

Ad aeternum:

**An Archeological Analysis surrounding Human Sacrifice in
the Ancient Near East**

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Under His Eye our beams of truth shine out,

We see all sin;

We shall observe you at your goings-out,

Your comings-in.

From every heart we wrench the secret vice,

In prayers and tears decree the sacrifice.

Sworn to obey, obedience we command,

We shall not swerve!

To duties harsh, we lend a willing hand,

We pledge to serve.

All idle thoughts, all pleasures we must quell,

Self we renounce, in selflessness we dwell.

(The Testaments by M. Atwood: p. 47)

I strongly believe in the punishments I have bestowed

(Aunt Lydia, The Handmaid's Tale)

Expedit esse deos, et ut expedit esse putemus

(Ovid, Ars Amatoria 1.637)

Abstract

ENGLISH

My research proposes a study of a heterogeneous practice often found in the archaeological record of the Ancient Near East: human sacrifice. Sacrifice presents a departure from standard mortuary treatment and fulfills a different social and ideological role only identifiable through the archaeological record and “performed” in three different spatial contexts: underneath architectural structures (Foundation or Construction Sacrifice), and in royal/elite burials (Retainer Sacrifice).

Sacrifice is one of the most common manifestations of human religious behavior, yet archaeology has only recently begun to devote significant attention to the practice. The originality of my project raises from the study of human sacrificial practices in the ancient Near East systematically, for the first time and the concepts that surround such ritual practice. Aligned with this and based on the archaeological evidence I am also focusing on the concepts behind the bodies of the individuals involved under one basic question: Is there any difference on the treatment of the bodies between the sacrificer (with proper burials) and the human offering/victim? If so, what was the idea or perception of the body behind it? Were they dehumanized?

DEUTSCH

Das Forschungsprojekt will eine eingehende und transversale Untersuchung einer heterogenen Praxis leisten, die häufig in den archäologischen Aufzeichnungen des alten Nahen Ostens zu finden ist: Menschenopfer. Das Opfer stellt eine Abkehr von dem üblichen Bestattungsbrauch dar und erfüllt eine andere soziale und ideologische Rolle, die nur durch die archäologischen Aufzeichnungen erkennbar ist und in drei verschiedenen räumlichen Kontexten in Verbindung steht: unter architektonischen Strukturen (Foundation or Construction Sacrifice), und bei königlichen / Elite-Bestattungen (Retainer Sacrifice).

Manifestationen menschlich-religiösen Verhaltens erfahren zunehmende Aufmerksamkeit in der Archäologie. Die Besonderheit dieser Grundlagenstudie ergibt sich durch die von mir angestrebte systematische Forschung, besonders den Konzepten, die mit dieser rituellen Praxis einhergehen. In Übereinstimmung damit und basierend auf den archäologischen Beweisen konzentriere ich mich auch auf die Zusammenhänge hinter den Körpern der beteiligten Personen sowie mit der grundlegenden Frage: Gibt es einen Unterschied in der Behandlung der Körper zwischen den religiösen Opfern? Wenn ja, wie war die Idee beziehungsweise die Wahrnehmung des Körpers dahinter? Wurden sie entmenschlicht? Konnte dieses Ritual von einem großen Publikum miterlebt werden oder war es nur einer kleinen Anzahl von Menschen vorbehalten?

Acknowledgments

This book has survived not only a global pandemic, but also a major war in Europe that almost turned into a WWII.

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Abbreviations

ANE – ancient Near East

AJA – American Journal of Archaeology

AR – Archaeological Reports

ARA - Annual Review of Anthropology

BASOR - Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research

BISI – British Institute for the Study of Iraq

CAD - The Assyrian dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

CRAIBL - Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres

JCS – Journal of Cuneiform Studies

JNES – Journal of Near Eastern Studies

NEA – Near Eastern Archaeology

RAI - Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale

DP – Death pit (shaft)

ED – Early Dynastic

BA – Bronze Age

EBA – Early Bronze Age

INTRODUCTION

“If religion has given birth to all that is essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion.”

(Bellah 1973: 191)

Human Sacrifice has been often catalogued as a *bizarre abnormality event* (Schwartz 2012), an *irrational and horrendous practice* (Leeson 2014), a *barbaric custom* (Van Dijk 2007), as well as a *cruel yet fascinating activity* (Schirmacher 2000; Recht 2019) but despite these connotations, it is undeniable that such phenomenon is one of the most discussed heterogeneous rituals of the great majority of world religions. Anthropologists have even argued that human sacrifice is nothing but a mythical Western construct, something exclusively ascribed to ‘others’ as a way of demonizing them (Bremmer 2007). However, human sacrifice has a well-attested reality and the term, or its local equivalent is frequently used by various groups. In the case of ancient Near East, I am considering human sacrifice to be the act which involves the actual killing of one or more persons.

In the Ancient Near East, human sacrifice has been often dismissed, discarded, or even ignored as it has seen as a primitive or uncivilized practice by Western scholars whose attitude toward the phenomenon varies in form despite its presence in the Near Eastern archaeological record as well as in textual and iconographical sources (Schwartz 2012). As pointed

out by Green (1975), the problem of human sacrifice in the Ancient Near East frequently relies under a prejudice in the treatment of the available data, tending on the one hand, either to deny such existence or totally reject the theory points to its occurrence in this area. The topic, of this investigation is indeed controversial or even problematic, but in light of new evidence as well as a necessary re-interpretation of the available data a renewal concerning this phenomenon is mandatory, beginning to remedy that situation with my Book.

Only few in-depth studies have involved human sacrifice in the Ancient Near East in the past centuries but none of them have been conclusive. Up until now, studies of human sacrifice may have risen more questions than it answers, but it does not leave us entirely clueless. It offers serious engagement with past ritual activities and a glimpse of the negotiations between identity, religious beliefs, and sacred space, political power, and memory. Recent approaches to the study of human bones and distribution within archaeological contexts illustrate how we may continue to learn more about the practice, along with new possible discoveries in future excavations. This book tries to create a point of no return, a space for not only discussing its existence in the Near Eastern archaeological record but exploring different ideas on the nature and purpose of human sacrifice and how it might be studied archaeologically by creating a pattern based on the available evidence.

Now, how can we bridge the gap between the tangible and the intangible, move from the material to the spiritual? Although recent theoretical approaches to the Archaeology of Religion have changed the way archaeologists are now confronting material culture, features, landscape, and architecture related to religious practices and beliefs, only

rarely have these studies attempted a coherent analysis of how to study it theoretically and methodologically.

My book will contain three main methodological sections or approaches. The first provides a framework for thinking about the constituents of culture as a mean both for situating ritual (human sacrifice) and for considering its accessibility to the consequent analysis. The second section outlines the theory of this ritual competence and the hypothesis suggested (Lumsden & Usieto Cabrera 2022) after the archaeological evidence as well as textual and iconographic data. The final section reviews the theories and how they work on the available archaeological evidence in the Near East, mainly during the Bronze Age but earlier periods were also considered for tracing a potential origin.

This study is not only concerned with sacrifice as a universal concept, but with its features specifically in the context of the Levant and Near East, where sacrifice has been studied in various monographs and articles. However no extensive work exists incorporating all types of material or the complete area included here as in comparison with other areas of study. Nor have the two main geographical areas of this study been carefully discussed in conjunction with each other.

One of the unique features of this study is the use of all types of available material, mainly archeological but also iconographical from the Bronze Age. Each of these may with caution be termed “primary” material, but they are of course “represented” to us in a certain way, through excavation reports, museums, and catalogues. The modern perceptions and assumptions related to these representations have serious implications for how the material is interpreted and are highlighted and discussed as a major issue throughout this study. The primary material has been collected

and catalogued in databases created specifically for the purpose, which are to be used in conjunction with the discussions that follow.

To detect the evidence of possible human sacrifice I will look at three factors. First, I will look at the type of burial: primary versus secondary interment, and single versus mass burial. Second, I will look at evidence of trauma or deliberate removal of skeletal or body parts. And third, I will look at the location of the burial: ritual, public or domestic setting. The last criterion will only be considered in conjunction with other evidence. Disturbed burials will be eliminated from the analysis since the original context is lost. Multiple-individual burials that show consecutive use will be eliminated (unless other evidence suggestive of sacrifice exists), since the custom of burial reuse is known throughout the Near East and is not associated with sacrifice. Since this study aims at the analysis of skeletal material for evidence of sacrifice, artifacts will not be considered except when in direct association with skeletal remains (such as in cases where an artifact substitutes for a skeletal part, or if the skeletal remains are placed within an artifact).

Regarding the topic of chronology, this study follows the dates of the Middle Chronology for the ancient Near East because this framework is most frequently used by scholars and appears, for now, to be the most accurate. It dates Hammurabi of Babylon's reign from 1792 to 1750 BC and the collapse of the Old Babylonian dynasty to 1595 BC (Van De Mieroop 2007: 104 - 107). The following table (Appendix 1, Table I) is a general scheme of the ancient Near East time periods and dynasties using the Middle Chronology. The outline does not specify regional differences or overlaps in reigning dynasties.

In the area included in this there are two main chronological terminologies in use. For the Syrian sites, the chronology is divided into

Early Bronze (EB), Middle Bronze (MB), and Late Bronze (LB), again, each with their sub-phases. Many sites naturally also have their own chronologies based on the stratigraphy of the site, and these chronologies are then usually correlated to the above categories or to absolute dates (e.g., Akkermans & Schwartz 2003; Woolley 1955 for Alalakh and Matthiae 1980a for Ebla; see also Schwartz and Weiss 1992 for a summary).

CHAPTER I

DEFINITION OF BASIC CONCEPTS

“Take your son, your only son – yes, Isaac, whom you love so much – and go to the land of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will point out to you”

(Genesis 22:1-18)

The debate over categorizing human sacrifice as religious (emphasizing its supernatural bonds) or simply as a heterogeneous practice (this time accentuating its socio-economic and political nature and a more natural perspective) within ancient Near East contexts (Schwartz 2012) exposes the need for a clear definition of concepts like “religion/religious,” “ritual,” or “rite.” Although this book does not intend to initiate an intense philosophical and psychological discussion of the definition of “religion,” a brief categorization of the topics of this book will be carried out in this chapter.

It can be stated that religion is inseparable from human society itself, and it brings about a complete set of ideological and emotional elements that are omnipresent in the social fabric and created through the materialization of religious beliefs by the members of the communities (Laneri 2015). Its materialization is supported by communication between humans and the divine, the existence of ceremonial places for worshipping,

and practices or ritual performances. When investigating the religious dimensions of ancient societies, however, it is quite difficult to delineate all of these elements. In order to overcome this problem, some approaches have been made within the cognitive sciences (Hodder 2007). The aim of this chapter is to conceptualize not only the understanding of religion itself, but its correlations within ancient Near Eastern societies by building a bridge between the material and mental dimensions. This approach may require the use of cognitive sciences (e.g., Hodder 2007) and draws on developments from the archeology of religion that have been proposed in recent years (Steadman, 2009; Laneri (all) and focus on the analysis of human-made artifacts (architecture, objects, texts, etc.) as well as natural elements like landscapes by identifying the relationship between the practical and cognitive dimensions of ritual practices in ancient societies (Doorgan 2012).

Concepts of religion in the ancient Near East: Defining the term from the general to the particular

The first step to understanding religion is to define it. Concerning the linguistic concept itself, Díez de Velasco rightly discusses (2006) how the concept was shaped over the centuries within the framework of Latin culture: *religio*, from which the word "religion" stems. This is originally used as a synonym for scruple or meticulous care in a sense that affects more thorough practice of worship than beliefs. The same happened in Greece, where the religious and the ritual were completely assimilated. The word translated as "religion," *θρησκεία*, thus has religious worship, worship of divinity, or ritual as its first meanings.

Defining this concept has been one of the most difficult tasks for scholars, as there might be as many definitions as there are schools of thinking (Benedict 1938; Goode 1951; Goody 1962; Hammond, 1970; Horton 1960; Titiev 1960; Justinger 1977). With so many definitions, how does one achieve an unbiased understanding of religion? Definitions of religion tend to suffer from one of two problems: they are either too narrow and exclude many belief systems which most scholars agree are religious, or they are too vague and ambiguous, suggesting that just about anything and everything is a religion. A good example of a narrow definition being *too narrow* is the common attempt to define "religion" as "belief in God" (Tylor 1871), effectively excluding polytheistic religions and nontheistic religions while including theists who have no religious belief system. This scientific exhaustion can be seen in Andrew Greeley (1982) when he argues:

I make no assumptions in the beginning of this exercise about a proper definition of religion. There exists a bitter and useless controversy in the sociology of religion about what religion is, and whether one needs an explicit "transcendental" "super-empirical" referent for a belief system to be religious.

There is also another school of thinking represented by Smith (1982) who argues that religion does not even exist, as there is only culture and, therefore, religion is simply a significant aspect of human culture. He defends this in *Imagining Religion*:

...while there is a staggering amount of data, phenomena, of human experiences and expressions that might be characterized in one culture or another, by one criterion or another, as religion — there is no data for religion. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison

and generalization. Religion has no existence apart from the academy.

(Smith, 1982: xi)

Many theoretical approaches (evolutionary, sociological, comparative, diffusionist, psychological, phenomenological, and cultural) have characterized anthropological and religious studies over the last centuries (Doorgan 2012; Malefijt 1968). An anthropological approach to the study of religion is holistic, as it treats religion as an aspect of culture rather than a separate sphere of activity (Bowie 2008). The desire to define religion anthropologically essentially began with the origins of the discipline itself. Edward B. Tylor's 1871 book outlined religion as a belief in supernatural beings. However, definitions have become somewhat more complex in the century or so since that publication. The anthropological study of religion essentially began with the origins of the discipline itself (Justinger 1977). Early scholars like Durkheim, Frazer, Marett, Schmidt, and Tylor exhibited a strong interest in religious phenomena. While their theoretical orientation, background, and methods varied significantly, they shared a common interest in the origins and historical developments of religion (Justinger 1977).

A different tack is taken by Paul Boyer who, in his book *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*, suggests humans have religion because it is how our brains are hard-wired. For him, religion is a complex system generated within the context of human evolution. Thus, religion is a collection of inferences, emotional responses, reason, moral judgments, and so on developed over eons and bundled together to create human belief.

In *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Roy Rappaport suggests that religion "grew up" with humans. Rappaport argues that language allowed humans to escape from the confines of the here and now

to explore the unseen; this ability sowed the seeds of religious thought and action (1999). He believes that the performance of ritual stands at the heart of human religion and is the impetus and carrier of emotion, unquestioning belief, and social unity, which make religion such a powerful human institution.

For the purposes of this book and without going too deep into the definition's controversy, I suggest that religion should be defined using the essential elements that can identify its presence within almost any theoretical approach and can be included in any of the following categories (Winkleman & Baker 2010):

- *Belief system in supernatural beings*, where they almost always include cosmological theories, explained, among other aspects, by mythology, philosophy, and theology. As religion became more complex, these supernatural beings were believed to inhabit specific places making them sacred (e.g., temples) and distinguishing them from the profane or non-sacred places (e.g., secular buildings).

- *Mechanisms of contact with these supernatural beings* through direct experiences (ecstasy, mysticism, etc.) or indirect rituals (with symbolic paraphernalia such as music, feasting, drug taking, offerings, and sacrifices) that occur in limited places between natural and supernatural spaces, sometimes guided by specialists (e.g., priests).

- *Sets of moral prescriptions or patterns of social behavior* that, emanating from the belief system, have the authority to influence the social structure (people and institutions).

- *A social group bound together by and organized around the above.*

As proposed, religion is therefore best defined as a social construct that relies on complex, culturally prescribed practices, and essential elements (Smith 2017). It is a polyhedral term that encompasses a

compendium of complex beliefs based on the supernatural. It also encompasses two fundamental aspects: one predominantly individual (*related to the intimate*) and another projected outward (*social*). Frazer (1984: 76) spoke about this dichotomy by pointing to the constancy in religion of a theoretical part with "*the belief in powers higher than man*" and a practical part, manifest in the attempts of human beings to propitiate and claim these powers. Díez de Velasco (2006: 11) has pointed out how this dichotomy can also be traced by the Latin etymology of the word, derived among other possibilities, from the religious terms *religare* "unite" and *relegere* "reread" or "study carefully." They emphasize both the concept of establishing ties with a reality outside the individual, and the recognition and internalization that accompanies intimate concentration.

This may sound suspiciously broad and non-specific, but there are several items of importance for an archeological study of religion. One of these is the *associated trappings* (Steadman, 2009: 23) that comprise the material remains that we, as archeologists, must rely on to inform us about past cultures. A second is the fact that these trappings (and what they represent) are certainly indicative of emotion, devotion, conviction, and faith on the part of the believers who manipulate them. The imprint of these emotions and feelings may very well have been carried down through the centuries in the way that such objects were handled, stored, or left in place. Finally, and most important, is the fact that we cannot separate religion from the rest of the culture. Religion, in the past and today, permeates every aspect of how humans construct their social institutions. This definition, with its focus on material culture and a holistic approach, will suffice as a working platform for the exploration of past religions.

As the topic of this book focuses mostly on Bronze Age material it is also appropriate to give a brief extrapolation and conceptualization of how

ancient Near Eastern societies may have understood religion, *attempting a basic approach toward their potential perception of the same.*

The study of religion itself as well as the methodologies for a better understanding of the concept have widely and drastically changed over the centuries, affecting every humanistic area concerning the study of this field. Scholars that attempted to deal with religion in the 19th and 20th centuries became increasingly aware that western stereotypes were inadequate and often misleading when applied to early modes of thought. A "landmark" (Beattie 1964: 67) in this respect is Evans-Pritchard's (1937) *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, where he argues that the Zande people (a contemporary society in southern Sudan) are as logical and rational as western men. In his own words:

In my own culture, in the climate of thought I was born into and brought up in and have been conditioned by, I rejected, and reject, Zande notions of witchcraft. In their culture, in the set of ideas I then lived in, I accepted them; in a kind of way, I believed them... If one must act as though one believed, one ends in believing, or half-believing as one act. (Evans-Pritchard 1976: 244)

This kind of answer must be familiar to many humanist scholars that deal with religion, past or present, as it connotes how difficult dealing with the mentalities of ancient cultures is. By "religion" (and so also by "ancient Near Eastern religion"), I would wish to understand the human response to a unique type of experience, the one William James called *religious experience* (James, 1902) and Rudolph Otto *numinous* (Otto 1943) experience. This experience cannot be in some way distinguished from profane or unsacred experiences, for religion in ancient societies would most likely have covered a large number of social spheres. The assumption that ancient societies are more analogous to old traditional societies than modern ones, and

consequently more dominated by religious belief, is not always accurate (Barth 1961; Insoll 2004). Indeed, ancient Near Eastern societies may have never attempted to define religion because they did not recognize its existence. The idea of religion, as we understand it today, does not exist in antiquity. In other words, their belief system was just that, theirs, and their place in the universe was explained by their own cosmology, mythology, and rituals (Steadman 2009: 21). As Trigger (2003: 411) and Laneri (2015) point out, confronting ancient religion has been a difficult exercise for modern scholars, chiefly due to its implications for a complex network of cognitive and material correlates that cannot be compared to our modern religious systems.

On the other hand, ancient Near Eastern religions may have served as a method of externalizing feelings and thoughts as creative energy that fed back into human society. That externalization was as real as the material world of the senses that humans imagine they inhabit, although that was habitually intruded upon by tangible and intangible paraphernalia. The actualization of human conduct and actions were negotiated here on a liminal plane, with action being the consequence of creative alteration. A scribe enacted the authority of a god, which was passed down or over to the king or High Priest. Every human action was mediated, and reflected back into the godly sphere, creating thereby a twofold reality. Human society comprised, and required, both realities in order to substantiate the human reality that was itself subject to continuous change.

To sum up and as some studies show (Aldenderfer 2012; Laneri 2015: 5; Steadman 2009) the trend during the second half of the 20th century has been marked by a strict separation of the analysis of ancient written sources from those dedicated to archeological material. When interpreting why ancient societies created gods, none of these *traditional* studies have shown,

for instance as an axiom, that this was held to be necessary to control natural events by anthropomorphizing the divine world, therein giving deities a role that, as implied by the term *supernatural*, is above nature (Laneri 2015). These approaches have been given within the parameters of cognitive archeology and the archeology of religion, which pay special attention to nature and landscapes.

The creation of supernatural beings that controlled fundamental natural elements (water, mountains, sky, etc.) would have made humans believe that there was a way of controlling nature through the worship of these supernatural creatures. Therefore, it is necessary to envision a direct relationship between the religious system and the landscape in which it developed (Burkert 1996: 21) wherein the relationship between the cosmic and the natural and human worlds was conceived and communicated through mythological stories and ritual practices.

Studying Religion through Archeology?

The emergence of cognitive science over the past years has stimulated new approaches to traditional problems in well-established social disciplines such as archeology and *Religionwissenschaft*. These approaches have generated new insights and reinvigorated aspirations for theories in the sciences of the socio-cultural (about the structures and uses of symbols and the cognitive processes underlying them) that are both more systematic and more accountable empirically than other alternatives. The most outstanding attempt to generate a methodology capable of objectifying and analyzing specifically religious data comes with the proposals of cognitive archeology (Cabrera Díez 2010: 43), oriented toward the symbolic and the ideological, exposed in the works of Colin Renfrew.

Archeology, according to Renfrew (1994) has to study the ways of thinking of the past as inferred from the material remains. Praeteritios thinking can become known because it is assumed that there has been no marked evolution in the states of human cognition since the appearance of Homo Sapiens. In other words, the functioning of the minds of individuals in the past does not differ significantly from that of today. On the other hand, the past is conceived as a reality existing in the *real* world through the lives of individuals and their interactions with others as well as with their environment (regardless of whether it can be empirically apprehended). Therefore, the knowledge that we may have about that past is based on our own observations and inferences and must be constructed, not “reconstructed,” since this would imply that a unified vision can be created – something impossible for Renfrew, not only due to the gaps of our data set, but also by the subjectivity of the people who may come to interpret it.

Following this reasoning, one of the main purposes is the study of the human ability to construct and use symbols, understood as something that means or represents something else (Renfrew 1994: 5). In this context, the field of religion turns out to lend itself the most easily to analysis. Renfrew pointed out, in effect, that one of the most important functions that symbols have is communication and mediation with the other world (Ibidem: 6-7).

From this position, it is thus possible to establish a methodology for the archeological study of ancient religions predicated on identifying the set of cultural elements and recognizing those within this set that carry religious meanings through symbols, despite that their precise meaning is not known (Renfrew 1985: 24; Renfrew & Bahn 1993: 375-6; Renfrew 1994). This approach has been developed in the last 30 years within the

Archeology of Religion discipline (Laneri 2015) where, through the recognition of useful archeological correlates for approaching ancient beliefs (Renfrew 1985; 1994), it has become a more coherent process that identifies the relationship between the practical and cognitive dimensions (Laneri 2015: 3).

But what does Archeology of Religion consist of? It basically focuses on the causal relations between ritual and artifacts as material devices that embody their cultural beliefs (Rowan 2011: 1). As McCauley and Lawson (2007) discussed:

Cognitive approaches in archeology, cognitive approaches to ritual, and cognitive approaches to culture, generally, exploit, among other things, the theoretical, substantive, and methodological resources of the cognitive sciences in order to gain insights about the underlying psychological and cognitive constraints that shape these public representations and their connections. (McCauley & Lawson 2007: 209)

Human-made artifacts may include everything tangible (clothes, figurines, texts, as well as architecture) and belong to the natural world that humans have intentionally altered and structured to serve their beliefs within their cultural systems. In the past, these objects lack direct scientific analyses as archeologists were not interested in how they were shaped by a society's psychological constraints (Rowan 2011). In fact, on Sperber's epidemiological account of culture, humans must have (or have had) such mental representations in order for these objects to exist as public representations of culture at all. As Sperber (1996: 81) pointed out, public representations of culture have meaning only through being associated with mental representations. Cognitive scientists are continuing to develop ever more sophisticated means for acquiring empirical evidence about the character of these mental representations. Cognitive archeologists have

made valuable contributions as well by investigating the inferences that can be drawn from the available remnants of material cultures about mental their implicit representations (Mithen, 1996; Renfrew 1994; Scarre, 1998, among others). Typically, the mental representations and states of mind pertaining to artifacts are tied up with various practices (language, education, politics, religion, art, science, and more) associated with these objects. It is such bonds that enable archeology to contribute to our understanding of the accompanying mental representations. (Renfrew, 1994: 51). The link between practices and mental representations is even more transparent than is that between mental representations and artifacts.

As a general issue, there has been a tendency in archeology, and especially Near Eastern archeology, to label anything that we do not understand or comprehend as a religious or ritual practice. But how might archeology acknowledge the spiritual or the structure of the immaterial? One factor working in favor of using archeological evidence to understand ancient religious belief is the human need to materialize the ethereal and *to provide tactility to praxis* (Rowan 2011: 2). As established before, religion is often expressed through ritual performance, which is manifested in a variety of ways in the archeological record (tangible and intangible): ritual paraphernalia, iconographic representation, as well as sacred natural and built space and landscapes.

Several studies (Barrowclough & Malone 2007; Fogelin 2007; Insoll 2004; Kyriakidis 2007; Laneri 2015; Rowan 2011) have shown that archeology has the potential to make a unique contribution to the study of change in religion and ritual practice by virtue of the long-term view of society it provides. Through this *longue durée* perspective, an archeology of religion may provide insights valuable to scholars interested in the materiality of ritual practices. However, given the difficulty of representing

different religious beliefs and practices, such optimistic statements must be tempered by recognizing that the full range of complexity of meaning and belief in the past may never be constructed in some cases.

One way to palliate these difficulties in archeology is to use proper terminology for *rite* or *ritual activity*. When delimited, these concepts, including human sacrifice, are extremely useful for inferring historical information about the religious system itself (the mythology and beliefs related to the rite, the existence or non-existence of specialists, funerary customs, the structure of sacred spaces, etc.), the culture and economy (existence of luxury objects, trade and general exchange, development of crafts and specific industries in service of religion, etc.), or social aspects (structure of society, presence of specific institutions, privileges for communities or people, etc.). When it comes to religion and ritual in ancient societies where the sphere of sacred / divine is diffuse in daily life, context (material and immaterial) is key. Not only is it crucial to comprehend and give the “correct” interpretation to the archeological evidence, but also to use a proper methodological approach, in this case, the archeology of religion. The subject matter has an important immaterial component (beliefs, prayers, sounds, sensations, and legible, audible, or silent religion, etc.), which, in most cases, is not reflected in any way in the available remains and material (temples or other religious architecture).

Every ritual activity (or rite) must be a formal, fixed, and repetitive action in which the communicative element expressed through symbols is important and in which the divinity intervenes in some way (as addressee, legitimizer, etc.), but it need not necessarily be a religious activity as such. Ritual may thus simply be a series of repeated behaviors; whereby human sacrifice can subsequently be defined as ritual.

Now, it is important to establish more powerful theoretical constructs for the study of religion because many elements of life are structured by religion beyond the typically recognized mortuary contexts and sacred sites. The need for humans to deal with death is not the sole reason for the existence of religions. The disposal of human remains typically involves rituals, often *rites of passage* (Bell 1997; Turner 1967; Van Gennep 1960), and numerous studies and synthetic treatments of mortuary rituals are available (Laneri 2007; Pearson 2001; Tarlow 1999; Williams et al. 2005).

Mortuary beliefs and practices are not the sum religion, and, in fact, some non-religious practices also evoke psychological responses to deal with death, such that these rituals are not necessarily religiously connoted at all. Although rituals that involve funerary and mortuary practices have been traditionally understood to be religious practices, these need not be such. Practices that involve death such as mourning or other *rites of passage* shall not be interpreted automatically as religious in nature: several studies among animals have shown quite the opposite (Rumble 2017) when dealing with death. Based on the analysis of different animals, studies have shown that mourning activities, funerary, and mortuary practices are not necessarily connected to religion, and these can, in fact, be interpreted as mere psychological responses to recover from the loss of loved ones within their community (Pettitt & Anderson 2020).

According to Turner, religious ritual is a prescribed behavior “*not given over to technical routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical (or non-empirical) beings or powers regarded as the first and final causes of all effects*” (Turner 1982: 70). Over and above places where ritual activities take place, this definition may not categorically exclude more mundane activities (Kyriakidis 2007: 17). Consequently, oppositions such as sacred versus

profane or functional versus ritual behavior are not necessarily helpful, or even applicable, especially in archeology (Brück 1999; Kyriakidis 2007; Whitley 1998). “*Practical*” and “*ritual*” are not so easily separated either, for the performance of a specific ceremony or the creation of a key religious symbol are eminently practical and functional from an emic perspective (Rowan 2011). Making an offering or a votive could be just as practical as making a tool (Morley 2007: 205). The sharp distinction drawn between sacred and profane is commonly blurred (Durkheim 1912), particularly for those interested in small-scale societies or domestic ritual practices (Bradley 2003, 2005), secular and sacred rituals may overlap and operate within the quotidian. This approach should not be alien when working with the ritual activities of ancient Near Eastern societies, as ritual does not equal religion (e.g., temples and funerary landscapes).

Thus, archeology cannot separate the mental and the material of the religiosity of humankind in the investigation of religious beliefs and practices among ancient societies. They are, in fact, the heart and the brain of human religiosity (Laneri 2015). Therefore, archeologists’ aim is to connect the different material vestiges into a broader discourse that constructs ancient religious dimensions as well as their role in structuring the social practices of ancient societies.

Concepts of Sacrifice

The study of the concept of sacrifice goes as far back as the study of religion itself as the survey of research in this chapter shows. What is sacrifice? This question has been answered in many different ways. As we will see throughout this chapter, several different scholars have attempted to define the concept. In the long history of research on the topic, sacrifice

has been used as a means for explaining the origins of religion, as an archetypal ritual, and as a way of understanding humans' relationships with the supernatural.

Sacrifice is constituted as a powerful form of communication with the gods and possibly influencing their will through an exchange that implies the most rigorous renunciation, life: both animal and human. The human being thus comes into contact with the divinity expecting a valuable reward in accordance with the offering. More particularly, the term refers to the bloody offering that entails the death of an animated being in the act of consecrating it to a divinity. The notion of offering is an essential component of the concept and, in fact, is in the same etymology of the Latin term from which our word directly derives: *sacrificium*, literally means "offering to a divinity".

In order to face the study of human sacrifice, it is necessary to define it by clarifying some of the characteristics that distinguish and separate it from other human actions. The construction of this category is indispensable, but at the same time it forces this analysis to begin with a distortion of the original practices because we can only generate it by imposing our current perspective, through which we implicitly divide what we consider religious from other social behaviors derived from past traditions.

Sacrifice is constituted as one of the clearest examples of ritual, in which beliefs regarding divinities are transposed onto the field of practice through particular actions defined within various disciplines, but especially Anthropology and the History of Religion. The current concept of sacrifice has been configured and delimited from this over time. Scholars have even argued that human sacrifice is nothing but a mythical Western construct, something exclusively ascribed to *others* as a way of demonizing them

(Bremmer 2007). However, human sacrifice has a well-attested reality and is even frequently used in several contemporary societies (Tierney 1989).

The body of research on sacrifice is immense, and only a few major thinkers are discussed in this chapter: those whose theories are related to the material studied here, have been the most influential, have the most wide-ranging ideas, or are the main representatives of a specific idea that I have selected. The absence of other names is because their ideas are either well-covered by those here or because their specific theories do not significantly help with the understanding of human sacrifice in the Bronze Age Near East. It is also noticeable that none of the authors here explained have based their theories on evidence coming from the ancient Near East, but rather from different and various contexts (from Mesoamerican to classical Greco-Roman period, and from the Philippines to African cultures). Nevertheless, they must be mentioned in order to establish my own argument later on in this chapter.

Tylor: A Gift

Based on Primitive culture: research in the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, arts and custom (first published in 1871).

E.B Tylor was, indeed, the first scholar to attempt a scientific study of sacrifice. Tylor saw sacrifice as a gift made to the soul of a person or object, or to the spirit of a personified cause, although he did not exclude the possibility that other motives could be operative (Tylor 1871: 484). Tylor further argued that the reasoning for sacrifice involved an inner desire to establish a deep bond between humans (in representation of their society) and that which they conceived to be sacred. Therefore, this ritual was a gift

offered to supernatural beings to secure their favor and subsequently minimize their hostility for possible misbehaviors.

As this purpose gradually became transformed in the mind of the sacrificers, the dominant note became that of homage, which again passed into that of renunciation. It seems apparent in an evaluation of Tylor's theory that once the beliefs which have determined sacrificial rites have been disclosed, it is very elementary to discover the rational motives for these rites. "*A prayer is a request made to a deity as if he were a man, so sacrifice is a gift made to a deity as if he were a man*" (Tylor 1871: 376).

Following an evolutionary perspective that was in vogue at the time, he sees three stages of sacrifice (each understood as a progression of the one that came before). These three stages are: *gift theory*, *homage theory* and *abnegation theory* (Tylor 2010). The original and *most rudimentary* stage is that in which sacrifice is simply a gift with no further assumptions and what he called "*unshaped intentions*" (Tylor 2010: 341). In homage, the second stage, the gift has the "*higher significance of devout homage or expiation for sin*" (Tylor 2010: 350). The final and highest stage of sacrifice is *abnegation*, where the value of the gift to the donor is the measure of acceptableness or efficacy (the more personal, the better).

W.R. Smith: A Communion

Based on *Religion of the Semites* (2002, first published in 1894 as *Lectures on the religion of the Semites*)

For Robertson Smith,¹ sacrifice was essentially a communion, a method of establishing the solidarity between the group and its god. He argues:

Sacrifice was a public ceremony of a township or of a clan, and private householders were accustomed to reserve their offerings for the annual feasts, satisfying their religious feelings in the interval by vows to be discharged when the festal season came around. Then the crowd streamed into the sanctuary from all sides, dressed in their gayest attire, marching joyfully to the sound of music, and bearing with them not only the victims appointed for sacrifice, but store of bread and wine to set forth the feast. (Smith 2002: 254).

This approach does not fundamentally contradict Tylor's, but it differs in methodological approach. Smith's approach to the subject of sacrifice is based on Semitic religion, and his goal is ultimately to comprehend his own religion (Protestant) by going back to what he understood as the "origin." While Tylor attempts to give an account of the abnegation and honorific sacrifice from the gift-sacrifice, Smith constructs some of the earliest motives of sacrifice even before such rites had been rationalized as gifts (Smith 1927).

He begins with the *totemic communion* in which the group ritually kills an animal for feasting belonging to a species which they believe to be akin to themselves. It is simultaneously their father, their brother, and their god. Because the same blood is supposed to flow in the veins of the victim,

¹ While Smith's work is considered one of the foundations of modern anthropology with the first attempt at a reasoned explanation for sacrifice, this unfortunately leads to many exaggerations by later scholars. His excessive reliance upon the totemic cult as the root cause of sacrifice, for example, is a source of weakness in his approach.

its death is at once a shedding of the tribal blood and a violation of the sanctity of the divine life that is transfused through every member of the sacred circle, human or irrational. From this communion Smith derives the expiatory or propitiatory forms of sacrifice which he calls the *piaculum* and the gift-sacrifice. This then, represents only the re-establishment of the broken relationship. Therefore, as his theory develops, the totemic sacrifice had all the effects of an expiatory rite. He sees this idea as already evident in the primitive communion.

Smith argues on the other hand, that when the tie between humans and animals had ceased, human sacrifice was replaced by animal sacrifice because this was henceforth the sole means of establishing a direct exchange of blood between clan and God. Later, as the ideas and customs which protected the life of the individual became stronger, the sacrificial meal which included cannibalism fell into disuse.

Smith was inspired by the widely publicized and accepted theory of totemism. He deals with this in his explanation of the totemic clan in the organization of Semitic tribal structure, observing in the practices, which he calls *totemic cult*, the root origin of sacrifice. For him, sacrifice is indistinguishable from the "common meal." According to his view, sacrificial slaughter had no object other than to make possible the devouring of a sacred and, consequently, forbidden animal. From this "communion sacrifice," he derives the expiatory and propitiatory forms of sacrifice, namely the *piaculum* and gift sacrifice or honorific sacrifice (Smith 1927: 463-276).

Thus, this view of sacrifice as a gift, complements that of Tylor's, but his explanation is far from complete. He does not take the magical purposes of such rites and the consciousness of guilt which usually characterized a human's relation to their god into consideration (Green 1975: 6). He argues

that atonement is not a single reason to sacrifice, but rather that “*atonement [is] simply an act of communion designed to wipe out all memory of previous estrangement*” (Smith 2002: 320). In the ancient Near East, nonetheless, this might not be the case as there is a group that will be explained in the following chapters for which atonement rituals may form the main core.

Frazer: Magic

Based on *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (first published in 1890)

Another argument can be found in Sir James G. Frazer. It is extremely difficult to give a precise account of Frazer 's theory of sacrifice for, while his works are filled with illustrations of sacrificial rites, his interpretations of their ends and means are varied and unsystematic. However, the fundamental idea he stresses seems to be that the communal meal is simply a magical rite. It is worth adding that for this author, religion in general and sacrifice in particular are a development of magic.

Basing his theory on numerous rites from several examples across the globe, humans imitate nature and believe that nature will be magically compelled to follow their example. For Smith the main purpose of sacrifice is to cement a relationship between a totemic god and his people by way of a communal meal of the flesh of the slain animal divinity. Once again, human sacrifice is compared to animal sacrifice. For Frazer, the slain god is a human or an animal who incarnates a nature spirit that is believed to bless agricultural production.

As far as totemism is concerned, Frazer differs from Smith as he stresses the aspect, whereas Smith predominantly emphasized its religious

aspect throughout. The idea of expiation still seems to originate in the communal meal, but rather than being religious it is a mere magical rite (Frazer 1993). Frazer's weakness, however, comes from his approach, as he seeks to incorporate different sacrificial forms (most of which come from totemism in Australia and the Americas) under a universal principle. In many cases the so-called totems are representatives of an animal species that the tribe hunts and upon which their life depends—or, on the contrary, by which they are hunted, and which is especially feared (Frazer 1993; Green 1975: 8).

Frazer's main contribution to the theory of sacrifice is his view that its inception lay in the fact that gods were destroyed to save them from decay (Frazer 1993), but there is no evidence whatsoever in the ancient Near Eastern world of such matters, nor is totemism present among ancient Near Eastern societies (including as outlined in Tylor and Smith's visions of totemism). He also indicates many other theories of sacrifice in his book, such as the idea of rejuvenation or rebirth (reincarnation of the god's spirit in the person of his successor).

Westermarck: Expiation

Based on *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (first published between 1906 and 1908).

Edward Westermarck's work *The Origin of Moral Ideas* has been recognized as a classic in the study of ancient customs and rituals. His hypothesis on sacrifice differs from those previously mentioned, on the one hand, in his proposition that the main element in sacrifice was expiation, but he keeps other basic concepts, on the other hand, such as substitution,

in which he sees the act of human sacrifice as the deliberate act of killing an individual as a substitute for the members of the entire community, serving the body of the individual as a vessel to carry out sins and divine punishment to avoid chaos. While most writers on the subject do not accept expiation as the ultimate objective, Westermarck considers it to be the original purpose of all sacrifices, even though he does not deny the existence of other reasons from which secondary meanings such as the transference of sin or the rejuvenation of a dying god later developed.

The practice, he argues, is based on the idea of substitution of the victim for other individuals whose lives are *in danger*, which in the course of time led animal offerings instead of humans (Westermarck 1917: 469-471). Again, we see in Westermarck the idea of animal sacrifice as a result of replacing a human victim for an animal victim, which translates into a more acceptable moral activity rather than the killing of a human being. He also defends that such act is not only performed at desperate times, but also previous to natural disasters in order to avoid them:

“For people subsisting on agriculture, failure of crops means starvation and death, and is, consequently, attributed to the murderous designs of a superhuman being, such as the earth-spirit, the morning star, the sun, or the rain-God. By sacrificing to that being, a man, they hope to appease its thirst for human blood; and whilst some resort to such a sacrifice only in case of actual famine, others try to prevent the famine by making the offering in advance”. (Westermarck 1917: 469-471).

According to his theory, then, expiation was the original purpose of the sacrifices to secure the future of crops. Westermarck accepts Frazer 's theory of the killing of a victim in order to secure the future of the crops, but he subscribes only in part to the second type of human sacrifice, in

which the victim is fed to the recipient imbuing him with divine strength. He alludes to such funerary rites within this context stating that they are made to dead humans "*to vivify their spirits.*" (Westermarck 1917: 469-471).

Westermarck's hypotheses are also important for the purposes of this book, as he was the first to attempt to bring two other rituals into focus, which he classifies as sacrificial: Foundation Sacrifice and Blood-revenge sacrifice. Indeed, he mentions the potential reasoning behind this specific type:

I do not believe that its primary object could have been to procure a spirit-guardian . . . the ghost of a murdered man is not a friendly being and least of all is he kindly disposed towards those who killed him . . . the human victim was sacrificed for the avowed purpose of averting some mortal danger from the community. . . . I conclude that there, also, the primary object of the rite was to offer a substitute, though this substitute came to be used as a messenger.

(Westermarck 1917: 464)

However, if we take this hypothesis into consideration, then human sacrifice was conceived as murder according to Westermarck's ideas. He even uses terms such as *killing* or *to kill* (Westermarck 1917: 464). Consequently, would this ritual, evidently carried out for the protection of the community (either the family or a larger community grouping), be conceived as murder even by the victim whose life was taken? The reasoning behind these arguments would need to be adequate and not predominantly westernized and Eurocentric to be compelling.

Although he is the only scholar who holds the view that blood-revenge is a form of human sacrifice, I do not agree with this vision as an explanation when it comes to the ANE, nor with the perception of substitution as a messenger for the gods. However, Westermarck's

comprehensive discussion of the elements of expiation, guilt, and vicarious suffering, almost totally neglected by other scholars, marks his work as a truly important contribution.

Hubert & Mauss: *Acte Religieuse*

Based on *Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice* (first appeared in 1899).

Sociology has also tried to explain such worldwide phenomena in universal parameters, not considering specific sacrificial rites within different cultures and societies. French sociologists Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1954) used Hindu and Hebrew sacrifices as the basis of their theory. Their *Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice* (1899) has been greatly influential for all subsequent research, and their observations are still in vogue. For them:

Sacrifice is a religious act which, through the consecration of a victim modifies the condition of the moral person, who accomplishes it, or that of certain objects with which he is concerned. (Hubert & Mauss 1964: 13)

Like Smith they believed that sacrifice is a sacred communion, which establishes a vital relationship between the sacred and the profane world that is only possible through the mediation of a ritually sacrificial *victim*.²

² Here the term 'victim' is used in accord with Hubert & Mauss, but as far as this book is concerned, this term implies violence, crime and, by extension, guilt as Recht proposed (Recht 2010: 43). They, furthermore, used this term for animals, not only humans. On my view, it is more suitable to use the term "offering."

This rite has a dual function: it makes direct contact between the two realms unnecessary as already implied in the mediation (Hubert & Mauss 1964). Additionally, it must be noted that the only way of communicating with the deities and making the sacrificial victim worth offering is to destroy it. In their study, sacrifice is not only carried out by an individual or a group-family but also by a *village*, *clan*, or *nation*, with one person selected regardless of their “race” or ethnicity to act instead of another person or for the society as a whole. As soon as the *priest*³ is chosen and consecrated, they automatically begin some cleaning or purifying ritual ceremonies to prepare themselves for the task.⁴ Because sacrifice entails interaction with the sacred, the carrier of the act who is “imperfect,” must proceed gradually through recommended rituals into the sacred spheres that are recognized as the traditional abode of the gods (Omeje 1981).

Hubert and Mauss’ theories of sacrifice as mediation are particularly striking in terms of divination (e.g., communication between humans and deities through animals or celestial bodies) as evidenced in the ancient Near East in some cases, as Recht appropriately pointed out (Recht 2011: 46).

Loisy: *Action Sacrée, Figuration Rituelle*

³ We cannot forget that Hubert & Mauss’ subjects of study were Hinduism and Hebrew sacrifice, for which dogma is very well established. The figure of a priest carrying out human sacrifice is still under discussion and is, perhaps, not realistic enough for the context we are working on.

⁴ These purifying rites are not alien for such rituals and are attested worldwide, therefore it would not be unreasonable to extrapolate such rites in the ancient Near East. These rites allow the carrier of the activity to become a *god* himself so that he can exercise meaningful influence upon them (Hubert & Mauss 1964).

Based on *Essai historique sur le sacrifice* (first published in 1920)

Alfred Loisy may have been one of the first scholars to give a transdisciplinary explanation of the concepts of sacrifice, attempting to join together every previous argument from the 19th and 20th century into a systematic narrative in his *Essai historique sur le sacrifice* (1920). For Loisy as opposed to previous scholars, sacrifice is not derived from a single source, but from two: the magical act and the ritual gift (Loisy 1920: 6-7).

He relentlessly criticizes Hubert and Mauss's theory that sacrifice is a process for establishing communication between the sacred and the profane (Loisy 1920: 14). On this theory, Loisy argues that the distinction between these worlds is not set but diffuse and that humans thus requires sacrificial activities in order "*to disengage himself from the influences of what is called the world sacred*" (Loisy 1920: 7-8).

Reviewing Loisy's main principles, it is clear that he combines Frazer's views on sympathetic and homeopathic magic with Tylor's gift theory, the result of which can be summarized as follows according to Green (1975, 12):

In contractual rites the victim is often killed by the parties to a contract. He sees this as an indication to the parties concerned, that in the event of a breach of contract, the violator will share the identical fate: "This, is an example of "action sacrée, figuration rituelle" which is neither an offering, nor a communion, nor even an homage to any god, but a rite effective in itself, conditionally effective, for it operates solely against the perjurer if there is a perjurer. (Green 1975: 12-13)

If I take this characterization into consideration, this is indeed an example of a magical act. In the case of funeral rites, Loisy finds the cult of

the dead to be the purest example of the gift of nourishment (Loisy 1929: 11-12). In such cases, offerings to the gods were designed both to attenuate their anger and to utilize their power and benefits. Seasonal rites are not the mere symbolic accompaniment of the phenomena they represent, but rather their magical cause. Because of them, for instance, he argues that the corn is made to die and revive (Loisy 1929: 12-13).

Like Tylor and Smith, Loisy does not accept the ancient idea of expiation through suffering:

Ancient man has, one may say, a physical conception of sin and a moral conception of illness; or rather he does not know how to distinguish clearly between a physical and a moral evil, and he uses the same process to eliminate both . . . The sacrifices said to be for purification or expiation tend essentially to rid men from the evil influences under which they have fallen (...) The fundamental idea has been to transfer evil from man to another being, through the destruction of which the evil is supposed to be itself destroyed or driven away. Then the gods are supposed to have prescribed his remedy for these evils which men finally attributed to the gods themselves as a punishment for their sins. (Loisy 1920: 14-15)

It is important to note, however, that whereas Tylor views the idea of abnegatory sacrifice as being derived from the gift and Smith sees the *piaculum* as a retying of the blood-bond, Loisy and Frazer argue that the expiatory rite originates in the magical transference of evil. Loisy's concepts of sacrifice can thus be more systematic and comprehensive.

Freud — Money-Kyrle - W. Beers: Psychoanalysis

Based on: *Totem und Tabu: Einige Übereinstimmungen im Seelenleben der Wilden und der Neurotiker* (first published in 1913)

Based on: *The meaning of sacrifice* (first published in 1930)

Based on: *Women and sacrifice: male narcissism and the psychology of religion* (1992).

With the rise of the psychoanalytical discipline throughout the 20th century, theories of human sacrifice began to expand beyond the evolutionary framework, first in S. Freud's work *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and later modified by Kyrle (1930) and Beers (1992). Before Freud's hypotheses, scholars did not deal with the role that unconscious factors and the subconscious mind have in sacrificial rituals but considered the conscious impulses alone. By so doing, according to Freudian theory, they completely missed some of the most vital forces that conditioned "*the seemingly irrational behavior*" (Freud 1939: 235-239). According to psychoanalysis, unconscious factors are the keys from which to draw the potential motivations behind sacrifice.

Hypotheses like those of Freud, Money-Kyrle, or W. Beers tried to explain the origin of sacrifice and the role of primary desires coming from the subconscious. For example, Freud's vision of human sacrifice lay in the Oedipal complex of man, basing his entire theory of sacrifice on what he called *neurotic* men who revealed this common unconscious wish.

This whole idea is defined as *patricide*, which is the killing of the symbolic father (Freud 1939: 236), a view clearly influenced by Darwin's beliefs about the life of primeval man (Money-Kyrle 1965: 186). He suggested that jealous sons who expelled their father as a result of their unconscious wish to possess their mother finally came together, killed, and then ate their father (*totem meal*). Precisely in this last statement, Freud, like

many scholars, deals with the feast post-sacrifice (Lambert 1993). But did Freud mean cannibalism, or did he only attempt to give human sacrifice an explanation using animal sacrifice and feasting as metaphors? On the contrary, Smith argued that this analysis is limited to the psychoanalysis of feasting, for it certainly cannot be maintained that "*originally all sacrifices were eaten by the worshippers*" and "*in the oldest sacrifice the blood was drunk by the worshippers and after it ceased to be, it was poured out upon the altar*" (Smith 1967: 389).

Money-Kyrle modifies the Freudian theory by making sacrifice the symbolic representation of an unconscious desire to kill the father: it is a metaphoric patricide. As he established, predilection for incest has been conditioned in the unconscious during the period of infancy, and variations in the institution of sacrifice are correlated with the various solutions of the central complex (Money-Kyrle 1965: 193-195 and 213-214).

This vision will influence researchers like W. Beers whose Neo-Freudian vision relates motivation for human sacrifice to male narcissism (Beers 1992), giving importance to sexual and gender studies. For this author, men venerate, love, and at the same time fear women as the great mother. The origin of sacrifice lies therefore in the feeling of omnipotence and unity of the child with the mother's chest that is frustrated when he realizes that he is being separated from his mother's chest and that his cries are not always answered in an instantaneous and satisfactory manner. Beers suggests that there is a connection between the *sacrificer* and resentment (Beers 1992). He also briefly suggests the idea that human sacrifice was a way to permit humans to kill legally, to bond with each other, and to create a separation between themselves and their victim (Beers 1992: 144-145).

In parallel to the influence of this gender binarism that Beers pointed out in sacrifice, it is worth mentioning other scholars like Jay (1992), who argues that sacrifice is a male way of establishing descent; that is, because men lack the immediate connection between parent and child through childbirth, an equivalent blood-bond is created through participation in the bloody ritual of sacrifice.

However, all these theories have significant weaknesses: unlike the previous scholars' work whose definitions were derived from theories based on specific cultures and time periods, the psychoanalysts based their theories on purely hypothetical foundations without verification or genuine parallels in any known cultures. Their theories are not extrapolated in the archeological evidence and, therefore, cannot provide greater understanding of such activity in this given context.

Durkheim: *Acte de Renoncement*

Based on *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (first published in 1912).

Émile Durkheim came from a similar background as Hubert and Mauss, which is reflected in his theory of sacrifice as based on the division of the world into sacred and profane as outlined by Hubert and Mauss. His hypotheses, although not opposed to those of Hubert and Mauss' (Hubert & Mauss 1964), relies on his conception of religion as socially constituted.

As Recht pointed out (Recht 2010: 47), two types of cults are identified in Durkheim's work: the negative and the positive. Without going too deep, the negative cult has to do with interdictions and its rites to separate the sacred and the profane. The positive cult, on the other hand, is designed to merge these two. Sacrifice is part of the positive cult, as a

religious ceremony which puts the group into action, brings individuals together and multiplies relations.

According to him:

Sans doute, le sacrifice, est, en partie, un procédé de communion; mais c'est aussi, et non moins essentiellement, un don, un acte de renoncement. Il suppose toujours que le fidèle abandonne aux dieux quelque chose de sa substance ou de ses biens.

(Durkheim 1968: 490)

It is precisely this last point where he agrees with Smith, as Sacrifice for him is also a communion and an essential part in creating bonds when food is shared (applied to animal sacrifice this time, not human). For him, it is an act of renouncement, as the society represented in the sacrificer gives something in order to receive something in return. Moreover, and in contrast to Robertson Smith, he does not see the idea of the gift or oblation in sacrifice as a secondary or later addition, but rather as an essential element.

Burkert: *Homo Necans*

Based on *Homo necans: Interpretationen altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen* (first published in 1972).

Walter Burkert, in contrast to the rest of the authors discussed in this chapter, did not seek for cultures worldwide or in prehistoric tribes but rather based his theory on ancient Greek and classical societies. In his book *Homo necans: Interpretationen altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen* (1972) his theoretical arguments suggest that the explanation and origin of sacrifice is

based almost entirely on hunting, situating sacrificial killing at the very core of religion and the basic experience of the sacred.

Although Burkert's studies classical societies, he sees the origin of sacrifice in the human hunt for and killing of prey in prehistoric societies. Hunting is argued to be ceremonial, and conversely, a sort of hunting scene is often acted out as a part of the sacrifice (Burkert 1983: 15). This communal activity was an important development in making humans human, and a new structure in human society began with the *age of the hunter*, one in which the world "*falls into categories: indoors and out, security and adventure, women's work and men's work, love and death*" (Burkert 1983: 18).⁵

However, although sacrificial activities and hunting have links in common with the material that I analyze in this book, this hypothesis does not fit in many senses. First of all, there are types of sacrifice, as we will see in further chapters, that do not display any strong association with hunting, and the hypothesis of such sacrifices merely being later developments cannot be substantiated because the link cannot be verified empirically; even if such an origin could be verified, these other types are so different that their very divergence would require some other explanation. The notion of sacrifice arising from the hunt is in itself only a hypothesis based on these facts and not one that can be proven. The idea of whether or not human aggression or violence is *innate*, and the conception of the individual as *evil* and *violent* are topics of general discussion with arguments for either

⁵ "[S]eine Welt zerfällt in zwei Bereiche, das Drinnen und das Draußen – Geborgenheit und Abenteuer Frauensache und Männersache, Liebe und Tod. Denn im Zentrum des neuen Gemeinschaftstyps, dessen biologisches Analogon das Wolfsrudel ist, steht das Töten und Essen" (Burkert 1972: 26).

view (e.g., Flannery & Marcus 2012),⁶ and assent is really up to the scholar's point of view, depending on whether they prefer a Hobbesian (violent) or Rousseauian (peaceful) binarism. However, even if Burkert's basic assumption (later shared by Girard) is allowed, the notion of a society structured around hunting and separated into different social spheres is not supported by historical or ethnographic evidence.

Girard: Controlled Violence

Based on 1972 as *La violence et le sacré* (first published in 1972), and *Le bouc émissaire* (first published in 1982).

Along with the issues discussed thus far, new aspects are accounted for in contemporary visions like that of René Girard, who has highlighted the decisive role that violence plays in the definition of sacrifice and the individuals involved. His work, *Violence and the sacred*, was first published in French in the same year that Burkert's *Homo necans* was published in German, 1972, and the theories share many links in common.⁷

Although not based on hunting as Burkert's was (1983), Girard's perception of violence is a key factor motivating sacrifice, as he argues that it is present in all societies and can cause an escalation of destruction if control is not achieved. Since violence is inherent, this sacred killing must

⁶ This view is shared with Beers, as he sees innate violence and eagerness to kill in humans as well.

⁷ Girard, through Freudian analysis, believes that "mimetic desire" is inherent to humans, and it is this mimetic desire that causes violence (Harrison & Girard 2005).

be repeated at regular intervals whether the situation is prejudicial or beneficial, as well as in crisis periods.

In such a framework, Girard sees sacrifice as a vent for human violence, working as a system to prevent the violence from spiraling out of control. The idea that the individual whose body serves as the vessel to divert violent acts from their fellow society members needed to be chosen unanimously for the rite to be efficient (or it would stop working) (Girard 2005: 7) is what Girard calls a misunderstanding. He adds that “*the celebrants do not and must not comprehend the true role of the sacrificial act*” (Girard 2005: 7). They must believe that the violence is exterior and alien to the group, and that the victim is guilty in a way that concerns the group as a whole (Harrison & Girard 2005). The victim needs to be chosen arbitrarily but must fulfil certain conditions first. This is, they need to have some requirements, but it is not about a specific person or individual, but rather the personification of the activity itself. This point of view could be a starting point for the ancient Near Eastern evidence, as it would allow us to comprehend even more about such practices and the role that the people—and especially the *individuals*—involved had.

Societies that lack a judicial system that rationalizes, and limits revenge are exposed to the possibility that this aggression could overflow uncontrollably. That is why the sacred in general, and the sacrifice in particular, fulfill a vital social function to appease violent behaviors in these communities. The sacrifice would help to moderate internal violence because it turns the victim into a substitute on which aggressiveness turns, preventing it from falling on other individuals and thus cutting the spiral of social violence. In this sense, sacrifice is understood as an effective tool to maintain the integrity of the community, restore harmony, and strengthen social unity.

Moreover, and concerning violence, Girard agrees with Burkert in seeing violence as inherent in human beings, although his notion of violence is more complex given his addition of the mimetic desire (Girard 2005: 152-178). This is a controversial psychological mechanism that causes humans to imitate the desires of others.

Despite much skepticism and criticism of Girard's theory (Valeri 1985; Alexiou 1990), if there is one thing that Girard's theory pointed out, it is the necessity to define sacrifice based on several simultaneously crucial constraints and not just rely on one aspect, like a gift or communion. On the other hand, and especially as far as the ancient Near Eastern evidence is concerned, sacrifice does involve an element of violence (in that something is being destroyed by human agency), but the question of the real significance we attribute to it (and of course the significance that ancient people attributed to it) is crucial. Did they consider such an act as violent? Why did Girard mention the subconscious of the victim? If they were conscious, then what would have stopped being the ritual act from becoming just murder or killing? All of these questions are far too difficult and based too little in empirical fact to consider as material for this book. Fundamentally, any other hypothesis that is related to the ancient world "in general" will not give us definite answers or clear thoughts.

Conte & Kim: An Economic Perspective

Based on: An economy of human sacrifice: The practice of *sunjang* in an ancient state of Korea (published in 2016 in *Journal of Anthropological Archeology* 44, 14-30).

Rather than seeking the origin of human sacrifice as traditional scholars since the 19th century have done, specialists Matthew Conte and Jangsuk Kim have attempted to give a further explanation of the underlying motivation of societies that practiced human sacrifice. Their explanation is based on the archeological evidence of the *Three Kingdom Periods of Korea* in the first half of the 3rd millennium BCE and the practice of human sacrifice or *sunjang* (Conte & Kim 2016).

It has been argued that the inner motivation of human sacrifice might lie in any of a number of specific factors: cannibalism (Harner 1977), social pressure and conflict for land (Cohen 1975), social control (Leeson 2014), the inner violent conflicts of mankind (Girard 2005; Burkert 1983), or the elite desire for sustaining stratified societies (Porter 2013). However, as Conte & Kim rightly point out, human sacrifice is a complex practice that shall not be explained by any single characteristic. It is a multifaceted behavior, and the perspectives that have been proposed are not mutually exclusive (Conte & Kim 2016). It is thus unreasonable to give a universal explanation of such an intricate practice using factors that cannot be determinant in some environments (e.g., ecological pressures and war for land are not feasible justifications for any evidence in the ancient Near East).

Additionally, these scholars argue that community members and sacrificial victims believed that they both benefited from human sacrifice rituals and thus actively participated. Sacrificial offerings/victims and sacrificers operated willingly and actively in what Smith once referred to as a "*religious market*" (Smith 1976). This hypothetical model treats religion as analogous to commercial markets: religion is supplied by religious firms and enacted by the participation of its followers (Conte & Kim 2016, Finke & Stark 1988, Iannaccone 1991). The more liberal a system is toward religion, the greater number and variety of religious firms compete with

one another for participants. On the other side of the spectrum are states that encourage (or require) their society members to participate exclusively in a single religion.⁸

Their view on retainer sacrifice or *sunjang* involves a sense of communal rite that helped reinforce social benefits for both: hosts and sacrificial victims. They argue that elite mortuary rituals and retainer sacrifices are both seen as public goods, supplied by hosts (the elite) and consumed by community members. They are usually supplied by the government (*in modern-day societies*) for the sake of the public. As they argued:

Mortuary rituals including retainer sacrifice would have been tools by which elite hosts, the providers of public goods, were able to legitimize and naturalize their positions in their communities, as a class that pools and allocates community resources and leads the community politically, and perhaps spiritually. (Conte & Kim 2016: 23)

The only way *sunjang* was legitimized over the centuries was by continuous coercion, sanction, and intimidation practiced by the elite. Nonetheless, this strategy would have been very risky and unsustainable due to possible resistance from commoners. Although we do not have many examples that can test this dualism between how the elite and the rest of the society really perceived *sunjang*, Conte & Kim (2016) cite a historical description from the *Samguksagi* of a royal funeral that took place in the

⁸ The term state follows the archeological evidence whose parameters allow scholars to talk about a state as a highly centralized political body.

kingdom of Goguryeo,⁹ that enlightens us about the participants of these rituals and their possible attitudes toward it:

Year 22 (248 CE), Ninth Month: *The King died in autumn, in the ninth month. His funeral was held at Siwon. He was called Dongcheon. Remembering his grace, all of the people of the land were filled with sadness. Many of his retainers wished to follow him in death, but the new king declared this was unrighteous and forbade them. [Nonetheless] On the day of his funeral, many people took their own lives at his tomb.*

(B. Kim 1998 [1145] cited by Conte & Kim 2016: 23)

This record clearly highlights that the Goguryeo people wished to follow their king in death but could not continue to sanction such rituals according to the new mentality. Sanction and intimidation imply means of ostentatiously displaying wealth and power to reinforce their influence toward the rest of society. Yet, if we apply an emic perspective, these sanctions would not always be intended to *force* their population into participating in such rituals, but rather just to control it on a broader scale (as a perfectionism tool). Thus, where can we set the boundaries between acting willingly and being forced to participate? While this strategy might have been very risky and unsustainable due to possible resistance from commoners, the *Samguksagi* documents, call this unsustainability of such practices into serious doubt, for it shows that there may also have been incentives for retainers to participate in sacrifice rituals (Conte & Kim 2016).

It is precisely the attitude, as well as the methodological analysis of this study that allow me to extrapolate from it in a cross-cultural framework

⁹ “*History of the Three Kingdoms*” is a historical record of the Three Kingdoms of Korea: Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla (Lee 1992).

to retainer sacrifice in the ancient Near East. Among the previous scholars whose views have been presented and discussed in this chapter, the hypotheses of Conte & Kim can best be applied to the ancient Near East because their evidence, although distant in space and time, may have theoretical and practical similarities (in the treatment of the bodies and architecture of the tomb chambers for the deceased). Still, the exact role that of, for example, the Mesopotamian elite, is not as clear as that of the Silla elite due to the lack of evidence; to cite some examples of retainer sacrifice, it is not clear whether the central body/bodies involved in the Royal Cemetery of Ur or in the monumental tombs at Umm el-Marra can be categorized as elite, local leaders, or high-ranking religious sphere members.

Their model, as opposed to that of previous scholars, did not pay much consideration to the symbolism behind the act, but rather sought the political and economic frameworks that this ritual created as well as the perception of the body as products within a religious market that need not necessarily be opposed to ecological, ideological, or symbolic interpretations.

Discussion

It is important to bear in mind that we may never be able to uncover the *emic* aspects of human sacrifice among ancient Near Eastern societies, nor to fully comprehend such phenomena on a worldwide scale or rationalize an act that may be unacknowledged or seem socially “unreasonable” within our specific Western mentality. Before beginning my argumentation, I must add that by classifying such phenomena as socially unreasonable, I am unintentionally placing into consideration my

very own point of view limited by the culture in which I grew up. Human sacrifice has generally been mistakenly tied to “uncivilized” societies and scholarly studies that confront such practices carry out an inherent automatic negative perception, but the evidence not only in the ancient Near East but also more broadly (e.g., Shang China, ancient Korea, or the Pacific in prehistoric time), suggests otherwise: it is tied to stratified and hierarchical societies (Leeson 2014; Conte & Kim 2016; Watts et al. 2016). Furthermore, while human sacrifice is conceived as a violent act on the basis of our moral precepts nowadays, the truth is that this act reflects an institutional violence that targeted the others,¹⁰ perhaps as a form of the controversial social Darwinism (Bannister 1989). Such an act may have helped to unite society by setting the boundaries on what was *in* (morally acceptable) and *out* (personified by people from other societies who, in neighboring contexts, were chosen as the victims of sacrifice).¹¹

It is not alien that traditional and dogmatic approaches to the study of human sacrifice have been a limiting factor when attempting to broadly comprehend such a complex ritual. Scholars have chiefly centered their attention on one factor that, according to them, was crucial for understanding the ritual, but they failed by reducing this activity to a one-sided practice instead of a multifaceted behavior warranting many different perspectives that need not be considered mutually exclusive (Conte & Kim 2016). Furthermore, most of the scholars not only did not incorporate the archeological evidence but based their investigations purely on theory (e.g., Freud), leaving no means by which to test whether their hypotheses are valid or not.

¹⁰ This is also called *structural violence* (Galtung 1969).

¹¹ This last theory, however, is hard to prove for the ANE case.

As human sacrificial practices in the ANE were not directly mentioned in textual or iconographical sources, the analysis of such ritual practices shall be carried out based almost entirely on archeological evidence and cross-cultural studies. It is mandatory, therefore, to seek similarities and differences among such events practiced elsewhere in the ancient world. I am aware that anthropological sciences have, to varying degrees, tended toward skepticism if not outright disbelief of the possibility of making sweeping comparisons (Willerslev 2013: 141) such as the one suggested here between Eastern Asian and Western Asian human sacrificial practices. These are so utterly separated by time and place that they cannot “really” be connected. However, the kind of cross-cultural approach that I envisage here, and has been carried out before (e.g., Schwartz 2012), is one that works from the principle of what André Iteanu (2009: 335) follows Dumont in calling a “*comparative displacement*.” However, according to the Dumontian framework, cross-cultural comparisons are indeed possible, but to be valid they must be restricted to elements of “*analogous magnitude*” (Iteanu 2009: 336), which means that comparisons must be between elements that have a similar amount of valorized weight within the societies in question.

As mentioned above, for the purposes of this book, I am considering human sacrifice to be only that which involves the actual ritual killing and subsequent offering of one or more individuals, or in the words of Recht,¹² sacrifice is “*the symbolic or actual giving of an animal or human being, or parts thereof, to one or several supernatural entities, in such a manner that that animal or human being dies as a result*” (Recht 2011: 71). It is an arduous but necessary task to establish definitions here with which to work from now on. On a

¹² In the terms defined throughout this book.

broader spectrum, I comprehend human sacrifice as the ultimate and highly ramified form of perceived contact between human beings and deities that is translated into the deliberate and ritualized killing of an individual or a group of people in order to please or placate supernatural beings in the first place, and in order to maintain order and avoid chaos in the second place.

By using the term *ultimate*, I explicitly mean the greatest possible exhibition of devotion, the final offering within a progression of various rituals that played a role in preventing the outbreak of internecine conflicts or chaos. These rituals were made during a lifetime (from being a tool of the hierarchical society by serving their leaders, to dying in order to continue this duty in the afterlife). Offering the life of a human being is the utmost demonstration of their devotion to their inner cosmovision of the world, and that is shown on the archeological as well as on the textual evidence. If human sacrifice were seen as a nondestructive ritual that does not differentiate itself from other religious performances, one would expect to find it archeologically more often than one actually does, or at least for it to involve a greater number of people—as with the Shang sacrifice in ancient China (Campbell 2012, 2014) or human sacrifice among ancient Americans (Iva & Donnan 1993). Indeed, ancient Near Eastern societies perceived such phenomena (except retainer sacrifice) as the response due to an uncertain event.

The direct implication of deities, however, has rarely been studied directly. If sacrifice must entail an offering to supernatural beings, then some varieties of sacrifice such as retainer,¹³ construction, and, potentially,

¹³ A major study by Testart (2004) proposed that retainer sacrifice is based on bonds of personal loyalty established between leaders and dependents, as opposed to loyalty to an institution.

symbolic/dramatic sacrifice (although not proven with human participants—discussed in further chapters) would not qualify.¹⁴ A way to elude this problem would be to define sacrifice as “*a slaying done with the direct intent of affecting the suprahuman realm of immaterial entities*” (Tatlock 2006), albeit with the further addition: it must imply the killing of the offering. For example, the offering of vegetal and liquid substances to supernatural entities can be considered sacrifice for some scholars (McClymond 2008), but for the purposes of this book, unanimated offerings will not be considered a sacrifice.

I do not agree with Girard’s (2005) argument in favor of human sacrifice as a controlled and accepted violence that the state provides to its society in order to keep criminality away; nor with the reasoning of human sacrifice as a mere economic tool within this *religious* market (Conte & Kim 2016). Rather, I suggest understanding the functionality of human sacrifice in the ancient Near East (and in general) as a *do ut des* (I may give, in order that you may give in return), comprehending the offering (the taking of a human life) as the highest donation humanity can make in order to gain deities’ favor or approval. This last hypothesis, however, does not apply to the preliminary subgroup of retainer sacrifice, as the intention were following their ruler into the afterlife.

Additionally, I suggest an understanding of human sacrifice as the greatest exhibition of *piety* and *devoutness*, and I argue that the offering

¹⁴ According to Schwartz (2017: 226), “*construction or foundation sacrifice intends to ensure the safety and prosperity of a structure by the killing and interment of living beings in its foundations Symbolic or dramatic sacrifice might include such practices as the ritual slaughter of animals at the conclusion of political treaties in the ancient Near East, where the violent treatment of the victim was intended to replicate the fate of those who would violate the treaty.*”

should be understood within specific social and political-religious parameters to establish and protect the system itself: based on the public ostentatious display of power, it is a ritual practice destined to last over time. But what do these two terms refer to exactly? Firstly, piety is usually defined as *the quality or state of being pious: such as fidelity to natural obligations dutifulness in religion* (Merriam-Webster, n.d), while devoutness means being *committed to specific duties or exercises* (Merriam-Webster, n.d). Accordingly, piety and devoutness not only connote part of the Judeo-Christian cosmivision, but rather denote a more widespread use of both terms that go beyond religious or cultural frontiers and states a strong commitment and fidelity toward an entity. For this reason, I strongly suggest employing both piety and devoutness to describe human sacrifice among ancient Near Eastern societies, understanding it as affection toward or veneration of the system, represented in an individual person, either supranatural or mundane, independent of distinctions between aristocracy and deities, given that they were all held to be a part of the same intangible biosphere. Human sacrifice could thus be considered a long-term ideological investment that not only helps to maintain the system (as recent studies have shown (Leeson et al. 2016)) but also to serve as restorative and regenerative practice that strengthens community identity, a *blood-bond* (Jay 1992) among the society members of one community.

By pointing out this devotion of the sacrificial people involved in such acts, I do not intend to rationalize what is indeed an act out of “irrational” behavior, nor to infer an inflexible thought of giving away his/her life willingly. Being willingly disposed to fulfill such duty does not imply they could or would not have regretted their decision. This is evidenced by the way that the killing was performed (Baadsgaard et al. 2011) for instance at Ur, where we can see that the death was due to the use

of a sharpened weapon, which is not as peaceful as one can envision (Woolley 1934). Sacrificial offerings and sacrificers participated and believed in the system that they actively sustained with their lives (Conte & Kim 2016).

It is worth wondering why these offerings were required to be killed. In many cases, killing is believed to release the life force from the victim and thus facilitate its transmission to the deities (Schwartz 2012, 2017). Because eating in the human world often requires killing, it follows that the nourishment of divine entities requires the death of living organisms. Psychological approaches (based on limited Western value systems) have largely focused on violence and the act of killing. Violence goes unquestionably with sacrifice and must be understood as a tool for performing these religious acts successfully. However, religious violence being a complex and multidimensional phenomenon (involving, among other things, political, sociological, and psychological processes and having been a natural strategy of humans) does not imply that humans deploy violence indiscriminately even when sacrificing.

Scholars with different backgrounds such as sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, have published quite a few empirical studies of religious violence based on firsthand empirical data (e.g., Jurgensmeyer 2003; Stern 2004; Oliver & Steinberg 2005; Bloom 2005). These numerous studies of religious violence have shown that violence is one of the most natural and biological responses of humankind in certain situations and removes the implication that the act of killing as a potential consequence of violence might in some way be alien to humankind. Neuroscientist Douglas Fields suggests our brains have evolved to monitor for danger and spark aggression in response to any perceived danger as a defense mechanism. He argues that:

Human beings kill anything. Slaughter is a defining behavior of our species. We kill all other creatures, and we kill our own . . . Violence exists in the animal world, of course, but on a far different scale. Carnivores kill for food; we kill our family members, our children, our parents, our spouses, our brothers and sisters, our cousins and in-laws. We kill strangers. We kill people who are different from us, in appearance, beliefs, race, and social status. We kill ourselves in suicide. We kill for advantage and for revenge, we kill for entertainment . . . We kill friends, rivals, coworkers, and classmates. Children kill children, in school and on the playground. Grandparents, parents, fathers, mothers—all kill and all of them are the targets of killing . . . (R. Douglas Fields 2016: 286)

I cite these studies in order to eradicate the common connotation that the ritualized killing of a human being is a primitive behavior. Psychological studies (Buss, 2006; Fields, 2016) have pointed out that no human being is free of turning into a serial killer by pushing the *right buttons* and by specific events that unleash such behavior. Irrational behavior is only determined by the circumstances in which the human mind has developed, and in consequence, if such an act were conceived as irrational by them, it would not have been performed. At the opposite pole, Burkert believes people were born evil, that they were born to kill (Burkert 1983). While the ability to do violence exists in all people, the need to hurt, to kill, needs to be activated by outside circumstances (Fields 2016). Society acts like an inhibitor of that ability, keeping reflexive instincts under control. If an outside event endangers survival, mitigating measures according to the harm must be done *extremis malis extrema remedia* in order to avert evil, to avoid eternal chaos, and restore the balance. Therefore, drastic times may

act as the main factor in disrupting our internalized morals. Events of such nature can include contexts of natural disaster, conquering, and warfare or the death of a king or ruler.

Furthermore, explanations for human sacrifice constitute an immense subject that can only be briefly summarized here. Among the classical theories explained in this chapter are those maintaining that sacrifice is intended as a *gift* to supernatural entities (Tylor 1874; van Baal 1976) in the expectation of a favor to be received from the deities in return (*do ut des*, “I give, in order that you may give”) or as an avenue of *communication* and *communion* with divine entities (Hubert & Mauss 1964; Smith 1894). The sacrificial gift is often believed to feed or sustain the gods who depend on humans for their sustenance. Such a gift usually entails an act of abnegation in which the sacrificer deprives themselves of a valuable possession (Schwartz 2017). In Mesopotamian cosmology for instance, humanity was created to supply food for the deities who were thus freed from the laborious task of food production.

As opposed to what Frazer or Westermarck argued (Frazer 1993; Westermarck 1917), the failure of crops, or any other mundane matter should not be considered a valuable hypothesis for ancient Near Eastern societies. The reason for my argument comes from the fact that if we analyze the evidence coming from the archeological context, there is a considerable relationship between stratified strategies and evidence of human sacrifice (Watts et al. 2016). This leads to the thinking that ancient Near Eastern societies that practiced such rites would have had plenty of other strategies to palliate the possible lack of crops as the archeological record has shown (e.g., colonization of new territories, the introduction of changes in cultivation, etc.). It would not be feasible to perform such *sacred* acts for only such a *mundane* reason (Usieto Cabrera 2020).

Another perspective focused on the violent aspect of sacrifice is offered by Girard (1977), who maintained that sacrifice functioned to channel the violent energies of the human community into an animal or human victim. In this scenario, the victim embodies the “others,” people from outside their community, an “appropriate” target that must nonetheless be marginal enough to avoid the enactment of revenge. Also focusing on the violent aspect of sacrifice, Burkert (1983) proposed that humans developed the practice as a way to ritualize and thus decriminalize the killing of their fellow creatures on the hunt.

Political theorists have long argued that effective political authority in class-stratified societies requires legitimizing mechanisms to protect and preserve the system (Coulanges 1877), an idea which evolutionary scholars have recently endorsed (Cronk 1994; Flannery & Marcus 2012) naming such theory the “*social control hypothesis*” (Watts et al. 2016). This theory argues that all people are *immoral* from the time they are born and must be controlled by laws, rules, and regulations in order to keep society safe. According to this hypothesis, human sacrifice legitimizes class-based power distinctions by combining displays of ultimate authority (institutionalized killing) with supernatural justifications that sanctify authority as divinely ordained (Carrasco 1999; Turner & Turner 1999; Girard et al. 1987).

Population pressure and conflict for land and resources have been correlated with human sacrifice in other regions of the world as well (Cohen 1975) strengthening its correlation with overpopulation (Schwartz 1991). Hitherto, when dealing with the motivation behind human sacrifice in the ancient Near East, the evidence coming from Mesopotamia, in particular the Royal Cemetery of Ur, has correlated the evidence with particular local meanings and the role of human sacrifice in creating and recreating

relationships between the living and the dead (Porter 2013), further indicating its parallel with the formation of early states as various studies have shown before (Ingham 1984; Trigger 2003).

Furthermore, a broader motivation was proposed by Watts et al. (2016) endorsing the social control hypothesis (Carrasco 1999) and using a comparative model of several societies from the Pacific to argue that human sacrifice was practiced helping sustain and promote highly hierarchical and stratified societies. Thereupon, Watts et al. (2016) proposed that the Social Control Hypothesis is able to explain these phenomena. They argue that *“human sacrifice legitimizes political authority and social class systems, functioning to stabilize such social stratification”* (Watts et al. 2016). In other words, human sacrifices could be considered a way for leaders to expand their power and influence while instilling fear into their *subjects*; human sacrifice helped maintain social stratification in the high-functioning societies of the 3rd millennium Near East. A cross-cultural framework is needed for this case. Studies looking at large-scale human sacrificial rituals from other archeological cultures have suggested that in early state societies, sacrificial rituals involving human victims often intensified during times of political instability and transitions. Their control over the lives and deaths of the victims caused fear that turned into fearful submission. In Yinxi (殷墟), epigraphic evidence implies that most sacrificial activities occurred during the earlier phases of rule when the ruling group was trying to establish its authority at what would become the new capital (Cheung et al. 2017).

In alignment to this, Yoffee (2005) argues that large public ceremonies hosted by rulers played an important part in the formation of

early city states.¹⁵ While such public ceremonies were ostensibly held for the sake of the public, leaders of early states hosted public ceremonies in order to legitimize their rule and naturalize a new political reality in which the accumulation of wealth and social inequality became the new norm.

But is it scientifically productive pointing out a single reason for such a complex and heterogeneous practice? Given the amount of evidence coming from the Near East at least since the early Neolithic period, there is a valid argument for the assertion that sacrifice, in a broader spectrum, is a social activity within a community that not only reinforces social bonds (Durkheim 1968; Burkert 1983) but also acts as a direct consequence of a specific dramatic event. Human sacrifice may have worked as a public display, a form of ceremonial act that justified the accumulation of wealth and inequality while expanding political authority. Likewise, the organization of sacrificial rites across different cultures and religions has undoubtedly been influenced by a number of factors. Economic considerations, for example, certainly have had some impact on early societies in the selection of the victim and the timing of the sacrifice, in the determination of whether the victim is consumed or totally destroyed, and whether the sacrifice is an individual or a collective group. The importance of such factors is an aspect of sacrifice that deserves more investigation.

The literature has also taught us that the underlying incentive to carry out such an act of power, display, and socio-religious symbolism is complex and heterogeneous at its core (Bremmer 2007). The reason behind human sacrifice according to Harner (1977) was simply cannibalism. He argued that it was a solution to an insufficiency of proteins and fat in a society with limited resources. Feeding the gods has also been the main

¹⁵ This hypothesis can also be applied to the material I am working on.

function of sacrifice for many scholars as we have seen (Freud 1951; Durkheim 1968). However, such statements tend not to incorporate other social constraints that might be crucial.

All things considered, human sacrifice cannot be limited to just one definition as I will explain later in this book. It is not a phenomenon that can be reduced to natural terms; it is fundamentally a socio-political and religious act that has been of profound significance to individuals and social groups throughout history, a symbolic act that established a relationship between humans and the sacred order, and a political act that helped to unite and bond societies.

The numerous tensions that surface in this survey of the theoretical literature are a stark reminder of the challenges and opportunities present in the cross-cultural study of human sacrifice through the subsequent exploration of concepts like violence, and, although not representing the entire interdisciplinary corpus, in the most relevant authors and theories selected for this book.

Based on the evidence, human sacrifice is predominantly a precisely targeted and meaningful form of violence (Harman 2000) instigated by hierarchies in stratified societies. However, this term (sacrifice) and other subsequent terms that come with it (concepts of bodies through the treatment of their corpses) within the context of ancient Near Eastern cultures cannot be confined by any narrow definition, arbitrarily imposed in support of some modern notion of what it “should” be. Indeed, the ancient concept appears to defy any modern definition. The most that can be said when a given ritual apparently involves the termination of human life singly or in groups, is that it can be understood only in its cultural and historical framework, and unless the evidence is compelling, the interpretation should not extend beyond that context.

In keeping with this, not all individuals involved were treated equally, which allows us to distinguish between at least two different groups: sacrificer (with a proper burial represented archeologically) and *human offerings/attendants* (with no proper burial, often being grave goods themselves as we will see in later chapters). In order to derive concepts from the archeological evidence of these dead bodies, could we distinguish any specific treatment from indirect textual sources on ritual killing? We first need to establish our foundations on the archeological treatment of the bodies of human sacrificial activities in later chapters.

CHAPTER II

DIRECT & INDIRECT EVIDENCE OF RITUAL KILLING

"Efficient motive for mortuary sacrifice may be affectionate fancy or symbolism, a horror of association of death leading the survivors to get rid of anything that suggests the dreadful thought or desire to abandon the dead man's property."

(Tylor 1871: 483-484)

The lack of interdisciplinary communication when dealing with this topic among ancient Near Eastern scholars has translated into diverse parallel interpretations of the different lines of positive and negative evidence about ancient sacrifice and violent behavior. As a matter of fact, hitherto no systematic or unified approaches exists for the study of sacrifice in the ANE realm, a situation that differs somewhat from other areas where different frameworks have been put forth to explain this ritual practice within a coherent sociocultural scheme.

In contrast to what Green argued (1976: 27), any objective study that intends to analyze human sacrifice in the ancient Near East, must begin with archeology and not with the study of cylinder seals. The reason why relies on the potential direct archeological evidence that suggests a direct relationship with human sacrificial rituals, as opposed to the ambiguous

and indirect evidence coming from the iconography or even textual sources. Having an ambiguous or vague evidence may lead to unclear conclusions that may predominantly rely on the scholar's background.

The focus of this chapter is on the potential features that help us identify human sacrificial behavior using archeological vestiges. This will be followed by the less than abundant textual and iconographical sources that might depict human sacrificial ritual practices and continues with the advantages of bioarcheological studies on human skeletal sacrificial remains.

In the past decades, there has been a considerable amount of art and archeological and bioarcheological work that focus on violence in the ancient world, either regarding specific aspects of violence (e.g., warfare) or a particular society or region. Taking that the literature is quite extensive into consideration, this book does not present any kind of synthesis or exhaustive review, mainly due to the unsuitable frameworks that cannot be applied in the ANE (e.g., assertions about injuries and trauma based on specific individuals, special patterns in buildings, interpretations based on foreign and dispersed cosmology and religious beliefs, etc.). Violence related to human sacrificial ritual practices in the ANE has never been the center of attention, nor the main subject of a single study beyond mere descriptive information. In keeping with the potential features related to human sacrifice (violence, injuries, and trauma identifications derived from bioarcheological analysis) I present a list of potential evidence coming from archeological, iconographical, and textual sources.

Evidence of Human Sacrifice in textual sources?

There is particularly little written evidence of human sacrifice, and, as usual, the few examples are controversial and dubious. The following list of textual evidence was started by Green (1975) and implemented by new proposals that, might, indeed, be written evidence for the ritual killing of human beings. The evidence is composed by:

1. *The Death of Gilgamesh* and J26 Ur III tablet.
2. Slaves and prisoners of war.
3. *Āšipūtu* rituals and medical tablets.
4. The "šar pūhi" ritual.

Beginning with *The Death of Gilgamesh*, it narrates Gilgamesh's descent in the netherworld. Kramer (1944) argued for interpreting the Epic as a reflection of the ritual killing of a human being and, hence, the existence of such ritual practice in written sources. Although earlier dates have been proposed (George 1999), most of the *Gilgamesh* tablets date back to the 7th century BCE, primarily from the temple library of the god Nabu and the palace library of Assyrian king Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, but other examples come from much earlier in the 21st century BCE.

According to legend, Gilgamesh was the son of the goddess Ninsun, the wife of the god Lugalbanda, an earlier Sumerian king. Elsewhere, he is described as the son, not of Lugalbanda, but of an "unknown mortal whom the Sumerian List calls 'the High Priest of Kullab,' a district in the city of Uruk."¹⁶ In this fashion, he was born part god—through his mother—and part man—through the unnamed High Priest. He was famous in Mesopotamia for building a wall around Uruk, emblematic of war and the need for the

¹⁶ Heidel, Alexander. *The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels*. The University of Chicago Press. 1946. Page 4.

city's defense. Gilgamesh appears to have been, whether in actuality or only in legend, a warlord or a king chosen for his martial qualities. In some later compositions Gilgamesh became king of the underworld, judge of the Anunna (ki), ruler of the earth, and judge over all (Heidel: 1946: 5).

Whether or not this mythological figure really existed, the contents of this epic have been proposed to resemble the contents in the royal tombs of Ur and might be an indicator in favor of interpreting the narration as evidence of human sacrifice resembling retainer sacrifice and, indeed, as an indicator of traditional customs for special occasions and mortuary Sumerian rites. However, we must bear in mind that the archeological evidence is stronger than the textual evidence in this case, due to the mythologically ambiguous nature of *Gilgamesh*. The epic narrates Gilgamesh's descendant to the netherworld accompanied by all of his offerings and grave gods, which are:

1. *His beloved wife, [his] be[loved] son,*
2. *The . . . wife, [his] be[loved] concubine,*
3. *His musician, [his beloved] entertainer,*
4. *[His] beloved chief valet, [his beloved].*
5. *[His] be[loved] palace attendants.*
6. *His beloved possessions,*
7. *. . . whosoever lies with him in that place.*

(As translated in ETCSL 1.8.1.3; Kramer 1944: 10)

The Death of Gilgamesh and the accompaniment to the Netherworld of his court members might be an indicator that there were burial ceremonies in which the deceased personage was accompanied by a retinue of his immediate family, servants, and other followers, as this book shall prove with archeological evidence. This fragment opens the door to the possibility of having a fuller knowledge of such ritual practice and their use as a

powerful tool. A similar text that might narrate the offering of a human being in funerary matters (the funeral of Ninenise, the wife of Urtarsirsira) comes from the Ur III period and was found at Girsu/Tell Telloh (Cohen 2005; Recht 2011):

I.

1. 1 woman's garment (of the wool from) barley-eating sheep,
 2. 1 long nig²-lam²-garment,
 3. 1 boxwood bed with thin legs,
 4. 1 chair, being open(-work?), of boxwood,
 5. 1 sledge (of threshing-sledge type) of boxwood, II.
1. 1 team female kunga²-equids,
 2. 1 bronze hand-mirror,
 3. 1 . . . of bronze,
 4. 1 Akkadian copper luxury(?) container,
 5. 1 copper . . . luxury(?) item,
 6. 1 small bun²-di-bowl,

III.

1. (these things) are the ensi 's.
2. 1 slave girl,
3. 1 pot perfumed oil,
4. 1 pot ghee,
5. 1 . . . -garment,
6. 1 . . . -garment,
7. 1 bar-dul⁵-garment that ties at the neck, 8. 1 bar-dul⁵-garment, a spreading thing.

IV.

1. 1 linen ...
2. 1 woman's woolen headband,

3. 1 gold choker,
4. 6 carnelian um-dur-necklaces,
5. 2 gold um-dur-necklaces,
6. 2 gold zi-um-necklaces,

V.

1. 1 gold container that "goes at the hand,"
2. 4 "purified silver" containers that "go at the hand,"
3. 1 large bun2-di-bowl,
4. 1 perfume-jar of algames-stone . . .

VI.

1. 1 (wooden) board and small wood scales,
2. 1 pair of combs of boxwood,
3. 10 boxwood spindles,
4. 1 bowl of boxwood
5. 1 footstool of oak
6. 3 ban2 ground . . .

VII.

1. 2 ul un-ground . . .
2. 1 bucket for . . .
3. (these things) are Baragnamtara's.

VIII.

1. When Urtarsirsira,
2. the son (of Lugalanda),
- 3-5. was burying his wife Ninenise,
6. Lugalanda,
7. the ensi₂
8. of Lagash
9. allotted (these objects) to him. 5(th year).

(Cohen 2005: 33/165-166, J26 and Recht 2011)

However, this text has inherent translation problems. As Cohen argues, the word that he translated as “to bury” (*tum₂*) can be also translated as “to carry” or “to marry” (Cohen 2005). This interchangeability could therefore be used to suggest the similarity of rituals of death and marriage, but in the context of human sacrifice, this difference is crucial. The “*slave girl's*” fate mentioned here would have been different: she would either have served as mistress in life (hypothesis preferred by Cohen (2005: 96) or would have been put in the grave with her mistress. In any case, if this list is a record of offerings for the tomb of his wife, would it not be odd or abnormal to include an *item* that was meant for a purpose other than to serve as grave goods?

In addition to both of these fragments that present a record of items that are meant to accompany the personage in which human beings might also be listed, the differences in the possible quantities of human lives *taken* are noteworthy: one slave girl versus a whole group of court members. It is also crucial to note that both texts should be conceived as different in nature: while *The Death of Gilgamesh* corresponds to a narrative or literary text, the Ur III tablet corresponds to an economic text whose only purpose is to inform and name a list of objects with no hidden or vague intentions. Accepting the hypothesis that both of these tablets narrate human sacrifice for high court members, was there any type of protocol or procedure by which to carry them out? Was the quantity of individuals already institutionalized? If so, were they assigned prior to death or postmortem? While only a few ambiguous fragments are insufficient to serve as the basis for this hypothesis, in combination with the archeological evidence they might prove helpful by providing a likely textual correspondence.

Other potential evidence concerns the sacrifice of a scapegoat by different methods such as: the killing of slaves and prisoners of war for being *sinner*s against their gods, as part of exorcisms and medical treatments, and as a royal prerogative.¹⁷ Green (1975) mentioned Zimmern's exorcism text of the killing of a slave along with a calf or sheep (Zimmern 1903: 599): *āšipūtu* (Stadhouders & Steinert 2018). Concerning the killing of individuals (possibly slaves), this type of healing ritual can be supported by further evidence: in his work, Stoll (1993: 15, 96) mentions a text that requires the killing of an individual in order to avoid foreshadow to the suffering of the patient's family from the *spawn of Šulpaea* (STT 89: 174-186): the patient shall be buried alive or be burned (see also Heeßel 2000: 329; Stadhouders & Steinert 2018). No further evidence supports human sacrifice within exorcisms or as medical treatments due to demonic possessions across time and space in the ANE in either textual, material, or archeological contexts, which decreases its hypothetical value.

Alternative evidence for human sacrifice in ancient Near Eastern written sources has to do with the *šar pūhi* ritual or the ritual of the substitute king (Bottero 2001; Lambert 1957-1958; Pongratz-Leisten 2007; Siddall 2020). In certain circumstances a human substitute (*pūhu*) might substitute the king due to fatal omens and possibly undergo death to avert evil consequences to the state. He, along with the queen, occupied the throne for a period of up to 100 days where they would undertake a series of apotropaic rites (*namburbu*) that aimed to excise the evil portent from the body of the king and attach them to the substitute.

¹⁷ In her studies, Pongratz-Leisten (2007) also mentions a controversy about the sacrifice of a scapegoat embodied by women from different societies throughout the ANE.

This ritual was designed as a safeguard for the king, whom the gods had marked out for death by an omen (often an eclipse in heaven). In order to protect him, Mesopotamian scholars developed a plan to excise the evil portent from the king by replacing him on the throne with a substitute who acted as a scapegoat by taking on the curse and appeasing the gods with his sacrifice. This substitute king ritual does not have any presence in the archeological record. However, as Siddall (2020) proposes, the royal persona was the most important human in the land, and might be represented in Ur, Jericho, or any other cemetery with retainer sacrifices.

But what can be asserted concerning the origins of the substitute? If additional Hittite and classical sources are consulted, a criminal or a prisoner of war were respectively chosen as the substitute (Kümmel 1967), but this is not clear within Mesopotamian sources. Early references to this practice call the substitute *saklu*, often translated as “common” or “idiot,” while later developments require noble origins for the substitute; a tablet from Ashurbanipal’s reign states that the person should be from the royal family (Lambert 1957-1958) (although this is not the only interpretation). In this way, as Siddall argues:

The substitute king ritual was not designed to fool the gods, but to appease their capricious interests by sacrificing a human of suitable status who could take on the king’s curse. (Siddall 2020: 470)

Moreover, this ritual did not develop distantly from the mindset and legitimacy of substitution that were a recurrent tool in the ANE. As seen in many different examples (Bottero 2001), the practice of transferring the illness of a curse from one person to an object or animal in Mesopotamian religion shows that the substitute king ritual was not a fabricated scheme but a part of a genuine tradition. Within these parameters, human sacrifice

practiced in the ANE can also act as another form of this *doctrine of substitution* (Bottero 2001: 147), transferring the death onto a single individual rather than an entire group (society as a whole or group members such as musicians, court members, etc.).

Siddall (2020) also recently implied that this substitution ritual was indeed an institutionalized form of human sacrifice and thus shall be considered relevant even though he accepted that this ritual was sporadically practiced across the ANE during the 2nd and 1st millennia BC. But, how accurate can this assertion be without any resemblance in the archeological record? If this practice were indeed institutionalized like retainer sacrifice, would it not have left any archeological traces beyond textual sources and vague scattered fragments? Nonetheless, in particular given the limited knowledge about Sumerian and Akkadian burial customs both archeologically and bioanthropologically, it seems plausible that this ritual would have taken place.

Moreover, evidence suggesting the slaughter of prisoners of war and slaves became more abundant toward the Assyrian period where these socio-political behaviors attained a longstanding psychological security, demonizing the others and taking authority over their gods. Reliefs depicting prisoners of war kneeling, being killed with a dagger or spear, or whose severed heads are being presented to kings such as Assur-Nasir-Apli II (883-859 B.C.): Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.); Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.) among others are remarkable for these purposes. Another significant proof concerns Sennacherib's murder in which he offers a human sacrifice on the altar upon which his father had been struck down (Green 1975; de Vaux 1964; Bardi 1932).

A reasonable explanation for the lack of sources dealing with the slaughter of prisoners of war and slaves is given by Green (1975), arguing:

As such common episodes involving the ritual slaughter of "sinners" who are in direct rebellion against Ashur would follow the regular development of affairs in Assyrian daily life, we should not expect any special reference to be made by the Assyrian scribes unless, of course, as in the last example, the entire context is abnormal, and a record would be necessary.

(Green 1975: 88)

The presence and identification of human sacrificial practices among ancient Near Eastern societies has not been free of controversy given the ambiguous record. Direct written evidence of ritual killing in the ancient Near East is not abundant (e.g., *The Death of Gilgamesh*). Although there is some indirect evidence which derives from the early periods, most of the references are from the later material (e.g., Assyrian period). Attempts to ascertain the real meaning or purpose of textual sources can be frustrating because one or another school of reasoning would interpret the evidence "to support some long-held theory, and efforts at re-interpretation which do not conform to these previously-held positions are often viewed with suspicion" (Green 1975: 85).

Written sources on human sacrifice in the ANE, though rare, are essential when combined with archeological data. They refer to the slaying of individuals upon the passing of a personage; the sacrifice of slaves, prisoners of war, or criminals; the killing of a scapegoat in various forms; and the substitution of the king.¹⁸ None of the texts analyzed here are free of doubt, as it is clear that the interpretation could go in either direction

¹⁸ In his contribution, Green (1975) also relates the slaughter of individuals at the annual New Year's festival in Babylon to mythological stories about the imprisonment of Marduk (Green 1975: 91-94).

according to the researcher's background and aims. Although with unclear results, these written fragments shall demonstrate that such ritual practice might eventually and gradually have become known, recognized, practiced, and even institutionalized in the ANE, and it ought then to support the conclusion that such practices existed, along with the archeological and empirical evidence for the same.

The Netherworld in textual sources

If I aim to give a reasonable analysis of human sacrifice in the ANE, then it is mandatory to mention briefly how ancient Near Eastern societies may have understood the function of the afterlife: the netherworld. When a person died in the ancient Near East they had to be ritually separated from the living. After the body was buried, their soul (*eṭemmu*) was believed to separate from the body and travel to the netherworld or the "land of no return," where it became an inhabitant. The exact term that refers to the netherworld remains controversial (Kramer 1967), for it might be the Sumerian logogram URU.GAL (*great city*), but this logogram could also refer to the grave itself (Potts 1997: 220-221; Katz 2003: 28). At the same time, the netherworld was believed to be ruled by Ereškigal as well as Nergal and Ninazu, but other deities (*Annunaki*) resided there with less power and lesser duties (Potts 1997: 226).¹⁹

Through the study of textual sources, it is possible to analyze the role that residents played in the netherworld, where for instance, elite and dead

¹⁹ Ancient Near Eastern societies may have believed that the graves themselves were a further entryway into the realm of the dead. However, concerning the actual location and perception of the underworld it is worth mentioning that it has changed through time as beliefs changed and developed throughout Mesopotamia (Katz 2003: 236).

kings as well as deities are mentioned (e.g., Urnamma, Gilgamesh, and Etana) as residents (Katz 2003: 121, 124-126). The afterlife presumably played a big role in the ancient Near Eastern psyche by creating a non-tangible hierarchical environment that mirrored earthly society (McMaster 1988: 70-71; Bottero 2001: 107-108), but how would this perception fit in with the human individual turned into a human offering? Or, in other words, what was the role of human offerings in the netherworld, beyond the accompaniment of rulers into the afterlife? Did their spirits have an important place in the netherworld? If an individual or individuals participated in sacrificial activity, were they expected to continue their lives in the afterlife in one way or another? As a superterrestrial matter that goes beyond comprehension, there is one question with no rational answer: why would someone be willingly involved in sacrificial rituals if he would not be joining the gods or serving their ruler in the afterlife?

Human Sacrifice on Cylinder Seals

As Ménant (1883) argues about the first inventory of seals that might depict the ritual killing of human beings, the most slippery and controversial discipline from which to study human sacrificial ritual practices in the ANE is glyptic. The conclusions drawn from the material originating from different contexts of society (e.g., art like glyptic) should only be applied to these limited areas and not broadly as Recht (2011) pointed out, and any further insight shall be difficult to achieve. With that said, seals or stamps usually represent various scenes that can help enlighten certain practices or behaviors that otherwise would be challenging to acknowledge based solely on the archeological record (Green 1975).

The seals or stamps that have been argued to depict any type of ritual killing of a human being starts with the representation of violence. Visual and textual sources argue that depictions of violence are a practical form of iconoclasm in which the enemy divinities are shown to be unable to protect their followers. Accordingly, De Backer sees these practices as a "form of ritual exercise of power" in which Mesopotamian rulers assumed the identity and role of the deities while pretending to be their guardian.

Iconographic material that depicts sacrifice, and more specifically human sacrifice, is not abundant, and it is consequently based on this low amount of available material that some scholars have agreed that one reasonable explanation might be that the process of killing and cutting animals, or furthermore, the process of killing an individual itself, is not considered symbolically important in these contexts (Marinatos 1988 cited by Recht 2011: 211). This hypothesis is predominantly supported by this low number of direct depictions of killing on iconographic material (animal sacrifice can be found for instance at H24, H52, H53, I15, and possibly H26-H28) (Taylor 2006; Ward 1889; Werr 1992) when compared to the frequency of other important aspects such as the bringing of the animal, imbibing the meat, or any other highly symbolic and ritualistic aspect related to killing such as banquets and feasting. Presentation scenes are often displayed in seals and have been widely studied (van Buren 1951; Haussperger 1991; Marinatos 1988; Recht 2011).

The analysis of any cylinder seal that might portray the scene of a killing of a human being, mostly from Old-Babylonian periods (Frankfort 1948), and the subsequent interpretation of the same as a ritual killing or human sacrificial practice shall not be considered the norm. The nearly absolute absence of direct depiction of human sacrifice in textual sources and iconographic material brings an important subjective perception to the

table. With very little known archeologically about such ritual practices involving individuals, it is important to highlight that there is neither no evidence whatsoever depicting the potential horror and violence of such a practice, but, when killing is in fact represented (animal sacrifice), it belongs to a most extensive event (such as feasting/celebration or any other symbolic event) with no particular emphasis on the act itself (Recht 2011). If the horror or awareness of animal killing lacked enough symbolism to be depicted artistically, could human sacrifice be perceived as either a highly symbolic ritual too sacred or divine or too explicit and exceptional to be depicted? Would bringing or presenting an individual to be sacrificed to the gods not be considered symbolic? These hypotheses would certainly shed light on the absence of such ritual practices in textual or iconographic sources as well as the lack of an institutionalized pattern to proceed, but it would require further analysis.

As has been proposed (Recht 2011), the lack of a specific type of material evidence does not exclude or even question the existence of the practice itself. Therefore, in addition to the near absence of human sacrifice iconography, it should be noted that there are no depictions of sacrifice in connection with burials and considering that human sacrifice is predominantly recognized archeologically in burial, royal, or sacred contexts, it should be no surprise that depictions of human sacrifice are difficult to recognize.

In Green's (1975) contribution, he pays special attention to a commonly repeated scene on Babylonian seals proposed by Ménant (1883) which usually involves a male figure raising one arm (as if to strike or attack) as well as holding a weapon in the other hand to crush a human figure, usually depicted on one knee and lifting an arm in defense (examples can be seen on H83, H105, H108, H135, and H172-H181 cited by

Green 1975) (Appendix 6, Table VI, Figures 1, 2, 3, & 4)). The scene usually takes place within religious settings, involving deities and, at times, pointing to ritual, such as a figure with a “sprinkler” and bucket (H105 and H177).

Another scene commonly repeated on late 3rd millennium BC seals according to Green has to do with the depiction of a seated god in front of a sacred²⁰ (Green 1975: 34) tree, approached by three standing figures, the first two of which appear to be prisoners according to Green’s arguments (1975). The first figure is chained, the second has the left arm extended backwards with the right hand in the grip of the last and tallest figure, perhaps the guard, who nudges the man forward against the back of his head. Delaporte goes even further and suggests that these scenes might be a depiction of human sacrifice destined to the vegetation god (1923).

Scenes featuring a standing figure that holds a scepter in both hands and a divine being stationed on top of a ziggurat holding a scimitar in his right hand and a scepter in the left are also common. Behind the figure is an altar with vegetable offerings upon it, and two standing figures clothed in *leopard skin* (Green 1975) with their right hands raised in a salute, which is striking once again. Between them is a kneeling human figure. A member of the standing pair holds back the head of the kneeling figure while the other pulls aside his beard as though to expose his throat for a more accurate blow. Seemingly, Bell interprets this scene as not the actual killing of a human being as sacrifice, but rather, the preparation of the ritual itself.

Be that as it may, the low number of scholars and recent studies focused on potential depictions of the ritual killing of human beings in glyptic in addition to the lack of a proper methodological approach worsen

²⁰ Arguments in favor of determining this tree as sacred are unclear.

the odds of a correct interpretation. The controversy of whether or not this is direct evidence of human sacrifice has hinged on the identity of the figure striking the “victim” (a god, a priest, or a king). However, as Green points out, the scenes should be seen as a whole, not disregarding the rest of the context. Other elements such as the priest with the sprinkler and the setting, often in front of a deity or possible temple structure, suggest a religious content in these scenes, which supports this latter hypothesis. However, several questions arise from the previous theory: if these scenes do depict the ritual killing of a human being, then it would certainly be a well-known bureaucratic religious practice comparable to other rituals, and it ought then to be highly depicted, for instance, in texts (such as sacrificing animals or the Royal Substitution among others). Although explicit scenes of the ritual killing of an animal is rare, comparisons with such have been proposed at some level even though they do not ultimately reveal any similarity. Recht (2011) ultimately cedes: “*a figure like the striking one does not occur with animals, nor do animals appear in corresponding defensive and submissive postures*” (Recht 2011: 220). Nevertheless, could this factor be determinant in dismissing this hypothesis? Certainly, as Recht successfully argues (2011), the ritual human beings depicted were in a different practice or ritual with no animal equivalent and are thus shown in a different manner.

In conclusion, if it is valid to interpret these scenes as sacrifice, would it open the door to new hypotheses like specific deities whose duties were to receive the sacrificed individuals’ bodies? (If they were indeed deities, which one? Perhaps Nergal (Black & Green 1992) or Shamash (Frankfort 1948)? Or, based on which exact element?) Moreover, if the figure was indeed a king or a priest then it would imply that they were the actual sacrificers, which, according to Green’s proposition, would have taken

place in temples or surrounding any sacred landmark. There is a high degree of uncertainty about their significance, and, thus, other potential theories shall be proposed (such as the execution of enemies within war periods, the punishment of sinners, or any other mythological meaning). What are the boundaries for interpreting these scenes as actual depictions of ritual killing and not as scenes of a different mythological or symbolic type?

An Archeological Perspective on Concepts of Ritual Violence

The tension between Hobbesian and Rousseauian scholars' discussions about whether individuals are inherently violent or not emerged from the "*killer ape*" hypothesis of the 1950s and 1960s (Ardrey 1961), the studies by Napoleon Chagnon with the Yanomamö (Chagnon 1968),²¹ and ethological studies that posit nature as inherently violent and attempt to discover the adaptive benefits of inflicting harm on others. While these studies do not represent the full scope of studies on violence, they exemplify the slipperiness of defining, analyzing, and identifying violence, especially in archeology.

Although with limitations on the notion and perception of such concepts in the ancient mind, violence has a long history of research in the ancient world from disciplines like anthropology, history, and more recently, archeology. As SooHoo (2019) recently brought up, a high percentage of studies on specific aspects of violence depend highly on the cultural logic and constraints imposed by modern scholars onto the phenomenon; in other words, while human sacrificial practices are

²¹ Recent studies have severely questioned these controversial studies (Ferguson 1995; Wade 2014).

described using concepts like “violence” or “barbarism” by some Near Eastern scholars, the society that carried out these acts may have perceived just the opposite, and our native categories may therefore influence our results. The concepts of violence and violent acts may differ from one society to another, and the people who practiced it would have been influenced by that time’s own idiosyncrasy and perception. Arendt, who wrote about the banality of evil after reporting on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, argued about each culture’s strategies to rationalize and normalize violence (Arendt 2006). Consequently, what counts as violence often depends on cultural assumptions about personhood and agency. It is thus mandatory to avoid falling into Western civilization’s theological myths of rationality and progress when discussing violence (Campbell 2014).

How the evidence is approached and interpreted highlights the tension between the emic and etic perspectives (SooHoo 2019: 18). In the last decades there has been increasing interest in the study of violence, particularly from a bioarcheological perspective. But what is violence and how can we recognize it archeologically? Is there any form of recognizing violence in spatial contexts without skeletal remains? Indeed, violence is challenging to pin down and remains a slippery and stimulating concept. In the anthropological literature, no consensus has been reached regarding the definition of violence, however, at the bare minimum, violence must involve some type of harm, which may or may not be caused by physical force (Martin & Harrod 2014; SooHoo 2019). Stanko (2001) also includes other types of harm beyond bodily harm: psychological or emotional harm shall be included in the definition of violence. Violence, in trans-cultural or trans-historical studies, does not need to be centered on the intentional infliction of bodily harm. Coercion through the confiscation of land or

livelihood, imprisonment, hostage-taking, ostracization, excommunication, stripping of rank or honors, public humiliation, etc. can all be seen as forms of non-physical violence.

For the purposes and constraints of this book in keeping with the available evidence, the concept of violence and such derived concepts as *violent acts* can be defined as a culturally mediated form of physical, psychological, or emotional harm, at any level, which implies direct person-to-person interaction. Without going too deep, while physical violence is considered the *de facto* basic characteristic, it is just the tip of the iceberg (Martin & Harrod 2014) with major deleterious subgroups coming from ordinary and ritualized violence, lethal and non-lethal violence, and symbolic, structural, institutionalized, and systemic violence. The first is often employed to punish or to intimidate. It can be used to define, establish, or strengthen bonds within and among social groups. Ritualized violence, on the other hand, operates with a distinct rationale because it is a strategic version of an act undertaken in normal circumstances, requiring an external, intangible explanation for the act itself.

Violence raises question of legitimacy and a study of it must address the social contexts in which it is sanctioned and accepted. Arendt, for instance, distinguishes between violence and power. Violence appears when power is in danger (Arendt 1970), when a loss of power occurs. Although violence addresses the sense of helplessness that comes with powerlessness, it ultimately is self-defeating, resulting in a disruption of the bonds of society necessary for the legitimate exercise of power. In keeping with this, it has been implied that violence flourishes when there is an ideology that legitimates the dehumanization and demonization of the “*other*” (SooHoo 2019; Stillwell & Baumeister 1997), but evidence suggests

a different scenario: there is not enough bioanthropological data for implying as much in the ANE.

As of yet, there has not been a comprehensive investigation of violence in human sacrificial ritual practices in the ANE. Previous studies have either dealt with the evidence in a descriptive approach or have neglected human sacrifice in the ANE when dealing with studies on violence within specific regions. The focus has been on visual or textual evidence or violence such as warfare and depictions of the same, usually within a single period and using symbolic and psychological analyses (Goetze 1963; Hamblin 2006; Muhlestein 2011; Nadali 2014; Nougayrol 1963; Oded 1992; Stillman & Tallis 1984; Yadin 1963) rather than in archeological contexts under a generic perspective that analyzes the evidence as a whole.

Violence has always accompanied humanity, as many case studies have shown (Kilby & Ray 2014; Martin et al. 2012; Ray 2011; Smith 2014); it is not solely related to one specific culture, tradition, or society, but is found in a wide variety of forms and expressions. Aligned with this, the use of violence is not reserved exclusively for hierarchical societies. Contrary to traditional, dogmatic studies (Amilburu 2003; Reano 2009; Zanotti 2018), violence (physical or symbolic) toward other individuals—either community members or foreigners—is present in egalitarian societies and cannot be discarded in the early periods of the ANE, as the use of violence to maintain social order is highly attested by the evidence (Campbell 2014; Clastres 1994; Kornienko 2015). Individuals whose bodies became vessels by which to carry their sins (excluding retainer sacrifices) acted in the name of the transgressors themselves: as Campbell (2013) points out citing Douglas (1966) “*dangerous, monstrous, witches or sorcerers—aggressors against the social order, against whom society is forced to take action.*” With this we can see the interrelationship of violence and the cultural order in general

(whether egalitarian or hierarchical) in local constitutions of being and trans-local politics of identity and worth. Moreover, if genocide is the limit case of violence against the Other (or the insider made Other), conceived of as those unworthy of life, then it is also true that similar (if less extreme) cultural or “civilizational” logics of relative worth shape practices of social violence as widely varied as human sacrifice, slavery, colonial domination, and the justification of bombing foreign civilians as “collateral damage” (Chomsky 2004).

There is probably no more epitomizing act of sacred violence than human sacrifice. As it has been implied for neighboring societies (Schele 1984), the zenith of the ceremony was sometimes anticipated by prolonged torture and humiliation. Consequently, sacrifice in the ANE is a special form of lethal violence that implies and requires the direct destruction of the individual, and would not require the torture of the individual (non-lethal violence). Indeed, the evidence does not suggest that human sacrifice, at least for the ANE, should be categorized as a violent act, as this has traditionally been conceived as a negative and chaotic practice. Human sacrifice does not fit into a “normalized and institutionalized” violence as seen in other neighboring societies where such practice was deeply assimilated within their society and depicted in many art forms, but rather suggests an act of sacred, meaningful, specific, multi-layered, and cohesive violence sanctioned by the elite *ad tempus*. The evidence also suggests the rejection of a *long durée* ritual activity within the *economies of violence-based* societies (Campbell 2013: 8-9) in contrast to other societies in the ancient world.

Finally, any study of violence among ancient societies must not only analyze trauma but other information about individual's contexts and the culture that may reveal patterns of violence. For instance, in addition to fractures, it is important to consider pathological conditions (Mann & Hunt 2005). Markers of bone disease may include a wide range of things that can be related to genetics, age, activity, or health. In the following subchapters, I wish to contribute a set of osteotaphonomic correlates of funerary vs. sacrificial practices, derived from religious-philosophical references adapted to the region. They are designed to assist in the recognition and interpretation of different posthumous body treatments and the potential funerary vs. non-funerary conduct they may represent.

Death and Perimortem Traumas: A Bioanthropological analysis

The necessity to move from descriptive narratives to interpretations that give the material a broader significance has been the main subject of numerous recent studies that argue for the use of a social theoretical framework in archeology and bioarcheology if it has been proven correct in other contexts (Martin et al. 2010; Martin & Harrod 2014; Smith 2009, 2014). But which hypothetical and theoretical framework do we need to follow in order to identify lethal violence among the vestiges of ancient societies? Is it possible to associate a place (tangible material) with violent behaviors in the field? Archeological approaches that incorporate bioarcheological information provide a source of information from which to clarify how violence may have been *perceived* and how this perception has changed over time. Archeology thus has the potential to bridge the gap between the intangible and tangible material with scientific data, and, with the help of

bioarcheology, it may improve scientific knowledge as recent studies have shown (Lovell 1997; Mann & Hunt 2005; Martin & Harrod 2014).

Another key thing to remember is that the scientific and archeological methodological analysis of violence among ancient societies often relies on the two research strategies of the biocultural approach (Martin & Harrod 2014: 119):

1. The analysis of data from skeletal remains.
2. The analysis of contextual data coming from mortuary and funerary features, material culture, environment, and other aspects of the culture of the remains.

As recently highlighted (Larry 2011; Martin & Harrod 2014; Whitehead 2004) preserved skeletonized bodies and body parts can be analyzed in an interdisciplinary fashion: as biological specimens, as artifacts, and as symbols (Martin & Harrod 2014). The body not only gives us an ideal opportunity to comprehend human beings as biological specimens, but dead bodies are precisely those that bring the most scientific knowledge to the table as the physical transference or embodiment of cultural and various socio-cosmogonic beliefs encoded in the lethal trauma that led to death. Therefore, following the first research strategy, in-depth analyses of human skeletal remains that might be interpreted as sacrificed individuals are crucial for *creating* patterns: it is fundamental, for instance, to see any macroscopic fractures or trauma on the bones, especially if they come from royal/aristocratic burial contexts, in order to avoid misinterpretations.

Studies focused on the ancient Near East have implemented this evidence in the last decades, but, especially due to the most recent discoveries (Schwartz 2017), they unfortunately do not make use of the majority of the evidence. New studies have shown that sacrificed individuals clearly received special perimortem treatment and died violently in most of the studied cases (Baadsgaard et al. 2011). A clear preliminary pattern in the data I am analyzing in this book shows irregular positioning of the sacrificed bodies, either arranged around one main individual (e.g., Schwartz 2012; Hassett et al. 2019; Woolley 1934) or contexts with incomplete skeletons either anatomically disconnected or in most cases mixed with animal bones (e.g., Koldewey 1887; Nigro 1998).

Scholars from the ancient world considers irregular positioning to be evidence that indicates a *dishonorable* treatment of the deceased. In primary contexts and especially in mass graves with multiple burials and elaborate regalia, the presence of sacrificial victims has been assumed on the grounds of a lack of positioning and based on contextual evidence. “Age, nutritional profiles, and the negative evidence of associated funerary objects have been proposed specifically as clues of unnatural death (Cucina & Tiesler 2006; Welsh 1988) in addition to the entangled primary interments of various individuals arranged around one centrally placed skeleton.”

A central aspect to bear in mind concerns the social status of the sacrificed individuals: whether they belonged to the court and, thus, received some type of special treatment visible on their skeletal remains, or, on the contrary, whether they belonged to a lower social status like slaves or captives and, thus, features signatures related to some type of activity (Barrett & Blakey 2011; Okumura 2011; Shuler 2011; Martin & Harrod 2014). In the course of the analysis of the material from each site, the potential

signatures observable on human skeletal remains and matched to captivity and slavery will be taken into consideration. As seen in Appendix 4 and Martin and Harrod (2014), following an adaptation from Martin (2008, et al. 2010), present a hypothesized link between violent actions associated with captives and slaves (on the left), and what the likely osteological “signature” and burial context might be. Although basing their hypothesis on contexts separated in time and space, it is noteworthy to use their work as a reference for the ANE evidence, as slavery and the activities and related violent treatment of captives leave permanent traces on the skeletal remains from which these living conditions can be inferred (Pérez Ventura 2012). In this area of study, there might be other telltale signs among violence-related injuries to help distinguish elite from peasants (those with injuries consistent with sacrifice vs. those with seemingly natural deaths more likely to be the elites) and locals from nonlocals (as recent studies have shown when applying isotope analysis) (Cheung et al. 2017).

Presumably, some of the most direct evidence of ritual death is provided by bioanthropological indications of *perimortem* violence (this term has been problematic and controversial as *it admits the investigator’s inability to discriminate modifications that have occurred right before and after death* (Haglund & Sorg 2002: 8 Cucina & Tiesler 2006: 21)). Perimortem violence concerning human sacrificial practices, represent unhealed impact lesions that range from fractures and stab marks to sharp or blunt force trauma as in the case of the ANE (Baadsgaard et al. 2011; Martin & Harrod 2015).

Physical violence often leaves anomalies on the bones that can be studied, however, there are a number of other reference materials that might be useful for interpreting traumatic injuries on human skeletal remains (Martin & Harrod 2014 citing Reichs 1988; Bass 2005; Byers 2010;

White et al. 2012). At its most basic level, mechanical loads that affect hard connective bones, may fall into one of five categories—compression, tension, shear, torsion, and bending (Martin & Harrod 2014: 120). Depending on the direction and force of the impact, as well as the morphology of the bone itself, different types of fractures may result (Manoli 1984; Hannon 2006) (Appendix 3, Table III, Figure 1). Violence-related trauma connotes injuries caused by interpersonal conflicts, by human sacrifice, or by other ritual practices. It is important to determine the potential nature of the trauma, otherwise it would lead to misinterpretations.

While there are a number of different types of fractures that affect the postcranial bones, fractures to the skull, both the cranium and mandible, are important because they are a good indicator of violence (Lovell 1997). Looking at the cranial vault first, Thomas (1984) describes four basic types of fractures: linear, depressed, comminuted, and penetrating. The difference between these fractures depends on several categories (energy of the impact, the location, and the shape of the weapon). Both linear fractures and comminuted fractures of the cranium are caused by impact with wider objects, whereas depressed and penetrating fractures are the result of narrow objects (Galloway 1999). In addition to cranial vault fractures, there are also fractures specific to the face (e.g., Le Fort, maxillary, zygomatic, and orbital fractures of the mandible and lower jaw among others.)

How can traumas that are unrelated to violence be distinguished from violence-related injuries? Are all traumas the consequence of violence or can there be accidental injuries? One method to avoid over-ascribing trauma to violence is to focus on cranial depression fractures on the head that are likely to be from blunt force trauma as in the case of the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Baadsgaard et al. 2011), although these depressions can

sometimes be the result of pathological conditions (Spencer 2014). Potential traumatic injuries must be evaluated in context, and researchers should be open to multiple interpretations for what the change in the bone may reflect.

Assessing fractures of the postcranial skeleton in combination with cranial trauma can provide support for or refute the likelihood that the injury was related to violence (Martin & Harrod citing Larsen 1997) (Appendix 5, Table V, Figures 1 & 2). Each specific case shines a light on specific interpretations depending on the nature of the context (time and space): repeated violence on human skeletal remains can be helpful in these cases. However, interpretation of the mechanism of injury remains limited because it is impossible to establish the nature of the trauma, especially when most case studies from the ANE either lack any skeletal remains or are too eroded or badly preserved to carry out bioanthropological or forensic studies.

The second research strategy deals with the contextualization of these skeletal remains. They are to be placed within their context through spatial analysis, mortuary and funerary features on their tomb/chamber/burial building, landscape, environmental analysis, etc. The goal here is to distinguish deviant burials or abnormal contexts that are severely or slightly different from the norm in order to recognize sacrificial patterns in the field.

Hitherto, studies on sacrifice and sacrificial body treatments from the archeological record have relied on indirect indications such as multiple interments in funerary and nonfunerary contexts, irregular placement of skeletal remains, sex, and age profiles, as well as nutritional status (Cucina & Tiesler 2006).

Until the last decades, funerary contexts deviant from the norm in the ANE have not received enough scholarly attention to study unnatural

ritual death (Bocquentin & Bar-Yosef 2004); this is mainly due to the lack or irregular preservation of the archeological data in contrast to other contexts in the ancient world (Murphy 2008). In some cases, the data comes from the unreliable and questionable methodologies of 19th and 20th century excavations, featuring poor preservation of skeletal materials, especially in the Near East where the climate is hot and humid. This puts important restrictions on any endeavor to evaluate anthropogenic marks, for traces of acts reminiscent of sacrificial behaviors are unlikely to remain. This has led to a general lack of the kind of evidence that accounts for sacrificial or otherwise violent traces.

Human skeletal remains that serve as the basis of my study do not represent the ideal material to analyze because they have typically been lost, are poorly preserved, or are too eroded to carry out any kind of bioarcheological analysis. Moreover, when interpreting trauma, it is usually an arduous task to give a proper and valid diagnosis, especially when relying on case-studies that employ differing treatment based on differing cultural approaches (Cucina & Tiesler 2006; Merbs 1983). The misdiagnosis of trauma can lead to misinterpreting an epigenetic trait or a taphonomy reaction as an injured trauma.

Without hesitation, it is difficult to interpret archeological material. Observations of dry bone samples pose several constraints. First, determining fracture frequency rates can be hindered by fragmentary skeletal remains or poor preservation.

Even with good preservation, cases of perimortem fracture may pass undetected since their appearance can mimic postmortem damage. Conversely, well-remodeled fractures of long bones (including stress fractures) can pass undetected during macroscopic and x-ray investigation (Kemp 2016). Well-remodeled lesions can make the determination of

fracture type difficult. Determining the age of the individual when the trauma occurred is also problematic, if not impossible in most instances. Notwithstanding these limitations, the potential for the study of traumatic lesions in human skeletal remains is considerable (Grauber & Roberts 1996 citing Roberts 1988).

Nevertheless, perimortem treatments do not complete the analysis on their own. Unlike perimortem violence, postmortem body processing is only indirectly related to the mode of death, but it provides an extraordinary source for understanding how both types of death are articulated in the processing of corpses related to their socio-cultural constraints: such as how the body was manipulated after death, whether the corpses were buried where they were killed or were moved to be buried, and if the clothing or other ritual decorations of the corpses were manipulated after the fact.

Here, the focus has not been on whether the violence comes from intragroup or intergroup motivations, as this would not be possible to determine due to the low preservation and quantity of the material. A list of basic potential studies on injuries and traumas have been presented here to aid the identification of signals from which human sacrificial activities might be inferred. The selected signatures seen on bones reveal the nuanced manner in which researchers integrate a diverse set of data generated from a number of techniques beginning with trauma on bones and continuing on to contextual data and details of the location and the burial context. In most cases, this book does not rely directly on the bones of ancient excavations because their preservation does not allow us to carry out further analyses but rather relies on the documentation produced from past excavations and on more recent excavations that rely on new methodological research and approaches or simply on the actual context insofar as it is better preserved.

However, this might change within the next few years because new approaches are on the way to aid in fieldwork.

Participants: A Preliminary Analysis

Many scholars use a variety of interchangeable terms such as victims, sufferers, or offerings when referring to sacrificed individuals (to cite some major studies: Baadsgaard et al. 2011; Beers 1992; Bremmer 2007; Carter 2003; Day 1989; Del Olmo Lete 1993; Detienne & Vernant 1989; Lange & Römheld 2007; Freud 1950; Schwartz (all)). The evidence here suggests generally avoiding the term victims or sufferers for human sacrificial rituals given their inherent negative connotations and their erasure from other relevant implications. Definitions of sacrificed individuals do not often imply intentionality and motivation, which is why I have opted to use two distinctive terms when referring to individuals involved in sacrificial practices: *human offerings* for those individuals sacrificed for a greater superhuman purpose involving deities directly, and *attendants* when referring to elite/royal funerary contexts involving individuals around a main body, often belonging to an elite member; overall a descriptive term shall be used as well: *sacrificed individuals*.

Considering the nature of sacrificed individuals, a certain selectivity can generally be observed. It is often understood that the most efficient offering will be as similar as possible to the sacrificer so as to serve as a substitute for that person (Hubert & Mauss 1964). In such cases, a human is the closest substitute one can provide, but a human might not always be used due to moral strictures, expense, or difficulty. Animal offerings are usually domesticated, ostensibly because a domesticated animal is closely associated with the human community and can serve as a stand-in for a

human, in contrast with animals hunted in the wild (Schwartz 2017 citing Beattie 1980).

In addition, if sacrifice can be seen as a social performance that helps to strengthen the bonds of community members, then the perception of individuals shall follow the same path: individuals had to fulfill their *duty*, sacrificed individuals became vessels by which to carry the immoralities and offenses of their community members, expecting an invisible and superterrestrial reward: “*Do ut des.*” As in other cultural settings that stage human sacrifice, a *kratophonous* (destructive) or *cathartic* element is introduced during the metamorphosis of the sacrificed individuals who lose their personal human qualities and step out of their flesh during their transformation into impersonators of the sacred (Hubert & Mauss 1964; Walker 1995).

The terms human offerings and attendants inherently highlight the sense of belonging to a community, but what about the potential sacrificed individuals that do not belong to the same community (war captives or slaves taken from other communities)? How about individuals that may not agree to join this potential socio-cosmogonic pact? When studying the representation of the other (the external individual that embodies the enemy, representing opposite morals) visual and textual studies have proven effective in the ANE (Nadali 2014; Reed 2007; SooHoo 2019). To cite relevant examples, Reed (2007) has suggested based on Assyrian reliefs that these representations reflect a conflicted perception of the enemy since they include ambiguous scenes that highlight their humanity and the ruler's anxiety to fulfill his role as the *pious shepherd* of all people—including these enemies. Again, based on Assyrian evidence, Nadali (2014) has shown the obscurity of analyzing structured warfare violence in visual

representations, highlighting what can be perceived from what is shown and what is not shown in visual representations of violence.

The killing of harmful or potentially harmful members of the community, serves as a corrective measure to re-establish harmony and, at the same time, secure the continuity of the collective well-being. Evil forces exerted by certain individuals are eliminated by ending their lives, by removing them from society, and sometimes by physically destroying their bodies by mutilation or fire. Are the bodies of sacrificed individuals conceived as eroded or polluted? A similar notion is expressed during the so-called “disjunction sacrifices” despite their impersonal quality (Beattie 1980). Disjunction rituals are not motivated by contact and union with spiritual powers but instead to seek to destroy or at least remove them from society.

One goal of studying human sacrificial ritual practices at a broad scale has been to determine the social status of the sacrificed individuals (Davies 1983). Scholars have conventionally assumed that sacrificed individuals were slaves, but recent archeological data coming from the ANE suggests a different scenario. As genetic studies, musculoskeletal studies, or any other bioanthropological analyses have been very difficult to carry out using the ANE evidence due to the poor conservation and preservation of these bones, it has been necessary to rely on other data such as burial goods. Burial goods associated with sacrificed individuals vary markedly; while some are found with no burial goods, bronze weapons such as axes have been interred with some sacrificed individuals, leading researchers to suggest that they may have once worked as servants, handmaidens, warriors, and guards (Baadsgaard et al. 2011). In some cases, sacrificed individuals were interred wearing fine ornaments, including gold, silver, earrings and rings, and glass and jade necklaces (items that

would not be out of place among grave goods interred with elites). On the basis of the luxurious items associated with sacrificed individuals, many archeologists hypothesized that some of the sacrificed may have high-ranking or ordinary members of the court.

Although archeological inference suggests that some sacrificed individuals may have held a relatively high status, such inferences are based mainly on indirect evidence such as the quality of the context and burial goods. The archeological data upon which these preliminary conclusions rely come from different sites: The Royal Cemetery of Ur (Woolley 1934), Umm el-Marra, Jericho and Başur Höyük.²²

For a better understanding of non-elite roles in elite mortuary rituals, it is necessary to consider how different heterogeneous-natured offerings were provided or supplied and what commoners could gain from participating in the rituals (SooHoo 2019). Ethnohistorical studies suggest that funerals were very costly events hosted by the elite (Hayden 2014). Indeed, it was not unheard of for wealthy and elite families to impoverish themselves in order to carry out proper funeral ceremonies for highly respected family members. Could archeological evidence suggest that ANE elite funerals also were immensely costly events? Some of the basic costs would have included the construction of a large tomb, and the procurement of burial goods including funerary garments, silver, gold, and gilt-bronze ornaments, and extravagant feasting foods. For funerals that included retainer sacrifice, elite families would have had to furnish an additional and exorbitant cost: the cost of human sacrifice. Attempting to investigate the cost of carrying out retainer sacrifice unavoidably involves contemplating the value of human lives. And of course, the value of a human life

²² See further on these on Chapter IV.

necessarily concerns culturally relative conceptions of life, death, and the afterlife as well as many other unquantifiable aspects of social relations, such as emotional bonds between family members and community members (Conte & Kim 2016).

As for the economical side of the ritual, the labor power of sacrificed individuals would be a critical factor in estimating the cost of human sacrifice. The sacrifice of individuals would have meant a substantial loss of wealth to elite members. Particularly in the case that the sacrificed individuals were of a young age and, presumably of high social standing, the loss of an individual or group member may have spelled a larger economic loss.

Individuals that were sacrificed belonged to ages at which they were still economically productive. The majority of sacrificed retainers discovered in elite tombs were adolescents and young adults under the age of 35 (Hassett et al. 2019; Schwartz 2012). The loss of economically valuable society members—either captives, enemies from neighboring societies or society members themselves—may have led to conflicts between elite groups and the rest of the society as their mentality gradually developed. As we see changes in the material record as a consequence of changes in the mentality of ancient societies, it would not be abnormal to hypothesize further changes within their cosmovision and their perception of reality. Given this hypothesis, under unstable and moving circumstances, sacrificing individuals would not have been sustainable for long. The evidence suggests it is most likely that conflicts were avoided through various forms of compensation provided by elite hosts of funerary ceremonies for family members of sacrificed individuals, especially in the case of retainer sacrificed individuals. Compensation for the loss of labor power in forms of dowries and bride-prices is ethnographically well

reported in many societies (e.g., Goody 1973; Rao 1993; Schlegel & Eloul 1988). Although the idea of material compensation for death may seem crude to some, the custom of providing *blood money* to compensate for murder or causing injuries is ethnohistorically well attested (Dunbar et al. 1995), and material compensation for the families of victims of accidents, disasters, and acts of terror are commonly provided by commercial firms and governments even today.

However, assuming that such compensation existed would be to presume that some people should have refused to participate in such rituals or, in other words, that potential rejections and disagreements may have, indeed, existed. It is still unclear whether commoners participated in the rituals forcibly in order to avoid potential sanctions or if they participated actively to contribute to social integration and the confirmation of community identities. Trying to comprehend the motivations or the psychological mindset behind such phenomena (Schwartz 2017) is an arduous task and practically impossible from a modern perspective.

The possibility that individuals willingly participated in sacrificial rituals is worth comparing with modern suicide attackers as Conte & Kim fruitfully suggest (2016). This is an enriching perspective that shines a light on the potential inner motivation to participate in such ritual acts. Setting aside obvious differences, the actions of suicide attackers are often regarded as “irrational” and are at least motivated by deep ideological convictions. However, there are also “rational” and perhaps even self-serving motivations for suicide attackers to volunteer their lives. Attackers may sacrifice their lives to signal their loyalty and affiliation with religious organizations (Berman & Laitin 2008). Conte & Kim (2016) also cite Perry and Hasisi (2015) who focus on other potential intrinsic motivations that may include personal gain and social rewards including honor and fame or

status upgrades in their communities—both for themselves and for their families.

Compensation for sacrificed retainers could have taken many forms, and of course, it would not have been the sole motivation for participating as sacrificial individuals. Ideological conceptions must have played a major role in encouraging participation. This scenario, of course, assumes that sacrificed retainers were regarded as *free citizens* and *independent* earners. However, the evidence cannot rule out the possibility that retainers would have been perceived as the property of the elite households. In this case, members of the households of the deceased elites who would have inherited the retainers would have implicitly borne the cost of the rituals. Regardless, their ritual deaths would have resulted in very high costs that would have exacerbated the potential costs of hosting elite funeral ceremonies.

In any case, the theoretical approaches that have been proposed here shall be tested throughout this book to discover whether the evidence implies any other hidden features about these individuals (e.g., motivation), whether perimortem and postmortem treatment can enlighten subsequent interpretations, or even whether the location and assemblage of ritual costumes could shed light on whether the individuals were venerated or violated before/during/or after the ritual practice.

Conception of Human Beings as Offerings

To understand the role of offerings and the role of human beings and their (metaphorical and physical) bodies in human sacrificial practices, it is crucial to first briefly examine ancient Near Eastern cosmology from different interrelated perspectives. In the first, as expressed in textual

sources such as the Myth of Atrahasis (Beaulieu 2004: 330), the cosmology presents humans as providers of food and drink for the gods because humanity replaced the lesser gods in this role after the latter revolted against the god Enlil (Bottero 1991). Deities are responsible for the origin of humanity and have control over human life, determining human destiny (Beaulieu 2004). These decisions can be influenced by humans through prayers, offerings, or any other ritual or festivity dedicated to their gods to palliate their rage (Lisman 2013).

In the case of this book, the Mesopotamians for instance, believed that the gods expressed themselves and their will in many ways, and they were constantly on the watch for heterogeneous signs in nature as well as other astronomical portents (Bottero 2001). Whenever an eclipse occurred, which should have resulted in the king's death according to the omen texts, a substitute was temporarily placed on the throne to die in place of the real monarch who was saved thereby.

There is some consensus interpreting this myth that the whole regime of daily offerings (of any nature) in temples is justified as feeding their gods (Burkert 1987; Freud 1950). But were human beings turned into offerings? If so, if human lives served as offerings, could we really talk about anthropophagy in the ANE? Indeed, as opposed to synchronic societies, in the ancient Near East there is no evidence, whatsoever, of cannibalism (Schwartz 1991).

Individuals turned into human offerings can be traced in the analysis of votive offerings at temples where votives were normally gifts offered to the gods by worshippers. Individuals often acted as gifts conferred in anticipation of future divine favors. They could also be offered to propitiate the gods for crimes involving bloodguilt, impiety, or the breach of religious customs. They could be given either voluntarily or in response to demands

by the cult's priesthood that the donor fulfill a religious vow or honor some religious custom (Beaulieu 2004).

The relationship to votive offerings and human sacrificed individuals is not entirely clear, but this could set the basis to the potential understanding of the human sacrificial act as part of their cosmology due to their willingness to give up their most precious belonging (their lives). It can be pointed out that according to ancient Near Eastern religion human beings only existed to serve a purpose: to fulfill the gods' desires. This also included serving in temples, as men, women, and children could be given to temples in order to dedicate themselves as a kind of labor force in the fields belonging to a temple. Based on the preliminary archeological evidence provided by the human skeletal remains mixed with other vegetables, fruit, and animal offerings found in the surrounding areas or even in the temples themselves, these people's duties may not have been expected to end after their death but rather would have continued in the afterlife (van Buren 1952); but this needs to be analyzed in depth. Although many questions remain about this custom, could these people who were turned into votive gifts die to fulfill such a task? If so, were they killed within the sacred spaces or outside and later carried out? Who could be votives and why? This leads to myriad problems in the comprehension of such practices, as the lack of textual evidence makes it nearly impossible to solve this gap. A central question arises here, namely, can the body of one individual be interpreted as a deity or a ruler's belongings or rather should

they be understood as having possessed themselves? Was everyone entitled to their own bodies? If not, why would that happen?²³.

Both of these perspectives suggest both that gods and humans exist in a master-servant relationship and that a certain contractual element is present. Every being that was of this world, except evil beings and demons, might receive offerings because they had some power over human lives, propitious or nefarious, and therefore, humans had to remain on good terms with them (Bealieu 2004; Brisch 2013). Among the main recipients were the celestial gods and the powers of the netherworld or the spirits of the dead (*etemmu*), albeit only in specific moon phases (Cohen 1993). Could this mean that human sacrifice also depended on these conditions? Would such a practice be carried out in specific times of the year as has been proved for other ancient societies (Alva & Donnan 1993; Houston et Al. 2015)?

Finally, kings and rulers during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE at very early states of formation also received various offerings in the ANE.²⁴ On the one hand, this was because the ruler acted as the mediator or "*pontifex*"²⁵ (Beaulieu 2004) between the physical and divine worlds; and on the other hand, he was understood to have been conceived "*from a divine seed, carried in the womb of a goddess, and fed at the breasts of goddesses*" (Beaulieu 2004: 330).

²³ Further studies on concepts surrounding their 'bodies' (metaphysically and physically) will be carried out in the following chapters, as it needs a more in-depth analysis based on each group of archeological evidence.

²⁴ Such divinization of rulers is not only attested at early states of formation but can also be linked to later practices where power has already settled and solidified as shown in 1st millennium BCE Asian contexts (Puett 2002).

²⁵ Such term is normally used in classical periods to refer to the emperor. These are the Latin words for "*bridge*" and the suffix for "*maker*."

The idea that any living human being could be worshipped like a god has indeed been proven in several societies across time and space (Brisch 2013; Campbell 2012; Puett 2002). Although not profoundly explained in this book, *divinity* is a concept that has been understood very differently throughout history. This is not a new point but remains underappreciated all too often when discussing the blurred lines between human and the divinity evidenced in the deification of kings. As a matter of fact, Woolley's words on this remain sufficient:

The king or queen goes to the grave accompanied by the court which attended them in life. It is quite true . . . that all this implies a view of the afterlife which neither the surviving texts nor the evidence of later burial customs would warrant our attributing to the Sumerians; but if the King is at the same time God that difficulty ceases to exist. God does not die, and the death of a god-king is merely a translation to another sphere. He is to continue his life, and presumably with no diminution of status, rather the reverse, and therefore he takes with him his court, his chariots and animals, and the furniture of his palace which he will go on using as heretofore. . . . Apparently, the men and women who crowd the death-pit were not killed in honor of the dead king . . . but were more likely going with master to continue their service. (Woolley 1934: 41-41)²⁶

According to the list of Sumerian kings (copies of which are available from the early 2nd millennium BC as well as later tablets from Ur-III), Mesopotamian kingship descended from heaven, and the ruler was the vicar of the gods on earth, thereby making it impossible for him to reach a god-like status as was the case in neighboring Egypt or China. Despite this

²⁶ However, it is important to highlight the controversy in interpreting the archeological evidence coming from EBA royal tombs as *divine*.

information, additional textual evidence testifies to the interest in achieving immortality by the Mesopotamian leaders as described in tablets narrating the epic but not fully achieved in the stories of Gilgamesh or other mythological stories associated with this subject such as the descent of the goddess Inanna/Ishtar to the netherworld and the myth of Adapa. Life, death, and the search for immortality through the glorification of a subject to divine level, or *apotheosis*, are elements linked not only to Mesopotamian mythological stories but also to other ancient Near Eastern societies, and they can thus be linked directly to the opulent display of authority through retainer sacrifice (having court members to serve them *for all eternity*).

Regarding the actual practice of the divinization of kings at early periods, a period marked by the regionalization of power divided among city-states, we encounter the advent of the first territorial empire (e.g., the Akkadian period). Starting with king Naram-Sin (middle chronology: ca. 2254-2218 BC), we see the first recognizable attempt by a Mesopotamian king to reach divine status by the addition of the determinative for “god” before his name (Postgate 1992: 266-267).

But, taking into consideration that the king was divine, were other high-ranking court members as well? Did they also lavish in the same ceremonies as the king? The struggle of members of the elite to *control the underworld* and obtain a stronger connection with the cosmological order and divine world is evident in the increased complexity of funerary customs and the practice of lavish funerary rituals during the 3rd millennium BC. The importance of lavish funerary rituals in ANE is reinforced not only by the evidence from the Royal Cemetery of Ur but also by written documents such as the famous reform texts of Uru'inimgina, the last ruler of the First Dynasty of the city-state of Lagash (ca. 2400-2350 BC);

these detail the performance of the funerary rituals at this specific Mesopotamian city-state (Vogel 2012: 421).

In particular, during the 3rd millennium BC, there is increasing variability in the archeological data associated with elite funerary practices as exemplified by the funerary remains discovered in EBA and MBA Near Eastern contexts (2900-2350 BC). The importance of connecting royal genealogies to the divine—as is even more evident in the tradition of northern Mesopotamia, the Levant, the Iranian plateau, and eastern Anatolia during the 3rd millennium BC (the Royal Cemetery of Ur, Jericho, Arslantepe or Umm el-Marra)—is shown archeologically (Laneri 2011; Peltenburg 2013; Schwartz 2012). In fact, it is arguably in these contexts that the earliest traces of human sacrifices associated with the disposal of individuals of elevated status have been found (e.g., at Arslantepe and Başur Höyük) in the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC.

Moreover, it is at the western Syrian city-state of Ebla that both archeological and textual evidence clearly document the important connection established between funerary customs and the creation of a cosmological world in which the royal ancestors were connected with the world of the divine by Syro-Mesopotamian communities of the 3rd millennium BC (Cohen 2005; Laneri 2011). At this city-state a large, royal complex (e.g., the Royal Palace G) with an archive of thousands of cuneiform tablets written in a local version of Akkadian was discovered by an Italian team of archeologists (Matthiae 1995). In addition, a large shaft grave was discovered underneath the Western MBA Palace, and the royal funerary customs at Ebla are further clarified by the tablets found in the archive that describe the ritual associated with the coronation of the new royal couple, described as their pilgrimage from the temples dedicated to the local gods Kura and Barama at the mausoleum dedicated to the royal

ancestors in the city of Ebla, (e.g., the mausoleum in Nenash) (Nadali 2016: 52). According to Laneri (2016), following Matthiae (1990a & 1990b), this practice features two women facing each other, one seated and one standing, which can likely be interpreted as a material representation of a form of spiritual connection between the living queen and the ancestral seated queen who is dressed in special attire associated with the divine (Laneri 2016). However, this interpretation needs further analysis.

The cult of the ancestor was carefully carried out after the death of a king. However, considering that the killing of individuals following their death happened before (or at the burial), the question arises whether these two were necessarily connected. Answering this question may provide a picture of the importance of the royal ancestors in continuing the royal genealogy as well as the role of the ritual performance of the pilgrimage to the Nenash mausoleum as part of a religious practice that embedded the royal genealogy of Ebla within the cosmic world (Ristvet 2014: 87-89) and the maintenance and perpetuation of eternal roles not only in earthly life but in the afterlife as well by having killed court members for their companions.

It is clear that there is no direct archeological evidence that justifies the hypothesis of potential divinization of rulers and the elite in general in the ANE or their occasional lavish use of human lives as offerings, but rather as I have previously implied, there are secondary indicators that may suggest as much (e.g., royal funerary landscapes from 3rd and 2nd millennia BC). Were all individuals among society valued equally? Were they chosen, and if so on what grounds, or were they selected at random? Further analysis of these questions is mandatory, and archeological evidence of the treatment of their bodies will be analyzed further on this book.

Concepts & Dichotomy of Human-Animal Bodies

Humans could act as offerings, and so did animals, but are human and animal offerings different in nature? Are there any differences in the treatment of human and animal bodies based on biological constraints? Do their bodies indiscriminately serve different purposes? As has been pointed out several times in this book and following Girard's (1977) studies, scholars concerned with the general study of sacrifice rarely discuss human sacrifice, and those who focus on human sacrifice either isolate it completely from studies of animal sacrifice or have pointed out shared features that cannot be applied universally (e.g., sacrifice as feasting).²⁷ Moreover, most of these studies' subjects either come from theoretical hypotheses or are based on the empirical studies of societies whose existence are too distant in time and space to be compared with the ANE.

Are these offerings also perceived differently by these societies or is it just a Western paradigm limited by socio-cultural constructs? Underlying this distinction between human and animal sacrifice is the presumption that sacrificed individuals are *unsuitable*, whereas animals are eminently sacrificeable (Breniquet 2002). Moreover, animals that are used for sacrificial activities, are typically domesticated, as these most resemble a human offering. To cite, in Hittite tradition dogs (especially puppies) could serve purificatory purposes and operate as channels into the underworld (e.g., G26 at Tell Mozan) (Collins 1992).

As has been pointed out by Recht (2014), the evidence for human sacrifice is often, if not usually, contested, given the discomfort caused to present-day sensibilities. According to Freud, human and animal sacrifice

²⁷ Can human sacrifice be interpreted as part of anthropophagous behavior? Hitherto, the evidence points in the opposite direction (Lambert 1993).

are two completely different things (Freud 1939). For him, animal sacrifice began as a substitution for human sacrifice, and he bases his narrative on a biblical argument as he argues:

The original animal sacrifice was already a substitute for a human sacrifice, for the solemn killing of the father, and when the father substitute regained its human form, the animal substitute could also be retransformed into a human sacrifice.

(Freud 1939: 195)

Looking at the evidence from the ANE, there is clearly an absence of human sacrificial evidence in comparison with analogous societies from the ancient world, and at the same time, evidence of animal sacrifice is wide in range—not only well represented archeologically in the ancient world but in textual sources as well. Animal sacrifice is attested more often than anywhere in the world, having evidence from at least the late 6th millennium BC until Islamic times. Animals that are used for sacrificial activities are also typically domesticated as these resemble sacrificed individuals the most.

The question remains as to whether significant differences exist between human and animal sacrifice apart from the nature of the sacrificed individuals and whether we might understand sacrificial practices in terms of “*continua* of killing” (Klaus & Toyne 2016, p: 315). Examples of such continua include animal and human retainers interred in high-status tombs intended to serve the deceased elite persons in the afterlife (Schwartz 2012: 16; Wygnańska 2017) in Tell Brak and Umm el-Marra, among others. Animals like donkeys, other equids, and camels played a big role in human life, especially in the 3rd millennium BC where early state-level societies were taking form. They were not only valuable for economic reasons but

were also of religious and symbolic importance. Proof of this is given by Weber (Schwartz 2012: 161) who mentions animals in her studies of the *kunga*²⁸ that are largely believed to have been the hybrid offspring of the domestic donkey, *Equus asinus*, and the wild half-ass or hemione, *Equus hemionus*. *Kunga* participated in royal and elite activities (Weber 2012: 169) (being used to pull plows,²⁹ wagons, and chariots) and were used in propaganda as suggested by the synchronous appearance of that animal in administrative texts, the proliferation of equid/vehicle imagery in institutional artifacts (glyptic), and the solidification of kingship as the dominant institution among the major constituencies (Weber 2012: 169).

Equids are frequently found in teams of two or four and occasionally with chariots (Crouwel 1981), and trappings found with them in archeological contexts are rare but not alien and typically connected with human sacrificial activities. A few possible examples come from the Kish Chariot burials, Ur and Susa. A question arises here with respect to the archeological study of this type of evidence: can these *highly esteemed* animals (mostly equids) serve as markers not only for sacred spaces but also for more complex rituals (such as human sacrifice)? If we take a look at the geographical distribution of sites where sacrificed animals were found in association with human sacrificial practices (from the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC), we see that these are just a small percentage of the total number of sites with either one or both practices, hence it is very hard to validate this last hypothesis, which needs further analysis.

While there is thus no tangible connection between equids and human sacrificial activities, new studies have shown the *value* (Foster 2002)

²⁸ BAR.AN in Sumerian.

²⁹ Although there is no direct evidence for plows pulled by *kunga*.

of dogs, equids, and camels³⁰ as markers of sacred spaces in human mortuary contexts (Reese 1995; Recht 2018; Wygnańska 2017).³¹ However, the intentional burial of equids on a broader scale, for instance in connection with humans, is unsurprisingly far less represented in the archeological record of some Near Eastern geographies like the Arabian Peninsula, having a considerable amount of archeological evidence from late 2nd millennium BC (Potts 1990). Here, despite the separation in time from the focus of this book, we have testimonies from later periods of the *balîya* (King 2009), wherein a camel or any other valued animal was slaughtered in order to accompany a person of status in death to ride and to maintain their status in the afterlife. It is also worth mentioning that such practices are usually connected with complete rather than disarticulated skeletal remains as in other ANE contexts (King 2009; Potts 1990; Recht 2018). Although there is little evidence of *balîya* in earlier periods, Potts argues that this ritual was practiced at least from the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC, as in the case of Qaryat al-Faw, in the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula (Potts 1990: 256).

The mutability of human and animal sacrificial beings is likewise apparent in some cases from the 3rd millennium BC, like Ebla, where animal and human skeletal remains were found at the sacred area of Ishtar at MBA Ebla. These contexts suggest the hypothesis that the bodies of human and animal individuals may have been treated indistinctly in sacrifices as we will analyze later on (Matthiae 1990a & b; Nigro 1998; Usieto Cabrera 2020).

³⁰ The sacrifice of camels by Bedouins close to their ancestor's tombs took place up until the mid-20th century AD (Henninger 1981: 191).

³¹ Some scholars differ in their appreciation of these animals, suggesting that equids are even slightly more valuable than camels, and that their presence implies the use of diverse resources (Uerpmann 1999: 116).

There may also be parallels in Shang China where sacrificed war prisoners were interchangeable with sacrificial animals (Campbell 2014) and both appear equally in the archeological record without proper differentiated burials.

Similarities in the treatment of animal and human offerings are attested in ancient China during the 2nd millennium BC. Interpreting such sacrificial contexts with equal treatment of human and animal bones and no further differentiation in either spatial placements or any other signs, evidence with shared similarities can be used to grant better understanding (Willerslev 2013). This “*animal turn*” (Schwartz 2017: 225) in archeology requires the rethinking of animal-human relations (Ritvo 2007), and recent archeological work has critiqued anthropocentrism and highlighted the agency of nonhuman animals (Overton & Hamilakis 2013). Based purely on the high amount of evidence of animal sacrifice (Schwartz 2012) in the archeological record and written testaments of the same and the comparatively low evidence of human sacrifice, there is validity to the hypothesis that human and animal bodies were perceived and used differently as offerings depending on the nature of the slaughter. However, it could also lead to the hypothesis proposed by Girard (1977: 10) on the interchangeable role that animals and humans often played in sacrifice, as the deliberate killing of a living object involves selection of a specific animal or person in order to achieve the proposed goal. However, a thorough exploration of animal agency in cases of sacrifice in the ANE has yet to be attempted.

Identifying Human Sacrificial & Post-sacrificial Behaviors in the Archeological Record

Human sacrifice in the ANE may well be described as a multifaceted, natural, ritual practice of complex funerary traditions, and I would observe that most of the human assemblages recovered from the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC contexts lack clear funerary statuses and therefore lack a clear methodological background. Funerary and mortuary contexts only became increasingly relevant to our study as a whole in the preceding decades given the development of new methods (e.g., spatial archeology).

In order to construct proper concepts related to the bodies of sacrificed individuals, it is compulsory to establish a theoretical foundation on the interment of human bones in funerary and non-funerary contexts³² from the ANE. Here, I have opted for practical reasons to deal with human assemblages of funerary and non-funerary nature according to three broad categories: primary disposals of retainer burials, bones within architectural structures, and incomplete, scattered, and intermingled human assemblages in presumed offertory arrangements (e.g., *miscellaneous human remains*) (Cucina & Tiesler 2006). These are proposed here as attestations of human sacrificial ritual practices in the ANE that have been found thus far.

As we have seen above, disposal spaces, body arrangement, and anthropogenic bone marks provide key information for assigning potential post-sacrificial status and inferring ritual behaviors, at least in primary interments and functionally defined contexts that stem from the closing acts of offertory ceremonies. These are:

1. The examination of ritual objects associated with the burial.
2. The differentiation between premortem and perimortem injuries.

³² That is, human skeletal remains that have appeared in sacred areas like religious buildings that would not conventionally be considered funerary contexts.

On top of problems of identification in the archeological record, there is the issue of scholarly bias (which subjectively influences the interpretation and reports of archeologists). The method of attempting to identify human sacrifice by analogy with animal sacrifice is not free of controversy. For instance, in sepulchral contexts, the burial is usually made for humans, which means that animal bones may be considered intrusive or secondary (in contrast, human bones are generally thought to be the remains of the deceased for whom the interment was made) (Recht 2011). The main reason for the Ur or Başur Höyük sacrifices to be considered as such is the sheer number of individuals found in the same place, the differentiation in grave goods from other inhabitants of the tomb, and their location in the tomb. Once this is identified in one tomb, parallels can be made with those of fewer inhabitants. This is, however, rarely done for other sites, but should be done for a more proper scientific development.

Several suggestions have been made recently for establishing a list of archeological signatures of sacrifice based on the available data (Recht 2019; Schwarz 2012; Tiesler 2003; Usieto Cabrera 2020):

- human skeletal remains in sacred contexts
- patterns in the skeletal remains suggesting a selective process, for example based on age, sex, or bodily deformities
- simultaneous burial of several people, especially with either overall equal status or with one individual apparently treated differently; also signs of “staging” the interments
- evidence of violence (cause of death, binding, other types of submission)
- human skeletal material associated with the construction of structures (especially foundations or later additions)

- similarity in treatment of animal and human skeletal remains, especially where sacrifice is suspected of the animal remains
- abnormal context/treatment of body in relation to the area and period.

These indicators are based on case studies, and in order to identify potential signatures or indicators that reveal human sacrificial ritual practices, a large group of evidence shall be considered to avoid biased assumptions. Over the course of this book, the validity of these signatures shall be examined depending on the nature of the archeological evidence and the respective subgroups. Each of these indicators must be combined in order to argue the existence of human sacrificial practices. What follows is a preliminary list of archeological sites across Southwest Asia that have enough evidence for suggesting human sacrificial practices in heterogeneous contexts. They are divided by geographical placement and chronological order, and all of them serve as the basis and core of my book, and are, thus, analyzed in greater depth in the following chapters:

	MESOPOTAMIA	THE LEVANT	ANATOLIA	ARABIAN PENINSULA	IRANIAN PLATEAU
<i>10th – 6th millennia BC</i>		Jerf el- Ahmar	Çayonu Tepesi		
			Domuztepe		
		Tell Qaramel	Gobekli Tepe		

<i>5th – 4th millennia BC</i>	Nuzi				Shah Tepe
	Tepe Gawra				Deh Morasi
	Chagar Bazar				Ghundai
	Germayir & Arbit				Tell Ain el-Kerkh Kudish Sagir
<i>3rd – 2nd millennia BC</i>	Ur	Tell	Basur		Shahr-i-
	Kish	Banat	Höyük	Al-	Sokhtar
	Al-Hibba			Midamman	Shah Tepe
	Lagash	Shioukh	Arslantepe		
		Tahtani			Mundigak
	Susa				
		Umm el-			
	Tell Brak	Marra			
	Dothan	Tell			
		Abou			
Tell Brak	Danné				
	Jericho				

Amman

Temple

Ebla

The sites presented in the previous table represent the total data that an exhaustive survey suggests have potential evidence or signatures of human sacrificial ritual practices among their archeological vestiges. They have been sub-grouped into different units depending on the types of sacrifice as I explain in the following subsection.

Types of Sacrifice in the Archeological Record

Within this framework of dissecting human sacrificial rituals, variation is introduced depending on archeological correlates, evidence accompanying these sacrificial rituals, the occasions that incited them, and their apparent motivations. It is problematic in most cases to retrospectively assign any specific message or purpose to any instance of ancient ritual slaughtering—especially with respect to the pictorial or archeological record—but my focus is on distilling some broad categories that are relevant for understanding the area’s ancient cultural complexes based on patterns in the archeological evidence.

My working definition for the three categories of human sacrificial deposits are not free of controversy, and they depend in most cases on isolated, scattered, and incomplete human bones. Labeling these as “problematic” admits, *per se*, the impossibility of assigning a clear pattern to isolated human components beyond suggesting a series of potential formation processes that could relate to ritual sacrificial practices, which is

why the focus here is on the context and spatial analysis combined with osteological considerations.

As has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the construction of such ritual practices based solely on ambiguous textual or iconographical sources is not particularly reliable. Such ritual practices can hardly be constructed or depicted without hard archeological data (analysis of architectural and stratigraphic contexts, zooarcheology, and bioarcheology) and iconographical (cylinder seals) and textual sources (myths and religious corpus, etc.) ought chiefly to be used as support. Particular indications of ritual killing are extracted from different classes of textual and iconographical material: (1) inferences concerning the killing of slaves and prisoners of war, (2) texts dealing with the matter of substitution ("*šār puḫi*," "*puḫu*"), (3) exorcism and medical rituals, (4) the human offerings as gifts and grave gods for accompanying personages into the afterlife, and (5) cylinder seals in which the ritual killing of human beings is carried out by deities and *may* deal with the slaughter of prisoners of war (Green 1975).

Yet, none of these assertions are reflected in the archeological evidence. Rather, the evidence suggests a much larger and broader scale of subgroups. We need to bear in mind that the archeological record is the direct evidence left from these societies that can best attest the existence of this practice. The strongest cases for sacrifice in the archeological record benefit from a large data sample and a repeated pattern of several diagnostic traits (Schwartz 2017). According to spatial archeological evidence, human sacrifice has appeared in the following contexts: in or under architectural features such as private house-hold foundations, within or surrounding temples, and in royal/elite tombs. These contexts can be further subdivided into different categories following their potential purposes and depending on the likely nature of the offering: into those

destined to deities or due to spiritual constraints and those destined to serve a *king/master* or other high-court members.

Some human sacrificial practices do not concern the presentation of gifts or communion with the divine but are rather of more *mundane* purposes. Retainer sacrifice is particularly common in this category (Van Dijk 2007), entailing the killing of possible slaves and war captives, guards, musicians, or other court members after the death of a king or an elite member of the court to be accompanied into the afterlife. The death of individuals to accompany elite members into the afterlife has been widely interpreted, ranging from *simple* trade goods within a religious market (Conte & Kim 2016) to the very basis from which stratified societies gained more power (thus adding layers beyond religious constraints) (Watts et al. 2016). The ceremonies associated with the burial of rulers must have been part of a theatrical performance that established the preeminence of the elite as part of their cosmological connection with the world of the divine (Cohen 2005).

The first category of debatable human assemblages concerns primary (disturbed or undisturbed) but mostly complete disposals that include container burials and death pits, associated by many authors with sacrificial retainer rituals. This consists of aristocratic companion sacrifice, not only as an integral part of dynastic elite mourning and ancestor commemoration but also as a tribute and homage to power itself—an embodiment of dominance guided by socio-political constraints. Examples of retainer sacrifice derive from royal/elite burial contexts such as Shang China (Liu 1977; Campbell 2014), Early Dynastic Egypt, Bronze Age Nubia (Judd & Irish 2009), and others. Parallels of this ritual practice can also be attested at Umm el-Marra, Jericho, Arslantepe, Başur Höyük, and Kish (Usieto Cabrera 2020). The most well-known case of retainer sacrifice in the

3rd millennium BC Near East, is the Royal Cemetery of Ur from 2450-2350 BC (Woolley 1934; Zettler & Horne 1998).

Sites that may have similar evidence and can be drawn into this category are: Arslantepe, Başur Höyük, Umm el-Marra, Shioukh Tahtani, Jericho, Tell Banat, Ur, Kish, Susa, and Shahr-i-Sokhta. These sites as well the latent concepts they may give rise to will be fully dissected later in this book.

The archeological correlates underneath domestic and public architectural features are referred to as foundation sacrifices, and this practice is highly attested worldwide, especially in East Asia and the Middle East. In this practice, animal, and human remains (especially infants) were used to ensure a solid and stable edifice and to protect their inhabitants by the killing and interment of a living being in its foundation (Wessingg & Jordaan 1997).³³ They were typically buried in boundary ditches, built into walls, under bridges, etc. (Merrifield, 1987: 50-7, 116-21, 186). These foundation deposits may have been evident in the foundations of buildings like the ones found at Nuzi or Tepe Gawra among others.

The sites that may have similar evidence and can be drawn into this category are: Nuzi/Yorgan Tepe, Tepe Gawra, Chagar Bazar, Germayir and Arbit, Tell Brak, Dothan, Tell Abou Donné, Shah Tepe, Deh Morasi Ghundai, Tell Ain el-Kerkh, Kudish Sagir, and Shahr-i-Sokhta. Once again, these sites as well the latent concepts that may arise from them will be fully dissected later in this book. One question serves as the basis of my research on these: does the evidence that has been discussed about foundation

³³ The use and killing of human beings for this purpose has been attested worldwide in both archeological and textual records (e.g., *Hitobashira*(人柱) in the case of ancient Japan, where human beings were buried alive).

sacrifice deposits extrapolate to other sites with similar contexts? Could other sites be related to human sacrifice on this assumption?

CHAPTER III

RETAINER SACRIFICE

"Apparently, the men and women who crowd the death-pit were not killed in honor of the dead King . . . but were more likely going with master to continue their service."

(Woolley 1934: 41)

Funerary and mortuary rituals appear in a wide variety of patterns and forms: as intangible thoughts, beliefs, and cosmogonic ideas and as tangible as mortuary monuments. Evidence shows how the tangible material changes over time, space, and culture as it works primarily as a materialization of ideology, by which cosmogonic views associated with supernatural authority are made manifest in the physical world. At the same time, mortuary monuments are often elite mortuary monuments, and supernatural authority is thus reflected in the physical world by mundane authority demanding special treatment and needs.

If, on the other hand, funerary and mortuary rituals are indeed a formal representation of an ideological performance, then proto-royal burials in a pristine state should provide as dramatic an example of the script for such a performance as it is possible to find in the archeological record (Morris 2007). There is large-scale evidence of sacrificed individuals buried after the death of the ruler of a proto state, for their heirs seek not only to serve the kingship or the deities of their inherited subjects but also

to use these as the perfect tools for subjugating and dominating society through the ultimate consumption: human lives.

Exploiting this metaphorical consumption by having sacrificed individuals accompany a personage from the elite after their death has been widely reported in the ancient world (e.g., Campbell 2014; Davies 1983; Schwartz 2012). As for the ANE, retainer graves are arrayed around royal or aristocratic tombs and funerary buildings in the form of death-pits (Usieto Cabrera 2020). They were first discovered at the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Woolley 1934) and attest to the formation of a hitherto unprecedented ideological materialization holding that a variant number of human lives were fittingly exchangeable upon the occasion of a personage's death. Retainer sacrifices during 3rd and 2nd millennia BC are, interestingly, not limited to the Royal Cemetery of Ur, as evidence will prove in this chapter. They have also been discovered at Tell es-Sultan and Tell Umm el-Marra in conjunction with monumental architecture and special chambers for their attendees. Likewise, there is potential evidence at Kish and Susa for retainer sacrifice guided by the so-called *chariot burials* (Moorey 1978), although the lack of a proper methodological excavation and documentation decrease the value of their study. Evidence also shows variable architectural disposal of retainer rituals at Başur Höyük and Arslantepe, for instance.

Among the many similarities and differences that the data from these sites share, a common feature of this practice often emerges: the data often comes from an elite mortuary complex of the 3rd or 2nd millennia BC. These practices were employed to legitimize elite control and to establish or rebuild social hierarchy, and a goal of archeologists is to reconstruct the ideology associated with the emergence of their elite power in the first complex proto states of the ANE. After the tombs were sealed or abandoned in use, the mortuary complex could, indeed, be an object of veneration as

the structures built over them show, for instance in the case of Ur, which indicates the continued significance of the space as a sacred landscape over time.

In this chapter, an in-depth analysis of retainer ritual will enlighten the rise, potential establishment, and abandonment of this practice over time. One emphasis will be on the potential concepts of the bodies of both sacrificed individuals and elite personages, understanding these as groups of social actors whose interment in death was highly significant and spatially represented their hierarchies in life—their role within the socio-political-religious complex ritual of sacrifice mirroring their involvement in the social hierarchy and power in life. The aim is to demonstrate a common pattern through evidence of retainer rituals, their connections to human sacrificial rituals, and especially retainer sacrifice.

Definition

Proceeding with the archeological data available for retainer rituals, it is mandatory to clarify and even redefine the concepts in use. Earlier in this book, the term that served to describe the individuals involved in retainer rituals was already well-defined and demarcated: sacrificed individuals. By doing so, potential inherent negative and non-objective connotations were erased, enabling greater comprehension (Davies 1983).

The arduous task of conceptualizing such a heterogeneous complex socio-political-religious ritual occurs not only when giving this ritual a clear general term but also when translating it into other languages as this ritual does not have a clear term in Spanish (Usieto Cabrera 2020) or, for instance in German (*Gefolgschaftsbestattungen*) (Vogel 2014), it refers to loyalty rather

than highlighting the precedence of the individuals as the English term does.³⁴

Recurrent features in this archeological evidence include variations in gender and sex, youthful individuals between 15-35 years old, and the distinguishable role of presumably having been killed to accompany an elite personage (such as a ruler or leader) into the afterlife (Van Dijk 2007). Although the use of this term in broader contexts has been rightly proven and appropriated (Campbell 2014; Conte & Kim 2016; Davies 1983; Cucina & Tiesler 2006), the use for this term in African and Near Eastern contexts was introduced by Woolley, who applied it at the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Woolley 1934), and it was later defined and sharpened by Van Dijk (2007).

Van Dijk laid the foundation for the definition's first application to ancient Egyptian (Van Dijk 2007) and other North African ancient contexts but never to the ANE or further contexts. This term relies on the sacrifice of retainers belonging to the elite following the definition given by Cambridge Dictionary according to which a retainer is "*a servant who has usually been with the same family for a long time*" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 1999). In the case of the ANE evidence, this pertains to a heterogeneous group adorned in rich ornaments such as jewelry or fine clothing whose bodies have been carefully disposed of, sometimes following a killing blow to the head (although this last feature is often difficult to discern due to poor preservation and the consequent impossibility of carrying out bioanthropological analyses on the human skeletal remains (Baadsgaard et al. 2011).

³⁴ This is an indication of how poorly studied this practice has been in comparisons with other human sacrificial practices in other contexts.

In contrast to the simple inner motivation that retainer sacrifices were offerings made to the body of a dead ruler, analyses of these bodies—including bioanthropological treatment (regarding methods of execution) and peri- and postmortem displays (regarding jewelry, clothing, and ornaments)—suggest the complexity of these sacrifices and their potential functions as political tools of intimidation or demonstrations of power. The bodies of the sacrificed individuals may, indeed, have served as ideal, propagandistic ritual visions and political tools used for dominance and the reinforcement of power in times when state-societies were arising but had not yet fully systematized as studies have shown in other contexts (Watts et al. 2016).

Dickson expands upon this paradigm, emphasizing the terror- and ferocity-inducing aspects of retainer sacrifice based on the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Dickson 2006) and adding a parallel interpretation of the evidence, namely that retainer rituals “*may not represent a strong, rich and stable society as presumed, but rather a vulnerable society that terrorizes and kills its citizens*” (Dickson 2006: 141). Certainly, interpretations of the evidence may vary depending on the scholar’s background. Inopportunately, this hypothesis cannot be sustained purely on the strength of the available data. This issue, along with the question whether this was meant to be witnessed by the general public or was rather a private indoor activity, remains unanswered. Tadmor’s studies on propaganda in Assyrian royal inscriptions are useful with respect to visual representations of violence (Tadmor 1995)³⁵. In this sense, retainer sacrifice also could be considered propaganda (Tatlock 2019), but its purpose is singular. Because the focus of retainer sacrifices is the

³⁵ The use of the term “propaganda” is used following Tadmor studies (1997) understood as the expression of royal political ideology.

cosmic role that individuals were assigned to fulfill, retainer rituals are attributed to the elite and ruling class as a means of sustaining power and asserting dominance, and such rituals were hardly performed outside royal/aristocratic funerary and mortuary contexts.

Indeed, funerary and mortuary rituals after the death of an elite personage are innately propagandistic: they are theatrical, carefully staged, and choreographed rituals that portray the violent self-presentation of the elite and other rulers.³⁶ Indicators of this are that retainer rituals were indeed sanctioned by the elite, were performed on a royal prerogative, and are perceptibly the expression of royal ideology that accentuates their extraordinary and sacred status.

Conceptualizing Retainer Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East

To better conceptualize, contextualize, and comprehend the function and reasoning behind retainer rituals, it is mandatory (without going too deep due to several constraints) to incorporate a new parallel concept: *divine kingship*. Sacred or divine kingship is a controversial and sometimes problematic term, particularly when applied to archeological correlates because some of its functions are only accessible through textual resources (Baines & Yoffee 1998; Bottero 2001; Brisch 2013; Cohen 2001; Drennan 1976; Espak 2015).

Some schools use the term *divine kingship* interchangeably with *sacred kingship* while others prefer a more subtle differentiation (Smith 2003): one refers to the act of worship a ruler as a living deity (although it is not always clear if this was during their lifetime or after death), while the other

³⁶ This is the necessary killing of the offering (Schwartz 2017).

indicates the ruler's closeness to the sacred but may not necessarily imply that a king was venerated as a god.

It would be interesting on this front to know whether the term "kingship" in ancient Mesopotamia meant just the king or ruler or, on the contrary, it also pertained to royalty and authorities in general. Archeological evidence from Southwestern Asia has demonstrated how the transition from a communal, rather nonhierarchical, form of governance to a socio-politically centralized form of governance was a gradual, progressive change that developed for centuries until reaching its peak in approximately the 1st millennium BC. Consensus on just how these early rulers solved the problem of governance has thus far eluded scholars of Mesopotamia.

Nonetheless, although disagreeing on details, most consider it likely that some form of theocratic rule characterized these early polities. The nature of political authority at the dawn of urbanization in southern Mesopotamia and during the early development of urban societies in the period of ca. 3200-2350 BC has been a controversial and much debated subject since the first discoveries of archeological correlates in the beginning of the 19th century (Matthews 2003). Early proposals of Sumerian city-states ruled by religious authorities (Temple States theory) (Deimel 1920; Falkenstein 1954; Schneider 1920) have been succeeded by more understated hypothesis of "*constellations of authority in early complex polities*" (Matthews & Matthews 2017; Smith 2003).

Particular significance is given to these archeological correlates. Evidence presented in discussions of incipient sacred or divine political authority in the ANE has been drawn from several sources: archeological excavations from relevant sites in southern Iraq and beyond, cuneiform texts from the periods in question, and depictions on cylinder seals,

statuaries, and reliefs from the Late Uruk (3400-2900 BC) (Matthews & Matthews 2017). As stated in many contributions (Matthews 2003), there are severe difficulties regarding these fields of evidence. For archeology, very few excavations at appropriate sites in South Iraq have taken place for a quarter of a century, and many of those that did take place prior to 1990 did not recover or publish evidence relevant to this topic.³⁷ For textual sources, problems arise because the vast majority were recovered from late 19th and early 20th century excavations that failed to articulate secure archeological contexts for the texts in question, and the missing distant perspective of these text makes their interpretation for sacrificial hypotheses (or the contrary) mere speculation. Even when stratigraphic contexts are definable, as in the case of late 4th millennium BC texts from Uruk (Englund 1998) or the mid-3rd millennium BC texts from Tell Fara and Abu Salabikh (Krebernik 1998; Krebernik & Postgate 2009), these contexts are more often secondary or even tertiary to the texts' original places of inscription and use (Matthews & Matthews 2017).

As seen by new trade-routes and commercial exchanges in the archeological record all over the Near East and the Iranian territory as well as in new monumental architectural structures that serve as the basis by politico-religious functionaries or rulers, the introduction of a new legitimized form of government can be seen from the late 3rd millennium BC in *great households*. Overall, the ground plans of these buildings are composed of large, square courtyards surrounded by multiple rooms, with thick external walls and long narrow corridors running between the external walls and the outer walls of rooms around the courtyards. Where

³⁷ The same problems apply to excavations that contained retainer rituals in royal/aristocratic burials.

reported, findings from within these buildings indicate significant levels and great variety of storage and craft production in specific areas of the palaces, including works of ivory, wood, and precious or semi-precious stones (Matthews 2003; Matthews & Matthews 2017; Zaina 2015). Such monumental structures have been excavated at Kish (Moorey 1964), Eridu (Safar et al. 1981), probably at Tell al-Wilayah in the south (Madhloom 1960; Matthews & Matthews 2017), at Mari (Margueron 1982), Ebla (Matthiae 2013), Chuera (Akkermans & Schwartz 2003), and, as proposed recently, in the unfinished *Stampflehmgebäude* at Uruk-Warka, (Boehmer 1997; Matthews & Matthews 2017).

Despite archeological, textual, and iconographical sources that demonstrate an important ruling figure, there is considerable disagreement among scholars regarding whether rulers were actually considered divine or of a divine nature. Various scholars assume that the deification of kings was a phenomenon of the late 3rd and early 2nd millennia Near East (e.g., Sallaberger 2002: 93; Selz 2008), while Michalowski (2008: 41) has adopted a more minimalist interpretation by arguing that the deification of kings only happened intermittently for brief periods of time in the 3rd millennium BC. Regardless of whether extrapolating such terms across space and time in these early periods and using the terms “divine” or “sacred” kingship or *theatre state* (Geertz 1980), rulers were able to combine coercive power with supernatural authority as a matter of fact, which made them able to assemble and organize power and dominance for the first time in ANE history (Mumford 1967).

Excavations and textual and iconographical sources thus confirmed a deliberate development in the perception of the ruler and the surrounding elite, signaling a new era. As divine agents, they were entitled to different

types of offerings, which feasibly included the sacrifice of humans upon their own demise in some cases.

In this matter, Cohen (2001, 2005) emphasizes that the early rulers made particular use of “death rituals,” which he defined as the physical form of abstract ideology and thereby a legitimation of rulership that included human and animal sacrificial offerings. Cohen based his argument purely on the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Cohen 2005) and concluded that the new palace ideology was manifested in the elite burials from early 3rd millennium BC. As presented in this chapter, new evidence will be added following Cohen’s arguments (2005).

In keeping with this topic, later revisions of his work added new relevant insights to his arguments that were, however, archeologically unfeasible. How difficult was it for a mortal individual to convince their subordinates, and perhaps, themselves that they were divine (Dickens 2006; Skalník 1978; Sürenhagen 2002)? If this is considered to be a controversial, traces of contemporaneous riots and political instability are perceived to have been much more severe than in the present day.

To give an answer to this previous question, evidence strongly points to the wide acceptance and assumption of the superimposed roles that humans had. One supporting argument can be found in the Mesopotamian myth of “Enki and Ninmah” (Black et al. 1988-2006; Bottero & Kramer 1989) that narrates the Sumerian origins of mankind, dating to the 2nd millennium BC.³⁸ Following the translation by Kramer (1944), there are certain fragments from this myth that are interesting to compare with the archeological evidence because they point directly to the potential relationship between retainer sacrifice and cosmological explanations. The

³⁸ The first fragmentary translation appeared in Kramer (1944).

parts that I comment on here concern lines 56-61, 62-65, 66-68, 72-74, and 75-78, where the Enki assign clear functions and roles to certain individuals in the ceremony. It was not aliened to base the fate of individuals on their physical appearances or mental attributes in the ancient world (Black et al. 1998-2006), and this shall thus be considered when analyzing the potential intrinsic motivations or reasonable origins of these selections in the literature. The roles that are mentioned here are the role of the servant of the king (due to the imperfections caused by his weakness and outstretched hands), an individual with constantly opened eyes determined to be a musician, an individual with mental problems appointed as a servant of the king, hermaphrodites representing court members, and a woman who could not give birth belonging to the queen's households, as stated:

56-61 Enki answered Ninmah: I will counterbalance whatever fate—good or bad—you happen to decide.” Ninmah took clay from the top of the abzu in her hand and she fashioned from it first a man who could not bend his outstretched weak hands. Enki looked at the man who could not bend his outstretched weak hands, and decreed his fate: he appointed him as a servant of the king.

62-65 Second, she fashioned one who turned back (?) the light, a man with constantly opened eyes (?). Enki looked at the one who turned back (?) the light, the man with constantly opened eyes (?), and decreed his fate allotting to it the musical arts, making him as the chief . . . in the king's presence.

66-68 Third, she fashioned one with both feet broken, one with paralysed feet. Enki looked at the one with both feet broken, the one with paralysed feet and . . . him for the work of . . . and the silversmith and...

72-74 Fifth, she fashioned a woman who could not give birth. Enki looked at the woman who could not give birth and decreed her fate: he made (?) her belong to the queen's household. (1 ms. has instead: . . . as a weaver, fashioned her to belong to the queen's household.)

75-78 Sixth, she fashioned one with neither penis nor vagina on its body. Enki looked at the one with neither penis nor vagina on its body and give it the name "Nibru eunuch ()," and decreed as its fate to stand before the king.

79-82 Ninmah threw the pinched-off clay from her hand on the ground and a great silence fell. The great lord Enki said to Ninmah: "I have decreed the fates of your creatures and given them their daily bread. Come, now I will fashion somebody for you, and you must decree the fate of the newborn one!

(Translation by the ETCSL; Black et al. 1998-2006)

According to this literature, physical attributes as well as mental illnesses could be reasons to be assigned to one social status or another, and, given their *raison d'être* of serving their deities, it would not be odd for these roles to continue into the afterlife. This "Enki and Ninmah" myth might thus directly or indirectly expose the obligation of individuals to serve their deities and their heads of state not only in this life but in the afterlife as well.³⁹ Whether or not religious-political power involved sacred or divine kingship or rather a mere *constellation of authority* (Smith 2003), comparing this hypothesis with the archeological correlates that shall be explained in the following, there is no doubt that the origin of such behaviors is connected with this original myth.

³⁹ However, this statement might be too speculative.

Archeological Evidence

Anatolia

Arslantepe – Royal Tomb 1 (T 1)

Based on field reports by Frangipane, M. (2012). Arslantepe-Malatya: A Prehistoric and Early Historic Center in Eastern Anatolia. *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Anatolia: (10,000-323 BCE)*.

Arslantepe is a mound about 4.5 hectares in extension and 30 meters high at the heart of the Malatya Plain and close to the right bank of the Euphrates in southeastern Turkey. The long sequence of the site covers several millennia from at least the 6th millennium BC until the final destruction of the Neo-Hittite town in 712 BC (Frangipane 2012). Excavations began in the 1930s, conducted by a French mission headed by Delaporte. Its long history, which has been largely excavated in more than 45 years of work by the Italian Archeological Mission of the Sapienza University of Rome, clearly reflects the history of the whole area as well as the complex events that marked its developments and changing relations within the Near East.

According to different archeological sequences and Palumbi (2012), the site derives from the second phase of the early Bronze I (period VI B₂), either ca. 3000-2900/2800 BC (Frangipane et al. 2001) or ca. 3100-2900 BC. In this period, after the collapse of palatial architecture and the erosion of elite power, during what the excavators interpreted as a general period of instability, a more refined phase of occupation and stability began with the reuse of ancient public buildings (Frangipane et al. 2001). It is in this phase that a royal tomb (T1) was found at the western edge of the mound,

bordering the large period VI A public zone in an area without any architectural structures (Frangipane 2012) (Appendix 7, Table VII, Figure 1).

At Arslantepe, the *architecture* does not conform to the typology or patterns of parallel sites with otherwise matching contexts (such as Umm el-Marra, Ur, Kish, Jericho, among others). Here, T1 does not consist of a multi-chambered burial, or *DP*, nor is it built with massive architecture, but it is rather an imposing stone cist built at the bottom of a large, irregular, five meters wide pit located at the edge of the village, outside the fortification wall (Frangipane 2012). As at Arslantepe, this *RT* began with the excavation of a large rectangular pit—as large as 4.35 m x 3.45 m—in which the tomb was then built (Frangipane 2012).

This cist-chamber tomb contains an adult (H225) lying in a flexed position on its right side accompanied by a very rich assortment of grave goods (Frangipane et al. 2001; Hauptmann & Palmieri 2000). The individual was a primary burial, articulated, male, 35-45 years of age, wrapped in a shroud, placed on a wooden board, and adorned with silver spiral pins and two necklaces (one silver, one mixed stone and metal). The body was also wearing a beaded garment over the head and torso. Placed at the back of the body was a collection of at least 64 metal objects (including vessels, personal ornaments (made of cornelian, rock crystal, silver, and gold, together with a hoard of metal objects placed behind its back, comprising weapons).

As the roof of the tomb had collapsed, crushing the bones, detailed skeletal information is lacking, and the cause of death is not ascertainable. It is evident, however, that the body had been placed in a fairly standard flexed position on its right side (Frangipane et al. 2001).

Recovered from the top of the collapsed stone lid, and the surface around it, the bodies of four individuals: 2 of them, likely respectively

female and male (H221, H222), lay on top of the tombstone wearing copper pins and a diadem with hair spirals made of copper-silver alloy similar to the items found among the grave goods buried with the main personage in the cist. According to Frangipane, this may have indicated kinship or some other kind of close linkage with him (Frangipane 2012). Two other individuals (H223 and H224), again very young and both females, were found outside the area of the cist in the zone at the foot of the elite personage with no burial goods and no ornaments, thus unadorned, except for two pins (Frangipane et al. 2001).

One aspect of Arslantepe that stands out is not only the different pattern of the chamber but also the fact that these individuals were all *young*. Moreover, within this age bracket a very clear opposition is established in the bodies' positions: each pair contains an individual 16-18 years old and one 12-15 years old, and each body of similar age is diagonally opposite the other, which Porter refers to as *mirroring* (Porter 2012). Another aspect worthy of note is that in two cases (H-222 and H-224), there are vestiges of a hemorrhage on the endocranial lamina of the skull vault which could have been due to blunt trauma, such as a blow to the head, as in the case of Ur, Jericho, and Umm el-Marra (Erdal 2012; Frangipane et al. 2001: 139). In addition, evidence suggests that the social status of the sacrificed individuals may have varied: in fact, the male-female pair is similar to the individuals of Ur or Jericho, but the female pair (unadorned and without related objects) is more similar to individuals of a low rank such as the servants of the lineage. Thus, Arslantepe introduces important key factors concerning concepts of individuals: not only were individuals of a lower rank likely to be chosen to follow the royal/elite personage after their decease, but servants were also eligible. May this evidence be related to the difference in nature of retainer evidence? Were servants eligible to be

sacrificed for their master when elite power was low or did it need to be reinforced when lower ranking members or other members of the court were chosen in a period of political instability?⁴⁰ Although this tomb is an isolated case on the mound at Arslantepe, its ritual importance will be proven in the ancient Near East with similar evidence from further sites across the region.

I can say without reluctance that Arslantepe is the prime example of Syro-Anatolian retainer sacrifice and provides the oldest known example of sacrificing individuals for accompanying royal/elite personages in the afterlife (Frangipane et al. 2001). The presence of this burial right after a collapse phase in conjunction with the large fortification wall on the top of the mound and the disappearance of cult areas, cretulae, and mass-produced bowls at Arslantepe VI B₁₋₂ may indicate that a new type of power was being installed that focused more on defense and on the political and military role of the chiefs than on their capacity to centralize resources and labor, as had been the case in the 4th millennium BC (Frangipane 2012).

Unlike similar contexts, it should be impossible to link this scattered and unrepeated ritual practice to a potential reinforcement of power at Arslantepe (Conte & Kim 2016). The collapse of the palatial complex of period VI A at the end of the 4th millennium BC and the total disappearance of the Mesopotamian-type early state system at Arslantepe was thought to have been followed by a return to forms of rural and country life, initially marked by such traumatic events as the abrupt arrival of nomadic groups (period VI B 1) that repeatedly settled in the area where the abandoned palace and the temples had originally stood.

⁴⁰ Further discussions are given later in this chapter.

Başur Höyük — The EB Cemetery (Graves No. 15-17, No. 16)

Based on field reports by Hasset, B., & Sağlamtimur, H. (2018). Radical ‘royals’? Burial practices at Başur Höyük and the emergence of early states in Mesopotamia. *Antiquity*, 92(363), 640-654.

Başur Höyük is notable for its quantity of southern Mesopotamian cultural material dating to the 4th millennium BC. The Early Bronze Age cemetery of Başur Höyük in the province of Siirt in modern-day Turkey contains a series of unique burials that represent the oldest evidence to date for retainer rituals in the region (Hasset & Sağlamtimur 2018) (Appendix 8, Table VIII, Figure 1). Focusing on the southeastern fringe of the mound, salvage excavations of the necropolis began in 2014 and, for the most part but not exclusively, uncovered stone slab-sided cist graves dated by radiocarbon samples to between 3100-2800 BC / EB (Hasset et al. 2019).

The 18 EB burials at Başur Höyük are composed of three different typologies used in a short period of time (Hasset et al. 2019): stone-cist graves, rectangular enclosures built with stone sides, capstones, and occasionally stone doors; pit graves; and, lastly, partial stone-cist graves where one side of the grave is constructed of stone. Normally, this last category consists of instances where a pit type grave has been placed directly next to one side of a stone cist type where the wall of a cist grave forms one boundary of the burial (Hasset & Sağlamtimur 2018).

PIT BURIAL

Tomb 16

Very little description is given concerning this burial. Tomb 16 (Appendix 8, Table VIII, Figure 2) is located in the northern part of the cemetery in an extraordinary position at the center of the site (Hasset et al.

2019). It consists of a large shaft, 3.30 × 2.00 m, with approx. 60 individuals that were buried in a single interment (with at least young and adult female individuals, male and female adolescents, and infants). The individuals in this tomb are the subjects of aDNA, stable isotopes, and bioarcheological analysis (Hasset et al. 2019).

No grave goods, objects, or offerings of any kind were connected to these individuals, nor was physical trauma identified in the field. No main body was detected in the field.

PARTIAL STONE-CIST BURIAL

Tombs 15 & 17

Tombs 15 & 17 form the largest of the stone-cist tombs and are set into the lowest level of the cemetery. (The location of Tomb 16 remains unclear.) As Hasset states:

Both graves were covered by the same large capstone, with Grave 15 making up a cist grave with four stone slab walls and Grave 17 consisting of an exterior area immediately to the east of the stone cist chamber with dirt sides.

(Hasset et al. 2019: 73)

Inside the cist-stone chamber were at least three individuals (at least one male around 12 years of age), with bodies 34 and 35 most likely placed in a squatting position. However, preservation is very poor due to the collapse of the roof. Outside the chamber, eight individuals (three females and five males) were laid, ranging in age from 11-20 years old and placed one atop the other against the chamber. The individuals at the exterior showed signs of physical violence in the form of blunt force trauma, similar to later execution methods at Ur and Jericho (Woolley 1934; Kenyon 1960, 1964). Unlike Tomb 16, 15 & 17 were richly provisioned with ceramics, beads, metal figurines, pins, and spearheads.

Remarkable conclusions can be drawn from the contexts. First of all, the typology of the stone-cist graves that held retainer rituals resemble Arslantepe, and both sites provide the oldest evidence whatsoever of the region. Although this evidence is directly connected with royal burials, it is not clear whether these sites constitute complete royal or elite burials. Second of all, it is clear that the initial architectural typologies at Başur Höyük influenced later developments of the practice in each specific ANE region: starting with the pit category that was eligible to hold mass burials and would be fully developed at Ur and continuing with the stone-cist graves that developed into tomb-chambers built above and below the earth. Furthermore, as evidence suggests (Hasset et al. 2019), it appears that the execution method of providing a blow to the head to ritually kill individuals originated in the 4th millennium BC Anatolian peninsula.

These burials feature remarkable similarities to the 4th/3rd millennium retainer burials identified in different sites across the ANE region, including possible parallels to recently uncovered evidence regarding the mode of death at the Royal Cemetery of Ur and Jericho. This allows us to corroborate hypotheses concerning the origins of retainer rituals within certain margins of error. This further allows us to develop our concepts of ownership over the physical bodies of a population at the point of death, which has been associated with the hierarchical social structures that accompanied early state-formation processes across the globe (Watts et al. 2016) and in E Anatolia during the 4th millennium BC. Thus, this site not only provides an ideal location to carry out aDNA and isotope analyses on the sacrificed individuals, but it also provides evidence of large-scale social and political changes in the crucial interval between the contraction of the first Mesopotamian interregional networks in the 4th millennium BC and the formation of early states on the 3rd millennium BC.

Mesopotamia

Ur—The Royal Cemetery of Ur

Based primarily on Woolley's field reports and contributions (1927, 1928a, 1928b, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1939, 1959, 1954, 1955, 1961, 1965, 1982).

The epitome of retainer rituals in Mesopotamia in the 3rd millennium BC are the royal tombs discovered at Ur by Sir Leonard Woolley in the late 1920s and 1930s (Woolley 1927). It was the first time that human sacrifice was argued to be part of ancient Near Eastern societies, which later created a wave of inherently negative connotations for the practice itself, causing it to be perceived as wild, savage, or too “uncivilized” to be practiced in the cradle of civilization—conditions that worsened the discipline's development until recent decades (Schwarz 2012, 2013).

Tell al-Muqayyar, ancient Ur, is located in modern-day southern Iraq, approximately 17 km W of Nasiriyah (Roaf 1990) and situated on the east side of the Euphrates, although studies have shown that in antiquity it ran curved SW of Ur (Wright 1981: 327). Research at the site began in the 17th century when the Italian nobleman Pietro della Valle visited the mound of ruins known as *muqeijer* (pitchy), due to the baked bricks originally set-in bitumen that littered its surface. The site remained unexcavated until J. Taylor, the British vice-consul at Basra, initiated fieldwork in 1853-1854 followed by brief excavation campaigns by Campbell-Thompson in 1918 and H. Hall in 1919. In 1922, extensive work by Sir Leonard Woolley (Woolley 1927) with a co-joint team from the British Museum and University of Pennsylvania Museum (Penn Museum) on the site exposed an enormous 4th to 1st millennium BC religious-political complex with

deciphered tablets identified as the Biblical “*Ur of the Chaldees*” (Rawlinson 1850: 481).

Woolley uncovered both monumental public structures and, to a lesser degree, substantial areas interpreted as private houses that have been the focus of resumed work at the site by international teams in the 21st century. Among the public structures, his most widely publicized discovery was probably a complex of over 2000 tombs in an extensive 3rd millennium BC necropolis, which is located at the southeastern end of Ur’s ziggurat and is partially overlain by the southeast end of the Neo-Babylonian temenos wall (see Appendix 15, Table XV). This elite and royal necropolis, interpreted as such based-on findings and known as the Royal Cemetery, is remarkable not only for the extraordinary mortuary and funerary ceremonies *in situ*, but also for the promise that it holds for granting a deeper understanding of the sacrificial rituals of ancient Mesopotamia and, by extension, the ANE societies of the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC.

Because of my reliance on published sources, it is very fortunate that Woolley presented his results as promptly and thoroughly as he did, although contradicting statements can be found throughout his contributions (Woolley 1927, 1928a, 1928b, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1939, 1959, 1954, 1955, 1961, 1965, 1982). As stated by Zimmerman: “*one must be willing to critically reappraise Woolley’s conclusions in order to gain a new understanding of the Royal Cemetery*” (Zimmerman 1998: 1).

This burial ground holds tantalizing promise for scholars who wish to use Ur for stratigraphical matters of the early and mid-3rd millennium BC (Nissen 1966; Pollock 1982, 1985). The realization of that promise has not, however, been forthcoming because scholars, most notably Hans Nissen (1966) and Susan Pollock (1983, 1985), have had only limited success in the intervening decades. Although there are numerous outstanding

contributions to different topics related to Ur (e.g., Baadsgaard et al. 2012; Gockel 1982; Nissen 1966; Pollock 1985; Zimmerman 1988), stratigraphic excavation was not the main focus of Woolley's work at Ur and *post facto* archeological interpretations of the chronology are thus necessarily difficult (Pollock 1991; Zimmerman 1998). It is generally accepted by scholars that the royal tombs date to the mid-late 3rd millennium BC, 2600-2450 BC (Early Dynastic IIIA) (Baadsgaard et al. 2012). Woolley (1934) first acknowledged that general stratigraphy was not necessarily a reliable guide. Instead, he argued that one could make use of sequences of directly superimposed graves that were necessarily dug subsequent to one another. On the basis of these sequences, he attributed relative dates to a variety of artifact types and then used these to date graves that were not included in any of the stratified sequences (Woolley 1934). However, Pollock argued that only a limited number of graves could be fit into sufficiently long vertical sequences of superimposed graves in order to provide evidence of clear chronological differentiation in artifact types, therefore it is not always certain that the graves that he lists as superimposed did, in fact, overlap.

The locations of the graves are similarly debated for stratigraphic purposes (Nissen 1966; Pollock 1985). Scholars have re-plotted the locations of RT graves (Nissen 1966) and re-examined stratigraphical correlations among them. Stratification in the Cemetery suggests that the site was reused over time, before and after funerary and mortuary symbolic uses of the landscape (Zimmerman 1998). The picture presented of the Royal Cemetery area is, therefore, a palimpsest of rubbish tips, graves, robbers' trenches, and occupied levels that would have been tremendously puzzling in connection with the sloppy nature of the site's stratigraphic excavation. Moreover, Zimmerman's studies brought new scenarios to light based on stratigraphical evidence (Zimmerman 1998), arguing that Woolley

occasionally mistakenly considered multiple tombs to be part of the same burial with disastrous effects on our understanding of the cemetery's internal burial rituals.

Based on field notes that show the various graves found within the trenches, these stratigraphical problems begin in Trial Trenches E through G (TTE, TTF, TTG), where Woolley began his work and later would uncover the Royal Cemetery area because he did not map the trenches or the earliest graves that he had found because he had not initially recognized them as such (Woolley 1927). He began mapping burials only after the trenches had been expanded to cover the entire area. In 1966 and 1982, Nissen (1966) and Gockel (1982) respectively led studies on the problem of the trial trenches where Zimmerman re-examined the evidence. He concluded that tomb 337 was in TTE, but so was 580, and even though 579 and 581 were in TTG, the numbering of graves often jumped between trenches that were concurrently dug up. TTE also revealed the stonework of tomb 777.

As the focus of this book does not concern the stratigraphical or chronological controversy of the Royal Cemetery of Ur but, rather, the mortuary and funerary sacrificial rites, I shall take stratigraphical references attributed to a combination of studies led by Zimmerman (1998) and the archeological sequences that they denote into consideration due to their convincing evidence and supporting arguments.

It was not until the fifth season (1926-1927) that Woolley returned to the Royal Cemetery and excavated the early 3rd millennium BC (Early Dynastic) for four years from 1933-1934 exposing an initial number of 1852 and later an additional 260 graves (Woolley 1928a, 1928b). Woolley estimated that up to three times more burials existed in the cemetery, whose borders had not been reached, but he posited that they had gone unrecorded because their boundaries were poorly defined, they had not

been recognized in time, they were poorly furnished, or they were too eroded and too badly disturbed (Woolley 1928b). He sequentially numbered all the graves with the prefix PG (Private Grave) but based on the evidence and to facilitate my analysis, I rename these tombs with the architectural structures that inter the main deceased RT (royal tombs), and I call those by the pits that lack any architectural assemblies and contain the bodies of sacrificed individuals DP (Death Pits).

Some 660 of the 1852 graves were dated between ca. 2600-2500 BC (Woolley 1934; Pollock 1985; Baadsgaard et al. 2012). Traditionally, 16 burials were singled out by Woolley as likely royals for the opulence of their grave goods, the architecture, and the presence of multiple individuals in what appeared to be a single interment. A critical re-examination of the tombs has additionally uncovered other tombs that parallel the original 16 and ought also to be considered royal. This is the case for RT 755, as evidence suggests this burial to be the king Meskalamdug (Marchesi 2004; Woolley 1934), RT 1068, RT 1130, RT 1151, RT 1156, RT 1266, RT 1312,⁴¹ and RT 1524. Therefore, among these 23 burials, six graves (DP 337, DP 580, DP 1157, DP 1232, DP 1237, and DP 1332) were death-pits and, as Zimmerman (1998) exposed, they contained no associated architecture and were thus assigned to main burials as a part of human sacrificial rites being specifically designated to the numerous interments of sacrificed individuals. The remaining tombs (RT 755, RT 777, RT 779, RT 789, RT 800, RT 1050, RT 1054, RT 1068, RT 1130, RT 1151, RT 1156, RT 1236, RT 1266, RT 1312, RT 1524, RT 1618, RT 1631, and RT 1648) had associated architecture and were sometimes connected directly to death pits.

⁴¹ RT 1312 may also provide evidence for the controversial hypothesis of cross-dressing in the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Cohen 2005; Woolley 1934).

At Ur, as opposed to Kish (Gibson 1972; Watelin & Langdon 1934), the cemetery is clearly separated from other contexts. The majority of the graves consisted of simple, individual burials more or less furnished and with quantitative and qualitative differences in grave goods: mass burials and subterranean multichambered complex graves or, in the words of Woolley, “ritual, architectural and material” (Woolley 1934). Inscriptions containing the titles LUGAL and NIN found on cylinder seals associated with specific individuals earned the cemetery its “royal” attribution. Whether or not the buried are royalty, however, is a matter of some debate that will be discussed in the following paragraphs (Pollock 1991).

Some of the tombs that Woolley previously labeled PG because they did not exhibit human sacrificial remains or clear architecture are, indeed, RT following the criteria established in this book, and they may have been the main burial sites for elite personages that received later sacrificial offerings. Now, if this hypothesis is accepted, the question of why some elite members are placed among their sacrificed individuals while others are clearly in separated spaces remains unanswered. The latter is the case for 755 (the potential tomb of Meskalamdug), 1068 (“tomb of the little princess”), 1151 and 1156 (main burials of DP 1157), and 1312 (with evidence of cross-dressing for the individual as in some of the DP). A list of the tombs with evidence of retainer sacrifice is presented following Woolley’s chronological order of discovery:

DP 337

According to fieldnotes and reports, DP 337 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 1) (Woolley 1927, 1934; Zimmerman 1998) is most likely the first royal grave that was identified as such using the criteria for royal graves established by Woolley (1934). This grave appeared in Trial Trench E and

lacks a thorough topographical mapping, having suffered from ancient looting as Woolley admits (Woolley 1934: 43).

The original shape of the shaft was interpreted to be circular (with the greatest length being six meters from N-E to S-W, its narrowest width 5.47 m, and its greatest width six meters). As in other RT and DP, the floor was covered with matting, while objects and individuals were placed above.

Three individuals (skeleton A was in good condition, skeleton B was poorly preserved, and skull C belonged to an infant) were found, but it had reportedly contained a greater number that could not be recovered due to looting and decay. According to Moorey (1977), this tomb may have actually belonged to a female elite member based on a lapis banquet seal that is very similar to RT 580. Concerning objects and offerings placed in the shaft, few objects were found above the shaft in the loose soil, attributed to looting, although some *in situ* objects were found in the end.

The bottom of the shaft was at a depth of 6.4 m below the modern surface and directly connected with the remains of a building at 3.10 m. Although there are no indications of the depth at which the individuals were discovered, Woolley directly connects this building (allegedly a funerary chapel) with matching structures in RT 1054 and DP 1237 (Woolley 1934).

DP 580

After detecting a pattern in these new tombs, Woolley decided to change his methodological approach for the TT to extensive horizontal excavations of the area, gradually cutting away at the face of the standing earth which bounded the depths of the pit. He classified this tomb as the "*least satisfactory despite the fact the objects found were unsurpassed elsewhere*" (Woolley 1934: 46). As in the case of DP 337, no architecture, nor a tomb

chamber were found (Zimmerman 1998; Woolley 1937). Woolley argues that either the mudbrick went unnoticed or, as in the case of DP 1237, the tomb chamber was outside the shaft and suffered from looting.

The area of the shaft was approximately 6.50 m x 4.50 m, the greater length being from N-E to S-W (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 2). The bottom of the shaft was found 5-5.3 m below the surface, and the N-W side of the shaft was still preserved at a height of 2.7 m. As for the bottom, irregularities and slopes from S-E to N-W caused difficulties for stratigraphical references of the objects that were found. He adds:

The most probable explanation seems to me that there had been a chamber of mudbrick which had been plundered and had subsequently collapsed, its ruins amalgamating so completely with the filling of the shaft as to evade our notice; the fall of the chamber involved the collapse of a temporary floor in the shaft on which offerings had been placed (cf. PG 1054) and these were found by us scattered in the filling; the original floor of the shaft outside the tomb-chamber had, as usual, escaped plundering by reason of the earth above it, and therefore the objects placed on it were found by us undisturbed. (Woolley 1932: 47)

Analogously, the contemporaneous tombs of the necropolis were found at a depth of about five meters below the surface with a layer of matting that extended more or less all over the shaft's area, and these were followed by a second layer of matting at a depth from 0.30-0.50 m, between which matting layers objects had been placed and were discovered *in situ*. Among other objects like cylinder seals, axes, and daggers, the skeletons of oxen were found together with traces of wood, a cart, and a copper rein-ring among the bones. No human bones were recovered whatsoever,

probably due to the poor preservation and the strong presence of acids and organic salts.

Despite the absence of human bones and architecture, these objects and their locations may suggest the use of this tomb as a shaft, and, consequently, a DP (Zimmerman 1998) that might have been used in honor of He-kun-sig, a priestess of Pabilsag (Moorey 1977), based on an inscription on a cylinder seal in the shaft.

RT 755

Tomb 755 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 3) was cut into the shaft of RT 779, which helped to establish the prior chronology of the latter. Admitted by Wooley (1934) to be larger than the ordinary tombs, it consisted of a rectangular pit measuring 2.50 x 1.50 m—a considerable depth, for the present surface of the ground was 6.75 m above the pit's bottom, and the original depth was probably at least 5.00 m deep. A spear-point was 1.80 m above the floor, but it had certainly been buried in the filling of the shaft—and a wooden coffin with a male individual inside, measuring 1.70 x 0.65 m, had been placed 0.50 m high against the north-east side of it.

The quality of the workmanship and the luxurious materials employed placed this grave in a class of its own—neither an ordinary PG nor, by Woolley's criteria, an RT (Moorey 1977). Around the coffin, fine weapons and vessels of baked clay, silver, copper, and stone abounded. Within the coffin lay a male skeleton, distinguished above all by the now renowned golden helmet lying just to one side of the skull.

RT 777

This tomb is a multi-chambered and complex structure (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 4). The shaft had been sunk in the undisturbed soil of the old rubbish- mounds with unusually clear stratification; the layers of black ashes, burnt earth, mixed rubbish, and pottery fragments sloped down sharply from east to west and were visible for three meters above and for 1.80 m below the chamber (Woolley 1934). Woolley reports that the structure is about 6.50 square meters (Woolley 1934). However, his plan of the cemetery and Nissen's plan both show a structure of about 8.25 x 7.25 m (Zimmerman 1998). While Woolley states that RT 513 rested on top of the ruined northwest wall of RT 777, this is not reflected in either plan (Zimmerman 1998). The outer walls were about one meter thick and made of rough limestones set in mud mortar. The northeast wall was apparently built partly of plano-convex bricks and coupled with suggestions of a trench along the northeast side that contained bodies (Woolley 1934: 54)—evidence for the actual location of the doorway of the tomb. A doorway in the northeast wall would change this structure's bent axis approach into a direct approach as is seen in RT 779 and RT 1236, which RT 777 closely resembles. The doorway identified by Woolley in the southeast wall was blocked by stones set in mud mortar 2.50 m up the entrance ramp.

The interior of the structure is divided into two chambers. The entrance passage was about 4.50 x 0.90 m, and the main chamber was about 4.35 x 2.70 m. These dimensions, however, are approximate because the walls and roof were partially collapsed. Inside, the walls were plastered with mud and the floor was of clay (Woolley 1934). On the exterior, the walls and roof were plastered with green clay. Both chambers apparently had wooden ceilings about 1.30 m above the floor.

According to Woolley, the long and narrow entrance passageway was roofed with a stone barrel vault (Woolley 1934). A reconstruction of

this tomb is given in Zimmerman 's studies (1998) (see Appendix 11). While the tomb occupied the whole of the shaft proper, there was a narrow trench cut against its N-E wall in which there were three male skeletons armed with spears, and in the *dromos* there was a fourth, all of which were interpreted as guards as in the case of RT 789, RT 800, and RT 1236 or the Y cemetery at Kish (Gibson 1972; Woolley 1934).

Two different chambers were uncovered. Along with the four skeletons, there was evidence of at least four additional bodies in the antechamber. The main chamber contained an individual who was probably a female elite member judging from their jewelry and associated objects. The other three were potentially sacrificed individuals, a male and two others whose sex was uncertain (Woolley 1934). Judging from the paralleled tombs and the matching grave goods, the royal personage might have been a woman (Moorey 1977), but assertions without the corroboration of osteological analyses, and the potential of cross-dressing at Ur make this assertion difficult to maintain. Moreover, although this context exhibits some of the potential signs of human sacrifice, there was no mention of violence or binding among the individuals, nor was there in the case of the previous tombs.

RT 779

According to reports, this is one of the largest tombs found, consisting of a large, stone-built chamber with four rooms (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 5) (Woolley 1934). However, in all subsequent publications, RT 779 is said to have two long chambers flanking two smaller, domed chambers with a maximum external height of about 2.20 m (Woolley 1934).

Woolley reports the shaft's dimensions as 12.00 x 8.50 m, but Zimmerman reports that the tomb's outer dimensions more closely match the 12.00 x 9.00 m reported earlier (Woolley 1934; Zimmerman 1998). The entrance ramp is preserved for a length of about 4.00 m and an ascent of about 2.30 m with 1.5 m of steps at its uppermost end. A small forecourt of about 1.1 x 2.6 m was at the bottom of the ramp (Woolley 1934). The entrance to the tomb chamber at the bottom of the entrance ramp was accessible through an arched doorway constructed of the same stone rubble as the chamber's walls.

No obvious death pit was found, but Woolley suggested that the upper shaft may once have contained structures or other burials. One hypothesis argues that the multiple rooms inside the largest chamber may serve the purpose of a death pit (Woolley 1934). The two central chambers suffered badly from damages caused by the collapse of the roof and ancient looting. Despite this situation, Chamber D had at least four human bodies, although their fragments were very scattered and badly preserved, and these were associated with several objects including the Standard of Ur (Woolley 1934). The actual number of sacrificed individuals or the presence of any royal personage cannot be known, but the few artifacts inside, the size of the chamber, and a repetition of known patterns provide clear indications of retainer sacrificial practices.

RT 789

Woolley called this the "*king's Grave*" (Woolley 1934: 62) due to the controversial *elaborate* death pit that included a great number of sacrificed individuals whose bodies were arranged with many weapons (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 6). According to reports, this tomb was a semi-freestanding

structure in the north corner of its shaft, which measured about 10.00 x 5.00 m, lying N-E by S-W, and being entered by a sloped dromos from the N-W side to the W corner (Woolley 1934). The floor of the pit was 8.30 m below the modern surface, and the walls of the chamber were of limestone rubble up to a height of 1.50 m, above which came a single course of burnt brick that supported the roof. The roof itself is made of baked bricks laid in true voussoir fashion (Zimmerman 1998).

On its exterior surface, the vault was plastered in clay and capped with a course of bricks laid flat (Woolley 1934). The apsidal ends of the vault were supported by pendentives. Access to the chamber's interior was gained through a doorway arched with mudbricks. Although Woolley reports this doorway as being 1.15 m wide, it is only 0.85 m wide according to the plan (Woolley 1934: Figure 10). However, a photograph confirms the wider width. Moreover, in antiquity, the doorway was sealed with brick and stone. Inside, the structure measured about 4.00 x 1.80 m.

On the interior, half-way down the *dromos*, there was a circular pit 0.75 m in diameter and 2.50 m deep that was filled with sodden earth and no objects, which Woolley suggested was for libations (Woolley 1934). At the foot of the *dromos*, six individuals were found wearing copper helmets and carrying spears, which supported Woolley's hypothesis that these were soldiers or guards. It is worth mentioning that one of these individuals was in much better condition than the others, which made it possible to carry out Computed Tomography (CT) to reveal their cause of death as blunt trauma (Baadsgaard et al. 2012; Fletcher et al. 2008). This argument is further supported by the following: "*on the blade of each spear was engraved a bull's leg, apparently the badge of the king's bodyguard (U. 10825-8; Types 3)*" (Woolley 1934: 64). The remains of two chariots, each drawn by three oxen (with the body of a groom (No. 44) by the animals' heads), were in the shaft

immediately in front of the entrance, and, according to Woolley, the skull of one of the drivers lay behind one of the chariots (Nos. 43, 36) (Woolley 1934). A depression in the floor near the southeast wall probably held the primary burial (UE II, 71).

NE of the charts, an open pit was found with at least 63 bodies and possibly more due to the disorganized arrangement of unidentified bones in the shaft. As argued in the reports and following the case of the other tombs, looting and poor preservation limited the results. Most of the bones were so completely decayed that they were, in fact, reduced to a layer of brownish powder. It is noteworthy that a row of probable women was half-leant against the SW wall of the tomb-chamber (Nos. 51-62) (Woolley 1934) and that the most important (or at least the most richly adorned) of all bodies in the grave were those of women, while the others, especially those that lined the passage leading to the chamber door, were men.

The occupants here should most likely be considered members of the court, singers and dancers, or artists in general, while the others would then be their guards or soldiers, but further discussion on this is provided later. No main royal personage was detected, although a depression in the floor near the SE wall probably held the primary burial, as in the case of RT 1236 (Woolley 1934).

RT 800

Diverse contributions (Zimmerman & Zettler 2021) have been written about RT 800 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 7), or at least what Woolley associated with the tomb of Puabi (Moorey 1977; Pilar Pardo 2009; Pollock 1985; Woolley 1934), but new studies have clarified the actual nature, chronology, and function of this structure (Zimmerman 1998). This grave consisted of a multi-chamber structure (RT 800a / RT 800b): the tomb-

chamber (4.35 m x 2.80 m) with the body of the main personage (distinguished by its ostentatious display) accompanied directly by two other female individuals and the shaft or death pit (a rectangle measuring 1.75 m x 4.00 m lying N-E by S-W) (Woolley 1934).

The soil into which the grave had been cut was badly disturbed and too loose, probably due to later interments, making the outlines of the death pit very difficult to trace (Woolley 1934). Abutting the northeast wall of the RT 789 tomb chamber was the RT 800 tomb chamber, its floor 0.40 m below the floor of RT 789 (Woolley 1934). Its limestone rubble walls rose 1.40 m before being topped with a layer of baked bricks. Likewise, the roof was a barrel vault of brick with apsidal ends supported on pendentives, and the interior dimensions of the chamber measured about 4.35 x 2.80 m (Woolley 1934). A ceiling like the one in RT 789 should have existed to support the roof if it was constructed from the outside (as Woolley contends). The chamber walls were plastered up to 0.60 m, possibly with a matting dado and wood paneling above (Zimmerman 1998).

Before going deeper into the chronological relationship of RT 800a and RT 800b, there was an oval hole of one meter's depth in the floor of the *dromos* as in the case of RT 789 and RT 1054, which led Woolley to interpret it as a libation ritual (Woolley 1934) associated with the actual sacrifice. Between this pit and the entrance to the shaft there was a shallow rectangular depression in the *dromos* floor wherein five human skeletons (males) lay in a row with dagger-blades, razors, and seven clay saucers (Woolley 1934). Once again, these objects and a preliminary osteological analysis allowed the excavators to interpret these as the bodies of guards or soldiers as in the case of the entrances of RT 789, RT 1236, and RT 1237. At the SW end of the shaft there were, furthermore, a harp and ten individuals (female). The harp stood against the pit wall and one female individual lay

right against it with the bones of her hands placed to the strings; these were likely members of the court dedicated to musical performances as depicted in glyptic (Moorey 1977; Woolley 1934). As Woolley stated, the other female individuals were arranged in two rows facing each other, all equipped with rich jewelry and the head-dress of the court.

In the center of the death pit was a chariot associated with two drawn animals: asses in whose bones the bodies of four grooms were mixed with a fifth human skeleton lying just clear of their hoofs against the corner of the entrance. In front of the stone-paved recess were large vessels of copper and silver, and an empty wooden chest measuring 2.25 x 1.10 m and surrounded by ostentatious objects or offerings occupied the middle of the north-east part of the pit close to the chariot (Woolley 1934). Woolley argued that the chest had been placed centrally in order to hide the looting hole made in the roof of the RT 789 chamber below, but there is no archeological corroboration for this theory. Against its SW end lay the body of a man who Woolley named the "Keeper of the Wardrobe" (Woolley 1934: 74), and two other skeletons were found near its N corner and the NE end. In total, RT 800 held the remains of over 20 individuals that Woolley connected with the death pit (RT 800a) of the tomb-chamber of Puabi (RT 800b), although this hypothesis might be erroneous, for the arguments in favor of it are weak.

It is, however, mandatory to develop this hypothesis, for it is crucial to a better understanding of the functions of these tombs. Architecturally, RT 800 is very similar to RT 789, however, the associated death pit was found directly above RT 789 (above and to the side of the RT 800 tomb chamber (Zimmerman 1998), which was found at a depth of seven meters below the modern ground-surface), whereas the chamber at the end of the pit was 1.70 m lower than that. Zimmerman proposed that the RT 800 death

pit and the RT 800 tomb chamber actually belonged to two separate graves: the death pit is roughly 12.00 x 4.00 m, but it is irregularly shaped, and reports and images are available in addition to further re-examinations of the cemetery that align with Zimmerman's proposal.

Starting with potential errors in the structure of the tomb, Woolley presented and discarded suggestions of a door in the SW wall of RT 800b (Woolley 1934),⁴² but new studies suggest a different picture that is not only supported by the distribution of artifacts within the tomb chamber but also with methodological approaches to the tombs. Zimmerman argued that this was due to a typographic error, for his field notes show mudbrick in the southern end of the SW wall. He added: "*Woolley probably meant either "west face of the south-west side [of the chamber]" or "south end of the south-west side [of the chamber]"*" (Zimmerman 1998: 17). The descriptions of his field notes could indicate the collapse of an arched doorway or its deliberate sealing. Considering that the arched doorway of RT 789's tomb chamber was sealed with bricks set on edge and considering that RT 789 is the structure most closely resembling this tomb, it is quite likely that Woolley discovered the brick filling of the chamber's doorway but failed to recognize it as such (Zimmerman 1998).

Supporting this assertion is the fact that during the excavation of RT 1054, the blockage in the door could not be easily distinguished from its surrounding walls (Woolley 1939). This is entirely feasible given their difficulties in finding the doorway of RT 1054; following Zimmerman's proposal, the excavators simply did not possess the technical skill to find the blocked doorway in the wall of RT 800's chamber. Hence, Woolley's

⁴² These suggestions include evidence of mudbrick and a possible arch in the "west end of the south-west side" of the chamber (Woolley 1934).

objection that a door could not have existed in RT 800's tomb chamber because access to it would have disturbed the bodies in the northeast end of RT 789 forecourt can be dismissed by dating RT 800's chamber as earlier than RT 789 (Zimmerman 1998). In fact, evidence suggests that too few arguments support a relationship between RT 800a and RT 800b, especially when the order of their excavations was as follows: RT 800's death pit, then RT 789, and finally RT 800's tomb chamber (Woolley 1928). As Woolley admitted, the disturbance by later graves was in such conditions that he had great difficulty in defining the edges of the RT 800 death pit (Woolley 1934). As seen in the excavation of the death pit, it stopped about 0.50 m from the outermost edge of the SW wall of the tomb chamber as they ceased excavation in the NE end of the death pit 1.10 m from the E corner of the wardrobe box in the RT 800 death pit.

Accepting this hypothesis, would mean that RT 800b either never had a death pit or, as Zimmerman suggested, that its forecourt still lay beneath the floor of RT 789 given that Woolley would never have dug below the floor. Woolley consistently reports that the floor of 800b is 0.40 m lower than the floor of RT 789; while this is no great depth, it is enough to conceal human skeletons (Zimmerman 1998). Nevertheless, this assertion must be considered carefully until further excavations allow further investigations.

RT 1050

RT 1050 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 8) is the most complex grave in the royal category, and it is likely that the entire complex in fact corresponds to several burial sequences rather than pertaining to a single grave (Zimmerman 1998; Woolley 1939). The upper mudbrick walls measure 7.20 x 10.00 m along NE and NW axes (Woolley 1934) although the plan shows a square building. The structure's interior is subdivided into

multiple rooms by cross-walls. The NE cross-wall was mostly destroyed in excavation before its presence was noted (Woolley 1934). Moreover, two chambers were originally thought to belong to two separate structures and were respectively designated RT 1050 and RT 1051 before being re-organized into the same structure (Woolley 1934).

The interior of the structure was filled with multiple layers of animal bones, pottery sherds, and human skeletal remains. Four of these were at a depth of 0.40 to 0.50 m below the tops of the walls, one was a complete skeleton sprawled amid the pots across the middle of the room, and of the others only the skulls were preserved. Six more skulls lay at depths varying from 0.60 to 0.70 m, and one lay in the bottom layer at 0.80 m. (Woolley 1934).

The uppermost layer consisted of burnt earth, ashes, charred wood, and small lumps of lime 0.20 to 0.30 m thick, which Woolley concludes are the remains of a flat roof (Woolley 1934: 92). The southwest wall of this structure was founded on a rubbish tip, but the other walls were founded on a leveled filling of red earth. Below this uppermost structure, a simple reed coffin rested on a ledge formed by a short mud-brick wall along the SW side of the tomb shaft (Woolley 1934). An inverted clay basin was below the coffin, which Woolley suspected was unrelated to the grave because it lay outside the tomb shaft. Below the reed coffin, the grave shaft constricts to roughly 4.00 x 4.00 m. On a mudbrick floor 0.50 m thick, over 40 individuals were found, including a wooden coffin at the southwest edge of the pavement (Woolley 1934: 94). Because many of the bones had disappeared and their existence was chiefly noticed through teeth or from the beads round their necks, the original number of bodies would have been higher (Woolley 1934).

Although the SE and NW walls stop with the floor, the NE wall continued below the floor into the tomb's death pit (Woolley 1934). This death pit, constituting the lowest part of RT 1050, contained rows of at least 12 bodies on an upper surface and broken pottery on a lower surface (UE II, 96). A four-chamber mudbrick construction was at the top, which contained layers of collapsed mudbrick and mixed skeletons.

However, the side of the pit had steps in several places and may indicate more than one burial episode even in this portion of RT 1050. At one level the remains of a reed coffin sat, and a wooden one was located at a deeper level. The wooden coffin rested on a thick prepared surface and beneath part of this lay around 40 bodies, which Woolley took to be the death pit of the royal tomb. He believed that there must have been a chamber above this and that it had been looted, but no archeological corroboration accounts for the absence of such a chamber.

According to Moorey (and without considering the potential multiple interments at RT 1050 with their respective sacrificed individuals), this may be the interment of A-su sikil-digir(ak), the wife of a king of Ur. However, evidence does not tilt the balance in favor of this hypothesis, but rather the tomb of A-kalam-dug, King (*fugal*) of Ur (Moorey 1977).

RT 1054

This grave site is complex, consisting of a deep, walled shaft above rubble and an earth domed multi-structure (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 9). As stated in reports, the soil above this tomb was filled with later graves that destroyed any superstructure that there might have been in the upper part of the tomb-shaft; the tops of the original walls were only encountered at a depth of four meters below the modern surface (Woolley 1934). The building's walls seem to have been a meter thick, enclosing a space that

measures about 6.00 m from NE to SW and as much again from NW to SE, but Woolley interpreted that the SE wall had been ruined (Woolley 1934). A cross-wall running NE by SW divided the area into two parts, one of which survives with a width of 3.50 m; this space is again subdivided into two unequal parts by the cross-wall. The walls differ greatly from one another; the outer NE and SW walls have their foundations set 2.90 m below the level at which the box lay, and the north-west wall only proceeds one meter below that level with cross-walls going no deeper than 0.15 m.

The walls of the shaft above began from a layer packed over the domed chamber and, having considered Zimmerman's studies, RT 1054 is split here into two intact and undisturbed structures: 1054a for the upper structure and 1054b for the lower structure (Zimmerman 1998) as the nonexistent architectural interrelationship between these buildings makes the hypothesis of one interment hard to maintain.⁴³ Woolley based his explanation on relative positions and seems thus to have considered them to be part of the same grave.

The foundations of a mass burial were in 1054a, which Woolley interpreted as part of a death pit (1054a) that belonged to the main burial in the lower structure (1054b). Four burials were found at different layers. High in the shaft (within what Woolley originally assumed was a vaulted chamber) was a wooden box containing two daggers and a seal inscribed for Meskalamdug as LUGAL (Moorey 1972). Beneath this was a succession of clay floors with offerings in clay vessels and simple subsidiary burials, which Woolley associated directly with a stone-vaulted primary burial

⁴³ However, Woolley believed he had evidence of a continuous process that included the packing and smoothing of layers above the dome and the construction of the shaft (Woolley 1934).

beneath them. Likewise, the bodies of five individuals were in RT 1054b, all being identified as males with the exception of one female (Woolley 1934). This female individual was believed to be the elite member, for she lies in the center of the tomb with rich and opulent grave goods, but this interpretation remains controversial (Marchesi 2004). This sequence of multiple floors suggests that they were periodically reopened, re-floored, and prepared for the interment of additional bodies and serve as one of the most important tombs for reconstructing retainer rituals (Zimmerman 1998; Woolley 1934).

DP 1157

Tomb 1157 might, indeed, be part of RT 1151 and 1156 (Woolley 1934).⁴⁴ 1157 is certainly a DP, but the question remains whether the two coffin burials of 1151 and 1156 (all three of which were excavated simultaneously) belonged to the same grave or were later burials that destroyed the earlier tomb when they were dug.

Below the coffins, the shaft was recognizable and was filled with a mass of plano-convex mud bricks. After a mixed layer made mostly of pottery fragments at a depth of 9.20 m below the modern surface (and thus 3.00 m below the two coffins) came the floor of the shaft with the bodies lying thick upon it. The floor measured ca. 5.00 x 3.25 m and contained 58 bodies mixed with traces of fire all over the floor and other signs of exposure to heat as seen in some other royal tombs at Ur (Fletcher et al. 2008).

Most of the bodies were not associated with objects with the exceptions of some cylinder seals, a silver wire hair ring, a string of lapis

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, there is no reconstruction of this tomb.

cylindrical and silver date-shaped beads, a necklace of faceted lapis cylinders, a copper pin, lapis double conoid beads, two cockleshells containing paint, and lapis and silver cylindrical and date-shaped beads. It is noteworthy that a copper razor, axe, and knife were associated with individuals 45 and 50, highlighting their roles as guards or soldiers. However, if so, why were they not buried and represented as the guards from RT 789 and 800 or DP 1237?

As Woolley admitted, the sides of the shaft were only recognized and traced below the graves of RT 1151 and 1156. The only hint of material connection that Woolley established were three holes caused by the decay of three upright, wooden shafts that rose to the level of the coffins immediately above the N corner of the underlying pit; if these decayed shafts had been the shafts of spears set upright in the filling of the death-pit, as is likely, then the levels overlap, but no proof corroborates his theory (Woolley 1934).

DP 1232

The proximity to DP 1237 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 11) and their near parallel depth made Woolley wonder whether DP 1232 was indeed an independent burial or if it was meant to be part of DP 1237 and, thus, one single grave (Woolley 1934). As the excavators could find no tomb chamber associated with DP 1232, Woolley was inclined to place it with DP 1237, but that death pit had no chamber either, or they are likely two separate graves. Whatever the case, it essentially consisted of a pit measuring 4.50 x 3.00 m at the bottom and approached by a *dromos* from the NE. The southern part of the SW side was destroyed, apparently by looting, but there was no tomb-chamber or related architecture in any case (Zimmerman 1998).

As in the case of DP 580, no bodies were uncovered, but the remains of a cart stood on the lower part of the dromos with the very poorly preserved skeletons of asses, oxen, and sheep, and two male skeletons interpreted by the excavator as a driver and groom due to their connection to the cart and the animal remains (Woolley 1934).

RT 1236

The plan of RT 1236⁴⁵ appears nearly identical, although it is more badly plundered than RT 779. Woolley assumed that this was the royal tomb of A-gig-hu-im based on cylinder seal inscriptions, but this has since been questioned (Marchesi 2004; Moorey 1972). The shaft of RT 1236 is the largest among the tombs, measuring 13.10 x 9.20 m, and the tomb chamber occupied the entire area of the shaft (Woolley 1939). The remains of other flooring and structures were preserved higher up in the shaft. Woolley interpreted these as evidence of later installations belonging to the same ritual (Woolley 1934) as he had done with RT 1050 and RT 1054. A *dromos* led to the chamber's door which was blocked with masonry rubble and plastered in mud (Woolley 1934). The door itself was 1.70 m high and 1.10 m wide and topped with a corbeled arch that stretched 0.75 meters above the floor (UE II, p.112; see Figure 22). As witnessed in the lower chamber of RT 1054, the floors of RT 1236 were noticeably bowed by the pressure of the superstructure.

The building was divided into four chambers, a long hall at the N end, another at the S end, and two smaller, square chambers in the middle.

⁴⁵ As in the case of DP 1157, there is no reconstruction of this tomb.

No individuals were discovered in any of the chambers due to ancient robbery, but the excavators believed that these chambers functioned as subsidiary burials and places where offerings were made after interment (Woolley 1934). Woolley concluded that the undersides of the vaults were intended to be exposed, and the timber holes were for the support of a temporary center in the construction of the roofs.

DP 1237

DP 1237 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 12) is the largest shaft with respect to its rich discoveries and the great number of sacrificed individuals, although decay made it impossible to obtain coherent descriptions (Woolley 1934). Named "*the Great Death Pit*" (Woolley 1932: 113) for its large dimensions among the other DP of the Royal Cemetery, it measured 8.50 x 7.50 m. Not only had the upper parts of DP 1237 been disturbed by later trenches, but Woolley also believed the royal grave to which this pit had belonged to have been nearby (four meters from the SE to the E corner), albeit having been destroyed by robbers (Woolley 1934). At the northeast edge and south corner, the walls were supported by mud bricks; the floor and walls were partially plastered with mud and coated with mats (Vidale 2013).

The pit consisted of a shaft full of rich objects and grave goods like lapis lazuli, carnelian, different types of ornaments and jewelry, and cylinder seals among many others, which were associated with 74 individuals including six males (identified as soldiers due by their parallel contexts to RT 777, 489, 800, and 1157) and 68 female individuals (all very opulently dressed and associated with musical instruments) (Woolley 1934).

It should be remarked that, as can be seen in the plan, the bodies lay very close together and were often actually overlapping, and the bones were in very poor condition. The recognition of the main individual, first argued to be body No. 9, was made more difficult by decay, although new studies have suggested body No. 61 due to related objects like cylinder seals (U 12380) (Baadsgaard et al. 2012; Pollock 1981; Woolley 1934)⁴⁶.

Woolley included this tomb, as well as RT 1236 in the RT category due to the tremendous ritual sacrifices of both of these tombs although no architecture was found, which was a crucial category for Woolley at that time. With no associated tomb chamber, nor any type of monumental architecture as in the cases of other death pits like 789 and 800, Woolley argued that the chamber must have been completely looted and pointed to small amounts of rubble as evidence of this, but the large size of this death pit and the extraordinary wealth displayed with the bodies, although decayed, may in fact suggest the undisturbed state of this tomb.

PG 1266

Although Woolley initially classified this grave as PG and not as RT, evidence suggests its inclusion in the RT category due to its potential sacrificial scenario, and it will thus be considered as such in this book. RT 1266 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 13) consists of a rectangular shaft measuring 1.60 x 0.60 m. Near the SW end there was a slight depression, destined for offerings as in the case of other royal tombs; this characteristic hole is widely attested throughout other royal tombs but not in private graves, which makes this tomb even more noteworthy.

⁴⁶ A different point of view is given in Vidal's (2012) discussion of individuals from DP 1237.

Concerning individuals, it contains a single interment of three individuals of which one of them (the one in the center) stood out for its ornaments and associated offerings while the other two were side by side with the main individual. As established, the body in the center was the richest with a broad fillet of plain gold with a dotted border on their forehead (U 12126) and two spiral, gold wire hair rings beside their head (U12133); a two-layer necklace of gold and lapis-lazuli was around their neck with and carnelian beads (U 12127), and a gold filigree finger-ring was on their left hand (U 12134). A quantity of shell rings was just below their knees were (U 12137). Pins with lapis lazuli heads were by the head of the body to the left (U 12128), while the other body had no personal ornaments. Finally, in the N corner of the grave there were numerous vessels and a copper dagger (Woolley 1934).

It does not seem likely that three individual members of the same family had died naturally in parallel and were buried in RT 1266. The careful disposal of these bodies, the offerings, and the construction of the tomb similarly suggest that these were not deaths of a sudden illness or epidemic. This pattern, although not typically seen at Ur, is more common at the Y Cemetery at Kish, Umm el-Marra, or even Arslantepe, where retainer sacrificial practices are essentially shown by a single interment of high- and low-ranking individuals in the same tomb or in specially attached secondary chambers. Because no bioanthropological analyses were carried out at RT 1266 due to the tomb's advanced state of decay—and taking other cases into consideration where the violence against sacrificed individuals was not shown but hidden from the ancient witnesses of the burial by covering them with ornaments or by laying the wounded skull to the opposite side—this grave shows a comparatively humble retainer ritual better aligned with the rest of the evidence from the 3rd millennium BC ANE.

DP 1332

Only the death pit of this tomb was found at a depth of eight meters below the present surface, and no traces of architecture were recovered due to disturbances of the soil (Woolley 1934). The bottom of this pit was found at nine meters, and its measurements (excluding its S limits) are 4.30 x 2.40 m.

DP 1332 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 15) presented two different layers of bones separated by a stratum of 1.10 m, which suggests a reused or re-opened tomb as in other cases. The upper layer contained 23 individuals, while the lower layer contained 20 individuals, but in both layers, decay had severely affected their preservation. In the top layer the bodies were arranged in rows of five across the pit's axis, but the arrangement was less orderly in the lower layer and at the NE end because there was only one body there, which Woolley judged must have been a musician based on its position in relation to a lyre. In many cases, the position of the skulls could only be identified by the teeth or, where these failed, by other metal ornaments and beads (Woolley 1934).

RT 1524

In the case of Ur, multiple layers of various interments with different social statuses are, indeed, a signal of human sacrificial rituals, and RT 1524 shall thus not only be considered an RT but even a tomb with potential sacrificed individuals given its parallels to the contexts of RT 1266 and RT 1050 or 1054a and 1054b.

RT 1524 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 16) is a rectangular tomb measuring 2.00 x 2.50 m, which seems to have had a dromos that entered from the N corner (0.8 m wide). This was contained to the SW, by a definite

wall of which four courses remained—two courses being laid herring-bone fashion over two horizontal courses and the brickwork again resting on two courses of large unshaped clay lumps (Woolley 1934). As in other royal tombs, the NW face of the shaft was covered with a smooth lime plaster of the same type as is found in the stone-built RT chambers, and this had again been covered with matting of which the imprint was left on the plaster.

At 0.70 m below the top of the “platform,” there was a mud floor covered with reed matting: on this lay two bodies, A (with no offerings or ornaments) and B (with a number of offerings including a bronze axe-head and calcite cylinder seals). Three meters below the top of the brick platform was a burial in a wooden coffin. Poor preservation and apparent disturbances did not allow Woolley to hypothesize a connection between these two interments, but the wooden coffin burial with the young female inside presented typical patterns of a royal/elite social status while the other two individuals (placed in matting as had been many other sacrificed individuals) and additional contextual and spatial evidence make RT 1524 worth considering.

RT 1618

This tomb (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 17) is very poorly preserved, and little can be said about it. However, it is a rectangular grave that is documented as measuring less than 4.50 x 2.00 m (Woolley 1934). In many ways, RT 1618 resembles RT 755 and RT 1422 neither of which were identified as RT as in the cases in which there was no evidence of additional bodies. It also resembles RT 1266 with the only difference being the existence of coffins. Although this already supports its inclusion as an RT, this grave contained a large wooden coffin in which lay the remains of an individual, presumably male (Woolley 1934), wearing four *brîm* headbands

(U 13793-6) and other rich ornaments. Remains of another headdress that Woolley believed to have been a decayed wig were also found in the coffin. Offerings were outside with four individuals in what constituted a small death pit (Woolley 1934).

RT 1631

Being one of the smallest royal tombs, this grave had been almost completely looted. It lay very close to RT 1648 but was not as deep (reckoning the height by sea-level) (Woolley 1934). The tomb shaft (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 18) is approximately 6.00 x 3.50 m (Woolley 1934). Woolley also stated that the tomb chamber is 4.00 m long. It consisted mostly of the remains of a rubble-built chamber that had originally been vaulted.

Inside the tomb lay the disturbed skeleton of one individual, but the small space outside the chamber entrance held very little. Woolley presumed this would have held the remains of the attendants to the royal burial, but the space was small, and it could only have held a few if that were so (Woolley 1934).

Unlike the case of RT 1266 where some evidence of retainer sacrifice was likely present and despite the fact that there is no direct evidence of sacrifice in RT 1631, it shall be considered as a candidate due to its parallels to the other royal tombs.

RT 1648

According to Woolley, RT 1648 (Appendix 9, Table IX, Figure 19) is the smallest RT, but as is the case with RT 1266, its evidence resembles human sacrifice. As in the case of RT 1631, for example, it consisted of a

built chamber with a small space outside the door that lay 7.30 m below the modern surface (Woolley 1934).

The shaft measured 3.30 x 2.40 m, and a wooden coffin containing a single skeleton was inside the chamber (2 x 1.50 m). Outside the coffin but still inside the chamber were three other skeletons. The individuals were identified as: young adult female (1648a), a mature female probably around 50 years of age (1648b), an adolescent male (1648c), and a robust male with patterns of ligaments and muscle development suggesting he carried loads on his back as a porter (Baadsgaard et al. 2012: 139; Keith 1934) as seen in the Standard of Ur (Molleson & Hodgson 2003). It is noteworthy that these individuals also exhibited exposure to heat. The small space outside the chamber contained offerings and animal bones.

Discussion

Later examples of retainer sacrifice are provided by RT 1845, 1846, and 1847, but these were in extremely rotten conditions (Woolley 1934) that undermine the possibility of any definite conclusions. Furthermore, Woolley's argument for not including RT 1266 and 1524 as tombs featuring evidence of sacrifice was a mistake due purely on his reliance on the "*lack of richness objects,*" due to which he failed to take any of the patterns that perfectly match other royal tombs into account. When this evidence is compared not only to other royal tombs at Ur but also to other synchronic sites such as Umm el-Marra (Schwartz 2012), the evidence is parallel, and a potential pattern can be created for the 3rd millennium BC. Concerning the chronology of the Cemetery, it is important to get a sense of which royal tombs were built earlier or later, for this could be used to argue for an ostentatious and opulent display of ritual at the beginning of the practice (RT 1236, 779, and 777) that led to a degraded or scattered replication of the

ritual over time without equivalent opulence (or vice versa). Zimmerman's studies suggest a reasonable scenario as follows:

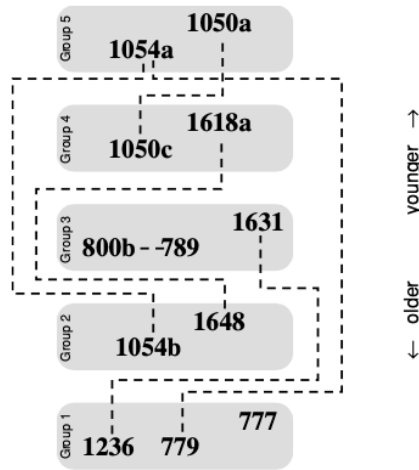


Figure 1. Chronological and typographical order of the most important tombs provided by Zimmerman (1998: 49).

This provides a unique hypothetical window into the origins, roles, and the cause of death of the sacrificed individuals at Ur. However, while most of sacrificed individuals were, indeed, female, this theory shall be re-examined because Woolley himself admitted that cross-dressing was exhibited at RT 1312 (Appendix 10, Table X, Figure 14) (or PG 1312 by Woolley) (Woolley 1934) where a male individual had been placed entirely with female objects and ornaments in a single, simple burial and at DP 1237 where the same display occurs (Cohen 2005). This demonstrates how hazardous it is to base the sex of individuals, especially those that have hypothetically been sacrificed, on their grave goods and surrounding objects and ornaments.

With respect to the cause of death of sacrificed individuals, none of the bones preserve visible evidence of the cause of death except for individuals from RT 1648 (Molleson & Hodgson 2003), the soldiers or guards from RT

789's death pit, and the females from DP 1237. These were radiographed and subjected to Computed Tomography (CT)-scans at the HUP, which yielded clarifying and fascinating results both regarding their mode of death and post-mortem treatment (Baadsgaard et al. 2012):

- One of the female individuals from DP 1237 (skull 30-12-551) was an individual in her late teens or early twenties at death.
- Skull B17312 belonged to a male individual, a soldier from RT 789, that was between 25 and 30 years of age when he died (Moore et al. 1963; White 2000).

Both of these skulls presented peri-mortem fractures that were bound and depressed and an area of detached bone resulting from a forceful blow to the skull caused by a sharp, weighted weapon. As recently argued, the weapon that best fits this description found at the Cemetery comes from a later context copper battle-axe that has a single long spike on the one side and three short spikes on the other: U 9680 (Woolley 1934). This conclusion not only corroborates Woolley's hypothesis of human sacrificial practices at Ur but also sheds light on the act of killing itself, which is far from what he had pictured at Ur (Woolley 1929).

In addition to revealing a feasible cause of death, CT scans revealed previously unknown details about the post-mortem treatment of individuals: small deposits of mercury with characteristic radio-opaque crystals, HgS, and other minerals such as arsenic used in ancient societies (e.g., ancient China) for the delay of putrefaction processes and as preservatives for corpses suggest a similar treatment at Ur. Furthermore, the female individual from DP 1237 showed ectocranial areas on the outer part of her skull that appear delaminated (e.g., the endocranial surface is not present). This feature is reminiscent of heat or burn damage to fresh

bone (Pope et al. 2004). According to Holck (1987), burning can be ranked according to the degree and type of exposure to fire, ranging from Grade 0, to Grade 4, resulting in a white appearance and chalky texture to bones at higher grades. Following Baadsgaard's studies (Baadsgaard et al. 2012), the skulls of the individuals at Ur correspond with Grade 1 or Grade 2 with bones showing evidence of heat alteration but no direct or full exposure to fire resulting in charring.

An increasing number of studies have sought to interpret and reinterpret the spectacular tombs excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley by exploring themes such as the maintenance and definition of elite power, contesting ideological and political struggles, the death of a *great household* member, the construction of elite identities, and methods of state control by terrorizing individuals. However, the overlooked evidence of this subcategory from other sites in the ancient Near East and comparable locations demands a mandatory re-examination similar to Woolley's but more in-depth that takes the retainer evidence from other ANE contexts into consideration.

In contrast to other studies (Leick 2002; Sürenhagen 2002; Winter 2010), I assert that the existence of retainer sacrificial rituals, constituting a pattern traceable throughout the ANE, is undeniable and must be considered. Based on the documentation produced during the 1926-1934 excavations, potential indicators or signatures found at the royal tombs demonstrate a clear pattern with paralleled synchronic sites across Mesopotamia and the ancient Near East that have been misinterpreted or overlooked. Ur has presented a diverse and heterogeneous picture of human sacrificial ritual practices that might be extrapolated to other sites as later discussed: *peri-mortem* preparation of the individuals and *post-mortem* treatment for the preservation of the corpses before interment; as

exposure to heat as in other royal tombs (Pfälzner 2007); prolonged time in mourning, in keeping with elite funeral ceremonies; re-utilization of tombs for multiple human sacrificial practices as in the case of RT 1050 (Woolley 1934); and, finally, food offerings or banquets held at RT, as in the case of RT 1054 (Zonta 2014). But are these signatures comparable at sites where retainer rituals are in evidence? Further discussion is provided later in this chapter.

Kish—The Y Cemetery

Based substantially on field reports by Watelin, L. C., Langdon, S. (1934). *Excavations at Kish IV*, Paris; Moorey, P. R. S. (1978). *Kish excavations, 1923-1933*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, and Gibson, M. (1972) *The city and area of Kish*.

Miami: Field Research Projects

Kish is a site consisting of eight mounds in southern Mesopotamia whose stratigraphy and relative chronology are predominantly based on material records showing an occupation from at least the 6th to the 1st millennium BC (Gibson 1972). Kish, paralleling the most important southern Mesopotamian sites, was surveyed, and excavated sporadically from the early 19th century until a joint Field Museum and University of Oxford team under Stephen Langdon thoroughly excavated it from 1923 to 1933 (Watelin & Langdon 1934). More recent excavations were carried out by a Japanese team but were abandoned in 2001 without further fieldwork (Matsumoto & Oguchi 2002).

The site that most likely contains human sacrificial remains appears in an ambiguous elite necropolis found at one of the mounds, which provides the earliest archeological sequence levels: The eastern mound

(Moorey 1966) of Y-Cemetery at Tell Ingharra (Appendix 10, Table X, Figure 1). According to the reports, the area of the western corner of the main monumental structure in front of the north-west face of the larger ziggurat (area E) was designated as the Y sounding and provides the strongest evidence of sacrificial remains. Moorey (1966) describes this area in the following reports:

A series of trenches running outwards, at right angles to the north-west face of the main temple, were described as B, B1, B2, B3, etc., from the west corner running eastwards, from approximately rooms Io to I 5.9 To the north of these another wide area was cleared by a series of trenches running parallel to the north-west face of the main temple, numbered C, C1, C2 etc., running towards the temple. In this area, at approximately 'plain level', two deep soundings were opened and designated 'Yw' and Ywn'. In the final stages of excavation, a further trench, designated 'D', but not to be confused with mound 'D' on the north-west corner of Ingharra, was cut along the north-east face of the temple.

(Moorey 1966: 19-21)

This work in the Y settlement unveiled a series of monumental buildings in what they called "Early Houses Stratum" (Watelin & Langdon 1934), including between 100-200 graves in mixed contexts that reuse an elite necropolis (Moorey 1978) dating to ca. 2900-2600 BC according to the reports and even recent studies (Dolce 2014; Marchetti 2006; Moorey 1976, 1978; Watelin & Langdon 1934). Although the excavators stated that "*no burial was recovered in the soil sufficiently well preserved to permit a reconstruction in detail*" (Watelin & Langdon 1934: 17), the majority of graves uncovered were buried simply and individually in half-crouched positions

under the house floors. This corroborates the well-known practice across the ancient Near East (Al-Shorman & Khwaileh 2015; Düring 2008; Porter & Boutin 2014) in which a body, often wrapped in matting and sometimes placed on a brick platform under a plano-convex brick vault, was set into a corner where the wall foundations formed two sides of the grave.

Gathering accurate or detailed description of the tombs has definitely been an arduous task, because the original reports by Watelin (Watelin & Langdon 1934) were not sufficiently descriptive and were full of errors and mistakes that differ from other published and unpublished reports (Gibson 1972; Moorey 1978). Yet, out of over 200 graves at the Y settlement, a group of tombs stood out, for they were much larger and more complex and contained the remains of multiple individuals, carts, equids, and other grave goods in what seemed to be a single event (Moorey 1978). There is also controversy and differentiation in the chronology of these tombs,⁴⁷ entailing arguments about their probable setting in 2750/2700-2450 BC, attributed mostly to the ED II (Gibson 1972; Marchetti 2006; Moorey 1978), which would include these tombs in a comparable range with the data at Ur and Umm el-Marra, which would support its categorization as possible retainer rituals.⁴⁸ Henceforward, tombs that contain these types of vehicles will fall under the term “cart-burials” (although further studies prefer to interpret these chariots as battle cars (Littauer & Crouwel 1979)), as current evidence supports what Moorey first argued:

⁴⁷ It would be relevant to separate the graves of the Y cemetery by period, mode of interment, origin of the shaft, etc. The published material gives us no possibility of doing this. There is, however, an unpublished report by Field on 200 graves from Y, in which the depth of the skeletons is given along with grave goods (Gibson 1972: 84).

⁴⁸ However, the reports omit any stratigraphical evidence for the date of the cart-burials (Moorey 1978).

I have used the term cart to describe the vehicles in these burials, rather than the more usual chariot, since in common English usage this denotes a vehicle, normally light, primarily for hunting and fighting. Such connotations may be misleading in this context. (Moorey 1978: 104)

Just under the *Red Stratum*, there were 12.00 graves scattered more or less evenly in the Y trench, forming a definite horizon at 12.00 m below the original surface of the mound (that is, two meters below the plain and almost one meter above the *Flood Level*) (Gibson 1972). Another horizon of graves occurs at 14.00 m (four meters below the plain), which includes one of the cart-burials (grave No. 322-324, 326/Cart-burial I). Two wheels were found, but it is possible that this chariot had four wheels originally (Gibson 1972; Moorey 1978). Alongside the cart were three skeletons or more, and a group of about 20 pots and a rein-ring were found. It is noteworthy that the tomb was divided in half by a low mudbrick wall between the human skeletons and the cart with the bovid (Appendix 10, Table X, Figure 2).

Odd references from 15.50 to 16.00 m are scattered throughout the published and unpublished reports, indicating another concentration of graves. This includes four rich tombs, Y 360, Y 363, Y 393, and Y 401. Burial Y 363 was associated with the skeletons of four or five animals, identified as *kunga*-equids, and Y 357 contained a male skeleton with his knees flexed at the entrance of the tomb (Watelin & Langdon 1934). These animals, lying at 15.50 m, were assumed by the excavators to have been the team that pulled the four-wheeled wagon (Cart-burial II) that was found at 16.00 m (six meters below the plain level) and are understood in various publications as a single burial (Gibson 1972; Moorey 1978). Gibson mistakenly argues based on unclear photographs that because the asses shown above the level of the chariot, they cannot have been the team for the

chariot (Gibson 1972). But the scenario is quite the opposite. The chariots appear to have been taken into the graves down a sloping ramp or shaft to a vaulted chamber of plano-convex brick and were in most cases set on a brick platform that connected with the slaughtered animals and human individuals higher up the ramp (Watelin & Langdon 1934). Poor preservation of one of the animal skeletons has obscured whether it is second animal at all, and the grave would thus have five skeletons unless these belonged to the others. It lay beside in front of the chariot at the depth of 16 m and has since been identified as bovid (Gibson 1972). Dr. Reed also confirmed the Expedition's identification of the other four animals as equid, and the animal found with Chariot Burial I as bovid.

As indicated in reports, it seems that the archeologists worked under very difficult conditions close to the water level and that two or three teams were combined from at least two burials in the case of the group around cart-burial II. The evidence we can glean indicates that both cart-burials I and II contained bovids, presumably oxen, as draft animals in accordance with some of the royal tombs of Ur (RT 789 and RT 800) where analyses have also allowed us to classify some of the draft animals as bovids (Dyson 1960). However, one question that remains unanswered concerns the method in which the animals were executed. As seen in Tell Umm el-Marra (Schwartz 2012; Weber 2008), some of the equids were not sacrificed but were rather placed on special installations after their natural deaths, which demonstrates their high value status in society. Hence, the question whether these equids really were slaughtered or had died naturally?

Another rich cart burial, cart-burial III (Gibson 1972; Moorey 1978), was found in the southern extension of the Y trench with human skeleton Y 529. This burial was 14.00 m deep (four meters below the plain) and is argued to have been associated with at least three chariots, although what

was found were probably only six wheels from two four-wheeled chariots. Another set of wheels was also discovered, denoting a fourth chariot burial in the southeast baulk of Y about 14.00 m under the edge of the larger ziggurat, but this is not recorded in detail. The disposal appears to be very similar to cart-burial II.

The size of these graves is also noteworthy because they were much larger than any of the others in the cemetery. There may also be traces of further cart-burials next to the larger Ziggurat, south-east of the Y settlement at four meters depth as noted in Moorey (1978): at IM 5764 (probably belonging to cart-burial I) and at graves No. 63 and 684. However, as Moorey asserted, “. . . every case in the Y sounding the cart-burials were so ill-recorded as to remain forever matter for debate” (Moorey 1978: 103).

In contrast to Moorey who considered the human sacrifice hypothesis for the Y-Cemetery “meagre” (Moorey 1978: 105), the evidence suggests a different scenario. While Moorey made comparisons to the findings from the Royal Cemetery of Ur, arguing from the absence of death-pits at Kish and from the fact that the quantity of grave goods in these tombs was no greater than in the remaining tombs that human sacrifice was improbable; however, when contrasted with parallel synchronic sites with similar evidence, everything suggests that human sacrifice is, indeed, a plausible interpretation at Kish despite the poor preservation and excavation methodology.

Admittedly, there is no evidence in the reports which may be used to clarify the status of these individuals or their cause of death, but they have been long argued to be sacrificed individuals (Gibson 1972; Moorey 1966, 1978; Watelin & Langdon 1934). The consensus bases their position on the tomb, that layout of these large structures is royal, and that all

individuals must have been buried simultaneously when the tombs were sealed; thus, the remains surely involved some killing as a ritual act. Thus, the arguments in favor of the sacrificial hypothesis emphasize correlations to the religious-political authorities of Kish, in which case they would serve as royal tombs (Moorey 1978); however, the evidence is too ambiguous to determine whether the individuals were, indeed, sacrificed—or, on the contrary, if they were simply elites.

Cross-cultural analysis has also allowed us to determine potential signs that supports this theory. As attested in ancient neighboring societies, cart-burials associated with individuals and draft animals (equids) are most likely to indicate human sacrificial ritual practices as in the case of 2nd millennium China (Rawson et al. 2020; Ying 2009). This probability increases when there are either signs of violence or binding on the individuals, and/or when all are placed within the entrance of the tombs, where their bodies are understood as representing guardians (as in the case of RT 789 from Ur (Woolley 1934)). This last picture is precisely the case of Y 357 / Cart-burial II, where a male skeleton was found at the entrance of the tomb in the outer walls (Moorey 1978).⁴⁹ Secondly, Moorey did not consider the grave goods from these tombs rich or luxurious enough to belong to a king or queen's burial, but this is precisely what equids, possibly *kunga* (Marchetti 2006), wagons, and sacrificed individuals represent. To him, the absence of *valuable* funerary equipment and the similarity of such objects with those of other tombs in the necropolis to the exception of the wagons and equids support his idea. Further argument in favor of this hypothesis is given by the paleoanthropological analysis of an individual

⁴⁹ It looks as if that is the case in the other tombs as well, but unfortunately it cannot be proved.

in tomb Y 494, for the individual shows features compatible with those of a habitual rider (Dolce 2014).⁵⁰

Furthermore, according to the reports and conceivably due to the extreme conditions, problems with preservation, and methods of excavation, no main individual to whom these offerings would have been made was detected in any of the cart-burials. The interments seem to be primary burials that were made simultaneously, and no differences in there are no perceivable archeological sequences to indicate a chronological disposal of one individual prior to the rest. As observed in the case of the Royal Cemetery of Ur or Arslantepe where the main individuals were in some cases placed in separate spaces, it would be reasonable to suggest that the elite individual burials from Y graves, especially those whose structures were built for interment (like Grave 373 underneath Y 357 (Moorey 1966)), might in fact represent the individuals for whom offerings had been placed in tombs Y 357, Y 529, and Y 237.

Their characteristic elite nature is not only sustained by the grave goods and the disposal of the individuals but is also supported by bioanthropological analysis as explained earlier (Dolce 2014). Do these thus represent the deceased elite to whom these sacrificed individuals belonged? Unfortunately, this would be challenging to demonstrate due to the impossibility of carrying out any analysis on the remains and the ambiguity of reports with respect to their exact stratigraphical and chronological ranges (Moorey 1978: 103). This is especially so with respect to the difficulty

⁵⁰ Nonetheless, there is very little evidence for equid-riding in the mid-3rd millennium BC. Even if this observation is correct, the evidence is insufficient and too ambiguous either to suggest an elite household or a servant/retainer.

of establishing the respective levels from which each was dug and the exact interrelations of each of the excavated structures to the others.

However even this can be proved according to some reports. Both dating the cart-burials and connecting these to the graves below is difficult to prove. That said, Moorey's findings present good arguments for a 2750/2700-2400 BC date and the reuse of these tombs for over 300 years (Moorey 1978). In addition to his arguments, Gibson supports this chronological hypothesis by emphasizing the objects associated with the burials. Accordingly, the cemetery would seem to be composed of three distinct periods of use. The earliest, dating to 2900-2700 BC, has burials incorporated into ruined houses at a level of 5-6 m below the plain. A second horizon dating to early 2700-2600 BC is also associated with houses about four meters below the plain and would seem to be the last period of interment before the *Flood Stratum* (Watelin & Langdon 1934). The third period, beginning in the mid-3rd millennium BC, is marked by cart-burials above the *Flood Level*. Consequently, the group of individual interments noted to be in the area west of the cart-burials and from the stratum between the *Flood* and the *Red Stratum* in field reports would be contemporary with the cart-burials and could provide evidence for the tombs of the main deceased.

Other arguments in favor of this hypothesis arise when comparing the evidence of cart-burials with parallels to 3rd millennium BC burials from Susa and Ur (Le Breton 1957; Moorey 1978; Watelin & Langdon 1934: 17-34; Woolley 1934) and when noting the chronological shift produced when analyzed and compared in greater depth.

Another argument in favor is the monumentality and visibility of these graves as in the cases of Ur and Tell Banat. Monumentality can also be discerned and discussed when compared to the site with the most

resembling evidence: the Royal Cemetery of Ur. The shafts of the similarly constructed graves at Ur were ten meters or more in depth (Moorey 1966; Zimmerman 1998). The cart-burials at Kish are just deep enough to cover the vehicles. It is difficult to believe that such elaborate burials, obviously for persons of consequence, could, like the others, be dug beneath the floors of occupied houses. It is much more reasonable, according to the evidence to suppose that the cart-burials were cut into an area of the Y settlement which had been abandoned. Its potential chronology and later reuse in religious or secular monumental architecture would be further arguments to connect these burials to the ones at Ur and Susa (Moorey 1966, 1978).

To conclude, although neither stratigraphical information for any more exact dating nor any further details of these tombs are available, the context of the tombs allow us to categorize them outside of the normal burial pattern of placing individuals under floors in private contexts. The orientation of artifacts in relation to the individuals, animals, and other grave goods, are also clear signs of ritual human sacrificial practices in the elite, and, most likely royal, contexts of the 3rd millennium BC, paralleling the Royal Cemetery of Ur.

Syro-Levantine area

Tell Umm el-Marra—Tomb 1

Based on substantial field reports by Glenn Schwartz and Hans Curvers (e.g., 2003, *Third-Millennium BC Elite Tomb and Other New Evidence from Tell Umm El-Marra, Syria* published at AJA), 2012, *From Urban Origins to Imperial Integration in Western Syria: Umm El-Marra 2006, 2008* published at AJA and 2011 field report by Ernest Batey Tell Umm el-Marra (Syria), seasons 2000-2006, published at *Bioarcheology of the Near East*, 5:45-62.

Umm el-Marra is a site of some 20-25 ha between Aleppo and the Euphrates in the Jabbul plain of northern Syria, occupied from ca. 2800-1300 BC according to archeological stratigraphy (Curvers & Schwartz 1997; Schwartz et al. 2000, 2003, 2006, 2012). This site has been excavated since the second half of the 20th century by different projects but has been extensively worked on since 1994 by a joint project of Johns Hopkins University and the University of Amsterdam under the direction of Glenn Schwartz and Hans Curvers (Curvers & Schwartz 1997; Schwartz et al. 2000, 2003, 2006).

Human sacrificial evidence comes in three types and can be derived from various and distinctive contexts. As for retainer rituals, evidence may appear in a complex of monumental tombs and auxiliary funerary structures built in the center of the acropolis that are dated mid-late 3rd millennium BC (Schwartz et al. 2000, 2003: 16). A total number of nine monumental tombs have been discovered to have been used from ca. 2500-2200 BC (Schwartz 2003), either for human or for equid burials. In addition to these tombs, complementary structures were uncovered whose functions are unclear so far, containing a mixture of scattered and reburied human skeletons and complete animal skeletons.⁵¹

The tombs (1-10) (Schwartz 2013) were built of large stones under a mudbrick superstructure and were roofed under wood beams or vaulted brick. All but the later (and unusual) Tomb 7 (Schwartz et al. 2006) had doorways in the east; no doorway was discovered to Tomb 4. The largest of the tombs measures approximately 46.00 square meters. Excepting Tomb 7,

⁵¹ These may indeed suggest that they served mortuary or cultic purposes according to the excavators (Schwartz 2003).

the tombs were built in linear orientations adjacent to one another without disrupting or impinging on the earlier tombs. Many of the tombs had been looted and disturbed in antiquity, although two (Tombs 1 and 4) were found undisturbed. Inside the tombs, large quantities of luxury goods were found along with the human skeletons.

In the 2000's excavation season, an undisturbed tomb (Tomb 1) dating to Umm el-Marra ca. 2300 BC (period V, Phase 3, later EB IVA) was uncovered in the center of the acropolis where two distinct episodes of interment were discerned, distributed in three distinct layers (Schwartz 2012: 15, 2013). As Schwartz et al. (2003) initially describe on their field report:

Found in the uppermost EB phase in unit 1278/3900 (6 × 10 m), the tomb was located in the stratum beneath a large MB stone platform. Oriented approximately east-west with an entrance on the east, the tomb consisted of a rectangular stone sub-structure ca. 2.6 × 3.8 m surmounted by a mudbrick superstructure of which only part of the lowest course was preserved. A large stone slab (1.2 × 0.9 m) spanning the space above the entrance was located at the same elevation as the lowest course of the brick superstructure; it may have served as a lintel, although the space between it and the threshold slabs below was minimal (ca. 0.6-0.9 m). Since there is no evidence of a trench or any other subterranean feature associated with the tomb, the structure appears to have been freestanding.

(Schwartz et al. 2003: 330)

As confirmed by this field report and later contributions (Schwartz 2003, 2012), the tomb has a complex structure composed of three layers and two episodes of burials. Five adults were buried, oriented E-W, placed in

the western part of the tomb, and demarcated by the rectangular impressions of wooden coffins (Schwartz 2003). Tomb 1 presented two tempo-spatially close burials that consisted of the following (Schwartz et al. 2003) (Appendix 11, Table XI, Figures 2 and 3):

1. The earlier interment (and lowest layer) composed of the incomplete remains of an adult, probably female (Skeleton E). Animal bones (right forelimb of an adult sheep bearing cutmarks and the right forelimb of a youth); the disturbance on this individual's bones, although articulated, suggest that it had occurred considerably earlier than the other burials. It is also associated with relatively ordinary grave goods.
2. The second interment (middle and latest layers) is composed of four adults that are stratigraphically divided by sex. Firstly, two adult men (Skeleton B and C likely 25-30 years and 30-35 years respectively) (Batey 2011) interred side by side in fetal positions directly below the two adults in the top layer. The southern individual (Skeleton C) had similar grave goods to those of the previous tomb.

Between these, the skeleton of a baby (3-5 months) was uncovered near the east side of the tomb entrance along with pottery and, again, the skeletons of two young sheep / goats (2-6 months).

Secondly, the latest layer is composed by two young, female individuals (Skeleton A and D), likely 20-25 years and 13-15 years respectively (Batey 2011), each accompanied by an infant placed at the knee (1-2 months

and 1-3 months respectively) (Batey 2011). As stated in the reports, the adults were in fetal positions with the head of one facing the lower body of the other. Both individuals were associated with rich grave goods and being female, were outfitted far more decorously than the others.

Outside the tomb to the south and against the tomb wall, two equid skulls, a spouted jar, and broken fragments of a jar containing the skeletal remains of a baby were buried (Schwartz et al. 2003), which the excavators interpreted as potential satellite graves or auxiliary offerings. Given the nature of the evidence, this may incline us toward the second option, probably as secondary or later offerings destined to the personages buried at the acropolis.

The men's skeletons were, furthermore, well-preserved, and the symmetry and side-by-side arrangements of the adults of both levels suggests the simultaneity of their interment. But why were four adults and three babies interred in pairs, and what is the reason for the ostentatious difference of ornamentation for each sex? Because there is no evidence of physical trauma and paleopathological analysis are ambiguous (Batey 2011), multiple hypothesis arise: these begin with the improbable scenario of death by natural disaster or by war/death in battle, which can largely be ruled out due to the diverse ages and sexes (Schwartz 2012); this hypothesis is followed by some undetectable but potential intra-dynastic conflict that is undetectable to present-day bioanthropological analyses; and the alternatives conclude with deaths due to an epidemic or an infectious disease, although this, too, seems unlikely for it would then have worked so quickly as to leave no trace on the bones (Ortner & Putschar 1981;

Schwartz 2012). Based on this data, evidence would thus rather suggest sacrificial ritual as the most feasible explanation.

Later excavations showed that Tomb 1 was part of a larger tomb complex with associated subterranean equid installations (Appendix 11, Table XI, Figure 1). Installations A-G were also present in the surrounding area of the Tomb, containing skeletons of animals, predominantly equids (25 complete and at least 15 partial equid skeletons) and in, several cases, human infants (Schwartz 2012). The tombs as well as the installations appear to have been built successively over at least three centuries from ca. 2500-2200 BC (Schwartz et al. 2003, 2006).

Based on the number of primary interments, their ages, and the presence or absence of additional deposits, Weber (2008; 2012) identified four types of equid funerary structures among these ten installations and suggested that they are the highly valued animals referred to as *kunga* (anše-BAR.AN) in literature (Weber 2008). It is worth mentioning that there is a difference between these installation types: some of the animals died naturally while others were deliberately killed (Schwartz et al. 2006).⁵²

- Type I installations (A, E and F) contain four male equids, dogs, and the fragmented and partial remains of a human infant in structures of mudbrick or stone. All 12 of these complete animals were of a young age (about 3-13 years old) when they died, suggesting that they were deliberately killed for interment (Schwartz et al. 2012).

⁵² Although no sign of physical trauma or violence inflicted remains visible on the bones, Schwartz (2006) relies on the age of these prestigious animals to suggest they were indeed, sacrificed.

- There are three Type II installations (B, C, and D) made of two-chambered, semi-subterranean, mudbrick structures with equids that died naturally (Schwartz et al. 2012).
- Type III is only attested by a single installation (G) that consists of a large pit lined with thick grey mud that was dug into an earlier room that had likely served cultic functions by containing deliberately equids killed (Schwartz et al. 2012).
- Finally, Type IV installations consist of individual equid skeletons, deliberately killed, and placed adjacent to other installations that may have served cultic functions (Schwartz et al. 2012).

As seen, while some of the animals were clearly sacrificed or slaughtered, others appear to have died natural deaths that require more subtle interpretations. It is feasible to emphasize the relevant and important roles of these animals among ancient societies, understood as symbols of prestige as explained earlier in this book.⁵³ Undoubtedly, the inclusion of slaughtered or sacrificed animals in funerary monuments, especially *kunga* for transport, is an indication or signature that marks a special ritual, particularly when involving human infants both in Tomb 1 and in the installations. Asserting that the artificial dichotomy between humans and animals (Latour 1993) would not have been as sharp as would be expected today, Weber proposes that both the sacrificed and non-sacrificed royal

⁵³ As Schwartz argues: “While it seems probable that the equids were killed and interred at the same time as the elite humans buried nearby, it is not possible to demonstrate this” (Schwartz 2012: 22).

equids were interred as substitutes for high-ranking humans to legitimize the ruling regime in times of stress.

It is worth noting similarities between the equid installations and the human tombs nearby, which included the E-W orientation of both the human and animal bodies, with the heads to the W, the placement of various animals side by side in the type II installations, resembling the humans in Tomb 1. While there are significant differences between the human tombs and the equid installations with regard to contents and architecture, in concordance with Schwartz (2012) these points of cohesion indicate some congruence of ritual and belief associated with the elite humans and animals.

In the absence of definite conclusions, the excavators proposed the possibility of human sacrifice, and, although the evidence collides with the proposed signatures for recognizing human sacrifice that I argued for previously in this book (*simultaneous primary interment of high and low-ranking individuals*), I nonetheless must incline the balance toward this last hypothesis in accordance with the present evidence. Retainer sacrifice would be a genuinely feasible scenario as argued:

1. Two high ranking women buried with wealthy accoutrements and their babies (died soon after childbirth) and two males sacrificed afterward.
2. Two women (and perhaps their babies) were sacrificed due, according to the excavators, to "*the unusual patterns of symmetry and grave wealth*" (Schwartz 2012: 18). In this scenario, they suggested that the women were indeed priestesses who were ritually sacrificed as proposed for Ur (Moorey 1977). But were the men sacrificed too? If not, why were they buried simultaneously along with the babies?

Evidence clearly suggests that one of the layers is a sacrificial deposit in honor of the other; on the one hand, the women with the finer grave goods could be seen as the elite burial, but, on the other hand, sacrifices are more commonly placed on top of or in some way 'after' the main burial. Indeed, if the first hypothesis is considered, then it would raise questions on gender and power. Might the killing of men to serve female high-court members in the afterlife be evidence for legitimation and reinforcement of power? Were men's bodies used as political propaganda that was needed for their status? Unfortunately, the unique and fragmentary nature of the data eludes the possibility of a definitive conclusion, but further analysis and discussions on these topics about gender and power would be fascinating.

The second hypothesis would unfold similarly to the first theory: sacrifice would be indeed a feasible explanation, but, given the uniqueness of these installations when compared with similar evidence, it clearer studies would be needed to prove it. Basing the argument entirely on the outrageous difference in ornaments would be unproductive given that looking at other tombs from the acropolis, such as Tomb 4, shows that women were more lavishly outfitted with ornaments than men. Another obstacle to this argument comes from the spatial organization of the tomb; as shown in other sites, placing the bodies of sacrificed individuals too close to elite individuals does not happen often. As shown in Arslantepe, Ur, or Tell es-Sultan the bodies of the elite are usually separated by either wooden coffins or tomb chambers from the sacrificed individuals (often placed in death-pits or in the vicinity of the main tomb chamber) (Frangipane et al. 2001). Therefore, were the women killed following elite men into the afterlife or was it the other way around? Were the infants also killed for this purpose? If so, how were they chosen for the ritual?

In order to tip the balance in the favor of the first sacrificial hypothesis, bioanthropological analyses are key (Tiesler 2006). Tell Umm el-Marra provides an ideal scenario to test and hypothesize about human sacrificial practices in the ANE as recent excavation results have shown (Batey 2011; Schwartz et al. 2000, 2003)—providing archetypal modern techniques not only in the study and recognition of sacrifice in the field but also in further data analysis. Having human skeletal remains sufficiently well-preserved to carry out bioanthropological analyses is, unfortunately, not the norm in every case, which is why the explanations of death are blank with respect to physical trauma in most cases. Ernest Batey was in charge of re-analyzing the human skeletal remains from the 2006 field season from the tomb complex in order to investigate a number of topics including demography, diet, health, paleopathology, possible familial relationships, and lifestyle reconstruction (Batey 2011). He followed the work of Barbara Stuart who provided initial field descriptions of the human remains, and other preliminary assessments were made by Bruno Frohlich and Judith Littleton of the Smithsonian Institution (Schwartz 2007).

Fortunately, the remains from Tomb 1 exhibit the best overall condition, however, paleopathological data are not reported for nearly one-third of the sample due to differences in preservation (Batey 2011). Two individuals, Skeletons D and E, respectively exhibit a severe osteoporosis throughout the skeleton. As Batey implied in his report:

A specific diagnosis may not be possible for either of these cases, but osteoporosis (especially for an adolescent) may be associated with Cushing's syndrome or type 1 osteogenesis imperfecta. If preserved, ancient DNA may shed light on possible relatedness of these individuals, which would support the hypothesis that

these two individuals shared same genetic disorder. (Beaty 2011: 50)

Although severe obstacles make further analysis on the human bones difficult, some concepts might be on the table: individuals D and E may share the same genetic disorder and are perhaps genetically related, which would imply several theoretical consequences. Schwartz (2007) suggested that, given the chronology, quantity, and demography of the individuals interred, a rational premise is that the tombs contained members of a series of important families or dynasties. These hypotheses were later confirmed by bioanthropological studies (Beaty 2011).

To begin with, having buried genetically related individuals in earlier funerary installations (Schwartz et al. 2000) would not only highlight an ancestor's cult or veneration as Schwartz argued (e.g., Schwartz 2012) with respect to reusing such structure, but it would simultaneously be a direct or indirect reinforcement of power by reusing the same funerary structure as their ascendants. The importance of elite ancestor veneration implied by the intramural aboveground tomb complexes at Tell Umm el-Marra suggest the significance of kin relations in the structuring of local complex societies in the ANE. But why does the veneration of ancestors, and in general, of power as an institution embodied by the political elite require the destruction of the offering? As explained earlier in this book, killing has commonly been believed to release the life force of the offering and thus facilitate its transmission to the deities (Schwartz 2017).

From this point of view, the potential explanation of retainer sacrifice might not only apply to the comparatively recent deaths but also to their ancestors as well. Are we dealing with human bodies that belonged to others in this case? Would this mean that the body of a retainer not only belonged to the high-court personage but to their dynasties as well? What

would the role of the infants be? Were they killed or their bodies was used for offering purposes after passing naturally? Do they assume the role of purity that is so necessary to some cultic rituals (Lange 2007)?

Finally, the mortuary complex at Umm el-Marra was not a static entity but a funerary complex that was used throughout the Bronze Age by adding new adjacent graves beside those that pre-existed (Schwartz 2003). Using such socially well-respected structures for “ordinary” burials, although also existing in other ANE contexts (Cohen 2005), would be unfamiliar in royal/aristocratic contexts, especially considering the high quantity of offerings placed inside and in the vicinities of the structures. The case of Umm el-Marra is thus deeply fascinating, not only in terms of the structure itself but also in terms of its implications as an inscription of their ideology into the landscape of the community by establishing a monumental funerary complex at a high point in the middle of the settlement. The symmetry and ritualized disposal not only of bodies, but also of other luxury grave goods as offerings would certainly fit well within the retainer ritual hypothesis, although further analyses on the skeletal remains will clarify explanations about these bodies and their relationship toward sacrifice or other more “mundane” activities as Beaty effectively explains:

Further bone samples are available for the analysis of ancient DNA, which can possibly confirm or refute the hypothesis of familial relationships within and between tombs, although preservation issues continue to be a problem in Near Eastern skeletal samples. (Beaty 2011: 52-53)

Jericho—The MB tombs

Based primarily on field reports by Kenyon (1960, 1964) *Excavations at Jericho I & II*.

Scientific interest in the site began in the late 19th century when the British army officer Charles Warren undertook preliminary excavations (Kenyon 1964). Ever since then, Jericho has been surveyed and excavated by numerous scholars, most notably between 1952 and 1958 by a co-joint expedition of The British School of Archeology in Jerusalem, The Palestine Exploration Fund, The British Academy, the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem that was directed by Dame Kathleen Kenyon (Kenyon 1960, 1964), and a team from La Sapienza University that has taken over the project since 1997. The mound of Tell es-Sultan, otherwise identified as Jericho, is located in the lower part of the Jordan Valley, ten km W of the Jordan River and 12 km N of the Dead Sea in Palestine (Taha & Qleibo 2010).

The complexity of the site required rigorous archeological excavation and recording techniques that Kenyon employed successfully (Kenyon 1985), especially with respect to earlier layers of the site (PPN). Part of Kenyon's work at Jericho included the excavation of over 507 tombs around the Tell site (ca. 2000-1500 BC / MB) (see Appendix 10). Her goal in excavating tombs was to obtain relatively complete objects that could be used "*as a basis for identifying and classifying the fragmentary material from the town site*" (Kenyon 1964).

In general, Middle Bronze Age burials in the Levant demonstrated diverse disposal methods for bodies that also varied greatly with respect to the number of individuals interred in the same place, ranging from one to

several hundred (Jericho Tell el-'Ajjul, Ebla and Megiddo). Multiple chambers were sometimes used (Northern Cemetery Beth Shan) but were less common than single shaft tombs.

A group of these tombs belonged to the MB based on their relative chronologies and the typological seriation of their pottery (Kenyon 1960, 1964; Redford 1993). Burial practice in the Middle Bronze Age at Jericho typically involved re-using rock-cut (soft limestone) chamber tombs: rounded or square-shaped burials with vertical shafts leading through a very narrow opening into a single circular chamber at the bottom of the shaft (Kenyon 1960). These tombs were accessed via a vertical shaft and contained one or two primary burials in fully flexed positions followed by multiple successive interments in the same chamber (Kenyon 1960: 263, 368; Kenyon 1985, 172) with the entrance being intermittently blocked by a large stone. As seen in the evidence, existing corpses were pushed to the back and sides of the chamber to make room as more individuals needed to be interred. In some cases, some portions of an individual's torso remained intact, but more often than not, the practice of reuse resulted in the dismemberment and commingling of the bodies of the earlier burials. In addition to ceramic vessels, grave goods included alabaster bottles and juglets, wooden furniture, wooden vessels, bowls and cups, bronze daggers, toggle pins and finger rings, basketry, scarabs, and food offerings (with evidence matching the RT at Ur) (Kenyon 1960: 371-92; Kenyon 1985: 174-75) (Blau 2006).

Nonetheless, a subgroup of six burials has been proposed among these tombs in which the simultaneous interment of high- and low-ranking individuals (based on their association with objects and offerings, spatial analyses, patterns in context, and the disposal of bodies at similar synchronic sites) seems to follow the retainer pattern, and there appear to

be two further tombs that have been overlooked (Tomb H11 and P21). The total series is (Kenyon 1960: 443-469, 480-513; Kenyon 1964: 358-368, 388-410; Recht 2019):

- *Group III*: Tombs P17, P19, and P21.
- *Group IV*: Tomb G1.
- *Group V*: Tombs H6, H11, H18, and H22.

TOMB G1

Tomb G1 (Appendix 12, Table XII, Figure 1) was the first of the MB tombs that contained multiple simultaneous well-preserved burials divided into different stratigraphic levels at Jericho (Kenyon 1960). According to reports, it lay across a small wadi in Area H whose entrance was blocked by a large, thin, rectangular stone. As this tomb was found undisturbed, most of the bones and food offerings (vessels, bowls, and a large slab of meat) were highly preserved, and many of the organic elements survived—apparently including some parts of a human brain (Kenyon 1960). This degree of preservation decreased progressively in the bodies further from the door. In spite of the good state of preservation of bones and organic matter, no furniture remained, as in the case of the RT at Ur.

As Kenyon stated, the first layer presented an impressive undisturbed sight with a row of five individuals that were side by side, (A-E) another individual at their feet (F), yet another (R) with their head facing the opposite direction (Kenyon 1960), some associated food offerings, and the complete skeleton of a young sheep. As seen in the case of individual E, human remains lay on a rush mat as in the case of Ur (Woolley 1934), and objects like different types of bowls and jars, scarabs, wooden objects, and ornaments were associated with these individuals. She added:

From the neatly aligned positions, and from the clearance of the space to take them, there is no doubt that bodies A to E were buried simultaneously. The legs of R interlock with those of this group, and F cannot have been put in position appreciably later and is certainly not earlier since he overlies the pile swept to the side to make room for the main group. A to E, and R therefore certainly represent a mass simultaneous burial. (Kenyon 1960: 443)

In layer 2, the remains of the previous interments (at least 15 individuals) had been cleared away in a pile to the sides and the rear of the chamber to make room. A main body was not detected in any of the layers, although Kenyon argued that the earlier interment was poorer in objects than the later one; however, the suggestion that this first layer of individuals might have been sacrificed while the later interment would have consisted of elite members is essentially speculative. Kenyon admitted that because the decay of the bodies from the earlier group were not significantly advanced when the tomb was reused (given that a number of bones remained articulated), this suggested a similar post-sacrificial treatment to that of the bodies at Ur, which were exposed before their interment. This sign, along with the tomb itself, suggest the plausibility of retainer sacrificial rituals. However, thus far no bioanthropological analyses have been carried out to answer the main question that this would raise: If these bodies indeed represented sacrificed individuals, were they exposed directly or indirectly to heat (post-mortem)?

If the retainer ritual hypothesis is accepted, tomb G1 should rather be recategorized as a shaft or DP.

TOMB H6

Tomb H6 (Appendix 12, Table XII, Figure 2) was very similar architecturally to G1, with a deep shaft, large, low chamber, a lamp niche in the wall, and an entrance blocked by a large, rectangular stone with smaller stones round the edges (Kenyon 1960). Inside the tomb, two different layers of interment were visible as well as furniture and lavish food provisions, indicating pre-sacrificial rituals as in the case of Ur.

The earlier layer contained a number of disarticulated individuals that had been swept into two piles to make room for the later interment. In the space so cleared, a group of four individuals and a further five skulls appeared. The next layer is more complicated, entailing the simultaneous interment of several individuals.

As opposed to tomb G1, Kenyon reported at H6 that these were simultaneous burials and that one body was treated as an elite member (burial A), which would corroborate the hypothesis of retainer rituals in these tombs (Kenyon 1960: 454).⁵⁴ In the center of the tomb, there was a platform of a single course of large, thick, mudbricks with the body of an individual. They lay on their back on a rush mat, with their head supported by a mudbrick *pillow*; their knees were slightly splayed, and their femurs were twisted over, suggesting that they were most likely placed with their knees raised (Kenyon 1960). The body was decorated with several ornaments, toggle pins, beads, and different materials evidenced by remaining textiles.

In the vicinities of the mudbrick platform, one single interment of three individuals associated with burial A was found. Kenyon interpreted these burials as the wife and son of individual A (as it consisted of a young

⁵⁴ Tomb H6 resembles Tomb J1, and retainer rituals are, perhaps, displayed in that tomb, although the evidence is vague due to preservation and documentation (Kenyon 1960).

female and an infant), although this hypothesis may need a re-examination as follows. The female individual, body B, lay on her back in an extended position at the head of the platform and was associated with ornaments like scarabs and toggle pins (Kenyon 1960). Between body B and the wall of the chamber lay bodies C and D, infants in the same position as the female individual and with ornaments as well (necklace of barrel-shaped beads and scarabs).

TOMB H11

Although tomb H11 (Appendix 12, Table XII, Figure 3) was not included in the list of retainer sacrifice rituals proposed by Recht (2019), the resemblance of the evidence in this tomb is noteworthy in comparison with the other groups. The chamber of tomb H11 was smaller than the other burials, but it contained a single simultaneous interment of individuals of which Kenyon insisted "*it is impossible that any of the bodies were put at different times, for they are inseparably interwoven*" (Kenyon 1960: 470).

The bodies of 11 individuals were inside the chamber: nine adults and three infants (Kenyon 1960) with no recognizable main personage (perhaps body L, but evidence is not strong enough to support this) or furniture. The food-supply was also attested, not only pottery jars and bowls, but by other organic material as well. The following is true of ornaments and associated grave goods:

Scarabs on right hand A, E; on left hand C; round neck K, H.

Toggle-pins on left shoulder A, E, G, H; on pelvis C.

Combs by head K, D, E; by body H.

Baskets for toilet accessories, all with juglets, B, G, D, H.

Juglet not in baskets, A.

No objects M, F (both children). (Kenyon 1960: 473)

TOMB H18

The architecture of this tomb resembles that of the others in Group V (Kenyon 1960) but with the difference that in tomb H18 (Appendix 12, Table XII, Figure 4) a subsidiary shaft (with no human skeletal remains or objects of any kind) and a chamber were built. Though everything in the center of the tomb was badly damaged by a severe cave-in, the remains of 13 individuals buried in a single interment were identified.

According to the evidence, body A (male) was placed first in the center of the chamber. This male individual was lying on a wooden bed on a rush mat with a long table loaded with food beside him (Kenyon 1960). Because very few attached ornaments were found, Kenyon interpreted that he was only buried in a loincloth. Basket 7 was beside the table and contained the individual's toilet equipment: a wooden toilet box (8) with bone inlay, a cylindrical wooden box (9) with another bone inlay, and five combs (16). Alongside a group of perhaps three further combs were what appeared to be decayed vegetables, flowers, herbs, and the remains of a wig (Kenyon 1960).

Beyond him, 12 individuals were identified: 11 infants and one adult (female and pregnant at the time of death). This simultaneous interment reused the tomb given that layer two showed the remains of two more individuals whose crania were piled up in the chamber. All of the infants and the other adult lay on their backs in an extended position with their feet toward door (except for G, whose head pointed toward the door). As in the case of Ur, these individuals were placed on rush mats with several associated objects: scarabs, crystal beads, bracelets, necklaces, and toggle pins.

Since the archeological sequence is clear, it is safe to affirm that body A was placed first, and it shall be interpreted as the royal/elite personage for whom the offerings were made. After his interment and over a short period of time, all of the other bodies were taken to the tomb. Unfortunately, the sacrificial hypothesis is only sustained by context and strong spatial patterns, but no evidence of physical harm was identified. Nevertheless, as in the case of Ur or Umm el-Marra, hiding the cause of death of sacrificed individuals was a common practice in the ANE. Questions concerning the cause of death or whether they were slaughtered in the tomb or elsewhere and then transported there remain unanswered.

TOMB H22

Tomb H22 (Appendix 12, Table XII, Figure 5) followed the same architectural patterns as its predecessors. At about one meter above the base of the shaft and above the fill containing the nearly intact grave goods, body A lay against the wall in an extended position. Kenyon failed in interpreting this burial, as she argued that this was a member of the family that died just after the other individuals from the tomb were buried, but this was not an impediment given that the bodies within the chamber were superimposed. Instead, although the body was not associated with any direct object or reports, evidence from contextual comparisons to other sites suggests that this body may be interpreted as a guard, or some other type of guardian as seen at the royal tombs of Ur and the Y Cemetery at Kish (Woolley 1934; Schwartz 2012; Gibson 1972).

Following “body A” and after the removal of the blocking stone of the entrance, 12 individuals (four adults and eight infants) were uncovered in a fairly neat row. Inside the chamber, there was apparently no cave-in as had been the case with H18, and the burials and other organic materials

were thus ideally preserved. All of these individuals were placed on a rush mat with the usual ornaments: toggle pins, scarabs, wigs, necklaces, and bracelets (Kenyon 1960).

No furniture was found, nor was a main personage. The provision of food offerings is also attested in H22 with long tables filled with drinking cups, jars, bowls with meat, liquids, and vegetables, indicating pre-sacrificial ritual banquets as in the case of Ur. Consequently, this might be another case of a DP.

TOMB P17

This has the same architecture as the previous tombs, but in this case, both the shaft and the chamber were enormous, but although did not provide any measurements as in the case of the previous tombs, (Kenyon 1964). Little description of this tomb can be found (Appendix 12, Table XII, Figure 6) except that it contained the simultaneous burial of 18 individuals of which at least the skeletons of an adolescent, three infants, and three adults are recognizable. Regarding grave goods, these seem to have been communal with the major group of jars, drinking vessels, and bowls. Individual ornaments were also discovered with specific individuals (toggle pins, scarabs, and bracelets).

No main individual was detected, nor was the cause of death visible for any of the individuals, and this might thus be the case of another DP (Kenyon 1964).

TOMB P19

As Kenyon admitted, tomb P19 (Appendix 12, Table XII, Figure 7) most resembles the case of the royal tombs of Ur, both with respect to context and the fact that the remaining individuals showed blunt force

trauma for the first time at Jericho as was also the case at Umm el-Marra (Schwartz 2012).

As in P17, the chamber was enormous, and the entrance was blocked by a very large, plastered stone (Kenyon 1964). Inside the chamber, there were at least six individuals buried simultaneously (male and female, aged 11-26). They were all laid out in a row with their heads to the rear of the chamber, showed evidence of blunt force trauma to the head, and three were missing one hand as well (skeletons B, F and C). These individuals were lying on a rush mat and were provisioned with food offerings and ornaments. Furniture was also found in great quantities, including wooden beds, baskets, and other variants.

Additionally, one individual might be interpreted as the main personage: individual E, a female of around 28 years of age (Kenyon 1964): she was the only individual that did not present signs of physical trauma, her arrangement and disposal suggested a more careful treatment than that of the other individuals, and her body was placed before those of the other individuals.

This singular arrangement along with the physical trauma on six of those individuals clearly suggest a scenario more relatable to the one at Ur. As evidence suggests, the ritual was as follows: after the death of the personage; she would have been placed in the chamber, the ritual pre-sacrificial banquet and ritual event would have taken place; the killing should have taken place elsewhere, whereupon the sacrificial individuals would have been dressed up and prepared (with similar conditions to those of the individuals at Ur, for some individuals also present indications of indirect exposure to heat in this case); and finally, the tomb would have been sealed with the interment of a guard.

As Kenyon reported, the remains of the earlier burials were still articulated when the tomb was reused, and the placement of the later individuals must thus have taken place in such a short interval that the earlier ones had not yet decayed (Kenyon 1964).

TOMB P21

According to Kenyon, tomb P21 (Appendix 12, Table XII, Figure 10) might have provided a very similar context to tomb P19, but in this case it suffered severely from robbery, looting, and other disturbances (Kenyon 1964). Although this tomb should have been richer in evidence and contextual implications, looting harshly obscured its authoritative interpretation.

Architecturally resembling the previous tombs, inside the chamber there were the remains of three individuals: individual A was placed on a mudbrick platform (as in the case of H6) with rich grave goods associated like scarabs, different types of bowls and drinking vessels, furniture, as well as ornaments; individuals B and C were very much disturbed and disarranged as a result of looting.

Discussion

Now that all of the tombs that presented retainer ritual patterns have been explained, several points may be raised. While hundreds of tombs have been excavated at Jericho, publications of the osteological and bioanthropological findings are minimal (Blau 2006). There were no visible signs of violence in any of the individuals (except for those at tomb P19), but, as in the case of Ur, this might have been obscured by laying the bodies upon their injuries, making these difficult to recognize as in the case of tomb

P19, which, prior to further osteological studies, is a reasonable explanation for the absence of visible trauma during the excavations.

Jericho features a much more diverse demographic than Ur with men, women, and infants, of diverse ages, but as opposed to Ur, there is very little indication of social status (other than in relation to an apparent main personage). However, given their disposal, treatment, and the presence of ornaments, these might have been individuals of lower status who were nonetheless members of an elite household. The remarkable preservation in most cases and the lack of disturbances reveals that these burials also represent wealthy or opulent events at Jericho that not only shed light on the sacrificial act itself but also on pre-sacrificial ritual banquets and post-sacrificial arrangements such as the transportation of sacrificed individuals to the tombs and their careful placement on site. Large amounts of food in the form of joints of meat were found in all of the tombs, and evidence of liquids, as in Ur, indicates ritual banquets and will be a focus in my "*Discussion*" subchapter.

To sum up, retainer sacrificial rituals were discovered among the following MB tombs at Jericho: Tombs G1, H6, H11, H18, H22, P17, P19, and P21 (Kenyon 1960, 1964; Recht 2019). These discoveries make it noteworthy and even mandatory to reconsider the entire mortuary complex. The deliberate arrangement of the bodies suggests an importance that transcends the funeral process and human participation in the same. With the possible exceptions of P17 and P19 (where no main personage was detected), the arrangements suggest retainer rituals influenced by local developments as evident, for example, in the inclusion of children.

Iran

Haft Tepe—*Square A and B XIX*

Based on Negahban E.O. (1991). *Excavations at Haft Tepe, Iran*, University Museum Monograph 70, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

The site of Haft Tepe, in Khuzestan province (modern-day Iran) was an important administrative center in the neighborhood of Susa and a temporary capital city of Elam under Insušinak-sunkirnāppipir and Tepti-ahār during the Kidinuid dynasty in the 15th century BC (Negahban 1991). The archeological site includes the remains of the Middle Elamite city (ca. 1500-1100 BC) and several graveyards (Potts 2013). The first survey of this site was undertaken by Jacques de Morgan in 1908, but regular excavations were undertaken by Negahban of Tehran University between 1965 and 1979 (Negahban 1991). A new archeological project was initiated between 2003 and 2013 by a German-Iranian team from the universities of Mainz and Kiel in conjunction with the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (Mofidi 2014).

The most plausible context for retainer sacrifice is the LB royal necropolis, dated ca. 1500 BC (Negahban 1991): Square A & B XIX. Although the evidence and its subsequent interpretation have been obscured by the fact that the bones have been badly neglected (including strong erosion, the disappearance of some during excavation, and the complete decay of others in storage), descriptions of the tombs are provided briefly in Negahban's field report.

In Square A XX and B XIX, a monumental funerary building complex was uncovered and named Tomb-Temple Complex of Tepti Ahar by the excavators based on inscriptions and other grave goods (Negahban 1991).

Although this structure was greatly disturbed by a fallen roof, decayed mudbrick, and modern constructions, certain architectural aspects still stood such as a vaulted chamber and entrance passageway that best resemble the RT at Ur. Inside the chamber of Square A, two individuals (male and female) lay on a mudbrick platform surrounded by very rich objects and offerings. Negahban (1991) interpreted these as the bodies of the king Tepti Ahar and his wife. Although there is no form of corroborating that these two especially well-cared for bodies from Square A XX are, indeed, the body of the king and his wife, they do certainly belong to persons of elite status. Scattered all around the tomb were the remains of at least 19 other individuals with no associated grave goods, and some were even disarticulated, corresponding to earlier events.

In Square B XIX, next to the tomb of Tepti Ahar and close to the attached monumental building, a similar multiple burial was discovered with the remains of at least 23 individuals: 14 arranged side by side and nine piled over them. Based on the data, this tomb is indeed a DP, for no main body was detected, and they all seem to have belonged to the same social status: low ranking individuals (Appendix 13, Table XIII, Figure 1). No objects, food, furniture, or offerings of any kind were present there except for a conical pottery bowl and a simple metal ring (Negahban 1991).

Unfortunately, the skeletons from the royal burial of Haft Tape and the associated deposits of human remains are no longer available for research. Nevertheless, their context is not only very similar to Ur but also to the MB tombs of Jericho, especially with respect to the disposal of the main individual on a mudbrick platform instead of in coffins as at Ur and the dumping of other individuals.

Plausible parallels

Evidence suggests that the question does not concern whether or not elite burials present human sacrificial remains at all, but, rather, why certain elite groups decided to use human sacrificial rituals as a form of mortuary and funerary offering, while others decided not to.⁵⁵ In addition to the evidence that has already been suggested based on different studies in the previous paragraphs, a number of sites are going to be added to the discussion based on unpublished or overlooked published evidence that might resemble retainer rituals: Shioukh Tahtani and Tell Banat.

It is crucial to comprehend the internal coherence of the socio-political organization, practices, and ideologies of each site before imposing interpretative models derived from other sites. This does not add new layers of difficulties in recognizing retainer rituals but actually helps in comprehending the local developments and specificities of mortuary and funerary traditions performed at each specific site or community. In the words of Porter (2007/2008):

We have to have very good control of the evidence but patterning in mortuary remains is extremely complex. We have to juxtapose variations in inhumation structure with variations in inhumation practice¹ over time as well as space; and we have to juxtapose such variations within sites with variations between sites.

⁵⁵ As evident in most cases, the disturbance of the burials in conjunction with poor preservation due to natural processes, not only human skeletal remains but also of the surrounding objects and structures, has likely affected the surviving evidence of certain cases in the past.

For there are of course other ways to categorize structure beyond only form: above ground versus below ground; marked and unmarked (although it is not always clear to us what actually pertained in the past); sealed/openable (this might also perhaps be expressed as single versus multiple use); purpose built/opportunistic – that is, where an existing space is used to contain a body such as a disused kiln; and of course, intra- versus extra-mural. To construct analyses in terms of one or the other of these categories is to miss the multivalence of mortuary practice. Rather we should attempt to accommodate all possible variation, for each of these characteristics expresses something quite particular, if only we could read it, not only about the precise performance of mortuary ritual and conceptualizations of death but also about the nature of the world as lived in and as understood by those who chose these characteristics. It is not a matter of categorizing burial types however, a problematic undertaking in and of itself, for what is more important – inhumation practice or inhumation structure? It is rather a matter of understanding what the varying elements of each burial may mean. Burials, in their individual aspects, general style and distribution over the built and natural landscape are not to be understood only as a product of socio-political organization, but equally as symbolically and cosmically charged. (Porter 2007/2007: 196)

Ritual complexity in elite burials during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC Syro-Mesopotamian area is evidenced both by varieties in the treatment of individuals, their disposal, and the treatment of their limbs as seen at Tell Ahmar, the Hypogeum, and Qatna – Tombs VI and Tomb VII with partially

cremated individuals and secondary interments might, for example, be understood as materializing the *rites de passages* (Pfläzner 2014); at Tomb 1 of Umm el-Marra, the veneration of ancestors might be influencing the election of subsequent tombs at the same spot (Schwarz 2012; Weber 2008); and the complex White Monument evokes the *mirroring* hypothesis discussed for Tombs 1-7 at Tell Banat (McClellan & Porter 1999; Porter 1995).

Shioukh Tahtani

This mid-3rd millennium BC site has been argued to present retainer rituals among their burials (Porter 2012), although an enormous quantity of unpublished material paired with limited access to those that have been published worsen its correct interpretation.

Shioukh Tahtani is located in modern-day Syria, ca. 140 km E of the city of Aleppo and dates to the mid-3rd millennium BC. Here, the broad evidence consists of the simultaneous interment of at least three bodies (two adults and one child) that line the sides of a large, round pit in flexed poses with their backs touching the sides of the pit (Porter 2012). There are several features of interest here, beginning with the positioning of the bones and the stratigraphy of the pit, which indicate that these bodies were deposited as a single event and not after consecutive lapses of time. Secondly, the excavators indicate that two of the adults were clothed in a very distinctive manner that had not ever been seen in the 60 or so burials at Shioukh Tahtani—thus making their different social status visible.

However, the evidence does not lead us to interpret this as an instance of human sacrifice but rather as a non-sacrificial mass burial in contrast to Porter's (2012) speculation of the opposite. Hitherto, the theory

of human sacrificial ritual practices among the burials of Shioukh Tahtani, cannot be corroborated or extrapolated.

Tell Banat

It is precisely in this last case, however, where a number of monumental multichambered tombs, in some cases built synchronically with tunnels like those of Tomb 1, that human sacrificial rituals are a feasible hypothesis (Porter 1995, 2015). Tomb 1 consisted of an entrance with two long, narrow chambers (Chambers 2 -3) and small constricted tunnels attached to each chamber that were probably dug by child labor; these contained multiple disarticulated inhumations with duplicated patterns of burial goods in each chamber (McClellan & Porter 1999). In addition, the largest and most elaborate burial corresponds to Tomb 7. This tomb (8 x 10 m) had five interconnected chambers, a dromos, an entrance that was covered by large limestone slabs (each weighing several tons) (McClellan & Porter 1999), and a burial structure incorporating columns, baked bricks coated with bitumen, and sharply dressed stones.

The tomb housed a wooden coffin and a pile of disarticulated bones (Porter 2007/2008). Beyond the various renovations and multiple reuses of the tomb (McClellan & Porter 1999; Porter 2012), a female adult and a female infant were uncovered beneath the capstone skeletons upon a layer of mudbricks. This tomb contained two burials, one articulated in a wooden box and one disarticulated and associated with objects on the floor of another room (Porter 2007/2008). This might represent an earlier burial that was pushed out of the way when the tomb was reused, but this second individual presented signs of a poor diet and hard work, thus, there is a

possibility that this was a subordinate companion of the primary burial although this hypothesis is weak and cannot be sustained.

Although obstacles to interpretation follow from the disturbance of the burial (in antiquity as stated in reports) (Porter 1995), the lack of other interments (elite personages that might be interpreted as main individuals for whom the funerary rites were performed) or physical trauma on individuals (or even the lack of osteological analysis) suggest that retainer ritual could be a reasonable hypothesis in this case.⁵⁶ Reasons for this conclusion include the resemblance to cases at Ur (Woolley 1934), and Jericho (Kenyon 1960, 1964), as well as the synchrony of this tomb with the other sacrifices of the Banat Periods IV and III and III, ca. 2600-2300 BC (McClellan & Porter 1999).

Preliminary Results

There is no doubt that these case studies represent human sacrificial rituals, especially due to the evident theatricality and histrionics of the events and the clear intentionality and rituality in the disposal of both human and animal remains. However, is there any recognized hint, pattern, or criteria by which to recognize or hypothesize retainer sacrificial behaviors? The diversity of evidence reflected in the majority of royal/elite funerary contexts that are clear instances of retainer sacrificial rituals is: simultaneous primary interments with occasional secondary additions of bodies; the high- and low/lower-ranking statuses of the individuals buried

⁵⁶ Although it is insufficient on its own, there is equal evidence to sustain or deny this hypothesis.

jointly in separated or clearly differentiated spaces (often with the elite in a coffin interment or on mudbrick platforms while the bodies of the low-ranking individuals are superimposed); patterns in the skeletal remains suggesting a selective process based on age or sex; limited spaces for individuals and animals (usually draft animals and other equids); the use in certain cases of grave goods as markers of social status or royal duties (groomers, drivers, and soldiers/guards); and, finally, evidence of physical violence: typically blunt force trauma to the head (cause of death, binding, and other indications of submission) (Recht 2019; Schwarz 2012; Tiesler 2003; Usieto Cabrera 2020).

The presence of violence has proved determinant in recognizing human sacrificial rituals (Tiesler 2003), however, as evidence shows and as has been stated in the ANE case, violence cannot be isolated as the sole or even key factor in classifying individuals as sacrificed (Martin & Harrod 2014: 127; Appendix 4). Violence on its own it is not enough to suggest retainer sacrifice in the case of ANE evidence (e.g., violence due to non-sacrificial motives at Tell Majnuna and Tell Chuera (Akkermans & Schwartz 2003)) or Tell Banat (McClellan & Porter 1999; Porter 1995). However, when evidence of violence is combined with other signatures such as the simultaneous interment of multiple high- and lower/low-ranking individuals, carts (or other vehicles associated with equids or donkeys), and complex architectural structures that suggest a mass burial (DP), then human sacrifice shall not be discarded. Even where preservation is good, it is often difficult to identify evidence of violent death in forensic or archeological skeletal material. Killing blows are frequently aimed at soft tissue, and many forms of violent death leave no trace on the human skeleton (Walker 2001). Moreover, in most cases where physical trauma is visible on sacrificed individuals, they are placed on the contrary side,

hiding these wounds from the eye to emphasize the action itself (sacrifice) and not merely the method of execution (Baadsgaard et al. 2012) except in certain cases where wounds were visible in the fieldwork at Başur Höyük⁵⁷. No other recognizable physical trauma, such as fractures, has been detected in any of the case studies.

A number of assumptions underlie my research when gathering data and weighing arguments from various sources. In contrast to explanations and suggestions without any archeological correlates whatsoever (e.g., the *Nanna* and *Nergal* role, or the Sacred Marriage Rite) (Moorey 1979; 1982; Roux 1996: 60), evidence has proved the hypothesis to a high probability that human retainer sacrifice has existed in the ANE for at least two millennia with the sole exception of Ur (Usieto Cabrera 2020).

The following table entirely sums up the archeological evidence that is going to be analyzed. The data is organized in chronological order:⁵⁸

<i>SITE</i>	<i>RETAINERS</i>	<i>APPROX. CHRONOLOGY</i>	<i>ELITE PERSON AGE / MAIN BURIAL</i>	<i>ESTIMATED NUMBER OF SACRIFICED INDIVIDUALS</i>	<i>PRESENCE OF VIOLENCE</i>	<i>DP (shafts of death pits)</i>
Arslantepe	royal tomb 1 (stone-cist built chamber)	ca. 3100/300 – 2900/2800 BC	1 (male)	four individuals (two females not dressed at all, and two adolescent	Yes (blunt force trauma)	No

⁵⁷ A reconstruction of this method of execution is provided in Appendix 5.

⁵⁸ Because the evidence for Shioukh Tahtani, Tell Banat, and Tell Fara is too weak to sustain, I have decided to exclude them from these tables, graphics, and subsequent reflections.

				male and female well dressed)		
Başur Höyük	EB Cemetery (Tomb 15, 16, 17)	ca. 3100 – 2800 BC	Tomb 15, 17: 3 individuals, male, female and unknown.	<i>Tomb 16</i> : at least 60 individuals (sex equally represented) Tomb 15, 17: at least eight individuals (mostly adolescents/young)	Yes (Tomb 15, 17, outside)	Yes (Tomb 16)
Ur	Royal Cemetery	ca. 2600 – 2300 BC	Yes (both equal number of male and females)	From at least 73 individuals.	Yes	Yes
Kish	The “Y” Cemetery (Tell Ingharra mound)	ca. 2600 – 2450 BC	-	At least five individuals	-	Cart-burials I, II, III.
Tell Umm el-Marra		ca. 2300 BC	-	<i>Unknown</i>	Yes (Shaft 1)	No DP associated

Jericho	MB Cemetery (<i>Tombs H6, H11, H18, H22, P17, P19, P21, G1</i>) (rock-cut soft limestone chamber tombs)	ca. 2100 – 1550 BC	Yes (both equal number of male and females)	From at least 3 to 17 individuals.	Yes	Yes
Haft Tepe	Royal Funerary Complex (Square A and B XIX / XX) (a massive superstruc ture multi- chambere d building, resemblin g the later mausolea at Ur)	ca. 1500 BC	2 individu als: male and female	<i>Square A</i> : 19 individuals <i>Square B</i> : 23 individuals	-	Tomb 23

Evidence in both the death pits and the royal tombs shows a predominating female presence—both as the main individuals of a tomb

and as sacrificed attendants—which suggests the significance of queenship (although this archeological evidence is not well-aligned with the textual sources). It is clear that queens held positions of significant power and control in 3rd millennium BC Mesopotamian societies, including influence over the administration of temple holdings, animals, lands, and goods (Maekawa 1973-74). In a detailed study of several of the ED III tombs in the Royal Cemetery of Ur, McCaffrey (2008) questions many unspoken gender biases: she points to evidence for *female kings* in the Sumerian King List and concludes, although her archeological and textual approach is highly debatable, that the Royal Cemetery contains the graves of both male and female rulers of Ur. McCaffrey’s contention can be highly debated given that all pre-Akkadian rulers that have left inscriptions or images were male, and there is not enough evidence to sustain her theory. By the ED IIIb period, a shift can be detected in the nature and representation of Sumerian kingship with an increased emphasis on the social role of the king and political legitimization manifest in an increased number of inscribed royal statues and their retention in temple repositories even after the death of individual kings (Marchesi & Marchetti 2011: 149-150). At the same time, kings, queens, and their courts were increasingly depicted in glyptic and inlay art as participating in regal activities such as leading armies into battle (Miglus 2008) and banqueting (Marchesi & Marchetti 2011) as seen in the glyptic from Ur.

<i>Site</i>	<i>DP</i>	<i>Male sacrificed individuals</i>	<i>Female sacrificed individuals</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Infants</i>
Başur					
Höyük	16	9	15	36	8

	Cart- burials I,				
Kish	II, III	3	0	0	0
Ur	DP 337	1	0	1	1
Ur	DP 1157	2	0	56	0
Ur	DP 1232	3	0	0	0
Ur	DP 1237	6	58	0	0
Ur	DP 1332	0	0	20	0
Jericho	G1	0	0	22	0
Jericho	H11	9	0	0	3
Jericho	H22	0	0	4	8
Jericho	P17	0	0	18	0
Jericho	P19	3	3	0	0
Haft					
Tepe	Sqare B	0	0	23	0

In addition to queenship, in most cases female individuals are accompanied by a difference in the ornaments and jewelry attached to their bodies as in the case of Umm el-Marra (Schwartz 2012). Female individuals also appear to be far more richly adorned than the males at Ur (Pardo Mata 2009) and Başur Höyük (Hasset et al. 2019). The fact that it is usually believed that the quantity and quality of grave goods correlates with social status, this might imply that the women were the paramount burials, while the men, lacking enhancement through grave goods, were in fact of a lower status. The possibility of retainer sacrifice is thus raised here too (Schwartz et al. 2003), although the excavators have related the objects associated with the women to the fact that women would, perhaps, have been better adorned than men in general, thus negating the status effect.

In the case of Arslantepe, for instance, the males wore diadems with traces of linen as a type of veil. However, the veil most was most commonly worn by married women based on the evidence of texts from later Assyrian periods, for there is no textual evidence for ritual acts involving men wearing veils in the Mesopotamian plains (Brooks 1923). This could be interpreted as a ritual act that simply lacks contextual evidence thus far, or it might be read to imply that the sexual identification of the skeleton does not match the gender that the individual would have performed in life.

There is no doubt that additional mourning must have accompanied such royal rituals. As Cohen highlighted (Cohen 2005), gala or cross-dressing *lamentation specialists* were not alien to ANE societies: costuming was key. At Ur, not only the female attendants appear to have been far more richly adorned than the men, but the evidence also suggests that they were dressed after death (Baadsgaard et al. 2012), and, in cases like RT 1312 (Woolley 1934), they were cross-dressing. However, this last hypothesis is weakened by further bioanthropological analyses, for comparisons suggest that cross-dressing in mortuary and funerary traditions was nonexistent in the ANE.

Whatever this scenario may be, evidence suggests the importance that objects and offerings in form of jewelry, ornaments, or other grave goods had. Wengrow draws an interesting distinction between sacrificial and *archival* ritual economies, using metal finds from the much wider context of the Eurasian Bronze Age (Wengrow 2011). According to this scholar, the sacrificial deposit of metal work, particularly in burial contexts, indicates a system of metal exchange that is most frequently found at the edges of more complex, centrally administrated urban exchange systems. Metalwork serves to consolidate and display personal wealth rather than being a standardized commodity for equitable exchange. Wilkinson has

highlighted the role of shifting economic modes in marking social change, observing such a transition in ritual-economic systems in the EBA Trans-Caucasian sphere of influence that stretched from Anatolia to Iran (Wilkinson 2014). The bronze objects buried at Başur Höyük fall into a pattern of ritual deposits that clearly mark Early Bronze Age funerary rituals as locations for the communication of wealth and status (Sağlamtimur & Massimino 2015) as shall be extrapolated to further cases like Arslantepe and Ur. The importance of this display is not diminished by the presence of administrative artefacts such as the cylinder seals and ceramics marked with seal impressions that were also found inside the tombs.

Just as the elaborate burials of adults in tombs making their appearance throughout the Euphrates and Tigris regions in the early 3rd millennium BC demarcate a new political structure that recognized individual status with a specific new form of burial, the same is accomplished through the social importance of objects in funerary contexts. These are not only a display of power by the individuals when alive but are a form of ritual deposition of wealth in death. Ritual depositions of wealth in the service of the community may have become more important than any actual burial itself. Individual wealth in the 4th, 3rd, and 2nd millennia BC was not, however, limited to buried collections of bronze and beads, for evidence shows a wide variety of luxury objects such as toggle-pins and scarabs made of precious metals (Kenyon 1960, 1964). This demonstration of power was also reflected in the treatment of the dead.

Nevertheless, the careful display of the bodies at every site perhaps suggests numerous concepts such as the commemoration of death in the case of Ur (Knudson et al. 2012; Woolley 1934). This commemoration of the dead and the creation of social memory through sacrificed individuals and

sacrificial rites can be defined as *“the construction of a collective notion about the way things were in the past”* (Van Dyke & Alcock 2003: 2). In this framework, the tomb functioned as a space wherein varied social identities could be displayed, and each individual could be memorialized by those who carried out the burial, constructing a social memory. It was not the case that the grave served the sole function of representing one idea or one identity, but rather that it was a space wherein different elements of the individual’s life were expressed, ranging from personal details to group identities and the larger patterns that symbolized their community and were reinforced by the sacrifice itself (Scurlock 1995).

Because these tombs worked as a social memory construct, the question arises whether they were in an accessible area, and if they were thus perceived from different perspectives or were created to be seen and commemorated—or if they were simply hidden from the public? The very idea of intra- versus extra-mural burials, the focus of this discussion, cannot be understood without considering the type of burial that falls within either delineation, especially in terms of above- or below-ground. Intra- or extra-mural, underground or aboveground structures suggest whether this practice was meant to be seen by a general audience, or at least would have been witnessed as in the case of Tomb 7 at Tell Banat (Porter 2007, 2008).

Landscape is a dynamic in the construction of social entities that is simultaneously contingent on the mind of the viewer. It is ideational, built, and conceptual, imbued with significance and power that shifts with the passage of time (Morandi Bonacossi 2007). And how should the monumentality, visibility, and the lived experiences of the ritual landscapes that these characteristics shaped be understood given that the elite monuments with individuals sacrificed as symbols within them did not stand alone? These objects had to be construed in relationship to each

structure, in the center of the city, or in the vicinities of places like the Royal Cemetery of Ur, whether in tension, in outright opposition to, or in concordance with them. In the case of Ur, not only would all inhabitants have been aware of these monumental structures, but integral parts of the architecture and activities of the cemetery were all modified and reused over time.

Mortuary structures that stand in a particular relationship to the ground and that were clearly made to be visible and accessible to the public's eye, shall be considered public following Porter's criteria (2007, 2008). However, this is not because public structures are the expression and locus of the elite status of a ruling group, an indication of their segregation from the mass of the community but lies in the literal meaning of public as *of the people*. Evidence suggests that this idea is very powerful in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC along the Euphrates, as manifest at the Royal Cemetery of Ur or Haft Tepe.

As evidence indicates, these carefully curated retainer rituals are sure to have been intended to last for quite a period of time (Woolley 1934). Secondary interment may also have been practiced as a sequence of these mortuary rituals intended to guide the deceased through a series of stages or *rites de passage* (Pfläzner 2014; Porter 2012; Schwartz 2013). For instance, in her discussion of ancestor veneration in the 3rd millennium BC of Syria, Anne Porter, has proposed that the bodies of selected individuals may have been subjected to a sequence of treatments after death and moved from feature to feature in preparation for their role as ancestor. Evidence suggests repeated reuse or re-entry to the tombs and post-mortem offerings to deceased individuals as in the cases of Jericho and Ur (Kenyon 1960, 1964; Woolley 1934). Secondary burials belonging to a retainer tomb could not only include later offerings but would also entail the need to wait for a

proper time in the ritual to open the tomb and inter a body and the desire to collect enough resources for an elaborate funeral.

Another concept related to individuals, involves collectivity *versus* individuality. Porter hypothesizes that these shafts were not necessarily the products of retainer sacrifice but the result of these rituals. Porter notes that the provision of human retainers in elite tombs should be understood as the most impressive of grave furnishings (Porter 2012). In fact, I suggest based on the nature of the evidence that individuals, were only taken into consideration as a group. They abandoned individuality to reinforce collectivity through sacrificial rituals. Their names, or origins, are not relevant as seen in the sites, and thus, the nature of the evidence suggests that they mattered as a group, which is why they always appeared in at least groups of two or three individuals, never as a single companion, although this last example shall not be refuted. This hypothesis can be demonstrated by several patterns visible in the archeological record:

1. The overall equal disposal of bodies less carefully treated concerning positioning and posture than the main personage for whom they had offered their lives (Kenyon 1960; 1964, Negahban 1991; Woolley 1934), in most cases being piled in one space without offerings.
2. The architectural space where their bodies were laid, often found in so-called death pits or shafts prepared to hold mass burials. In certain cases, these shafts were attached to the tomb itself (Kenyon 1960, 1964; Woolley 1934) while in others the shaft was an independent part of the grave (Frangipane 2012; Schwartz 2012).

The clustered deposition of the bodies inside or outside of the tombs and their deviation from the traditional E-W burial orientation clearly indicate that these individuals were positioned in death to reflect their relationship to the individuals buried within the graves. Retainer burials from the 3rd

millennium, as seen in the evidence, are accompanied by piled ceramics, furniture, and food offerings, which may indicate that ritual feasting and drinking took place during the associated pre-sacrificial rituals. Their important social status is clearly marked by their personal ornaments, but their burial position indicates that this status was secondary to their relationship to the burials in the chambers when they are not in separated spaces. In the same way, funerary spaces in burials may work by mirroring the human realm. Mirroring is a concept proposed by Porter (2012) based on Tell Banat evidence, but it will be expanded and extrapolated to retainer rituals here.

Additionally, it is compulsory to take into consideration that the existing archeological data available for study and open to be interpreted is just a fragmentary version of the social reality created as part of the commemorative acts, which Scott successfully named "*transcripts*" and divided into *public* or *hidden* (Scott 1990). Undeniably, public transcripts are the official version expressed publicly on ritual occasions and are meant to strengthen ties, loyalty, and unanimity among the elite. Therefore, the images that are available for us to analyze are neither complete nor neutral. To begin with, in archeological analyses of the ancient world, human sacrifice, and more specifically retainer rituals, are thought to be key in discourses of power, status, wealth, and increasingly violence, especially where elites *jostle for international status in competitive emulation* (Porter 2012: 191; Peltenburg 1999) and may thus reflect both a *public* and *hidden* transcript (Scott 1990). This competition between elites for primacy was great, and their resulting peer interactions and visibility as public heads of state were legitimized through different performances (Schwartz 2012: 159). The idea suggests understanding these phenomena as evidence of the concepts of power and wealth: in order to be powerful and to be perceived

as powerful, you should adopt the attributes of those who you perceive to be powerful, from which the idea of cross-cultural interactions and the transmission of ideas between political elites essentially arises. However, accepting this idea would mean to understand physical violence as the ultimate manifestation of power and dominance, and this may hence translate into a lack of power that needs to be reasserted over subordinates by the elite (Conte & Kim 2016; Watts et al. 2016). Would this mean that retainer rituals correlate with a strategy of power reinforcement by the elite? Or is it evidence of interactions and different cross-cultural transmissions? If so, we might expect this practice to be adopted by those participating in such elite networks within this market of human lives and their bodies as luxury goods either by emulation or shared cultural and socio-religious constructs (Willerslev 2013).

The 4th and 3rd millennia BC were decisive in the history of the ANE (Cohen 2005; Eller 2006). In this period, societies inhabiting this vast geographical area established social, economic, and cultural values that came to mark the succeeding millennia. In particular, the 3rd millennium BC is characterized by an impressive quantity of high-quality archeological data directly connected to funerary practices (D'Agostino et al. 2014; Lanero 2007; Postgate & Moorey 1976; Schwartz 2007a). This abundance of material validates the hypothesis maintained by various archeologists that funerary practices became increasingly important as a means of strengthening the social structure of 3rd millennium BC communities at a moment in which a dramatic transformation of social cultural, and economic habits was underway. On the other hand, even though archeologists have attempted to interpret the funerary practices of numerous settlements in this region, only rarely have they tried to embed this analysis in a long-term sociohistorical perspective that considers the change in funerary practices

as a part of a broader transformation of a given sociocultural scenario. This analysis adopts a sociohistorical perspective in which the archeological data related to funerary domains of the elite will be interpreted as indicators of a long-term process of change that clearly modified society's social organization and, as a result, transformed its growth.

It is axiomatic of funerary archeology that death plays a considerable role in the structuring of the living society (Parker Pearson 1999), and there has been extensive discussion on the role that the sacrificed dead play in constructing, consolidating, and legitimizing social authority (Girard 2005; Turchin 2016; Watts et al. 2016). Human sacrifice has long been argued to be a short-term response to social instability, a grand gesture of wealth sacrifice, embodied not just in material goods but in human life in a way that demonstrated centralized political authority and legitimized control over society (Flannery & Marcus 2012). The instability of a social hierarchy that requires human lives to be sacrificed is borne out in this theory by the fact that many of the earliest centrally organized polities practiced human sacrifice in the early stages of their consolidation but later abandoned it. This has been argued for different ancient chiefdoms of Papua New Guinea (Watts et al. 2016). As with the metal economies described by Wengrow (2011), sacrifice is a practice linked to the fringes, to instability, and to the need to display power in order to wield it according to this conceptualization.

The effectiveness of such retainer rituals as a means of social control and power display were brought to bear by a later administrated economy with socio-religious developments that did not require the sacrifice of its human subjects, as evidence suggests from the 1st millennium BC

(Negahban 1991).⁵⁹ As with other aspects of human culture, the internal value of human sacrifice to the practitioner societies seems unlikely to be strictly universal; the variety of cases and sometimes explicitly stated written justifications in the past seem to contradict any purely functional interpretations (Schwartz 2012).

In the vacuum of political centralization that followed the withdrawal of Uruk material culture in the Mesopotamian sphere, we precisely see the instability among smaller polities that would be expected to underlie the introduction of human sacrifice. Based on Arslantepe and Başur Höyük, retainer rituals might have actually originated in the 4th millennium BC Anatolian peninsula at a time when elites had expanded their power to encompass a large geographical area stretching from the Taurus to the Zagros Mountains. These rituals would have been founded on forms of colonization and/or cultural and economic interactions with local communities living in peripheral regions in order to have access to raw resources.

Discussions of the role of individuals not only concerns their obligation for participating in such rituals but also their willingness to playing an active role. People involved in such symbolic acts were not only participating as forced sufferers in a politico-religious ceremony of tightening community bonds (that aided in the construction of the *insiders* and the *outsiders*) but in following the natural order according to their mentality. It might be what Durkheim called a “*collective effervescence*” or the collective ritual as conceived within their society (Durkheim 1995: 352); ceremonies and rituals thus put collectivity in motion by subjugating

⁵⁹ According to some theories, however, human sacrifice never falls out of fashion, as has been argued for the Aztecs (Turchin 2016).

individual identities to the group, but in doing so, the individual is also metaphorically revitalized. The experience of *collective effervescence* and *communitas*⁶⁰ (Turner 1969), is an abstract reward when contrasted with the more tangible benefits that motivated hosts (in this case, the elite) to sponsor the opulent mortuary rituals of the types mentioned. However, when described as concrete social phenomena in the context of actual historical events, these concepts become increasingly substantial. Schwartz (1991) pointed to Abraham Lincoln's elaborately planned state funeral as an example of how mourning rites can play an important role in producing social identities. I would also like to point out another case aligned with Schwartz (1991): the North Korean mourning ritual of the *juche* mindset (Ahn 2012). Through various social and mortuary rites, both Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il were transformed by the North Korean public into a shared symbol of nationhood. They are still memorialized today by monuments and on North Korean currency, and their names are commonly evoked by leaders as spiritual ancestors of North Korea. It is in this regard that public funerary rites transcend the mourning of any particular individual and their identity to entail broader social customs. When a high-ranking military officer dies, a funeral committee is set up and students and residents in town are mobilized to hold a grand memorial service. These kinds of funerals are usually held in a spacious hall at the central offices. However, during this opulent mortuary display, regular civilians are forbidden from mourning their death.

Furthermore, and as north-Korean sources state, they consider their leaders as members of their family. They receive worship, offerings, and

⁶⁰ That is, the effect of rituals that temporarily disintegrate social structures (Durkheim 1995).

other forms of homage. Their places of burial become pilgrimage sites based on their opulent, ostentatious, and carefully displaced tombs and monumental architecture—signals of the transposition of the elite into the sacred sphere, thus deserving ovation and respect via pilgrimage as is still done at the tombs of the commemorated leaders of modern-day North Korea (Byman & Lind 2010). Consequently, elite bodies are still considered sacred in a way worthy of receiving homage.

These rituals can be viewed as adaptations that reinforce social integration and identity, provide resolutions to conflicts among members, and even retain and transfer important information involving subsistence activities and local environments. Retainer sacrifice, as it was carried out in the context of mortuary rituals, can be interpreted as having played a similar role in the communities of ancient Near Eastern societies. From the perspective of community members, the funeral rites of local elites functioned as events through which community identities were created and perpetuated. Not unlike the North Korean leaders' state funerals mentioned above, the elites being mourned as their ancestors came to symbolize a generalized community identity. Sacrificed retainers helped maintain this community identity even in the afterlife as the eternal servants of deceased elites.

Furthermore, and in the more suitable context of the Sumerian creation myth, specific roles for each and every one within their society had been established from the moment that they were born, and those roles were not only to be fulfilled in *this* life but also beyond as explained in previous subchapters of this book. The idea of a pyramidal social structure in which everyone's purpose must be fulfilled, even in the afterlife, and the correspondent attitudes toward sustaining their system imply great mental and physical effort. However, why stop performing retainer rituals? One

valid theory that might apply to the ANE evidence is provided by Judd and Irish (Judd & Irish 2009) who argue that the vast administrative state systems that rose up in southern Mesopotamia in the following millennium implicitly emphasized the economic value of human life to the formation of early states. A sacrificed life, like a sacrificed bronze knife, holds a value that is non-exchangeable, non-renewable and can only be fully valorized by removing it from this world. Thus, a perceptible modification of the concept of a human life's value is tangible.

Another perspective from which to analyze the active involvement of individuals in such acts includes the use of foreigners or war captives (Liu 2009). Acculturation (Hopgood et al. 2020) is a phenomenon that not only affects the modern world but the ancient world as well (Gudykunst 1987) as in the case of prisoners of war in *renxun* rituals in ancient China (Campbell 2012). Although the use of war captives in sacrificial rituals and, more specifically, in retainer rituals, has not been proved yet for the ANE (Usieto Cabrera 2020), its use has been widely demonstrated in ancient societies where war captives spent several years being fed and strongly enculturated before being sacrificed (Cheung et al. 2017). For the ANE evidence, the association of daggers, axes, and other weaponry with male bodies as in the case of Kish (Gibson 1972), the Ur Cemetery (e.g., RT 777, 779, 1524, among others), and Jericho (Kenyon 1960, 1964) led the excavators to interpret them as soldiers/guards, although an opposite scenario might be worth suggesting: prisoners rather than soldiers/guards as has proved correct for neighboring cases (Li 1977; Liu 2009). Perhaps this hypothesis is corroborated by the depiction of war captives and prisoners of war on the Standard of Ur (Pardo Mata 2009), for it has been suggested based on the clothing and helmets with individuals from RT 789 (Woolley 1934), however, there is once again no certain evidence whatsoever to

sustain the hypothesis that captured prisoners of war were later killed in these sacrifices.

As in other synchronic societies of the ancient world (Bremmer 2007; Green 2002; Ying 2009), these sacrificial rituals were divided into pre-sacrificial and post-sacrificial rites, and the Royal Cemetery of Ur might play an essential role in understanding both stages. However, as Porter (2012) suggested, unlike like ancient China (Campbell 2014), ancient Egypt (van Dijk 2007), or the ancient Korean peninsula (Conte & Kim 2016) where grotesque representations of human sacrificial rituals in iconography and textual sources represent an important component of the ritual, these representations are only ever ambiguous or vague in the case of the ANE (Recht 2011).

One must emphasize that although the ANE evidence is rare when compared inter- and transregionally thus far, it is safe to affirm that retainer sacrifice was a common practice in different societies of the ancient world, and, when it occurred, it was a local practice that often shared the same roots: the ultimate consumption of human lives in the disposal of their physical bodies when they were alive and, metaphorically, in their continued service in the afterlife. To demonstrate this, following Dumont's comparative anthropology again (Dumont 1977, 1986), a cross-cultural analysis of two sacrificial traditions will come in handy. Similarities in the treatment of the sacrificed individuals and the architectural features and mortuary practices of royalty and the high-ranking elites can be traced broadly, and there is valid evidence to argue that this practice—just as *sunjang* in the 1st millennium BC Korean peninsula, or *renxun* retainer sacrifices in ancient China (Campbell 2012; Ying 2009)—was a common elite mortuary ritual in Asian ancient contexts. This would have provided strong, long-term ideological investments needed to sustain their stratified

system until being forgotten, banned (as in the case of *sunjang*), or even becoming ecologically unsustainable (as in the case of Kerma) (Judd & Irish 2009). The fact that retainer rituals were practiced for a long time and later denied as textual sources imply, suggests that elites employed strategies that legitimized retainer sacrifice and that commoners somehow accepted these legitimizations in ancient societies.

Strong emotions were certainly stirred by the killings, possibly performed in two consecutive steps (first in the gathering of the victims and later in the arrival of the executioners). If people were successively killed, washed, redressed, and deposited in burial groups as evidence suggests in the case of Ur (Baadsgaard et al. 2012), one ought to search in the mass burials for spatial patterns created by a long series of actions. However, given the manner in which grave locations were recorded in the field, I suggest that one cannot construct the plans and sections or the full funerary traditions in some cases with the degree of accuracy that this approach demands (for sites like Kish) due to reasons of decay, preservation, or even the excavation methodology that was used (Laneri 2007; Tatlock 2006).

Rituals of preparation for the sacrificial ceremony might, indeed, be both depicted and supported by iconographical evidence (cylinder seals) found at the tombs of the Royal Cemetery of Ur.⁶¹ Here, in RT 1054 and 800 and DP 337 and 1237, seven cylinder seals were uncovered depicting comparable scenes: U 11904 held at the National Museum of Iraq, U 12374, U 10448, U 10872, and U 8615 held at the Penn Museum, U 10871 and U 10939 held at the British Museum (Woolley 1934). These banquet scenes are usually divided into two registers on cylinder seals and on three plaques

⁶¹ Libation has also been proposed (Porter 2012) for Arslantepe and Umm el-Marra, but once again, evidence is not strong enough to sustain this hypothesis.

and on the Standard of Ur⁶² (Woolley & Mallowan 1976; Woolley 1934). Sometimes the second register on the seals shows apparently unrelated scenes where the banquet is coupled with scenes of war or contest such as men fighting bulls.

The commonly depicted scene deals with a banquet, perhaps on a special occasion, that might parallel the archeological retainer evidence. A double register banquet scene with female participants is depicted on the dark blue lapis lazuli cylinder seal from RT 800b on the right upper arm of Puabi (U 10872). All of the women wore skirts or dresses with long fringes with their hair in a bun. On the upper part, two females sit on identical folding stools facing each other and raising their conical drinking cups. Between them, are what has been argued to be two servants with their hands raised, and a servant to the far-left stands waving a square fan (Pittman 1998). On the lower part, a female individual sits on a stool facing a high table laden with bread and a haunch of meat flanked by servants. Behind her, a woman raises what seems to be a jar or cup. To the side, a separate scene depicts musical performances with a small four-stringed instrument.

This scene is also depicted on two parallel cylinder seals (U 10871 and U 10939) found at the same tomb RT 800, and U 10448 from RT 800, U 8615 from DP 337, and U 11904 from RT 1054 are also noteworthy. Although the depicted scenes differ widely, lacking either a musical performance or representing both males and females equally in some cases or only males in others (Pittman 1998; Woolley 1934), all of these may indicate a ceremony as has been suggested for previous other cases.

⁶² Although this might also be a banquet scene resulting after a military victory (Frankfort 1939).

Musical performances are also depicted on U 12374 where matching scenes are evident and again directly connected with an individual (body No. 7 in DP 1237) who had collapsed in the corner of the pit near the lyres. This seal is a carved, double-register banquet scene that also carries an inscription: Dumukisal (Pittman 1998). Combining elements of other banquet seals from the ANE, three individuals are shown here in the upper register—perhaps two elite members and one standing servant. On the lower register, musical performances appear again in an elaborate scene of dancing and singing. On the left side, there is a man carrying a staff over his shoulder preceded by two females clapping cymbals (Woolley 1965) and a woman playing a bull lyre.

Within a certain margin of error, the evidence allows us to hypothesize about the potential connections between the depicted scenes in glyptic and the archeological correlates that may represent a pre-sacrificial retainer ceremony that occurred at Ur in ca. 2600-2450 BC. In addition to the school of thought that has interpreted these seals as banquets (Imai 1983; Pittman & Aruz 1987), these scenes are hypothesized to deal with specific pre-sacrificial preparation in the form of banquets and festive rites. First of all, the fragmentary parallels in the musical instruments in the graves of the archeological record in the cases of DP 1332 and 1237, RT 789, and even the comparable fragmentary pieces of musical instruments from nine graves at the A Cemetery at Kish (Moorey 1978; Woolley 1934) look remarkably like the ones depicted on U 11904, 10872, and 12374. Second, the dichotomy in the banquet scenes (either representing a predominating male presence or the equal presence of both genders) in a ceremonial or festive event with servants and the well-dressed elite as in the cases of U 10871, 10939, 11904, 8615, and 10448, are reflected in the actual tombs from the cemetery. Third, the high percentage of females present in the cases of RT 800 and 1648 and

DP 1157 and 1237 and in the main female personages buried at DP 580 and 1237 and RT 777, 800, 1050, and 1524 contain parallels to the depicted evidence on U 10872 and 12374. Also, the presence of drinking cups, jars, breads, meats, and other types of food as depicted in all of the cases: the lower register of U 11904, 8615, 10448, 10871, 10872, and the upper registers of U 12374 and 10939 can be directly connected with the evidence from RT 1054 or DP 1237 (Ellison 1983). Last of all, it is worth mentioning the depictions of infants dancing and performing on U 12374 that might be connected to the only child burial from tomb RT 1133 despite the ambiguity (Woolley 1934). However, references on this seal are ambiguous and not illustrated.

One argument against this interpretation, relies on the high number of seals portraying banquet scenes that were not found in burial contexts as well as banquet scenes on other objects unrelated to burials (votive plaques from temples, the Ur standard, etc.). There is evidence that elite persons had seals depicting themselves or persons of a peer status (e.g., females for female seal owners), but there is no evidence that these banquets are in any way restricted to burial-related events.

Unfortunately, glyptic evidence does not offer clear insight into any kind of rites connected with burials, despite that mortuary and funerary rites clearly involve major activities with significant wealth, material, and ideology (Recht 2011).⁶³ The prominent banquet scene on the seals of the ED periods may depict banquets associated with major funerals and may, thus, be thought to represent some of these funeral when the evidence is

⁶³ A possibility is, however, given by Recht: "*These lavish burials actually are depicted in the iconography, but that we have so far been unable to detect them*" (Recht 2011: 163). However, she cannot give any clear signature for identifying a banquet scene as mortuary.

associated with presumed sacrificial remains or pre-sacrificial rites as in the case of the royal tombs of Ur (Woolley 1934). This methodological approach of combining iconographic evidence and their potential matches within the archeological material is supported by Cohen, who documents a match of the vessels found in the tombs with those shown on banquet scenes, bowls, drinking vessels, necked pots, and spouted vessels at Ur (Cohen 2005: 90). Nevertheless, the vessels depicted on seals or plaques outside of burial contexts depict the same kinds of vessels, thereby weakening this link.

This hypothesis may also be corroborated by the archeological correlates. As opposed to public graves inhuming single individuals, in royal tombs pre- or post-sacrificial rites with banquets, food offerings, food samples, and related furniture are held as evidence in DP 580 and 1232 and RT 789, 800, 1050, 1054, 1236, 1631, and 1648 and tomb G1 at Jericho (for more specified details of the samples that were recovered, please consult Ellison 1983) (Kenyon 1960, 1964).

Therefore, it is possible that banquet scenes not only depict funeral feasts in some cases (Matthiae 1984) but also further non-secular scenarios (Frankfort 1939) and rituals of pre-sacrificial practices as well (Hobson et al. 2017). However, since cylinder seals are hardly associated or uncovered in connection with burials or are difficult to contextualize in museum collections in most cases (Taylor 2006; Wieseman 1962; Werr 1992), no certainty can be attained.⁶⁴

It is clear that the Royal Cemetery of Ur provides ideal evidence by which to study retainer sacrifice in the ANE. With respect to pre- and post-

⁶⁴ However, in the Royal Cemetery of Ur alone, several hundred were found in graves. It is possible to link these with individuals, and there are also many banquet scenes from the non-elite public graves.

sacrificial rites, CT scans of individuals at the Royal Cemetery of Ur might be clarifying (Fletcher et al. 2008). As Baadsgaard (Baadsgaard et al. 2012), Keith (1934), and Molleson and Hodgson (Molleson & Hodgson 2003) showed, confirming the sacrifice hypothesis, the individuals they analyzed had suffered lethal blunt trauma. They speculated further about their social roles as porters, cart drivers (as seen in the gripping muscles from an individual at PG 1573), and high and low members of the court based on depictions in glyptic and iconographic evidence such as the Standard of Ur (Molleson & Hodgson 2003).

Regarding post-sacrificial costumes, computed tomography revealed a clear desire to display sacrificed individuals before burying them in the tomb, as the presence of the following treatments suggests exposure to heat and the application of cinnabar points to retard putrefaction and extend soft-tissue preservation. Were these bodies hidden from the general public or were they meant to be seen, witnessed, and mourned? In other words, was the exposure to heat and the desire to preserve their soft-tissue and avoid putrefaction carried out for practical, non-symbolic reasons, or were they used as part of the post-sacrificial rituals of the elite? According to the evidence, it can be said that the bodies were likely meant to be displayed after the sacrificial killing had been completed. Parallels in the ancient world are found in Mesoamerican societies where the skulls of both prisoners of war and sacrificed individuals were used for public displays in *tzompantli* (Mendoza et al. 2007), evoking the underlying concept of individual humans as trophies.

The appearance of black charcoal layers has been reported throughout the Royal Cemetery of Ur, but there are no signs of this practice at other sites with retainer evidence in field reports, field notes, or photographs (Woolley 1928, 1934, 1939). Evidence of an indirect exposure

to heat appears on the male individual from RT 755 and on the individuals in RT 1648 (Molleson & Hodgson 2003). Overall, the possible heating (or smoking) of bodies post-mortem might have been undertaken to delay putrefaction and to preserve the bodies for a time after death and before burial. Might this be evidence of a public display in which these individuals would have been witnessed by the society as a symbol of the power of the elite? Unfortunately, the evidence in the ANE does not allow us to look for similarities in further sites with retainer rituals (although heating corpses is known in the ANE from at least the 6th millennium BC), however the heating or burning of sacrificed individuals is widely attested in other ancient contexts (Oestigaard 2000, 2019) as in the case of ancient China: the exposure to the sun to dry for worship (Campbell 2012). In this last case *chī 𣎵* (exposing the body to dry) is performed by carving open the bodies of sacrificed individuals and then exposing them to be dried like meat. This treatment with indirect or direct exposure to heat is usually related to the differing demands of the gods to whom the sacrifice is intended.

Based on the evidence, as already demonstrated, elite funerals were not short events, and human sacrifice was not unique to Ur (Baadsgaard et al. 2012; Dickson 2006). Elite funerary ceremonies were lengthy, staged events with music, wailing, and feasting (Cohen 2005; Pollock 2003) as documented in approximately contemporaneous textual sources (Jagersma 2007: 291-4; Katz 2003: 167-88) such as the imagery of musical instruments and musicians found in the tombs and the abundant drinking and vessels with the remains of food (Woolley 1934). It is possible in the case of Ur, and as extrapolated in further contexts with similar retainer evidence, that royal attendants took part in these ceremonies, but the entourage probably did not descend the passage leading to the royal tomb chamber on foot as Woolley envisioned. Instead, at some point following the death of a king,

queen, or elite personage—perhaps days or weeks after the royal entombment, which probably took place on the third day after death (Katz 2003: 174-82)—the individuals were killed, preserved, and dressed, and their bodies were purposefully arranged in a *tableau mort* in the royal tomb to continue their service in the netherworld (Baadsgaard et al. 2012).⁶⁵

As final notes, now that retainer sacrifice has proven a feasible hypothesis for the ANE evidence, several other conclusions arise. First of all, the practice is first attested for in Anatolia in the 4th millennium BC and lasted until at least the 2nd millennium BC (Negahban 1991). Second, individuals were ritually entombed, and there are great differences in their burials compared to those of massacres, wars, or epidemics. The key argument against identifying these burials as retainer sacrifice lies in the difficulty of ascertaining the cause of death from fragmentary skeletal remains (Tatlock 2006). It is unlikely, however that the repetition of such patterns over three millennia in parallel to the sacrificial practices of other ancient societies across the globe correspond to non-sacrificial burials.

Thus, after killing (usually with blunt force trauma as patterned in the Philadelphia cases) and after treating and dressing the bodies, it is assumed that individuals were put on display and thereafter brought down

⁶⁵ There is enough evidence for the manner in which burial rituals were held in the Ur-III period from the texts respectively used by Katz and Dick (Dickson 2006; Katz 2003). These dates are later than those of the Royal Cemetery, but they are also from Ur. In these texts, the ritual culminates on the 3rd day, on which the largest (animal) sacrifices by far are conducted. If we look at spending on burial rituals (which is attested through the administrative perspective of many texts), there is some evidence even from the ED era of comparable rituals. There does not, however, appear to be much effort (except for the regular food and drink offerings for the deceased) after the third day. Hence, one would assume that the retainer sacrifice rituals took place within these first three days.

to the tomb, which was then sealed. Although not all of the skeletal remains from death pits or tombs were laid out in the same manner, evidence shows that all were intentionally and ritually arranged; as Woolley recognized, the scene was carefully planned and staged (Woolley 1934). Afterward, it is assumed based on the nature of the evidence that this tomb may have become a pilgrimage site (Ahn 2012).

Moreover, the gradual decrease in sacrificial retainers accompanying elite personages into the afterlife in the archeological evidence suggests that the origins of the practice lie in Anatolia in the 4th millennium BC (Frangipane et al. 2001; Hasset & Sağlamtimur 2018; Hasset et al. 2019). This cist-tomb ritual subsequently developed into the physical separation of spheres seen in the funerary and mortuary structures: tombs and shafts or DP (Kenyon 1960; Usieto Cabrera 2020; Woolley 1934). The exact same pattern was repeated in the Asian territory from the 2nd millennium BC with several similarities not only in the treatment of the bodies (Ying 2009) but also in the execution of the physical ritual and the architectural structures (Bagley 1999; Campbell 2012; Huang 2004), which suggests possible interregional and transcultural transmissions of retainer sacrifice. Hitherto, there is no evidence to sustain a belief in the transmission of this practice to the ANE, although there may evidence of the opposite scenario.⁶⁶

In this interpretation, therefore, the practice of retainer sacrifice is specific and contingent. Several scholars have pointed to generalized situations of social stress as causes of human sacrifice, seeing urbanization and state formation as sources of stress in a variety of cultural contexts (Schwartz 2012) in which this practice—a kind of chiefly sanctification ritual

⁶⁶ A more in-depth transcultural and interregional analysis of this matter would be required.

(Drennan 1976)—influenced and supported the formation of early states (Conte & Kim 2016). However, if sacrifice were a direct response to this in the ANE, and if these causes were so general and widespread, then the same might be expected of retainer sacrifice: why is human sacrifice not equally widespread? Perhaps we would expect to see much more frequent textual and archeological evidence of sacrifice than we do. These are not sacrificial economies whose “*cultural logics are determined by rituals of waste*” (Buchli 2004: 183) but are rather societies in which all of these conceptions shall be taken into consideration without highlighting one over the others because the evidence does not allow us to do so. Nor does it seem that the performance of violence is the essential element here (Dickson 2006). It is being dead, rather than being killed, that seems to be the most essential part of the disposition and meaning of these particular burials. Power may or may not enter into consideration, and the backgrounds of these sacrificed individuals may vary greatly, as proven here. However, whether sacrifice is a route to or an expression of power or not is a question of function, not meaning.

Finally, there are, however, several questions that remain unanswered. Do the substantial differences in the number of sacrificed individuals from site to site suggest differences in the power of the elite individuals in life? Do the number of sacrificed individuals increase or decrease depending on the actual religious-political power that the elite member possessed in life? Likewise, experiential aspects certainly cannot be overlooked, ranging from which new concepts from *the archeology of sense and emotions* arise and related to issues such as how the paraphernalia, performances (dance, music, and the screams of individuals), or the scene of the corpses affected participants (Laneri 2010).

CHAPTER IV

FOUNDATION SACRIFICE

"Something alive has to be put in order to fix it."

This chapter addresses another form of the human sacrificial phenomenon, namely that of *construction* or *foundation sacrifice*, which is often discussed in the context of other ancient and modern societies but has rarely been fully discussed for the ANE. My focus will solely be on outlining the socio-religious conditions of foundation sacrifice and exposing potential sites that might contain such evidence. Hitherto, my interest has been on the importance attached to human remains, especially those of infants and children, but, once again, the condition of preservation and indelicate archeological excavation methodologies have in many cases obscured an exhaustive osteological analysis, which makes the context and spatial analysis key.

As a consequence, the reason why sacrifices related to construction are thought to have arisen in the first place and how the social importance of the structure might relate to the nature of its sacrifices seem to be the most crucial emphases.

Human remains have been placed underneath structures, walls, or bridges for different spiritual purposes since classical times as the *founding of Rome* demonstrates; when Romulus founded the city of Rome, Faustulus und Quinctilius are said to have been slain and buried in a deep pit under

a huge stone (Brewster 1971). Many other worldwide practices related to infants and children attest to the same (Ellis 1968).

It is arduous to carry out a scientific approach to the underlying religious beliefs with any certainty because there is no literature outlining the origins of this ancient custom, and there are only scattered theories regarding the case of the ANE (Westermarck 1917).

In order to pursue an orderly presentation, this investigation will, whenever possible, first attempt to evaluate the evidence of this ritual through the successive archeological levels of each site under consideration, and, secondarily, compare the relationship of the evidence to its counterparts at other sites within the same period. This procedure is necessary due to the differences in cultural progression between northern and southern and within differing northern areas.

It has been noted in earlier studies (Green 1976) that the evidence from archeological sources concerning foundation sacrifice in the northern and southern parts of the ANE is diverse. However, this statement shall be revised. If the evidence of human sacrifice is examined at the *places of sacrifice* in the south in what are most likely not private households, we must realize that this may have been performed as a corporate cultic act by the entire community. This conclusion correlates with the earliest evidence of organized temple religion in this area during the early and middle Uruk period. On the other hand, while all evidence of this ritual is completely residential in northern Mesopotamia—being demonstrated as early as Yorghon Tepe and at Tepe Gawra XIII as the ritual killing of infants—this is not necessarily a hindrance to the theory being proposed. In this region during the periods in question, what we are dealing with is not an organized cult or the state religion of the south but rather domestic, house cult practices. Cultic and other records are preserved by the official power-

structures of the ancient Near East, and, consequently, reflect the “official” cult.

Definitions & Concepts

Principally, the ritual interment of human foundation deposits during the construction of a new special building, especially a public building, is well attested in the ANE from at least the Early Dynastic period to Hellenistic times (Ambos 2004). Although briefly mentioned in texts, the best evidence for foundation deposits comes from archeological discoveries. These were usually positioned at its significant points below the foundations of the building, including entrances, corners, and load-bearing wall intersections (Ellis 1968). These were initially deposited in a receptacle such as a stone box, but in later periods they were more often inserted into the foundations with no special container (Hunt 2006).

Despite certain scholarly attitudes, and as stated earlier, one of the most widespread religious beliefs, given its existence in the cosmologies of numerous ancient and modern societies, is undoubtedly the idea that immuring a human individual, often an infant (Ellis 1968), in a structure under construction ensures its protection (Westermarck 1917). However, this practice can not only be traced archeologically but also in ancient literature such as the Bible: “*He laid the foundations thereof in Abram, his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son, Segub*” (English Standard Version Bible, 2001, 1 Kings 16:34).

Hence, the custom of burying human individuals in foundations has received different names depending on the society that practiced it (e.g., *Hitobashira* for ancient Japan, *itxusuria* for the Basque Country, or *Inju* for ancient Korean societies) (Brewster 1971; Ellis 1968; Gomme 1883; Lee 1992;

Usieto Cabrera 2020). Although there is no specific name in ANE literature, various studies have shown that it is highly attested in East Asia and the Middle East where animal and human remains (especially children and infants) were usually buried in boundary ditches built into walls, under bridges, or in foundation layers of buildings for protection and spiritual guidance (Ellis 1968; Merrifield, 1987: 50-7; 116-21, 186). India is the epitome of this practice when demonstrating its persistence through time and space (Brewster 1971; Danerek 2016). In ancient India the favorite sacrificial individual was a pregnant woman. In 1872 when the Hooghly Bridge was being built across the Ganges, native populations feared that each structure would have to be founded on a layer of the skulls of infants and children in order to appease the river spirits (Danerek 2016; Gomme 1883).

Unfortunately, there is no clear record in the ANE literature of the use of human individuals as foundation deposits (Schwartz 2012), and the only evidence there might be for its study is archeological. In addition, foundation sacrifice (or also Construction sacrifice) has rarely been proposed as more than an exceptional event in the ANE (Usieto Cabrera 2020), such that when it occurred its presence has often been reduced to its mere report.

One problem noted in the few reports and contributions (e.g., Ellis 1968; Tatlock 2006; Recht 2011) is that authors do not differentiate between the construction of a private building and the construction of public houses such as temples⁶⁷ (Ellis 1968; Wessing & Jordaan 1997). In fact, there is an

⁶⁷ This applies in particular to temples in southern Mesopotamia, but it may also have been the case for private houses in northern Mesopotamia (Ellis 1968). The most permanent example is the Temple Oval at Khafajah where several meters of sand were imported, and

essential ideological and abstract difference between these various constructions. This difference is reflected in the form of the sacrifice and divergent uses of individuals based on age or sex. Ideologically, this is also apparent in the fact some foundation sacrifices were performed to appease spirits believed to have been disturbed by the construction activity, and in other cases the sacrifice is enacted to establish a profitable contact with benevolent ancestors or to animate a protective guardian spirit (Westermarck 1917). Conceptually, ceremonies connected with the construction of either a private or a public household can be divided into appeasement sacrifices aimed at gaining a title to the land from the spirits that own it, and rituals said to protect or animate the structure (Wessing & Jordaan 1997).

Appeasement sacrifices thus refer to those sacrifices that are understood to be made in order to pacify supernatural entities whose serenity is somehow disturbed by the actions of individuals. The entities meant here are spirits that were thought to imbue significant features of the landscape in the ANE (Campbell 2012). As in other places from southeast and southwest Asia, there were certain ceremonies in the Bronze Age that had to be conducted before constructing a new building or colonizing new lands; it would not, therefore be odd to extrapolate this logic as a potential reasonable explanation of the evidence of these sacrificial ceremonies under study. As Wessing and Jordaan state:

In opening new settlements, the founders first of all have the tutelary spirit to whom the land locally belongs. Only when they succeed in gaining this spirit's cooperation, that is, by

the foundation deposits (ceramic, animal bones, figurines, and jewelry) were then placed on top (Delougaz 1940).

turning village guardian, will they be able to fell the trees, break the soil and establish the new settlement. (Wessing & Jordaan 1997: 105)

Moreover, there are sacrifices that are thought to somehow influence the nature of the construction. These rituals are designed to protect the structure from danger and, in some sense, animate it and bring it to life (Westermarck 1917). In much of the most prominent literature on construction sacrifice (e.g., Davies 1983; Heine-Geldern 1995; Hubert & Mauss 1964), the spirit of an individual is said to become a guardian or protector of the structure for which the sacrifice was made.

On the other hand, these theories are refuted by a number of authors guided by Westermarck's ideas (Westermarck 1917) and the authentic logic that the human being that has been killed would not have felt angry but benevolent toward their murderers. This logic is borne out in the notion and concept of the "*one who waits*" (Wessing & Jordaan 1997: 108), which fits in with the idea found throughout southeast and southwest Asia that the spirit of a person (or animal) who has died retains a connection with his or her mortal remains and especially the skull (Wilken 1889). These remains can become a vehicle through which contact with a person's spirit is maintained. Therefore, the way in which a person has died is thought to influence the fate of their spirit in the afterlife, including the belief that the spirits of those who have died a violent death stay near their remains (Heine-Geldern 1995). Thus, Heine-Geldern continues, it is possible to obtain a powerful protective spirit by violently killing a person (or animal) and storing their bones in a certain place, which would contradict Westermarck's studies.

Ellis (1968) provides a comprehensive discussion of different kinds of foundation deposits in Mesopotamia as well as disperse textual and iconographic material in connection to animal sacrifice (although with no

reference to human deposits), concluding that *“their appearance is so sporadic . . . it does not appear that the burial of sacrificial animals was ever a standard and important part of building rituals”* (Ellis 1968: 42 cited by Recht 2011: 202). The examples given in this book are derived from references in intermittent reports, papers, or discussions in which the interment of human individuals resembles the pattern of the foundation deposits found at sites such as Nuzi, Tepe Gawra, Chagar Bazar, and Tell Abou Danné, which serve as the basis of my studies. Furthermore, these sites represent the epitome of such practices and shall be compared with other sites from the ANE that might reflect the same practices such as Dothan or Tell Brak.

Traditionally, and given that the vast majority of the archeological evidence consists of the remains of infants and children, scholars have considered arguments regarding the interment of infants in ceramic vessels and in the floors of buildings (child intramural and jar burials) to be either an unreasonable proof of foundation sacrificial rituals (Carter & Parker 1995) or an uncertain practice to begin with (Tatlock 2006). On the one hand, infant sacrifices from the Phoenician-Punic realm (González Wagner 1995) have likely influenced scholars in their studies of infant burials, particularly in Mesopotamia, to identify jar burials as immolations. However, and as the data shows, these burials do not necessarily relate to human sacrifice, but have rather been a regular burial practice in northern Syria, Mesopotamia, and southern Turkey from at least the 4th millennium BC (Ibañez et al. 2013). It is thus important to keep in mind that the burial of infants in ceramic vessels was a ubiquitous practice in the ANE and was often a typical method of non-sacrificial burial (Tatlock 2006).

As Tatlock insightfully suggests: *“such a coincidence is possible if one were dealing with a limited number of instances but questionable in light of the wide array of examples”* (Tatlock 2006: 81 citing Ellis 1968: 38). These

interments might align with theories that argue that the individuals used for these practices were conceived of as protective spirits meant to serve as guides, especially with respect to the purity of infants and children (González Wagner 1995).

Finally, burying children and adults under the floors of private and public structures is attested throughout the entire region not only in Mesopotamia. Therefore, one cannot simply assume the existence of sacrifice when encountering floor burials or ceramic interments. Following Tatlock's studies (2006), my analysis is based on two different types of burials that appear in the 4th millennium: interments in or under the walls of buildings (built-in burials) like Yorghhan Tepe (Starr 1939), Tepe Gawra, and stratum VIII (Speiser 1935), and burials in rooms which have been identified, more or less precisely,⁶⁸ as chapels or temples (in-floor burials) such as Tall Chagar Bazar (Mallowan 1947) and Tepe Gawra (Eastern Temple of stratum VIII).

Archeological Evidence

Syria and Mesopotamia

Nuzi/Yorghhan Tepe

Based on Starr's (1939) field reports.

Yorghhan Tepe is located in N modern-day Iraq. Excavations were begun by the Archeological Museum in Baghdad and ASOR and carried

⁶⁸ The nature of these buildings is controversial, for there is no architectural or archeological material corroboration.

out by Robert H. Pfeifer, Richard FS Starr, Harvard University, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology in Philadelphia.

Potential foundation sacrifice can be found throughout different structures from various prehistoric periods up until the Nuzi period (strata I-IV). Starr, the excavator from 1927-1931, found a repetitive pattern beginning with evidence from the prehistoric era (strata XII-X): the remains of two infants were located resting in two vessels on the floor of pavement X, while the extended remains of another young child were found resting directly on the floor and covered by a large bowl on pavement XA (Ellis 1968).⁶⁹

The evidence is located in several groups of strata that Green (1976) describes in great detail following Starr (1939). First of all, another infant burial was found encased in a wall in stratum X, whose skeleton rested on the bottom of a large jar with its legs contracted and its hands raised to its face. The base of the container was level with the floor, and the wall was intentionally built over it "*with care taken to bridge the body so that the weight of the superimposed structure would not crush it*" (Green 1976: 60).

Similar evidence found in the later Nuzi periods (Starr 1939) makes it clear that these burials represent more than the mere disposal of a body. The principal graves uncovered in stratum III are on the pavement of room P400 at the NW of street 1, group 16. Three upside down infant interment jars were uncovered there, each covering the remains of one infant. A fourth large jar contained the bones of 11 infants and was placed directly under

⁶⁹ The location of the body makes it evident that the burial was contemporaneous with laying the floor (Ellis 1968).

the wall at the northern corner in a room where domestic equipment was uncovered.

The three pavement burials follow the traditional Nuzian pattern of interments, and the strange nature of the fourth type has led scholars to conclude that there must have been some sacrificial aspect to these burials (Starr 1939). Furthermore, and based on the nature of this evidence, this can be interpreted as a dedicatory offering placed within and under the wall at the time of construction.

Stratum II, belonging to 15th and 14th centuries BC, reveals a related group of house units crowded against each other, all connected by streets. Within the space between two walls above the pavement floor an infant burial was covered by an inverted jar. The skeleton of an adolescent was additionally below the floor under the remains of the infant. The space between the walls was then apparently filled up with earth and potsherds. To one side above the infant burial was an envelope tablet.⁷⁰

G24 is also worth mentioning (Starr 1939) due to the interment of two infants related to the construction of the pavement. The first is against the northwestern wall near the doorway of unit G21A. However, the clay urn was below the pavement with the top of its nob-handle flush with the floor. The second was in the same position directly under the southwestern wall. The bottom of the wall was lower than the top of the container, demonstrating that they were placed contemporaneously; clearly the wall was built with intentional care over the clay vessel.

On the basis of the preceding evidence, the reasonable deduction can be drawn that the only rule governing the location of these burials within a

⁷⁰ This is considered to be intrusive by some scholars and to be part of the burial by others (Green 1976).

room was their connection to the structure, whether within the wall, the pavement, or the floor (Green 1976).

It is important to mention that the pattern on the bodies indicates the intention of putting them within the walls or underneath specific structures, but the question whether the bodies were slaughtered for sacrifice or their bodies were rather used after an unrelated death remains unanswered. In this case, given that an osteological analysis is not available, the context is key. Stratigraphical studies (Speiser 1935) indicate that the construction layers of the buildings were contemporaneous with the interments and were not a later imposition, but, again, this is not sufficient to conclude that this is an example of foundation sacrifice. Other factors must be evaluated if the real significance of these cases is to be understood.

Furthermore, the evidence does not suggest that there is *no* rule for the number of burials within a building or for the types of private houses in which they appeared. The most frequent custom was that of a single burial jar per building, but there are also several instances of three to a building, and two unique instances of four and 21 respectively (Green 1976). It is difficult to establish a fixed type of room in which they occur, but the broad limitation to a subsidiary room—that is, never an entry room or a courtyard—perhaps devoted merely to the storage of pots or jars, seems plausible enough. None occur in any of the seven levels of the temple or the palace building of stratum II.

Although jar burials are not indicative of human sacrifice, Tatlock notes: *“built-in burials potentially connote sacrifice”* (Tatlock 2006: 82). It is clear based on the evidence from Nuzi that a special socio-religious situation is indicated by the multiple interments of infants, which likely suggest the traditional custom of using children as foundation deposits (Davies 1983). Based on their data, the excavators classified these

inhumations as foundation sacrifices that provided protection and blessings to the household (Starr 1939: 16, 349-357), basing their conclusion on:

- The uniformity of the age of the infants at the time of death, estimated between three and 12 months, which cannot be used as a measure of infant mortality at Nuzi; if this were so, one would expect to find a more even distribution throughout the city.
- For such a proposition of a high infant mortality, there were too few infant burials, and one should expect to find a much larger number of interments in that case.
- Infant interments were not found throughout the entire site (only a limited number of dwellings contained infant burials under the floors or walls).

According to several scholars all of these points seem to indicate, (Green 1976; Starr 1939) that the children were killed intentionally to serve religious purposes, although I would add that despite there being a reasonable amount of evidence to support this hypothesis, no certain answer can be given.

Tepe Gawra

Based on Speiser (1935) and Tobler's (1950) field reports.

Tepe Gawra is located E on the Tigris River close to modern-day Mosul in NW Iraq. This site reflects a long history from at least, the 6th millennium BC until very recent dates (Rothman 2001). Studies of the site began in 1931 under a team of archeologists from the university of

Pennsylvania. Among the numerous sites excavated in northern Mesopotamia, Tepe Gawra is strikingly important because a part of the mound was consistently used as a necropolis during its earlier history. Excavations have revealed that the tombs and graves were situated as close to the temple buildings of their respective strata as was physically possible in an overwhelming number of instances. In other cases, certain of these were deliberately located under the foundations and floors of temple buildings and have consequently been referred to as sacrificial interments

At Tepe Gawra, the evidence that can most likely be interpreted as foundation deposits are infant interments that were associated with temples in different strata: below floors, in walls, and directly before it (Speiser 1935: 25-26 140-142; Tobler 1950: 57, 66, 100-101) ranging from strata XVII-VIII (Speiser 1935). Although these burials like those of Nuzi (Starr 1939) were often explained by the excavators as natural deaths supported by references to high infant mortality rates (Tobler 1950), the nature of the evidence and its controversial locations are particularly interesting given that such spaces are hotspots for ritual activity and especially sacrifice (Ellis 1968; Starr 1939; Woolley 1974).

Stratum XVII, which dates to early 5th millennium BC (Becker 2015) and constitutes the earliest level from which relevant evidence can be gathered, includes two circular buildings whose architecture and long-standing structures in the same spot suggest a religious interpretation (Becker 2015; Tobler 1950)., Subsequent graves attached to this structure were uncovered below the floor: two of these contained an adult and an infant, three others two infants and a child in the pavement, and, finally, another contained three graves with an infant, a child, and an adolescent (Green 1976; Rothman 2001). According to the excavator, *“their position and regular distribution, 1.50 m. apart, could indicate contemporaneous burials”*

(Speiser 1935: 26). The rest of the burials were located either near or between these, somehow connected to the structure but not as directly as these eight graves.

In stratum XV, four buildings with a great resemblance to the stratum XVII structure were uncovered. In one of them, which has controversially been interpreted as a private building, rooms 3 and 9 contained three infant graves (Becker 2015) in direct contact with the construction of the building. Furthermore, there was probably a grave with three infants in the construction layers in stratum XIV, but it was too eroded to tell, for only the foundations of the building remained (Speiser 1935).

In stratum XIII, which belonged to the late 5th millennium BC, three buildings were uncovered whose size, architecture, and other contents were interpreted as public religious buildings or temples (Becker 2015). Cultic remains were on top of the pavement in all three, including animal bones, vessels, incense burners, and recessed niches for liquid offerings. The interments of various infants and children were discovered to be directly attached.

After diverse strata with clear differentiation in terms of their architecture, interactions with landscapes, and funerary traditions, over 73 graves were discovered in stratum XI, although only eight were located under the floor of a temple (Speiser 1935). These eight graves were mostly infant or children graves that were not much described by the excavators (Speiser 1935; Tobler 1950).

Out of the 23 graves in stratum X-A, only one was found directly related to the foundational layers of the religious building (locus 220 was found about 75 cm below the floor of Room 1074 in the central chamber of the temple) (Speiser 1935), and five other tombs (Green 1976) were also connected with the shrine. It should be emphasized that where five tombs

were connected with the temple, only one, No. 107 with its adult occupant, was located immediately under the center of the shrine. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the four tombs of stratum X-A had no religious structures, while the five or ten of strata X were located in the vicinity of the temple (Green 1976).

In stratum IX, 24 graves were dug directly connected to the remains of another religious building (Speiser 1935). All the other graves primarily lay in the eastern section of the mound and were of infants and children. The infant interred in 903-A wore a gold headband and a necklace of gold, carnelian, and lapis beads. Although no further description of the tombs is provided by the excavators (Speiser 1935; Tobler 1950), most of the infant tombs described here were adorned by a variety of objects.

Stratum VIII is complex in terms of its chronology, architecture, and the religious practices found at its level (Becker 2015). This stratum offers a succession of settlements consisting of three sublayers that represent three interconnected periods. Within the foundational layers of four different religious buildings in this layer, 21 graves were found, all except two of which contain infants and children; 14 were grouped around the western temple, one of which was found in the southwest wall, presumably placed there while the building was under construction; finally, four other graves were dug through the pavement of the E shrine (Speiser 1935).

The 45 identified tombs related to strata IX and VIII are a noteworthy feature of this mound, of which the majority are directly connected to religious structures. Out of these tombs, ten have been identified as containing sacrificial individuals by the excavators (Rothman 2001; Tobler 1950), and four of them are connected to the W and E religious buildings of stratum VIII, apparently having been deliberately placed underneath the foundations of their respective massive buildings. This is significant

because the numerous graves excavated at all levels associated with these temples normally contain the remains of infants and children.

A detailed study of these tombs is provided by Green (1976):

“Those belonging to the western temple of Stratum VIII are Tombs 14 and B, to the eastern shrine are 2, 202, 5, and 14. Each had an infant placed underneath the foundation of the front of the building. Stratum IX Temple has Tombs C and 54, each with an infant burial. It is of interest that Tomb 5 is situated directly beneath the podium of the eastern temple.

Other tombs, while not located directly beneath temples, appear to have some religious significance. Tomb No. 31 of Square 9-M is located 40cm east of the western temple of Stratum and five meters from the lowan of Stratum IX Temple. It also contained an infant and may be connected to either temple.

Tomb No. 60 of Squares 10-11M lay close to the wall outside the Stratum VIII-B Western Temple, before this apparently fell into disuse. Whereas the pattern seems to be a location beside a religious edifice, it could have been placed here when this building was still used for religious purposes. The same argument can be used for Tomb 29 which also may have had its source in Stratum VIII-B.

Three other tombs are worth considering as containing evidence of ritual killings. They are Nos. 124, 107, and 102. Located below the pavement of Stratum XI, their floor elevations are remarkably uniform. No. 124 can be related to either the northern Shrine of Stratum VIII, or to the Stratum IX Temple. Numbers 107 and 102 are contemporaneous, separated only by a wall. While 107 is directly under the shrine, No. 102 lies

outside, separated by a thin wall. The similarity of construction and design, along with corresponding similarity in artifacts, therefore, furnishes the link in the relationship between them. Tombs 124 and 109 contained infant remains, while No. 107 those of an adult.

Among the excavated tombs, Nos. 25, 29, and 30 were of multiple burials, the latter two of them contained mother and child burials of Stratum VIII-C. No. G36-122 of Stratum XI had two infants and an adult and could represent death in childbirth. Other multiple tombs of interest are Nos. 25 and 111. The latter of Stratum X contained a triple burial, all adults, while No. 25 had its origin in Stratum VIII; both are uniquely joined by the common walls of Tombs 24 and 109. The scholarly consensus is that an inferior social standing is indicated for all the persons in Tombs 25 and 111, but whether they were slaves, serfs, or the wives of the persons interred in Tombs 24 and 109 cannot be determined. Each double tomb is a single structure, having been built and occupied at the same time; one must assume, then, that in Tombs 25 and 111 there can be evidence of victims of either ritual killing, war, or plague. (Green 1976: 71-72)

Three conclusions can be drawn about this site:

1. The existence of burials under the pavement or walls of religious or sacred structures.
2. Burials under the pavements of private dwellings.
3. Scattered burials with no particular location, unconnected with religious buildings.

The contrast among all of the interments at Tepe Gawra is important, for burying their inhabitants within their households seems to have been an ordinary practice. However, the location and direct connection of some grave sites to religious temples, their interment within walls, or, more precisely, their location in important rooms—especially when mixed with animal remains that are suspected to have been sacrificed—suggest a potential function as foundation deposits and offerings made for protection and guidance (Ellis 1968; Tatlock 2006; Westermarck 1917). However, and as has been stated in other cases (e.g., Woolley 1934), the erosion of evidence, the inadequate archeological methodologies of the fieldwork, and the limiting factors of later events mean that no osteological analyses were carried out on the bones, nor can they be carried out today. Hence, the question remains whether those infants and children were, indeed, sacrificed or if their deaths, otherwise attributed to a high childhood mortality rate (Mallowan 1947), were intended to be beneficial due to their interment in foundational layers of special buildings.

The study of these tombs reveals a clear connection between religious buildings and infant/child tombs with an overwhelming number of instances situated either within these buildings, within their walls, or in their vicinities outside (Speiser 1935). Due to various constraints (Tobler 1950), no pattern concerning the bodies can be established. There is also the important factor of infant burials: in all cases they were located in central areas inside these temples and were closely associated with the adult tombs. The preceding evaluation has revealed that the number of graves and tombs at Tepe Gawra was considerable but by no means large enough to account for the entire population of the excavated areas. It might thus be presumed that there is another cemetery somewhere in the vicinities.

Finally, there is potential evidence of foundation sacrifice at Tepe Gawra as Green pointed out (Green 1976), but certainly not all of the sub-pavement burials can be classified or patterned based on comparisons to other sites. Furthermore, there is no explanation related to the strata and the potential cultural differences implied throughout them for the existence or absence of these tombs, nor is there evidence about whether the infants were killed in these structures. If such interments were ritually significant and practiced by the same individuals, it might be expected that these customs should have been continuously observed from the earliest evidence (stratum XVII) of the existence of these structures and for the entirety of their duration, but this is not the case at Tepe Gawra.

Chagar Bazar

Based on Mallowan's field reports and contributions (1936, 1937, 1947).

Chagar Bazar is located to the south of the city of Amuda in the NE part of Syria. This site was a large city on the caravan route taking overland traffic from the Habur to the upper Tigris. The similarity between the numerous artifacts uncovered here to those of neighboring sites suggests that this route connected Chagar Bazar by road to neighboring sites in antiquity. The character of the debris also reveals that this was probably the most important city of the region (Cruells et al. 2013; Mallowan 1947).

The site was initially excavated from 1935 to 1937 by Sir Max Mallowan after being selected on the basis of his surveys in the northern Khabur region in 1934 under the auspices of the British Museum and the British School of Archeology in Iraq (Mallowan 1936). More recent excavations were carried out by a British-Belgian team (Cruells et al. 2013).

The 1935 campaign revealed levels 2 and 3 (ca. mid-late 3rd millennium BC) (Mallowan 1947), which contained a significant percentage of infant burials (90% and 80%) (Tatlock 2006). Room 3 of level 3 was interpreted to be a shrine with a place dedicated to the altar where the remains had been laid (Mallowan 1947). According to the excavator, these burials are comparable to the infants buried in jars under the floors of household chapels or in their vicinities in the early 2nd millennium BC at Ur (*Larsa period*) (Mallowan 1936; Woolley 1955).⁷¹

Of a total of 23 interments at earlier levels, only eight were children or infants (from levels 16 to 6). However, of 45 in the two later levels, 36 were children or infants in the layers 2 and 3 (Mallowan 1947).

Tell Abou Danné

Based on Tefnin's field report (1979).

Tell Abou Danné is located in the northern part of Syria, near Aleppo (Tefnin 1979), and its settlement that dates back to the 2nd millennium BC was briefly excavated by a Belgian team (Tefnin 1979).

Very little work has been carried out on the foundation deposits from Tell Abou Danné (ca. 1800-1600 BCE) (Tefnin 1979), and there is not much information beyond a brief description that the excavator offered on the circular pit as part of the foundations of the fortifications and a brief

⁷¹ Woolley decided to explain this phenomenon by positing a high mortality rate for children (Woolley 1955: 187-190), thereby failing to provide a wider and more detailed transcultural and interregional explanation.

subsequent analysis by Recht (2019). There, a human skeleton⁷² lay with its back against the wall along with several animal remains (dogs).

The fact that the dogs (including puppies) were sacrificed and that the walls functioned as fortifications suggests that this is, indeed, a case of foundation sacrifice (as signatures discussed earlier in this book for the recognition of sacrifice in the field would also suggest). Finally, the sacrifice may have had a protective purpose as well, as in the other Syro-Mesopotamian cases (Recht 2011).

Preliminary Results

Categorizing a site as a case of foundation sacrifice with confidence and a clear definition as we have attempted in other contexts (Beattie 1980; Sugiyama 2005) should involve the discovery of a complete or near-complete human or animal skeleton in architectural foundations with evidence of violence prior to being interred, but these conditions are not always feasible with the available evidence. Ultimately, recognizing the possibility of these rituals in the ANE thus depends on establishing their similarities to the archeological vestiges of several other Asian societies (Lee 1992).

Thus far, there have only been a few minor encounters with human remains that are possible foundation sacrifices beyond the sites proposed here; however, due to the ambiguity of the evidence and the low amount of data under consideration, they are not definite. In early periods, similar evidence could be found at Tell Ain el-Kerkh and Çatalhöyük (Russell & Düring 2006) although, again, the evidence is not strong enough in terms of quantity or quality to sustain the assertion.

⁷² Unfortunately, there was no reference to sex or gender (Tefnin 1979: 48-49).

The excavator records a child about one and one-half years old buried beneath the large, squared stones of a wall of the middle Bronze Age site of Dothan. In the words of the excavator, "*[i]t suggests the idea of a 'foundation sacrifice' reported in earliest Palestinian excavations (though denied by some recent writers)*" (Free 1953: 18). The late Nelson Glueck also records the early Bronze Age foundation sacrifice of a newborn babe under the fireplace of a house at Tell Abu Matar and another stuffed into a jar that had been placed under a threshold of another private building at Teleilat el Ghassul, both in the Negev (Nakhai 2001). Kenyon also records an infant foundation burial beneath the wall of a structure she identifies as a temple or a shrine in the late early Bronze Age city of Jericho (Kenyon 1960, 1964)⁷³ although her conclusion was uncertain.

Tell Umm el-Marra might also include evidence of foundation deposits where animal bones of equids and the remains of infants were placed in the floors of some private houses, and part of an equid was found in association with the main gate to the acropolis (G28 and G27) and in installation B, tomb 3 and rooms 2 and 3. The use of equid bones was apparently also found in the foundations of building 6 at Tell Banat (Porter 2002b: note 12). Such deposits were placed in very deliberate positions, indicating their use as markers of sacred boundaries (Zarins 1986).

The palace of Büyükkale at Hattusa has been proposed to include the remains of a four-years old child in the wall of a structure at stratum V, belonging to the early 2nd millennium (Neve 1966; Kümmel 1967: 164; Tatlock 2006: 104), although no further description or any other detailed information is given, hence no definite conclusion on Hattusa is possible.

⁷³ However, this was located some distance from the two adjacent rooms with solid blocks of brickwork which she had identified as altars.

Other sites that present similar evidence but for which there is insufficient data for analysis are Germayir and Arbit (Schwartz 2015) and Tell Brak (Oates et al. 1997, 2001), each with a series of graves buried under the floors of houses, but no further context or properly recorded methodologies were provided (Green 1976). A jar 1.90 m long and 0.40 m in diameter was found at Megiddo (Schumacher 1908) in the foundations of a wall lying 2.30 m underground above the lowest layer of stones; it had been partially crushed by the second layer of stones. It contained the skeleton of a child and three clay vessels, presumably offerings that had been made.

Places of sacrifice or *Opferstätten* (Koldewey 1887) at Al-Hiba and Tell Surghul warrant special attention, for Koldewey's (1887) first excavation of their interiors revealed animal and vegetable residues and alleged human skeletal remains. Al-Hiba and Tell Surghul have been the main focus of numerous studies, but none of these past studies have dealt with Koldewey's assertion that human skeletal remains were found among animal offerings. To my knowledge, no study has indicated the existence of human sacrificial activities in the *Opferstätten*, however the existence of human skeletal remains in such places has been known for over a century since the reports of Koldewey's excavations in the 19th century (1887).

Based on the designation proposed by the excavators at Uruk-Warka, Van Buren (1948) summarized some of the findings of Lenzen, Heinrich, Seaton Lloyd, Woolley, and Delougaz in his detailed study of the *Opferstätten* in Mesopotamian Bronze age contexts, concluding that certain detached areas in the vicinity of temples had been specially prepared to contain offerings of a heterogeneous nature (Lenzen 1937: 11-12). These places highlighted not only the contents of the offerings (predominantly fish and other burnt animal and vegetable remains) (Lenzen 1937) but also the manner in which they were prepared.

Based on the evidence, I suggest several hypotheses. First of all, due to the proximity to highly symbolic religious contexts (temples), the intentional and detailed manner of preparation, and the fact that animal and vegetable offerings were made, *Opferstätten* should, indeed, be interpreted as sites of sacrifice destined to serve as the bases of offerings to the gods. If the findings of human skeletal remains are thus considered, these only account for two of a total number of nine sites in which the *Opferstätten* have been catalogued, which only translates to 22.22 %. On top of this, the human skeletal remains are, frankly, rather unlikely to be real (Usieto Cabrera 2020). Such a low percentage does not provide sufficient grounds to discuss ritual slayings in southern Mesopotamia during the Bronze Age, for a higher number of such findings would be available in other sites if the practice existed in this context, making their discovery the norm.

However, scholars have agreed to differentiate between the northern and southern Mesopotamian evidence with respect to foundation deposits (Green 1976; Tatlock 2006), for southern Mesopotamia could be considered a special case. Although there is not much evidence when compared to other places like Syria, there is indeed a difference in the evidence between the ritual killings in northern and southern Mesopotamia that cannot be seen elsewhere. If we examine the evidence of human sacrifice at the *Opferstätten*⁷⁴ found at Al-Hiba and Tell Surghul (Tatlock 2006), we must

⁷⁴ Dr. Heinrich Lenzen has made a number of important observations dealing with places of sacrifice or *Opferstätten* by the designation given by the excavators at Uruk-Warka. The interpretation of these places emerged from the study of archeological results of this site. For a more detailed and comparative study, please see the following in E. Douglas Van Buren (1952-53), Heinrich (1934, 1935, 1937, 1938, 1939, and 1940), and Green (1975).

realize that this may have been performed as a corporate cultic act by the entire community. Such a conclusion correlates with the earliest evidence of organized temple religion in this area during the early and middle Uruk period. On the other hand, all evidence of this ritual in northern Mesopotamia is completely residential, which is demonstrated as early as prehistoric Nuzi and Tepe Gawra XIII, so the ritual killing of children in the North is not necessarily a hindrance to the theory being proposed. In this region during the periods in question, what we are dealing with is not an organized cult or a state religion as in the South but are rather domestic house cults. Cultic and other records are preserved by the official power-structures of the ancient Near East, and, consequently, reflect the "official" cult.

Later potential and less tangible instances of the ritual killing of infants can be found in the Bible (Green 1976). The concept that foundation sacrifices were practiced in the Syro-Palestinian area is not only suggested through archeological remains but is also attested in literature. In the reign of Ahab, Hiel of Bethel is said to have rebuilt Jericho: "*at the price of Abiram, his firstborn son, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord which he spoke to Joshua, the son of Nun*" (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, 1 Kings 16:34 and Joshua 6:26).

Altogether unlike the evidence for retainer rituals, the enormous, eclectic, and unparalleled data worsen the possibility of creating a pattern by which to study this practice in the ANE. Based on this passage, early archeologists sought to interpret many sub-pavement burials as foundation sacrifices, although interpretations of this passage have always been controversial. Without going too deep into Biblical interpretation, because there can be no real proof of foundation sacrifices in written sources alone,

and because the “true meaning” of these texts is not easily understood, it cannot be assumed that human foundation sacrifices are referred to here.

In the religious sphere, one of the most widespread types of magic is undoubtedly the belief that immuring a human individual in an edifice under construction ensures its permanence. There is not enough evidence to conclude whether these are appeasement rituals or animation sacrifices (Wessing & Jordaan 1997), although some evidence may rather suggest the latter, related to gaining the protection and spiritual guidance of the individuals who were sacrificed.

The textual records of the Near East also do not suggest structures being imbued with such a strong sense of agency, although it is clear that certain buildings were extremely important as religious, political, administrative, and social centers, and through this, they would no doubt have both shaped and been shaped by people (Recht 2011). Nevertheless, having briefly examined the motivations, my attention is now directed to these structures. Regrettably, most of the evidence comes from very early excavations and reports that paid little attention to this distinction so that it is often not clear what kind of building is meant or what its probable function was based on the available findings. Structures are then divided into two broad analytical categories, namely buildings of a private, individual nature and constructions of a public nature. Under the former we understand such things as individual family dwellings, more commonly present in northern Mesopotamia, while the latter would cover such things as bridges, long-houses, palaces, city gates, temples, and the like in southern Mesopotamia.

Furthermore, although the practice of offering a human sacrifice and laying them on the foundation of a structure was originally intended as a propitiation of the spirits of the earth (who were believed to have been

disturbed), this later passed into the conception that the spirit of the sacrificed person would be a ghostly guardian of the building being erected (Moses 2008).

By looking at the previous table, there is a significant number of infants and children involved in such rituals. Sacrificing infants and children is generally thought to represent a form of contact with the supernatural realm in order to incite supernatural action, for instance as gifts intended to generate reciprocal obligations from ancestral powers (Gonzalez Wagner 1995; Brereton 2011). The idea of using infants in foundation sacrifices is generally closely associated with the purification of the threshold.

Beyond the perception that the dead bodies of infants and children principally made effective offerings because of their *purity* (Moses 2008: 51), there is a new wave of social thought led by Brereton (2011) that proposes that their use was based on social perceptions that relate children to the realm of dead. Underlying concepts of children and infants are studied by Helms (1998), who discusses the insights of Lévi-Strauss regarding the social concepts of children. Lévi-Strauss (1993) demonstrates how infants and children are often perceived as lying outside the bounds of normal society and socialization, representing a special category of person. Because children are not yet fully socialized into the world of adults, they are often linked with notions of otherness (that space in the social imagination that is also shared with the ancestral dead) (Brereton 2011; Lévi-Strauss 1993: 49).

According to him, this is the main reason why children frequently personify the dead in initiation rituals and *rites of passage* (Lévi-Strauss 1993). Brereton follows this line of thinking and suggests that the divergent treatment of adults and children in funerary rites in the 5th millennium BC reflects the unequal social status of both age groups. Infants and children

were not considered to be fully socialized persons, and, by extension, they were not considered suitable for ancestral status and socialization within communal cemeteries. This author then proposes that intramural infant and child burials are better understood by their association with otherness and the dead as a potential conduit through which to contact the supernatural realm (Brereton 2011: 274).

By incorporating children into the domestic realm, households could maintain genealogical links with ancestral or supernatural powers and manifest *access to origins* (Helms 1998). As such, intramural funerary practices are likely to have been an important means of ensuring the transmission of tangible and intangible wealth across generations. It is therefore no coincidence that the largest and most elaborately constructed houses were often associated with greater numbers of infant burials as I have demonstrated with reference to the data from Tepe Gawra, which developed from a community comprised of large, extended families (Level XII, Terminal Ubaid/LC1) to a regional center with buildings with special functions (Level VIII, LC 3 Period).

The attempt to interpret certain intramural infant burials as foundation sacrifices is equally premature for most cases that have been explained here. There is no reasonable means of ascertaining whether the other examples listed were actually sacrificial individuals because they fall into the normal pattern of the thousands of subterranean burials uncovered at scores of sites in Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. A great percentage of the bodies from Nuzi, Tepe Gawra, Chagar Bazar, and Abou Danné, in addition to those comparisons made earlier are interred either with a few pieces of pottery, beads, a few implements, or nothing at all. Does the evidence thus result in a high infant mortality rate (Mallowan 1947; Woolley

1955) or is it, indeed, evidence of sacrifice? I argue that no sacrifice can be derived from our current material.

Unless there is some clear indication that a given burial is associated with some cultic artifact or a series of examples pointing to a definite pattern in type, location, or burial method, it is risky to classify something as a foundation sacrifice. However, bioanthropological analyses might have the answer (Beattie 1980).

On this occasion, the focus is on osteological analyses of how violence is reflected or has been inflicted upon children and infants as well as how this is recognizable in the field. The main goal of most of the bioarcheological research on violence and children is to answer two major questions (Martin & Harrod 2015):

1. Is child abuse recognizable in the bioarcheological record?
2. What are the consequences for children who survive this violence?

There is a need, according to the specialized literature (Martin & Harrod 2015; Korbin 1990) for bioarcheologists to understand the clinical and forensic literature for modern cases of child abuse in order to seek a pattern in ancient societies. However, and as the ANE has demonstrated, this has not always been successful, especially when the preservation of the bones is not ideal. Nonetheless, radiology, medical pathology, and forensics have played an important role in developing an understanding of child abuse, for these disciplines provide a number of signatures to accurately identify child abuse in the past. Beyond a particular fracture type, patterns of violence against children that might be worth searching for in the field include key features such as:

1. Fractures to the same bones of specific areas of the body.

2. Evidence of a fracture that does not heal because of repeated injury to the same location (Martin & Harrod 2015).

Unfortunately, these patterns were not recognizable or could not be tested, and therefore, unless new evidence comes to light, no conclusion is clear. At this point, the evidence leads us to even more questions than originally planned. The sole definite affirmation that can be made in regard to all of this is that the evidence for foundation sacrifice in the ANE, although promising and still being compiled, is too sporadic, too poorly preserved, and too inaccessible to carry out studies on successfully. Based on the evidence, no child sacrifice can be distinguished, and, thus, foundation deposits in the ANE likely did not include human offerings.

Foundation deposits have thus at times mostly included animals (either sacrificed whole or sacrificed and eaten) and objects, but there is only sporadic and ambiguous evidence for human individuals. There are many reasons why they are at times included and at other times are not; these may range, for instance, from economic concerns to the type of building or the stage of construction as Recht concludes (Recht 2011).

CHAPTER V

DATA OBSERVATION

"The deep motives for human sacrifice can only be guessed at."

(Rind 1996: 18)

That our behaviors are directly related to the cognitive or mental capacities that have evolved in our lineage is a conclusion not questioned by the scientific community (Henley et al. 2019). However, the way in which these capacities have evolved and manifest themselves is a subject that raises many doubts and controversies.

The methodology of Near Eastern archeology is a faithful reflection of the scientific reality of our society, both in its academic organization and in the development of its theoretical and practical contents. In this respect the theoretical framework of archeology, the discipline being organized within the group of studies known as "humanities," reveals an important information deficit in matters closely related to the main theme of its doctrine, namely that the study of the behavior of human beings over the course of their long, complex, and not yet well known morphological and cultural evolution often lacks literary support upon which to draw.

This deficit focuses, above all, on certain theoretical content corresponding to psychology, sociology, social cognition, and biocultural studies (Solomon et al. 1991; Winkelman & Baker 2010) of which each contributes to studying human reality but is not directly related to the theoretical content of archeology. However, when theoretical aspects

related to psychology and sociology have been used, there has always been uncertainty about their veracity (Pickering 1984).

The study of human reality in all of its cultural periods should not be limited to the analysis of tools and the deduction of behaviors from the archeological record but should also be oriented toward a global understanding of the evolutionary biological entity of which it is a part. In this sense, it is interesting to know the causes of behavioral variation in trying to understand the traditional problems of where and when and, the most complexly, how, and why human sacrifice took place in and changed across the periods of the ANE.

On this basis, and with the need to carry out a more exact study of human sacrifice, there is no choice but to propose an interdisciplinary structural approach to the analysis of the origins and development of such behaviors. The evidence that has been described and analyzed in depth in previous chapters based on the division of sacrificial categories into two main groups, invites the theoretical study of the concepts that sacrifice encompasses; we have seen this in Chapter I and in practical biocultural (Winkelman & Baker 2010) and cognitive archeological approaches (Renfrew 1994). The origins, development, and conclusion of these practices will now be studied based on the evidence of Chapters III and IV from a multidisciplinary point of view, including psychology and sociology.

Scholars that have already dealt to a greater or lesser extent with aspects of human sacrificial rituals in the ANE have seen some aspects of these rituals embodied in various cultural settings, and their work sheds light on the importance of this avenue of investigation (Reverdi & Grange 1981). Although their research entails vital information for understanding this practice, there is no multidisciplinary, theoretical reflection on the fact that such ritual ceremonies are often, when compared cross-culturally

(Schele 1984; Sugiyama 2005), more effective when the individuals involved are transported out of their mundane existence and into the realm of the extraordinary; cognitive archeology and psychology can enlighten us in such matters. Human sacrifice not only concerns the direct action of killing an individual but also the different and complex psychological and sociological characteristics that such practices encompass for the individual and the system itself.

The consequent concepts of social scientists regarding these destructive festivals in terms of their destruction of the life of an individual in its strictest sense have suggested that these rituals will also have been exciting, rewarding, and memorable to those involved due to their inclusion of diverse melodramatic elements.

Performance studies experts similarly recognize that the kinesthetic qualities of ritual can augment the pleasurable aspects of the experience. They reveal that dancing, singing, chanting, and other forms of active movement increase the impact of ritual and may more productively communicate shared beliefs and enhance social bonding (Baadsgaard et al. 2011). Social psychologists similarly reveal that ritual activity affects the emotional, biological, and psychological states of participants in different positive ways (Sugiyama 2005). Social scientists have diverse theories of ritual, and some of them surmise that one of its central functions is to alleviate individual and societal stresses and trepidations. A large body of research from the field of psychology corroborates some of these hypotheses and reveals how exposure to violence and death, even in a ritual setting, can buffer individual and collective anxieties (Pyszczynski et al. 2009; Ray 2011).

They explain that exposure to violence in many different formats has surprising psychological benefits (Girard 2005). Other social psychologists

deliberate upon the physiological reactions to extraordinary moments in religious ritual. Fagan determined that heightened experiences evoked by *active stimuli* directly impact emotions and physical responses (Fagan 2011: 204). He also recognized that out of all the different types of stimuli, violence is what engenders the most “excitement.” He identified the term “excitement” as a psychological state with biological manifestations such as “heart pounding, stomach churning, [and] dry-mouthed sweatiness” (Fagan 2011: 204).

This chapter addresses this inattention to these more immersive aspects on the one hand by moving toward the description and analysis of ongoing discussions of the evidence and by examining phenomenological characteristics in concepts of sacrifice for the participants involved; and on the other hand, by exploring the different observations this data raises for a multidisciplinary approach, given the impossibility of carrying out osteological analyses in most cases. It is also intended to survey and expand the archeological realm left behind by sacrifice by using multi-and interdisciplinary perspectives for greater understanding. It aims to reconsider the evidence and move forward based on what has been done. Furthermore, anticipated evidence for human sacrificial rituals has also been translated into a preliminary fieldwork sheet designed to be used should any case of suspected human sacrifice in the ANE arise.

Now it is necessary to go back to the study of the concept of violence and its use in sacrificial rituals. Modern research and theories that focus on the kinesthetic, emotive, and psychosomatic modes of engagement in celebratory and violent ritual activities are essential to this mode of analysis (Siddall 2020). These contemporary studies reveal that both positive/affirmative and negative/fearful rites sponsor biological,

psychological, and social reactions that are generally rewarding for individuals and groups.

It is reasonable to ask how applicable theoretical psychological hypotheses such as the Terror Management Theory or the MS are (Greenberg et al. 1986; Pyszczynski et al. 2003), for both are suggested here as providing a better understanding of the ritual under study. Is their use really mandatory or even necessary? Is it possible to apply them to this domain? How applicable can psychological frameworks based on modern populations be to ancient societies? At bottom, the only possible answer is that we must try and shall judge their usefulness according to their results, achievements, and their problems.

Violence was not the pinnacle of ANE sacrificial ceremonies but just a tool by which to carry these out, and they were accordingly surrounded by dramatic elements; consequently, these modern social-psychological studies are essential to an experiential analysis of ANE human sacrifice. Amplified inputs and heightened autonomic responses are and were engendered in joyful and exuberant moments in rituals and are fundamental to religious experience. The following survey of theoretical models from multiple disciplines enhances our understanding of the experience of ritual and the possible biopsychosocial responses of individuals.

A Bio-Cultural & Psychological Approach to the Fascination of (Violent) Death: The Terror Management Theory (TMT)

Biocultural studies (Winkelman & Baker 2010) agree that feelings derived from natural and violent deaths are inherently processed within social contexts for ancient and modern individuals (Inomata et al. 2009).

Recent analysis based on Baadsgaard's results on the public exhibition of the corpses at Ur also considers that this *morbid curiosity* (Inomata et al. 2009: 81) is translated into a universal and intrinsic interest that draws people to spectacles of terror (Dickens 2006) understood as visible rituals of the dead (Baadsgaard et al. 2012). Cross-cultural comparisons reveal common anxieties associated with death as well as diverse ways of managing the uncertainties posed by its realities.

In a similar fashion, human sacrifice is the epitome of spectator violence destined to be witnessed as the visual representations of violence in the Assyrian royal inscriptions are used to explain in Chapter III (Tadmor 1995). Concerning this last topic, scholars differ greatly, for Derrida (1995) concluded based on Aztec sacrifice, for example, that by sacrificing others, individuals avoided being sacrificed themselves. Durán (1971) in contrast, studied sacrifice cross-culturally and based his arguments on the sociology of war-captives, arguing that:

For them, being captured in war for future sacrifice was the worst possible outcome, and warriors often preferred to be torn to pieces rather than be captured and so capturing and sacrificing their enemies may have alleviated these fears.

(Durán 1971: 113)

In addition to having been practiced due to the violent attraction across societies to observe the death of others (Pizzato 2005), human sacrifice arises for the perception of control over uncontrollable and fearful emotions toward death, giving participants a theoretical sensation of control. Miller (1979) emphasizes that having a sense of control comforts people with the knowledge that their actions can avert future disasters, thereby assuaging anxiety and stress. Social psychologists Thompson et al.

(2008: 41) further revealed that one of the most pivotal motivations in human behavior is to have a sense of control over aspects of life that seem threatening. Finally, in a cross-cultural study of violence, Pizzato reasons for both ancient and modern societies that:

We may avoid thinking about our own deaths, yet we are attracted to the performances of violence by others, involving life-threatening fears or glimpses of death, onstage and onscreen. (Pizzato 2005: 2)

Various anthropologists see ritual as a place where perceived control is experienced at a group level. They also ascertain that people generally resort to illusory control, understood as overestimating one's ability to avoid a misfortune, and that people prefer this over real control because it has the same effects of reducing anxiety without laborious effort (Thompson et al. 2008). According to social psychology and bio-cultural studies, the most uncontrollable event for humans is their eventual death (Suhail & Akram 2002). Different theories concerning death and ritual human sacrifice have been set forth from the fields of anthropology, sociology, and religious studies as explained throughout this book, but there are not many significant social-psychological theories that examine the implications of how societies manage the anxieties related to death. The exception is a group of social psychologists that have conducted research on this very topic and identify their theoretical framework as Terror Management Theory (TMT) (Greenberg et al. 1986; Pyszczynski et al. 2003).

Merely "appeasing the gods" or similar arguments about demographic control (Cohen 1975) are thus shown to be too naïve to explain human sacrifice. Social complexity is key to comprehending the context of human sacrifice and the role it played in early urban communities. Sacrifice is a complex topic, especially when it concerns the ritual killing of human

beings. From a general perspective, sacrifice can be considered a practice that gave humans an intangible sense of control over their world (Solomon et al. 2004) through ritualistic activities. I have already discussed how Girard argues that every community is driven by fear and behaves similarly in directing hatred and violence toward a single individual or victimized group of individuals (Girard 2005). The fear he speaks of is correlated with death anxiety, introducing the concept of a *death anxiety buffer* from the Terror Management Theory (Greenberg et al. 1986; Pyszczynski et al. 2003). Therefore, and following Girard's hypothesis (1986, 2005), sacrifice is an innate tool for humans to exert power for peace which is the core element of terror management theory; to buffer against existential dread (Solomon et al. 2016), defending the sense of individual control within a select cultural world view.

In order to shed light on this practice, this book merges archeology and psychological with sociological studies on the nature and context of human sacrifice because TMT has not been applied to the study of human sacrifice but has much potential for this discipline.

Terror Management Theory (Solomon et al. 1991) provides a synthesis of various propositions derived from evolutionary theory, existentialism, and psychodynamic theories (Pyszczynski et al. 2003). TMT emerged at the end of the 80s and was inspired by the 20th century writings of Ernst Becker, an anthropologist with a psychodynamic orientation who had an interdisciplinary perspective. Becker integrated areas such as philosophy, anthropology, psychology, and biology with an evolutionary perspective, relating the importance of people's mortality to their need for self-esteem, such that they cling so much to their cultural beliefs that they have difficulty relating to those who are different (Solomon et al. 2004; Pyszczynski et al. 2003).

This theory assumes that people (and all living beings) are fundamentally motivated by survival from birth. However, in addition to other specific mammals (Pettit & Anderson 2020), human beings are particularly equipped with superior cognitive capacities that allow us to be aware of ourselves and our own mortality, which conflicts with the psychological and biological systems directed at promoting our survival. The awareness of the inevitability of one's own death generates an existential anxiety and a decrease in self-esteem, potentially resulting in a sense of hopelessness and vulnerability that can be disabling in extreme cases.

Human beings are able to face this existential threat through various cultural mechanisms and psychological responses that have their fundamental basis in cultural praxis: fundamentally, cultural world views, self-esteem, and other "secondary" mechanisms that may be derived from either—such as sacrifice. Cultural world views are common systems of values and beliefs that give meaning to the world, making it appear more tidy, permanent, predictable, safe, important, and meaningful (Piñuela Sánchez 2014). In terms of TMT, human sacrifice offers answers to the fundamental questions of human beings, making them feel that they are the valuable members of a meaningful universe; this typically explains the origin of the universe and provides order and meaning in the face of threatening chaos. It also offers a purpose and criteria of conduct that guide the action of individuals toward prescribed goals; and, above all, it endows both symbolic and literal ways of transcending death itself. Symbolic immortality is obtained through identification with—or belonging to—entities that transcend the person themselves and that last after their death. In this sense, the shared beliefs or ideologies in which sacrifice inscribes itself survive beyond the individual who maintains them and link them

with groups, communities, or institutions that do so as well. Furthermore, the sacrifice of individuals under TMT suggests several other symbolic modes of coping with the significance of death: identification with groups, belonging to organizations or institutions, having offspring, amassing great fortunes, or achieving great scientific or artistic achievements among other cultural activities that shield from anxiety (Solomon et al. 2004).

According to TMT, another element that protects us from this existential fear is self-esteem (Solomon et al. 1991), which originates from the belief that we, as individuals, have value according to the standards prescribed by our shared belief system or cultural vision of the world, regardless of the constraints of time or space. Therefore, culture is also the origin of self-esteem because its implicit morality provides the basis and the necessary criteria that determine what is deemed “good” and “bad.” From this point of view, self-esteem thus has a primary function of protecting against existential anxiety caused by the awareness of one's own mortality, a need that is universal and uniquely human.

Another fundamental assumption of TMT is, because world views and all cultural products are socially constructed, symbolic, ultimately fictitious realities, and therefore fragile, that their efficacy requires that they be continually validated through social consensus—and they stop when they are not.⁷⁵

In Sven Lindqvist's words on the “Exterminate All of the Brutes” where:

“The story is about two Europeans, Kayerts and Carlier, who have been dumped by a cynical company director at a small trading post by the great river.

⁷⁵ Perhaps this could account for the disappearance of human sacrificial activities over time in the ANE.

Their reading matter is a yellowed newspaper that praises in high-flown language "our colonial expansion?" As in the jubilee issue of Cosmopolis, the colonies are made out to be sacred work in the service of Civilization. The article extolled the merits of those bringing light, faith, and trade to "the dark places" of the earth.

At first the two companions believe these fine words. But gradually they discover that words are nothing but "sounds." The sounds lack content outside the society that created them. As long as there is a policeman on the street corner, as long as there is food to buy in the shops, as long as the general public sees you only then do your sounds constitute morality. Conscience presumes society.

But soon Kayerts and Carlier are ready to do trade in slaves and mass murder. When supplies run out, they quarrel over a lump of sugar. Kayerts flees for his life in the belief that Cartier is after him with a gun. When they suddenly bump into each other, Kayerts shoots in self-defense and does not realize until later that in his panic he has killed an unarmed man.

But what does that matter? Concepts such as "virtue" and "crime" are nothing but sounds. People die every day by the thousands, Kayerts thinks, as he sits by the body of his companion, perhaps by hundreds of thousands- who knows? One more or less was of little importance- at least not to a thinking creature.

He, Kayerts, is a thinking creature. Hitherto, like the rest of mankind, he has gone around believing a lot of nonsense. Now for the first time he is really thinking. Now he knows and draws the conclusion from what he knows."

(Lindqvist 1996: 15-16).

This loss of effectiveness is even more notable when alternative systems challenge, criticize, threaten, reject, or belittle one's own—which threatens the foundations on which the basic principles that guide the lives and self-esteem of individuals and communities are based. In such

circumstances, there are several alternatives that allow one to maintain confidence in one's own belief system and/or protect it against existential fear (Lieberman 2010; Piñuela Sánchez 2014; Pyszczynski et al. 2003):

1. Assimilation or "converting" the "other" through proselytizing or indoctrination. This would increase social support for one's own vision of the world and lifestyle and is commensurate with greater trust.
2. Accommodate the threatening aspects of the world views of others into their own, thereby reducing the stress caused by their differences.
3. If the previous strategies fail, it is also possible to "delegitimize" by directly ignoring, rejecting, or underestimating the threat of other world views and those who hold them: consider "psychopathic" terrorists, the ascription of mental or personality disorders, claims of ignorance or manipulation by wicked leaders, etc.
4. An alternative conclusion in cases of extreme threat is to annihilate or destroy the "other."

In addition, three hypotheses arise to explain TMT and its relationship with violence, or especially institutional violence: The Mortality Salience Hypothesis (MS), the Anxiety Buffering Hypothesis (ABH), and the Death Thought Accessibility Hypothesis (DTA) (Hayes et al. 2010; Schmeichel & Martens 2005).

According to the MS hypothesis, the salience, accessibility, prominence, and remembrance of one's own mortality is evoked whenever thoughts or memories about one's own mortality become accessible for any reason and a situation of threat or existential anxiety occurs consciously or unconsciously. This increases one's need for a sense of security, to which people accordingly respond with various attempts to transcend their own

mortality, either literally or symbolically, in defense of their world view. MS mentions two main forms of response from which other secondary responses would be derived:

1. An increase of faith and commitment to shared belief systems or world views (composed of social norms, values, moral principles, diverse ideologies, attitudes, social identities, stereotypes, etc.).
2. Getting involved in actions that give rise to a more positive self-image in light of such world views (increasing self-esteem), which also implies a greater motivation to behave based on the rules and norms derived from one's culture or cultural vision.

Without going too deep into psychological aspects that do not concern the subject of this book, some controversial aspects to take into account regarding this hypothesis are detailed below, which refer to: 1) the effects of MS; 2) the timeline followed in defense of a world view, and 3) the procedure followed when manipulating the standard deviation (for more detail, see Caspi-Berkowitz et al. 2019; Solomon et al. 2004; Pyszczynski et al. 2003 Hayes et al. 2010).

Next, the Anxiety Buffering Hypothesis (Schmeichel & Martens 2005) (ABH) establishes that reinforcing protection systems prevents defensive responses to situations of epistemic-existential threat such as MS. In other words, defensive responses to the vision of the world prior to MS will be minor or non-existent if individuals have previously had the opportunity to reaffirm any of the systems of meaning mentioned above (cultural visions of the world/beliefs, values, self-esteem, close relationships, group identity, etc.).

Finally, Death Thought Accessibility (DTA) consists of two sub-hypotheses that argue for two different possibilities for how a system offers protection against the terror of death: questioning and violating the specific

structure that threatens to end the cultural practice; or strengthening and reaffirming the structure itself (Hayes et al. 2010).

Studying Human Sacrifice with Cognitive Archeology and Psychobiological Orientation: Human Sacrifice as TMT?

One of the main weaknesses or disadvantages present in this analysis is the attempt to perceive human reality through contemporary concepts based on modern experiences without even intuiting the origins and the development of our own way of thinking as individuals (Binford 1965; Bruner 1988; Henley et al. 2019). Knowledge of these facts is essential because knowing how we have structured ourselves neurologically, psychologically, and socially can serve as a starting point for better understanding our behavior as cognitive archeology has demonstrated (Rivera 2003).

All humans are broadly the same because we all have the same general evolved capacities of our species. Therefore, a certain biological structuralism is easy to accept, although there are different ways of deriving living reality from there. This conclusion can be reached via different paths, one of which is to compare current populations with ancient ways of life (Hernando 1999, 2002) in order to see with greater clarity how there are different ways of interpreting lived reality. However, other paths use the criteria of the aforementioned sciences, which lead us to the creation of a “psychobiological” model for the origins and development of symbolic behavior; it is called psychobiological because it is based on concepts related to psychology and various areas of biology (Noble & Davidson 1996) that can help us to explain possible forms of interaction between human

beings and their environments and, therefore, better explains their behaviors in ancient periods (Henley et al. 2019; Mithen 1996).

In application to human sacrifice, this archeological data generates a new interpretive form of cognitive archeology with a psychobiological basis. Using this framework and the information that the archeological and paleoanthropological record offer us regarding sacrifice, we will try to analyze the ways in which human beings created and developed the characteristic behavioral forms of such rituals. In this respect, there are two basic facts that must always be considered:

1. Academia accepts that a certain type of biological structuralism is common to all human beings and particularly shapes religious matters (Leahey 1980) through our evolved cognitive capacities and our generic manners of interacting with the environment.
2. The lack of knowledge about the direction that cognitive development and forms of thought could have had in different historical periods is a source of the cultural diversity of human populations.

On this basis and in order to attempt a maximally objective analysis, there are a few theoretical frameworks that can better delimit and more precisely develop specific interpretative aspects of this material when well-articulated with respect to each other. First of all, the existence of forms of thought different from our own is a fact that is confirmed by numerous ethnological studies. These show appreciable differences in the ways in which current premodern populations live and interpret the world—a type of thinking only erroneously called “primitive” or “wild” (Hernando 1999, 2002; Lévi-Strauss 1964). In the same respect, sacrifice has also been

perceived as a “savage” or “barbaric” practice (Schwartz 2012), on which point I have already made my position clear in Chapters I and II.

On the other hand, biocultural studies propose similarities in neurology and brain physiology between all hominids (Wynn 1993), such that quantitative and qualitative differences (exaptation) are caused by the appearance of different capacities that will only develop as a function of their interactions with the environment that cause changes in the surface and associated areas of the cerebral cortex. If we apply these parameters, it might be seen that the reasons for the existence or non-existence of human sacrificial rituals lie in the exaptation of human brain capacity and that it therefore happens for neurological reasons. All cultural forms, that is, elements related to behavior that are not transmitted by genetic means, must have been created at one point and transferred to subsequent generations through forms of cultural communication in real time (imitation, teaching, etc.). Thus, all behavioral forms, symbolic or not, had to be created from very simple elements to arrive at today's comparative complexity. An objection to this theory is given by cognitive archeology (Coolidge & Wynn 2016), the main argument against it being that the interactions between these neural capacities and their responses to different social and biological or cultural causes and biogeographical or social environments is, in principle, similar for all human groups, but the results are not the same. Unfortunately, this hypothesis thus has no scientific support and is founded on too much speculation.

Now, can sacrifice be analyzed using the TMT hypothesis? Several experiments in more than 20 different countries offer empirical evidence for the basic assumptions and hypotheses of TMT and, fundamentally, for those of MS, ABH, and DTA as well, and their effects have been described as reliable when contrasted and replicated in social psychology (Van den

Bos 2009). Terror Management Theory has been substantiated by numerous tests all around the world. According to Maxfield, there have been over 500 empirical experiments conducted in over 20 countries that support various hypotheses using the TMT framework as of 2015 (2015: 37). Greenberg et al. (2008) demonstrated that their theory is testable in a laboratory or real world setting by using a concept called “mortality salience” (MS). The results obtained support the importance of conscious fear of death (or the lack thereof) and for the related need to defend cultural belief systems and to perceive oneself as valid in light of the values dictated by such systems.

But how does TMT relate to human sacrifice? Dying for a cause or for a group is not only a puzzling human behavior that defies the biological goal of self-preservation, but it also represents the epitome of symbolic immortality and the transcendence of mundane existence. These motivations have recently been analyzed in-depth (Caspi-Berkowitz et al. 2019). Their aim was to apply TMT’s methods to study how different individuals would react to death and what role this would have on their related orientations. According to TMT, if an individual sacrifices themselves, they aim to transcend their biological finitude and buffer their death anxiety by establishing a sense of abstract significance with something greater and more enduring than physical existence, which Durkheim also argued for in his collective effervescence (Durkheim 1995).

The results of this study are very promising for human sacrificial studies, as they indicate that sacrifice might act as a death-anxiety buffer. According to TMT, if a psychological mechanism buffers death anxiety, the availability of an alternative route makes it unnecessary to activate because concerns about death will already have been mitigated by it; in this case, the alternative route would be sacrificing one’s life.

This response defensive response to one's world view predisposes individuals to react negatively toward those who in any way question or threaten their faith in said belief systems, either simply by thinking differently or by overtly violating or offending their cultural symbols or norms (Pyszczynski et al. 2003). In like manner, TMT adds a psychological perspective to the responses that the terror of death evokes—in this case sacrificing an individual; this is aligned with the previously explained theory of *collective effervescence* or the collective social ritual (Durkheim 1995: 352) that puts the collectivity in motion by subjugating individual identities to that of the group, thereby revitalizing the individual (*communitas*) (Turner 1969).

These experiments have deepened the relevance of existential fears about intergroup relationships, finding on various occasions that when we remember our own mortality, individuals in society tend to increase their preference for charismatic leaders, especially those with authoritarian skills; we develop a greater need for order, clarity, and structure; we conform to the norms of our culture or world view with more conviction and dogmatism, including support for policies of extreme military violence against others (see these effects in Niesta et al. 2008; and Pyszczynski et al. 2008).

Although there is still some controversy and confusion at both the theoretical and empirical levels with respect to the extent that these effects are general, natural, unavoidable, or exact when applied to ancient societies (Zimansky 2005), this framework is applicable to the ANE human sacrificial evidence and its evidence. As argued in TMT, self-esteem is a huge component of managing existential dread; therefore, low self-esteem can lead to violence or the use of extreme force to consolidate one's sense of personal importance in the world. It is no surprise that a newly established

ruling class would feel vulnerable, especially upon a state's early formation and when large urban populations were already operating at the edge of sustainability (Conte & Kim 2016). The fact that all of these sites date to times of socio-political unrest despite varying types of sacrificial evidence (Usieto Cabrera 2020) is not a coincidence but evidence of the fundamental role that existential dread and threats to world views or mortality have upon this ritual practice. The various hiatuses between the data coming from the available sites might thus be interpreted as deriving from momentous changes of cultural world view that became tenuous or were being challenged in some way. The vulnerability indicated by DTA (Hayes et al. 2010), particularly in these ancient contexts, is linked to fatality, which corresponds to abandoning human sacrificial rituals in this case.

One can expect that the practice was phased out over time because there was a signifiably change in mentality from collectivism to individualism (Gelfand et al. 2004) or, as TMT would argue, "if self-sacrifice for a cause or a group acts as a defense against death concerns among people scoring high on attachment anxiety, one can expect that providing them with an alternate terror management defense" would have become more satisfying (Caspi-Berkowitz et al. 2019). The DTA hypothesis (Hayes et al. 2010) seems to be plausible and applicable given the evidence, for the hiatus between chronological periods and the subsequent apparent complete disappearance of human sacrificial practices is evident in Caspi-Berkowitz (et al. 2019).

Another issue raised earlier, namely the question of the role of witnesses in such spectacles of terror in the ANE, remains unanswered in general. However, at Ur, sacrificed individuals were placed in the graves with their wounds to the ground. They were most probably not killed on the spot, and their violent deaths were not obvious, at least not in the final

arrangement. Were there then spectators at the killing site? Researchers identified one psychological reward that participants gained from viewing, allowing, or even participating in violence administered by the system itself, of which human sacrifice would be one kind: they developed a sense of empowerment and mastery over uncontrollable events such as death (Goldenberg et al. 1999). Goldstein recognized that experiencing violent dramatizations in a protective framework offers spectators an outlet for their need for excitement while also giving them a sense of control in a secure environment. The protective frame is operational because the violence occurs in a “parallel but different reality” where it can be observed and experienced without the full range of the heightened emotions that it elicits, which might otherwise spoil their enjoyment (Goldstein 1999).

Gratification is further increased when subjects have closer accessibility to death-related thoughts while remaining in a well-ordered, secure situation. Greenberg revealed that humans have different strategies to suppress death-related thoughts to deny or minimize vulnerability from a TMT perspective. An interesting finding in their study was that divergent experiential modes of encountering violence (MS) offered a greater investment in world view and emotional responses than experiencing the violence in a strictly “rational” manner, though subjects remained safe from the effects of the violence in both cases (Greenberg et al. 2008).

Spectacles of death were close at hand in ancient societies throughout the world (Dickens 2006; Peltenburg 1999; Pizzato 2005; Schwartz 2012). Fagan, in his cross-cultural analysis of violence in the classical world, remarked that spectators of the Roman games were exhilarated by participation or self-substitution, metaphorically approaching “the dangerous edge” with all the excitement this entails in a “safety zone” where they remained physically unharmed and “detached” from the

uncertainties of action but still received the pleasure of vicarious risk-taking (Fagan 2011). The questions that remain now are how violence in ANE sacrificial ceremonies was handled⁷⁶ and what the possible biological, psychological, and social incentives were as they participated, actively or passively, in the actual killing of other individuals.

Finally, and coming back to cognitive archeology, although the existence of complexity in our biological constitution and in its behavioral manifestations is fully accepted, we are led to study events that occurred thousands of years ago with methods that—at least until now and despite their continuous progress and development—continue to be insufficient to channel knowledge about human beings with greater explanatory power.

As a consequence of the excessive division and doctrinal independence in archeology and all other humanistic sciences, the use of the discipline's own theoretical methods of analysis is the path usually taken despite the limitations of this choice. This excessively common phenomenon in our scientific and academic environment means that even when dealing with the same scientific problems, each discipline approaches them from particular and almost never confluent points of view, which leads to theoretical expositions that are often antagonistic on topics of common interest—in this case human sacrifice.

However, there is no doubt that we can create an interpretative form with great explanatory power in its application to data related to archeology with a multidisciplinary theory of human behavior and a great interest in synthesis. Such an application would be the basis for the creation of what I have called cognitive archeology with the intention of better

⁷⁶ Nevertheless, this question is unanswerable for the periods in which human sacrifice in tombs is attested (late 3rd to mid-2nd millennia) due to inadequate sources.

knowing our own cognitive and behavioral reality. Thus, and with respect to one of the initial questions, it is possible to use the foundations of such sciences in prehistoric interpretations.

An important conclusion with respect to the use of cognitive archeology focuses on accepting that human events always constitute a historical continuum to which we can but apply some general characteristics to facilitate the study of the subject in question. The apparent abruptness of the behavioral changes seen within the archeological record would then rather be due to the lack of data than to a historical reality.

Every cultural change is contingent on antecedent conditions that made it possible and is inspired by causes and motives that give rise to its origin or its development as they take place but not before. The appearance of each process is possible at certain times, but this does not always occur systematically, for not all human groups arrive at the same time and develop the necessary conditions, or, perhaps even having them, some take longer than others to create or use them. Each population has its own production rhythm independent of the others.

In these lines I only intend to develop a point of view different from that traditionally established in archeological circles in order to develop new archeological interpretations of sacrifice, which may help us attain a better understanding. This is nothing more than a starting point, the initial structure of a path of which almost everything remains to be developed but that can only be traveled by those who, assuming the difficulty of human complexity, break the established molds and try to assume a new, difficult, but necessary explanation of human reality.

TMT & the Utility of Individual's Bodies in Sacrificial Rituals

Since Allport echoed this point in his work *The Nature of Prejudice*, the field of social cognition and biocultural studies has focused its attention on the importance of various measures to prevent prejudices related to perceptions of similarity and differences in the "other." Concerning the individuals that were sacrificed, this is related to understanding them as a member of the same social category as the sacrificers or establishing intersections between individuals of different types. Examples of this are the inclusive social categorization of the other, cross-categorization or multiple bonding, intergroup contact, and cooperation between groups to achieve superordinate goals.

This emphasis on individuals and their physical bodies has proven essential, especially when conditions of epistemic-existential anxiety are directly related to the event (Piñuela Sánchez 2014). I raised a particular question earlier in this book: is it possible to discern the inner psychological reasons for a person to actively participate in sacrificial acts? And, although the issue hinges on the impossibility of any certainty about the individuals that were, indeed, sacrificed—such as whether they acted deliberately or not—the answer could be revealed in TMT studies (Pyszczynski et al. 1999). The hypothesis of dampening anxiety predicts that reinforcing or affirming any of the elements or structures that protect the individual from anxiety (e.g., the concept of self-esteem provided by the society itself and its surrounding politico-religious cosmology) may reduce defensive responses to epistemic-existential threats and thereby disinhibit the inherent potential response of giving up their bodily lives.

Schmeichel & Martens (2005) show the convergence of TMT's predictions with those of Steele's self-assertion theory (1988). Steele (1988) proposes that the explicit affirmation of a characteristic or value (political

or religion constraints) that individuals consider fundamental in their life, regardless their chronological or cultural background, diminishes defensiveness because it serves to maintain the integrity of the self, that is, the continued perception of oneself as a moral and competent person. Nevertheless, self-affirmation processes are flexible and can take place in two different ways:

1. Stimulating self-esteem, for instance by offering feedback about sacrificial rituals, which would strengthen self-esteem by preventing the defensive reactions suggested by TMT.
2. The affirmation of important values, which would correspond to strengthening cultural views of the world that TMT postulates to prevent antisocial responses (Pyszczynski et al. 1999).

In regard to the first variant, Harmon-Jones et al. (1997) add that the affirmation of self-esteem is crucial when the individual is more or less willingly involved in deathly events that directly affect their bodily realm. There are several studies⁷⁷ that link low levels of this intrusion with general anxiety, anxiety before death, or physical and mental health problems (Baldwin & Wesley 1996; Pyszczynski et al. 2004), which suggests that self-esteem decreases as one's awareness of mortality increases, that threats to self-esteem cause anxiety, and that it mediates the defensive responses that take place in the face of such threats (Harmon-Jones et al. 1997).

Regarding the second self-affirmation process, Schmeichel & Martens (2005) were some of the first to find empirical evidence that reinforcing the most important elements of a world view can be an antidote to the antisocial effects of existential anxiety. Based on current populations

⁷⁷ Although very few have been applied to the ancient societies (Lumsden & Usieto Cabrera 2022).

with a high level of stress-events (sacrifice), their study proved that, under neutral conditions, the activation of mortality seems to provoke endogroup *favoritism* and exogroup *rejection*. Under certain conditions of self-affirmation, the memory of mortality transforms into a more positive assessment of the outgroup member than in the control situation (no activation of mortality fear) or in any of the non-affirmation conditions.

Cosmological and religious beliefs have proven determinant for one's vision of the world, in particular for those individuals who overtly profess such beliefs. This particular cosmovision acts as a mediator between the supra-realm and the earthly realm, in which tension the body of an individual or their life provides the ultimate offering. Individuals thus utilize their bodies in such rituals in response to the need to structure the world in relation to order, meaning, value, self-esteem, transcendence, death, and existence. Jonas & Fischer (2006) prove how the self-affirmation of religious beliefs in contemporary societies prevents defensive reactions to existential threats in people with a high level of intrinsic religiosity.

Moving forward, could this psychological perception be a consequence of such strictly implemented moral and religious constraints? Evidence has allowed me to overcome intrinsic socio-cultural boundaries in the study of such events (Campbell 2012, 2014) and propose the term: *religious fundamentalism* when these conditions are at play. For the purpose of using the contemporary concept of religious fundamentalism in the context of socio-political-religious beliefs, it is first necessary to put aside any inherently negative contemporary responses to the term itself. This choice has been made in keeping with Altemeyer & Hunsberger's (1992) concept, wherein religious fundamentalism refers to the belief that there is a set of religious philosophies that distinctly contain the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, inerrant, and essential truth about humanity and divinity; that it

is opposed by malevolent forces that it must vigorously confront; that this truth must be followed today in accordance with the fundamental and unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings therefore have a special relationship with divinity.

Religious fundamentalism has been shown to be a vision of the world that is especially effective in meeting epistemic-existential needs (Piñuela Sánchez 2014): the need for structure (because it offers unquestionable dogmas), the absolute truth of sacred texts, clear rules of conduct, and unquestionable concepts about good and evil. It furthermore offers a system of value and meaning due to the superior relationship with the deities of those who fulfill their precepts—in this case by sacrificing their bodies for the greater, unselfish purpose of providing a symbolic transcendence of literal death. It is likely that individuals found sufficient comfort in their own beliefs, and that religious fundamentalism likely offered a defensive protection from the effects that accompany existential anxiety even though these beliefs are inaccessible to us (Friedman & Rholes 2008). Friedman & Rholes' (2009, 2009) subsequent studies have proven that fundamentalism so effectively protects against world views other than that of one's own religion that the other defensive mechanisms are rendered irrelevant, but this does not imply that existential anxiety ceases to affect the defense of their religious ideology.

In addition, the commitment to other tangible or intangible social structures (social boundaries and their relationships within their community, the feeling of membership, etc.) also prevent world view defense responses like not participating in the sacrificial act (Nadali 2014; Reed 2007). However, as TMT argues, those whose constraints would move them not to participate and, thus, to create a defensive response are

“others”—foreign individuals (SooHoo 2019). For instance, finding a transcendent collective social identity offers protection against death (Castano et al. 2002) and can therefore prevent other types of responses against it. According to these studies and in accordance with this collective effervescence (Durkheim 1995: 352) psychological and biocultural studies have found in contemporary societies that the memory of their own mortality increased their willingness to make personal sacrifices and to give their lives for their homeland or for an ingrained religious fundamentalism, a response with certain parallels to suicide terrorism or willingly taking one’s own life after the death of the North Korean leader (Ahn 2012).⁷⁸ This symbolic immortality prevents existential anxiety and its associated responses by helping to create social ties between individuals, binding them into a collective mentality whose bodies belong to the group and the divinities and no longer themselves.

As has been said repeatedly, world views are complex and diverse, and in situations of epistemic-existential threat there is a drift toward those elements—both from the world view and, where appropriate, from new ideologies—that provide more meaning, security, structure, value, permanence, and, above all, those that provide any of the three fundamental forms of protection: esteem, close ties, and significance. To conclude, Lakoff (2002) adds that traditional societies with distinctive strict moral and religious constraints and fundamentalist religions reflect a vision of the world as dangerous, sacralizing the moral absolutisms of punishment and reward, hierarchical relationships, tradition, the confrontation with evil, and the moral supremacy of the belief system itself based on an internalized mental model of "strict parenthood" (Schimel et al. 2007) by which the

⁷⁸ For further references to this, please refer to Chapter III.

bodies of individuals play an important role not only intangibly in worship but also tangibly in offering their own bodies to the cause.

Concepts on the Role of Individuals and Their Utility in Sacrificial Rituals

One of the oldest ways of conceiving the universe is to imagine it as composed of pairs of opposites: *dichotomies* (Sheldon 1922). In the case represented by sacrificed individuals This pair of opposites is divided in terms of their potential utility within the cosmogonic order: a principal or main body VS retainers, high-court members and other individuals sacrificed for their leader as seen at Ur (Woolley 1934), Jericho (Kenyon 1960, 1964), and Başur Höyük (Hasset & Sağlamtimur 2018).

Sacrificing something not only reveals the possibility of losing it but resignation toward the very possibility of that loss. Anticipating the disaster by giving what is most precious opens a process of exchange between the secular world and the hereafter. In search of stability, people give up their goods, bodies, or souls in order to obtain an advantage over other groups. While it denotes the need for care, sacrifice also breeds chaos. As a central form of exchange, currency restricts pleasure to avoid pestilence, tragedy, and disaster. At one point, man restrains himself from his instinctual passions (civilization). However, not everything seems to be so simple; the need for exchange always leaves open an "unsatisfied" need, which leads the subject "by the shortest path" (uncivilization).

Two great tendencies are much debated in human psychology: the satisfaction of desires and adherence to the law (Baumeister & Leary 1995). The first liberates the instincts in this or that direction, while the second restricts volition, leading man to transformative sublimation. However,

societies are not only sustained by exchange as some fathers of modern anthropology have suggested (Hubert & Mauss 1964) but also by the cult of sacrifice (Conte & Kim 2016). All sacrifice implies a balance between desire and repression to negotiate a state of community stability. Every group is held together by the distribution of duties according to rights and an understanding of individuals within society as both active and passive participants. As a "substitute form," sacrifice requires a body (offering) that is given to the gods seeking a benefit. The offering is then replicated in order to commemorate the exchange (currency).

Following the reasoning of exchange, an important but inessential aspect of sacrifice is that it contains and resolves the dichotomy between the concepts of restriction and pleasure among the participants. On the one hand, there is sacrifice in the form of the sacrificial object while, on the other, there is the concept of the hedonistic stimulus characterized by the advantage of the other participants. By way of comparison, and as an ethnohistorical example, handling money in capitalist systems must appeal to deception in order to exist (Conte & Kim 2016). The circulation of money prevents the subject from taking what he wants by force, solving the need to deal with others who, like himself, want the goods of others. The circulation of currency subverts the relationship between people. The greater the economic desire, the lower the ethical propensities of the person toward others. The self-destructive tendencies of selfishness must be disciplined through fear and hope. Men and their cultures resort to sacrifice to avoid calamities but also to nourish themselves with the necessary hope that a better time is yet to come. In this way, individuals try to tame what is uncontrollable in nature.

Sacrificing requires divine assistance that fosters the sacred and consecrating environment, but the primary element is provided by the

offering that is exposed. The concept of value acquires its form within the psyche of the participating individuals in these moments. This offering requires the most significant value that a human can offer, their very life, which they must be willing to relinquish as an offering in order to consolidate themselves as the useful object of sacrifice. It is then the substitution of places but not of essences, where the value that is required is not less than what is offered.

The utility of value lies in the fact that it can be modified to the liking of the person who uses it in anticipation of a desired result: no less so than in the use of a person as an offering and an object of sacrificial value (Usieto Cabrera 2020).

The sacrificed individual is the closest being to the divine in this context. Under this condition, the individual has been consecrated by the sacrificial act. Value is then found in the human's maximal detachment, a total break from that which is prefigured as extremely valuable, for obvious norms are transgressed in emphasizing and relinquishing the objectual aspects of the subject. In pursuit of sacrifice, the subject becomes a useful object of maximum value; the sacrifice of animals is thus a direct convention with divinity.

Under this assumption, the very relationship between utility and benefit is mediated by the human condition that binds people in terms of the unique values that they can offer; therefore, sacrificing is not to kill but to abandon and to give. The execution is nothing more than an exposition of a deep meaning, a sense that animates the ceremonial expression of both the sacrificer and the sacrificed who share the same essence and differ only in position and spirit, for the value of this utility is above the offering. Sacrificing humans is the highest expression in terms of value, unattainable

by other species. The intensity of the consummation could not be replicated due to the comparative weakness of the value offered.

Aligned but not related to TMT, sacrifice is not an act of violence because consecration prefigures it in a higher order than that of the earth. Its utility and value put it at the level of revelation itself, even if it necessarily attends the bloody rite. In this way, the various ANE societies that carried out sacrifice would not have seen it in the same way that classical societies later did—preferring to speak of such acts as bloody and barbaric and ultimately eradicating them from their traditions; this is also contrary to the probably exceptional behaviors of the ancient Greeks (Taboada 2013).

Although the consecration of the rite makes the participants feel closer to divinity even before making the transgression from subject to object in the sacrifice, they feel divine because of the value they acquire through the sacrifice and the expectation of obtaining a place of even more value and greater privilege after the fact.

And, as far as useful objects of sacrifice are concerned, the main object is the human being itself. This tool does not operate in itself, its value is conditioned by external perceptions, which is why the religious and ideological construction is constituted by considering the order of its nature (abandonment of animality). Their purpose is mediated by the action of another subject that imposes the final condition upon them, which is the one that acquires the useful value.

In this way, the sacrificed individuals, the subject-objects, transcended from an earthly plane to the astral plane in an act known as transmigration. Part of transmigration and the objectification of the subject was granted when attending the consecrating category, where it was already considered a useful object without leaving the essence of the subject.

In some sense, it shared both spaces in which the useful object could be considered as a subject-object, establishing a relationship of equality via attributes that specified the unique condition elaborated for the constitution equivalent to the exceptional and special order (Ponsada 1992).

Already from the consecration of the sacrificed, an attribute is added to its condition of useful value, such as that of being divine. In this case, the spiritual condition that it already acquires with death makes the supreme state be considered as a religious ritual "*[i]nsofar as he is spirit himself, man is divine (sacred), but he is not sovereignly so, since he is real*" (Bobbio & Matteucci 1982: 42), a problem faced by the complexity of the overflow of attributions and unique complexity for religious construction.

In this way, the divine consecration of the human is strengthened, and the cosmic order is reestablished, either toward its divinities (foundation sacrifice) or toward society itself (retainer sacrifice). These societies accepted within their religious constitution that the pleasure of the divinities when sacrificing individuals would grant them that earthly order that they particularly sought—an order that was also based on avoiding dangers through good fortune, e.g., exceptions that largely represented the sacrificial action perpetuated by the sacrificer and the people themselves as the sacrificer in the consecrating act.

Consecration is the affirmation of the divine spirit of the sacrificed individual, which is why the use of the body as a thing officiates in death, but body and spirit together represent the intrinsic and conscious denial of animality. The sacrifice is not an act per se, in which the sacrificer is a "murderer" (Burkert 1983) as per modern constraints and delimitations but is the reestablishment of the divine order that prolongs nature to make the evident return to the spiritual order via the divine in the sacrificed individual. However, this relationship that appears with the sacrificer

deepens the prescription of the ritual, making the situation a complex sign in which a subject similar to that of the offering kills the subject-thing in the ritual, thus consecrating it and not as a wild act.

The sacrificer is nothing more than an individual who acts under a mediating prefiguration; they are the one that gives way to the reestablishment of order, where nature receives favors from the divinities, or, on the contrary, anger is evoked as soon as the sacrifices are not made. The cosmic order of their world was understood in this way and beyond other secondary characters such as violence, such that its horizons were composed of possible sacrifices, making it easier for the people of this religious constitution to act without fear of judgment.

It is necessary to understand the quasi-mythological figure of the executioner as restoring order. ANE societies sacrificed their individuals with this full communion with the sacred in mind. Human sacrifice was their most exceptional representation of their social reality, denoting the fact that they, as a community, sought nothing more than to provide for the future by using that which was most valuable to them." To this extent, what was acquired under this simultaneously divine and mundane payment was only meant to correspond to the value of what was offered in the specific ritual—the blood of a human, the worthiest offering at all.

Around all of these circumstances that made up the entire sacrificial motive, a natural order acted that, as mentioned before, constituted the entire intimate figure of sacrifice that operated (contrary to "barbarism" or the otherwise questionable) as a form of communion with the sacred and divine that ensured their survival.

This is, however, why the latent vision of sacrifice since then has not been especially favorable, for the spilt blood of the sacrificed individual seemed a trait of "savagery," which, as seen in other trials, would quite

possibly erase the intimacy with the divine intended by the detachment of the offering and their renunciation of their subject-condition in lieu of an object-condition as a thing that can be sacrificed. Their sovereignty as a human was contingent on their useful objectuality that burst into the earthly to prolong their nature in the divine.

The human being is useful for the sacrifice as soon as the requirements and the divine demands are fulfilled. These, nevertheless, seek their own protection and spiritual survival because their lives are deemed irreplaceable and not objects of abundance such as other earthly and quasi-animal (natural) constructions. Given this background, the infants, normally the first-born in Phoenician societies (Wagner 1995), were those who were prefigured as the most useful and invaluable of the species, which therefore represented true detachment perfectly predisposed to servile use in ritual sacrifice.

To generate a judgment of this situation would be to ignore all of these quite complex religious constructions. However, sacrifice as such offers the opportunity to interpret these practices in some way as the sacred connection that ancient peoples sought with the divine and held to be their possibility of contributing to their society by offering their own children or adult members without apparent diseases or disabilities—a far greater contribution than shedding their own garments or other grave objects.

All of these relationships were generated before the sure movement of the desire for the sacred, and that is why different societies did not break with this order but preferred to continue this practice in their own manner, a link that would ensure their favorability with the gods. However, this vision of what was useful in the human was somehow broken when these practices became intelligible, and they saw that their human essence prevailed over the divine act and that the terror of the wrath of the divinities

(or of the leaders who represented them) could be mitigated with other offerings from at least the 3rd millennium BC forward.

This was how a consolidated society from the 1st millennium BC could begin with these cultural phenomena only to later disappear on their own. It is not strange that the different ANE societies ultimately succumbed to potential enemies that caused great damage or that different phenomena burst forth with great force before the reciprocal action of cultural exchanges.

Cultural exchange could have been a dangerous weapon to handle, and, ironically, it could have caused its own disappearance. This is why it is likely that both the idea of human sacrifice and the specific vision that these people had of their gods would have been altered when combined with their knowledge of gods from other cultures. The utility of human sacrifice thus called for different actions when trying to please other gods or politico-religious leaders, and these societies would have learned other forms of survival in the same manner. These possibilities are interwoven with elaborate constructions based on the possible facts that can be established over time and based on different interpretations (see all Schwartz).

Another aspect of the current discussion of human and animal sacrifice that seems especially relevant to the ancient Near Eastern experience is the critique of the traditional anthropocentric approach toward animal-human relations and the distinction between human and animal sacrifice (Schwartz 2017: 225). As will be seen below under the category of retainer sacrifice, the current exploration of animal agency and the consideration of animals as other-than-human persons are applicable in certain situations of sacrifice in this region (see Schwartz 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2017).

On the (Peri/Post-mortem) Treatment of Bodies After the Sacrifice. Is there an *Expected Pattern*?

The available documentation and reports have not given me access to the skeletal remains of sacrificial persons in most cases, but there are a few exceptions provided by Baadsgaard et al. (2011), Kenyon (1960, 1964), and Recht (2011, 2019) in which the peri- and post-mortem treatment of sacrificed individuals has been recorded. Another interesting approach to extracting information about the ritual from the sacrificed individuals' bodies focuses on determining the fate of the individual's remains both prior and antecedent to the ritual. Hence, after the consecration has occurred, the body of the individual has already left the mundane sphere of existence and has suffered various treatments in the physical realm from which varied information can be attained depending on the context of discovery.

Different contexts have been provided in previous lines where: there is no differentiation between human and animal remains (e.g., Tell Brak); the excavators suggested that the animals and humans were sacrificed as part of a closure ritual for a given building (Oates et al. 2001; Recht 2014: 421); peri- and post-mortem violence has been detected (in Ur, Başur Höyük, and Arslantepe); or the bodies show evidence of rapid and incautious treatment or abandonment without any differentiable treatment (Umm el-Marra) (see Schwartz all). In most cases, skeletal remains cannot serve as the main evidence for detecting human sacrificial activities as in other contexts (Inomata & Triadan 2009). However, when the entirety of the evidence is combined, the skeletal remains of a sacrifice nonetheless warrant special consideration given their value as objects possessing a

certain sacredness once they have been subjected to the ritual. It is even possible that their deposition is an inherent part of the rite (Bruit 2005: 39). It is also sometimes paradigmatic as in the case at the Amman temple (Herr 1983) where the ritual ends with the burial of the ashes of the potentially sacrificed individual, which is reminiscent of later Phoenician-Punic sacrificial rituals (Lipiński 2000).

Purposeful, theatrical, and ritualized deposition is often difficult to detect archeologically. Although identification is often done almost intuitively, it is not often that much thought is given to the criteria that have been used in doing so (Laneri 2007, 2011). Usually, the variability and complexity of the actions that might cause this type of deposition do not facilitate the establishment of guidelines for their location. However, some general elements might be proposed for consideration in the following:

- They are deposited in accordance with the criteria previously discussed. This can be translated into the choice of remains grouped by gender, age, or even secondary/primary burials.
- An effort has been made so that the remains last in time and space to promote the memory of the ritual act. For this reason, the sets are isolated in specific enclosures or containers (pits, holes, containers, etc.), they are sealed, and can even be marked so that they do not go unnoticed from the outside.
- Finally, it should be noted how the deposition pattern ought ideally to be repeated at the same time and space to be considered intentional. Then again, a large group of evidence ranging from different time periods and geographical locations is being considered, in which some

mutual intentionality has nonetheless been detected. This intentionality is not only given by the sacrificed individuals' bodies (peri- and post-mortem treatments)⁷⁹ but also by their theatrical disposal in architectural structures and the internal ritualization of the burial suggested by the context.

Apart from this type of deposition, there are also paradigms in which the skeletal remains of the sacrificed individuals have been recovered and reused for a new function. I refer especially to their use as a constructive element or deposit as most often found in Northern Mesopotamia and Northern Syria, usually taking the form of infants buried in jars below or within walls and under the floors of certain buildings and the relation of the same to fire (Green 1975: 59-79; Recht 2014: 418-21; Tatlock 2006: 80-88; Tatlock 2013).⁸⁰

Apart from rare involvement of fire in human sacrificial ritual practices in the ANE (except for vague evidence at Amman temple, Al-Hiba, and Tell Surghul), why should this relation to fire be included? Studies based on the ancient world have demonstrated that the ashes from a sacrifice were believed to be an effective element of purification (Cabrera

⁷⁹ Peri-mortem violence described in the available documentation is represented by unhealed impact lesions that range from fractures, stab marks, and sharp/blunt force trauma (Baadsgaard et al. 2011; Frangipane 2012; Hasset & Sağlamtimur 2018; Martin & Harrod 2015; Kenyon 1960).

⁸⁰ Although almost none of the sites mentioned involved death by fire (except for Amman temple and a brief citation at Al-Hiba and Tell Surghul) (Hankey 1974; Herr 1983; Green 1975), studies have emphasized that in most cases the ashes caused by burning the bones of the victims could be used to make an insulating paste that covered and protected certain parts of structures (such as altars) from fire (Cabrera Díez 2010: 298).

Díez 2010; Vaux 1985: 583). Following an interdisciplinary approach, fire could be used as an integral part of mixtures capable of cleaning impurities from the individuals who used them (Buccellati 2021).

Following the Dumontian framework of cross-cultural comparisons (Iteanu 2009: 335), the epitome of these uses is provided by selected passages in the Bible. It is known, for instance, that lustral water was prepared according to a specific archaic rite that involved the sacrifice of a red cow without blemish that had not worn a yoke. The rite was celebrated outside the city and in the presence of the priest. It involved burning the individual completely, collecting their ashes, and storing them in a pure place. The lustral water was made with these ashes and "living" water, that is, water from a moving source like a stream (Vaux, 1985: 583) (English Standard Version Bible, 2001, Num. 19, 1-10).

The purifying power of these ashes was maintained in Jewish tradition and in more recent times as is recorded in some passages of the New Testament:

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

(English Standard Version Bible, 2001, Heb, 9, 13-15.)

Now, does the evidence allow us to create an expected pattern based on these case studies? In the beginning of this book, one particular question was raised: how can one move from the abstract world to the tangible? Or, in other words, how is a psychological complex ritual translated into a pattern that can be recognized in the field? Through the decades,

archeologists have struggled to attest human sacrifice in those societies without textual corroboration due to the difficulty and complexity of such rituals. Essentially, and despite the variety in the arrangement of the pieces involved, one recurrent pattern has nonetheless been recognized for the argued evidence that always conveys the same idea: an individual or group of individuals that embody order and challenge darkness by giving their own lives.

In the multidisciplinary literature of human sacrifice (e.g., Day 1989; Finsterbusch et al. 2007; Green 1975, 2002; Harman 2000; Huang 2004; Hughes 1991), the focus has always been on the study of skeletal remains to create a pattern (Cucina & Tiesler 2006; Houston et al. 2015; Martin & Harrod 2014; Schele 1994). Unfortunately, for the ancient Near Eastern case, it has been mandatory to diverge from this path due to the lack of skeletal remains or their poor conservation in almost every case. The concept of destroying the offering is the central and universal idea of these long-lasting human communities in several ancient and modern societies (Tatlock 2019) that practiced this ritual. As it has been difficult to attest to human sacrificial rituals based on the literature and iconography of these periods, the evidence has relied solely on indirect patterns (e.g., context) influenced by the inner evolution of such abstract rituals and, when available, direct patterns (skeletal remains).

Based on the documented evidence, two enormous concepts lay behind human sacrificial rituals in relation to the *utility* of the bodily remains:

1. On the one hand, there are enough similarities in the evidence to suggest a first pattern for retainer rituals (Kenyon 1960, 1964; Negahban 1991; Woolley 1934), namely two clear

aristocratic/royal⁸¹ contexts instantiated, firstly, in the spatial division between the bodies of the sacrificed individuals and the body of the main personage and, secondarily and in undetermined contexts (due mostly to preservation), in which multiple individuals are interred in a single location with their bodies often overlapping. Besides skeletal remains, the architectural space where these bodies were interred were often so-called death pits or shafts prepared for mass burials. In certain cases, these shafts were attached to the tomb itself (Kenyon 1960, 1964; Woolley 1934), while in others the shaft was an independent part of the grave (Frangipane 2012; Schwartz 2012).

2. On the other hand, there is a more heterogeneous and complex pattern related to the basis of architectural buildings (at foundational levels) in which human skeletal remains are foundation deposits (Van Dijk 2007).

Beyond encountering human sacrificial rituals under buildings, structures, or in separated architectural spheres within aristocratic/royal funerary complexes, there might perhaps be an earlier ritual (Kornienko 2015; Schmidt 2006; Stordeur et al. 2001). However, at this point there are more inconveniences and obstacles than there is clear information to even consider this human sacrifice: the evidence is once again poorly conserved, very poorly distributed, and too separated in time and space to be discussed conclusively as explained earlier in this chapter.

⁸¹ Although aristocratic/royal contexts are involved, this does not mean that such evidence is solely reserved for those contexts. In fact, most of the royal burials discovered (Qatna) yielded no evidence of human sacrificial rituals.

Furthermore, a specific and determinant response cannot be given due to the general unclear state, disposal, postures, and age and gender distributions of the skeletal remains for both the retainer and foundation evidence. No well-defined pattern besides the presence of violence (normally cranial fractures) can be drawn until further excavations shed light. Hence, despite the fact that the preservation of the bodies has been far from ideal, one universal pattern shall be worth mentioning:

1. The overall presence of violence recognizable in physical traces (Appendix 5, Table V, Figures 1 & 2) that might have led to the deaths of the interred individuals. As a rule, violence indicates the primary utility of service as a sacrificed individual.

Although having no physical pattern, a further distinction shall be proposed with respect to the intangible utility of their bodies:

1. Their bodies worked as direct offerings (probably made to a divinity as in Foundation deposits or directly to a ruler as cross-cultural comparisons may suggest) or as the vessels of their society's *sins*.⁸²

Although studies on this have been conducted in the last decades, especially due to the most recent discoveries (Hasset & Sağlamtimur 2018), they, unfortunately, do not represent the majority of information, as much of their data is missing, has been mis-interpreted, contaminated, or was poorly preserved (Usieto Cabrera 2020). These studies have shown that sacrificed individuals clearly received special perimortem treatment and died violently in most of the studied cases (Baadsgaard et al. 2011). A clear preliminary pattern in the data I am analyzing in this book reveals irregular

⁸² The psychological relationship between offerings and vessels is not entirely clear, for, as already discussed, both are respectively used in either sacrificial group.

positioning of the sacrificed bodies, either arranged around one main individual (e.g., Schwartz 2012; Hassett et al. 2019; Woolley 1934) or contexts with incomplete skeletons (often disjointed and in most cases mixed with animal bones) as the only cases in which the excavators have discussed the probability of human sacrificial rituals (e.g., Koldewey 1887; Nigro 1998).

A pattern cannot typically be established on the basis of positioning alone, however, for there is heterogeneous positioning in most cases: Tomb 1 at Umm el-Marra; Tombs G1, H6, H18, H22, P17, P19, H11, and P21 at Jericho; Tomb 7 at Tell Banat; Tomb 1 at Arslantepe; EB Cemetery at Başur Höyük; and the Royal Cemetery of Ur. As seen in Chapter II, in primary contexts and especially in mass graves with multiple burials and elaborate regalia, the presence of sacrificial individuals has been assumed on the grounds of lack of positioning as well as contextual evidence. The entangled primary interments of various individuals arranged around one centrally placed skeleton, age, and the negative evidence of associated funerary objects (except at Ur) have been proposed specifically as clues of unnatural death (Cucina & Tiesler 2006; Welsh 1988). Despite that scholars have interpreted irregular position as the dishonorable treatment of the deceased (Buccellati & Buccellati 1997), the ritualistic nature of the evidence suggests the opposite: a deviant position might, indeed, indicate the status of the individual (sacrificed) to differentiate them from those who were not sacrificed.

Infants & Children: Concepts of Infanticide in the ANE

Prior to dealing with the specific topic of interest, the possibility of sacrificial infantile ritual practices or infanticide, it is first advisable to

question where the boundary can be set between actually sacrificing an infant and using the body of an infant that has already died of natural causes for ritualistic purposes.

Although there is no osteological corroboration that the interments in the ANE analyzed in Chapter IV were, indeed, slaughtered, the contexts clearly indicate a deviation from ordinary interments more common in that time and space. This difference between those contexts and further contexts in which infants and children were buried underneath private households is the inherent distinctive architectural feature that suggests a public domain rather than private contexts. It will be accepted here that those bodies essentially served (either having been slaughtered for this cause or having died by other causes) as sacrificial offerings whose theoretical conceptual background will be analyzed in the subsequent paragraphs.

This has not been the focus of any study, paper, or scientific research, and, as a consequence, this topic has been considered obscure (Usieto Cabrera 2020). Despite the vague evidence from the ANE, the debate does not focus in this case on whether those infants/children were sacrificed and does not solely rely on these case studies but on related metaphors from the ancient world concerning the use of their bodies for ritual purposes regardless of their causes of death.

In the following lines, following a clear definition of infanticide in an attempt to comprehend the value and use of their bodies and the symbolic features that they embodied, it is mandatory to analyze the bigger picture and not only the limited evidence that has been discussed thus far; this means that we must study this practice across the region to seek out the metaphors behind it. First off, there is a lack of clear evidence and skeletal remains to suggest their actual death, that is infanticide, was a part of the ritual itself (Wagner 1995).

The use of infants and children in sacrificial rituals has been widely attested worldwide for different reasons and is no freer of controversy than the rest of human sacrificial rituals (Purdum & Parades 1989; Schele 1984). As discussed in greater detail in Chapter I, evolutionary anthropologists, philosophers, and historians of the 19th century conceived of the following hypothesis to explain human sacrifice: the bloody sacrifice of individuals began in a primitive stage of “savagery” and “barbarism,” which was followed by animal sacrifice, and, in “higher” forms of “civilization,” these were ultimately replaced by a stage of symbolic and bloodless sacrifice—a definitive achievement in the moral and cultural progress of humanity (Smith 2002; Frazer 1993; Tylor 1871). Nowadays, the debate has a lot to do with the confrontation between idealistic and materialistic conceptions of the world, society, and culture, although they are often no longer discussed in these terms.

Every sacrifice encourages atonement, a rite of the expulsion of everything considered evil, impure, unworthy, or simply dirty. In this regard, different studies explain that infanticidal practices implied a symbolic substitution. Ancient civilizations like the Canaanites needed to sacrifice the primal son to calm the demands of their gods or confer stability to their social system (Taipe Campos 2005; Wagner 1995). To cite an example out of the great corpus of infanticide in ancient societies (e.g., Pliny (VIII, 80), Plato (Rep., VIII, 16), Pausanias (VIII, 2, 3.7)), Davies (1984) argues:

First, all over the world, . . . the sacrificial victims were taken from the same categories of people: war captives, slaves, women, and children – that is to say, precisely those who had few, if any, rights on their own. The emphasis may vary from place to place: in Mesoamerica war captives were in the majority; in Sumer,

the archeological record concerns victims who were retainers or slaves; wives were immolated with their husbands not only in India, but also, for instance, in China and Polynesia; children were in almost universal demand as untainted intermediaries between the living and the dead. The Phoenicians and Carthaginians were specialist in child sacrifice, while in India, children were thrown to the sharks at the mouth of the Ganges until a British ordinance of 1802 forbade the practice. (Davies 1984: 212)

Blood coming from the heart of a child was considered the purest elixir to serve as the food of the gods (Taipe Campos 2005). The sacrifice of children, unlike that of prisoners, warriors, or slaves, is significantly explained by the Maussian book of gift and counter-gift (Taipe Campos 2005). Aligned with Taipe Campos and basing his theory on the Aztecs, Graulich (2005) suggests that sacrifices carried out on infants and children usually involved parents who had sold their children or slaves whose children were captured after a battle. In this sense, beyond the conception of the bodies of children and infants as counter-gifts as Taipe Campos argues, the sacrifice of children could also correspond to specific problems in economic and fertilization cycles (Graulich 2005), wherein their bodies were used as symbolic socio-economic tools.

Another characteristic that the ANE evidence has brought to light is the age of the individuals involved. Roman-Berelleza (1990) claims that the age of the children and of these individuals in general is of paramount importance for understanding the phenomenon. According to bio-cultural studies, children, in almost every society embody the ultimate purity of that society (Davies 1984). Their sacrifice is given to them as a benefit, a privilege to enter the world of the dead protected by the gods in an almost untouched

manner. Their deaths (especially if the infant or child was ill) put the children at an advantage over those who had been excluded from the sacrifice, no matter their origins. On the contrary, a study carried out by López Luján (2005, 2006) states that human sacrifices were configured as rituals after a forced migration in which the protection of the gods is celebrated. The staging of youth is a recurring theme in texts and studies on communities that practiced human sacrificial rituals, but this is not the case for the ANE. In these cases, gods usually took the forms of children or youthful aspects (Durán 1984).

There is sufficient data including both etic and emic perspectives (Rowan 2011) on the study of sacrifice to perceive the inclusion of infants and children in the ANE as entailing the promise of eternal life, the protection of a deity, and an afterlife without any kind of deficiencies, deprivations, or frustrations as opposed to being nothing more than an arbitrary or abrupt end to their lives. After Abraham's definitive settlement, he nearly sacrificed his own son at the request of his god. A compelling explanation for this would be that people offered certain sacrifices to the gods in order to obtain necessary resources for subsistence, protection, or other favors from them. The purity of the youth of sacrificed children denotes the passivity of humans in relation to the divine (the same passivity that King Agamemnon shows)—an unconditional submission.

This use of the nature and conditions of the youngest members of society to be sacrificed clearly appears in ethnographic stories that exhibit how heterogeneous this practice is. Wagner carries out different ethnohistorical and ethnographical studies to prove how infanticide can have different socio-religious meanings in modern-day societies (Wagner 1995). The data on ritual violence is equally represented in Asia, America, and Africa. The aim of this section is to provide data for comparisons

between the ritualized murder and control of the population through infanticide and the cases that we are most interested in highlighting, namely violence exercised against the non-adult members of a community in a ritualistic and periodic manner that is broadly accepted or supported by the society. These would be the minimum requirements to establish an interpretation of child sacrifice as a ritualized manifestation of infanticide.

Unfortunately, in most cases, the sparseness and distortion of the available information do not ensure the concurrence of some or all of these requirements. One thing is interesting to point out: all of the questionably documented cases of child sacrifice take place in socially stratified and politically unified societies: empires, states, or advanced headquarters. In the pertinent case, these mainly correspond to the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC, although the evidence is not strong enough to maintain these hypotheses, leaving us with mere speculation.

Following the archeological evidence, several points have been raised:

- Infants and children were indeed sacrificed for such purposes—or their bodies were at least handled and used directly as intermediate tools to communicate with deities for protection.
- Neither social isolation, nor the possibility that these individuals may have been outsiders, nor whether these children were ill or suffered from any disease at all have been possible to analyze.

But how do we interpret this specific evidence? Based on these points, infanticide, and the use (or cultural importance) of their bodies for sacrificial rituals has been widely explored in different societies, wherein they are typically understood as gifts or counter-gifts (Taipe Campos 2005),

as symbolic socio-economic tools (Graulich 2005), or as the perfect embodiments of concepts such as purity and vitality (Durán 1984). Child sacrifices cannot be exclusively defined by any one of these characteristics, for the conception would then be incomplete, but rather, as we have discussed, they must be understood with respect to their emic protective functions and their functions in celebrating an entire way of life and world. Any migration and arrival to a new environment, the construction of new buildings, or any other major event within a new community would have represented a major break. Their sacrifice not only constituted the epitome of the basic gift of purity and vitality (Durán 1984; Wiese & Daro 1995), but, as the evidence appearing in the foundational levels of several buildings attests, their bodies also served to obtain the approval of the gods who guarded the newly inhabited space in a manner that made it more powerful and prosperous than an adult individual would have (López Luján & Olivier 2010).

This ritual (normally carried out in an exemplary center) gave the gods a child, a sign of purity and vitality and was not intended as a punishment but as an extraordinary honor. In return, deities conferred a veil of protection on the community. In modern societies, the death of children of course has a totally inverse effect. Industrial societies introduced modifications into their codes that generated a double dynamic. On the one hand, they gave women and children special protection in the face of a complex and hostile world while putting men in command of the economic order on the other. The child, who until then had contributed as labor to the family earnings, was isolated by modern legislation in the subterfuge of the home.

General Discussion of Symbolic Violence Against Women in the ANE: The Body of Female Individuals in Sacrificial Rituals

In Chapter II was discussed how violence could be divided into nonlethal and lethal categories, sacrifice being a lethal form of violence based on the nature of the data. Furthermore, and given the high percentage of sacrificed women in some cases (e.g., as represented in the epitome cases of Ur at DP 1237 or RT 800) (Woolley 1934), it is necessary to analyze potentially gendered violence and to discuss how female bodies were used in establishing or capturing the social control that has been well documented in the examples of captives and slaves and cases in which women were at risk of violence even when they were not necessarily outsiders (Zhang et al. 2016). A biocultural feminist approach (Jay 1992) must be considered because the evidence requires a full interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary theoretical explanation that cannot be fulfilled with only bioarcheological studies of such phenomena due to the potential objectification of their bodies as vessels when they were in fact oppressed by direct gender violence.

Theoretically, how expendable were women's bodies in the ANE? In addition to several studies dedicated to women in the ANE and in the ancient world in general (Jay 1992; Justel & García-Ventura 2018), Couto-Ferreira et al. (2017) directly point out the role of women within ANE societies: fertility, that is, the capacity⁸³ to bear healthy children, forms part of a broader idea of prosperity encompassing wealth, well-being, and equilibrium for the land, the individuals, the gods, and the cosmos. It is not unanticipated, therefore, that in Sumerian lamentations and other similar

⁸³ In fact, this idea of fertility is most strongly linked to males in the ANE (see Dumuzi or Adonis).

texts (Akkadian, Hittite, etc.) describing the destruction of cities and the dissolution of the social order that women stopped bearing, cattle became infertile, and fields stopped producing crops. On the same grounds, when the harvest was abundant, the silos became full, patients recovered from their maladies, and women bore healthy children (Biggs 2000).

In contrast to fertility, a women's body has always also been highlighted in the concepts of *virginity* and, once again, *purity* (Durán 1984; Wiese & Daro 1995; Rubiera Cancellas 2015). Such concepts held great significance among ancient societies, especially with respect to the "feminine." If sacrificed individuals of various cultural contexts are taken into consideration, it is noticeable how being a virgin endowed the chosen person with perceived value, especially if they were a woman (Foley 2001). This should not be detached from the stereotype that still persists in our mentality today, which has traveled through all historical eras: the *maiden* who is sacrificed, a motif that is chiefly maintained in literature and filmography (Rubiera Cancellas 2011).

At a broader socio-political and religious level, the cosmic order was maintained by royal power mirrors established in creation by the gods. In the same way in the realm of social dynamics, the female body was thought to enclose and reproduce the same ideology of cosmic order: if the land must be productive in order to secure the subsistence of both humans and the gods, so their bodies should be equally productive so as to secure family enlargement, social reproduction, and continuity. Consequently, and although this correlation is very weak in the ANE, what do the metaphorical correlations between agriculture and female fertility tell us about the ways that female bodies were culturally trained as apparent "vehicles" of sexuality and reproduction to comply with this idea of

abundance and prosperity, and how disposable were their bodies to sacrifice?

However, if their role within society was so essential, why sacrifice them? For, in speaking of violence targeted against women, one must allude to the possible roots of the patriarchal system in ancient societies that have been widely discussed (Jay 1992), entail, and export a whole series of ideologies and values that sustain male domination, inciting and enabling violence against women. Sanahuja (2007) thus defines what is called gender violence as:

It would be nothing more than an expression of the unequal power relations between the two sexes, manifested in the economic, social, political and symbolic spheres. (Sanahuja 2007: 27)

Expósito (2011: 20) adds that "*violence and gender come together when the former is used to achieve a plus of presence or influence over the latter.*" The relationship between the sexes was unequal, for they were based on a "social asymmetry" in which the aggressor justified attacks via his masculine role that the victim was supposed to accept it in her feminine role (Expósito 2011). This suggests that, if there were violence against women in ancient times, it would have been both direct, structural, and symbolic (Martin & Frayer 1997).

Nancy Jay's feminist psychological analysis contributes an optime approach to gender violence as reflected in sacrificial rituals. According to her, human sacrifice is directly interconnected with family structures (Jay 1992). By uncovering a symbolic opposition between sacrifice and childbirth, Jay argues that sacrifice creates a male social bond that transcends women's physiological reproductive power. By creating and maintaining the social relations of reproduction, a patrilineal line of

descent-sacrifice functions as a remedy for biological reproduction or “having-been-born-of woman” (Jay 2001). Integrating his insights with Smith’s kinship hypothesis (Smith 2002), Jay effectively demonstrates the way in which sacrifice centralizes a patrilineal link with transcendent powers, making this relationship exclusive and in turn legitimizing a male-dominated social order.

Without exploring this subject beyond the limits of this book, my argument—as based on the current wave of scholars proposing a patriarchal society based on kinship and lineage relationships (Frymer-Kensky 1981)—would be aligned with both Smith’s and Jay’s interpretations of sacrificial rituals that legitimated a male-dominated social order. In the case of the ANE, because sacrifice was rather linked to social and religious descent rather than biological descent, kinship is understood as group membership with no presumption of actual genetic relationships. Accordingly, sacrifice maintains descent structures through fathers and sons in patrilineal societies, whereas sacrifice in matrilineal or bilateral systems may work in opposition to genealogical structures through the mother, although there is no evidence to sustain the latter hypothesis in the ANE.

The role of women in the politico-religious sphere is not free of controversy (Sanmartín 1993; Zamora López 2006) and entirely depends on textual and iconographical sources. Perhaps the role of women in sacrificial rituals reflects a pragmatic role, ultimately devoting themselves to their deities or leaders (Martín-Cano Abreu 2009). Cross-cultural studies demonstrate how women as mothers are never recorded as enacting a sacrifice, and women who do sacrifice always do so in specifically nonchildbearing roles as virgins, consecrated married women, or postmenopausal women (Jay 2001). Unrelated traditions and biocultural

approaches exhibit a feature in common: they typically stipulate that only male adults may administer sacrifices (Jay 1996, 2001).

Can women then be the executor of sacrifice? Although this question has not been answered in any study (Jay 1992) and no evidence can be traced to the ANE, the ability of sacrifice does not belong to any specific gender. If this is accepted, then how can sacrifice be accounted for solely as a means of male appropriation of female powers, or be believed to have relied purely on a specific gender as the principal executor? I argue that it cannot, as it affects both genders in equal quantity.

The evidence of both males and females of all ages as well as infants and children of both genders in the ANE also suggests a different type of violence: structural violence (Novák 2002). Structural violence can be defined as that exercised by or on behalf of the structures and institutions of the dominant power, following its own reproductive logic and creating inequalities in all areas of life. Structural violence is based on an unequal system of power that enforces the unequal distribution of resources, which in turn decreases social mobility within the system. This may take the form of classification order and linear interaction patterns, reciprocity between centrality and rank, congruence between systems, correspondence between ranges, and interconnections between all of these levels (Galtung 1969). It is also divided into two types: structural-vertical violence (repression and exploitation) and structural-horizontal violence (occurring in parts near or far from the individual).

In this case, the fact that a power (a political-religious minority) chooses the distribution (represented in a minority group of sacrificed individuals) already demonstrates aspects of structural violence from which problems arise when that violence falls upon a single group. Structural violence is silent, and although its effects may seem innocuous,

they are just as severe as direct violence, for they modify an entire system of ideas composing individual and collective thought.

In addition to structural gender violence, the evidence suggests that other types such cultural and symbolic violence arise (Bourdieu 1994). The first designates one of the many ways in which structural violence works, but it can also be considered an independent category. According to Galtung, cultural violence corresponds to those aspects of culture and the symbolic scope of our experience (materialized in religion, ideologies, language, art, empirical sciences, and formal sciences) that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence (Galtung 2004). This violence softens the features of the other two through internalization, modifying values to make the act and the idea arise naturally and voluntarily.

Symbolic violence, on the other hand, is equivalent to the concept developed by Bourdieu (1995). Symbolic violence elicits submission that is not even perceived as such, relying on "collective expectations" and socially inculcated beliefs. Why symbolic sacrifice in the ANE? In symbolic violence, the sacrificed individual is not aware that violence is being exercised against them, for they believe that they are within the dominant system because just this has been instilled in them. This type of violence transforms domination-submission relationships into affective relationships and power into charisma, turning the understanding of the sacrificed individuals into gratitude. It is a type of mild, routine, and balanced violence. Symbolic systems are instruments of communication and domination, which make this logical and moral consensus possible, contributing to the reproduction of the social order (Bourdieu 1971a, 1971b).

The actions carried out by the dominant group are concerned, camouflaging themselves as disinterested to enhance their capacity for

violence (Bourdieu 1994: 152); that is, those who are dominant know the system and try to make the sacrificed individuals believe that they are all in the same position, thus making them the true accomplices of the system through their ignorance. In addition, structural violence is applied in architectural spaces, pedagogical action, and the body. The male order is so imposed in society that it does not need to be justified, and its domination is unconscious, thereby seeming natural and self-evident. Bourdieu defined it like this:

Symbolic violence is instituted through the adhesion that the dominated feels obliged to grant to the dominator when he does not have . . . to imagine the relationship he has with him, another instrument of knowledge than the one he shares with the dominator and that, by being no more than the assimilated form of a domination relationship, they make that relationship seem natural. (Bourdieu 1998: 51)

In terms of the bioarcheological corroboration of structured gender violence, Martin & Harrod (2015) provide extraordinary research with a framework with which researchers can attempt to identify evidence of violence in an archeological context in the past. The problem, however, is that archeological data and broken bones do not always provide sufficient evidence to definitively identify gender violence in the cases of human sacrifice in the ANE. The evidence is not enough to sustain and maintain such hypotheses, and, hence, one cannot discuss direct violence perpetrated against intragroup women or outsiders. Looking at a number of different skeletal samples from numerous sites, Wilson (2008) found that violence against women was highly variable and that women were not passive participants during these encounters.

Overall, direct violence against women seems to be a constant throughout history (Wilson 2008), but the rise of gender trends in recent historiography and studies on the history of women have also begun to worry about this scourge, its origins, and evolution. Modern sexual cultures are in a constant state of flux, and, as a result, theories of sex and gender and histories of sexuality are particularly volatile.

As a whole, and despite the individuals whose gender cannot be established, there is an equal number of male and female individuals presented in the evidence for both retainer and foundation sacrifice. Although the evidence does not maintain the hypothesis of direct violence that uniquely targeted female individuals for sacrificial rituals, it has been demonstrated how the presence of female individuals established structured gender, cultural, and symbolic violence that was sustained over millennia in the ANE. Following the equivalent importance granted to patriarchies and lineages in sacrificial rituals by Smith (1992) and Jay (2002), with which I agree, the evidence does not permit us to distinguish a specific type of targeted violence perpetrated by one gender against the other in which women had a specific role; but, rather, according to the nature of the evidence, a structural, highly orchestrated, symbolic, and cultural violence affected various individuals of all genders and ages. Nevertheless, it is acceptable that within those general parameters, infants and children played an important role as explained earlier but not based on their genders, but, on the contrary, on their young ages.

Nonetheless, the question of a gender bias in the retainer sacrifices of the ANE is indeed interesting, and it would be fascinating to analyze further once the subject has been better delineated and is not at such an early stage of discussion; the possible killing/suicide of royal women in the Ur-III-

Dynasty is a prime example for this topic, but it is not yet strong enough to establish this study.

Beyond the Body. A Third Subcategory of Human Sacrifice in the ANE: *Dramatic/Symbolic Sacrifice?*

Explanations on why societies made sacrifices and on the roles that individuals played within them have constituted immense subjects throughout this book that can only be briefly reiterated here. These variabilities have constituted the central study of human sacrificial rituals depending on their functions and simultaneous meanings, however, the archeological ANE variability is not in fact as great as that of other contexts, solely constituting two categories delineated by the evidence, namely retainer and foundation sacrifice. However, if one pays attention to certain reports (e.g., Hankey 1974; Herr 1983; Nigro 1998; Schwartz 2013), could there possibly be a third type? In none of the studies discussed so far (to cite some examples: Woolley 1961, 1982; Schwartz 2003a, 2003b, 2007a, 2007b, 2017; Recht 2011, 2019) has there been any mention of a different subcategory of human sacrifice in the ANE. Nevertheless, different textual sources in Chapter II listed forms of sacrificial rituals that could be recategorized as a dramatic/symbolic sacrifice (Murray 2016). In the archeological sources, this type is usually related to animal sacrifices made to supernatural forces (Usieto Cabrera 2020).

These ritualized killings of animals⁸⁴ responded to the conclusion of political treaties in the ANE, a practice attested for in early 2nd millennium

⁸⁴ There is, however, no clear or definite evidence for the use of human individuals in this subcategory (Usieto Cabrera 2020).

BC Syro-Mesopotamian territories (Lafont 2001) and occasional later contexts (Lewis 2006; Schwartz 2019). The implication is that the fate of the sacrificed animal is symbolic of the fate of the person who breaks the treaty, a concept made explicit in textual sources analyzed by Schwartz (2012, 2019) and Recht (2011, 2019).

The problem of dramatic/symbolic sacrifice has long been either a subject of considerable controversy or simply neglected by scholars of the ancient Near East (Recht 2011, 2019; Schwartz 2012; Tatlock 2006; Green 1976). Most studies of this subject betray a prejudice in their treatment of the available data, tending either to suggest a “deviant burial” (Murphy 2008; Wahl 1994; Wilke 1933) or to fail in giving a reasonable explanation at all (Porter 2012).

But what exactly is a deviant burial or *Sonderbestattung*? Murphy (2008) defines it as burials linked to *bizarre* practices such as decapitations or odd body positions from the past. Wilke’s (1993) first attempt at defining deviant burials emphasized that these unusual burials formed a specific group and were not the result of accidents, soil pressure, or carelessness (Wilke 1933) but rather an intentional human design. Deviant burials are defined in yet another manner using the relative treatment of bodies compared to the other burials of the space and period to which they ostensibly belong (Wahl 1994). Given that providing the dead with a proper funeral is determinant for their spirit’s rest (*eṭemmu*) in the afterlife in the ANE, encountering the violent/abrupt/chaotic or none-too-careful treatment of a body is especially noteworthy.

Hence, is there enough evidence to suggest a human dramatic/symbolic sacrifice? Girard (et al. 1987) argued that not all cases of human sacrifice appeared to be highly orchestrated or theatrical in context, but, rather, that some were sudden burials for the dramatic justification of

political conflicts (Price 1978) to re-establish natural order. But why would human beings and not animals be killed? Considering the parameters of sacrificed individuals based on the evidence of retainer and construction contexts as well as human-animal relations, a certain selectivity observed in the nature of sacrificial individuals may be extrapolated both in the ANE and from broader contexts (Green 1976). It is often recognized that the most effective sacrifice should be as similar as possible to the sacrificer to serve as a substitute for that person or society (Hubert & Mauss 1964). In such cases, a human would obviously be the closest substitute that one could provide, although this decision would also depend on moral strictures, expense, and other difficulties. As a replacement, domesticated animals would be the next closest option, presumably because domesticated animals were closely associated with the human community in contrast with hunted animals (Beattie 1980).

The main role of individuals was to serve their deities not only through formal public or private religious activities such as offerings and worship in the temples or shrines but also through the observance of all sorts of daily prayers, rituals, and practices to invoke or placate the gods (Bottero 2001). Much as slaves may have looked up to and praised their masters upon whom their well-being depended, ANE societies admired and glorified their gods, praising them for their benevolence and mercy while seeking help and blessings from them (Bottero 2001).

The examples that are going to be mentioned represent the best, relatively, consolidated, and well-studied evidence on this matter. First of all, a deviant burial related to ritual killing is briefly mentioned at Titris Höyük (Honça & Algaze 1998), where the evidence deals with a plaster basin found in the corner of a room (II-13) of a private dwelling of the Late

Early Bronze Age in the outer town.⁸⁵ Another example is found at Umm el-Marra (Schwartz 2013). It is precisely in this latter context that evidence appears piled up in terms of stratigraphy in an MBA monument: Shaft 1. A further pattern is seen at Al-Midamman (Keall 2008), Ebla (Nigro 1998), and the Amman Temple (Hankey 1974; Herr 1983), albeit only with vaguer evidence in a lower quantity, none of which can individually serve as evidence except when considered as a group.⁸⁶

Given that the argued archeological evidence only concerns distant, heterogeneous, and non-patterned human remains in a more or less ambiguous context, I do not think that the argued evidence involving human individuals is strong enough to interpret such findings as the part of some ritual killing, for among nine proposed sites connoting places of sacrifice, only a small percentage contain human skeletal remains in a plausible context to suggest sacrificial rituals. The problems of contextualizing the scattered and poorly preserved information make it impossible to discern and interpret authoritatively.

The argument for a third type of sacrifice at these localities based on these case studies should thus be discarded, for all of the evidence in situ indicates that these indeed correspond to deviant burials. Although this evidence of abnormal sacrificial rites could possibly correspond to dramatic sacrifice (Schwartz 2017), it should, however, be emphasized that aside from the literature mentioned, there is no further recorded evidence of

⁸⁵ Laneri (2002) adds an interesting perspective, interpreting this burial as a reproduction of Inanna's descent to the netherworld.

⁸⁶ Further earlier evidence is also going to be considered at Jerf el-Ahmar, Çayönü Tepesi, and Domuztepe. However, based on their chronological results, I shall analyze these separately.

human remains in archeological contexts that is free of controversy. Consequently, encountering a deviant burial either because of the treatment of the individual (presence of violence as in Shaft 1 at Umm el-Marra (Schwartz 2013)), an abnormally shared space by human and animal remains (Nigro 1998), or because of the rare context of the tomb (not showing a *proper* burial (Schwartz 2013) or an irregular location of the tomb) need not necessarily correspond to sacrificial rites for averting evil or expiating their depravities.

On the problem of Human Sacrifice in Early Periods

There is a school of thinking led by Kornienko (2015) and Schmidt (2006) that argues that this practice at least dates back to the PPN and Epipaleolithic periods. According to various studies (Büyükkarakayaa et al. 2019; Haddow & Knüsel 2017; Kornienko 2015), it seems probable that human sacrifice was practiced in the Neolithic Period (Kornienko 2015) in the ancient Near East. Their results are based on funerary practices throughout the ancient Near East in the Neolithic Period, characterized by a wide variety of forms—inhumation, cremation, single and group burials, burials in pits and in chambers, and both articulated and disarticulated skeletons (Campbell 2007-2008: 134). A widespread and recurrent feature involved the manipulation of the individual's body after death, which might include disarticulation, fragmentation of bones, detachment of skulls, and secondary burial (Lumsden & Usieto Cabrera 2022). The display and secondary burial of skulls, including some with a plaster covering modelled into facial features is a well-known tradition in the Neolithic Near East (Haddow & Knüsel 2017; Kanjou et al. 2013; Kornienko 2015).

Kornienko specifies the origin of such practices after an evident switch in religious beliefs, world views, and attitudes that were formed under the conditions of the general upsurge in symbolic activities in Southwestern Asia during the Proto-Neolithic and Pre-Pottery Neolithic stages (Cauvin 1994; Kornienko 2015). These changes can easily be summed up using Verhoeven's studies (2002) on the four fundamental principles of ritual practices and associated human perceptions in the ANE that made it possible for human sacrificial rituals to flourish since the Epipaleolithic: collectivism; dominating symbolism; vitality, including the idea of domestication, domesticity, fertility/reproductive ability, and vital force; and the human-animal bond (Verhoeven 2002). Nevertheless, dealing with material such as religious precepts with little or no tangible presence at sites (Hodder 1988), especially as related to human sacrificial practices, necessitates a better understanding of the spiritual and ideological foundations for studying religion in early periods of the ANE.

In addition to the obscurity and difficulties in recognizing the evidence, its identification in earlier periods is worsened by a great variety of burial rites, including the use of secondary burials, the disarticulation of skeletons, the separate burial of their parts, the display of their skulls or other manipulations (e.g., Kurth 1981; Bar-Yosef 1988),⁸⁷ and generally unclear documentation.

General examples of human sacrifice in the PPN seem to conform to one type known from later periods (foundation sacrifice) but do not seem to match any other known types. This latter group includes an association

⁸⁷ The tradition of displaying groups of human skulls in the PPN is a special case in this regard.

of secondary skull burial with the burial of infants, which are rare and may represent a special form of skull burial.

Despite the chronological evidence and following the comparative displacement by Durkheim and Itenau (Itenau (2009: 335) with Dumont (1997), Jerf el-Ahmar (Stordeur et al. 2001) and Domuztepe (Carter 2012) represent the epitome of what is most-likely human sacrificial evidence from the PPN. Overall, the evidence is presented in the same theatrical, fastidious, and well-staged manner as the other evidence discussed in this book. At Jerf el-Ahmar, there is a beheaded human skeleton with cadaveric rigidity (indicating public exposure as in the case of the individuals at Ur) lying in a supine position with their arms spread apart on the layer of a public structure that has been destroyed by fire (Stordeur et al. 2001). According to the excavators (Stordeur 2002), the death of the individual, the fire, and the collapse of the building's roof onto the body occurred in a very short span of time.

Likewise, the study of the osteological materials has revealed cuts made at the point of near-death on fragments of the frontal and parietal bones of three individuals.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the second cervical vertebra with the traces of 12-15 cuts within a 15 × 5 mm area has been found among the human remains, which corroborates the hypothesis of an intentional beheading (Kanjou et al. 2013).

In addition to evidence of post-sacrificial ceremonies or pre-sacrificial ceremonies, the hypothesis based on the Ur material (Baadsgaard et al. 2012) (that the killing did not happen in the same place where the bodies were placed) is confirmed and potentially finds its origin at Jerf el-

⁸⁸ Cuts that possibly appeared in the course of the treatment of the dead body have been revealed on fibulas.

Ahmar, although this is not certain. In the plan of one of the rooms from the public buildings, a polished stone slab of 260 × 165 cm was found on which laboratory studies revealed traces of human and animal blood (Wood 1992). Traces of human blood have also been identified in one other public building at Çayönü Tepesi, namely, the Terrazzo Floor Building, which was used during the middle PPNB period.

Another unique example dates to the Late Neolithic period, around the middle of the 6th millennium BC (Lawler 2007; McMahon & Oates 2007) at the site of Domuztepe west of the Euphrates River in southeastern Turkey. At Domuztepe, a massive, constructed (death) pit⁸⁹ (Carter 2012) held a minimum of 35 individuals as well as numerous domestic animals (sheep/goats, pigs, cattle, and dogs) that were killed simultaneously and systematically. The individuals showed severe blunt-force trauma on the left side of their skulls (Carter et al. 2003), and they were mixed with the animal remains, which sheds light on human-animal relations. Human teeth marks on the bones suggest that these individuals had been part of the feast, therefore cannibalism was practiced in addition to human sacrifice at Domuztepe (Campbell et al. 2014: 31). Regarding sex and gender, the individuals represented both sexes and all ages without any specific preferences (Carter 2012).

Despite the absence of textual or iconographical records, this recognizable behavioral ritual is directly linked to the customs at Arslantepe, Başur Höyük, Ur, Jericho, and Haft Tepe (Kenyon 1960, 1964; Negahban 1991; Woolley 1934). When the evidence is compared, the focus shifts from “*why*” to “*how*.” In all cases, a weapon was used to kill the

⁸⁹ However, at Domuztepe there is no central tomb that serves as the chief tomb, and might yet be unexcavated, as the excavator admitted herself (Carter 2012).

individuals with blunt-force trauma; afterward, the corpses were placed outside for an undetermined time, and the ritual was finished by dressing them up and setting up the ritualized scene with banquets and, in some cases, animals and furniture. In all cases, individuals served as the vital structure that supported a highly hierarchized social organization. The scenes at Ur, Jericho, or Haft Tepe follow the same architectonic pattern (death pit) and ritualistic show (the location of individuals, objects, and animal remains) and lend themselves to the same questions regarding their visual divergences from other places with more developed, well thought-out, and executed rituals that perhaps originated at Domuztepe⁹⁰ and were later reused at Arslantepe.

Given the context and the theatrical scene at Domuztepe and the fact that it represents the first site at which “death pits” appeared suggests its influence on a later ritual and implies that said ritual became more specified and complex throughout the ANE: retainer rituals (Carter 2012; Usieto Cabrera 2020).

Prehistoric evidence corroborates the idea that at least some type of ritual killing occurred within these societies, however the idea that these ritual killings were either sacrifice or any other type of punishment seems doubtful so far. Sacrifice is, indeed, a universal concept of long-lasting human communities that is not only reflected in their material realms but often also in their mythological realms as well.⁹¹ This ritual is rooted in the ancient practice of reciprocal gift exchange and was not alien in any society

⁹⁰ However, no final corroboration can be made, for the research on Domuztepe has not yet been published. However, if there are, indeed, traces of cannibalism this would stand in stark contrast to the rites otherwise discussed in this book.

⁹¹ The *universality* of the concept of human sacrifice will be discussed later in greater detail.

around the globe (Campbell 2018). Despite the fact that prehistoric sacrifice is hard to approach archeologically (e.g., Moses 2012; Russell 2012), especially with respect to the difference between laic or non-ritual slaughter, sacrifice in social contexts, and the intentions of the participants (Schwartz 2013), there is a high percentage of certainty that human sacrificial rituals originate to at least the 9th or 10th millennium BC (PPN) in Mesopotamia and Anatolia (Büyükkarakaya et al. 2019). However, and with the available evidence, no definite answer can be given in relation to whether this was, indeed, a cognitive development over time or rather transmitted knowledge from further territories and societies.

The Functional and Symbolic Values of Objects. *Expressions of Meaning?*

Although different furniture, charts, and other objects were associated with sacrificial rituals on rare occasions at the tombs of Jericho and the Royal Cemetery of Ur, no studies so far have been dedicated to their functional or symbolic meaning and value. It has already been pointed out how one of the characteristics of the ritual is its ability to express symbolic messages.⁹² Ritual behavior is preferably organized by actions in which their communicative aspect stands out above the rest. They are actions that "*say something*," rather than "*do something*" (Leach 1968: 523), although neither aspect eliminates the other completely.

Symbols, at least at first, exist in a material appearance, only the existence of which makes their knowledge and analysis possible (Molino 1992: 16-17). For this reason, the communicative capacity of these behaviors

⁹² See Chapter I.

can also be attributed to most of the objects that intervene in some manner in these actions or contribute to this expressive function.

The ability to transmit messages through their symbolic aspects is, in general, common to all material culture (Hodder 1982, 1989), and, for this very reason, it is not limited to intervention in ritual processes. However, the symbols of which these objects and artifacts form a part in these contexts may *exhibit* several peculiarities.

Ortner (1973) has indicated how—compared with more mundane symbols that operate to differentiate and classify complex ideas, elaborate primary concepts, and facilitate their understanding and communication to others—sacred symbols can aggregate a set of meanings that function as a powerful emotional tool in which various concepts are summarized. Turner was referring to this ability to represent a set of things and actions in a single form when speaking of "condensation" as the first property of ritual symbols (Turner 1980: 31).

On the other hand, beyond the way in which the message is expressed, its content also has certain peculiarities. The most important elements communicated through symbolic rituals are the components of the moral and social order of the community that guide the individuals within the group. This type of communication is intended to project a specific image of the social—an image that is configured around the dictates of power and that strives to present itself as unchanging over time (Shanks & Tilley 1982). In public rituals the efforts of the control centers to fix or attribute certain meanings to objects is more evident than in any other context (Hodder 1988: 180-181).

Recognizing this type of symbol is not simple, but, as with the entire symbolic system, it is not arbitrary but structured and linked in a relational way (Cabrera Díez 2010; Hodder 1988: 184; Shanks & Tilley 1982: 132).

Knowing some of the guidelines that govern this structure can make it easier to detect the presence of symbolic elements in objects. Some of the guidelines are, for example, that the metaphorical or metonymic relationship between the symbol and its meaning tends to be conventional, repetitive, and regular. It is additionally common for the same symbols to be used together within the same context (Renfrew 1985: 13-14).

In general, it is possible that objects that have a certain symbolic and ritual component that can be identified (such as different furniture, charts, or even food offerings pictured as banquets), but it is far less likely to decode the full meaning of that content (Tilley 1989). The difficulty arises, above all, because conventions intervene in the attribution of meaning to a sign in decisive and specific historical-cultural manners (Hodder 1988) that are complicated to construct given the limited set of objects that we have conserved from these cultures (Bermejo 1992).

Overall, there are a number of objects that are associated with the sacrificial ceremonies found at Ur and Jericho (Woolley 1934; Kenyon 1960, 1964). To facilitate their compilation, it is generally useful to divide them into the following categories:

- A. *The clothing and ornaments of the sacrificed individuals.*
- B. *Musical instruments and other tools.*

Music is necessary for the development of the ceremony. Some instruments that were carried by the participants were represented at the time of the procession.

Knives and other cutting tools such as axes have also been encountered as well as items normally necessary for the immolation of the sacrificed individuals or for treating their remains (Durand 1986: 103-116).

RELATED SACRIFICIAL CONTEXTS	
SCENARIOS	CONTEXTS
Scenarios of actions that precede death: processions, cleansing, libation, . . .	Ornaments: ribbons, garlands, priestly attributes, . . .
- Spaces of immolation: around the altar and the collection of blood	Instruments, tools: to cut, to contain, to cook, . . .
Scenario of actions after death: the remains are handled, cooked, consumed, deposited, . . .	Elements of "ritual architecture": iconographic, functional, . . .

Sacrifice and its Relationship to Space

The characteristics of a sacrificial ceremony require the presence of certain elements that can not only define a cultural space but also one that is particularly dedicated to sacrifice. These were highly heterogeneous spaces that were specifically dedicated to worship or temporarily highlighted when the ceremony was held as seen in the case studies.

Given the complexity that the ritual can encompass, *sacrificial spaces* will be understood in a broad sense as encompassing all places that host actions related to this practice such as funerary contexts or the substructures of certain buildings. There is great variety in the ceremonies of the ANE, however, it can be said in general that they consisted of a series of preparatory acts prior to the immolation of the sacrificed individual who constituted the central nucleus of the ceremony followed by subsequent acts that included treating the remains and their ritual deposition. Although

it is not necessary that each of these moments would have been carried out in a separate or otherwise differentiated place, some architectural or ornamental features may help to define what actions were carried out in them.

According to this scheme, the following actions can be established in a chronological way:

C. Actions that preceded the death of the sacrificed individual (processions, polishing, baths, etc.) or that were a secondary part of the ritual to reinforce the moment of sacrifice (prayers, shouts, libations, bloodless offerings, etc.) were carried out as seen by Baadsgaard et al. (2011). For retainer sacrifice, these actions would have been conducted in a different location from the execution of the individual, only after which they would have been moved in the post-mortem procession to their final resting place.

We know that processions, for instance, with lamentation specialists can have an important role in rituals associated with very different forms of worship (Cohen 2005; Wengrow 2011). Burkert (1983) and Durand (1986: 89-95) base their arguments on Greek sacrifices to theorize about the prelude of this sort of ceremony. According to Margueron (1991: 329), individuals went to the *altar* following a march full of symbolism in which the placement of people or tools was carefully observed, and the attitudes of the individuals that were immediately to be immolated were monitored.

However, and despite the chronological and social differences between the Greek and ANE rituals, we have no archeological clues to detect the precise places that served this purpose. These would have been roads or ways of communication that led to the central place of worship but that may not have otherwise been indicated in any special way. The processional route can only be accurately documented in exceptional cases

as in the case of Ur, where the post-mortem treatment of the bodies has allowed an investigation to develop (Baadsgaard et al. 2011).⁹³

Other types of actions that would also have accompanied the deaths of sacrificial individuals such as prayers, ritual shouts, and songs are almost completely invisible in the archeological record (Laneri 2010; Mezzacappa 1999). An exception can be found in the case of bloodless libations and offerings. These may either have been a part of the sacrifice or may themselves have constituted independent rituals.⁹⁴

D. Spaces in which the individuals were executed / immolated.

This element is well attested throughout the ancient world (Vernant 1981: 6-7; Jouanna 1992: 421; Georgoudi 2005) but is not observable in the case of the ANE, for the most recognizable piece of this ritual is missing: an altar (Étienne & Le Dinahet 1991).

However, the altar is not always an essential element. There are also fewer complex ways of performing sacrifices in which it would not have been necessary to mark the exact place of death. This would be true, for example, of scenarios in which sacrifice was only occasionally conducted. It is also possible that the place of death was not in any human structure—except for animal sacrifices, which in most cases were killed in the direct proximity temples. Some natural phenomena such as rivers, forests, or caves might, in fact, have sufficiently defined the sacrificial space in which the only essential action for the ritual was carried out (Cabrera Díez 2010).

⁹³ No information regarding the places of purification, ablution, or polishing have been found.

⁹⁴ In Phoenician-Punic contexts, tables of offerings or for perfumes are known to have been distinct from the altars of immolation (Bisi 1991: 227; Margueron 1991: 240).

In such cases, the evidence would be practically imperceptible, which could answer for why such evidence is missing in the case of the ANE.

On the other hand, the place where a sacrificial individual as killed might be traced through a careful treatment of the scene, for example through the discovery of blood⁹⁵ in some contexts (Taïpe Campos 2005) or in what Smith (2002) understood as *piaculum*. As a transmitter of the vital force and powerful regenerator of life (Dietrich 1988; Grottanelli 1993b: 126-127), blood played a prominent role in rituals and could be the object of special attention. Sometimes the place of death can also be recognized thanks to certain structures designed to collect it or to facilitate its filtration into the earth. If we consider that violent slaughter was the most frequent and simple way to perform a sacrifice, fixed structures of this type could not have been located very far from the place where the sacrificed person was killed, for the blood would otherwise have coagulated too quickly (Margeron 1991: 239) as seen in the case of Çayönü Tepesi (Wood 1992).

E. *Spaces in which post-death activities took place.*

Typically, these were tasks carried out by a specialist who may or may not have been the sacrificer. So far, documentation has not allowed any definite conclusion on this matter.

F. *Spaces in which the remains of the sacrificed individuals were deposited.*

Sacrificial ceremonies required the presence of certain elements that we cannot broadly define as cultural spaces but rather as spaces especially dedicated to sacrifice. These were highly heterogeneous spaces integrated into places specifically dedicated to worship or temporarily differentiated at the time that the ceremony was held.

⁹⁵ Blood traces related to sacrifice are not common or widespread in the ANE, however.

The immediate spatial context must also be considered when locating human sacrificial rituals. Following what has already been stated, these parameters can be found in spaces that help to identify the scenes of the ritual. In summary, these can be:

- special architectural or ornamental elements including artifacts of "*ritual architecture*" (e.g., death pits in the case of the ANE).
- religious iconography (gods, attributes, indirect references, etc.).⁹⁶
- elements related to the propitiation of the religious experience: musical instruments, remains of alcohol or other drugs, and containers for their consumption (as seen in Ur and Jericho).
- the direct remains of the celebratory act: animal bones, votive epigraphy, signs of wasted wealth (luxury and destruction), remains of food and drink (Ur and Jericho).
- elements pertaining to the instruments that were used: knives, spits, grills, cauldrons, tripods, glasses, furniture (as in the case of Jericho) (Kenyon 1960, 1964).

RECORD OF RITUAL	
CONTEXT	OBJECTS

⁹⁶ There is, however, no archeological reference for this in the ANE.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Differentiated "scenographically" by natural conditions or by artificial elements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defined by their symbolic capacity in form (condensation) and substance (moral and social aspects).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The remains of ritual action: offerings, food, drink, music, drugs, representations of divinity, furniture, charts, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Related to the ritual space: architectural, iconographic, instrumental elements, etc.

Human Sacrifice as a Universal Concept After All?

Despite the fact that there is not archeological evidence of human sacrifice in all societies (Davies 1983), it is certainly mentioned in their sacred texts and thus connoted in their cosmological visions of the world. From the Hebrew Tanakh to Greek myths, from the Rig-Vedas to the Aztec codices, from the founding of the Christian Church to Islam, the theme of justifying violence has predominated. Different forms of sacrifice (both human and animal) have appeared across the ancient world, from ancient Egypt to the Indus valley (Harman 2000) and still persist in persist in sublimated forms that match the prescriptions and reforms of newer religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam (Wagner 1995).

From an anti-utilitarian perspective as seen in Eliade (1981) or Hubert and Mauss (1964), the thin line between religiosity and violence or between mysticism and sacrifice reveals deep resonance between "physical annihilation" and the annihilation of self in the mystical experiences; physical annihilation is a pale reflection of true transcendental annihilation. The contemplation of death in animal or human sacrifices (which is replaced later in the history of religion by meditation on death (Peanson 1999: 120)) has effects akin to triggering a mystical trance.

However, the reverse is also true from the point of view of biocultural studies: sacrifice institutes a kind of magical exchange in which the sacrificing individual acquires favor from their god and thereby maintains their power in life (Puett 2000). This more utilitarian perspective is found in Nietzsche (1968), Freud (1985), and Horkheimer and Adorno (1996). The mystical or erotic trance is then a kind of liberation, hysteria, or libidinal expenditure triggered by a sadistic instinct toward the sacrificed individual. Either perspective involves violence in its sapiential, religious, and sacrificial form.

But how can the universality of sacrifice be understood in relation to the ANE—or to modern times? First of all, and based on the case studies analyzed thus far, a sacrifice either after the death of a leader or in order to ask for spiritual protection is a social phenomenon⁹⁷ (Hubert & Mauss 2010: 48). It not only involves the destruction of the offering (in this case a human individual or an animal) but also the radical abandonment of the mundane existence of the individual/animal to a divine realm (ontological transformation).⁹⁸ These individuals must give away their most valuable and precious offering: their physical existence. (Although no definite correlation can be made for ANE rituals.) Hence, underlying this concept is the

⁹⁷ In this sense, sacrifice can have very opposite ends such as either obtaining a state of holiness or suppressing a state of sin or extreme holiness. The eminently social character of sacrifice follows from this (Girard 2002).

⁹⁸ However, this *universality* does not extend to the perceptions of different societies; a common distinction is made, for example, between ancient and Abrahamic religions with respect to their positive/negative attitudes toward physical sacrifice. Sacrifice is the rationalization of religious violence for practical and moral purposes, and it symbolizes the epitome of human sacrifice carried out to feed the great social machinery that would otherwise have destroyed itself (Carrasco 1999).

common understanding that the death of an individual is not only inevitable but necessary (Girard 2002). In this sense, the universal goal of sacrifice is to affect the religious status of the sacrificer or the object of the sacrifice, implying a type of consecration. Thus, sacrifice is a religious act that modifies the state of the person who consummates it through the consecration of an individual/animal or of some objects in which the person is interested (Hubert & Mauss 2010: 90-94). At the same time, these sacrificed individuals followed Thomas' understanding of consensual sacrifice, such that whoever was the object of sacrifice should not be considered a victim even if the decision was made by a third party (Thomas 1993: 239).⁹⁹

Although a proper definition of sacrifice in the ancient world has already been given (Tatlock 2006), the psychosocial coherence of this concept has not suffered. Thomas (1993), the pioneer of the anthropology of death, argued that the prestige given to *fertile death* is a constant found from Africa to the industrialized West as represented, for example, in giving one's blood for the state (Thomas 1993: 13). This idea of fertile death is generally incorporated into the idea of sacrifice discussed within the social sciences. It is common in this way, for instance, to comprehend those who give their life for their homeland as sacrifices.

Another connotation of sacrifice is the inherent concept of a heroic and altruistic death to privilege a certain community. Worthwhile investigations into the heroic acts of people who die for some version of the common good have been conducted by Kohan (2005), Álvarez (2001), Stephens, (2007), and Guber (2016) among others. In this context, death is understood as heroic because individuals appear voluntarily or

⁹⁹ See further details in Chapter II.

involuntarily on a metaphorical battlefield, exposing their life for a common good that exceeds their individuality and transcends their subjective interests; the veneration of individuals as heroes by their family members and by society at large is made clearest in death.

From a philosophical perspective, the category of the heroic death can be understood as a protective foundation for human civilization in the face of the hostility of the world. In search of stability, people give up their goods, bodies, or souls in order to obtain an advantage over other groups. While this denotes the need for care, sacrifice also breeds chaos. Deception nearly seems like the cornerstone of society. How it is regulated and domesticated is the central theme of Kurnitzky's study (2005). From his perspective, politics has been economized and optimized for specific results, such that it can only be appealed to in terms of its effects but not their causes.

All sacrifice implies a balance between desire and repression to negotiate a state of community stability. Every group stays together because duties are distributed according to rights. As a "substitute form," sacrifice requires a body (offering) that is given to the gods when seeking a benefit. The offering is then replicated in order to commemorate the exchange (currency).

Following this reasoning, exchange (a universal aspect of sacrifice) contains and resolves the dichotomy between restriction and pleasure. On the one hand, sacrifice takes the form of the sacrificial object, while, on the other, it is a hedonistic stimulus characterized by advantage. The greater the economic desire, the less the ethical propensities of the person toward others. The self-destructive tendencies of selfishness must be disciplined through fear and hope. Men and their cultures resort to sacrifice to avoid calamities but also to nourish themselves with the necessary hope that a

better time is yet to come. The sacrificial rite opens the door of the self to their future; it is a way to tame what is uncontrollable in nature.

Kurnitzky (2005) gives another perspective on the universality of human sacrifice based on a thorough understanding of the global economic phenomenon of sacrifice in the ancient world and its consequences for people's lives and the relationship between the subject and public power. In order to move forward in this analysis, it is important to clarify that there are two subjects/objects universally involved in sacrifice from this perspective:

1. The sacrificer or the person who offers the sacrifice and benefits from performing the sacrificial act.
2. The sacrificed individual who is the object of sacrifice.

However, all of these objects/subjects differ from their environment with respect to signs. Assuming that, as in modern times, individuals felt terror and attraction to great catastrophes, communities could subsist through sacrifice. The sacrifice of an offering not only exhibited the possibility of losing it but also of resignation in the event of that possible loss. Anticipating the disaster by giving what is most precious opened a process of exchange between the secular world and the hereafter (Korstanje 2013).

Among ancient theocratic societies, political violence was invariably religious, and their cosmological vision was the primary vehicle of the ideological justification of violence (Pyszczyński et al. 2009)¹⁰⁰.

In this sense, the universal tool mediating between the sacrificer and the sacrificed individual was sanctioned violence as previously discussed.

¹⁰⁰ At least based on the available evidence in the ANE, killing enemies in war was common, while sacrificing members of one's own community was rare.

Despite the fact that violence fell on the scapegoat or sacrificed individuals in order to correct disorder and chaos, the ANE evidence has demonstrated that violence was not as essential and sadistic here as in other contexts (Cucina & Tiesler 2006; Schele 1984); furthermore, although violence was used to repair chaos, the apparent lack of focus on the violence of death in the entire practice of sacrifice is worth mentioning. Although a good death according to ascetics is sacrifice, and all sacrifice is an act of creation (Smith 1987), the destruction of the offering implies a certain violence that is exerted on the bodies of the sacrificed that is not inherent in the concept of death itself. In other words, death is not violent per se, but being sacrificed is what makes death violent and is the reason that sacrificed bodies were believed to be ontologically transformed. Violent death led to certain purification rituals being practiced on the bodies of the individuals. These contributions are extremely important for us to understand the meaning given to the identities of the bodies that could participate in the acts of purification thought to follow from the violent infliction of death and the subsequent treatment of the killed.

The only meaning of this mythological relationship is to erase the traces of violence because religions and cultures are founded and perpetuated in this way (Girard 2002: 125). Violence is concealed through different mechanisms such as the interpretation that it is not collective violence that makes the evil beneficial but its ritual equivalent. Although collective homicide is not erased in all texts of the oldest myths, concealing collective homicide continues to be practiced among us with the same force as in the past (Girard 2002: 121).

In addition, sacrifice has been demonstrated to fulfill two inherently different concepts regarding individuals after the sacrifice: their respective use to consecrate religious institutions or to promote the rebirth of the

sacrificed individuals, both of which are highly suggestive from an understanding of bodies as seeds or potential sources of life. In this regard, there is the universal dichotomy that even though sacrifice equals destruction and death, it also symbolizes life and rebirth.

Can human sacrifice then be categorized as a universal concept based on the ANE evidence? Based on the available evidence, the answer is yes. Ritual sacrifice pertains to a global, socio-economic phenomenon of transformation in which either the sacrificed object or the sacrificer undergoes an ontological transformation from the sphere of the profane to the sacred; this can be understood in terms of rebirth and fertility with respect to providing society with the protective mechanism of an offering to a deity or an institution considered sacred. Sacrifice implies an act of violence, which can be reversed through certain mechanisms. For example, it can be purified through ritual practices, or it can be diminished, hidden, or made invisible through mythological constructions related to sacrificial acts. Durán (1984) likewise grouped different aspects that make such concept universal:

1. Its relation to subordination and religious-political affairs. This is Durán's only aspect related to the ANE.
2. Reproductive and fertility cycles, which may have been influential in the ANE as in other ancient societies.
3. Divine protection against natural disasters or war.
4. Ritual forms to control time.

Fieldwork Sheet

Much of what has been stated throughout this book is synthesized in the following worksheet, which proposes a method for collecting data related to sacrificial practices.

The following fieldwork recording sheet is designed to provide a sample record sheet for the field whenever cases of human sacrifice are suspected. The archeologists will use a pro forma record sheet to record their excavation results in the hope of creating a clearer and better organized corpus of information for the ANE. The goal is to guarantee the suitability and quality of future excavations and proper post-excavation preservation.

This sheet shall enable any archeologist to undertake most recording and excavation tasks and differentiate human sacrifice cases from regular funerary or deviant funerary contexts.

HUMAN SACRIFICE RECORDING FORM

SITE LOCATION

EXCAVATION UNIT

SQUARE

ARCHEOLOGIST

DATE

CONTEXT

IS IT A GRAVE? YES NO INDIVIDUAL MASS BURIAL

IF MASS BURIAL, STRATIGRAPHICAL CORRELATION
(If detected, multiple layers, single interment, etc.)

STRATIGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION
(Above, below)

DIMENSIONS:

LENGTH	WIDTH	DEPTH
<input style="width: 60px; height: 40px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 60px; height: 40px;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 60px; height: 40px;" type="text"/>

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

SPECIFIC SHAPE

DEATH PIT: DETECTED NOT DETECTED

PRESERVATION

ESTIMATED N° OF INDIVIDUALS

MAIN BODY? YES NO

PRESERVATION OF THE BODIES

ESTIMATED N° OF SACRIFICED INDIVIDUALS

GENDER DISTRIBUTION

AGE DISTRIBUTION

FURTHER ADDITIONS / COMMENTS

DISPOSAL OF SKELETAL REMAINS: PRIMARY SECONDARY INTACT DAMAGED
UNDETERMINED

SKELETON(S): UNPRESERVED PRESERVED COMPLETELY PRESERVED PARTIALLY

BODY ORIENTATION(S)

POSITION(S): LATERAL DORSAL VENTRAL EXTENDED FLEXED UNDETERMINED

PRESENCE OF VIOLENCE? YES NO

IF YES, COMMENTS:

IF OBSERVED, MAJOR TYPES OF FRACTURE: TRANVERSE SPIRAL COMMUNUTED IMPACTED GREENSTICK
OBLIQUE

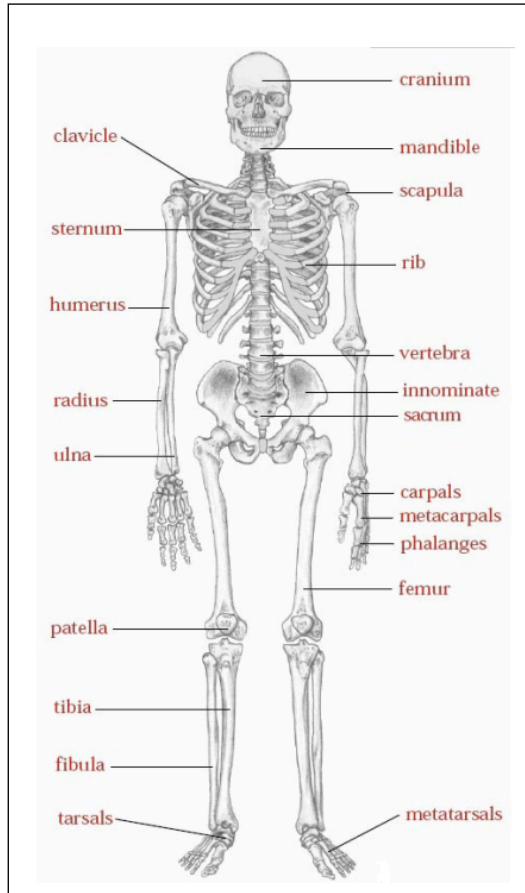
CRANIAL FRACTURES:

FURTHER COMMENTS:

IF OBSERVED, CRANIAL FRACTURES: LINEAR DEPRESSED COMMUNUTED DIASTATIC

SKELETON N°:

NEONATE ADULT MALE FEMALE UNDETERMINED



OBJECTS RELATED/GRAVE GOODS: YES NO

FULLY DESCRIPTION
(Including finds n°, material and context)

DOCUMENTATION(S) ATTACHED

CONCLUSIONS

Acta est fabula

Over the centuries, societies have always been intrigued by human sacrificial systems, and I conjecture that this scholarly interest derives from a basic human proclivity to be curious about violence and death, influenced by modern studies that confirm humans are biologically rewarded by viewing violence (Webber 2015). There is general consensus based on these abundant studies that humans experience physiological and emotional arousal as they witness or participate in violent activities and these responses motivate many of these subjects to seek out these stimuli on a repeated basis (Guang-Xin Xie & Moon 2008).

The study of human sacrifice and ritualized violence can decipher cultural, socio-political, and economic behavior of ancient communities and while studies have already revealed the significance of sacrifice in transitional communities and early state formation, the material in the ANE is a microscopic example of how hierarchy and ritual violence are entangled throughout millennia. This Book has attempted to draw attention to a multifaceted phenomenon found, so far, in certain archaeological contexts throughout the Near East and shared practically universally by almost all historical societies. Despite throughout the chapters more questions than answers have appeared or questions that should be asked are not even questioned yet, the importance of this study lies on several layers. After all, not being able to obtain a definite conclusion (e.g., on the controversial proposal of the use of children and infants in sacrificial rituals

in the ANE), is a conclusion on its own. This book has been determinant to clarify and classify the ANE evidence, as previously only scattered, rare and ambiguous data were compiled. There is no other corpus that involve the human sacrifice in the ANE as this book.

It has been proven that for the ANE case, no iconographical or textual reliance is feasible as they present great difficulties due to the ambiguity and in most cases, methodological issues when obtaining data on excavation. As a result, only archaeological data has been determinant. But why sacrificing human beings and not leave textual or iconographical references? Why the need of executing human individuals and not attest it on their artistic or literary cosmology so it can be preserved? This study has pursued three main goals. It has sought first to assess the data which supposedly testify to such practices across the ANE; it has attempted, in the second place, to evaluate the role of individuals this ritual within its cultural milieu under an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspective beyond archaeology; and finally, it has sought to find parallels among contiguous cultures which may demonstrate contact, diffusion and potential starting of this practice.

Human Sacrifice in the ANE was unique not only in essence (with supreme ideas related to the value of individuals based on their social status), but in execution as well (judging from the evidence, the surrounding ritual seemed that it did not have such a relevant role as in other cases). There is a sufficient amount, nowadays, of literature dealing with human sacrifice in the ancient world, as well as archeological contexts from which to conclude that human sacrificial rituals were not indeed alien to the ANE societies, but, a well-known and rooted practice that lasted for millennia, used when needed.

Conclusions are going to be presented in different blocks according to their correlation, starting from the bigger picture into small details.

It is to be concluded that human sacrifice can be traced throughout this region according to the following archaeological patterns:

1. This rite, religious or secular, is an act of a ceremonial nature that must be carried out in sacred places and according to strict rules determined by tradition or by an authority, with the usual presence of an officiant-mediator (perhaps reflected in the society itself).
2. As the ritual killings of individuals who will continue their service in the other world at the death of important person, whose earliest evidence come from 4th millennium BC Başur Höyük (Hasset & Sağlamtimur 2018).
3. As foundation deposit, mostly in Northern Mesopotamia, from at least 6th millennium BC (Rothman 2001).
4. A miscellaneous, complex ritual practice that cannot be yet categorized, from at least the 9th millennium BC.

Following the textual evidence, human sacrifice can be traced according to these patterns found in literature:

1. As adult substitutes for kings in India and Mesopotamia, upon whose individuals the continuity of the natural process depends, proceeding from a northwesterly direction (Siddall 2020).
2. As medical treatments: *Āšipūtu* rituals and medical tablets (Stadhouders & Steinert 2018).

Now, regarding retainer sacrifice phenomenon, here is a table showing the clear evidence:

	MESOPOTAMIA	SYRIA-PALESTINE	ANATOLIA	IRAN
<i>4th – 3rd millenium ane</i>			Arslantepe Başur Höyük	
<i>2nd – 1st millenium ane</i>	Ur Kish	Umm el- Marra Jericho Shioukh Tahtani Tell Banat		Haft Tepe

Based on this available data, conclusions are the following:

1. There were pre-ceremonial and post-ceremonial rites (Baadgsaard et al. 2012).
2. No boundaries in using slaves or high-court members following the parameters by Martin & Harrod (2014: 127).
3. The existence of death pits or specific architectural (or non-architectural) spaces destined to keep high number of sacrificed individuals.
4. Blunt-force trauma as general method of death execution based on the Pennsylvania evidence and Jericho MB tombs.
5. Animal sacrifice is directly linked to food consumption or banquets, and is in direct relation with temples, where they were sacrificed, but not humans.

The usage of human individuals and more specifically children and infants on foundation sacrifice cannot be determined

From another perspective, in terms of theoretical conclusions:

- The direct connection between religion and human sacrifice.

Moreover, and based on the available data here a list of graphics is presented to simplify the results:

Figure 1 shows the total percentage of sites in the ANE, where sacrifice evidence was found according to the metric presented in this book. Out of the small sample size analyzed in this project (13 sites), 69% (9 sites) presented sacrifice in one of the forms previously described. 31% (4 sites) showed no evidence for human sacrifice.

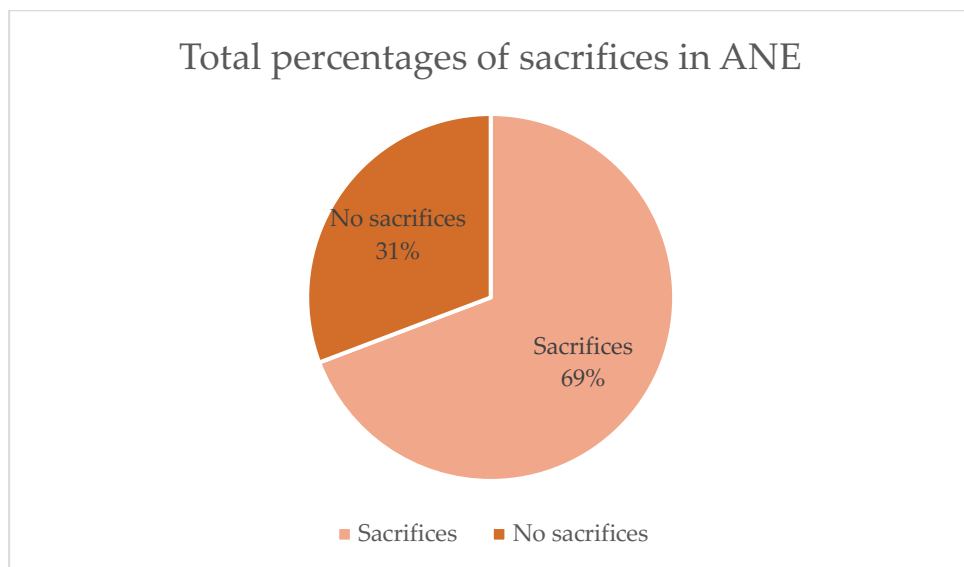


Figure 2. Total Percentages of sacrifice in ANE

As Figure 2 shows, there is a higher number of sites with human sacrifices during the 3rd millennium and a remarkable downgrade after the 1st millennium BC. This may imply that the probability of finding such practices increases when the chronology of the site is around the 3rd

millennium BC. In the 3rd millennium, 6 out of the 13 sites analyzed (46%) presented evidence of sacrifice.

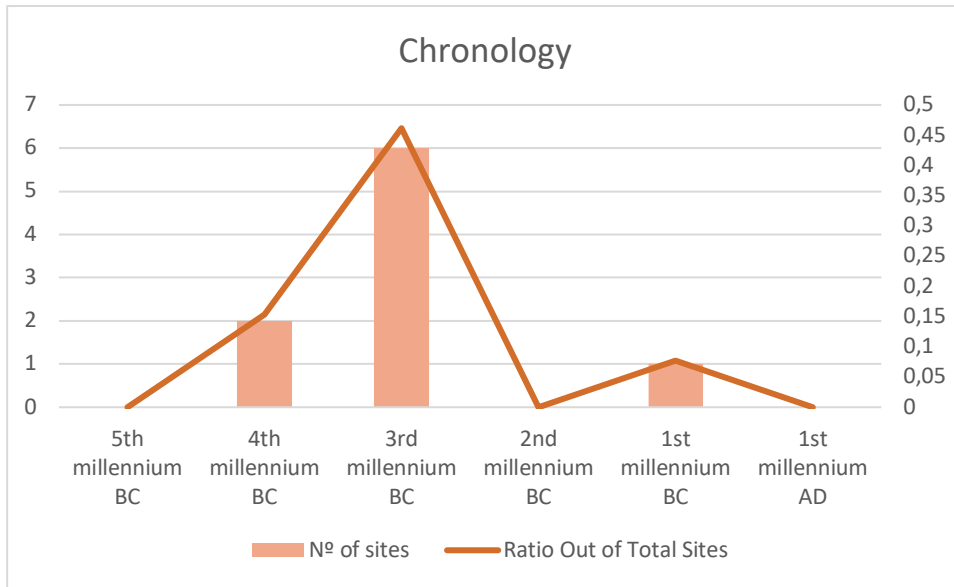


Figure 3. Chronology

Regarding the geographical distribution of the sites (see Figure 3), there is a higher number of sites in Syria, Mesopotamia and Anatolia that presented human sacrifice. Numerically and without any particular order, from the sites in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia; 23%, 15% and 15%, respectively, presented sacrifice from the total sample size. This result suggests that there are higher chances to find this kind of evidence in these places.

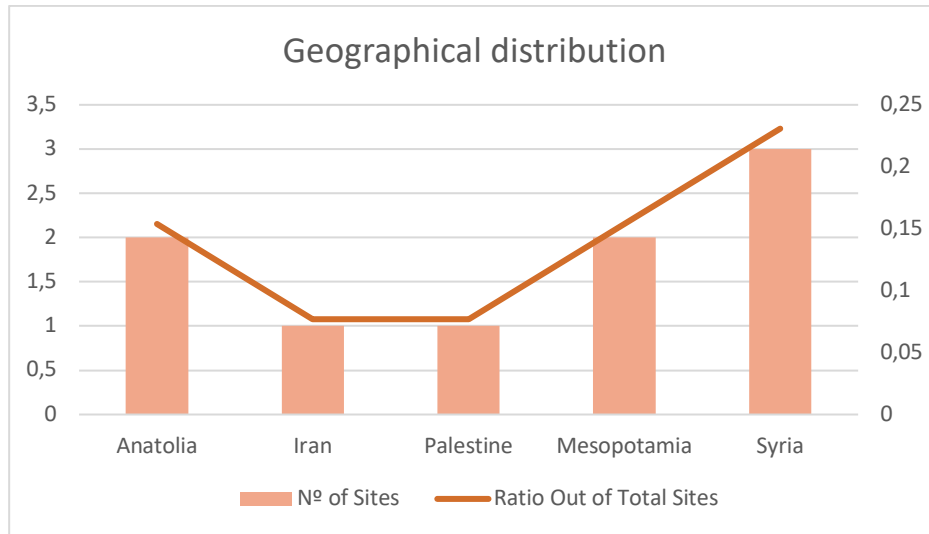


Figure 4. Geographical Distribution

Results presented in Figure 4, propose an interested topic, the quality of the techniques employed during different periods of time. From the total number of sites analyzed per period (the sum of sites with sacrifice and without sacrifice), there is a clear correlation between the probability of finding human sacrifice and the period when the sites where excavated. When the site is more recent, it usually presents human sacrifice (in 100% of the cases). This result indicates that sacrifice might be easier to identify with newer techniques as in comparison with the past.

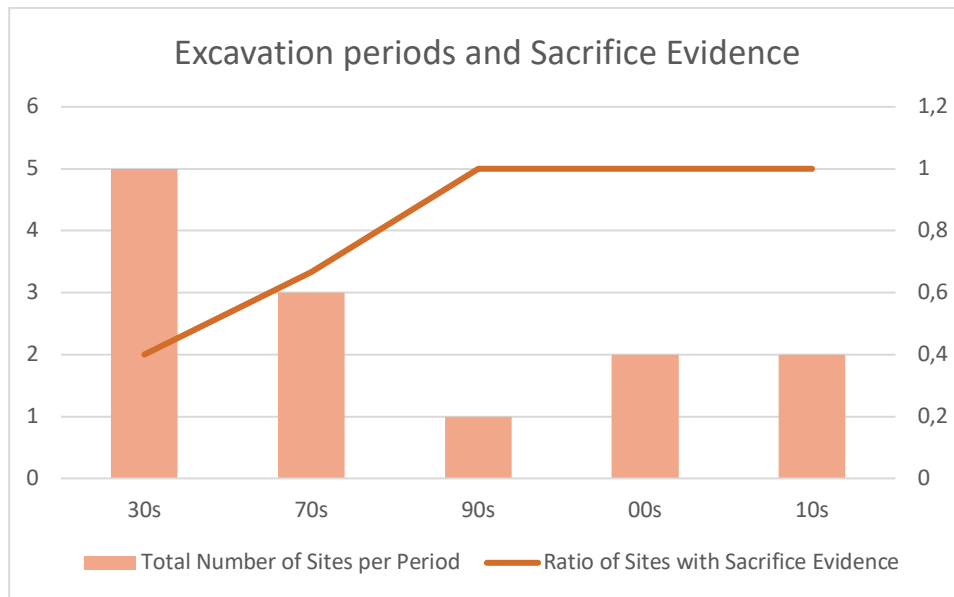


Figure 5. Excavation periods and Sacrifice evidence

The results presented on these figures are debatable due to the small size of the sample, bias effects on the non-randomness of the sample might affect these results. There is a clear recommendation on applying the methodology presented on this analysis on a larger sample with randomness to extrapolate these results with a higher degree of confidence.

Few of the researchers who have studied ancient religions have been unenthusiastic to accept the approach of anthropological analysis that sees religion as a functional form of adaptation to problems and conditioning of a material and practical nature, preferring to judge the meaning of religious beliefs and acts as relevant only to the own independent sphere of the transcendent and sacred, with hardly any connections with worldly activities. It is admitted that religions in ancient societies were much more strongly integrated into daily life than what happens today, but it is usually

blamed on a psychological predisposition, not satisfactorily explained, and that it is often considered a consequence of a lack of *rational* and *scientific* ways of thinking.

In brief, causal links between religious beliefs and practices and ecological, demographic, and technological factors are often not easily accepted. At most, the opportunity of religion and its administrators to contribute to the regulation of certain aspects of socioeconomic or political-institutional life is recognized, such as the various rituals that mark the agricultural calendar or the royal renewal parties, but more as an *a posteriori* benefit than as a previous necessity.

- As opposed to a scholarly wave led by McClymond (2008), sacrifice must imply the killing of the offering (Tatlock 2006) and thus, be defined as the ritual killing of an alive offering (human individual or animal) for a specified or unspecified cause that transcend the human realm into the intangible reality.

It has been demonstrated that for defining sacrifice, different perspectives have been considered as overall when one is neglected, then such term loses its definition. For instance, although Jay (1992) does not offer an overall definition of sacrifice like Tatlock (2006), stating that sacrifice can be determined only within the context of its own tradition. She does, however, propose a logic of sacrifice. Sacrifice is grounded in an opposition between communion and expiation. Sacrifice joins people together in community and, at the same time, separates them from defilement, disease, and other dangers.

- The problematic interconnection with the concept of violence.

The kind of violence that embodies human sacrificial rituals it is a violence inscribed and shaped in culture, internalized in their minds, and objectified in social practices of relationship, with such a profound impact on individual / interpersonal and collective life, that it has been imposed in their environment as a form of culture.

The semantic load of the concept violence carries with it the notion of force, it is the use of force, generally with a manifest or covert intention to subdue another and cause physical or psychological harm; It manifests itself in any area of individual and social life and involves multiple forms of expression, but whatever its face, it expresses harm, coercion, abuse, hostility, control, and destruction.

Just as violence brings a semantic load that helps to define it, it also carries a discursive load, which in its process of bio-sociocultural construction in a given historical context, is shaped, and deployed within the social complexity in multiple networks of Socio-symbolic significance that helps to identify its link with gender. In this context of meaning, an analytical perspective opens, far from being reductionist, deterministic or scientific, based on old paradigms; It seeks to question the obvious, the obvious, the "natural"; describe what appears on the surface and investigate violence as a discursive practice, as well as follow the displacement of the various forms it assumes between knowledge and power.

Human sacrifices in the ANE were carried out in order to feed a great machinery that would otherwise self-destruct, hence violence defines the execution of the ritual (destructing the offering), but it does not mark the entire activity (as in Mesoamerican context). The forced or voluntary shedding of blood perhaps as its reason to exist, the rejuvenation of the gods and the non-destruction of the world.

- Human sacrifice was active through millennia based on a desensitization effect (Funk 2005) and its direct correlation with the political sphere.

Why was it sanctioned and lasted over millennia? Based on the evidence, I argue that a desensitization effect with repeated exposure to violence lies behind the distinctive duration of these practices. The concept of “desensitization” is defined by Jeanne Brockmyer Funk (2005) as the reduction or elimination of cognitive, emotional, physiological, and behavioral responses to stimulus. Anderson (Anderson *et al.* 2003) explained that habituation to neurophysiological reactions over a period of time is a well-established psychological phenomenon where repeated presentation of an identical stimulus usually results in smaller and smaller neurophysiological responses to that stimulus (Anderson 2003: 96). In the case of desensitization to violence, higher levels of violent content or “shock value” is required in subsequent exposure to attain the same level of arousal. Funk (2012) concluded that reduced emotional reactions to witnessing traumatic events occurs because humans “are simply not capable of prolonged arousal to other people’s tragedies,” and Drabman et al. (2001) similarly observed that frequent viewing of violence on television reduced emotional responsiveness to violence in the real world.

Though longer-range effects from immersion in any type of violent scene or activity do exist, short-term exposure to violence results in increased enjoyment. In the long term, desensitization caused by multiple encounters with violence affects moral behavior, which results in a loss of empathy and an unwillingness to help others, and in subcultures with high incidences of violence, victims are dehumanized to diminish the activation

of moral reasoning. Anderson et al. (2003) determined that “*emotional desensitization*” results in a heightened propensity to experience violent thoughts and behaviors and a minimization of “*prosocial behaviors*” (2003: 96).

Desensitization to violence occurs for all types of individuals who are repeatedly exposed to the same level of stimuli and to achieve the same physiological arousal in subsequent viewings the violent content needs to be more explicit and more graphic. While these studies had the advantage of live subjects and control groups to test their hypotheses, my analysis of the violence experienced by ancient peoples relies on the assumption that the biology of humans has not drastically altered in the past millennia.

Galloway (2014) discusses how working entirely with death and violence can affect the confidence that researchers have in their conclusions because they do not generally have access to the perpetrators or the witnesses, and because *so much of the evidence is circumstantial and inferential* (Martin & Harrod 2014: 135 citing Galloway 2014). Others have suggested that researchers who study violence often connect more with the sacrificed individuals and are less able to maintain objectivity in their interpretations (Pollock 2008). In all of these aspects, researchers need to be able to maintain a scientific distance while they process these lasting images of individuals who died at the hands of others.

I propose that the components for physiological excitement in aggregate strict experience and openness to brutality (*adrenaline surge*) was something very similar for the ANE as they saw savage passing as it is present day subjects who watch rough killings on TV or in films as a wellspring of diversion. A similar adjustment or desensitization impacts would likewise have been also capable. For instance, the intensification of war and of human sacrifice during the 3rd millennium BC followed a

chronological trend (Inomata et al. 2009: 82). I argue that there are many explanations behind this conceivable heightening including political prerequisites and a general culture of savagery; and basic to this conversation, there were organic reasons too. There were critical physiological and social-mental prizes experienced in their custom program that exemplified ritualistic exercises.

Lastly, why the use of human sacrificial activities and what relation did it have with political spheres? Since the dawn of stratified states societies, rulers had the need to justify their social system and show their power and authority connected with divine order. Thuswise, disobeying kingship equals disobeying natural order and equals absolute chaos. Social stratification is thought to have been one of the earliest forms of institutionalized leadership to emerge in human cultures (Flannery & Marcus 2012). Human sacrifice was deeply connected and rooted with the political sphere as the evidence show. Almost every site where human sacrifice appears in the ANE is either a royal burial, a public building, or any other special monumental location.

- In the case of the ANE, human individual's corpses functioned differently according to their role into the ritual. That is, different concepts have raised in terms of the individuals that participated (main body *versus* retainer individuals) as well as their functional and value meaning.
- TMT studies cannot be determinant at the moment, for the study of human sacrifice in the ANE, but may be helpful when more sources become available.
- No peri-mortem/post-mortem conclusions can be made upon the low quantity of corpses.

In terms of pragmatic conclusions:

- The controversy on whether there were human sacrificial rituals in the ANE were as complex as the evidence itself. However, and based on the available data, human sacrifice was indeed not only a known practice through millennia but used in times where it was crucial.
- After setting the basis on the existence of human sacrifice in the ANE, another definite conclusion was the multifaceted inherent phenomena in the ritual based upon the nature of the offering: retainer sacrifice (those made after the death of a leader or a relevant individual in order to follow them and serve them in the afterlife).
- Another definite conclusion was drawn after the impossibility, paradoxically, to demonstrate the regular use of children and infants to sacrificial rituals, as proposed in several excavations¹⁰¹. The available evidence does not allow us to indicate the use of individuals, and specially children and infants, as foundation deposits. Hence, this starting hypothesis is refuted due to the ambiguity of the evidence.
- No definite conclusion can be made upon the origins of the sacrificed individuals based on genomics or osteoanalysis or their relations to slavery (as seen in Appendix 4, Table IV). However, in some cases as in Jericho and Ur, context has allowed

¹⁰¹ The specific killing of children and infants cannot be demonstrated and thus, it differs from the use of their corpses into offering rituals.

to discern on the high court belonging of the sacrificed individuals.

Evidence has shown that using osteoarcheological and bioanthropological analysis for the study of human sacrifice in the ANE does not clarify as much as in other contexts. Most of the skeletal remains, when available, are in advanced state of decayed or too eroded to carry out studies from. As opposed to what have been established (Holland 2010), ancient Near Eastern burials are not, in general, equal as sacrifice shows. The use and value of sacrificing a human being that could be an active member of the society and the labor market, is priceless. On first sight, the moral and cultural distance between the large-scale use of human beings as offerings to the gods and ancestors, interchangeable with cattle or sheep – hacked, burned, drowned, or buried alive. On the opposite, sacrifice in the ANE reflect an in-depth inequality: sacrificed humans had been dispatched by blunt force trauma to the head, deliberately disarticulated – the bones fragmented before deposition, and subjected to “thermal alteration”. Human teeth marks on the bones suggest that these individuals had been part of the feast, so that here at Domuztepe, in addition to human sacrifice, cannibalism was also practiced (Campbell et al. 2014: 31).

On Appendix 4, Table IV, it has been provided by Martin & Harrod (2014: 127 based on Martin (2008) and Martin et al. (2010) certain hints to recognize captivity and slavery activities related to bodies. But could this be applicable in the ANE evidence? Based on the list, here is a list of visible

and analyzed physical evidence and its correlation to captivity and slavery activities¹⁰²:

- Signals of commodification and trade:
 - a. High number of reproductive-aged women
 - b. Increase in number of subadults (specially in contexts where there are death pits traceable)
- Submission and beatings:
 - a. Cranial and post cranial fractures
 - b. Injury recidivism, co-occurrence of trauma and pathology, cranial and postcranial lesions
- Hard labor and long work hours
 - a. Work and trauma related osteoarthritis (an individual in tomb Y 494 (Dolce 2014))
- - "Social death" and outsider status
 - a. Irregular burial context
 - b. No grave offerings, unusual grave goods

Hence and based on physical evidence, these are the concepts in the studied evidence: signals of commodification and trade; submission and beatings; hard labor and long work hours as well as "social death" leading, perhaps, to outsider status. This not only shows the multidimensional origins of sacrificed individuals, but it confirms the non-high-court member statuses of individuals. Beyond this inherent inequality, sacrificial murder is

¹⁰² Due to the ambiguity of the evidence and lack of information in most cases, this information provided here is based entirely on the available documents, and there is no individual information on specific corpses or skeletal remains and thus, it is listed as a collective rather than specific individuals.

a key element in creation (Siddall 2020), in terms of exacerbating the human and physical realm into the netherworld. Retainer and Foundation sacrifice reflect the expectation that the exalted social status that the main individual (or individuals) buried in them had in this world would also be theirs for eternity. To be clear, this Book is not suggesting that the practice of retainer sacrifice itself placed a strain on the labor market. Even the sacrifice of several dozen retainers every couple of decades would have had a minimal impact, if any, on overall labor demand. Instead, we are suggesting that a shift towards a more centrally administrated regime that promoted public works, increased agricultural production, and territorial expansion transformed ANE labor market, fundamentally altering perceptions of the potential value of human lives which resulted in a decrease of human sacrifice. Within this context, human sacrifice became increasingly difficult to compensate for, materially, socially, or ideologically.

Multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity are key for studying such a complex activity. Sacrificing a life, whether animal or human, is not an easy task and does not solely rely on one side or the other, and thuswise it must be approached from multiple perspectives. The prior theoretical knowledge of sciences of various kinds (evolutionary biology, psychology, sociology, etc.) that was explored on Chapter I, is becoming more and more necessary, although it implies a greater difficulty to achieve, due to the great doctrinal complexity that they entail. Without the help of other disciplines, there can be fully comprehension of such.

The Archaeology of Human Sacrifice in the ANE is incipient and at its infant stage. It is a work in progress that needs further development. Human sacrificial ritual practices overlap with and is often part of the underlying social structures that promote inequality and differential access to resources. It is a justified political action with severe repercussions on

society. Cultures normalize, promote, and even celebrate these types of highly symbolic, ritualized, structural violence. At the same time, this type of violence includes a wide range of activities such as public and perhaps ritualized torture of enemies that are used as symbolically to reify the group identity and the power structure (Martin et al. 2013). In the very possibility of approaching the divine order, individuals witnessed an overflow of situations that for their own human construct would seem acceptable. With this, the value of the offering could not be less than that of the human being themselves, seeing in them that unique value pleasing to their divinities and their beliefs, in the fulfillment of vows.

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APPENDIX 1. TABLE I

DIFFERENT CHRONOLOGIES FOR THE NEAR EAST.

CHRONOLOGY	EVENT	DATES
Ultra-High Chronology	<i>Hammurabi reign</i>	1930-1888 BC
High Chronology	<i>Hammurabi reign</i>	1848-1806 BC
Middle Chronology	<i>Hammurabi reign</i>	1792-1750 BC
Low Chronology	<i>Hammurabi reign</i>	1728 – 1686 BC
Ultra-Low Chronology	<i>Hammurabi reign</i>	1704 – 1662 BC

Figure 1. *Different types of Chronology for the ANE* (Copyright by Usieto Cabrera, D.) (Table after Hasel 2004: 8).

APPENDIX 2. TABLE II

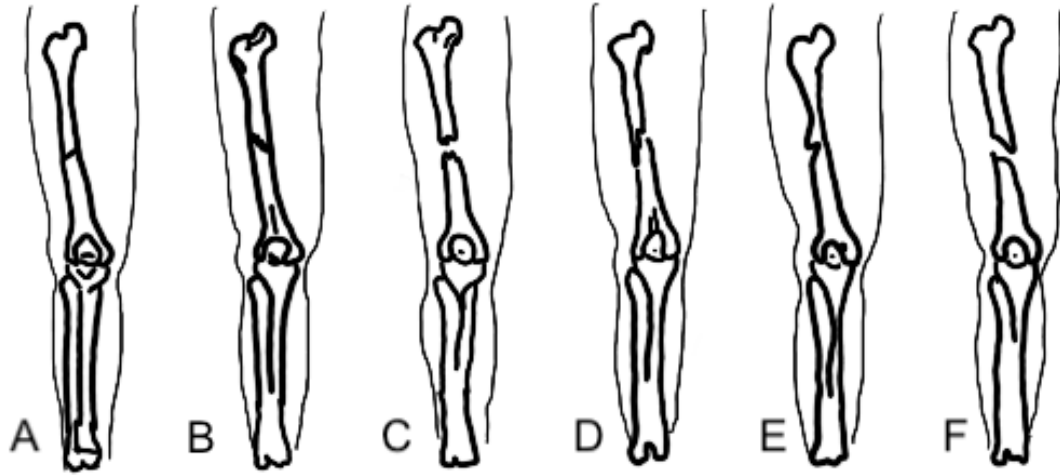
MIDDLE CHRONOLOGY.

Late Uruk	3500 – 3100 BC
Jemdet Nasr	3100 - 2900
Early Dynastic	<i>ED I: 2900 – 2750 BC</i> <i>ED II: 2750 – 2600 BC</i> <i>ED III: 2600 – 2350 BC</i>
Akkadian	2350 – 2150 BC
UR III	2112 – 2004 BC
Old Babylonian	2004 – 1595 BC

Figure 1. *Middle Chronology for the ANE* (Copyright by Usieto Cabrera, D.) (Table after Van De Mieroop 2007; McClellan 2012: 141).

APPENDIX 3. TABLE III

MAJOR TYPES OF FRACTURES



A. Transverse fracture

B. Spiral fracture

C. Comminuted fracture

D. Impacted fracture

E. Greenstick fracture

F. Oblique fracture

Figure 1. *Major types of fracture* (Copyright by Usieto Cabrera, D.) (drawn after Martin & Harrods 2014).

APPENDIX 4. TABLE IV

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CAPTIVITY & SLAVERY MATCHED WITH POTENTIAL
SIGNATURES THAT MIGHT BE OBSERVABLE ON HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS.

Captivity and slavery skeletal correlates	
Possible underlying violent tactics used	Implication for skeletal growth, development and maintenance
Raiding and capture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Healed cranial depression fractures ● Healed broken ribs and long bones
Commodification and trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High numbers of reproductive-aged women ● Increase in number of subadults
Submission and beatings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cranial and postcranial fractures ● Injury recidivism, co-occurrence of trauma and pathology, cranial, and postcranial lesions
Hard labor and long work hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enthesal changes, ossified ligaments, and asymmetries ● Work and trauma related osteoarthritis
Punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Postcranial fractures (accident/occupation related) ● Nonspecific infections ● Evidence of torture ● Young age-at-death
“Social death” and outsider status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural modification present or absent (head shape and cradle boarding) ● Irregular burial context
Denied access to food resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No grave offerings, unusual grave goods ● Nutritional stress (cribra orbitalia and porotic hyperostosis) ● Short-for-age and shorter attained adult stature
Inadequate habitation areas with poor sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nonspecific infections (staph and strep) ● Tuberculosis, treponematosi

Figure 1. *Captivity and slavey skeletal correlates* (Martin & Harrod 2014: 127), that adapted it from Martin (2008) and Martin et al. (2010).

APPENDIX 5. TABLE V

RECONSTRUCTION OF A MORTAL TRAUMA & THE TRACES THAT MIGHT LEAVE
ON THE CRANIAL

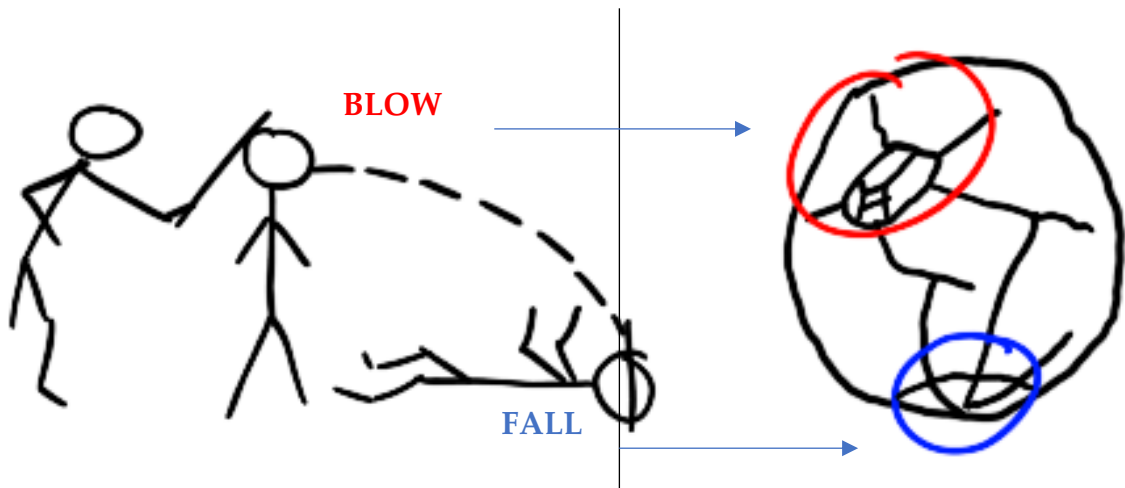


Figure 1. *Digital reconstruction of a mortal trauma and the traces that might leave on the cranial*
(Copyright by Usieto Cabrera, D.).

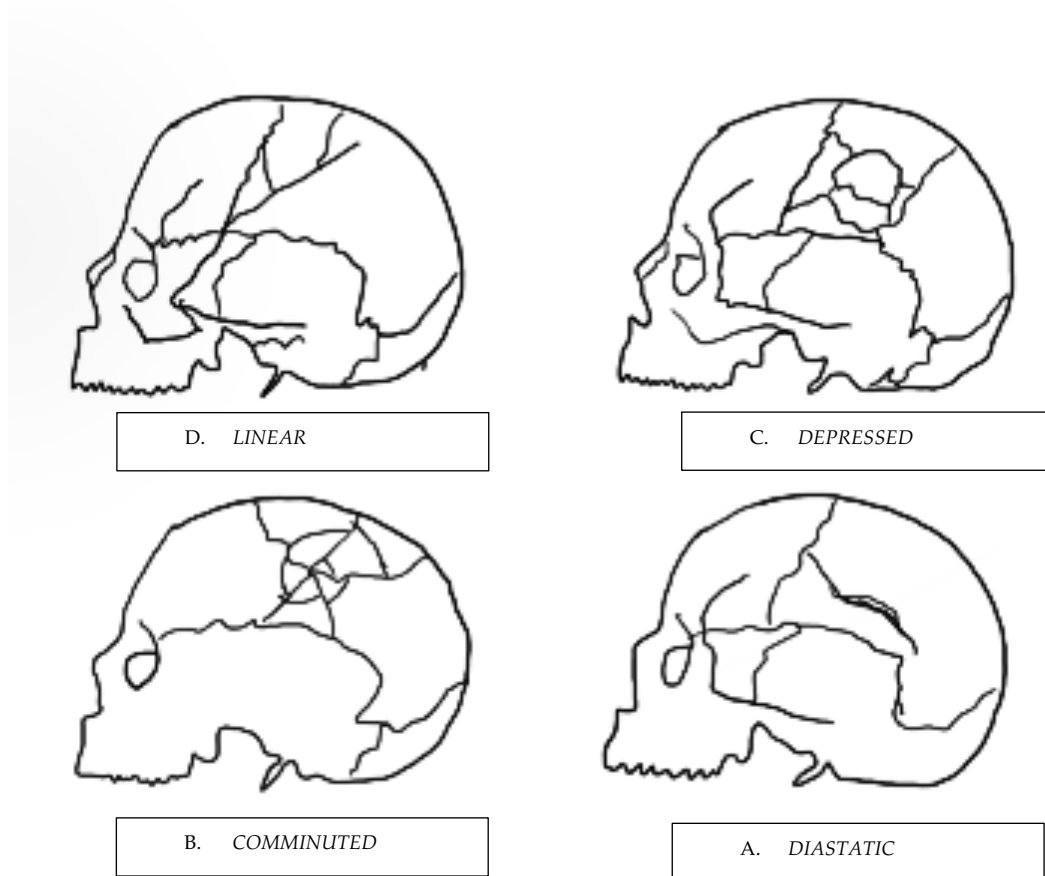


Figure 2. Digital reconstruction of different types of cranial fractures (Copyright by Usieto Cabrera, D.).

APPENDIX 6. TABLE VI

OLD BABYLONIAN CYLINDER SEALS

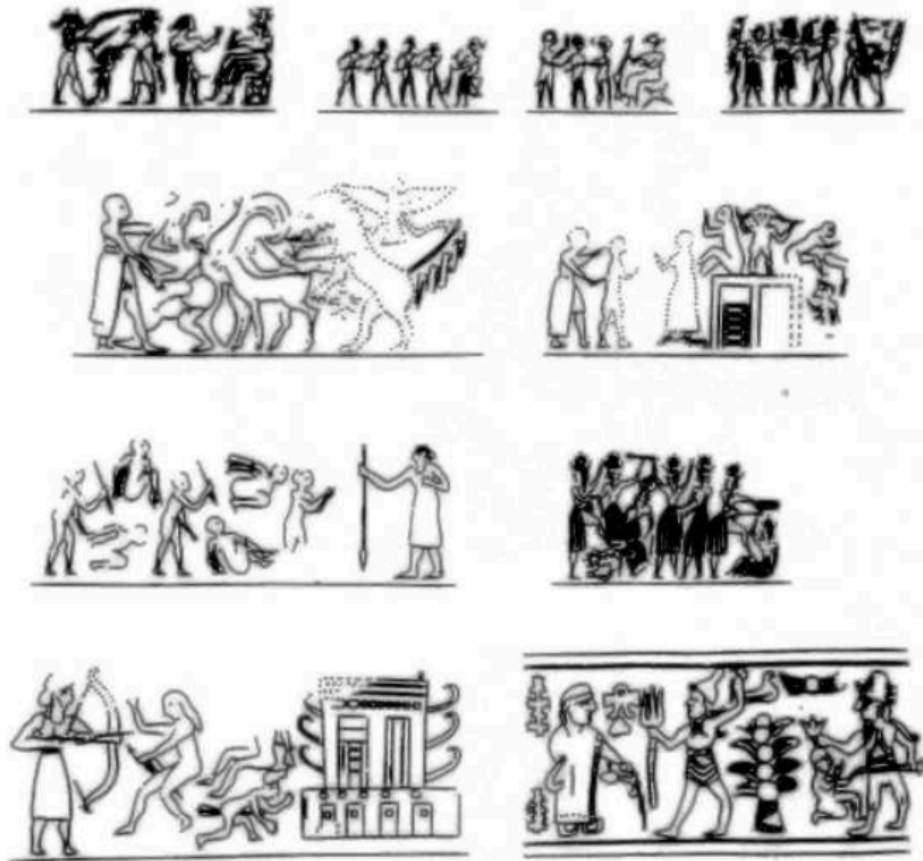


Figure 1. *Digital reconstruction of seal cylinders with potential iconography of human sacrificial rituals* (Groningen & Wolters 1953: 135).



Figure 2: Old Babylonian cylinder seal.

Menant, 1886



Figure 3: *Annual Report of the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art 117* (Jul. 1, 1986 - Jun. 30, 1987), p. 16.



Figure 4: *Seal Cylinder* (Hayes Ward, 1910: 39)

APPENDIX 7. TABLE VII.

ARSLANTEPE

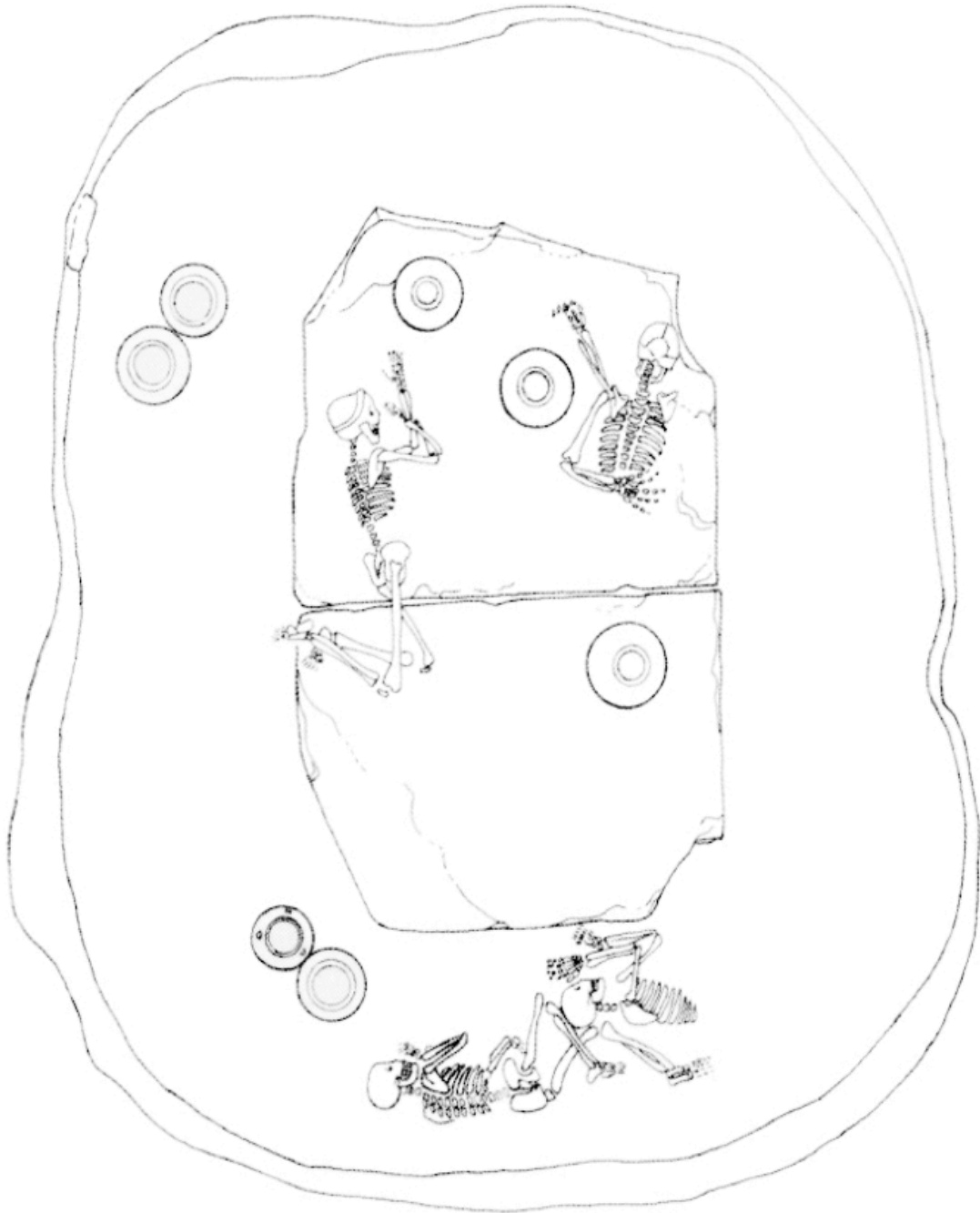


Figure 1. *Digital reconstruction of the tomb S 15 at Arslantepe (Frangipane et al. 200: 112, Fig. 13).*

APPENDIX 8. TABLE VIII

BAŞUR HÖYÜK EBA CEMETERY AND TOMBS.



Figure 1. *Digital reconstruction after an aerial photography of the EBA cemetery* (Copyright by Usieto Cabrera, D. and drawn after Hassett *et al.* 2019: 2, Fig. 1).

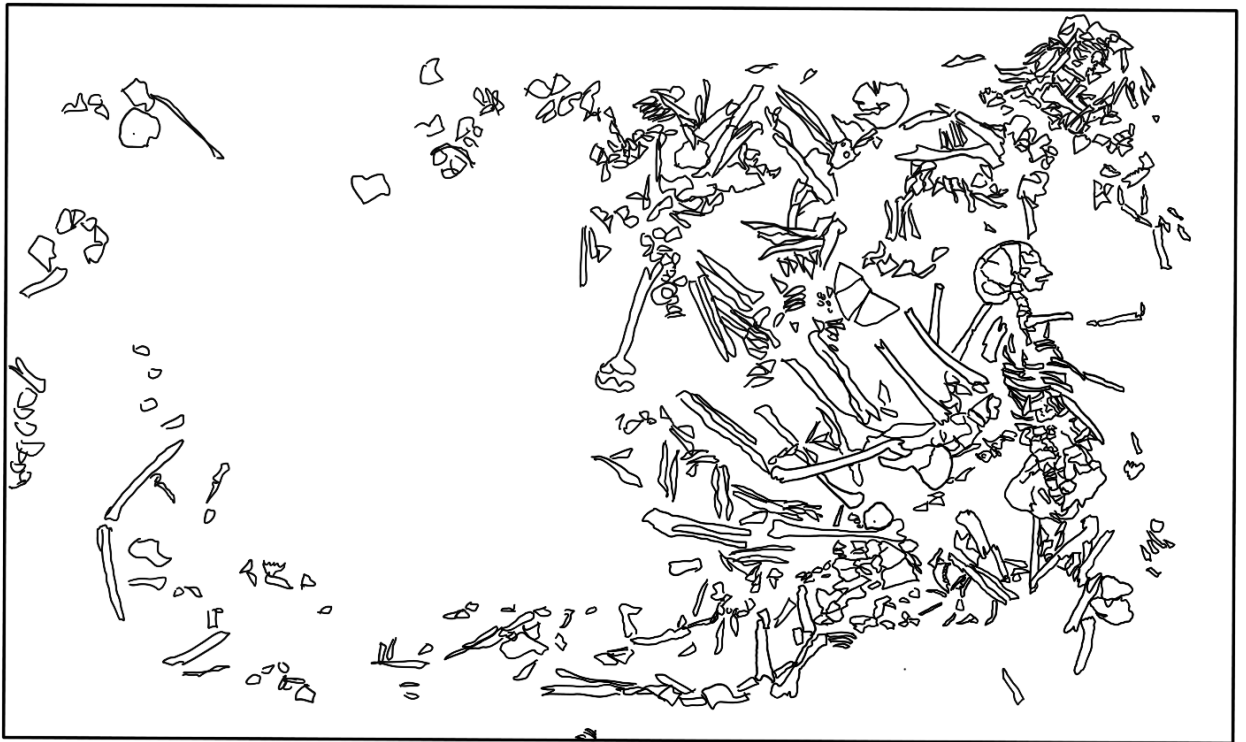


Figure 2. *Reconstruction of the mass DP (tomb 16)* (Copyright by Usieto Cabrera, D.)
(drawn after (Hassett *et al.* 2019: 3, Fig. 2).

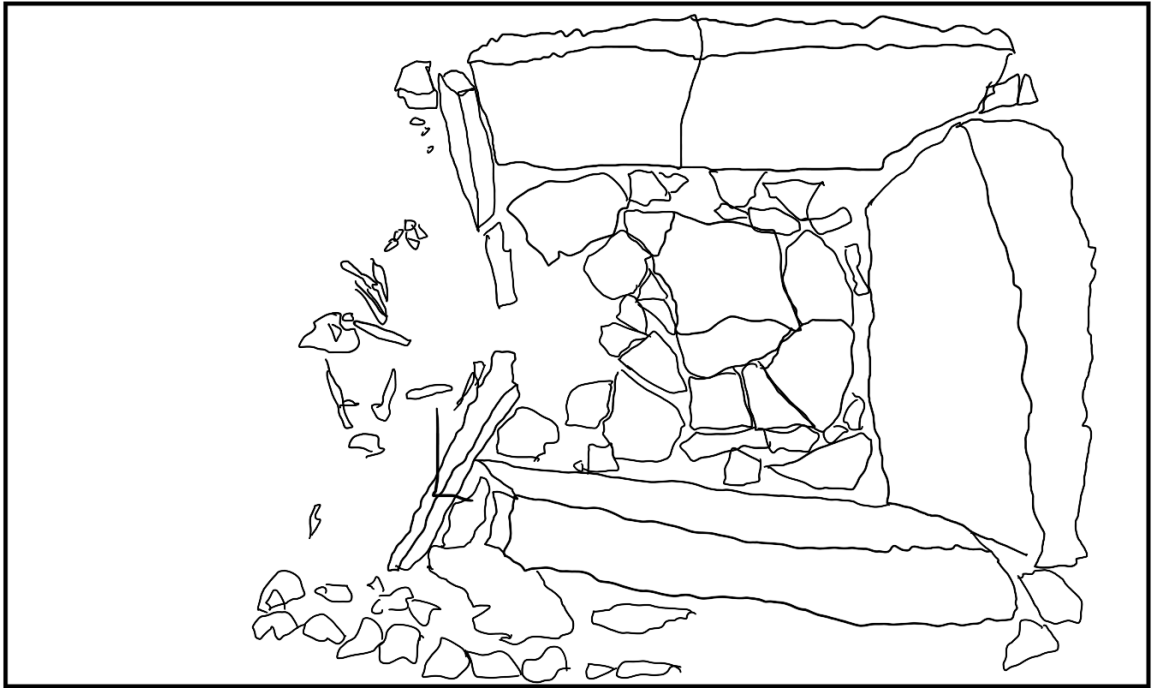


Figure 3. *Reconstruction of tomb 15 & tomb 17* (Copyright by Usieto Cabrera, D.) (drawn after (Hasset & Sağlamtimur 2018: 644, Fig. 2).

APPENDIX 9. TABLE IX

ROYAL CEMETERY OF UR AND ADDITIONAL GRAVES ARGUED TO BE INCLUDED.

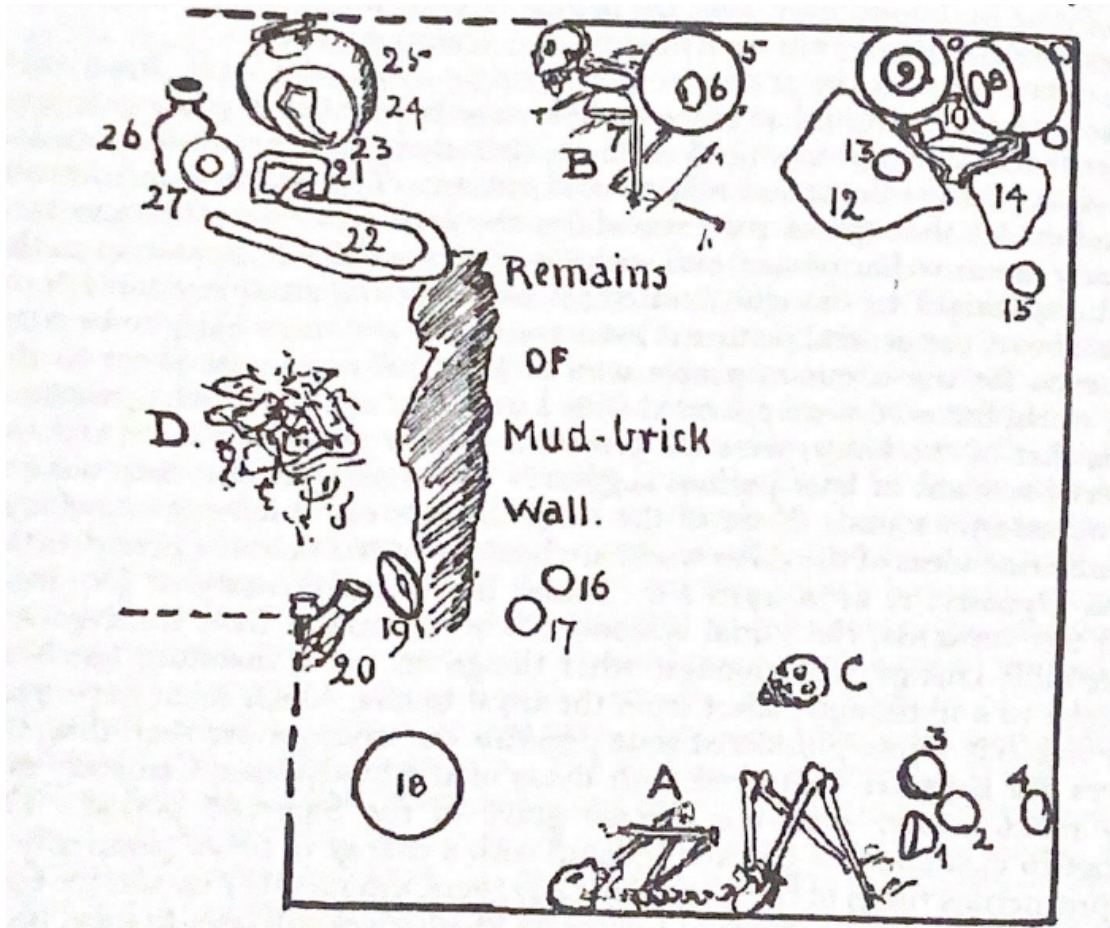


Figure 1. *Reconstruction of DP 337* (Woolley 1934: 44. Fig. 1).

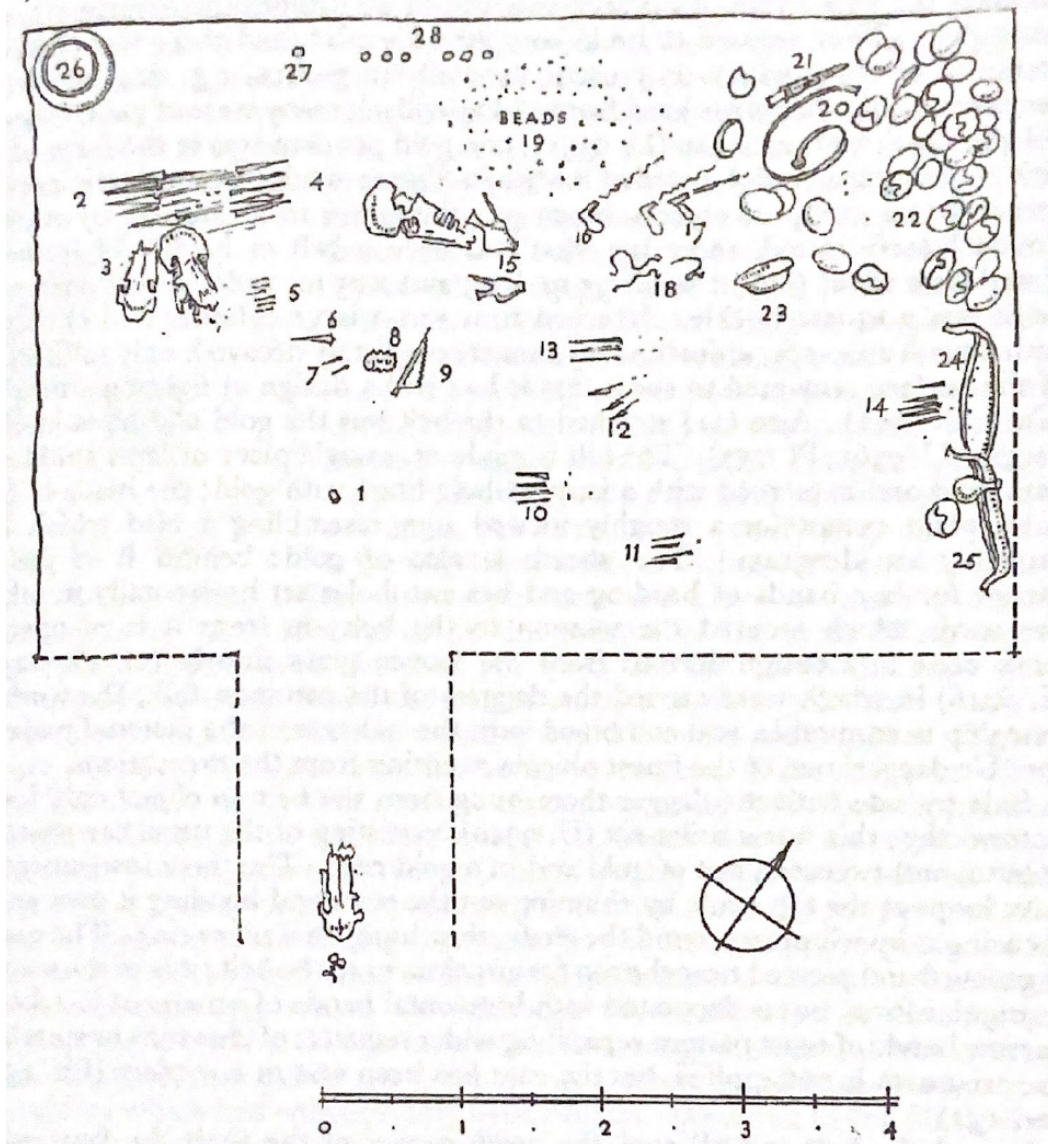


Figure 2. *Reconstruction of DP 580* (Woolley 1934: 50. Fig. 4).

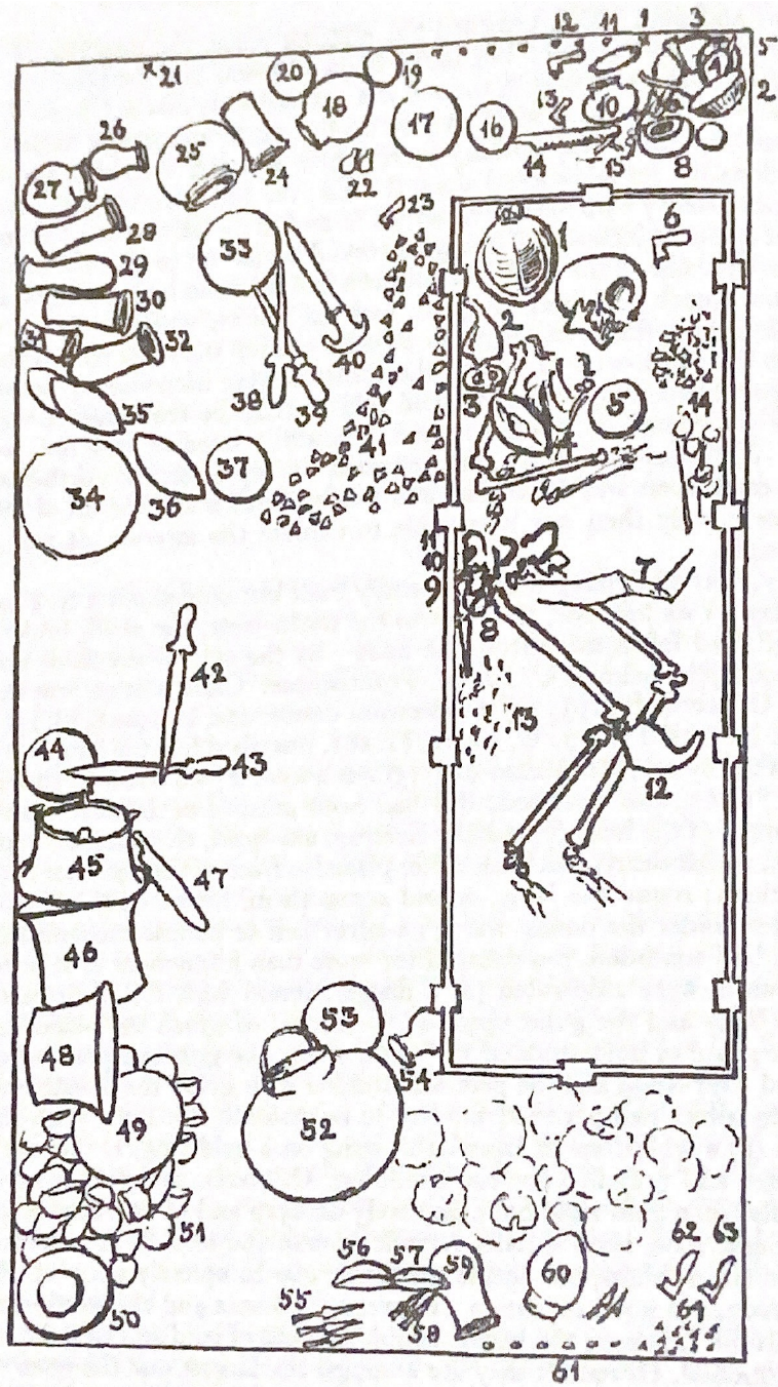


Figure 3. *Reconstruction of RT 755 (Woolley 1934: 157. Fig. 35).*

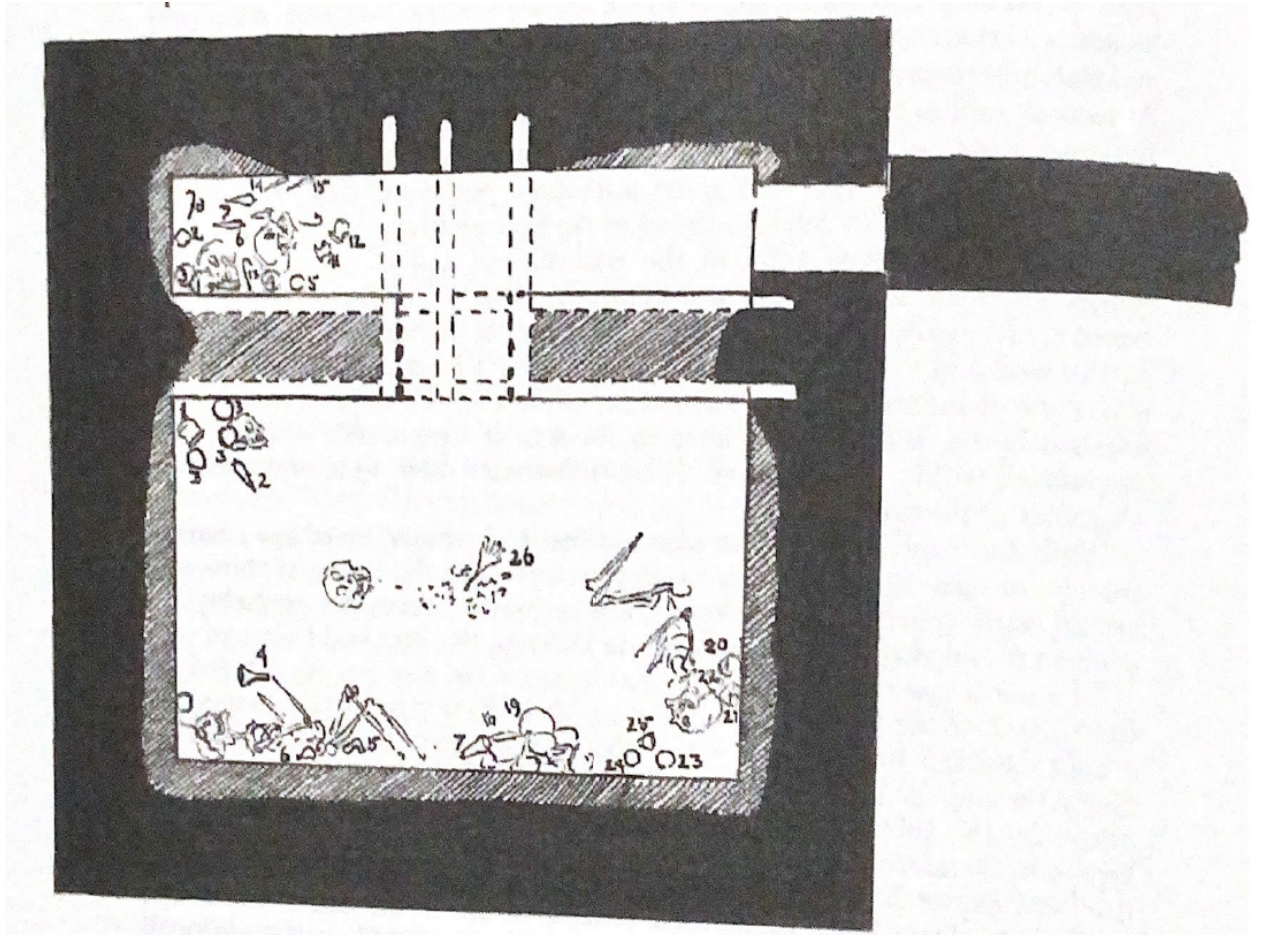


Figure 4. *Reconstruction of RT 777 (Woolley 1934: 55. Fig. 6).*

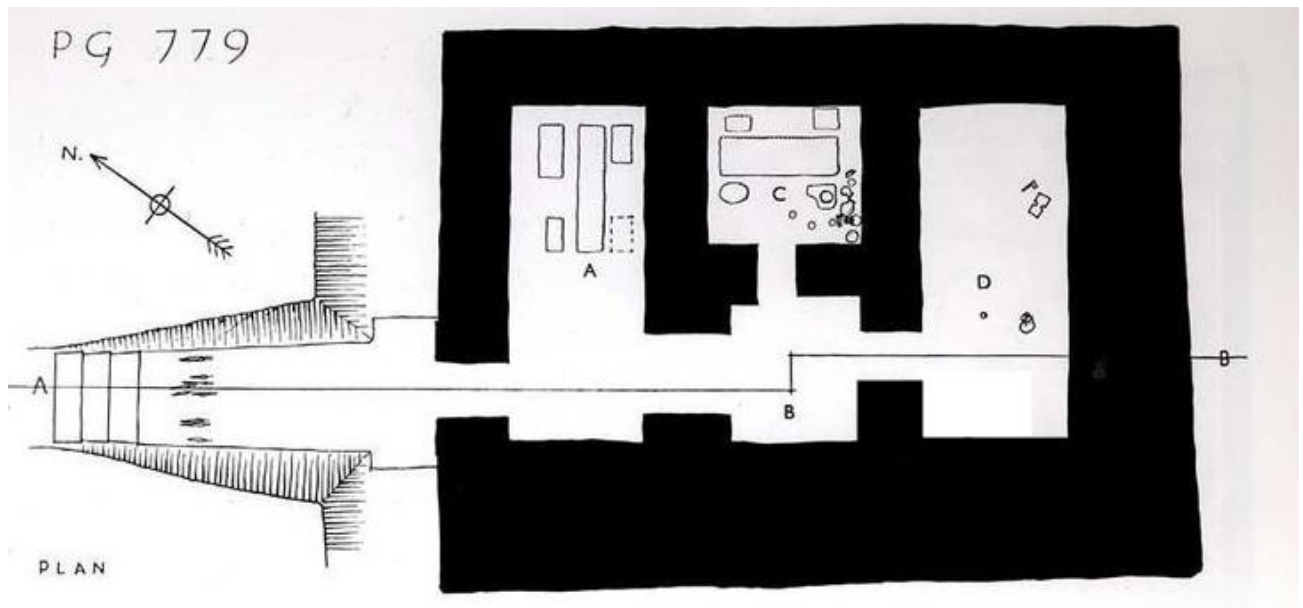


Figure 5. *Reconstruction of RT 779* (Woolley 1934: 59. Pls. 5).

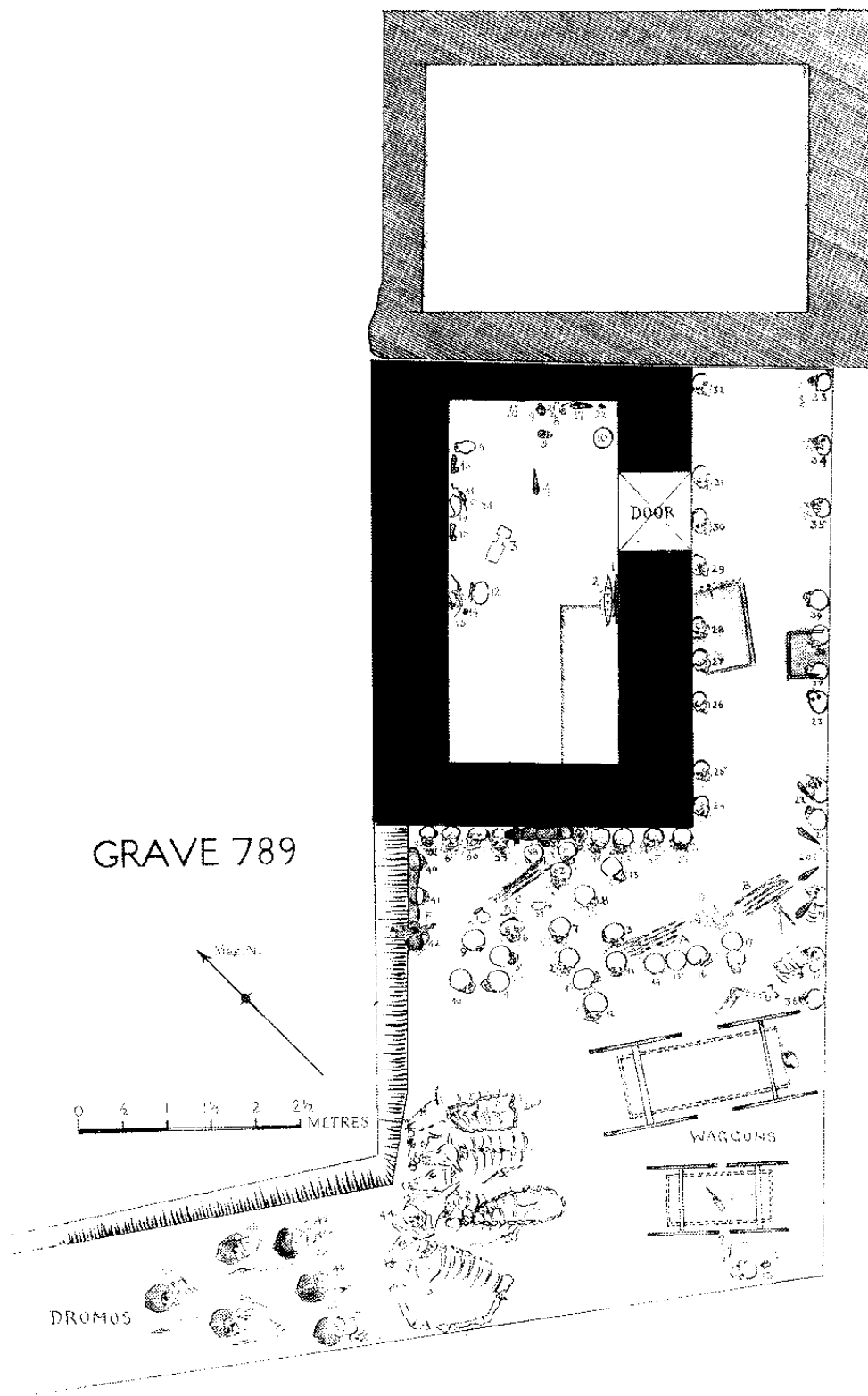


Figure 6. *Reconstruction of RT 789* (Woolley 1934: 57. Pls. 29).

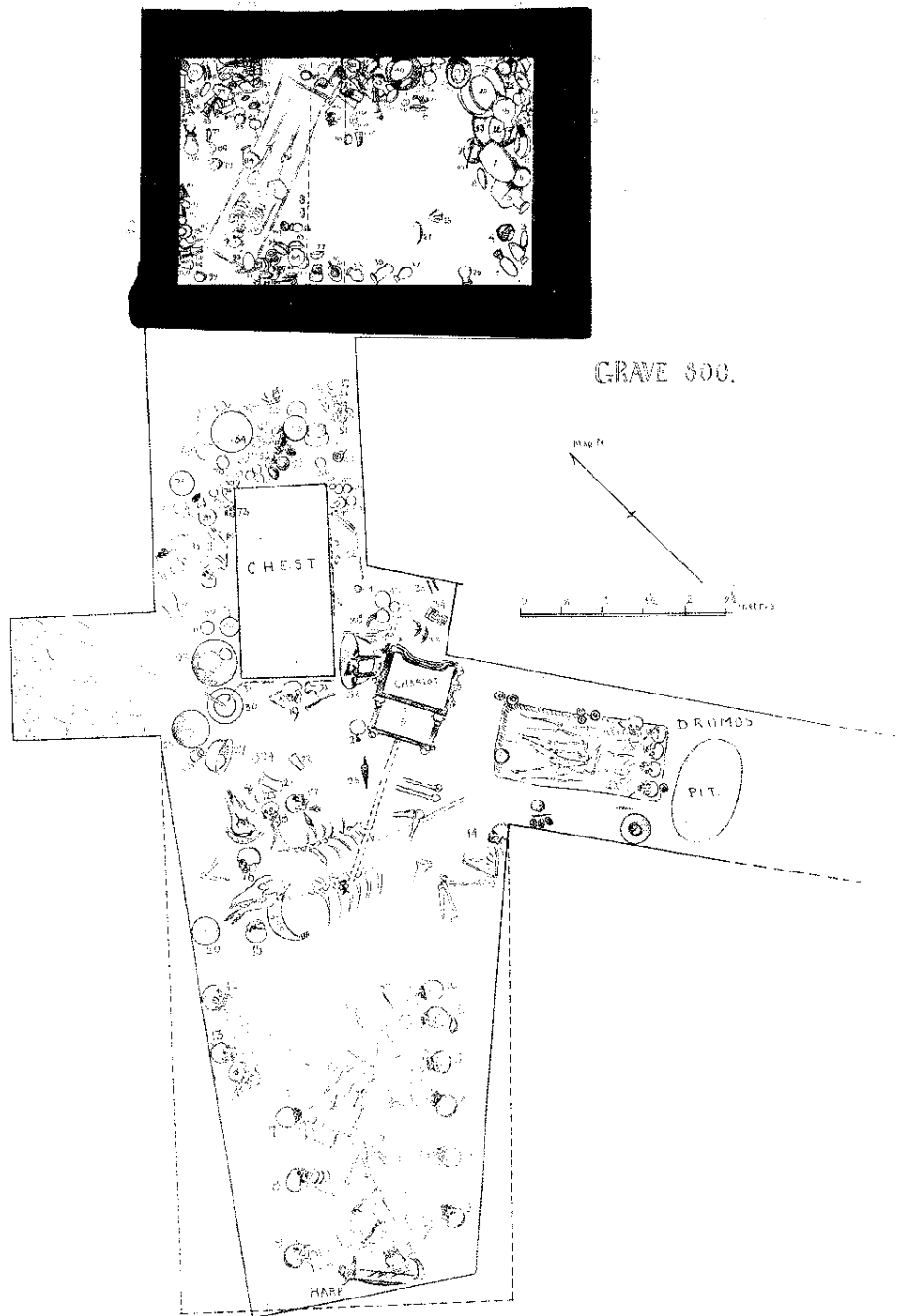


Figure 7. Reconstruction of RT 800 (Woolley 1934: 73. Pls. 36).

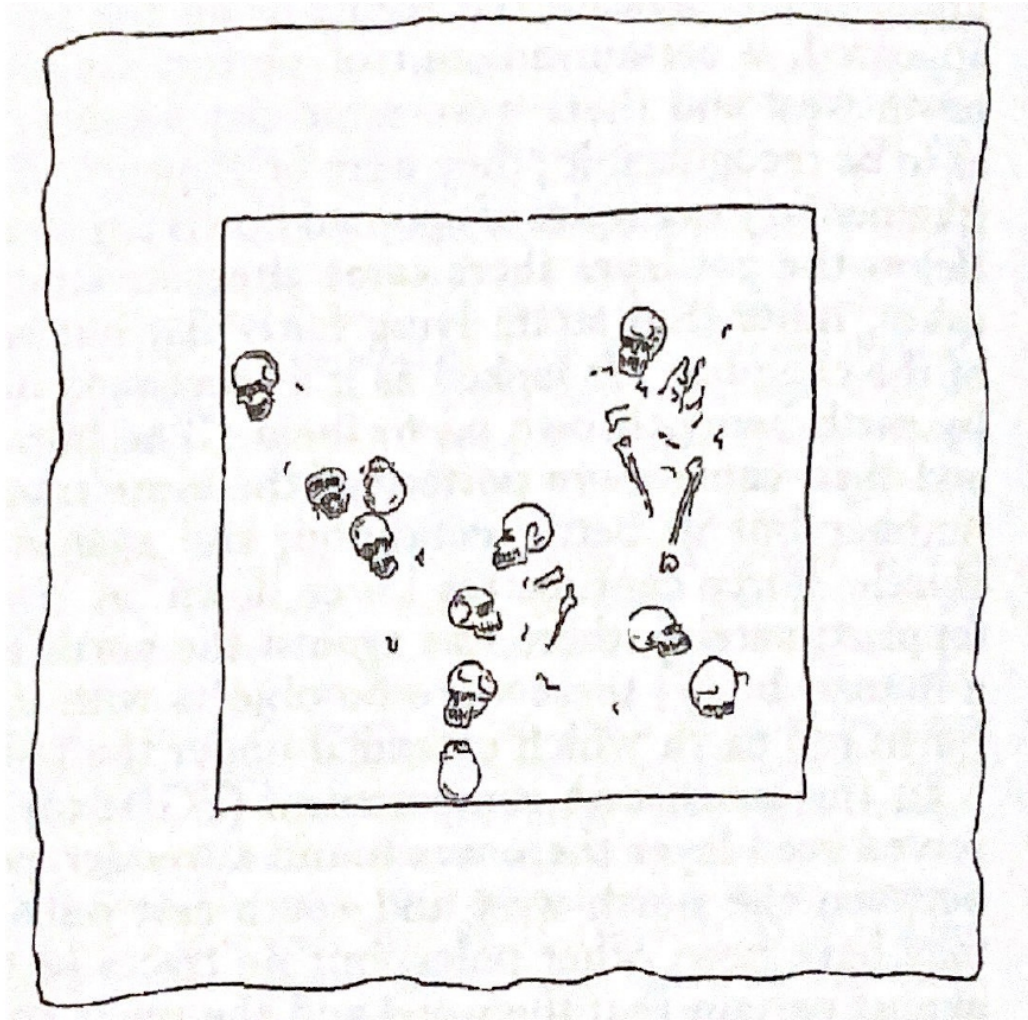


Figure 8. *Reconstruction of RT 1050* (Woolley 1934: 93. Fig. 13).

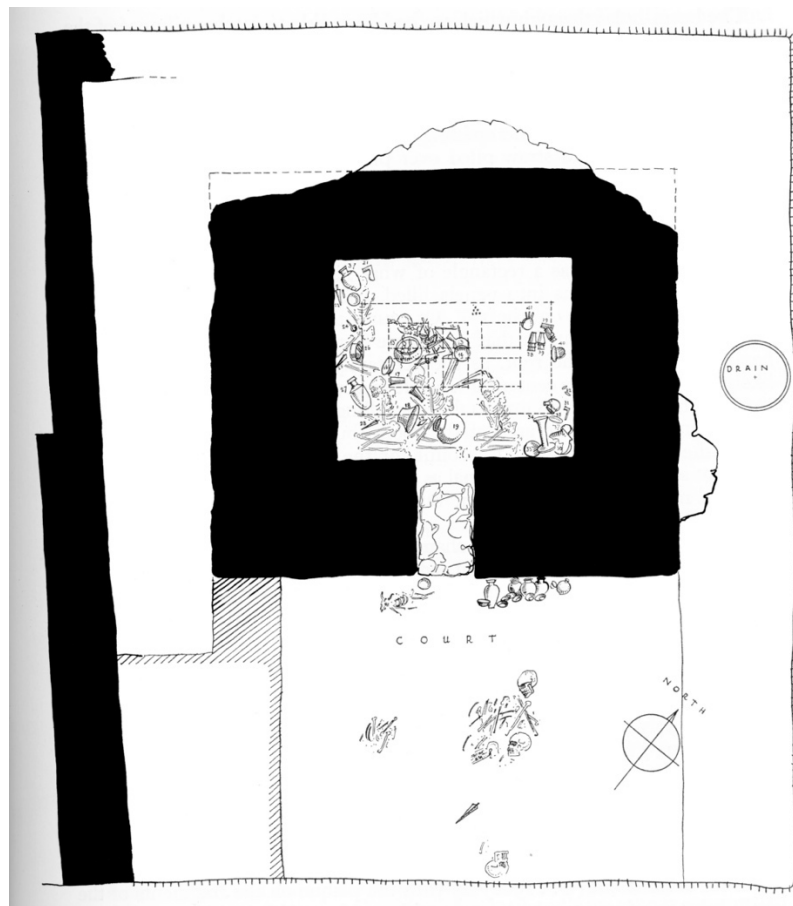
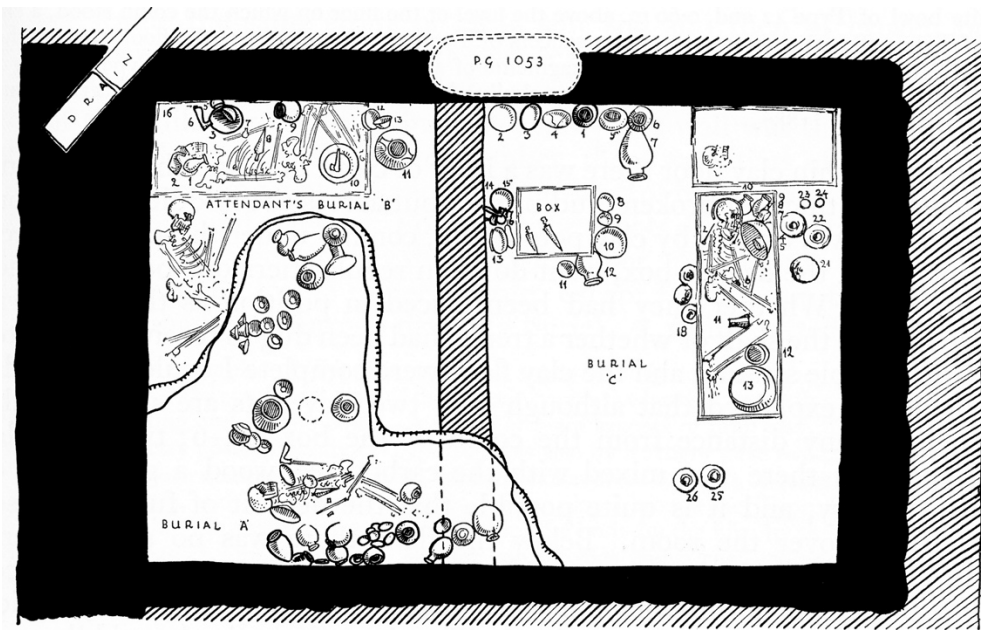


Figure 9. Reconstruction of RT 1054 (Woolley 1934: 99-105. Figs. 15, 17).

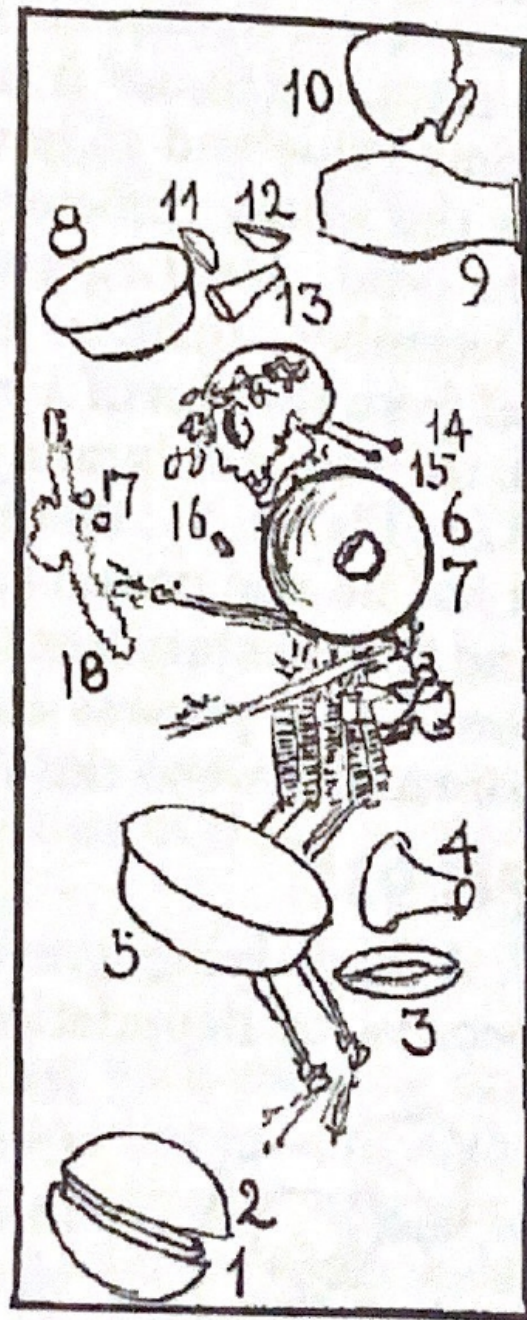


Figure 10. *Reconstruction of RT 1068* (Woolley 1934: 163. Fig. 39).

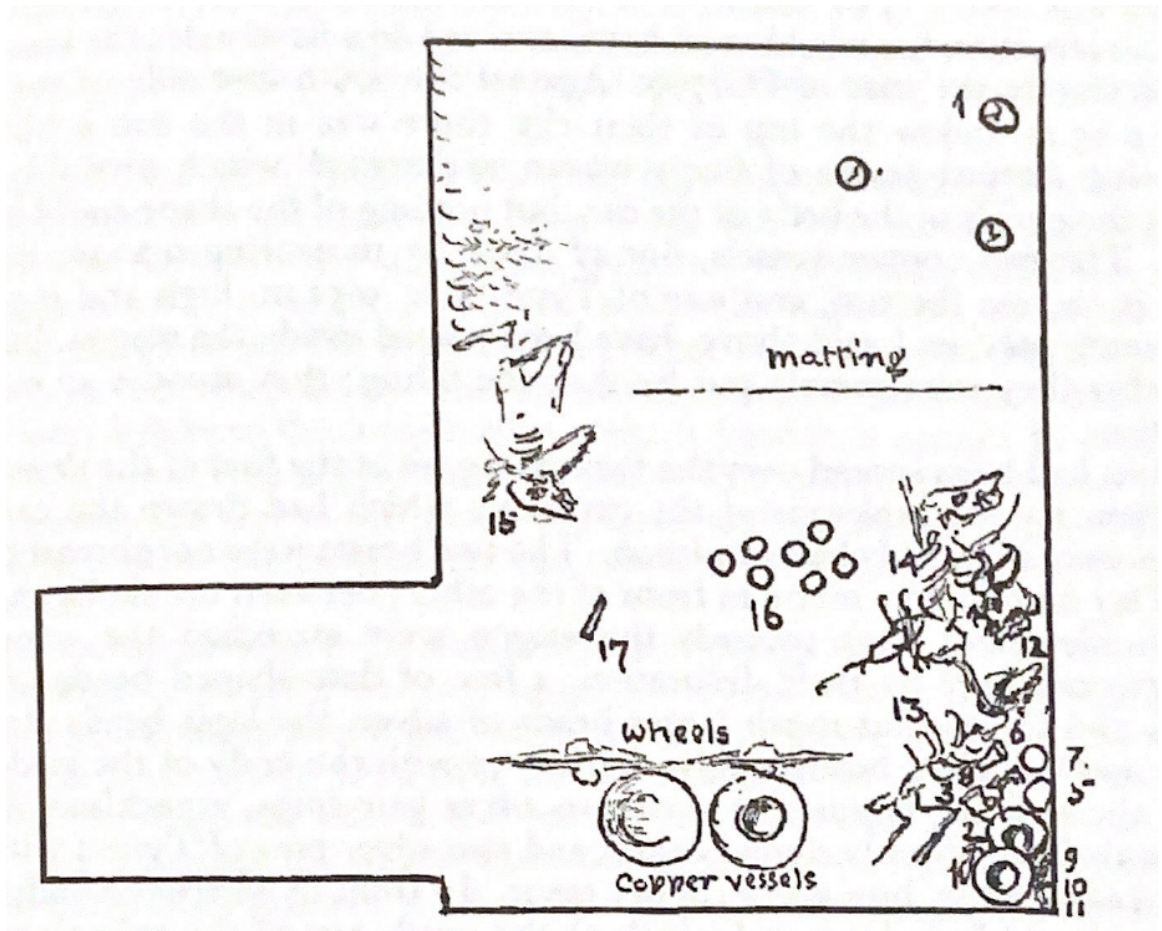


Figure 11. *Reconstruction of DP 1232* (Woolley 1934: 108. Fig. 18).

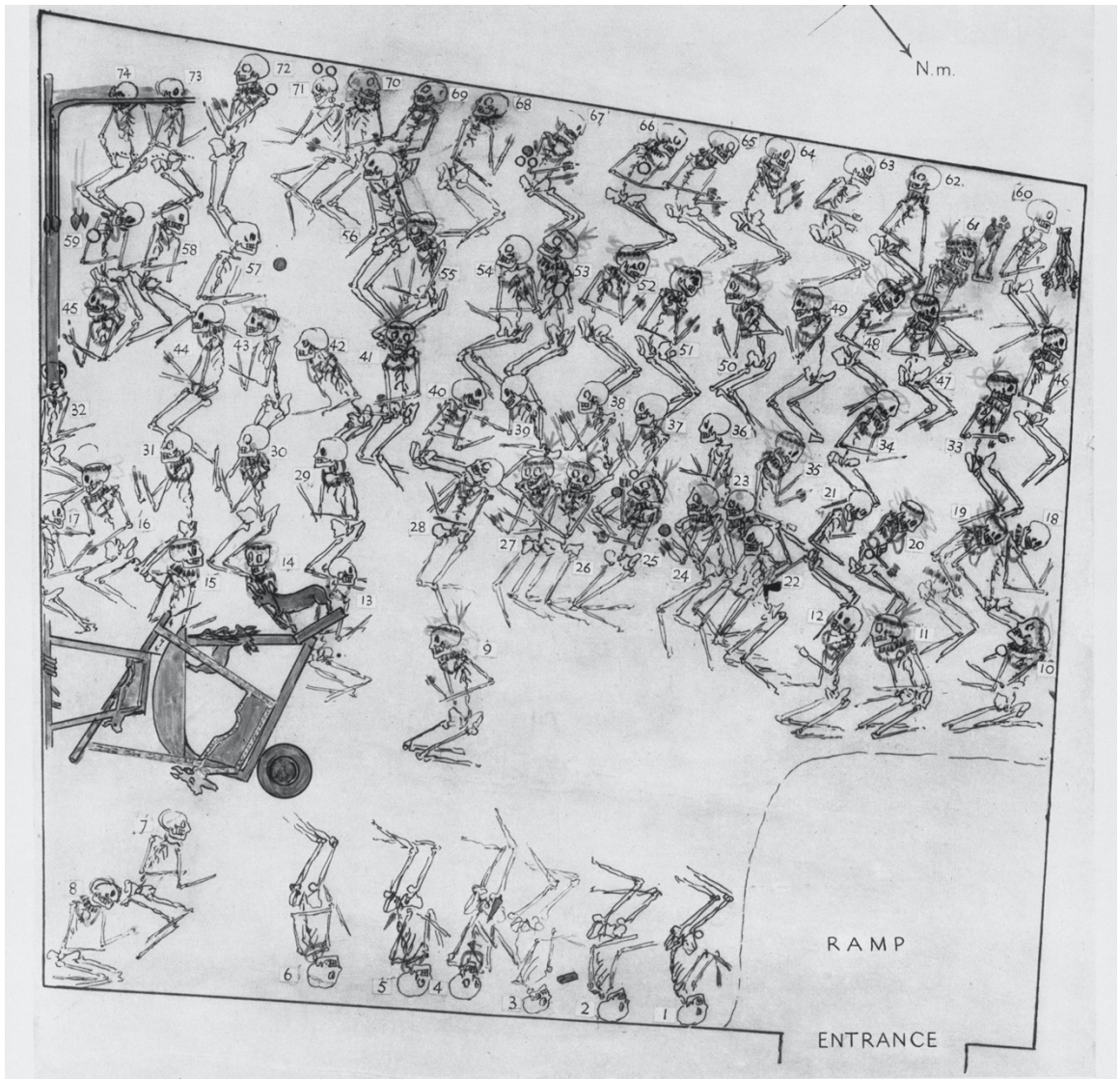


Figure 12. *Reconstruction of DP 1237 (Woolley 1934: 108. Fig. 18).*



Figure 13. *Reconstruction of RT 1266* (Woolley 1934: 172. Fig. 47).



Figure 14. *Reconstruction of RT 1312* (Woolley 1934: 173. Fig. 48).



Figure 15. *Reconstruction of DP 1332* (Woolley 1934: 125. Fig. 200).

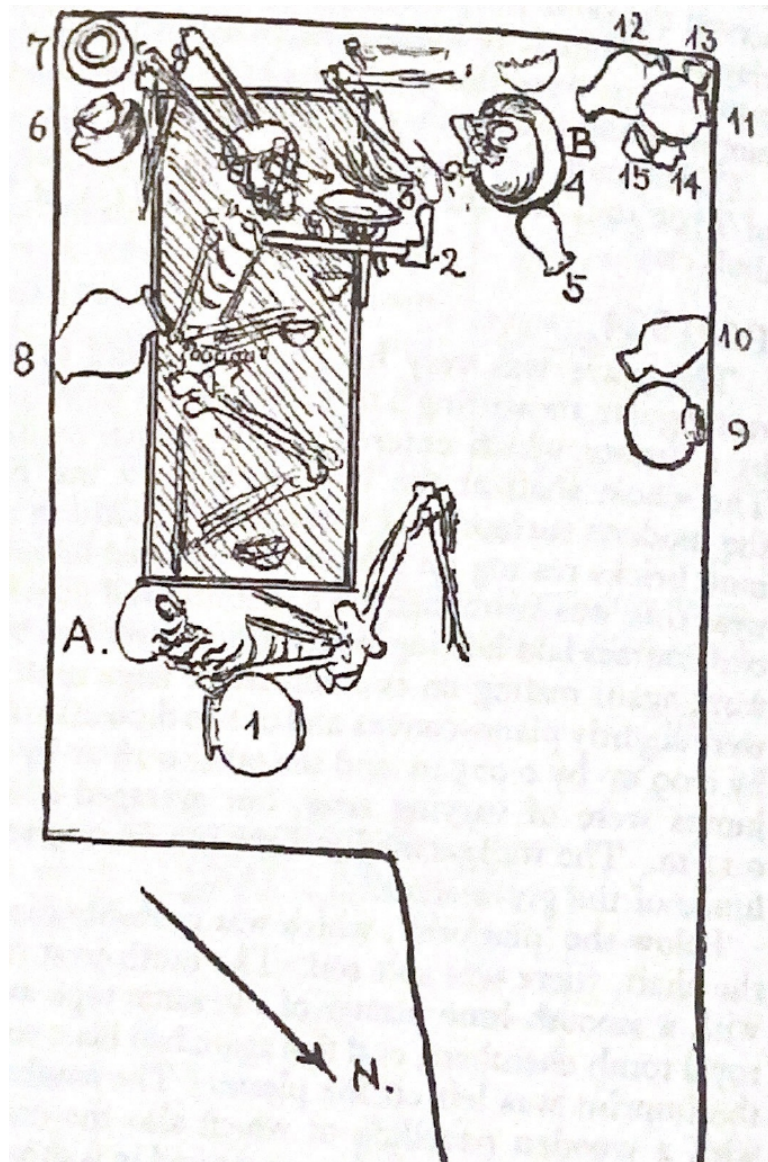


Figure 16. *Reconstruction of RT 1524* (Woolley 1934: 179. Fig. 54).

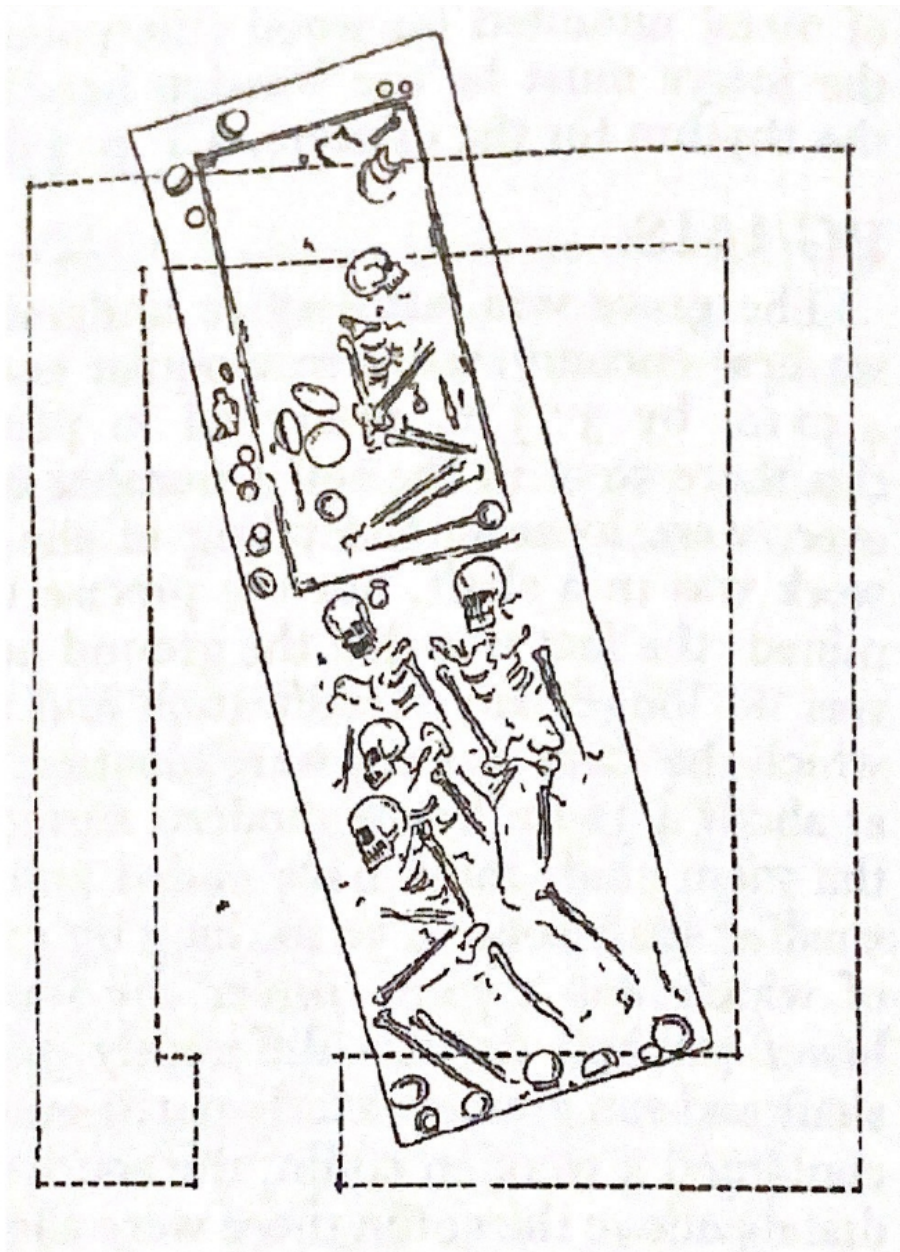


Figure 17. *Reconstruction of RT 1618* (Woolley 1934: 179. Fig. 54).

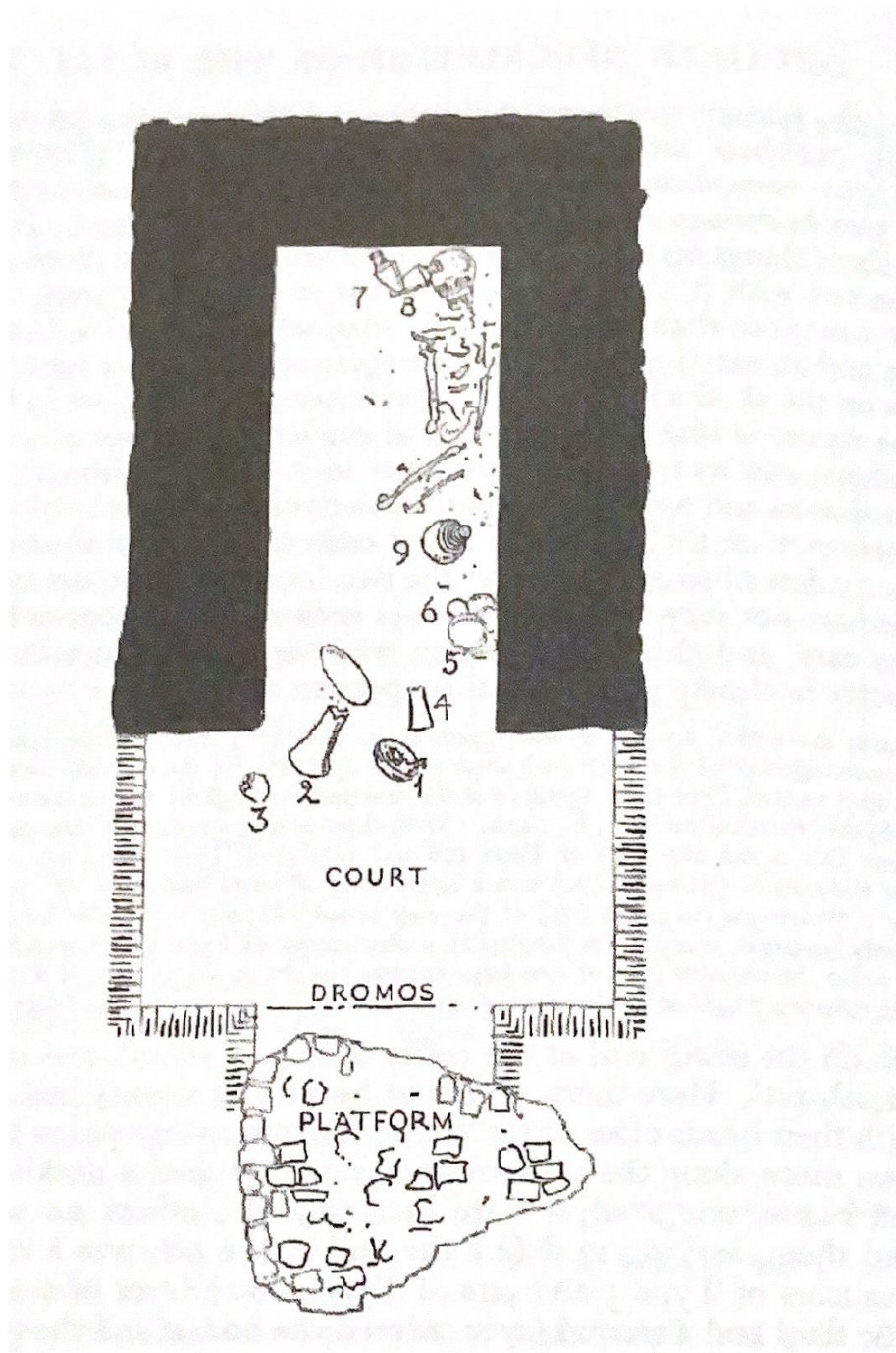


Figure 18. *Reconstruction of RT 1631* (Woolley 1934: 131. Fig. 25).

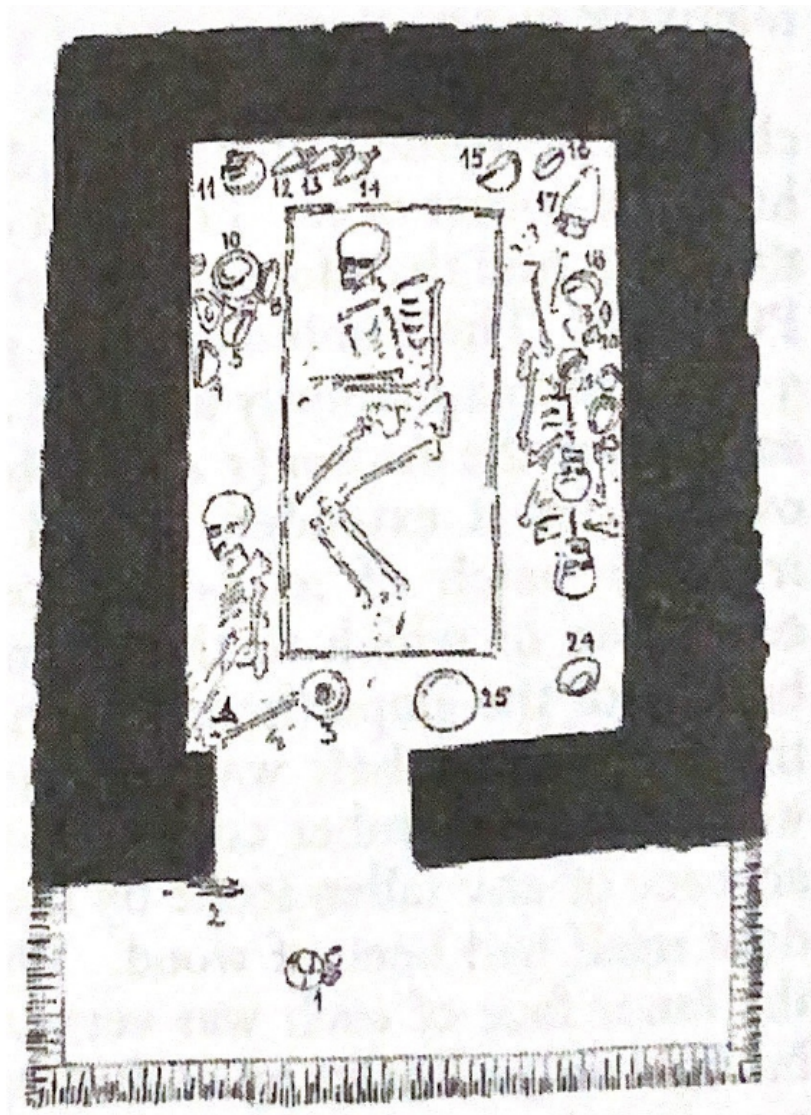


Figure 19. *Reconstruction of RT 1648* (Woolley 1934: 133. Fig. 26).

APPENDIX 10. TABLE X

Y CEMETERY AT KISH.

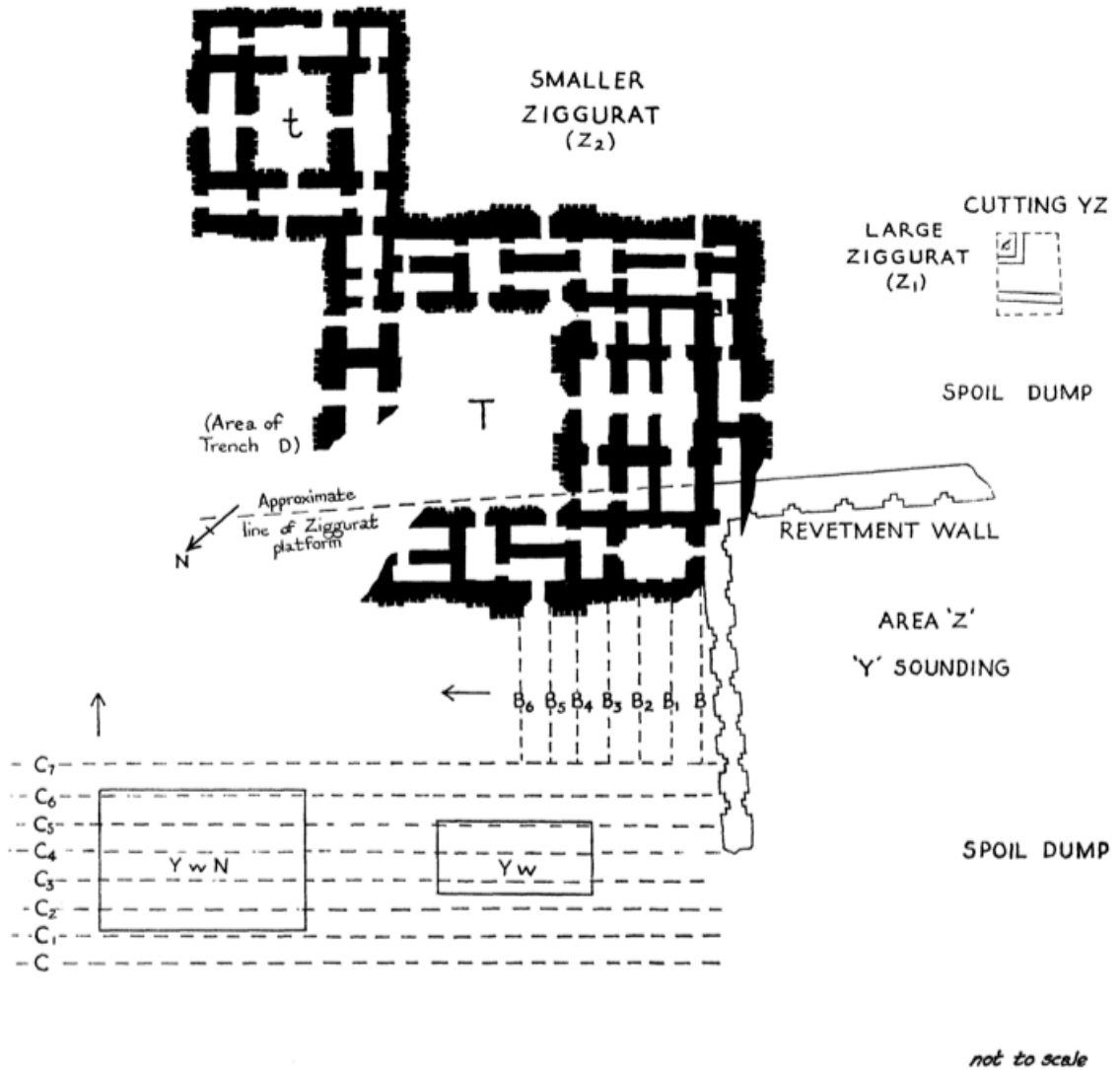


Figure 2. Digital reconstruction of the Kish excavations and the Y Cemetery (Moorey 1966: 20)

(MOOREY 1966: 20)

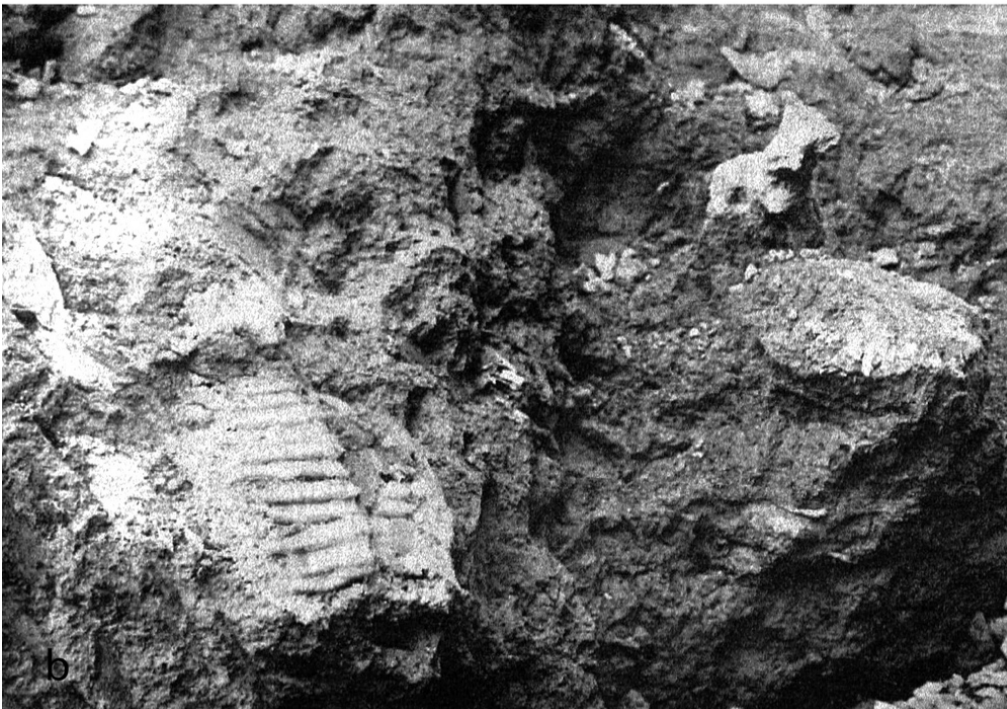


Figure 2. *Photographies of a Chariot Burial at the Y Cemetery, showing the vehicles and the skeleton of an animal (Watelin & Langdon 1934: Plate XXIII)*

APPENDIX 11. TABLE XI

TELL UMM EL-MARRA ACROPOLIS & TOMBS.

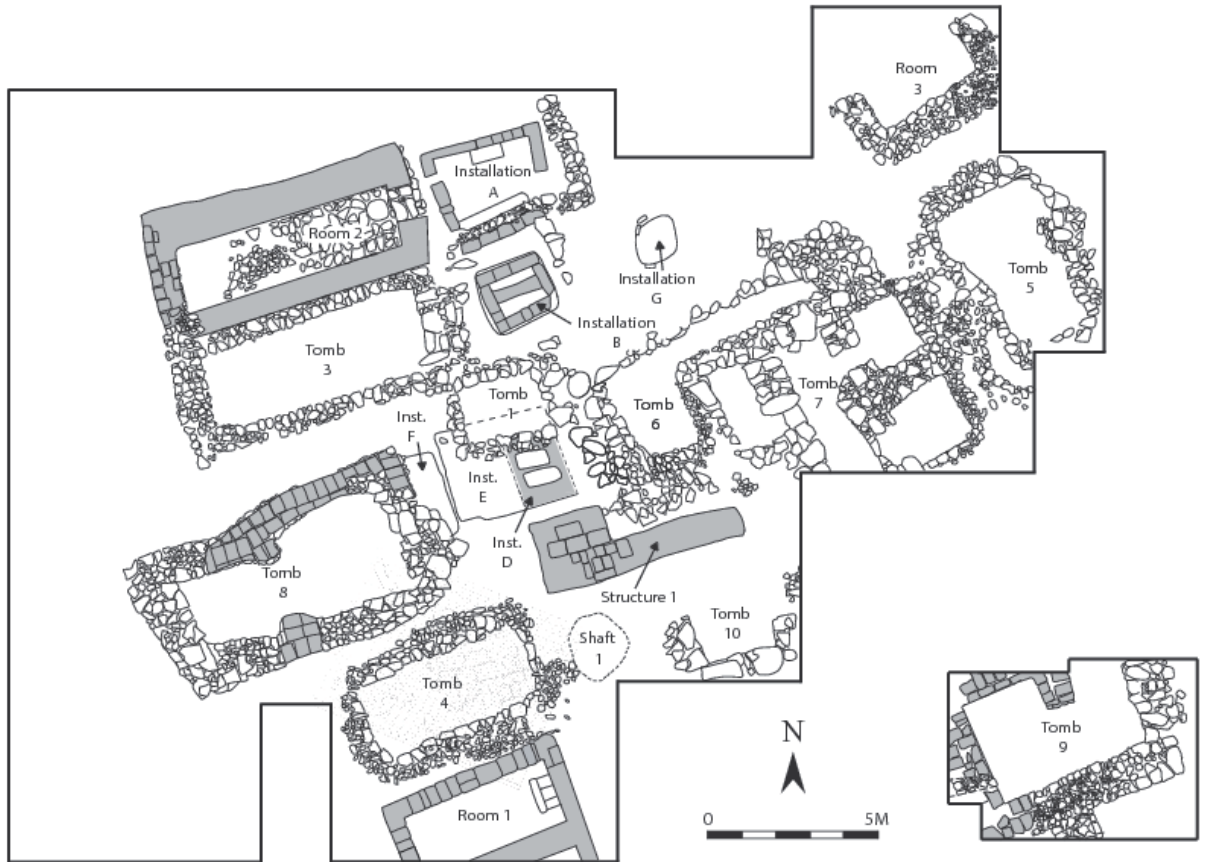


Figure 1. *Reconstruction of the excavations in the Acropolis Center of Tell Umm el-Marra*
(courtesy of G. Schwartz and taken from Beatty 2011: 46)

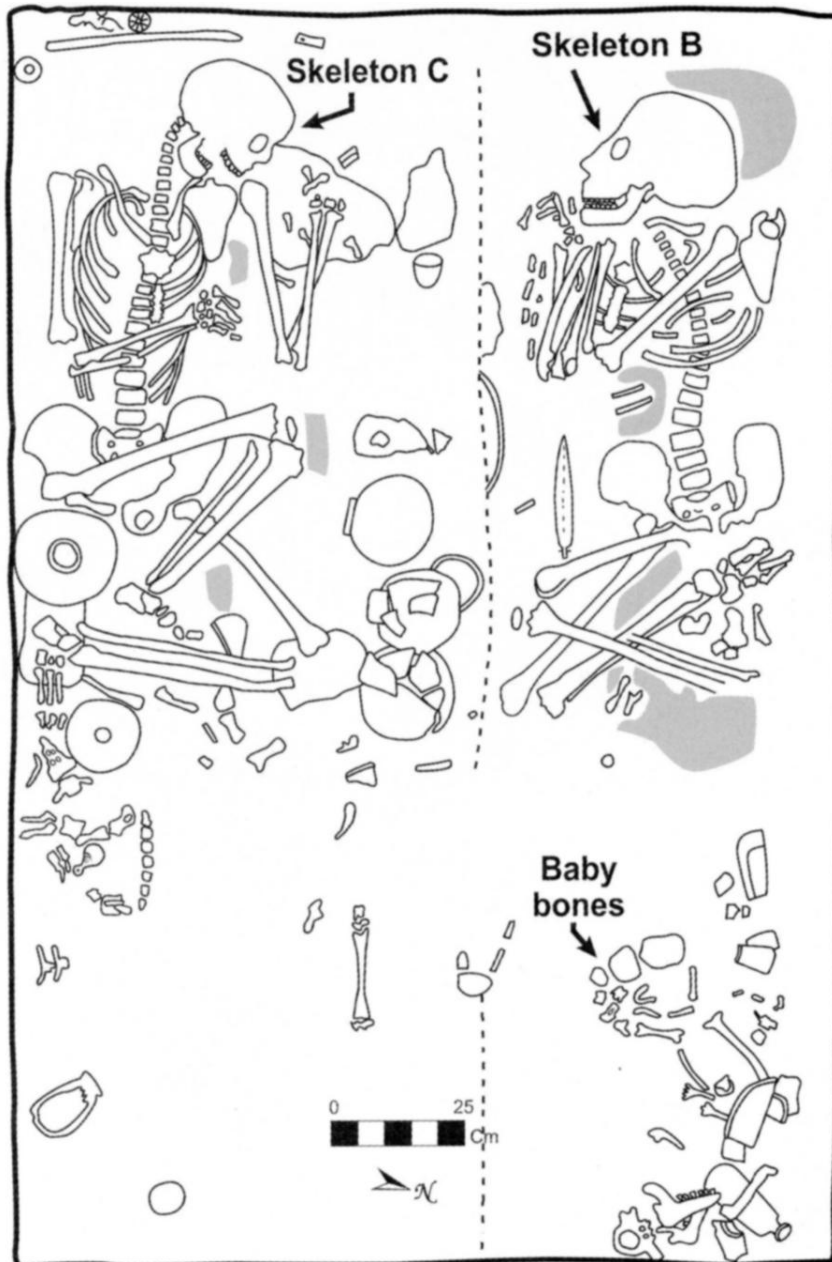


Figure 2. Reconstruction of Tomb 1, middle layer (Skeleton B and C are males) with gypsum layer with mat impressions indicated in gray (Schwartz & Carvers 2003: 336).

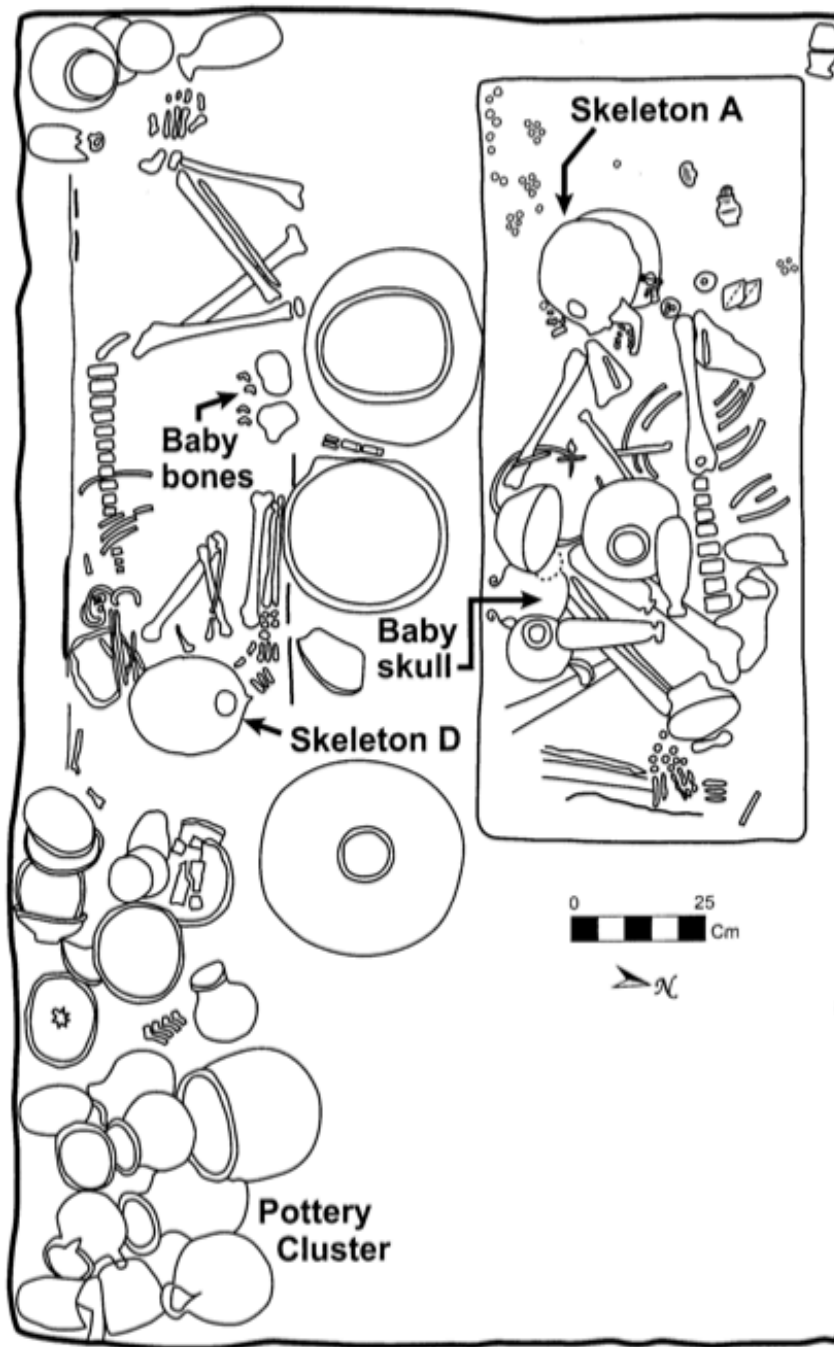


Figure 3. *Reconstruction of Tomb 1, top level* (Schwartz & Carvers 2003: 331).

APPENDIX 12. TABLE XII

TOMBS OF JERICHO.

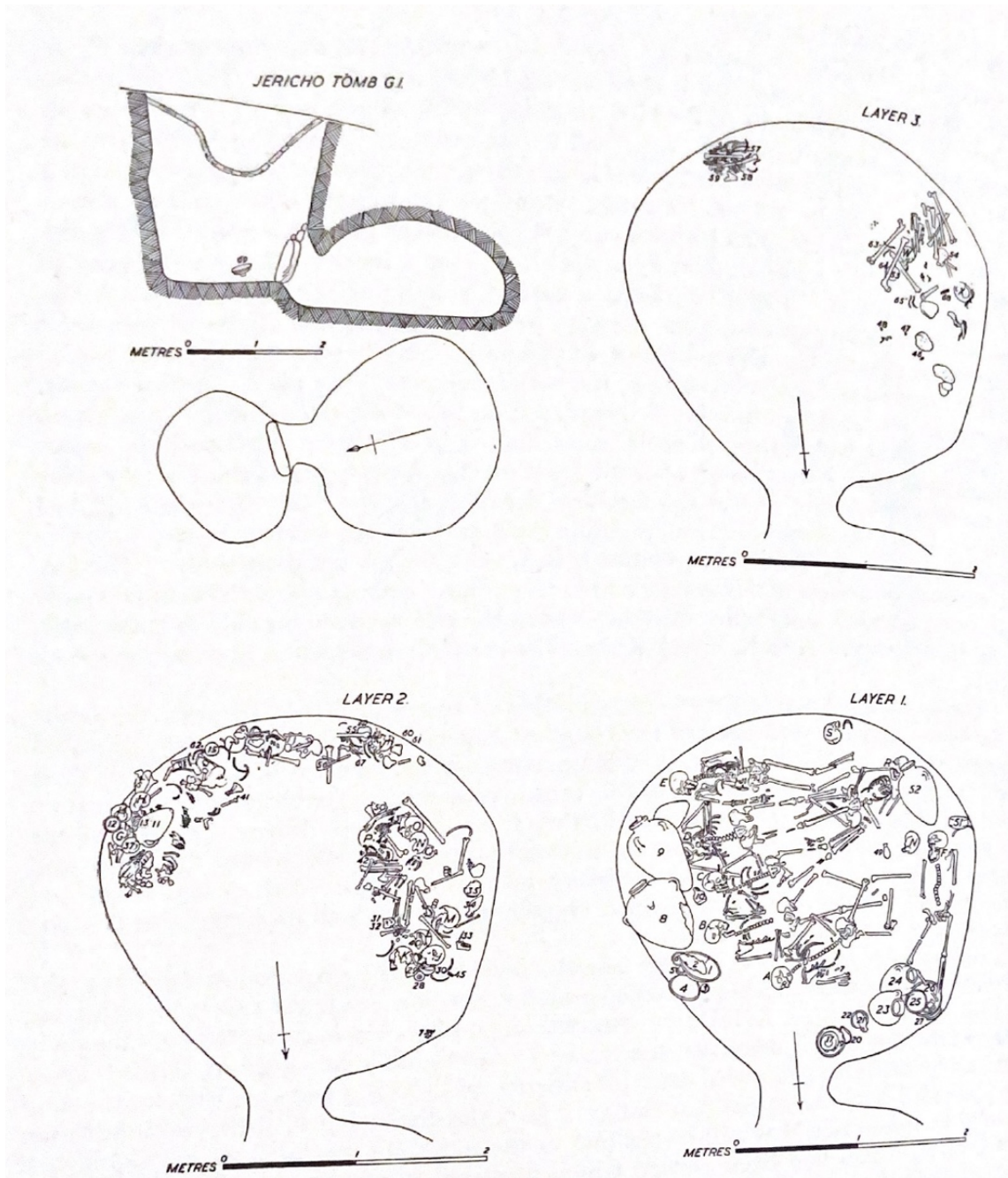


Figure 1. Reconstruction of Tomb G 1 (Kenyon 1960: 444. Fig. 188).

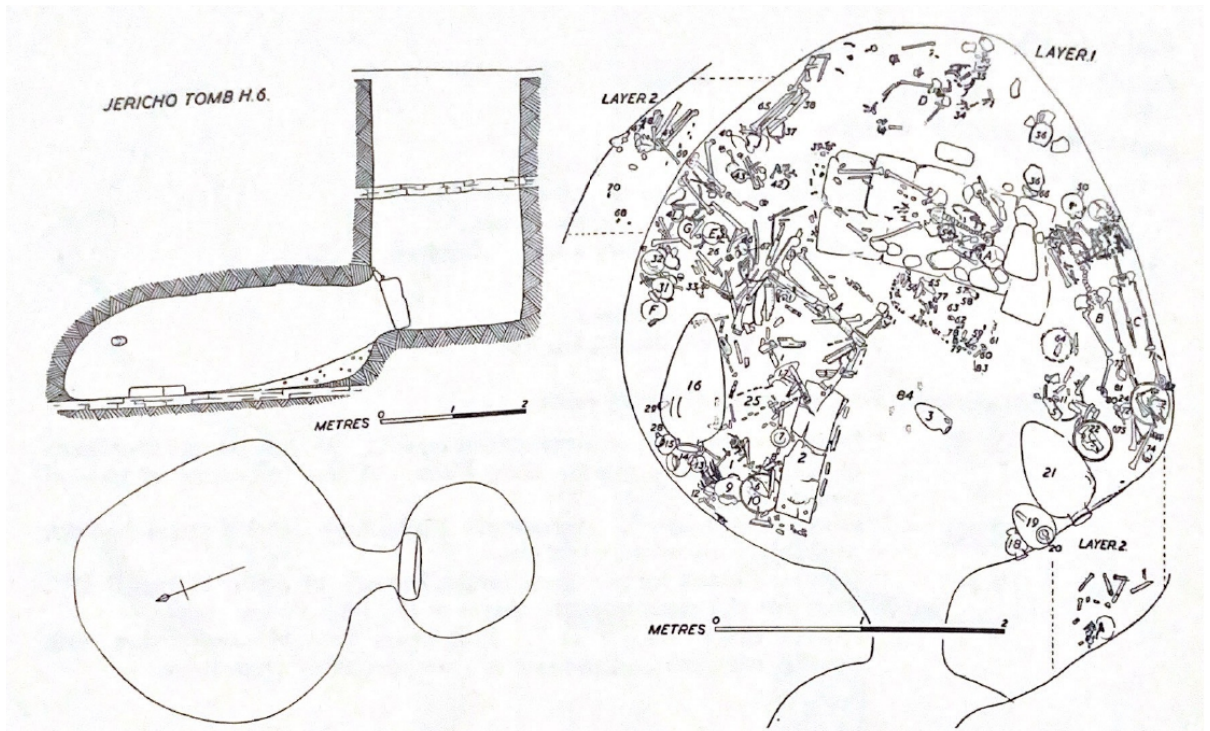


Figure 2. Reconstruction of Tomb H 6 (Kenyon 1960: 454, Fig. 193).

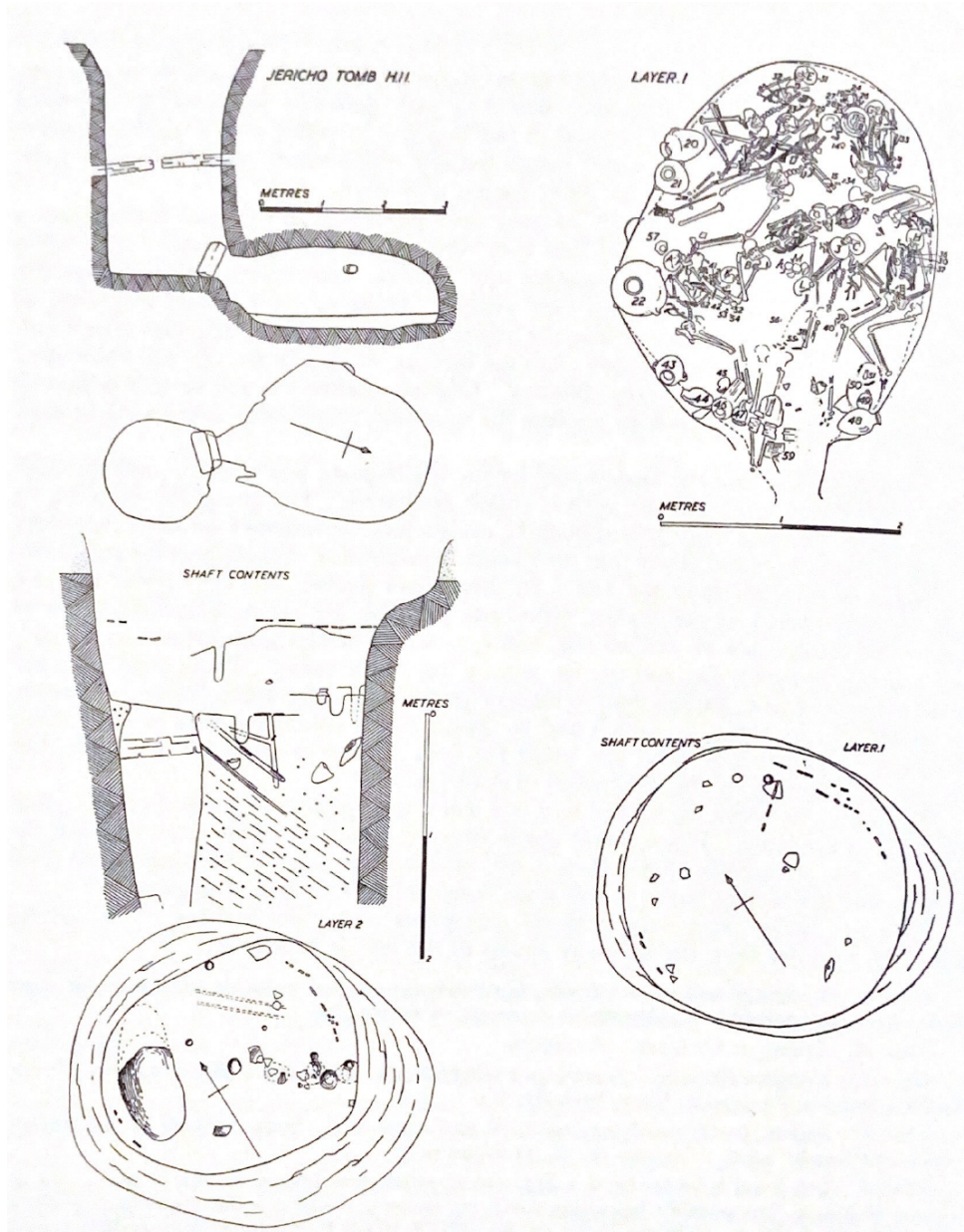


Figure 3. Reconstruction of Tomb H 11 (Kenyon 1960: 454, Fig. 204).

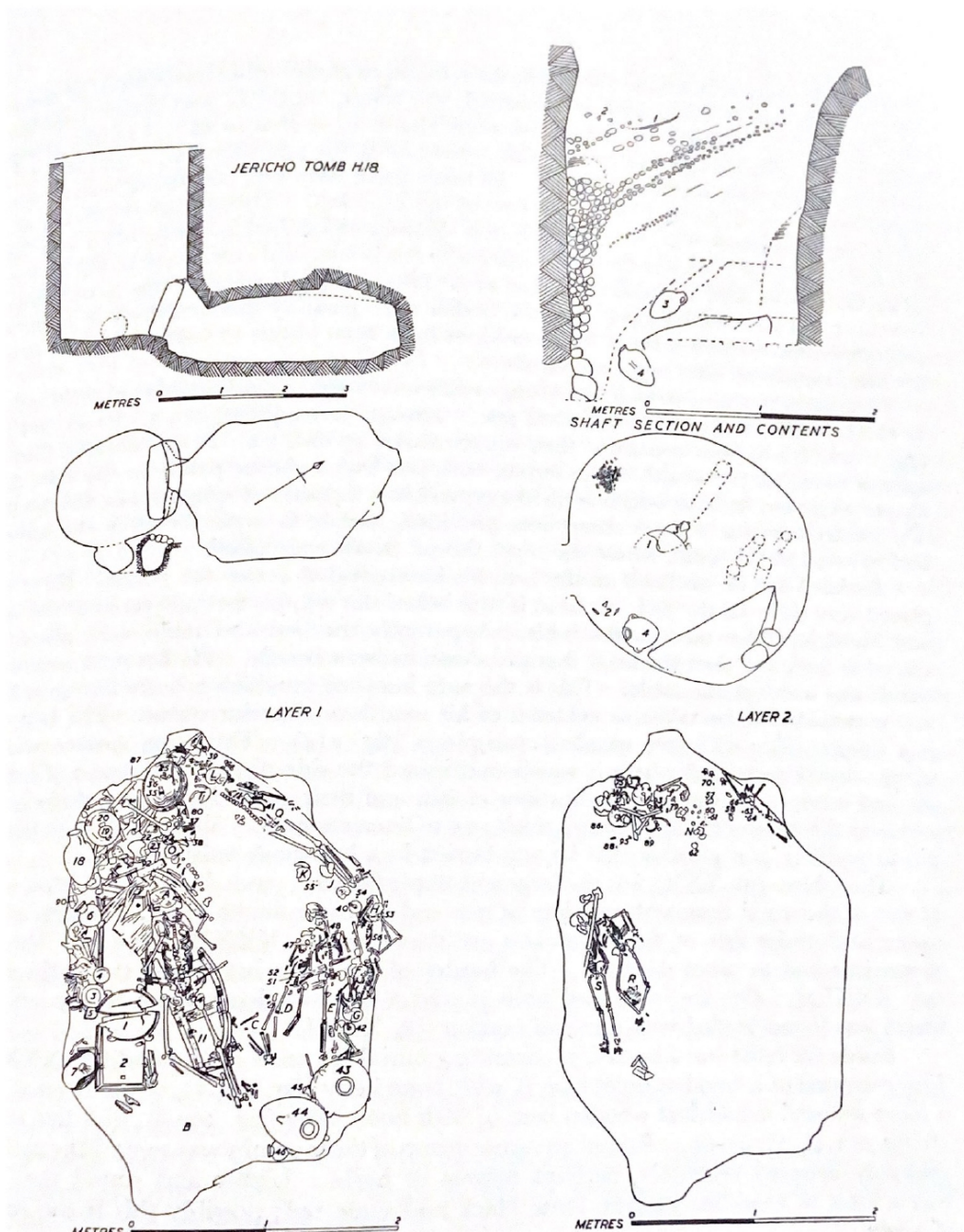


Figure 4. Reconstruction of Tomb H 18 (Kenyon 1960: 487, Fig. 211).

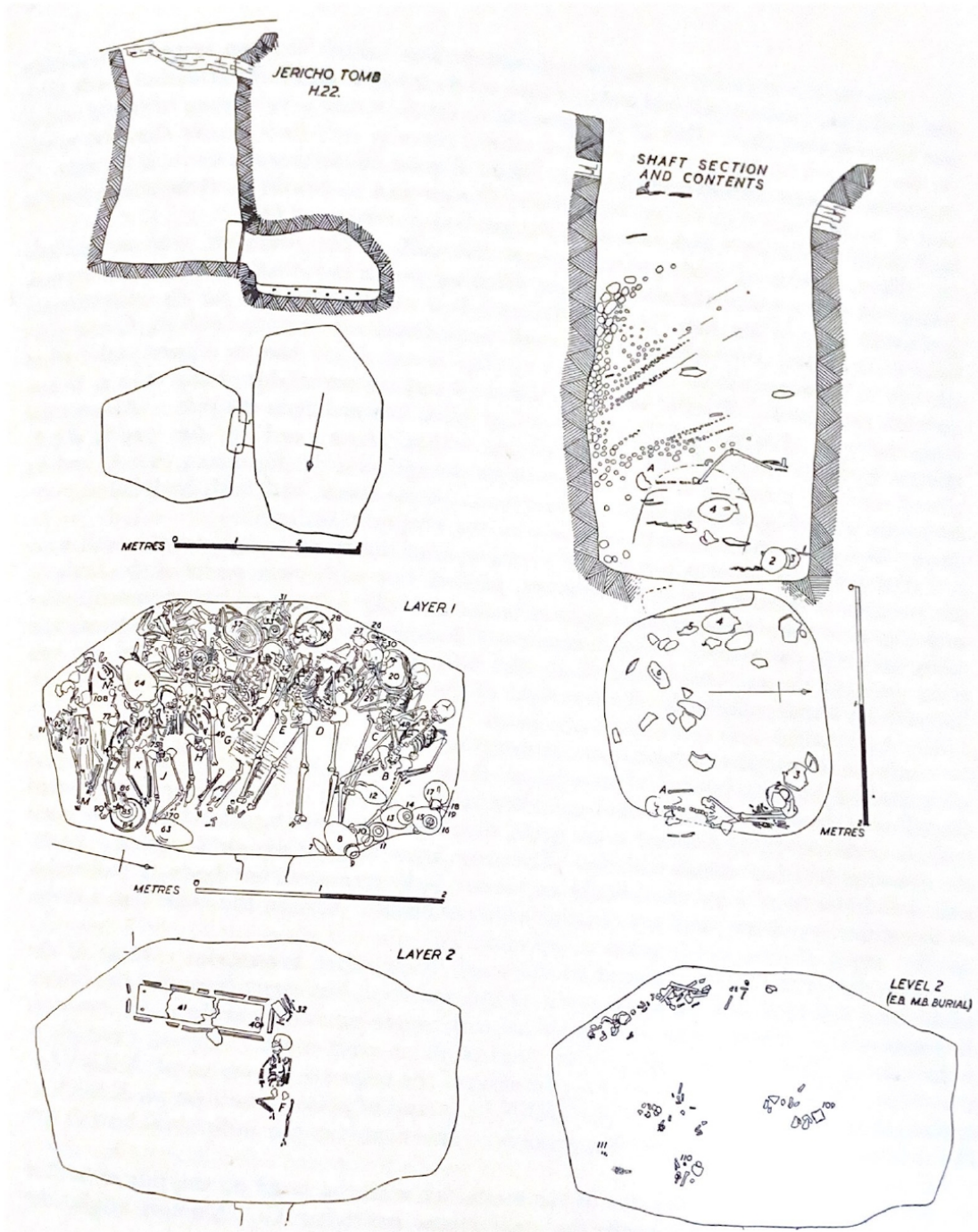


Figure 5. Reconstruction of Tomb H 22 (Kenyon 1960: 501, Fig. 217).

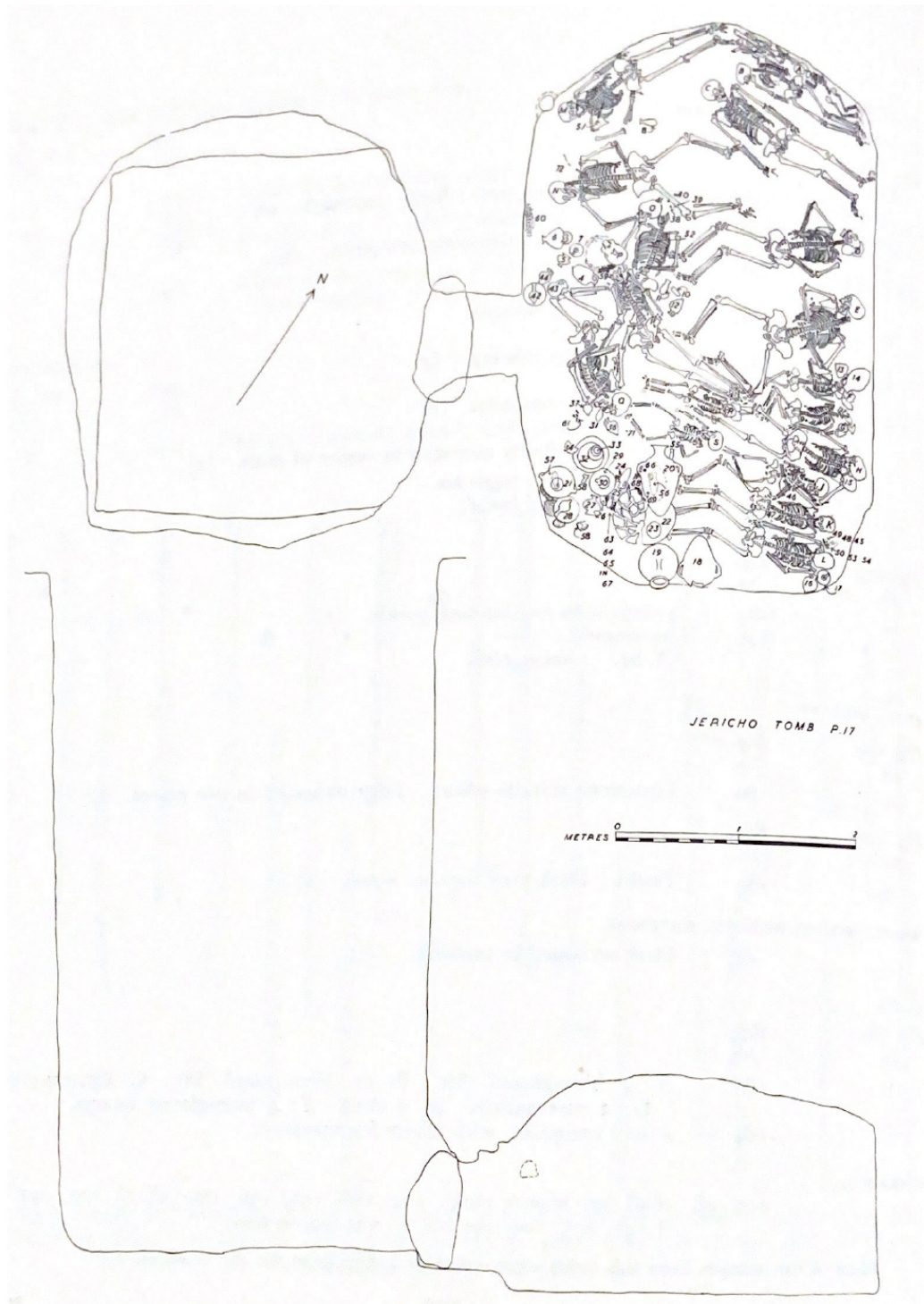


Figure 6. *Reconstruction of Tomb P 17* (Kenyon 1960: 358, Fig. 175).

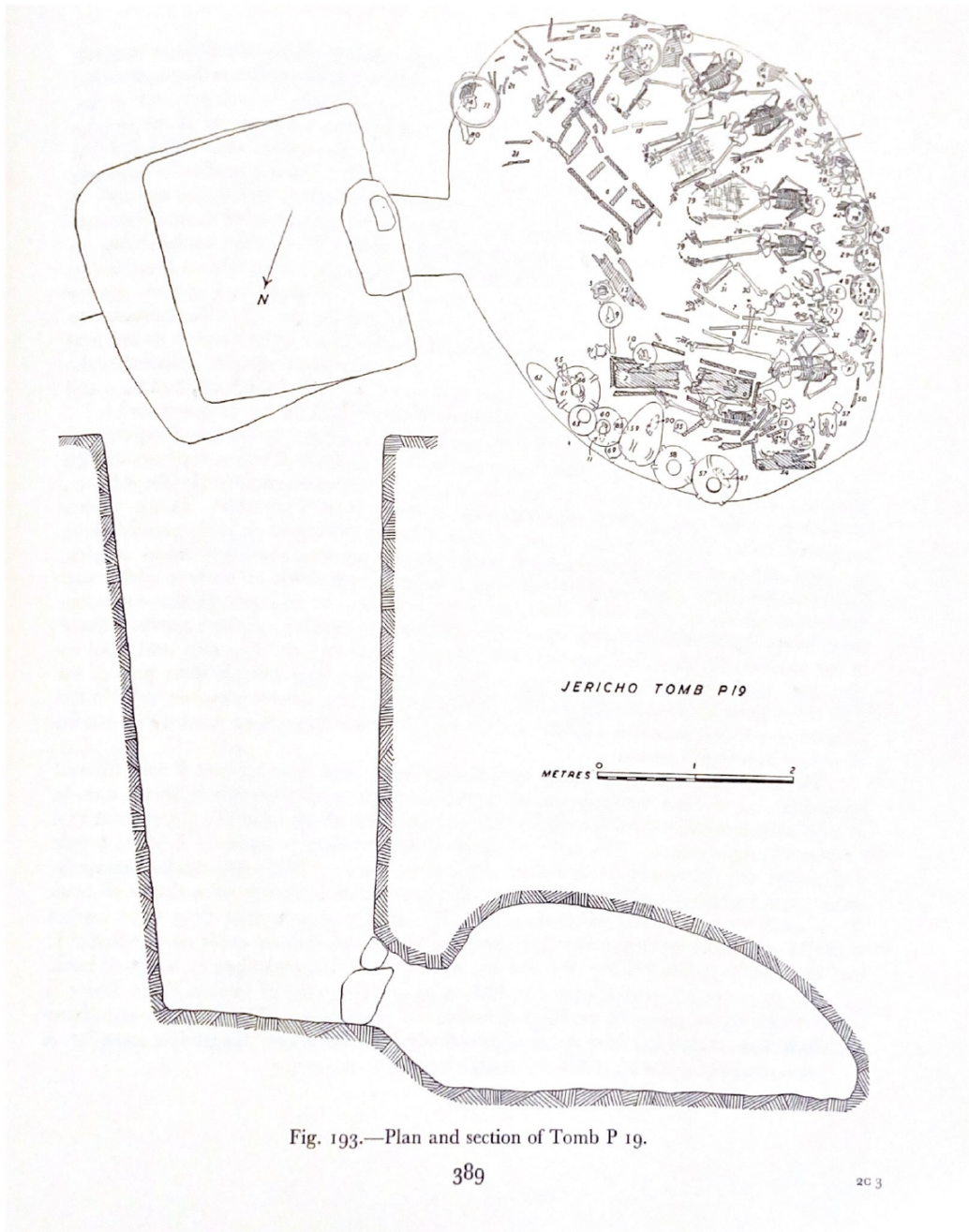


Figure 7. Reconstruction of Tomb P 19 (Kenyon 1960: 389, Fig. 193).

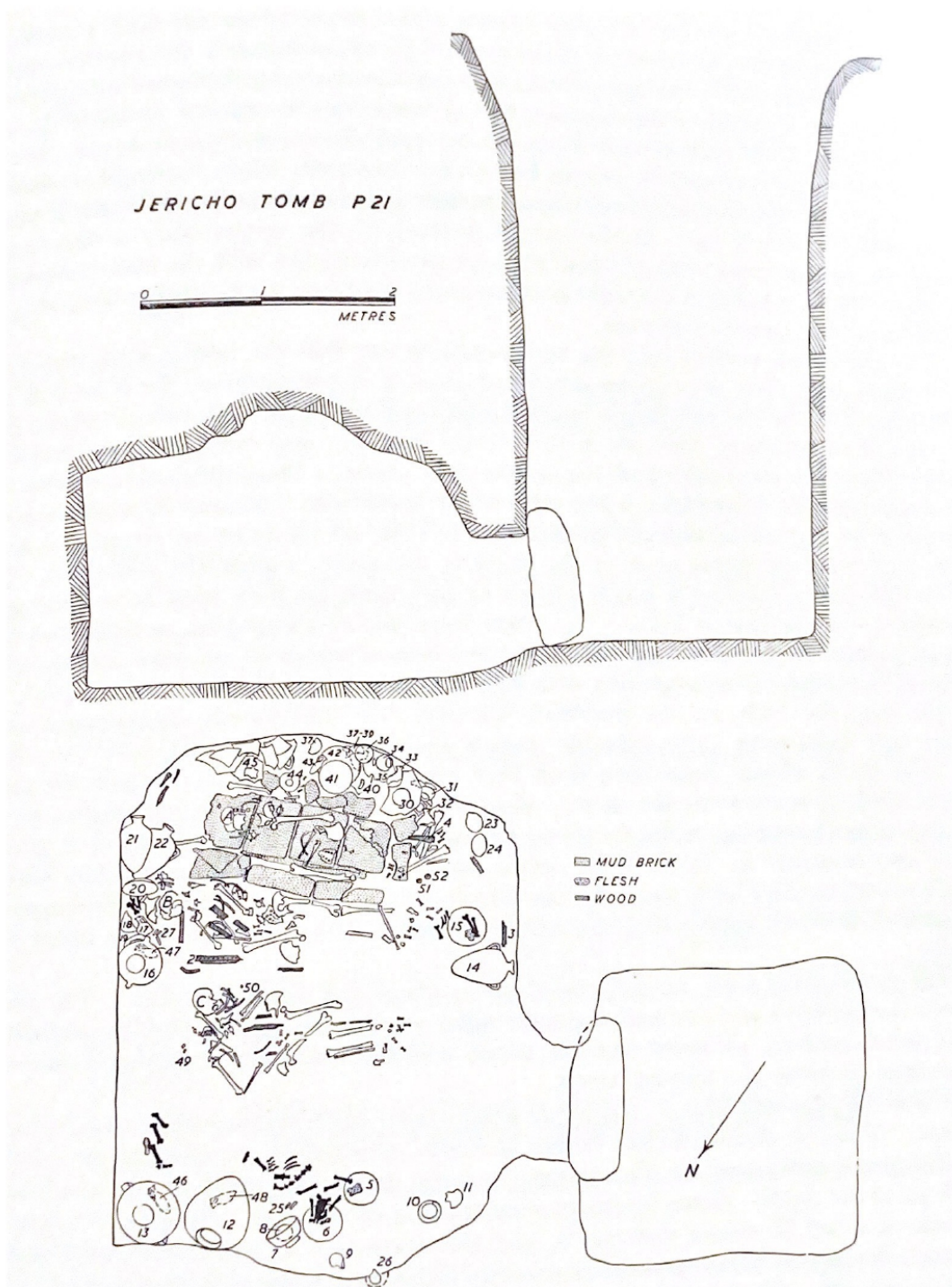


Figure 8. Reconstruction of Tomb P 21 (Kenyon 1960: 429, Fig. 223).

APPENDIX 13. TABLE XIII

HAFT TEPE.



Figure 1. *Digital reconstruction of the mass royal tomb (Square A XX and B XIX) with 23 skeletons (Copyright by Usieto Cabrera, D.) (drawn after Negahban 1977: Plate XXXI).*

