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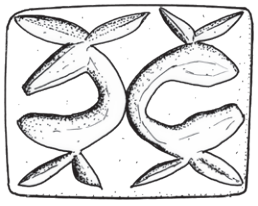

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# Ebla between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages: A Précis (and Some New Data)

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**Abstract**. The discoveries of the 2004-2008 excavations at Tell Mardikh, ancient Ebla, in north-western Syria, and the following processing of the archaeological record have allowed for a re-examination the site's trajectory between Early Bronze IVB and Middle Bronze I. Not only it was possible to gain a clearer picture of the site's trajectory during Early Bronze IVB, the phase following the demise of Ebla's Early Bronze IVA kingdom, but also to re-investigate how the site transitioned from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age at a deeper chronological scale, which was hampered before by the lack of sufficient stratified data. Moving from these insights, this paper offers a summary of the state of research on Ebla between the Early and the Middle Bronze Ages and proposes some ideas concerning this critical nexus in the site's development. Moreover, unpublished stratified ceramic data are presented and examined that might allow current synchronisms between Ebla, the Middle Euphrates, and the Syrian Jazirah between the late 3rd and the early 2nd millennium BC to be re-considered, and to shed light on the site's participation and role in region-wide processes that were taking place between the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BC. This way, this crucial connection in the developmental trajectory of Ebla and in the study of ancient Syria will be re-analysed offering insights into archaeology, chronology, and history.

**Keywords.** Ebla, Northern Levant, Upper Mesopotamia, Early-Middle Bronze transition, Ur III period, chronology, synchronization, pottery, Early Khabur Ware, Amorites.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the passage from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age in Syria relates to urban regeneration between the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BC and the emergence of Amorite identities in the region. The investigation of the processes through which Ebla, the Bronze Age city corresponding to present-day Tell Mardikh (Fig. 1), in north-western inland Syria, transitioned from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age is a long-standing

question, which many scholars have tried to answer during the past decades. However, the examination of this matter at a deeper chronological scale was hampered by the lack of sufficient stratified data to investigate the period between the end of Ebla's territorial state, which flourished in the 24th century BC, and the establishment of the 'Amorite' city at the onset of the 2nd millennium BC. Initially, the question has been framed within the conceptual scaffolding of the 'dark age' at the end of the 3rd millennium BC and of the regeneration of complex societies at the dawn of the 2nd millennium BC (Akkermans, Schwartz 2003: 282-284). The first is largely superseded now, although it still resonates in a few recent works (see *infra*), the second is currently subject to a historical re-evaluation in the light of emerging greater continuity between the later Early Bronze Age and the earlier Middle Bronze Age traditions in western inland Syria (Morandi Bonacossi 2014: 416-419). From the standpoint of Ebla, the excavations carried out by the Italian team of Sapienza University of Rome in the Lower Town south-east from 2004 to 2007 uncovered, for the first time at this site, a long occupational sequence (Fig. 2) spanning from Early Bronze IVA (EB IVA) to Middle Bronze II (MB II), and, for what concerns this article, a multi-phased Early Bronze IVB occupation, nestled between the remains of the Early Bronze IVA and the Middle Bronze I (MB I) strata, and more stratified evidence of Early Bronze IVB (EB IVB) was found on the Acropolis in 2008 (Fig. 3) (Matthiae 2006a: 470-475; 2007: 493-512; 2009a: 773-777; 2010: 191-208, 390, 395-398; 2020: 95-105; 2021: 143-154, 299-300, 303-306; D'Andrea 2014-2015; 2016a; 2018; 2020a).

This discovery has allowed us to piece together the scattered evidence for the EB IVB occupation previously uncovered at the site and to try and re-evaluate it chronologically and historically. In this article, we summarize the state of research on Ebla's developments between the Early and the Middle Bronze Ages and present unpublished stratified ceramic data that might allow us to re-examine certain proposals of interregional synchronisms between Ebla, the Middle Euphrates, and the Syrian Jazirah, namely the hypothesis that the Ur III period may be contemporary with the Middle Bronze I (MB I) stratum Mardikh IIIA, rather than with the later part of the EB IVB stratum Mardikh IIB2 (see, e.g., Porter 2007: chart 1; Pruß 2007: 485-486; Pfälzner 2017: 172-173, 175 and *infra*). We will use the discoveries made at Tell Mardikh from 2004 to 2008 and the results of the ensuing post-excavation study of the archaeological record to discuss how these data may change the way we understand the crucial nexus between the Early and the Middle Bronze Ages at Ebla and may shed light on the site's participation and role in region-wide processes that were taking place between the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BC.

## 2. THE STATE OF RESEARCH: CHRONOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

The study of the later Early Bronze Age phase and of the transition from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age is intrinsically connected with the investigation of processes of formation, crisis/collapse, and regeneration of urban societies in the northern Levant during the centuries from *c*. 3000 to *c*. 1900 BC, that is from Early Bronze II to Middle Bronze I. Within this long timespan, the period between *c*. 2300 and *c*. 1900 BC is associated with the examination of mechanisms that led to the transition from differentiated local trajectories in the Early Bronze Age to a homogenized socio-cultural complex in the Middle Bronze Age. The latter phenomenon is often referred to as the Amorite *koine*, happening within an Amorite *oikumene* (Schwartz 2013a; Burke 2014a; 2014b: 408-410; 2017: 264-266). However, it is increasingly accepted that the mechanisms that produced the homogenization were diverse, and not necessarily ascribable univocally to the emergence of the Amorites both at a political level and (presumably) in the archaeological record (Homsher, Cradic 2017; 2018; D'Andrea 2019a). Moreover, the centuries between *c*. 2300 to *c*. 1900 BC are tied to the definition of timing and chronology of the shift from the Early to the Middle Bronze Ages in western inland Syria and of the synchronization of this event with the regional periodization schemes of the surrounding regions. Obviously, the definition of the chronological frame impacts on historical interpretations of connectivity and mechanisms that triggered political and sociocultural changes, possibly mirrored also by transformations of the material culture.

Traditional interpretations of Ebla's developmental trajectory between the mid-3rd millennium BC and the onset of the 2nd millennium BC centered on a few key points. Firstly, between *c*. 2500 to *c*. 2300 BC Ebla par-

ticipated in a phase of flourishing urbanization leading to archaic state formation in the Northern Levant and was, indeed, the regional capital of a kingdom that ideally extended from Karkemish on the Euphrates to around Hama in the central Orontes Valley.[1] The Ebla kingdom was violently destroyed towards the end of the 24th century BC. Both Sargon and Naram-Sin of Akkad claimed that they destroyed Ebla, but according to some scholars Ebla was destroyed by Mari (Archi, Biga 2003; Sallaberger 2007: 422; Finkbeiner, Novák 2015: 12) or by a *shakkannakku* (literally general) of Mari on the orders of Sargon (Durand 2012). Besides, it has even been argued that a natural catastrophe might have been the catalyst for this destruction (Kennedy 2015: 311-312; 2016: 8, 19), though the latter proposal is based on a misunderstanding of the archaeological evidence (see *infra*). Yet still, Matthiae has discussed numerous historical and archaeological reasons why, in his view, Sargon is the most suitable candidate for the destruction of Ebla and suggested that in Naram-Sin's inscriptions the name Ebla is a *pars pro toto* and the king may have referred to the region of Ebla and not to the site itself (Matthiae 2010: 192 = 2021: 143). Until a few years ago, it was believed that the devastation of Palace G and the EB IVA city of Ebla would have caused decline at the site during the post-destruction phase in EB IVB, traditionally (and conventionally) dated to *c*. 2300-2000 BC. During the latter period, Ebla would have retained an urban status, despite a drastic reduction of monumentality compared to the previous EB IVA period, as a possible sign of shrinkage and abatement (Matthiae 1993: 619-621). Nonetheless, it was believed that during EB IVB Ebla might still have had some role in interregional connectivity, taking the Ur III-period texts from Drehem mentioning men from Ebla (Owen 1992: 117-122; Sallaberger 2007: 434-435) as evidence for contacts between the two cities in the 21st century BC (Matthiae 2006b: 92 = 2013b: 249; 2010: 204 = 2021: 152-153; 2020: 105; Dolce 2007: 184; Pinnock 2009: 71), corresponding to the late EB IVB in the traditional chronology. According to traditional narratives, at the onset of the 2nd millennium BC and seemingly following a second destruction towards the end of EB IVB, Ebla would have been rebuilt with a new urban layout determined first and foremost by the outer ramparts possibly under the aegis of an Amorite leader, who might or might not have been responsible for the end of the EB IVB town (Matthiae 2009b: 187-188 = 2013a: 75-76; 2010: 204-298 = 2021: 153-154).

From the early 2000s until the most recent times, what happened at Ebla and, more generally, in Western Syria during the last quarter of the 3rd millennium BC has been subject to an intense scholarly debate, centring on the one hand on investigating and understanding collapse, crisis, and transformation and on the other hand on tracking continuity and discontinuity between the Early and Middle Bronze Age traditions. In addition, the so-called "4.2 ka BP climatic event" and the connected migration hypotheses linking material culture transformations and social change to either intra- or inter-regional movements of people triggered by climatic change have played a part in the conceptual frameworks applied to the archaeological evidence of the EB IVB period from western inland Syria (e.g., Burke 2014a; 2014b; 2017; Weiss 2014; 2017; Kennedy 2016). Glenn Schwartz and Naomi F. Miller (Schwartz 2007; Schwartz, Miller 2007), 'ecofactual and artifactual' data at hand, discussed the difficulty of identifying widespread collapse during EB IVB, a notion that would prove correct ten years later with an increased body of data (Mazzoni 2013: 36-38; Cooper 2014: 288; Schwartz 2017: 114-116; D'Andrea 2019a: 16-24). However, the development of the regional sites during the latter period were still obscure until a few years ago, and the proposed interpretations somewhat biased by the lack of substantial stratified data, and synchronisms likewise.

As concerns periodization, ceramic chronology, and synchronisms, the question 'what to label the end of the Third millennium ceramic assemblages' (Porter 2007a: 73) arose from comparisons between the ceramic ensembles of the Ebla region and those of the Middle Euphrates Valley sites. In the wake of this debate, two proposals were put forward.

The first suggestion, advanced by Mazzoni and Felli (2007: 212-215, fig. 4) and Felli and Merluzzi (2008: 100-103) is that at some sites, such as Tell Afis, in the Ebla region, it was possible to isolate a transitional EB-MB phase during which ceramic traits typical of both the Early and Middle Bronze Age traditions co-existed. This

[1] On the geographic extension of the Ebla kingdom, see, e.g., Archi 2015: fig. 1; Biga 2013; Bonechi 2016: 59, with different opinions concerning either the inclusion or exclusion of Hama from the territory of the Ebla kingdom; for the inclusion of Karkemish in the territory of the kingdom, see Fronzaroli 2003: 43.

phase would be comparable with the transitional phase identified at some sites in the Middle Euphrates Valley and then called Phase 6 in the local, regional, sequence (Cooper 2006: 23-26, figs 1.8-1.9; Porter 2007a: 72-78; 2007b: 12-13, pl. VI), and now referred to as Early Middle Euphrates (EME) 6 after the ARCANE project (Sconzo 2015: 109, 111, and tab. 8, pls 28-30, 35). The latter phase is, in turn, similar ceramically to Phase Early Jazirah V (Orsi 2012: 91-95) now called Early Jazirah (EJZ) 5 according to the ARCANE's periodization scheme and terminology for the latter region (Rova 2011: 64-65, tab. 7 and Pls 21-25). The evidence from Tell Afis can be positively matched with that of Tell Mishrifeh/Qaṭna, in the central Orontes Valley. At the latter site Daniele Morandi Bonacossi (2008: 128-129, 131, 135-137, 149, and figs 15-19) has identified, within the EB IVB sequence excavated in Operation J, on the Acropolis of Qaṭna, a rather long timespan (Phases 20-18) during which the Early-to-Middle Bronze Age transition would have been accomplished, and only after which it would be possible to isolate the peak of the MB I (Phase 17) at this site (Morandi Bonacossi 2008: 146-147, 149, and fig. 24). In a technological study of the pottery, Marco Iamoni (2014: 20-21) confirmed this proposition from the petrographic point of view, showing that substantial changes in the modes of production of ceramics that would crystallize in the Middle Bronze Age began during EB IVB at Qaṭna. In fact, EB IVB, and especially the later stages, were accompanied by significant technological transformations that anticipate aspects typical of the Middle Bronze Age ceramic production, which would then clearly be accomplished at an 'industrial' scale. This is shown by the workshop area installed on the Acropolis in Phase 18 (late EB IVB or transitional EB/MB phase in Operation J) and remarkably enlarged in Phase 17 (early MB I phase in Operation J) (Morandi Bonacossi 2008: 136-137, 147-149, figs 20-23). Interestingly, 'industrial' workshop areas for pottery production appeared at several other sites across the Levant from the EB/MB transition and well into the MB I period (Morandi Bonacossi 2008, 428). Such pottery production areas can be found in western inland Syria at Tell Afis in Phase Afis IV/V (EB/MB phase) according to the excavators (Mazzoni, Felli 2007: 212, fig. 3; Felli, Merluzzi 2008: 98-101 and fig. 3), in Lebanon at Tell 'Arqa during Phase N, in the advanced stages of Level 14 (later part of MB I; Thalmann 2010: 99, fig. 20), and in Jordan at Tell el-Hayyat, in Phase 4 (MB I; Falconer, Fall 2006: 39-40, figs 3.12-3.15). This evidence is in accordance with Homsher and Cradic's (2017: 271, 275-276) interpretation of typological and techno-stylistic changes in the Levantine pottery of the Middle Bronze Age taking place at a region-wide scale and pointing to growing homogenization because of spreading technological innovation within high patterns of connectivity in the frame of the 'second-generation states' (definition by Schwartz 2013b: 498) of the Middle Bronze Age.

The second proposal that has gradually become popular from the early 2000s, when it was advanced first by Ann Porter (2007a: 78-87 and chart 1), is that, based on ceramic parallels, the most suitable correlation between Phase 6/now EME 6 and Ebla's phases would not be with Mardikh IIB2 – corresponding to the EB IVB stratum – but with Mardikh IIIA – corresponding to the MB I stratum. A correlation has also been proposed between the Ur III period in southern Mesopotamia and EJZ 5 in the Jazirah, with MB I at Ebla and in western inland Syria rather than with EB IVB (Pruß 2007: 484-486; Schmidt 2012: 170-174, fig.10-13; 2014; Pfälzner 2017: 172-177), while others are more cautions (Schwartz 2017: 100) or hesitant (D'Andrea 2014-2015: 153-154, n. 8; 2016a: 201, fn. 5; 2016b: 218-220; 2018: 230-232; 2019b: 2274-276).

In this paper I would like to argue that there are two levels of analysis of this issue. One question is the relative, ceramic phasing of EB IVB and MB I, which may be re-addressed based on phased, primary, ceramic assemblages that were not available for scholars to see when the various suggestions of moving synchronisms between western and eastern regions of Syria were put forward. The other question is the absolute chronology of the EB IVB and MB I periods in western Syria, which is still in flux due to the paucity of reliable radiometric dates to define the boundaries of these phases *within the timespan including the 21st and the 19th centuries BC*. The latter consideration applies also to the definition of Phase EME 6 in the Euphrates Valley and EJZ 5 in the Syrian Jazirah.

## 3. EBLA DURING EARLY BRONZE IVB AND THE EB/MB TRANSITION

### *3.1. The Data from the 1964–2003 Excavations at Tell Mardikh*

The occurrence of the very distinctive Painted Simple Ware, which has been for decades the *fossil directeur* of the EB IVB period (Mazzoni 1985: 14-15; 2002: 79 and Pl. XLIV) made it possible to recognize an EB IVB presence at Ebla since the very beginning of the archaeological exploration at Tell Mardikh. Residual EB IVB sherds were found at several spots at the site (D'Andrea 2018: fig. 2), and an impressive amount of several hundred sherds of EB IVB pottery was collected in ash layers heaped in the ramparts (Mazzoni 1985: fig. 6: 2-4, 6-7, 11, 13-15, 17-20, 22-23; D'Andrea 2015: figs 1: 1-10, 14-17, 2; 2016a: 209-211 and figs 4: a and 5-8). The latter layers were interpreted by Matthiae (2009b: fn. 61 at pp. 62, 64, = 2013b: 73, fn. 61) as the debris of the destruction of the EB IVB settlement cleared and used to accomplish the impressive earthworks at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age.[2] Beside secondary materials, architecture dating from this period was also uncovered: dwellings in Area T (Matthiae 1993: 615, 617, 619-621 and fig. 3) and the older phase (Phase I) of the Archaic Palace (Matthiae 1993: 638-640 and fig. 14; 1995: 654-655, fig. 2, 659-672, figs 7-17; 2006b: 92 and fig. 6 = 2013b: 248 and pl. 74; here Fig. 4), both in the Lower Town North and uncovered in the 1990s, and the remains of a temple on the Acropolis, uncovered in a sondage under the Temple of Ishtar of the Middle Bronze Age, excavated in 1966 (Floriani Squarciapino 1967: 69-72, tavv, XXVIII: 4, LX: 1-14) and extended in 1968 (here Fig. 5).

The major limit of the EB IVB evidence from Ebla available until 2003 was that it is only related to one-phase contexts dating from this period, or, in other words, that a long stratigraphic sequence from this period to use as a benchmark for the phasing and synchronization of the evidence from the different excavation areas at the site was lacking. However, with this chronological caveat, it was still possible to infer some information on the nature of the EB IVB settlement; therefore, preliminary assessments of the evidence were put forward by the archaeologists working at Ebla.

In her re-examinations of the evidence, Rita Dolce proposed that it might have taken a couple of generations for Ebla to recover from the destruction, and that a process of recovery should have started after the end of the Akkadian period (Dolce 2007: 174), following the abandonment of the site after the end of EB IVA and a short-term gap (*contra* Matthiae 1995: 125; 2020: 101). This gap would have been followed by the restart of construction activities in several sectors of the Lower Town in particular, according to a new urban layout compared to EB IVA, which would be kept in the Middle Bronze Age. This event would have inaugurated a thriving phase of life of the new settlement (Dolce 2007: 183-184, 188) under the aegis of a new ruling dynasty (Dolce 1999: 293-295, 297; 2007: 175-176 and fig. 9; see also Dolce 2001: 21-25). Dolce also suggested that in the EB IVB urban pattern some earlier foci of political power and cult were preserved and actually persisted through the long developmental trajectory between EB IVA and MB II (Dolce 2009: 275-276), and in particular from the EB IVB centre to the 'Amorite' city' (Dolce 2009: 267), like some secular and public buildings on the Acropolis. The latter hypothesis was based on the persistence of cult buildings in Area D, and possibly in Areas N, and P (see Dolce 2001: 17; Pinnock 2004: 93, figs 2-3; D'Andrea 2014-2015: 135, fig. 3), and on the notion of ash layers with EB IVB pottery sherds under the courtyard of the later Middle Bronze Age Palace E, which have been later re-ascribed to EB IVA (see Matthiae 2020: 101 and footnote 2 here). A connection between the EB IVB and MB I traditions at Ebla was recognized also by Frances Pinnock (2009). Pinnock did not consider the two horizons as 'one and the same culture in evolution', though stressed the importance of continuity at Ebla, 'between the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC' (Pinnock 2009: 79) – meaning, in the traditional chronology, between EB IVB and MB I – in the representation of kingship in art and urban principles, as well as in royal onomastics.

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[2] It was earlier asserted that further ash layers containing EB IVB pottery were identified on the Acropolis, in a limited probe in the courtyard of the monumental building in Area E interpreted as the Royal Palace of the later Middle Bronze Age I-II phases (Fronzaroli 1967: 81-82; Matthiae 1995: 132). However, Matthiae (2011: 743-761, in particular 751; 2020: 101) has subsequently revised this statement in light of the 2008-2010 excavations on the Acropolis that showed that everywhere in the northern and western sectors the Middle Bronze Age and later architecture were set directly above the EB IVA destruction layer. In fact, the pottery from the sounding published by Fronzaroli in 1967 looks EB IVA in date rather than EB IVB.

In a 2007 reconsideration of the evidence from Ebla at the EB-MB transition, Stefania Mazzoni and Candida Felli (2007: 208-209) pointed out that, in the state of research of that time, from the available archaeological evidence and epigraphic records (Ur III texts mentioning Ebla, the inscription on the torso of Ibbit Lim's statue, and Ib-Damu's seal from Kültepe/Kanesh) it was not possible to infer sufficient data to determine critical chronological (both relative and absolute) turning points in Ebla's developmental trajectory between the end of EB IVA and the beginning of MB I. These crucial yet chronologically indistinct aspects were:

1) Whether there had been a hiatus between EB IVA and IVB;
2) The duration and phasing of re-urbanization in EB IVB;
3) The existence and extent of disruption between EB IVB and MB I.

Mazzoni and Felli also stressed the importance of defining whether urban regeneration at Ebla (with the construction of the rampart and the new urban layout) would have taken place within the chronological framework of the Ur III-period or the post-Ur III period horizon based, respectively, on different proposed dates for the Ibbit-Lim inscription to either the Ur III period (Frayne 1990: 807) or MB I (Gelb 1984: 213-229; Archi 2002: 26). The two options would place this event, respectively, 'within a context of Ur III primacy' or in a new sociocultural and socio-political framework characterized by the advent of Amorites (Mazzoni, Felli 2007: 208). The latter proposition is related to traditional interpretative paradigms seeing the political and economic emergence of Amorites as a Middle Bronze Age phenomenon. Finally, Mazzoni and Felli (2007: 209) suggested that, in their view, the most suitable reading of the then available archaeological data for the EB/MB transition at Ebla was 'a process of cultural continuity (...) ascertained by material culture in connection with a stratigraphic sequence showing apparently no break in the occupational history of the site'. They also maintained that 'the re-structuring of the early MB I Ebla can be interpreted not as a revival after a collapse but as the apex of a trend that had already started in the course of EB IVB and which included economic stability and, eventually, growth and political stability' (Mazzoni, Felli 2007: 209).

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the importance of the evidence excavated from 2004 to 2008 and the subsequent data processing to answer the questions listed above, and use my own research on Ebla in the EB IVB period carried out during the past years to support the view of some degree of continuity in the occupation of the settlement between EB IVB and MB I, as well as to explore the hypothesis of a connection between the two periods in terms of sociocultural and socio-political dynamics taking place at the site and its region. Above all, I will discuss how to analyse these phenomena on a deep chronological scale may allow us to frame them historically and conceptually, shedding light on the factors that made Ebla's urban regeneration possible and the potential agents of this resurgence, and bringing resilience into the discourse as a decisive mechanism for possible EB IVB/MB I continuity in some socio-political structures that might have ensured stability and growth notwithstanding a destruction in between.

### *3.2. Results of Research at Ebla from 2004–Present*

In 2004, the decision to start excavations in Area HH in the Lower Town South-East yielded an unprecedented opportunity to investigate and understand in a better way the Early Bronze IVB sequence at Ebla. Paolo Matthiae (2006a: 470-475; 2007: 493-512; 2009a: 773-777; 2010: 191-208, 390, 395-398; 2020: 95-105; 2021: 143-154, 299-300, 303-306) and the current author (D'Andrea 2014-2015; 2016a; 2018; 2020a) have described and analysed this sequence in detail, but it will be useful to summarize the main stages below (Tab. I).

The destruction that brought the EB IVA city to an end, and which is well documented in the Palace G rooms on the Acropolis, was detected only in a limited sector of the Temple of the Rock in Area HH because of later clearing operations. In fact, possibly soon after the destruction – as is suggested by lingering EB IVA traits in the pottery assemblages of the earliest EB IVB phase in this area (EB IVB1a) – the Temple of the Rock underwent a sort of termination ritual, including cleaning and clearing the debris, the deposition of a group of pottery vessels in the cavities of the cella, and the ritual sealing of the cella and antecella with several courses of mudbricks and a

thick layer of crushed limestone devoid of any archaeological material. Soon after, still in the early EB IVB phase (EB IVB1b), retaining walls were built along the outer perimeter walls and on the front of the by then no-longer-used temple, and dwellings were built and used along the northern and western perimeter walls of the temple.

In the following phase (EB IVB2), some new activities were started, with levelling and still somewhat enigmatic architecture that may be connected, as possible substruction(?), with the reorganization of the area as a sacred compound in the following phase (EB IVB3), with a temple proper – Temple HH4 – flanked by a smaller shrine – Temple HH5 (Fig. 6). The ceramic phasing associated with the stratigraphic sequence in Area HH has allowed us to synchronize with this sequence the EB IVB evidence uncovered in the other areas of the site. It was thus possible to understand that not just the dwellings in Area T, but also the first construction phase of the Archaic Palace (Phase I), and the construction and use of Temple D3 on the Acropolis may correspond to this late EB IVB stage in Area HH. Moreover, following a reconsideration of the pottery from two tombs excavated in the basal level of the rampart in Area Z based on new parallels from Area HH, I have proposed to redate them (originally ascribed to MB I as the rest of the tombs dug into the rampart in this area) to the late EB IVB period.[3] In my view, it is likely that, at Ebla, roughly at the same time when Temple D3 on the Acropolis (Figs 3, 5) and the religious complex including Temple HH4 and Temple HH5 in the Lower Town south-east (Fig. 6) were built, the construction of the ramparts might have started (D'Andrea 2019a: 20, 23-24 and figs 16-17), like the beginning of the construction of the Archaic Palace (Fig. 4).

The construction projects of the Archaic Palace and of the rampart would have been interrupted by the destruction,[4] which was identified in the western sector of Area HH (Matthiae 2006a: 471, 474 and fn. 48) and which Matthiae recently, tentatively, ascribed to an expedition led by Shu-Suen against Ebla and other cities in the western regions (Matthiae 2010: 206-207 = 2021: 153; 2020: 101-105, with bibliography). However, construction works might have been resumed soon after that event and accomplished during the Middle Bronze Age, when the Archaic Palace was modified, completed, and finally used (Phase II, followed by Phases III-IV, all still in MB I; Matthiae 2006b: 87-91, figs 3-5 = 2013b: 246). The evidence of several tombs spanning (ceramically) the whole length of the MB I and the beginning of MB II dug into the upper (compared to the two, possibly EB IV, tombs mentioned above) layers of the rampart in Area Z (Baffi Guardata 2000: 56) is suggestive that the completion of the rampart took quite some time (on this aspect, see also Nadali 2018: 295-297). This new (or newly understood) evidence for EB IVB/MB I continuity suggests that whoever was the responsible for the second destruction of Ebla this still disturbing event might not have been as dramatic or at least not widespread as the devastation of the Early Bronze IVA city had been (see Dolce 2009: 268-269).

In fact, there is one more, apparently minor but indeed very important, piece of evidence in between the destruction of the late EB IVB settlement and the early MB I city, that is the presence of a well-defined phase (EB IVB 4) of architecturally modest, but certainly sedentary, occupation following the destruction in Area HH (D'Andrea 2020a: 59 and fig. 7; here Fig. 7). In past publications (D'Andrea 2014-2015: 138-139, tab. II; 2016a:

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[3] Mazzoni and Felli (2007: 207) and Mazzoni (2013: 51, fn. 86) had earlier suggested an EB IVB or EB/MB transitional date for the vessels int these two tombs (D. 6707 and D.6709), but their presence in the Middle Bronze Age rampart was considered as evidence for the construction of the rampart at the very beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. The chronological and historical implications of this datum for raising the date of the beginning of the construction of the rampart towards the end of EB IVB, before the destruction, have been discussed for the first time, together with the relative stratigraphic information, in D'Andrea 2019a, 20, 23-24 and figs 16-17.

[4] It is important to call attention to the fact that no EB IVB destruction layer has been identified in the rooms of the Archaic Palace, which might be either taken as a suggestion that the EB IVB destruction was not as ubiquitous as the EB IVA destruction, or that cleaning and clearing the debris happened when building activities were resumed in the early MB I stage, and the palace was accomplished and used. In some recent works (Kennedy 2015: 311-312; 2016: 8, 19) floor subsidence in the Archaic Palace has been taken as evidence for a natural catastrophe bringing the EB IVB settlement to an end, but this is due to an erroneous correlation of this piece of evidence with the phasing of the Archaic Palace. In fact, the floor showing clear signs of subsidence, which Matthiae (1995: 672) has connected with an earthquake, are those of the last MB I phase of use of the building, Phase IV (Matthiae 1995: 673, fig. 17; 2006b = 2013b: 245), not those of the EB IVB period, Phase I.

203; 2018: 233 and fig. 4; 2020a, 59, 62, tab. 1 and fig. 7; Matthiae 2009a: 64, fn. 16; 2009b: 64 = 2013b: 74; 2020: 96, fig. 5.2; see also Mazzoni 2013: 47), we have called this a 'squatters' reoccupation'. However, this definition should be probably changed to a description that emphasizes continuity of settlement with the previous inhabitants of the later EB IVB town (those who erected the temples, started to build the Archaic Palace, and possibly also initiated the construction of the rampart), as well as with the following phase of reconstruction, of which these individuals who remained at the site might have been the agents. Marked continuity between the pre- and post-destruction EB IVB phases at Ebla is strongly documented by pottery assemblages that may be ascribed to a terminal EB IVB horizon (Matthiae 2010: 205 = 2021: 150; 2020: 100 and fig. 5.8) with no sign of regression (see below). In my view, also considering the growing signs of continuity in the settlement between late EB IVB and early MB I, the presence of proper architecture, albeit unremarkable, may be interpreted as evidence for a phase of resilience after the destruction, albeit possibly short. Such a phase might have allowed the local community to get reorganized during MB I and to complete the construction works began at the end of EB IVB probably without letting too much time elapse after the destruction.

This new segment of Ebla's sequence is key to understanding the site developmental trajectory between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages and may be crucial to explaining continuity between the two periods in material culture and in the new urban layout. In fact, as for the first aspect, clearly continuity in the material culture included not just the pottery, but also the layout of temples (Figs 2-3). The two main Middle Bronze Age types – the bipartite temple *in antis* with longroom cella and the tripartite temple *in antis* (Fig. 8) – emerged from the architectural solutions elaborated during the late EB IVB phase that are well represented by the bipartite Temple HH 4 with longroom cella and by Temple D3, tripartite although still with a broadroom cella (Matthiae 2015: 80-85, 90, figs 4-5, 19-22; here see, respectively, Fig. 8: 3 and 8: 7). As for the second aspect, it seems ever more possible that a new urban layout including the outer rampart and a new seat of political power in the Lower Town (the Archaic Palace), and temples in Area D on the Acropolis and in Area HH was first conceived during the late EB IVB phase and maintained in the early Middle Bronze I phase (and even subsequently, although with further changes). In fact, all the main elements already present in the late EB IVB town, either accomplished – as Temple HH4 and HH5 and Temple D3[5] – or under construction – as the rampart and the Archaic Palace – mirror those that would typify the early MB I settlement. The possibility that Ebla's MB I urban layout was largely based on that of the EB IVB period was already suggested by Dolce (1999: 293, 298; 2007: 184; 2009: 267, see also Pinnock 2004: 93-95), Mazzoni and Felli (2007: 209, 219) argued that the reuse of the Archaic Palace between EB IVB and MB I might have been a sign of remarkable continuity of political structures between these two periods (see also Bonechi 1997: 36, fn. 25). In this author's view, this may not contrast with Matthiae's (2006b: 94 = 2013a: 250) interpretation of the earliest MB I phase of the Archaic Palace (Phase II) as a stage of decreased monumentality of the building compared to the ambitious project of the late EB IVB, and that, in this early MB I stage, the palace might have had a temporary "open" and somewhat peripheral reception unit. This hypothesis would fit in a scenario of recovery from a destruction, although in a slightly more advanced phase compared to the terminal EB IVB phase (EB IVB4) and when a Middle Bronze Age material culture proper had emerged at Ebla (Fig. 13), as at other sites in western Syria (see, e.g., Tell Afis Phase Afis V, Qatna Phase 17 in Operation J).

In MB I, the two sacred areas on the Acropolis and in the Lower Town south-east at Ebla were enhanced with the construction of two new temples above those of the EB IVB period (Figs 2-3). Temple D is patently a monumental structure (Fig. 3), and, although Temple HH 3 was very poorly preserved and razed (Fig. 9), it was possible to ascertain that it was built directly above the EB IVB Temple HH4. However, it was only later in the Middle Bronze Age sequence that the urban layout of the settlement changed with the establishment of a series of public buildings in the Lower Town in a large strip of land surrounding the slopes of the Acropolis, thus far uncovered on the northern, western, and southern sides, and with the construction of Palace E on the Acropolis (Fig. 1).

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[5] It has been suggested that an EB IVB temple might have preceded the MB I cult buildings also in Area P and N (see a summary in D'Andrea 2014-2015, 135, fig. 3, citing earlier references). However, this has not been considered here because of the current impossibility to define the date of these earlier structures within EB IVB even in terms of relative chronology and phasing.

Continuity between late EB IVB and early MB I could be framed within urban regeneration taking place throughout these periods under the aegis of a 'new' sociocultural component progressively risen to power during the reorganization process started in western Syria after the wane of the EB IVA Ebla kingdom and gradually accomplished during EB IVB through mechanisms that still largely elude our understanding. The most important implication of this hypothesis might be that sociocultural transformations that are traditionally considered typical of the Middle Bronze Age – the achievement of economic and political primacy by Amorites in north-western Syria – might have in fact begun during the later EB IVB phases (D'Andrea 2019a: 26). Weiss (2014: 376-377; 2017: 154-146) and Burke (2017) already suggested that substantial groups of Amorites were present in the northern Levant during the last century of the third millennium BC and Burke (2017: 270-271, 287-296) even proposed that they might have taken on political and economic power at major regional centres. However, here we argue that rather than "habitat-tracking" migrants (Weiss 2014: 374-375, 378; 2017: 145) or refugees (Burke 2017: 275-282, 287-296), such Amorites populations would have had stronger local roots, their presence in northwest inland Syria being already attested since at least EB IVA, as it can be appreciated, for instance, from the Ebla texts dating to the 24th century BC. Their rise to political and economic pre-eminence during EB IVB might be situated in a more general regional renegotiation of powers that might have followed the end of Ebla's EB IVA kingdom. Thus, in contrast to endogenous explanations for an EB IVB Amorite presence in the Ebla region, we propose a different, more endogenous interpretation and suggest that the *new* elites of the later EB IVB phase at Ebla might have emerged already from a sociocultural element that was previously a component of the *local* EB IVA society but was not in power at that time and that we may call, in the broadest sense, Amorite (on this issue, see Porter 2012: 309-312). This social component might have been able to achieve control of pivotal economic activities in the regional reorganization of the EB IVB period, following the fall of Ebla, and, this way, to rise also to political power (Nichols and Weber's [2006: 50] 'emerging "innovative" elites'). The proposed reconstruction may allow us to reconsider also striking aspects of continuity in intangible cultural aspects between EB IVA and MB I, such as royal onomastics, ideology, and collective memory, that had been noticed before though then framed within a different conceptual scaffolding pivoting on the notion that EB IVB was a phase of regression when EB IVA traditions were kept (Matthiae 1993: 619-621).

### *3.3. The pottery and the intra- and interregional synchronisms*

With the developmental trajectory delineated above for Ebla between late EB IVB and MB I in mind, let us now turn to the ceramic evidence for these periods, and to how the new stratified data from the 2004-2007 excavations in Area HH and the 2008 excavations in Area D may give novel insights on (and possibly contribute to a clarification of) synchronisms between Ebla and other sites in western inland Syria, like Tell Afis in Phases Afis IV/V and V, and Qatna in Phases 20-17 in Operation J, as well as between Ebla and sites in the Syrian Jazirah, like Tell Mozan during Phase C7.

The study of primary stratified assemblages of the late EB IVB phase (EB IVB3) in Area HH at Ebla (D'Andrea 2014-2015: 146; 2018: 225-229; 2019b: 268-270 and figs 5-10; 2020a: 78-79; here Fig. 10) clearly show that this phase was characterized by the following elements:

1) Long-lived EB IVB vessel types such as Simple Painted Ware vessels (Fig. 10: 1-3) and bowls with profiled rims (Fig. 10: 4-5);

2) Late EB IVB types such as unpainted goblets (Fig. 10: 6), either plain, with comb-incised decoration, or with grooved rims, and bowls with triple grooved rim and/or bowls with vertical rims (Fig. 10: 7);

3) Late EB IVB types that can be considered harbingers of the Middle Bronze Age tradition (Fig. 10: 8-9), in particular bowls with round carination and beaded rim (Fig. 10: 9).

These trends recur in comparable assemblages from Area T (Fig. 10: 10-21) and Area D (Fig.10: 22-29) dating from the late EB IVB (EB IVB 3) phase.

Evidently there are no late EB IVB assemblages where ceramic elements typical of the EB IVB and MB I traditions co-exist – in contrast to what was proposed for Tell Afis in Phase IV/V and Qaṭna in Phases 20-18 (Opera-

tion J). Forerunners of the Middle Bronze Age tradition can be observed at Ebla (Fig. 10: 8-9, 16-19, 22, 27-29), although they are not yet MB I vessels proper non only in terms of shapes (D'Andrea 2018: 228, 232-233; 2020a: 78-79; 2019b: 146, 151 and fig. 12: 12, 18-19) but probably also in terms of fabrics, though this needs to be further investigated by means of petrographic studies. These late EB IVB harbingers of the MB I tradition document the beginning of a development that, in the long run, would have eventually evolved into the MB I types if there had been no destruction, as it is visible at the two above-mentioned sites, but by no means represent a transitional EB/MB ceramic phase at Ebla.[6] It is a normal process of ceramic developments that innovations typical of a new tradition begin to emerge next to those of the older tradition until they replace them. At Ebla we cannot follow the whole process of gradual change and transformation observed at Tell Afis and Qaṭna, because of the destruction at the end of the late EB IVB phase. In fact, although the latter event was followed by continuity in the settlement and resilience, it certainly entailed a break in the development of ceramic industries, albeit short and localized. This may also be suggested by the fact that the pottery of the post-destruction phase (EB IVB4; Fig. 11) is represented by an EB IVB horizon, albeit a terminal one, which is closer to the preceding EB IVB3 ceramic phase at Ebla and to Phase Afis IV at Tell Afis than to the EB/MB transitional phases at Tell Afis (Phase IV/V) and Qaṭna (Phases 20-18 in Operation J) (Tab. II). Unfortunately, continuous construction and use of Area HH, especially in the temple area, with much clearing and levelling undergoing in-between the different phases made it impossible to recover any pottery from Temple's HH3 floors that would allow us to date ceramically the phase of use of this building. In fact, the remains of Temple HH3 were poor and razed, and covered with a thick layer of limestone gravel that served as a foundation for Temple HH2 (Fig. 13). The early MB I ceramic phase at Ebla is thus far documented by pottery assemblages from other sectors of the site, in particular from the Archaic Palace (Phase II). These assemblages illustrate a fully MB I ceramic horizon, although an archaic one, whose typological traits were described earlier by Lorenzo Nigro (2002: 101-104, and tab. 7, Pls XLVI: 1-6, 9-13, XLVII: 14-16, 18-26; 2009: 289-320) – his MB IA – and were recently discussed also by Luca Peyronel (2019: 747-750). In particular, the assemblages of Phase II of the Archaic Palace (here Fig. 13) originate from archaeological contexts that lay just above the EB IVB layers. Mazzoni and Felli (2007: 214) suggested that vessel shapes comparable to those of the earliest MB I phase at Ebla do not show up at Tell Afis before the dismissal of the workshop area ascribed to the EB/MB transitional phase at the site, confirming our proposed synchronization of the latter phase after EB IVB3 and before MB I at Ebla, that is parallel to Ebla's EB IVB4, the post-destruction phase (Tab. II).

Now that we have defined what Ebla's late EB IVB, terminal EB IVB, and archaic, initial MB I ceramic assemblages may look like respectively and synchronized them with late EB IVB, EB/MB transitional, and early MB I phases at other sites in western inland Syria, let us turn to the question of proposed synchronisms of western inland Syria with the Middle Euphrates and the Syrian Jazirah. The present author already pointed out (D'Andrea 2018: 232) that the proposed comparisons between Ebla's MB I pottery and Mozan C7 Ur III-related ceramics[7] were established based on pottery assemblages that *do not represent the beginning of MB I at Ebla, but date from a later phase*, when the Middle Bronze Age pottery tradition was well established at the site, as well as, more generally, in Syria as a whole. My intention was then as it is now to raise attention to the existence of a much longer ceramic sequence at Ebla than thought before, spanning all through the EB IVB period and well into MB I. This sequence comprises segments of the ceramic sequence that are in the process of being prepared for final publication and that, at least for what concerns EB IVB and the EB/MB transition have been partially published during the past five years (D'Andrea 2014-2015; 2016a; 2018; 2019b; 2020a).

If, on the one hand, it cannot be denied that there are similarities between the Mozan C7 pottery and the MB I pottery from Ebla, on the other hand there are parallels also between the late EB IVB assemblages of Ebla

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[6] A different interpretation of these assemblages was offered by M. Alkhalid (2014-2015, 168-170, fig. 6; 2018, in particular pp. 264-269).

[7] An Ur III-period date for the Mozan C7 pottery is also based on the style of seal impressions found in the house, as well as on Puššam's seal itself, which can be compared to southern Mesopotamian Ur III-period seals (Pfälzner 2017: 164) and is dated paleographically to a period between the late Sargonic and the Ur III period (Pfälzner 2017: 166).

and Mozan C7. In previous studies (D'Andrea 2014-2015: 153-154, n. 8; 2016a: 201, fn. 5; 2018: 231-232), I have focused on carinated bowls, as these vessel types are taken as evidence of a possible ceramic synchronization between Ebla's phase Mardikh IIIA, Tell Mozan Phase C7, and Uruk's Ur III period, though not alone (Schmidt 2012, 170-174, fig.10-13, tab. 3, carinated bowls on fig. 10:-12, 45-, 12:1, 5; 2014; reprised by Pfälzner 2017, 172-177, carinated bowls on fig. 7.1 and 7.8 at the top). Unpublished data at hand, I have shown that comparable vessels do appear in late and terminal EB IVB pottery assemblages from Ebla (here Fig. 14: 1). Likewise, if one wants to find more parallels for Ur III vessels in the Ebla region's ceramic repertoire looking at small jars, it should be considered that, albeit fragmentary, necked small jars with restricted slightly flaring neck and upright triple-grooved rims appear in later EB IVB assemblages as well (Fig. 14: 2-4).

There is another, unpublished, piece of evidence that may bear on correlations with Mozan Phase C7. In fact, in the late EB IVB3 assemblages there are a few painted fragments (Figs 14: 5-6 and 15: 1-4) that, though not being identical to those in the assemblages of Mozan C7, may have connections to pottery vessels considered by Pfälzner as early specimens of Khabur Ware – which he has assigned to the site's pottery period 'Ḫabur Ia' and dated to his Early Jazirah V phase (= EJZ 5), 2100-2000 BC (Pfälzner 2017, 168-169 and tabs 7.1, 7.5), preceding chronologically Kolinski's 'Early Khabur Ware' (Koliński 2014). One specimen is a fragment of a small carinated bowl with upright slightly thickened outside rim and reddish-brown painted horizontal bands (Figs 14: 5; 16: 1; compare to Pfälzner 2017, 170-171, figs 7.5: K 1141, 7.6:c; here Fig. 14: 9). In the absence of petrographic analysis of the small carinated bowl from Ebla, it is impossible to push connections between the two sites any further. The second group of pottery fragments is represented by necked jars decorated with a recurrent, brown-painted schema composed of groups of horizontal bands framing groups of smaller oblique lines forming triangular patterns (Figs 14: 6; 15: 2-4), which resemble those found at Tell Mozan (Pfälzner 2017: 169-170, figs 7.5: K 1144, 7.6: b; here see Fig. 14: 10). On such vessels from both sites, the painted motifs are 'cursory' and the paint is 'transparent', as noted by Pfälzner. Only petrographic analysis might determine the origin (local or non-local) of the Ebla sherds, but it is possible that these vessels represent a local ware class blending local elements (for example the pastes)[8] and decorative traits of the eastern tradition of the earlier Khabur Ware.

The phased assemblages shown here (Figs 11-12, 14: 1-6, 15) as illustrative of late EB IVB, terminal EB IVB and early MB I at Ebla indicate clearly that other vessel types comparable to Phase C7 at Tell Mozan do not appear at Ebla until the beginning of Phase Mardikh IIIA1.

We may harmonize the fact that vessel shapes that will typify the MB I tradition at Ebla seem to appear earlier at sites in the Middle Euphrates Valley and the Syrian Jazirah with the observation that other traits of Ebla's late and terminal EB IVB *corpus* can be positively compared to pottery vessels of the other two regions. This consideration might allow us to keep the traditional synchronisms of Phase 6/EME 6 in the Middle Euphrates and phase Early Jazirah V/EJZ 5 with late EB IVB at Ebla, at least in part; this would not contrast with the possibility of an overlap of those two archaeological *facies* in the Euphrates Valley and northeast Syria also with early MB I in north-western inland Syria (D'Andrea 2016b: 220). It is overall possible that elements typical of a new archaeological *facies* or tradition may have begun earlier in the eastern regions of Syria, starting from the 21st century BC, and more gradually in western inland Syria, with a different pace and rate at various sites during the 21st century BC (Schwartz 2017: 100, 114; D'Andrea 2018: 232-233), with a new tradition beginning earlier in one region than in the other. In a way, this is also what we may observe in the difference between Ebla's post-destruction EB IVB4 ceramic phase and the transitional EB/MB horizons identified at Tell Afis (Phase Afis IV/V) and Qaṭna (Phases 20-18 in Operation J).

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[8] With respect to this a large jar from Phase 18 at Qaṭna (late EB IVB or transitional EB/MB phase) shows comparable decorative schemas with parallel bands and triangles, but also the typical triple spirals of the EB IVB Painted Simple Ware of north-western inland Syria (Morandi Bonacossi 2008: 137 and fig. 19). Interestingly, Morandi Bonacossi reports that this jar was made with 'the so-called "transitional" fabrics decorated with a reddish-brown wash', though he suggests that the new motifs may recall the tradition of the Levantine Painted Ware of the MB I (Morandi Bonacossi 2008: 137). See D'Andrea 2015 for some discussion of this issue, based on particular EB IVB sherds of Painted Simple Ware from Ebla, with stylized animal figures and geometric designs.

### *3.4. Radiometric evidence and absolute dates*

Having set a preliminary framework for regional and interregional synchronisms based on relative ceramic chronology through stratified, phased, pottery assemblages, we should now look at the radiometric dataset for the three regions of Syria we have considered thus far – western inland Syria, the Middle Euphrates Valley, and the Syrian Jazirah. However, the radiometric evidence is both limited and problematic. Two main issues are radiometrically dating EB IVB, early MBI, and the EB/MB transition in western inland Syria and verifying radiometrically the suggested contemporaneity of the Ur III period in Mesopotamia and MB I in western inland Syria. A general scarcity of radiometric determinations for EB IVB and early MB I in western inland Syria, for EME 6 in the Middle Euphrates, and for EJZ 5 in the Syrian Jazirah as well as radiocarbon dates with very broad intervals further hamper synchronisms between these regions during the 21st and 20th centuries BC. Moreover, the use of multiple different sets of absolute dates in different chronological systems makes it difficult to firmly establishing synchronisms.

Starting from Ebla, it is currently impossible to define the absolute chronology of the EB IVB period radiometrically, as there are no radiocarbon determinations associated with samples originating from EB IVB contexts. Radiocarbon dates of the destruction in Palace G yielded calibrated average intervals at 2348-2298 cal BC in the first standard deviation and at 2367-2293 cal BC in the second standard deviation (2-sigma) (Calcagnile, Quarta, D'Elia 2013: 454 and fig. 27.5). These dates provide a good *terminus post quem* for the beginning of EB IVB at the site in accordance with the traditional conventional absolute chronology for this period (Schwartz 2017: 88, tab. 1). Thanks to the stratigraphic sequence in Area HH we know that not too much time should have elapsed before the reoccupation of this area after the destruction. As for the EB IVB lower chronological boundary, it is currently impossible to date it radiometrically. The only radiocarbon determinations available are associated with MB I contexts and, even those, are not nestled in a long stratigraphic sequence.

Two radiocarbon dates belong to the midden in Area EE, which contains a remarkable number of archaic MB I pottery sherds and some EB IVA-B ceramics and is ascribed to an initial MB I phase (Peyronel 2019: 744-747, figs 5-8). Two charcoal samples from the midden yielded the following dates with rather broad intervals: 2140–1910 cal BC (LTL-386A) and 1980–1740 cal BC (LTL-395A) (Fiorentino *et al*. 2008: tab. 2). Both these determinations might support the traditional chronology for the start of MB I at the beginning of the 20th century BC, although the first one might also be used to support an earlier start of the MB I at Ebla parallel to the Ur III period, but the secondary nature of the archaeological deposit does not allow us to take into consideration these dates to establish the chronological boundaries of MB I at Ebla. Two more reliable radiocarbon determinations were recently obtained from human skeletal remains originating from two of the tombs dug into the rampart in Area Z (Skourtanioti *et al*. 2020: e18): 2135-1964 cal BC (MAMS-41635; human tooth from burial D.7363) and 2026-1896 cal BC (MAMS-41116; human bone from burial D.6384), both dated ceramically to MB I, the former with rather standard MB I pottery, the latter with pottery of a late/final MB I phase (see Baffi Guardata 2000: fig. 8.1). It must be admitted that both dates are surprisingly high for the period to which the tombs can be ascribed ceramically and may provide some indication of where to place chronological boundaries for earlier and later MB I. However, again, the determinations have rather broad date estimates to embrace implicitly the proposal of a higher date for the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age at Ebla. In other words, what is needed to solve this issue is a series of modelled radiocarbon dates from a continuous EB IVB-MB I sequence that would allow for refined absolute phasing, associated with primary stratified pottery assemblages for each phase and sub-phase.

In addition, there is another piece of information that cannot be ignored in the definition of interregional synchronisms, though belonging to a different class of evidence: the discovery of seal impressions belonging to 'Ib-Damu king of Ebla' (*meki-im ib-la*) at Kültepe/Kanesh in the *kārum* II levels. This piece of evidence may allow a synchronism between the two sites to be established in the chronological frame of the Old Assyrian commercial outpost from 1930-1836 BC (Morandi 2014: 415). In fact, even if the seal was reused, it cannot be too much older than the time of its first use, as it can be placed in a clear Middle Bronze Age material culture horizon from the point of view of glyptic art (Pinnock 2000; 2004: 97).

A later MB I tomb excavated at Qaṭna in Operation H (Morandi Bonacossi 2011: 15, figs 6-7) yielded absolute date ranges that are as broad as those from Ebla, but with lower date estimates: 3479±45 BP, corresponding to 1920-1680 cal BC, in the 1-sigma range and to 1880-1740 cal BC, in the 2-sigma range (LTL2048A, from Tomb G 17). Moreover, a tomb in the same location that has been dated by the excavators to the EB IV/MB I transition yielded absolute date ranges consistent with those of the traditional chronology: 2200-1950 cal BC, 1-sigma, 2140-1980 cal BC, 2-sigma (LTL2049A, from Tomb G 26). The latter determinations in the two standard deviations originate from a skeleton that was associated with a bronze belt disk, which Morandi Bonacossi (2011: 24-25 and fig. 26) has compared to one found at Tell Mozan in a later third millennium BC context as well as to MB I bronze belts from burial contexts across the Levant. The stratified sequence on the acropolis of Qaṭna provided a series of radiocarbon determinations that may allow the phasing of the timespan from late EB IV to early MB I periods to be better defined in western Syria (Morandi Bonacossi 2008: fig. 10). EB IVB Phases 25, 23, and 22 yielded, respectively, the following dates: 2400-2600 cal BC, 1-sigma, 2140-1760 cal BC, 2-sigma (GX28924); 2300-1750 cal BC, 1-sigma; 2150-1940 cal BC, 2-sigma (GX28921); and 2410-2130 cal BC, 1-sigma, 2310-2190 cal BC, 2-sigma (GX28920). Phases 20-18, which are those where the EB-MB transitional characteristics are expressed ceramically, provided the following dates, respectively: 2040-1620 cal BC, 1-sigma, 1940-1730 cal BC, 2-sigma (GX28919); 2200-1600 cal BC, 1-sigma, 1980-1740 cal BC, 2-sigma (GX28918); and 2060-1880 cal BC, 1-sigma, 2040-1920 cal BC, 2-sigma (GX28922). Finally, Phase 17, which is MB I proper, yielded the following date estimates: 3540±70 BP/2040-1680 cal BC, 1-sigma, 1950-1740 cal BC, 2-sigma (GX28917). All in all, Morandi Bonacossi (2014: 414) estimated that calibrated dates from the site may place the transition from EB IVB to MB I at Qaṭna in the interval between 2040 and 1930 cal BC, that is in keeping with the traditional chronology for the EB IVB and the MB I periods in western inland Syria with 2000 BC as the ideal divide in between (Schwartz 2017: 88, tab. 5.1; see discussion in Matthiae 2020: 103). Similarly, samples from EB IVB Layers d and c in Square 15Gc at Tell Mastuma yielded, respectively, calibrated ranges at 2200-2130 cal BC, 1-sigma, and 2210-2120 cal BC, 2-sigma (UCIAMS-21675), and 2130-2080 cal BC, 1-sigma, and 2140-2010 cal BC, 2-sigma (UCIAMS-21676) (Nishiyama 2009: figs. 10.13–10.14), which are again consistent with the traditional chronology of the EB IVB period in the last quarter of the 3rd millennium BC.

A further factor affecting our ability to positively match regional sequences by using absolute dates is that Phase 6/EME 6 in the Middle Euphrates and phase EJZ V/EZJ 5 of north-eastern Syria are ill-defined from the point of view of absolute chronology, due to the lack of radiocarbon determinations for EME 6 and the paucity of radiocarbon dates for EJZ 5. This implies that for both phases the upper boundary has been set at *c*. 2100 BC based on modelled dates for the preceding EME 5 and EJZ 4c phases, but the lower boundary has not been set (Decker, Drechsler, Sconzo 2015: and tabs 2-3 and fig. 14; Ristvet 2011: 322). Therefore, the absolute chronology of these regional phases is established on a conventional basis and based on the presence of EB IV and MB I-related pottery types and styles in the assemblages ascribed to these horizons. Further confusion may arise from the use of different chronological systems in various regional studies discussing the Ur III period in Mesopotamia, not just referring to the High, Middle, Low or Ultra Low Chronology, but even to different sets of absolute dates within the Middle Chronology schemes. Thus, for instance, Finkbeiner and Novák (2015: tab. 2), adopt the dates from 2035-1919 BC for the Ur III period, following Mebert's proposal of a Middle Chronology (MC) circa 70 years lower than traditional MC ($rMC_{70}$; Mebert 2010). They maintain that the $rMC_{70}$ seems supported by the Middle Bronze Age characteristics of the Ur III pottery (Finkbeiner, Novák 2015, 12), citing Pruß's study we have recalled before (Pruß 2007). Differently, Sallaberger (2011: 332-333, tab. 3) introduces a MC reduced by 40 years ($rMC_{50}$), placing the Ur III period from 2060-1953.[9] Finally, Sallaberger and Shrakamp (2015: tab. 39) use a Middle Chronology reduced by 8 years placing the Ur III period from 2102-1995 BC. Recently, Manning *et al*. (2017) suggested that revised radiocarbon dates from Kültepe and Acemhöyük seem to indicate that the lower MC might be the most correct, and the one better harmonizing different regional chronologies, including synchronisms with Egypt. However, evidently the definition of absolute chronology associated with phasing in the regional peri-

[9] Not 2042-1953 BC as wrongly reported by D'Andrea 2016b: 218; 2019b: 275.

odization schemes for north-western inland Syria, the Middle Euphrates River Valley, and the Syrian Jazirah still needs a substantial refining. Considering that absolute chronologies are in flux, also the evidence of similarities among ceramic assemblages of distant regions should be used very cautiously for chronological cross-correlation and should not be used to establish synchronisms expressed as absolute dates or historical periods until contemporaneity can be proved firmly.

The radiocarbon determinations obtained from samples taken from Phase C7 in the House of Puššam at Tell Mozan place this phase between 2200 and 2000 BC (Pfälzner 2017: 166-167 and fig. 7.4). This is, again, a broad range estimate, which partly overlaps with one of the MB I radiometric determinations from Ebla, as well as, nevertheless, with several EB IVB radiocarbon dates from Qaṭna reported above from their original publication sources. On the one hand, it is possible that the transition from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age in Syria took place earlier than thought before and that, therefore, it might have partly overlapped with the Ur III period in the Syrian Jazirah and southern Mesopotamia, as it may be suggested by the radiocarbon dates. On the other hand, I believe that there might be evidence for a possible correlation of Phase C7 at Tell Mozan with the late EB IVB horizon at Ebla. Not only this would not be contradicted by the radiometric evidence for this phase at Mozan that cannot be really used as a conclusive proof of different interregional synchronisms between eastern and western Syria because of the broad range estimates at 2200-2000 BC. It would also be supported by unpublished evidence of parallels between the Phase C7 ceramic assemblages of Tell Mozan and the EB IVB3 pottery ensembles of Ebla presented in this article.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS. THE EB/MB TRANSITION AT EBLA WITHIN THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXTS

The above discussion of the radiometric evidence at hand has showed that we are still unable to synchronize regional periodization schemes from western Syria, the Syrian Jazirah, and southern Mesopotamia based on absolute chronology. Another issue is how to correlate the few available absolute dates to historical periodization schemes (e.g., the Ur III period and the different chronological proposals; see discussion in Sallaberger 2007; 2011; Sallaberger, Schrakamp 2015) This is complicated by different chronological systems, not just among the High, Middle, Low, and Ultra-Low Chronologies, but even different Middle Chronologies, some differing quite substantially from each other. We have seen that there are two opposite trends: 1) one is to move the Ur III period to the MB I in the 20$^{th}$ century BC based on reduced MC systems, on which the synchronisms between EME 6 and western Syrian MB I rests; 2) the other one is to move western Syria's MB I to the 21$^{st}$ century based on the observation of possible ceramic similarities between sites in the Khabur region and Ebla. We have underlined that there are several issues hampering this kind of synchronisms, in particular due to the blurring absolute chronologies of EME 6, EJZ 5 and even the Syrian MB I, due to the paucity of C14 dates for the Middle Euphrates and the Syrian Jazirah, and the paucity of dates from western Syrian MB I. Among the radiometric determinations from western Syria, only those of Qaṭna are framed within a continuous EB IV-MB I sequence and seem to support the traditional chronology. The radiometric determinations from the MB I tombs of Ebla are slightly higher than it should be expected although still possibly also fitting the traditional chronology due to their broad dates estimate. Without trying to push this evidence too much in favour of either chronological proposal these dates just face us with how far we are from building a sound absolute chronology for the centuries leading to the transition from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age in Syria as a whole.

On the other hand, the unpublished pottery evidence we have presented in this article indicates that more work is needed also on relative, ceramic chronology and interregional synchronisms based on pottery types and styles. With respect to this, we have recalled that 'sloping horizons', as they have been originally defined by Lorenzo Nigro (2007: 367, 382), may exist in different regions, with Middle Bronze Age features appearing earlier at some sites and areas, and Early Bronze Age features lingering longer at others. Above all, we have demonstrated on a sound stratigraphic basis that there is a precise segment of Ebla's EB IVB sequence – late EB IVB or EB IVB3

– that can be securely placed not only *before* a terminal EB IVB phase and the earliest MB I phase at the site, but also clearly before the EB-MB transitional phases observed at Tell Afis. It is precisely this EB IVB3 phase at Ebla that shows pottery types and styles that may be compared to those of Phase C7 at Tell Mozan, including early carinated bowls and what might be a local subset of or at least a local ware class connected with Pfälzner's 'Ḫabur Ia'. Noteworthy, the latter ware class clearly emerged as an important component of the ceramic assemblages of the end of the 3rd millennium BC at sites in the Khabur basin, including Tell Mozan in Phase C7 (Pfälzner 2017: 188, 191, 198). This important new piece of evidence is suggestive that synchronisms between western Syria and the Syrian Jazirah that have been hold true for some time might be reconsidered and that more work is needed to achieve a reliable synchronization between these distant regions with discrete sets of material culture, despite visible connections among them. To better understand the synchronization of these two regions of Syria between the late 3rd and the early 2nd millennium BC might be a potent tool for refining our interpretative frameworks for sociocultural transformations that resulted in the transition from the Early to Middle Bronze Age at a region-wide scale These transformations might have resulted from regional dynamics and processed that entailed high patterns of connectivity among sub-regions of Syria that were part of diverse 'cultural zones'.

Turning now to the sociocultural aspects of a possible major degree of continuity between EB IVB and MB I at Ebla than expected before, we must reconsider the site's developmental trajectory from the end of EB IVA to the beginning of MB I as we can now appreciate it in light of new data and through comparisons with the progressions of other regional sites during this quite long timespan.

We have mentioned earlier that EB IVB at Ebla was considered as a phase of decline and abatement despite the site's retention of an urban status (see, e.g., Matthiae 1993: 619-621; Dolce 2007: 184; 2009: 267), not just exemplified by the loss of the role as regional capital that the site had in EB IVA, but by a sensible decrease of monumentality compared to EB IVA. The possibility to frame the EB IVB phase when public architecture reappeared at Ebla within the stratigraphic sequence in Area HH for the latter period and the ensuing intra-site synchronization have allowed us to appreciate this stage as part of a progression in the later part of this sequence. This evolution led from crisis during EB IVB1 to reorganization during EB IVB2 and new growth during EB IVB3, followed by a destruction, a possibly short phase of resilience in EB IVB4, and the final accomplishment of urban regeneration at the site in MB I. The archaeological evidence seems to suggest that the agents of reorganization and new growth might have emerged from a renegotiation of political and economic power between different *local* components. These components might have been a more 'urban' one that had been in power during EB IVA, and a more 'tribal' one, though urbanized or at least connected tightly with the urban component, that was in power from the end of EB IVB onward (with important changes all through the period; see *infra*).[10]

As noticed in previous works (D'Andrea 2019a: 17-19; 2020b: 212; 2020d: 156, 161), the trajectory of Ebla goes all the way around compared to sites in other areas within the broader region, especially in central Syria. In fact, Qaṭna developed uninterruptedly all through EB IV, and sites at the western edge of the Syrian steppe thrived all through the period as well, seeing in the EB IVB a phase of expansion. There have been several explanations for this, which range from movements of people from other sites or areas – including refugees from Ebla after the destruction (Mazzoni 2013: 36) or from the Jazirah after the fall of the Akkadian Empire and the 4.2 ka climatic event (Weiss 2012; 2014: 370-379; 2017: 136-147; Burke 2017: 287-296). However, it seems more likely that an endogenous path was working, connected with new economic and political possibilities for the central Syrian sites after the wane of the Ebla kingdom (Kennedy 2015: 316-317; 2016: 4; D'Andrea 2019a: 17-19; 2020b: 212; 2020d: 156, 161). This region of Syria east and southeast of Qaṭna is traditionally identified with the territory of a political entity mentioned in the EB IVA Ebla texts, a tribal confederation called Ibal (with several possible chiefs) and showing an Amorite linguistic connection (Catagnoti 1997: 123), which was originally in conflict with Ebla until it was subdued (Biga 2014). The identification between the steppe area to the south and east of Qaṭna with Ibal has

[10] Matthiae (2009b: 188, fn. 70 = 2013a: 75, fn. 70) had adumbrated the possibility that a change in political power balances between urban and non-urban components might have been a factor behind socio-cultural changes in the transition from the Early to Middle Bronze Age, though framing this process within antagonistic relationships between the two parts.

recently been questioned and it has been argued that there is some need of rethinking Ibal in terms of both spatial extension and socio-political organization (Catagnoti 2020: 234). However, this proposal does not per se contrast with the observation that the phase of intensification and growth of sites in this very region of Central Syria during EB IVB might have corresponded to recovered political and economic autonomy of this region after the wane of the mighty kingdom of Ebla (D'Andrea 2019a: 17-19; 2020b: 212). I have recently suggested that a reprise of contacts between Ebla and the sites in the central Syrian steppe in a mature EB IVB phase can be inferred based on ceramic evidence (D'Andrea 2020d: 153 and fig. 1). This renewed connectivity may account also for similarities observable between the religious complexes of Ebla and Al-Rawda (D'Andrea 2020c: 10-11; 2020d: 159), which were noticed before (Matthiae 2007: 504–505; Castel 2010: 142). If my interpretation of sociocultural transformations at Ebla during the advanced EB IVB phase is correct, then contacts with sites in Central Syria would have taken place no longer within the framework of EB IVA political relations, which might have been antagonistic to some extent at that time. EB IVB contacts might have happened within a new 'sociocultural order' when the new leadership of Ebla might have been closer, in terms of socio-cultural background, to the political leaders of the circular cities established in Central Syria (D'Andrea 2020c: 10; 2020d: 159; 2021: 4) at sites located at the western edge of the *Badiya al-Sham* (see, more recently, Castel 2020; Mouamar 2020).[11]

While we do not yet fully understand what happened at the transition from EB IV to MB I in this region of Central Syria, it seems clear that previous hypotheses of a crisis of settlements in this area connected with climate change may not be the only explanation. On the one hand, shifts toward dryer climatic conditions must be considered (especially at the microlocal level) among factors that might have triggered changes in patterns of settlement. On the other hand, a possible alternative model might be that of a change in landscape use, connected to a political reconfiguration. It is worth noting that this area was not abandoned in the Middle Bronze Age, as it was suggested before (Peyronel 2014: 124-125; Schwartz 2017: 116, 119-120); rather it seems possible that a concentration of population in a smaller number of larger sites occurred. While Tell Shayrat and Al-Rawda where no longer occupied in the MB I period, Qaṭna and Tell as-Sur (that both had circular plans in the Early Bronze Age) were still inhabited, and both underwent a radical modification of the urban layout with the construction of the rampart which may be interpreted as evidence for the concentration of a larger population than before in these settlements (Mazzoni 2013: 50-52). In fact, it is precisely in this phase that Qaṭna grew from 25 to 110 ha (Morandi Bonacossi 2016: 151). In addition, recent remote survey work suggested that, during the Middle Bronze Age, the whole marginal area of the Syrian steppe was dotted with a well-planned defensive system made of intervisible towers, fortresses and forts, whose spatial distribution seems to have been related to the major sites of this period – Aleppo, Ebla, Tell Tuqan, Tell Nasriyah, Qaṭna, and Tell as-Sur (Rousset *et al*. 2017: 115, 135-144, and fig. 24). All in all, the archaeological evidence might correspond to the militarization of a political frontier in this phase, which was only demarcated by the still enigmatic feature discovered by the French team of the *Marges Arides* Project and dubbed the *Trés Long Mur* (TLM, meaning Very Long Wall) during the EB IV period. The inclusion, in the new system, of sites such as Ebla, Tell Tuqan, and Aleppo that were not bounded by the TLM, might be a consequence of a new socio-political configuration, emerged already at the end of EB IVB in the wake of renegotiation of political balances leading the 'Amorites' to get to power, and eventually crystallized during the Middle Bronze Age.

Seen from this new perspective, evidence of continuity and discontinuity in 'intangible' aspects at Ebla during MB I as compared to EB IV, in particular EB IVA, may acquire a new meaning. It was already noticed (Matthiae 2009b: 188; Mazzoni, Felli 2007: 206-209; Dolce 2009: 268; Pinnock 2004; 2009; D'Andrea 2019a: 20-26, figs 5-6, 8-10, 12-14; 2019b: 265, 267-272) that at Ebla there are striking aspects of ideological continuity with EB IVA at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. One is the deliberate retention of the sacredness of some places (Pinnock 2004 93-94, figs 2-3; 2009: 74). This phenomenon is visible in Area HH in the Lower Town south-east, and in Area D on the Acropolis, where, during EB IVB, temples are built in the same place where EB IVA sanctuaries

[11] If this hypothesis is correct, it may provide a sociocultural backdrop also for Matthiae's (2020: 101-105) proposal of a military campaign in the Ebla region during Shu-Suen's reign, framing this event within the Ur III king's intervention against the Amorites in the western regions.

stood before. One aspect that has not been underlined thus far and that is fully appreciable in time-depth thanks to the synchronization of Ebla's EB IVB evidence made possible by the multi-phased sequence excavated in Area HH, is that, in both areas, this return to holy places took place after a gap, only in the late EB IVB phase. This is clearly visible in Area HH, where from the termination rituals in the Temple of the Rock to the construction of Temples HH4 and HH5 in EB IVB there is a phase in-between with a shift in function to domestic occupation in this sector of the site. This piece of evidence underlines a deliberate choice during the mature EB IVB phase to restore the sacredness of that place, which was kept also in the following Middle Bronze Age. This choice of ideal continuity in cult places relates to the advent to power of 'Amorite' leaders at several other places in the Middle Bronze I, including Tell Umm el-Marra, close to the Lake Jabbul, where a cult platform was built above the EB III-IVB elite burial complex (Weber, Nichols 2006: 46-47, 49-51). At Tell Brak/Nagar too, a similar process of preserving earlier cultic traditions in the new 2nd millennium BC sociocultural milieu is suggested by the retention of the worship of the *Belet-Nagar* (Oates, Oates, McDonald 1997: 142).

Another aspect of striking deliberate continuity is royal onomastics, with the 2nd millennium BC political leaders of Ebla bearing non-Amorite names – Igrish-Ḫeba, Ibbit-Lim, and Ib-Damu – modelled on those of the EB IVA kings – Igrish-Ḫalab, Irkab-Damu, Ishar-Damu (Bonechi 1997). On the other hand, the most remarkable innovation at the time was the introduction of the worship of Ishtar at Ebla by King Ibbit-Lim, or, rather, the syncretism between Ishkhara (the main EB IVA goddess at Ebla) and Ishtar actualized by the king as suggested by Matthiae (2010: 210-211 = 2021: 156-158). This is stated by Ibbit-Lim himself in the inscription on his (fragmentary) statue from Ebla ascribed to the turn between the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC on palaeographic ground (Gelb 1984) and dedicated 'in the eighth year after Ishtar had manifested herself in Ebla'. It is believed that the syncretism may be reflected by the creation of the term Ishtar *Eblaitu*, Ishtar of Ebla (Matthiae 2003; 2009b: 189). It has been observed that, although Ishtar was frequently mentioned in the EB IVA texts, it would have not been possible, in the cultural *milieu* of that time, that a king would put his dynasty under the protection of Ishtar as Ibbit-Lim did; therefore, this event must reflect a change in the cultural backdrop at the time of this king (Archi and Matthiae in Matthiae, Pinnock, Scandone Matthiae [eds] 1995: 408, n. 251). This event may look like a discontinuity with the local EB IVA tradition, but the observation that there may have been a syncretism and not a replacement somewhat mitigates against the interpretation of this change as evidence for a discontinuity.

I have proposed earlier that coexisting conservative royal onomastics and innovations in the pantheon's structure in the Middle Bronze Age at Ebla may be interpreted as an attempt of the 'new' (Amorite) leaders of Ebla to find a 'compromise of reconnecting with past local traditions (non-Amorite royal onomastics) while also engaging with something "foreign" to them (the worship of Ishtar)[12]' (D'Andrea 2019a: 24, 26). However, this was possibly the result of a process of negotiation of identities that may have involved deeper aspects than mere opportunistic choices, rooted in the very same genesis of the 'second-generation states' of Syria (again borrowing the definition from Schwartz 2013b: 498). With all due differences between western and eastern Syrian contexts, the best explanation for this phenomenon can be drawn from Ristvet's analysis of the ways Amorite rulers in Upper Mesopotamia pieced together in one social fabric the remnants of a pre-existing urban component and tribal components of the same society under the umbrella of the new tribal state formations (Ristvet 2012: 37-39, 45-47). This model may offer a feasible explanation for the coexistent trends of continuity and discontinuity with the local EB IVA tradition at Ebla in the Middle Bronze Age tangible and intangible cultural traits. Likewise, I believe that it was the very same fact that the responsible of the regeneration at Ebla already during EB IVB were already based in a local segment of a much larger component present in a broad geographic belt (see Porter 2019) spanning the whole zone of uncertainty at the margins of the agricultural urban cores as defined by Wilkinson *et al*. (2014: 53-55, fig. 3) that we may define as Amorites. This very same fact may explain changes between EB IVA and EB IVB, continuity between EB IVB and MB I, and resilience at Ebla through the end of EB IVB and the Middle Bronze Age

[12] With respect to this, it would be more appropriate to refer not to the worship of Ishtar per se, as the goddess was mentioned in the 24th century BC text, but rather to the making of Ishtar a polyadic and dynastic goddess.

despite the destruction in-between thanks to a flexible, adaptable social structure, ensuring to each sub-component a general, broader sense of belonging despite local political autonomy. This might have been the force driving the regeneration of urbanization at Ebla during a mature EB IVB phase, with the new local leaders possibly backed-up by those of the sites on the western edge of the Syrian steppe, from which they were socio-politically distinct, but to which they were socio-culturally akin (D'Andrea 2020c: 10; 2020d: 159). Likewise, this might have been the pivotal force of Ebla's resilience at the turn between EB IVB and MB I that ensured fast recovery and steady growth of the city and its community after the destruction in the late EB IVB phase. If these were the forces and the processes at work at the site, this might account for EB IVB-MB I continuity at Ebla as well as for the blend of local long-established traits going back to the EB IVA tradition and new innovative aspects borrowed from the regions to the east and typifying the Middle Bronze Age sociocultural milieu.

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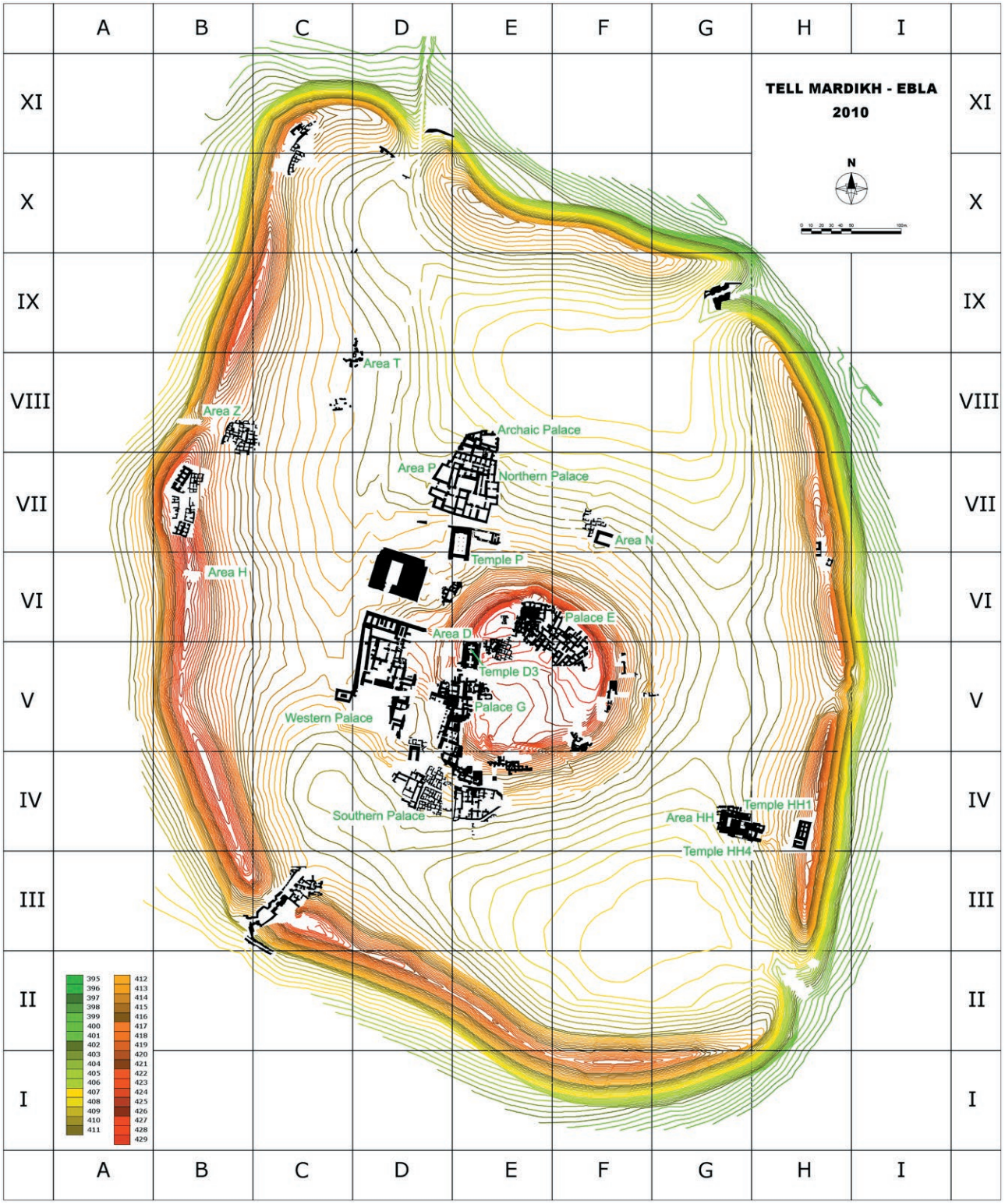
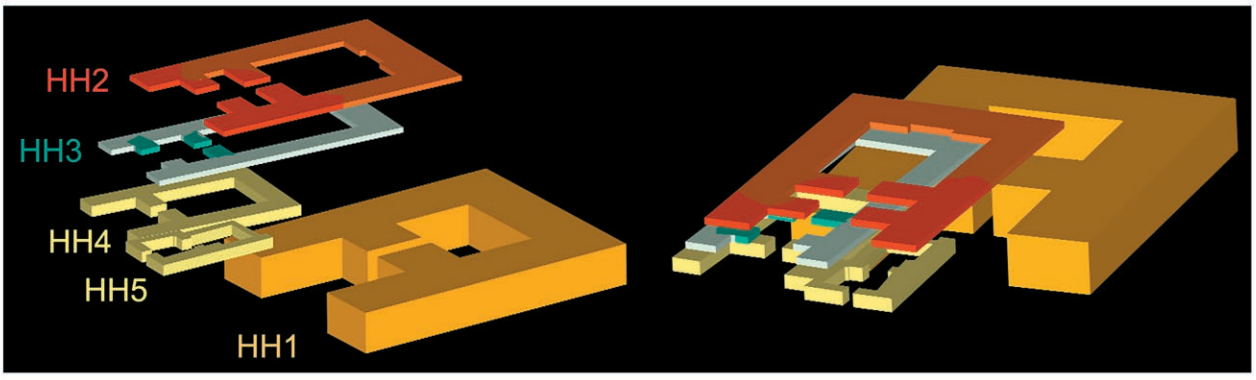



**Fig. 1:** Tell Mardikh/Ebla, topographical map captioned with areas and buildings mentioned in the text (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

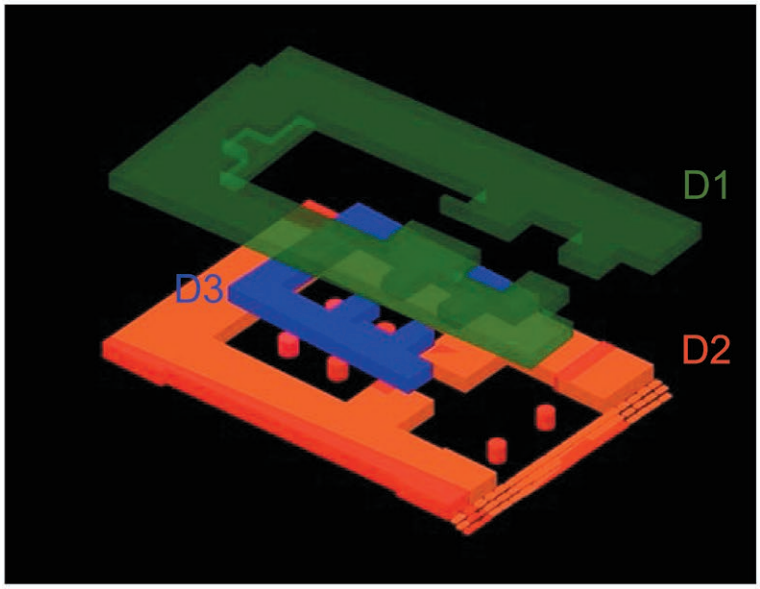
a




b

**Fig. 2:** Ebla, aerial view of Area HH (a), with the latest Middle Bronze Age temple in the background, the Early Bronze IVA Temple of the Rock in the foreground, and the latest Early Bronze IVB (EB IVB4) architecture on the left side (see enlarged view on Fig. 7), and schematic view (b) of the superimposed Early Bronze IVA, Early Bronze IVB, and Middle Bronze Age temples *in antis* (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

a




b

**Fig. 3:** Ebla, aerial view of Area D (a) and schematic view (b) of superimposed Early Bronze IVA, Early Bronze IVB, and Middle Bronze Age temples (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

**Fig. 4:** Ebla, view of the Archaic Palace of EB IVB-MB I, with the ramparts in the background, looking east (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

**Fig. 5:** Ebla, remains of Early Bronze IVB temple in the 1966 sondage enlarged in 1968 below the Middle Bronze Age Temple of Ishtar, looking west (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

**Fig. 6:** Ebla, view of Early Bronze IVB Temple HH 4 and the smaller Temple HH5, looking north-west (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).


**Fig. 7:** Ebla, terminal Early Bronze IVB (EB IV4) occupation in Area HH (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

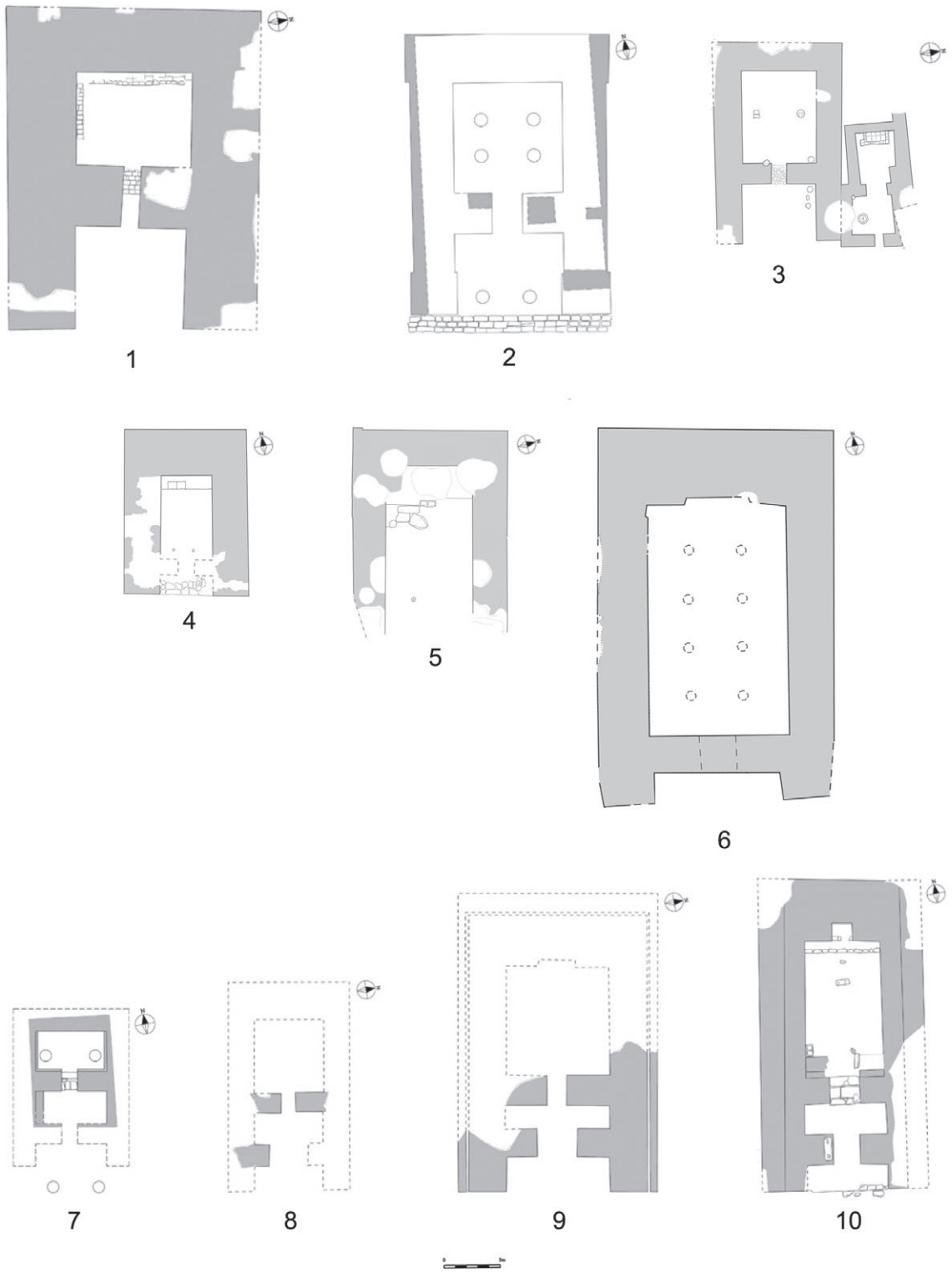



**Fig. 8:** Evolution of different types of temples *in antis* at Ebla from Early Bronze IVA to Middle Bronze II: bipartite (1-5), and tripartite (6-9) temples *in antis*: 1) Temple of the Rock (HH1), EB IVA; 2) Red Temple (D2), EB IVA; Temple HH4 (with minor shrine Temple HH5), EB IVB; 4) Temple B2 (Temple of Reshef), MB I-II; 5) Temple N (Temple of Shamash), MB I-II; 6) Temple P, MB I-II; 7) Temple D3, EB IVB; 8) Temple HH3, MB I; 9) Temple HH2, MB I-II; 10) Temple D (Temple of Ishtar), MB I-II (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

a


b

**Fig. 9:** Ebla, the remains of Temple HH3 of Middle Bronze I in the Lower Town south-east: general view looking north-west (a) and detailed plan (b) with the dashed lines tracing the contours of Temple HH 4 and Temple HH 5 (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

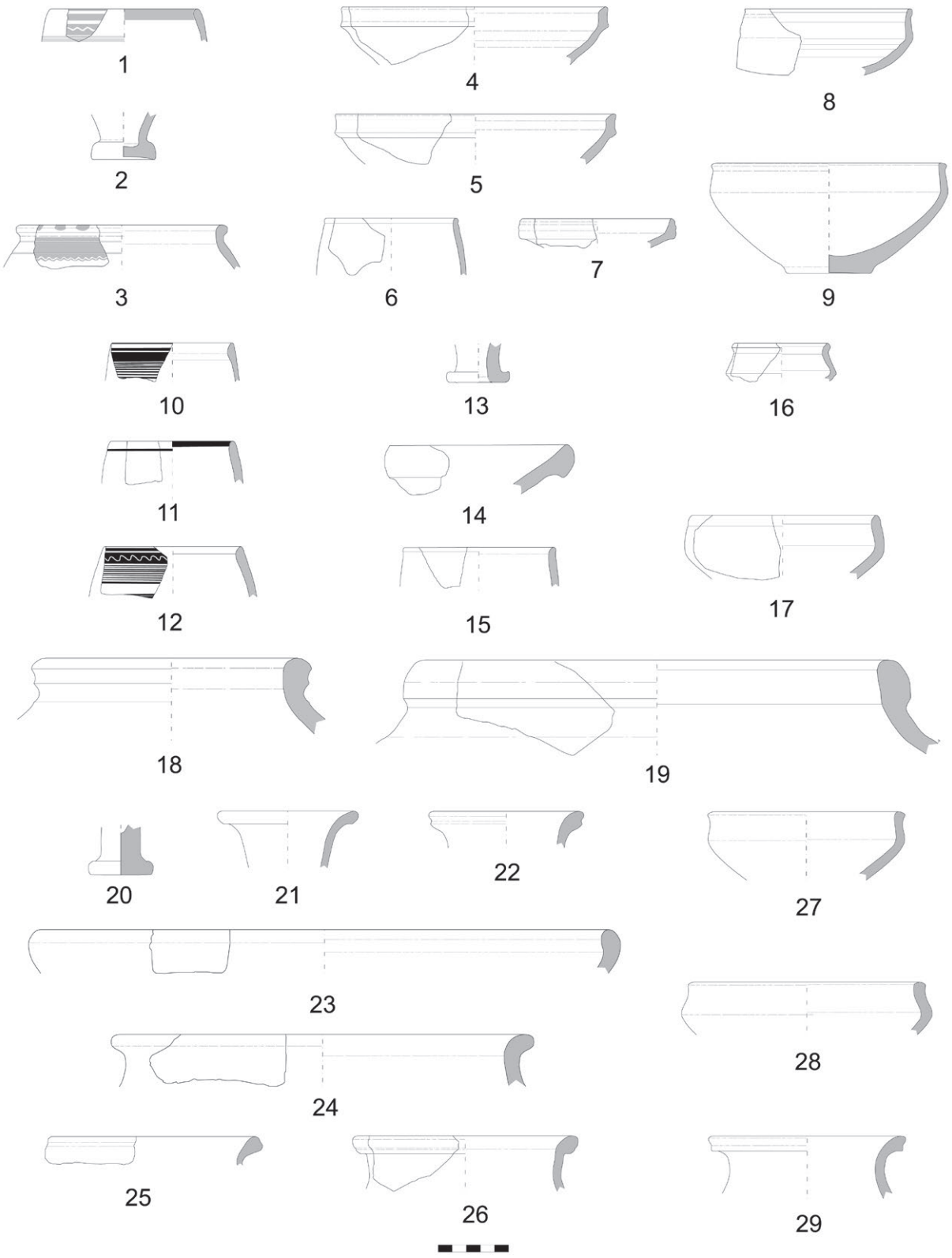



**Fig. 10:** Ebla, late Early Bronze IVB (EB IVB3) pottery from Temples HH4 (1-9), from Area T (10-21), and from Temple D3 in Area D (22-29) (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

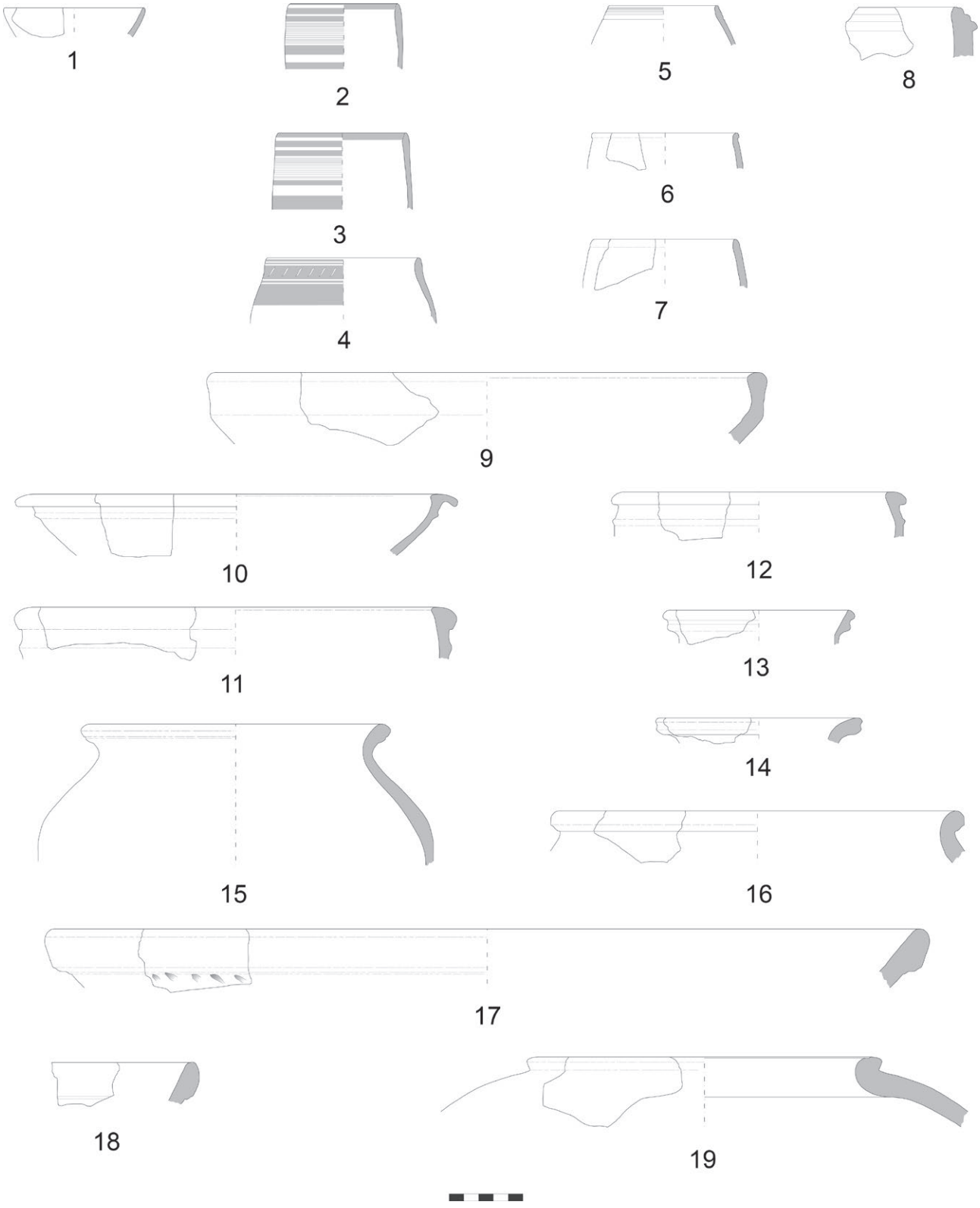



**Fig. 11:** Ebla, terminal EB IVB pottery (EB IVB 4) from Area HH (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

**Fig. 12:** Ebla, the remains of Temple HH2 of Middle Bronze I-II in the Lower Town south-east, looking west-south-west; the white layer of plaster used as a foundation for the temple cover the remains of the earlier Temple HH3 (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

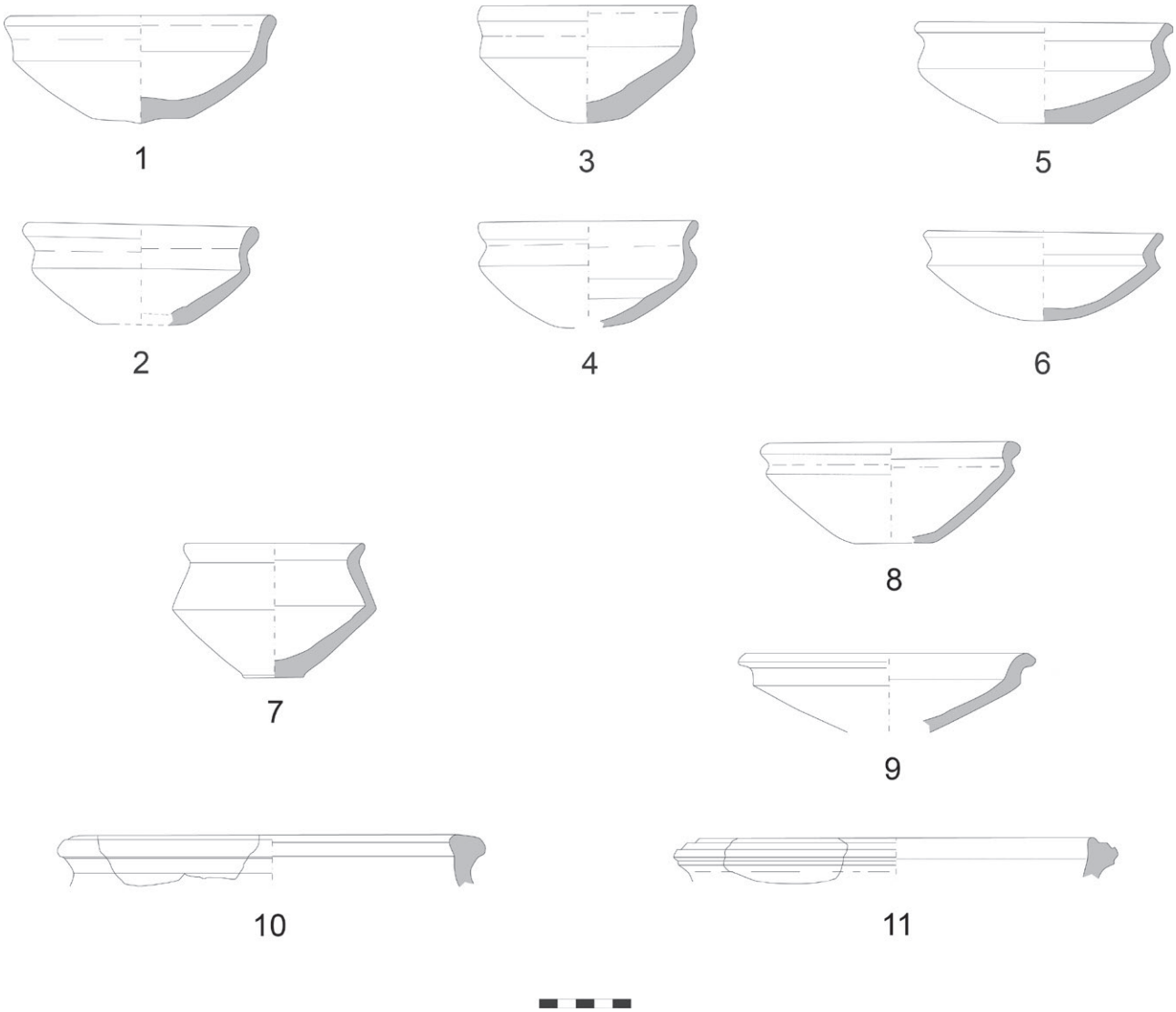



**Fig. 13:** Ebla, Middle Bronze I pottery from the Archaic Palace, Phase II (after Matthiae 2006a) (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

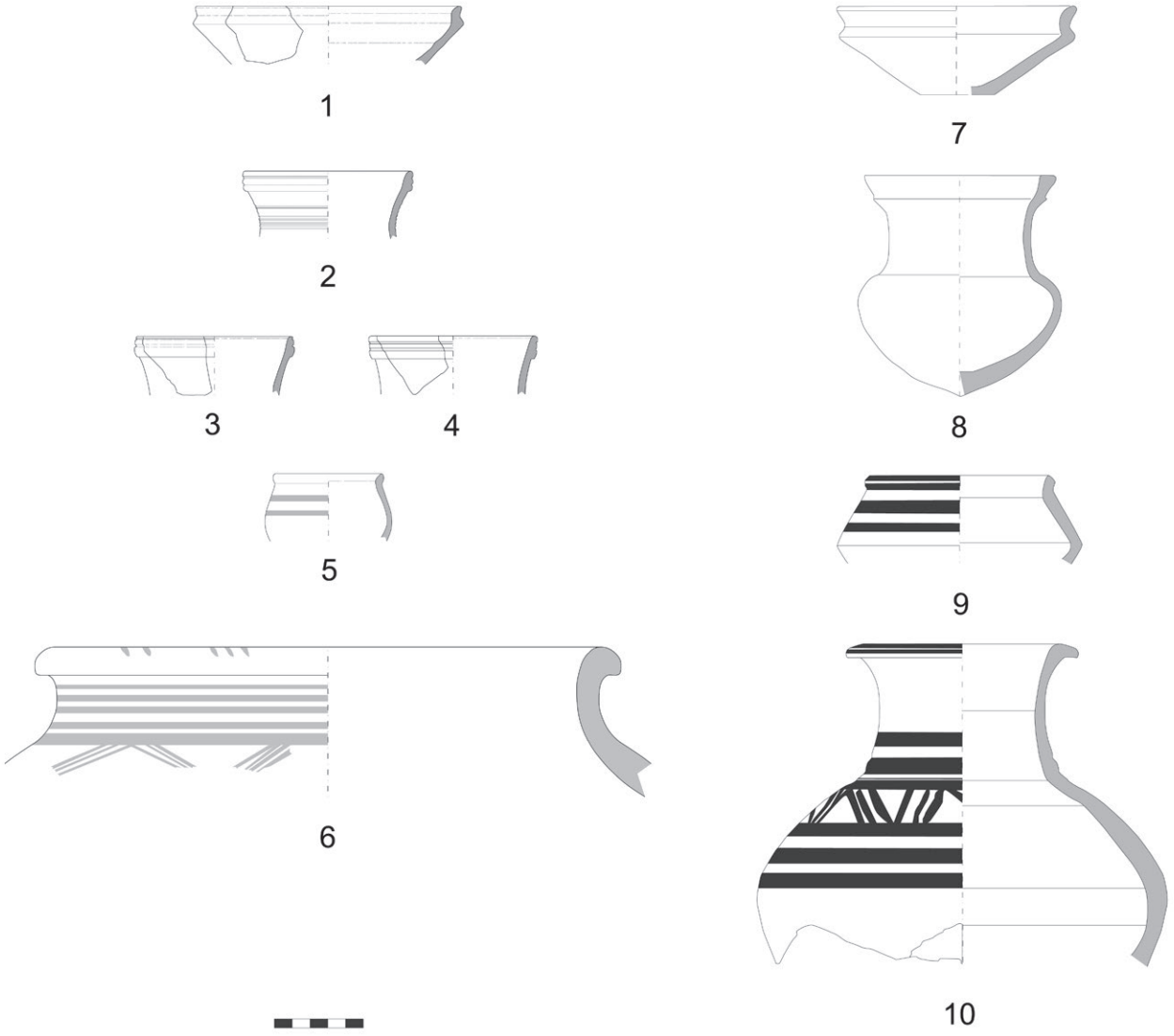



**Fig. 14:** Ebla, Early Bronze IVB carinated cup (1), triple-grooved rimmed jars (2-4), and painted vessels (5-6) from Ebla (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria), and vessels from Phase C7 of Tell Mozan (7-10, after Pfälzner 2017, figs 7.1: K 231, K 480, 7.5: K1141, K 1144).


**Fig. 15:** Ebla, Early Bronze IVB painted sherds (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria).

**Tab I:** Suggested periodization and stratigraphic correlations between areas with EB IVB occupation at Ebla, also highlighting EB IVB/MB I continuity or discontinuity; edited after D'Andrea 2020a: tab. 1.

| Archaeological periodization | Phases | Area HH | | Area D | Area T | Area Z |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Local sequence | Activities | | | |
| Mardikh IIB2 | EB IVB1 | Phase IIa | Ritual sealing of Temple of the Rock | ------- | ------- | ------- |
| | | Phase IIb | Houses | | | |
| | EB IVB2 | Phase IIc | Levelling and constructional fills | ------- | ------- | ------- |
| | EB IVB3 | Phase IId | Temple HH4, Temple HH5 | Temple D3 | Houses | Beginning of rampart construction & earlier tombs in the rampart (D.6707, D. 6709) |
| | | | | **DESTRUCTION** | | |
| | EB IVB4 | Phase IIe | Houses | ------- | ------- | ------- |
| Mardikh IIIA1 | MB I | Phase IIIa | Temple HH3 | Temple of Ishtar (D1) | Tombs | Completion of rampart construction & later tombs in the rampart |

**Tab. II:** Suggested correlations between Ebla, Tell Afis and Tell Mishrifeh/Qaṭna discussed in the text; reprised after D'Andrea 2020a: tab. 2.

| Tell Mardikh/Ebla | | Tell Afis | Tell Mishrifeh/ Qatna |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mardikh IIB2 | EB IVB1 | ------- | Phases 26-21 |
| | EB IVB2 | ------- | ↓ |
| | EB IVB3 | Afis IV | ↓ |
| | EB IVB4 | Afis IV –V | ↓ |
| Early Mardikh IIIA1 | MB IA | ↓? Until Afis V | Phases 20-18 ↓ Phase 17 ↓ |

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# Hic sunt leones. Iconographic analysis and computational modelling for the study of the Iron Age free-standing lions of the Elbistan plain (south-eastern Anatolia)

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**Abstract.** Lying between the central Anatolian plateau and the Euphrates region, the Elbistan plain represents an ideal environment for inspecting forms of cultural interconnection. During the Iron Age, this territory was marked by the presence of notable inscribed monuments, the study of which allowed scholars to establish relationships with the most significant Neo-Hittite dynasties. This region is also characterized by the presence of sets of anepigraphic portal lions, positioned seemingly at random in the open landscape and with no apparent relationship with coeval archaeological remains, which have never been concretely integrated into the historical picture. In this contribution, the iconographic and stylistic analysis of these sculptures will allow us to situate them in their chronological and historical framework. A computational spatial model is further used to evaluate the meaning of their positioning as markers of a visual networking system that may have represented the most significant thoroughfares to and from the Elbistan plain.

**Keywords.** Elbistan plain, Iron Age, Euphrates region, Free-standing lions, Syro-Anatolian art, Settlement pattern, Semi-automated landform classification, Least Cost Paths.

## 1. INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND GOALS

Since the mid-19th century AD, German and British explorers travelling across the Taurus regions reported the presence of two free-standing stone lions located approximately 15 km south of Darende, in the middle of the soft foothills at the northern border of the Elbistan plain in central-eastern Anatolia.[1] Because of their presence the spot has always been referred to

[1] A detailed synthesis is reported by Hawkins (2000: 329).

by local inhabitants as 'Arslantaş' (lion stone) (Fig. 1). Not much attention has been typically dedicated to these sculptures and the lions have generally been mentioned as indicators of the presence of a gateway, drawing on comparisons with similar stone guardians known from the Assyrian palaces (Sterret 1888: 299). Only later was the attention of scholars drawn to the fact that these standing *in situ* sculptures seem not to be associated with any building or even any proper site (Hawkins 2000: 329), representing an isolated piece of archaeological evidence in the open countryside (Özgüç, Özgüç 1949: 63-64).

Approximately 35 km southeast of Arslantaş, at the eastern border of the Elbistan plain, a second pair of standing lions has been found in the proximity of the village of Sevdiliköy. They were moved in 1961 to the local museum of Kahramanmaraş (Eralp 1995). Nowadays, only one of the two sculptures is exhibited, while the second is kept in the museum storehouse. Their original location was on top of a rock outcrop which probably also represents the quarry from which the lions had been realized (Orthmann 1971: 533). Indeed, according to the locals, the sculptures had been found here lying on their sides.

Once again at the beginning of the 1960s, a single lion sculpture was discovered in the village of Hunu/Arıtaş, at the western edge of the Elbistan plain (Kökten 1960: 43; Dumankaya, Topaloğlu 2017: 291). Despite the fact that the village was built on top of a mound (the so-called Arıtaş Höyük), it is still debatable whether the sculpture was originally located on the site. The fact that the lion was left unfinished and/or reused allows us to assume that it was only later transported and employed at the site. In any case, the sculpture was moved to the Kahramanmaraş museum, where it is still currently exhibited.

The standing lions of the Elbistan plain have never been the focus of any specific analysis. Travelers and scholars have long argued over whether the lions from Arslantaş could have been given one or more inscriptions (Ramsay, Hogarth 1893: 92-96; Charles 1911: 31-35; Meriggi 1975: 316; Hawkins 2000: 329). Nowadays, there are still

**Fig. 1:** The lions of Arlantaş in 1881 or 1882. Credit: John Henry Haynes archive, courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University.

doubts about the location and even the existence of any potential inscription(s) and the continuous exposure of the lions to the austere winter conditions of the Anatolian plateau will certainly not improve the situation.

Very few attempts have also been made to set the three groups of sculptures within their chronological and cultural context through iconographic and stylistic comparisons (Özgüç, Özgüç 1949: 64; Orthmann 1971: 118; Eralp 1995: 118-119). Moreover, the sculptures have hardly ever been considered as a coherent whole or analyzed in order to understand their possible meaning and their relationships and positioning within the surrounding territory (Harmanşah 2011: 77, Fig. 3).

However, their main characteristics stand out at first glance. First of all, they are unique in the whole context of Syro-Anatolian art, considering that they are the only lions carved on all their surfaces and arranged to be seen for a full four-side view.[2] Second, their location is anything but random, since they are all positioned in strategic areas marking the existence of possible passages and accesses from and to their territory as well as a special relationship with the surrounding landscape.

When plotted on a map along with the rest of the archaeological evidence of the Elbistan region, the portal lions of Arslantaş, Sevdiliköy, and Hunu immediately evoke an impressive significance. Indeed, they all border the outer fringes of the inhabited plain, distanced from any other settlement of the region (Fig. 2).

The following pages present the lions from the Elbistan plain. Their main iconographic and stylistic characteristics will be described and situated within the corpus of the Syro-Anatolian art. Their positioning will be then evaluated within the surrounding territory through computational spatial models and their symbolic, political, and historical meanings will be further discussed.

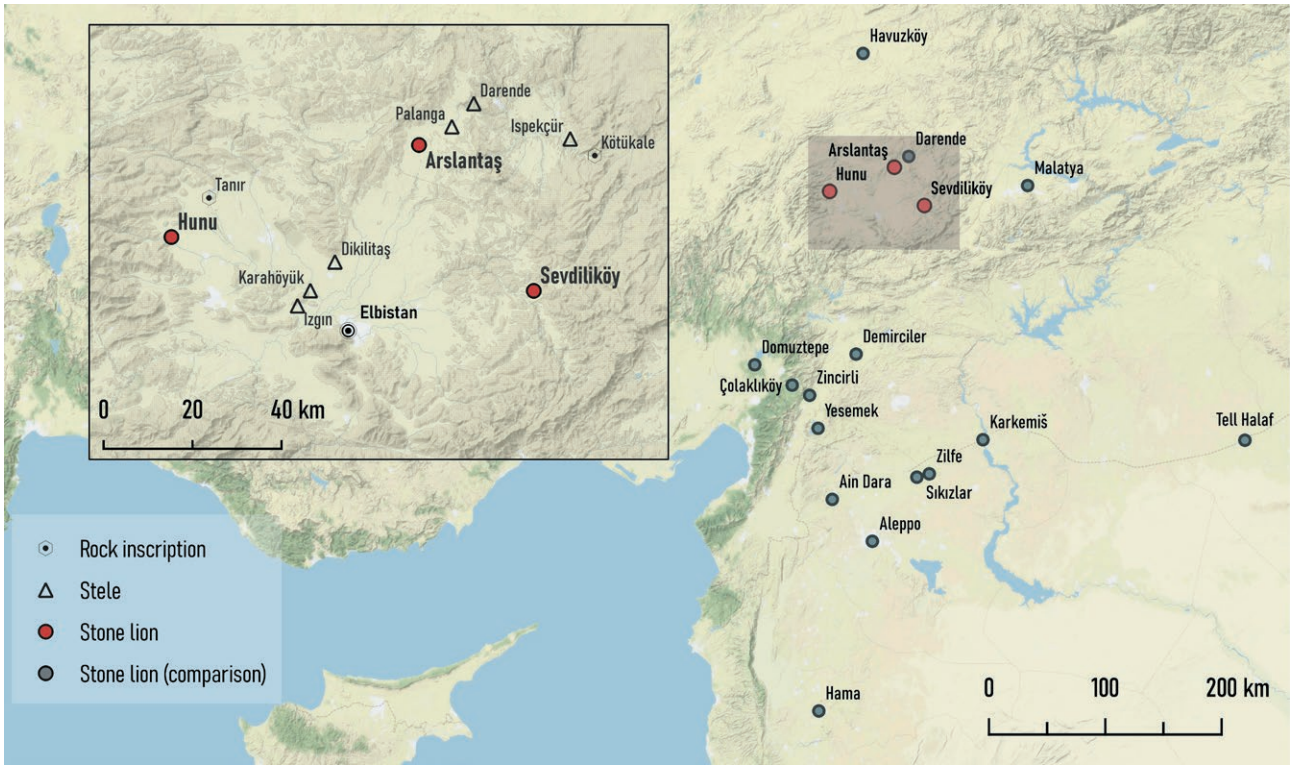


**Fig. 2:** Map of the study area with cited toponyms. Base map by Stamen Design, CC-BY-3.0.

[2] The term 'Syro-Anatolian' is used here to identify the region that geographically includes south-eastern Turkey and north-eastern Syria. For the use of different terminologies in accordance with historical, geographical or ethnic issues see Gilibert (2011: 1-6).

## 2. ICONOGRAPHY AND STYLE

### *2.1. Description*

The most renowned case of this fascinating group of sculptures is represented by the couple of still *in situ* portal lions from Arslantaş (Fig. 1).[3] The lions are free-standing and only the stone blocks underneath the bodies and between the legs were not sculpted away. This resulted in an almost fully three-dimensional shape where the body details are carved for a four-side view and the shoulders and hind legs are seen sideways (Fig. 3).

This provides the sculptures with a peculiar natural stance, as is also stressed by their upper outline that steeply follows the curve of the animals' spines. The lions are relatively slender with slightly rounded edges and smoothed surfaces. Shoulders and hind legs are separated from the torso by well-defined and soft curves. The limbs are elongated and slim, but they look rather stiff and immobile, despite the front legs being slightly advanced. The heads are three-dimensionally figured all around and conceived for a multi-side view. However the unnatural position of the heads should be noted – completely retracted and embedded into the shoulders – as well as their cubic, unusually long and wide proportions.

The rendering of the animals' details is unfortunately not always easily comprehensible. This is especially evident on lion B, where the details of the muzzle are almost completely washed away. The lions' mouths are open wide with a hanging tongue just slightly visible on lion A (Fig. 4). The lips are round and large while the fangs, probably originally four sharp pointed shapes, are now only discernible by means of two conical bulges. The upper parts of the muzzles are deeply damaged, so as not to allow for a precise reconstruction of their details. This generates a bizarre perception of the mouths, as though they were wider than the originals. The outline of a broad nose

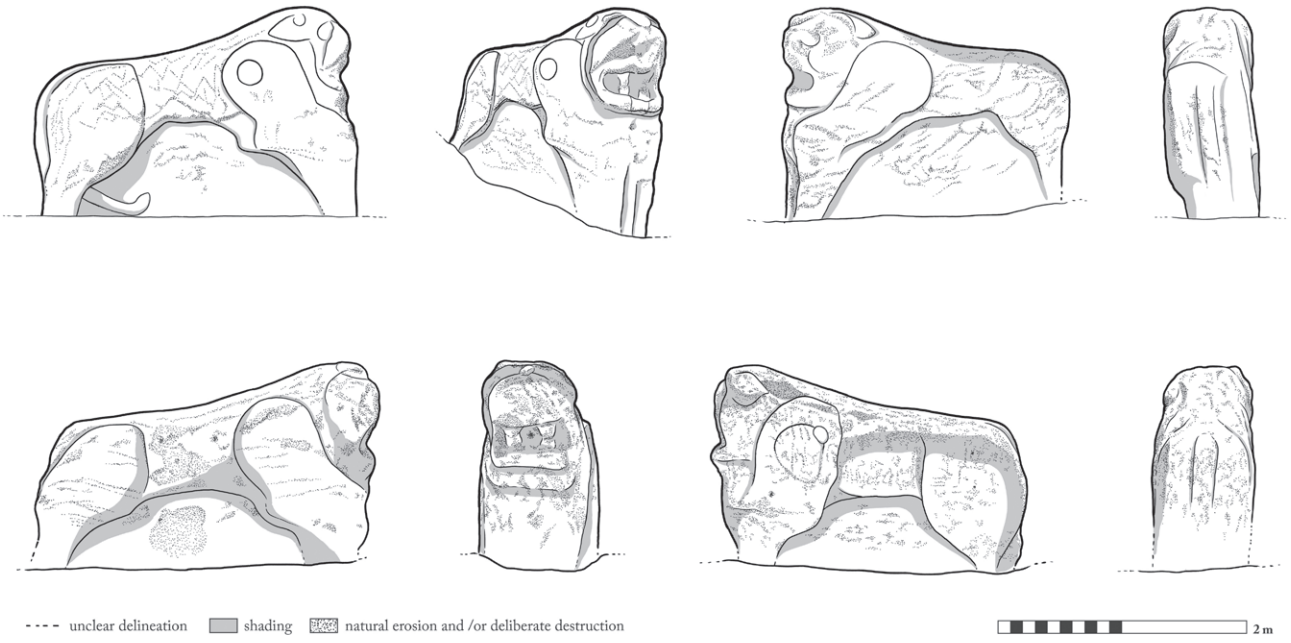


**Fig. 3:** The lions of Arlantaş: lion A (top) and lion B (bottom). Drawings by R. Zaher based on: Özgüç, Özgüç 1949 and Bilgin 2021.

[3] We follow here the numeration proposed by Hawkins (2000: 329) who identified lion A with the one on the left entering the potential 'gate' and lion B on the right. The sculptures are made of limestone and are placed at approximately four meters distance to each other; lion A is 2.05 m in height and 2.55 m in length, lion B is 1.95 m in height and 2.55 m in length (Özgüç, Özgüç 1949: 64).

is in any case visible especially on lion A. The eyes of the animals are also wide with the upper orbital parts rounded and notably protruding.

Despite the absence of a neck due to their posture, the muscles that surround the animals' heads are rendered by a soft band that is still partially visible only on the external side of lion A that merges with the above-mentioned protruding eye socket. The cheek musculature is also very prominent and is especially emphasized on the external side of lion A. The ear shape is in contrast almost totally indiscernible. They give the impression of being large, retreated, and triangular (Fig. 5).

Despite the fact that they are characterized by rounded and well-defined shoulders, the forelegs are out of proportion: extremely wide on the upper part and thinner in the lower one. Moreover, the joint between the two segments is characterized by a very unnatural angle that recalls a protruding spur, as is especially noticeable on the back of the external foreleg of lion A. On the same lion, the upper sides of both forepaws are also visible, and are characterized by four elongated and stylized claws (Fig. 6). Unfortunately, their ends on both the front and the lateral sides cannot be reconstructed because they are hidden by the soil of the field.

A thick mane entirely covers the external sides of the upper parts of both lions, approximately down to the belly line and reaching almost the limit of the hind leg (Fig. 5). On lion A, the mane recalls a pattern characterized by irregular lozenges or leaf-shapes that overlap both the fore and the back shoulders. This is less readable on lion B, where the limestone encrustations and a series of irregular grooves on the surface have been weathered, giving the impression of the presence of some rude circular patterns. This might also be a consequence of the long period spent by the lion lying on this side and touching the earth.

The bodies are slim, and the abdomens are rendered with an arch shape that is extremely stretched and thin on lion A but heavier and more solid on lion B. As far as the hind legs are concerned, they are also well

**Fig. 4:** Arlantaş in 2011, the lions' head: lion A (left) and lion B (right). Credit: Bilgin 2021.

**Fig. 5:** Arlantaş in 2014, the lions' external foreside: lion A (left) and lion B (right). Credit: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Aslanta%C5%9F_(Darende), CC-BY-SA-3.0.

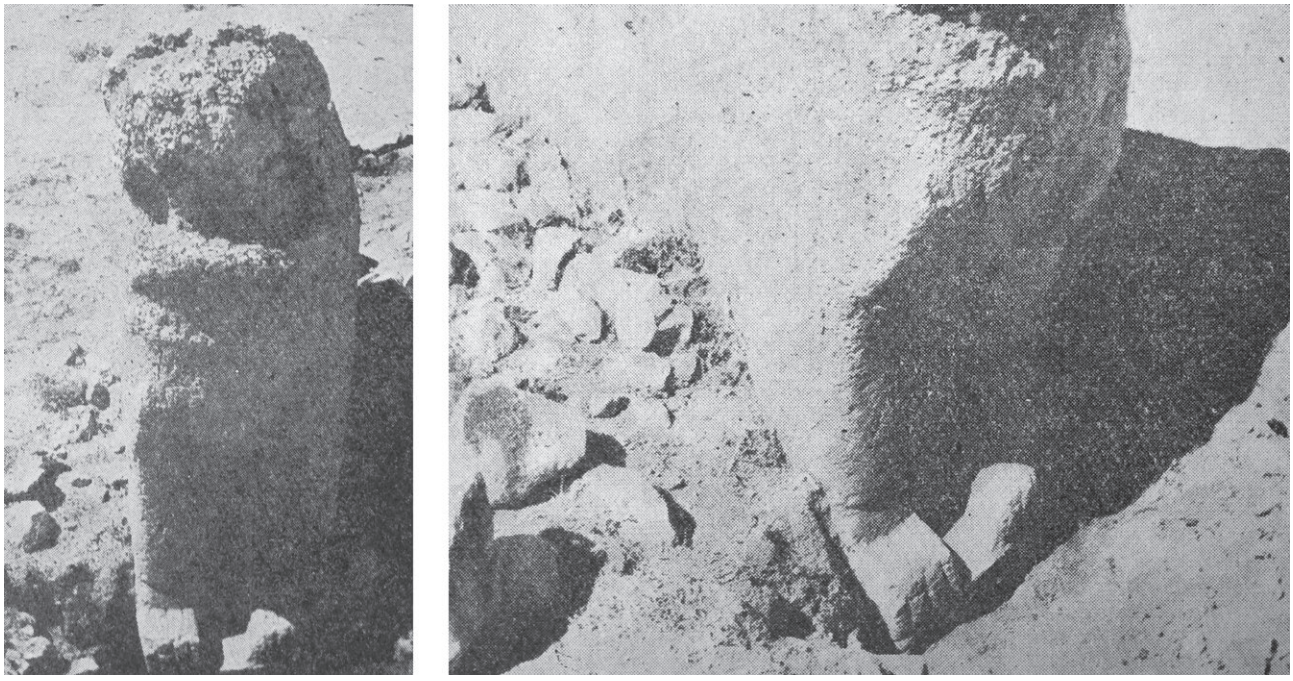

**Fig. 6:** Arlantaş in 1947, lion A forepaws. Adapted from: Özgüç, Özgüç 1949: 16, res. 18-19.

and softly modelled, as is especially evident in the rendering of the gentle and rounded curves of the shoulders. However, as for the forelegs, little attention has been paid to their proportions, namely that the lower parts are unnaturally thinner than the upper ones. Only the left paw of lion A is visible. Once again, this is done by rendering the four claws with thin and stylized traits, while the paw side is once again not visible. A thick tail is observable on the upper parts of the backs of both figures, disappearing between the legs and turning sideways approximately at the point where the limbs became thinner. Indeed, the faint trace of a carved tail is visible on the external side of lion A, where it sharply runs diagonally downwards with a final thickened upturned curl, maybe symbolizing the hair tuft.

The main traits that characterize the lions from Arslantaş also recur on the Sevdiliköy one.[4] The above-mentioned imbalance of rounded natural surfaces and out-of-proportion anatomical details represents the basic characteristic of this sculpture as well (Fig. 7). Moreover, the lion is thought to be a free-standing monument with its almost entirely three-dimensional shape made for a four-side view (Fig. 8). Considering its general iconographic and stylistic aspects as well as dimensions, the lion from Sevdiliköy is essentially quite identical to those from Arslantaş. The figure is slender but characterized by an unnatural triangular and static shape of the body. The head is retracted into the shoulders and shows cubic and unbalanced proportions. The shoulder muscles are once again well-defined but still characterized by rigidity and flatness.

Most of the details of the heads of the Arslantaş lions are also visible here, such as the big and protruding eyes, the wide and deep open mouth with faintly visible hanging tongue, the emphasized cheek muscles, the squared and broad nose, as well as the band that surrounds the head. In any case, it should be noted that the sculpture is better preserved than those from Arslantaş, allowing for a better analysis of some anatomic details (Fig. 9).

**Fig. 7:** The lion of Sevdiliköy in 2011. Credit: Bilgin 2021.

[4] The exhibited lion is made of andesite and is 2.04 m in height (Eralp 1995: 115).

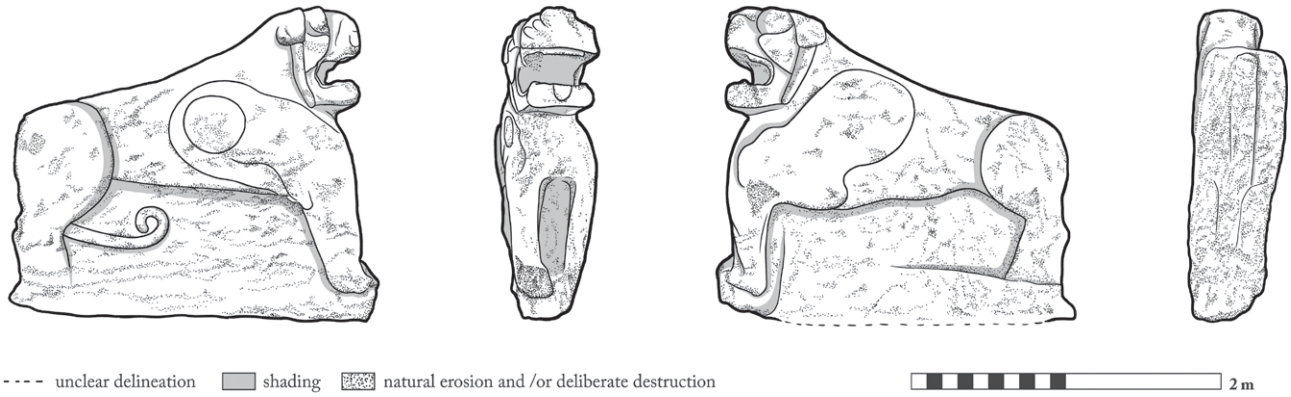


**Fig. 8:** The lion of Sevdiliköy. Drawings by R. Zahler based on: Eralp 1995 and Bilgin 2021.

**Fig. 9:** The lion of Sevdiliköy in the 1990s, the foreside. Adapted from: Eralp 1995: Lev. E6, F1, courtesy of Gül Eralp Kania.

The muscles around the mouth are softly defined by a thin curved surface, while the muzzle is high, squared and pronounced. A thick tail starts from the back of the animal, disappears between its legs and appears then again on its right side running horizontally and finally turning up with a curl (Fig. 10). The ears rise up from the band that surrounds the head in the shape of two large patches. The eyes are oval-shaped and well-defined. Uncommonly, the mouth does not show any trace of fangs, but a series of fractures at its far ends let us assume that they should have been there originally. In contrast to what can be observed at Arslantaş, no trace of mane or fur is visible on the lion surface. Moreover, the sculpture entirely stands on a substructure that slightly protrudes outside the limits of the animal shape.

The forelegs are rounded and straight with the right limb slightly advanced, providing a certain idea of movement. In any case the left shoulder is definitively out of proportion, occupying a great part of the body space and being itself as long as the rest of the leg. Moreover, the joint between the upper and the lower parts of the limb is

**Fig. 10:** The lion of Sevdiliköy, the lion' right side in 2014 (left) and back side in the 1990s (right). Left, credit: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kahramanmaras_Museum_L%C3%B6we_Sevdilli.jpg, CC-BY-SA-3.0. Right, adapted from: Eralp 1995: Lev E5, F3, courtesy of Gül Eralp Kania.

once again very unnatural and sharp. Although barely detectable, the paws of the forelegs are rendered by four stylized claws visible on their upper side only. Even more unbalanced are the hind legs. First of all, the right back shoulder is longer compared to the left one, capturing almost all the space designated to the entire leg. As a result, the lower right hind leg is completely projected forwards, giving the impression that the animal is crouched on this side. The lower left leg is better proportioned, but its paw is extremely elongated, probably in an attempt to compensate for the position of the right limb. At the extremity of the left paw the faint traces of four elongated claws are again visible. Interestingly, the points where the upper and the lower hind legs join are, in both cases, naturalistically rendered by means of a small and round protrusion.

The lion from Hunu shows instead an important set of differences compared to Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy (Fig. 11).[5] This is especially evident in its smaller size, as well as its rendering and design (Fig. 12). In-depth observations are difficult because the lion almost doubtlessly is both reworked and unfinished. Three different carving stages are indeed visible on the sculpture. The right backside is only roughly hewn and the front and front-right is carved with finishing details, while the entire left side is smoothed and outlined (Fig. 13).

Despite the fact that these activities are easily recognizable on the stone, the establishment of their temporal order is difficult. However, the occurrence of the different carving steps on the sculpture can hardly be explained other than as an unfinished carving process of reusing the stone block. It gives the impression that its front finished side represents either the earliest or the latest carving activity. The hammering and smoothing traces on the two sides mark instead an even later reuse that was probably never finished. With this is mind it is clear that establishing either its original or final shape is virtually impossible.

However, it is also very interesting to note that there are more than a few correspondences with Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy in some of the iconographic and stylistic details still visible on the sculpture. First of all, the upper curved outline of the stone block reproduces once again the spine and the backside of the animal. It allows the

[5] The lion is made of basalt and is 1.30 m in height and 1.60 in length (Kökten 1960: 43).

**Fig. 11:** The lion of Hunu in 2015. Credit: Bilgin 2021.

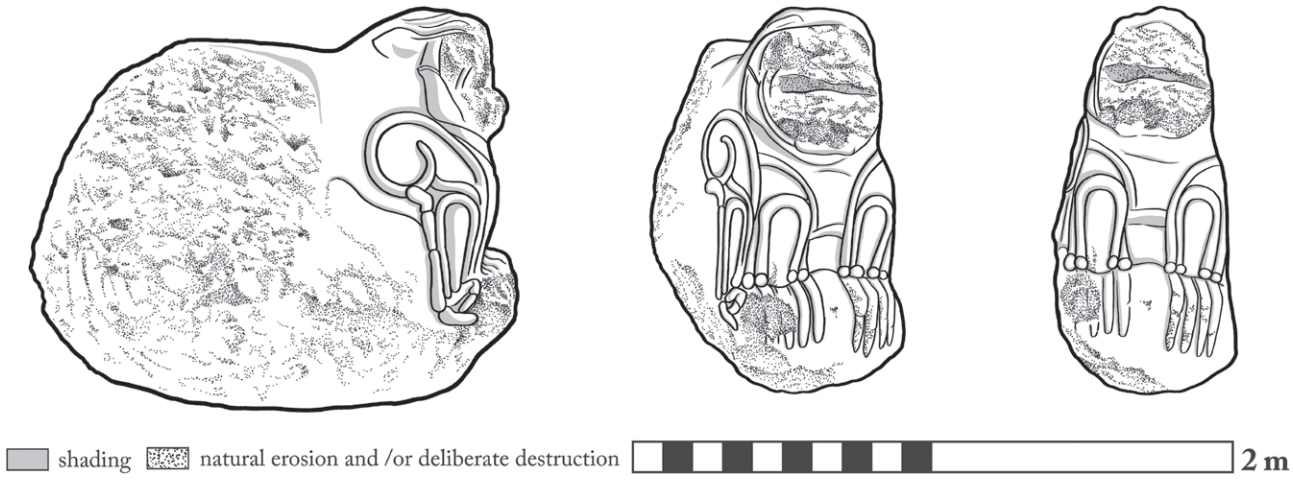


**Fig. 12:** The lion of Hunu. Drawings by R. Zahler based on: Kökten 1960 and Bilgin 2021.

**Fig. 13:** The lion of Hunu in 2015, the lion' left side. Credit: Bilgin 2021.

assumption that this lion as well was not thought to be a structural element but rather a free-standing sculpture. Moreover, the general posture of the lion, with its retracted and unnatural position of the head as well as its rounded, plastically sculpted but at the same time cubic and stiff character, are very close to the other lions. Despite the fact that the front face is almost completely lost, probably erased together with the left side of the lion, interesting observations can be drawn from its right side. The head is surrounded by a curved band on which the traces of the depressions left by a small triangular retreated ear are still visible. The eye is only slightly perceptible. It was certainly wide, with its upper orbital part protruding. The mouth was also wide and open, as well as characterized by a soft line that defines its lateral muscles. Because of all these characteristics, the head of the Hunu lion can be considered very close to those of Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy.

Nonetheless, it cannot be ignored that the design of the limbs shows significant differences. First of all, their shapes are mostly carved rather than rendered in relief. The lower torso is only visible by means of a faint incised line that shapes its outline. The shoulder is defined by an unnatural spiral form, an attempt to balance anatomic details and decorative patterns. The external side of the right foreleg has a triangular shape with the muscles stressed by further incisions. The same pattern occurs on the front side of the legs. Despite the fact that their outline is softly and naturalistically defined, with incised lines that emphasize the upper shoulder curvatures, the overelaboration of the muscle details produces once again an extravagant result. The view of the lower legs is even more awkward. Indeed, this part protrudes, creating a sort of unnatural break in the front limbs and giving the idea that the animal is crouched. Moreover, this protuberance was completely designed to reproduce the animal paws, with the result that these are as long as the upper legs. Once again, the paws are defined by four elongated and slim claws.

### *2.2. Comparisons*

In the wider framework of the Syro-Anatolian figurative art of the late 2nd-early 1st millennium BC, the lions from Elbistan show on the one hand their adherence to specific artistic canons and, on the other hand, the introduction of original aspects.[6]

First of all, it should be noted that the lions from Arslantaş, Sevdiliköy, and Hunu are unique in their arrangement (Fig. 1). As a matter of fact, lion sculptures were usually integrated into specific structures with the intent of

[6] If not otherwise specified the nomenclature of the following comparisons is always based on the numeration provided by Orthmann (1971).

guarding the gates of cities, palaces, temples or citadels (Mazzoni 2013: 470-471; Pucci 2015: 59-70). These 'proper' portal lions were indeed always sculpted on one side only, while their structural parts were left uncarved. The forelegs and the heads were protruding and three-dimensionally rendered, but the rest of the figures were intended for a lateral view with a bidimensional approach that implied the visibility of the hindlegs on the carved sides only. The sculptures from Arslantaş, Sevdiliköy, and Hunu were instead completely free-standing and three-dimensionally shaped for a four-side view. They were not meant to be integrated into a structure, rather they were 'virtual' portal lions, themselves representing a structure. A couple of similar cases can be taken into consideration. The lion from Çolaklıköy, found out of its context in the namesake village, is probably the best comparable example (Tunca 1976). It was sculpted on its four sides exactly in the same manner as the Elbistan lions and its dimensions are comparable with Hunu. Nonetheless, the right-side section of the back was flattened with a rectangular hole and its rear end was squared off vertically. Hence, it should have been used with some structural purpose. Actually, this lion seems to be structurally akin to the figures adorning the entrance of the Kapara Temple-Palace at Tell Halaf (Moortgat 1955: 110-114). Indeed, the two lions of the four-bay portico were also sculpted on their four sides, serving architecturally as statue-stands of the *hilani* façade (Gilibert 2014: 40-44). Another all-round lion is Hama C/1. It is fully three-dimensionally shaped even in the part underneath the body and between the legs. Unfortunately, the lion is the result of a very invasive restoration and not a few doubts about its original design have been raised (Orthmann 1971: 102-103; Riis, Buhl 1990: 50-52).

The wide set of unfinished lions coming from quarries and workshops also show, at a first glance, similarities with the sculptures from Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy. These are especially evident for some of the standing lions from Yesemek (Duru 2012: 68-71, lev. 8-11), as well as examples from Sıkızlar, Zilfe and Demirciler (Mazzoni 1986; Mazzoni 2011: 141-143; Carter 1996: 292-293, 304-305; Konyar 2009: 178, 185-186). Actually, affinities are mostly related to their stiff posture and cubic proportions, but exact comparisons are hard to make and misleading considering their incomplete nature. In fact, a more careful analysis shows that these sculptures were always thought to be 'proper' portal lions, since they were outlined on one side only and, when visible, their hindlegs were both carved on the same side.

As mentioned, the posture of the forelegs of the lion from Hunu is very unnatural and atypical. It recalls the small, crouched lion displayed in the Gaziantep Museum, which interestingly seems to originally come from the Elbistan region as well (Balcıoğlu 2009). Actually, squat lions are very common in the Syro-Anatolian art, such as that visible on relief E/1 of the Herald's Wall and H/2 of the King's Gate at Karkemiš (Hogarth 1914: pl. B10a; Woolley 1952: pl. B55a). Moreover, crouched lions are frequently depicted as deity stands, as at Darende and with the stele B/4 from Malatya (Hawkins 2000: 304-305, 328, pl. 145-146, 164).

When we turn to their iconographic and stylistic details, further peculiarities emerge. The head of the lions, completely retreated into the shoulder and without any trace of neck, provides these figures with a unique posture. The upper curved outline of the body of the lions from Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy is also very uncommon. It recalls the shape of the portal lion Malatya A/2 (Dalaporte 1940: pl. XVI-XVII; Orthmann 1971: 97-98). In contrast, the back rump-shape of the lion from Hunu is more canonical and comparable with the specimens C/1-2 and C/4-5 from the Lion's Pit at Zincirli (Luschan 1902: Taf. 46-47), as well as with the portal lion Malatya A/1 (Dalaporte 1940: pl. XVIII-XXI) and the lion base Karkemiš H/11 (Woolley 1921: Pl. B21; Orthmann 1971: 41-42).

The horizontal movement of the tail of the lions from Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy is also without comparisons. Indeed, the typical Iron Age tails curl up between the legs of the animals but always moving from up to down (Akurgal 1949: 68-71). The closest examples are attested at Ain Dara, on the portal lions A/1-2 (Orthmann 1971: 58, Taf. 1a) and on the reliefs of the outer façade of the temple terrace (Abū Assāf 1990: pl. 19a, 22a). Here, the lions' tails run horizontally under the bodies of the animals but always curl down.

The mane covering the entire body of the lions from Arslantaş is also unique. Indeed, when attested, the fur covers the frontal parts around the heads of the animals only, as a proper mane, while in a few other cases it extends over the bellies of the lions (Akurgal 1949: 70-73). Moreover, at Arslantaş the pattern is also atypical. Some affinities can be seen with the leaf-shape mane of the sculptures of the Temple-Palace at Tell Halaf (Moort-

gat 1955: 110-114, Taf. 120-121, 128) and with the overlapping irregular lozenge-shape mane of the antithetical lions on the pedestal wall relief of the cella of the Storm-God Temple at Aleppo (Gonnella *et al.* 2005: 108-109, Abb. 152; Kohlmeyer 2013: 522).

More affinities with the repertoire of Syro-Anatolian art can be found when we turn to the anatomic details of the lions. The head shape of the lions from Arslantaş, with their open wide mouths and protruding upper orbital eye parts, finds comparison with the figures of the Temple-Palace at Tell Halaf (Cholidis, Martin 2010: 346-354; Moortgat 1955: 113-114, Taf. 127-128). The solid and cubic form of the head of the lion from Sevdiliköy is instead very similar to those of the animals carved on reliefs B/11 and B/12 of the Outer Citadel Gate at Zincirli (Luschan 1902: Taf. 44). Moreover, its squared and large nose is close to those carved on the lion base Karkemiš H/11 (Woolley 1921: Pl. B21). The emphatic cheek muscles of Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy characterize many of the sculptures of the Herald's Wall at Karkemiš (E/3, E/4 and E/9) (Hogarth 1914: pl. B11a-b, B14b; Orthmann 1971: 31-32), as well as the relief with the antithetical lions from Aleppo (Gonnella *et al.* 2005: 96, 101, 108-109, Abb. 133, 141, 151-152). The small triangular and retreated ear of Hunu is also comparable with examples from the Herald's Wall at Karkemiš (E/1 and E/3) (Hogarth 1914: pl. B10a, B11a), as well as with reliefs from Aleppo (Gonnella *et al.* 2005: 108-109, Abb. 151-152). The big, raised ears integrated into the band around the head of Sevdiliköy recall instead the portal lions A/1-2 from Ain Dara (Orthmann 1971: Taf. 1a). Again, it should be considered that the way they hang laterally in a large patch-shape is without comparisons.

The band that surrounds the heads of the lions from Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy is quite characteristic of Syro-Anatolian art. It can be seen again at the Herald's Wall at Karkemiš (E/1, E/3, E/4, E/6 and E/9) (Hogarth 1914: pl. B10a, B11a-b, B13a, B14b), as well as in the reliefs from the pedestal wall at Aleppo (Gonnella *et al.* 2005: 96, Abb. 133). The more protruding curve around the head of Hunu is instead more similar to those on the portal lions Malatya A/2 (Delaporte 1940: pl. XVI-XVII) and Ain Dara A/1-2 (Orthmann 1971: Taf. 1a), as well as on the lion base Karkemiš H/11(Woolley 1921: Pl. B21).

Many sculptures and reliefs present rounded and well-defined fore and back shoulders. Not in a few cases the rendering of the anatomic details is out of proportion, recalling those of Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy. This is especially visible on some of the reliefs of the Herald's Wall at Karkemiš (E/1 and E/4) (Hogarth 1914: pl. B10a, B11b) and again on the antithetical lions from Aleppo (Gonnella *et al.* 2005: 108-109, Abb. 152). The peculiar sharp angle that characterizes the joints of the forelegs at both Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy finds a good comparison with the unnatural posture of the lion carved on relief A/9a and the bulls reproduced on reliefs A/3 and A/4 at Malatya (Delaporte 1940: pl. XIX, XXII; Orthmann 1971: 91-92). The spiral-shape of the shoulder of the lion from Hunu is however more uncommon. As a decorative element, the spiral occurs for instance on the sphinx protome Zincirli K/8 (Orthmann 1971: 73, Taf. 67b), while a pattern similar to Hunu can be seen on the bulls decorating the sculpted base from Domuztepe (Çambel 1999: 94, pl. 122-123).

The pattern made with incised lines that reproduce the muscled shape of the forelegs at Hunu is not rare in the repertoire of the Syro-Anatolian art. Comparisons can be made with the lions decorating the reliefs of the terrace of the temple at Ain Dara (Abū Assāf 1990: pl. 19a, 22a), as well as with the relief H/2 from the King's Gate at Karkemiš (Woolley 1952: pl. B55a; Orthmann 1971: 31-33).

As far as the paws of the three sets of lions is concerned, they certainly share the general characteristic of ending with elongated claws. However, only the case from Arslantaş offers the possibility of drawing specific comparisons. Interestingly, T. and N. Özgüç (1949: 63-64, Abb. 18-19), stated that when they visited the site the forepaws of lion A were visible. They describe the four claws on each paw as flat on their top, curved on the front and with some linear decorations, suggesting a very suitable comparison with the early sculptures of the Lions' Pit at Zincirli (C/1-3) (Luschan 1902: Taf. 46-47). A further association can be made with the earlier group of reliefs from Hama (Riis, Buhl 1990: 40-42, fig. 17). The back paw still visible on the internal side of lion A shows an even more stretched and slim shape of the paws that seems to be comparable with those of the lions of the Temple-Palace at Tell Halaf (Cholidis, Martin 2010: 346-354; Moortgat 1955: 110-114, Taf. 121-122, 129).

*2.3. Style and Dating*

The lions from the Elbistan plain have never been concretely integrated into the development of the Syro-Anatolian art. W. Orthmann (1971: 118) included them in his collection, saying that due to their posture they do not specifically belong to any group and because of their coherent characteristics they might all be attributed to the same workshop. Despite this, he tentatively assigned Sevdiliköy to his style II and Hunu to style III, without any specific mention of Arslantaş (Orthmann 1971: 486, 533). Before him, T. and N. Özgüç (1949: 63-64) instead proposed a dating for the lions from Arslantaş to the 11th or 12th century BC, since they merge rounded and smoothed surfaces typical of the Hittite period with more squared details of some later sculptures. Following the same idea, G. Eralp (1995: 118-119) also agreed that both Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy belong to an early phase of Late Hittite art. In contrast, S. Mazzoni (1997: 366) considered all sets of lions from Elbistan as belonging to a consistent group of free-standing sculptures dated to the 9th century BC, together with Havuzköy, Çolaklıköy, Tell Halaf, and Hama. More recently, A. Gilibert (2015: 143) found the comparison with the sculptures from Ain Dara more suitable, setting the dating of the lions to the 11th century BC. Moreover, V. Blanchard (2019: 191-193) considered the lions from Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy as evidence of the activities carried out across the Elbistan territory during the 12th century BC.

It is undeniably challenging to situate the case of the Elbistan lions within the already complex lines of development of Syro-Anatolian art. Indeed, the identification of a general development of this form of art is difficult to trace, especially in the absence of reliable contexts and considering the differences in style occurring at contemporary sites (Orthmann 2002: 153-155; Manuelli 2016: 28-29). The lions from the Elbistan plain represent a proper stylistic group without any trace of a clear internal development. This increases the difficulties of delivering an appropriate cultural and chronological assessment.

It should also be considered that the Syro-Anatolian lions have never been the focus of any detailed study, and curiously Orthmann has also not provided any specific analysis of them as individual figures. Remarkably, the most reliable and comprehensive study on the development of lion iconography and style between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st millennium BC is still nowadays provided by E. Akurgal (1949: 57-75). However, more recently S. Mazzoni (2000: 1046-1048; 2013: 477) has added new cases and thoughts to the topic, still confirming the arguments and the general development proposed by the Turkish scholar.

With the exception of some stylistic details, the lions from Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy are almost identical. The first shows rounded edges, soft curves and more attention to detail, i.e. the mane and the paws, while the second is more squared and solid, but in any case they are undeniably very close to each other. They can certainly be the product of the same workshop or even of the same sculptor or artist and their dating should necessarily be the same. As far as the lion from Hunu is concerned, its unfinished status creates not a few problems for its evaluation. The sculpture is clearly smaller than those from Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy, but its general arrangement and above all the carving and rendering of its head is nearly the same. Despite the fact that the design of the forelegs is clearly different, the contemporaneity of the whole group is probably the preferred assumption. Indeed, it cannot be ruled out that they all belong to the same workshop, but that the carving of the lion from Hunu followed a different path and the rendering of its finished front side was made by a different sculptor than the one responsible for Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy.

Considering that the heads of the lions from Arslantaş and Hunu are deeply damaged and that the one from Sevdiliköy is also not in perfect condition, only a few elements can be used for an appropriate dating of the sculptures. Despite the fact that the movement of the tails of the lions from Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy is unusual, it needs to be noted that tails curling up between the legs of the animals are typical of the pre-Assyrian Iron Age, while during the Assyrian period they instead start curling onto their rears (Akurgal 1949: 68-69). Concerning the distinctive mane of Arslantaş, it must be stressed that the stylized spade or leaf pattern is more typical of the Hittite lions, while it developed into a flame-shape mostly during the Iron Age (Akurgal 1949: 59; Mazzoni 2000: 1046). The soft rendering of the cheeks as well as the emphatic muscles of the necks and the shoulders also echo the Hittite imperial period, while the stiff and static posture of the figures is more characteristic of the earliest Iron Age sculptures (Özgüç, Özgüç 1949: 64). Following the same dichotomy, the small retracted ear of the lion

from Hunu recalls Hittite prototypes, but the wide and rigid open mouth is instead closer to later examples (Orthmann 1971: 118; Akurgal 1949: 70-72). The unusual rendering of the forelegs of Hunu is certainly close to Assyrian examples, but similar patterns are already visible for instance at Ain Dara (Mazzoni 2000: 1046).

A special mention is due to the paws of the lions from Arslantaş. Unfortunately, the rendering of their lateral part, which represents one of the most distinguishing features of the lion development, is not detectable. It might be assumed that the forepaws displayed a fifth lateral crouched claw. The back paw could have also been characterized by the same pattern. Indeed, neither the schematic double-thickened claws with single spiral of the earliest Iron Age sculptures, nor the stylized multiple-spiral shape of the later ones are here reproduced (Mazzoni 2013: 477; Akurgal 1949: 68).

In general, comparisons have shown that the main set of affinities occur with the lions carved on the reliefs of the Herald's Wall at Karkemiš, as well as with those of the cella of the Storm-God Temple at Aleppo, which can now be quite confidently set at the beginning of the 10th century BC (Mazzoni 1997: 266-267; Gilibert 2011: 116-117). Nonetheless, further features usually associated with the continuity of the Hittite artistic traits into the earliest Iron Age sculptures are also observable. Specific comparisons have been made with the sculpted lions and the reliefs of the terrace at the Ain Dara temple, dated to the 11th century BC (Nóvak 2012: 48; Mazzoni 2013: 473; Gilibert 2015: 143), as well as with some of the sculptures reused in the Lions Gate at Malatya, which originally belong to the 12th century BC (Mazzoni 1997: 292; Manuelli 2019). Later parallels can also be seen in certain traits of the lions at the entrance of the Temple-Palace at Tell Halaf, for which a dating to the late 10th century BC can be assumed (Mazzoni 2013: 480; Gilibert 2014: 36). In conclusion, comparisons allow us to confidently situate the lions from the Elbistan plain between the 11th and the beginning of the 10th century BC, although an earlier dating to the 12th or a later one to the advanced 10th centuries BC cannot be fully excluded.

## 3. LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

### *3.1. Method and Aims*

As mentioned, the portal lions of Arslantaş, Sevdiliköy, and Hunu represent unique and original evidence of the cultural milieu at the beginning of the Iron Age. However, their uniqueness, as well as the absence of inscriptions and associated archaeological context, have also inevitably misled their interpretation and the reconstruction of their historical significance. Yet when these monuments are plotted on a map alongside other archaeological evidence of the Elbistan region, their positioning is tremendously evocative (Fig. 14). They are located either at the foot slopes of the surrounding towering massifs (Sevdiliköy and Hunu) or on top of the natural depression between the foothills of the Anti-Taurus and the rough mountains dividing the Ceyhan river's headwaters and the Tohma river basin (Arslantaş).

In the light of these premises, a legitimate question arises: how can their outstanding topographic prominences be used to better understand the monuments' function and historical significance? And consequently: how can we formally deal with the problem of conferring a specific significance to a place beyond our simple subjective perception?

Here we discuss how to define an explanatory formal model capable of outlining the main landscape features of the Elbistan basin and its archaeological evidence. This relies on an array of quantitative methods and techniques that are nowadays quite common in GIS Science (Tilley 1994; Llobera 2001; De Reu *et al.* 2013).

In order to answer basic geo-historical questions, such as 'where?' and 'why there?' (Baker 2003: 37-44), two different yet interconnected approaches contribute to defining this model. First, the archaeological spatial pattern of the Elbistan basin will be outlined in order to evaluate if the lions' positioning might share affinities and discrepancies with the distribution of settlements within the same region. Second, the function and the topographic prominence of the lions will be evaluated within Elbistan's historical mobility network, as well as in relation to the geomorphological characters of their surrounding territories.

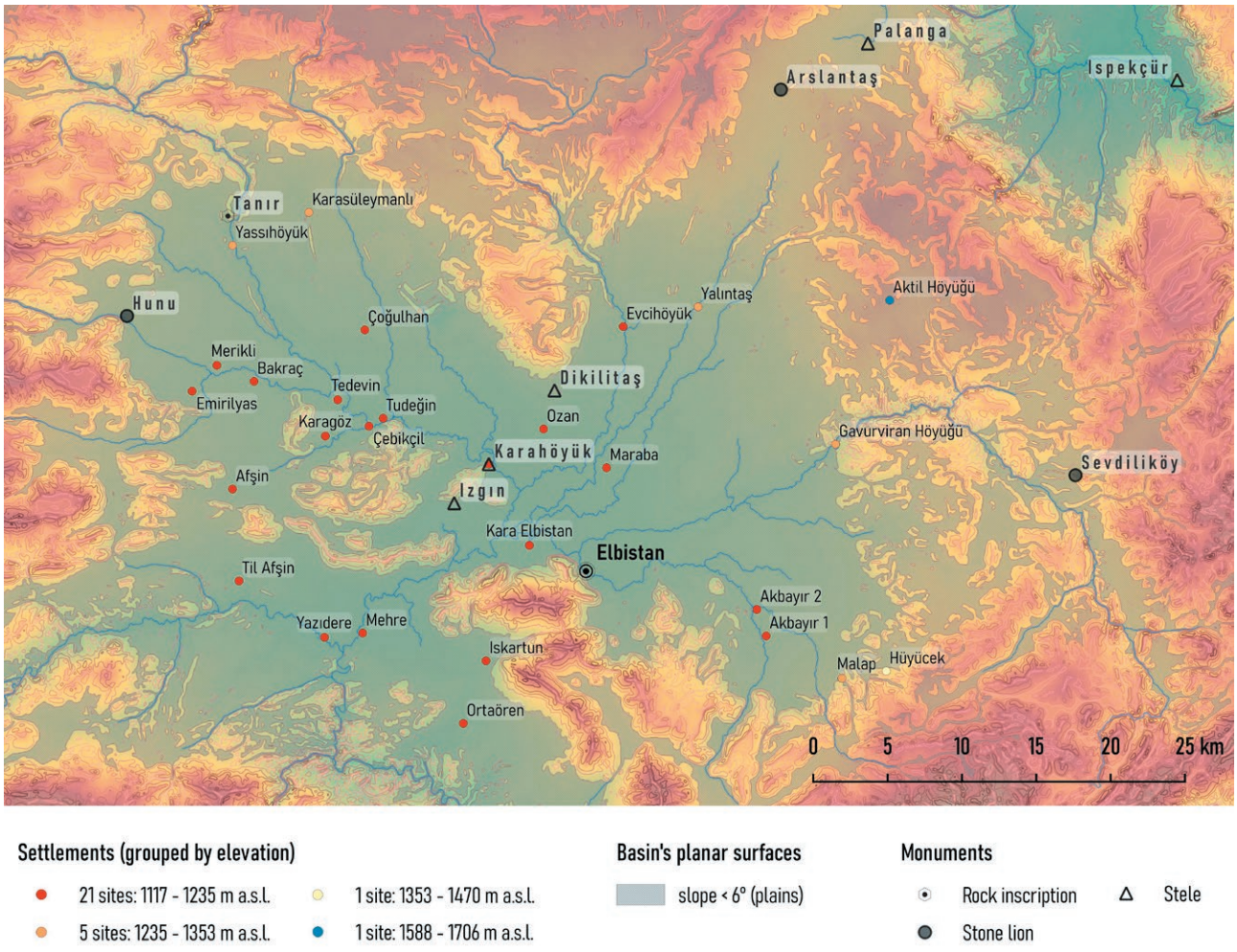


**Fig. 14:** Distribution of settlements in the Elbistan basin with the indication of the region's planar surfaces within the interval from 0° to 6° slope.

### *3.2. On the Lions' Positioning ('Where?')*

The Elbistan region is an intermontane plain located in the western part of the eastern Taurides. It represents an embedded basin with a generally level floor almost entirely ringed by steep mountains reaching altitudes between 2000 and 3000 meters. The extensive ranges of the Binboğa massif enclose the western side of the plain, while the steep slopes of the Hizanlı and Nurhak mountains mark natural borders respectively to the north and to the east. The southern edge of the Elbistan plain is bordered by the Berit Dağ massif. In contrast to the rugged geomorphological nature of the surrounding mountains, the basin floor shows a high degree of uniformity. Its lower parts lie at about 1100 meters a.s.l. and, with the exclusion of the Soluk hills in the middle of the plain, the land is generally flat or gently sloping.

This sharp distinction between plain and mountains also marks a fundamental characteristic in Elbistan's long-lasting settlement history. Indeed, all the pre-classical mounds so far known seem to be located exclusively within the floor-plain (Çifçi, Greaves 2010). In order to formally support this assumption and to minimize subjective decisions, we first focus on the problem of the quantitative definition of plain areas within the study region. Despite the fact that several geomorphometric semi-automated approaches might help in recognizing such a land-

form (e.g., *r.geomorphon* or Topographic Position Index), we still preferred to follow a simpler method based on empirical observations. Indeed, since the slope gradient of the terrain can be assumed as the basic criterion to outline relatively flat areas, it can be estimated that all terrains within the range between 0 and 6 degrees of slope can be safely considered plains. At first glance, this threshold value could appear subjective. It actually relies on the synthesis of different criteria that have been inferred from the survey of physical terrain conditions and comparable factors resulting from secondary literature (Veselský *et al.* 2015: 802-803; Di Filippo, Mori 2018: 51-53).

This allowed us to assemble a set of continuous planar surfaces derived from an SRTM DEM at 30 meters resolution through the multi-scale analysis of slope gradient geomorphometric variables.[7] The results, displayed in Fig. 14, confirm that all the identified settlements do indeed lay inside the Elbistan basin flat area. Moreover, 24 of the 28 sites are located at no more than 2000 meters distance from the plain border. This limit is represented by the proper landform perimeter or by further reliefs inside the plain itself, i.e. the Soluk hills at the center of the basin.

This picture is truly revealing when we focus on the geology of the Elbistan basin, which allows us to outline an even more solid relationship between landscape and the distribution of sites. Almost all the settlements are located in geological areas characterized by alluvial plain sediments originating from recent stream beds (Fig. 15). More precisely, these settlements spread out across the geological interface between recent stream beds (Holocene fluvial sediments) and more ancient sequences of Pleistocene sediments composed of conglomerate, sandstone, siltstone, and mudstones with abundant calcretes, which generally lay at a higher elevation (Yusufoğlu 2013).

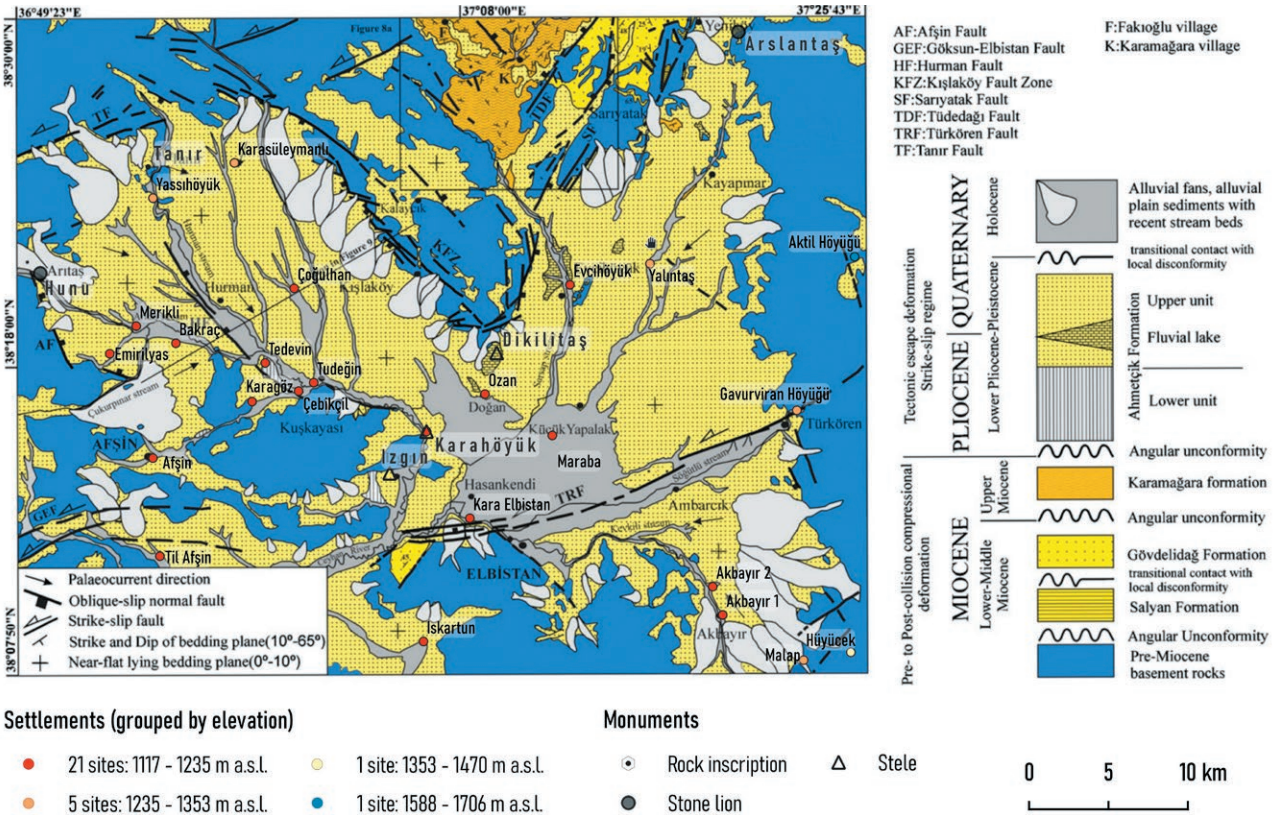


**Fig. 15:** Relationship between the sites' distribution and geology in the study area. Adapted from: Yusufoğlu 2013: 311, courtesy of Halil Yusufoğlu.

[7] GRASS GIS *r.param.scale* module, morphometric parameter = slope (Veselský *et al.* 2015: 802-803).

This preference in the choice of settlement location can be safely considered the main feature of the sites' distribution in the Elbistan plain. The majority of the settlements (17) are located less than 300 meters apart from the geological interface formed by recent fluvial sediments cut into the more ancient Pleistocene sequences. In other words, most of the archaeological sites, and more significantly those with the longest occupation sequences, are located on natural elevations such as rocky spurs, platforms, or terraces, overlooking the underlying watercourses (e.g., Merikli, Tedevin, Til Afşin, and Yassıhöyük; cf. Brown 1967). As a consequence, there is also a noticeable relationship between the mounds' distribution and the network of watercourses (Konyar 2011; Çifçi, Greaves 2010). If one considers exclusively the permanent streams, i.e. those with significant and steady flows, 18 settlements are located at no more than 750 meters from them. Yet if the overall hydrologic system is taken into consideration, also including the minor streams, seasonal tributaries, and possibly springs, all the locations are characterized by a considerable availability of water resources.

Summing these data up, the archaeological settlements in the Elbistan basin follow a clear and coherent distribution pattern. The sites, dated from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Age, seem to be deeply influenced by the natural environment. They are located exclusively in the basin's relatively flat area, within the ecological interface characterized by gradients from 0 to 6 slope degrees. Moreover, they lie at the fringes of recent geological areas originating from fluvial accumulation of Holocene stream beds, showing a tight relationship with the network of the basin's watercourses.

In this context, the fact that the sculpted lions are located along the outer limit of Elbistan's inhabited region marks a fundamental difference from the proper settlements, and the two sets of archaeological evidence clearly follow distinctive, seemingly opposite distribution patterns.

Furthermore, the picture also helps to identify a sharp distinction between the different sets of lions. Indeed, Sevdiliköy is located at more than 16 kilometers from the closest Holocenic formation and more than 2 kilometers apart from the nearest major watercourse. A similar trend seems to be shown at Arslantaş. Despite the fact that compared to Sevdiliköy the location is closer to the basin's recent fluvial sediments (*c.* 3 kilometers), it still lies about 4800 meters from the steady stream. Hunu, conversely, shows some discrepancies from either Arslantaş or Sevdiliköy. The findspot of Hunu's lion (i.e., the village of Arıtaş Höyük) exactly mirrors the main features of the other settlements of the region. It is located at the intersection of the geological interface between recent stream beds and more ancient sediments (Dumankaya, Topaloğlu 2017: Fig. 7), at the western limit of the relatively flat surface of the basin (*c.* 1293 meters a.s.l.), and in close connection with one of the major western branches of the Hurman river. In short, it possesses all the features emphasized for the 'living' settlements rather than those shared by Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy.

The comparison of the distribution pattern of settlements and portal lions seems to show that the lack of any contemporary remains in both Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy is not due to either the dearth of archaeological research or unknown historical circumstances. Instead, it confirms that these lions are open-air monuments, intentionally conceived to be erected in the open country, without any direct relationship with any coevally inhabited center nearby.

### *3.3. On the Lions' Function ('Why There?')*

The reconstruction of ancient mobility through computational techniques (i.e., the Cost Surface Analysis and the Least Cost Pathways) is nowadays routinely applied in the field of historical research (Llobera 2000; Surface-Evans, White 2012; Polla, Verhagen 2014). Its primary purpose concerns the development of 'predictive models' that may help us to understand the nature and development of ancient road systems. Even more significantly, as a reconnaissance tool, this array of techniques provides a means by which geographically-based research problems can be examined, serving as a method of hypothesis validation (Newhard, Levine, Rutherford 2008: 99-101; Bevan 2011).

Therefore, the analysis here proposed starts by examining an aspect that has already been highlighted by the reports of travelers and explorers who crossed the Elbistan plain at the turn of the 20$^{th}$ century AD: the impor-

tance of the places where the lions were erected in the framework of an interregional communication system. For instance, Arslantaş is reported to mark the southern border of the Sivas province (Hogarth, Munro 1893: 644) or, more often, is described as a landmark along the path that leads to Derende (Ramsay, Hogarth 1893: 96; Maunsell 1902). As far as Sevdiliköy is concerned, the existence of the monument was still unknown at the time of the above-mentioned early surveys. Nonetheless, the location was already known at the end of the 19th century AD as Alhazli/y and was referred to as the fundamental hub in the network of communication to the Malatya region (Ramsey 1890: 273; Maunsell 1902; Kiepert 1913).[8] Interestingly, these early descriptions agree significantly, depicting the locations of these open-air monuments as liminal spaces at the fringes of the inhabited plain on crossroads along the major pathways connecting Elbistan with the Tohma Su and Malatya basins.

Taking this as a starting point, we have processed a set of computed routes through the combination of the *r.walk* and *r.drain* modules implemented in GRASS GIS. Considering the computed mobility network that joins the main Iron Age center of the plain (Karahöyük), to the coeval sites located just beyond the massifs ringing the Elbistan's basin (Meriggi 1966; Kontani *et al.* 2012), the peculiar location of the lion sculptures stands out (Fig. 16).[9]

In a general framework, Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy are both considerably far away from any plausible inner road system of the plain, which instead seems to accord quite precisely with the web of inner watercourses. In contrast, they are touched by the routes that lead from the plain to the neighboring regions.

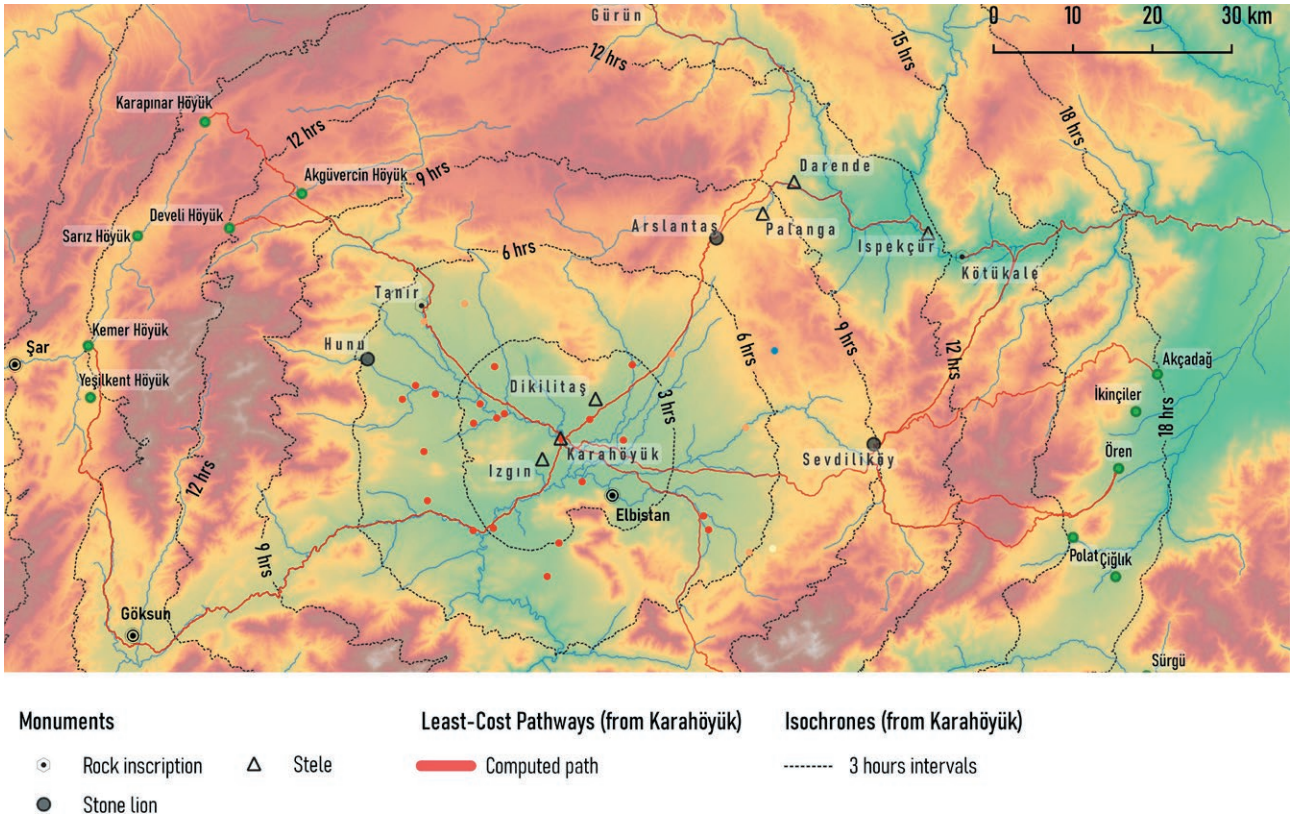


**Fig. 16:** Mobility pattern from Elbistan toward nearby basins with the indication of computed pathways and related isochrones.

[8] The place-name Alhazli/y has disappeared nowadays, but was mentioned until the beginning of the 20th century AD (Ramsey 1890: 273; Naval Staff 1919: route 86; Maunsell 1902; Kiepert 1904-1907; 1913).

[9] Computed pathways have been balanced through travel times given by Sterret (1888: 299). For this region, a perfect match between real and generated pathways occurs when the spreading algorithm (*r.walk*) considers exclusively the rate of change of the original DEM (i.e., slope) and no friction parameters are provided.

Only a few general considerations can be raised about Hunu. Its location, lying at the foot slopes of the steep Binboğa range, clearly has no close relationship with the main route leading out of the Elbistan basin. Even by forcing the algorithm parameters in order to find a suitable track across the Binboğa (e.g., from Hunu to Kemer), bypassing the massif turns out to be more convenient in terms of travel time than crossing its arduous mountain tracks.

Entering now into more detail of the locations of Arslantaş and Sevdiliköy, the perceptions of the early 20th century travelers mentioned above seems to be fully confirmed by the computational analysis.

The lions from Sevdiliköy are located at the intersection of an array of computed routes leading eastward and crossing the Nurhak range in the direction of the plains of Sultan Suyu and Malatya. This area shows the characteristics of a proper crossroad, since it is located just before the paths which allow passage through the mountains. From Sevdiliköy three different routes allow a crossing of the Nurhak range. It is worth noting that these generated tracks correspond quite precisely to those described by ancient geographers and travelers. The first track follows a system of narrow valleys that connects Sevdiliköy to the course of the Tohma Su, near Kötükale, from where a road is reported to reach Malatya (Ramsey 1890: 273). A second route, apparently the easier one, crosses the mountains from Alhazli (roughly corresponding to modern Sevdiliköy) and reaches Arga (modern Akçadağ), at the western foot slopes of the Malatya plain (Ramsey 1890: 273-274; Naval Staff 1919: route 86 alternative). The last track allows a crossing of the Nurhak range via the mountain pass of Ola Kaya (Sterret 1888: 299; Ramsey 1890: 273), or across the southern pass of Devrent Gedick (Naval Staff 1919: route 86).[10] These variances join again descending towards the region of Polat (i.e., Ören Höyük, see Meriggi 1966).[11]

Moreover, the topographic relevance of Sevdiliköy in the framework of the interaction of the Elbistan plain with the eastern regions is especially visible when considering its geomorphometric variables (Fig. 17). The Sevdiliköy crossroad is precisely located at the eastern margin of the Elbistan plain, where routes running eastward converge on the banks of the Söğütlü stream, some 2 kilometers south of the rock outcrop where the lion sculptures stand. This crossroad lies within an area of small plains located at the foot slopes of the Nurhak range. Just beyond it, a natural break of the Sügültü river gives access to a system of narrow U-shaped valleys that traverses the range in its entirety.[12] This 'entrance' represents the most suitable natural passageways across the mountains.

As far as Arslantaş is concerned, the site is located on the wide and almost flat saddle that links the Elbistan plain to the Tohma Su basin. From the south, this geological formation is accessed following the course of the Sarsap stream, along a route flanked by the impressive, albeit quite enigmatic, Dikilitaş monument, 'a rectangular monolith 5 meters high, set erect in a large block on a spur of the Karajik Dagh, visible from every part of the Elbistan Ovasi' (von der Osten 1930: 108 and Fig. 116). Since the discovery of the Arslantaş lions, early topographic maps (Maunsell 1902; Kiepert 1904-1907) and itinerary accounts have reported the presence of this monument and its significance as a primary node of the communication routes crossing this stretch of the Anti-Taurus. The computational analysis interestingly confirms the perception of 19th century AD reports. It also supports the supposition that, at least during the past century, Arslantaş constituted a hub from which a set of individual roads departed to different locations into the Tohma Su basin, such as Gürün and Ispekçür (Fig. 18).

The topographic prominence of Arslantaş is defined by completely different landscape features when compared to Sevdiliköy, showing different geo-morphometric variables. These do not allow us to identify meaningful landform features that may have prompted the efforts to build the monument in that spot. A potential key to the interpretation comes instead from a further geographical description provided by an unknown explorer at the begin-

[10] The Ola Kaya peak appears in the form Alaja in the map-series 'Eastern Turkey in Asia' (Maunsell 1902). Today it should be the Öğlekayasi Tepesi (N 38°12′57″ E 37°49′25″, https://www.geonames.org/10483853/oeglekayasi-tepesi.html). The Devret Gedick modern toponym features as Derbent Dağı (N 38°11′00″ E 37°45′00″, https://www.geonames.org/317081/derbent-dagi.html).

[11] The computed routes do not stop at Polat but continue up to Oren Höyük. It is the first site with a documented Iron Age sequence after the steep descent (Meriggi 1966).

[12] Two different quantitative approaches for semi-automated recognition of landform classes, *r.geomorphon* (Jasiewicz, Stepinski 2013) and the Topographic Position Index (Jenness 2006; De Reu *et al.* 2013), roughly outline the same results for the study area (Fig. 17).

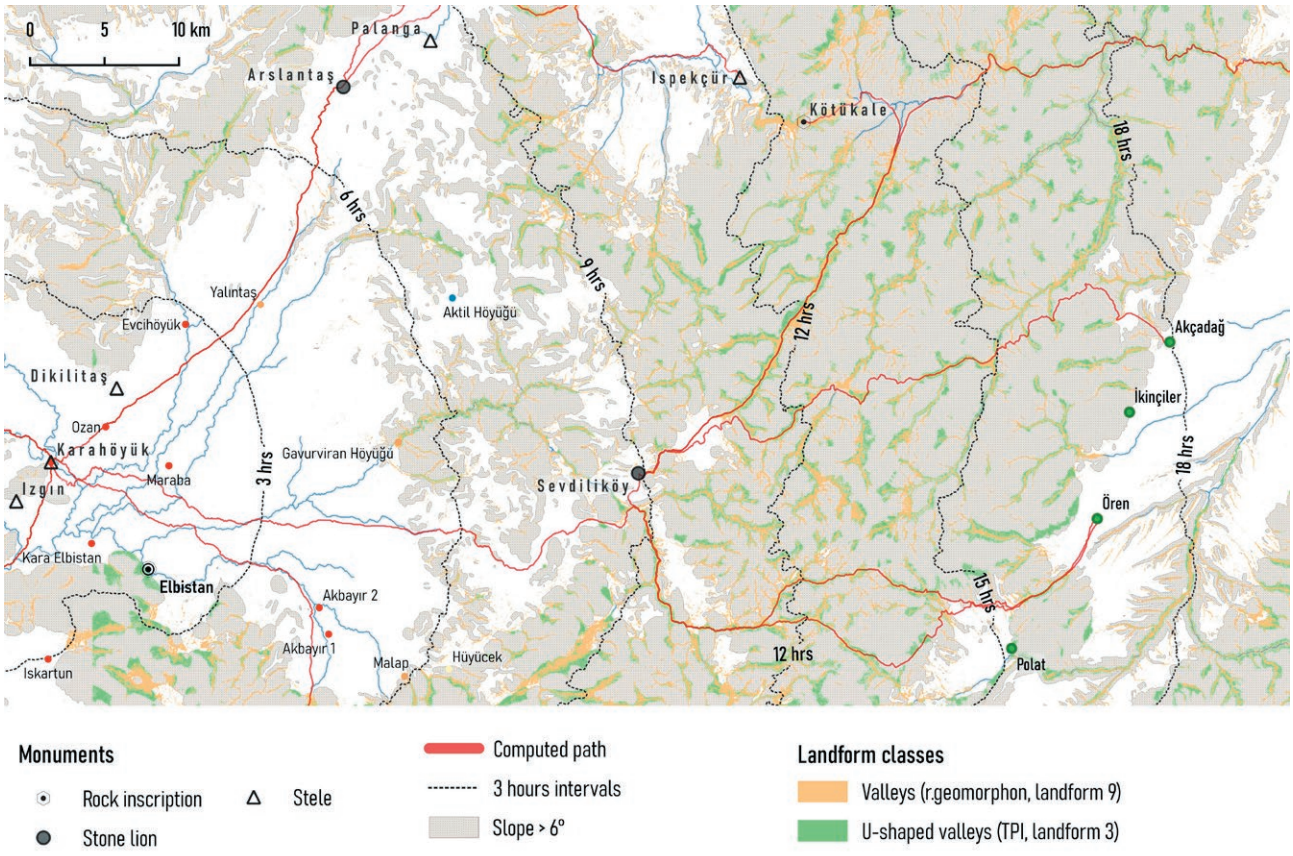


**Fig. 17:** Location and morphology of the 'natural passageways' through the Nurhak range.

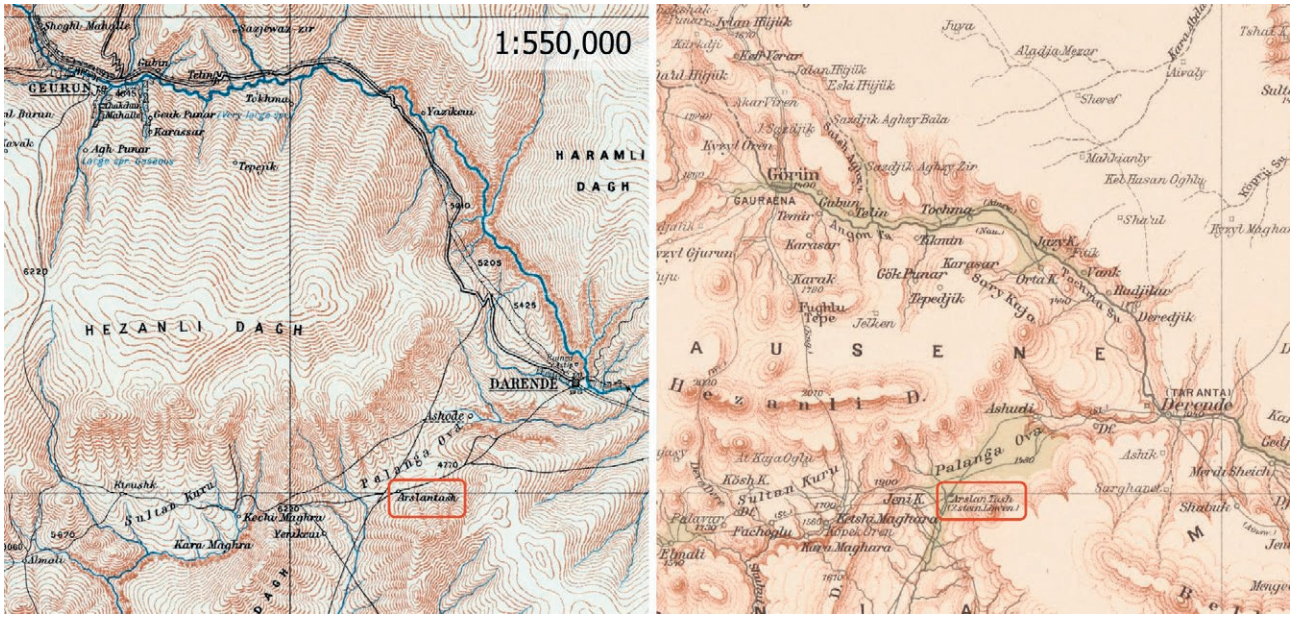


**Fig. 18:** The role of Arslantaş within the intermontane system of communication between the 19th and 20th centuries AD (approximate scale 1:550,000). Adapted from Maunsell 1902 (left) and Kiepert 1913 (right).

ning of the 20th century AD, which says: 'Arslan Tash, alt. 4,900 ft.; carved stone lions of Hittite origin. Here is the watershed between the Jihan and the Euphrates' (Naval Staff 1919: route 85).

On this basis, once we identify the Elbistan watershed areas (hydrologic basins) through the *r.watershed* analysis (GRASS GIS) and plot them on the map alongside the location of the Iron Age sites, the topographic relevance of the Arslantaş lions emerges (Fig. 19). They are located precisely on the major drainage divide between the Tohma Su and Ceyhan hydrological basins.

In general geographical terms, water basins are areas that act like funnels by collecting and draining off precipitation into common outlets (e.g., rivers or lakes). This implies that Arslantaş is characterized as an area that, in spite of the weather conditions, is always virtually free from significant flooding hazards. Looking at the portal lions in the context of the mobility network to and from the Elbistan plain, it is reasonable to expect that they possess such a characteristic.

Moreover, since adjacent watersheds are separated from each other by some physical features at higher elevations (i.e., ridges), this computational process allows us to highlight a piece of further significant landscape evidence. In terms of landforms, the wide saddle where Arslantaş is located is defined by such a narrow slope gradient that even the *r.param.scale* algorithm could not fully distinguish it from the proper plain of the basin (Fig. 14). Yet as the watershed analysis clearly indicates, Arslantaş is precisely on top of an important drainage divide, a physical feature allegedly represented by a nearly imperceptible ridge, just slightly higher than the surrounding landscape. This distinctive environmental trait must have profoundly impacted this place's significance, conferring it a power that persisted across the millennia relating to the use of surface water by local communities. As in the case of other morphologically and geologically distinct localities, such as rivers, mountain peaks, sinkholes, or springs, this area holds the geographical characteristics of a borderland. It is not surprising that at the end of the 19th century AD, Arslantaş was still referred to as the southern edge of the Sivas province (Hogarth, Munro 1893: 644). It is highly reasonable that at the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, this evocative place was already similarly perceived as the northern border of the Elbistan cultural landscape.

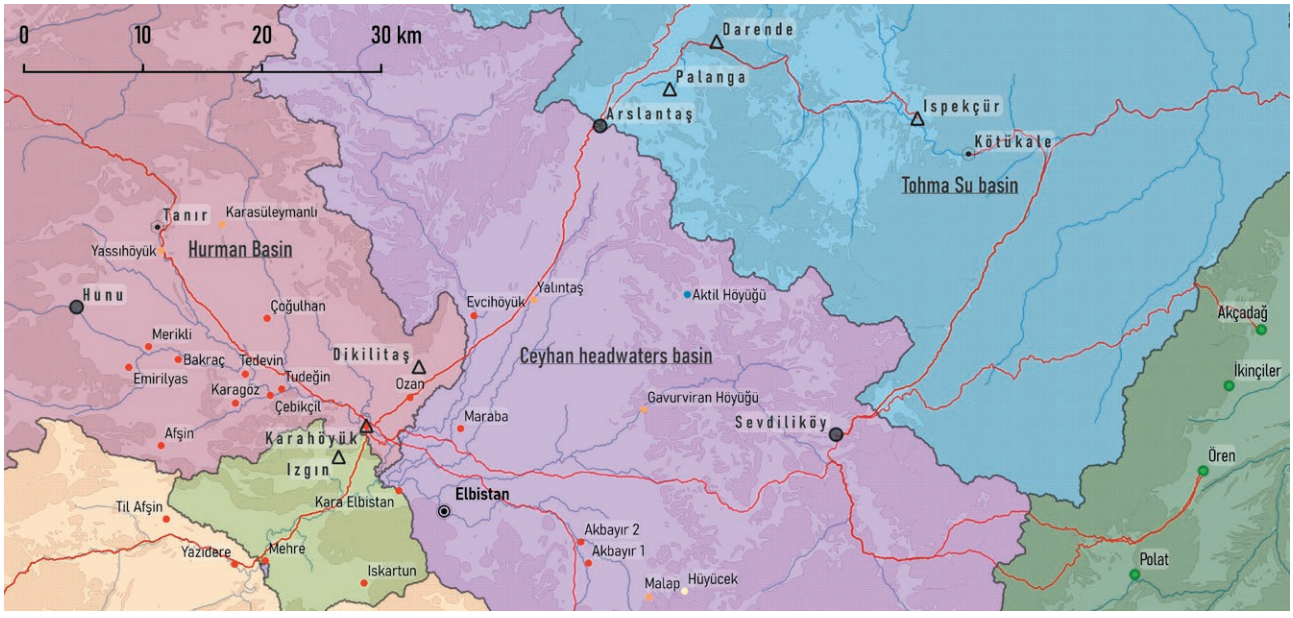


**Fig. 19:** The Elbistan main hydrologic basins system.

## 4. DISCUSSION: THE ROLE AND MESSAGE OF THE LIONS

For a full understanding of the role covered by the lions of the Elbistan plain, two further factors and characteristics should be briefly considered. First, they represent a gate, if only symbolically, entailing the existence of a threshold or passage. Second, the iconographic choice of lion images is meaningful.

The symbolic role of gates in the public architecture of the Ancient Near Eastern world has been stressed by many scholars, mostly by analysing textual and iconographic sources (May 2014). In the Syro-Anatolian region of the late 2nd and early 1st millennium BC, city-gates, temple-gates or palace-gates were the main public spaces inside the settlements where ceremonies and rites were performed and the royal power displayed (Wilhelm 2011: 103-105; Miller 2012; Manuelli, Mori 2016: 211, 227). This is further underlined when we consider the message conveyed by the image of lions. The link between lion iconography and ideological and religious aspects is well known since the end of the 4th millennium BC in Mesopotamia (Peyronel 2019). This is even more evident during the Hittite period, when the lion became the embodiment of the physical, military and political power of the kingship, reinforcing the relationship between the deities and the king (Collins 1998).

In this context, the monumental guardians placed at the gates of the Hittite capital, and later wholesale adopted by the Neo-Hittite kingdoms, stood as proper symbols of the royal power (Collins 2004: 84; Pucci 2015: 62-63). They represented the subjugation of the wild world by the royalty and the town. As boundaries between the savage nature and the cities, their passage entailed the act of coming under the care of the gods and the control of the rulers (Mazzoni 1997: 294-295). The fact that these spaces were guarded by lions implied that in passing these figures one switched from being threatened by them to being protected by the self-same guardians, having moved from outside, i.e. the place of confrontation and threat, to the inside, i.e. the space the lions dominated and protected (Strawn 2001: 315-316).

Despite the 'virtual' nature of the portal lions from the Elbistan plain, and the fact that they are not concretely associated with any city, citadel, palace or temple gates, the message behind their erection could not have been any different.

The landscape analysis proposed here has also allowed us a better evaluation of this message, demonstrating that the position of the lions is not random. Their locations share all the earmarks of liminal spaces, borderlands, places of significance within the contemporary geographical perception, where the hubs of the interregional communication network intersected prominent features of the physical landscape. It is therefore not surprising that these passages were shaped into the form of open-air monumental gateways, thus blending the concepts of threshold and border alike.

The Arlantaş lions were located in the open country, in a highly strategic position. This location corresponds to the highest spot of the plateau where a set of interregional routes converges, on the natural border formed by the drainage divide between the major hydrological basins of the Tohma Su and Ceyhan. Likewise, the lions from Sevdiliköy have been erected in an area of great topographic prominence, corresponding to the eastern margin of the Elbistan plain, on a natural borderland that allows monitoring of the entrance of the pathways to and from Malatya. Interestingly, the inhabitants of the Turko-Kurdish community of the Sevdili village refer to the outcrop where the lions have been found with the toponym *Kürki Kapı*, which they assume means 'the gate of the mountain'.[13]

As far as the Hunu lion is concerned, the fact that the sculpture comes from a site where only Roman remains have been discovered cannot be neglected (Dumankaya, Topaloğlu 2017: 291). Considering that the lion has certainly been reused, it seems highly reasonable to state that Arıtaş Höyük does not represent its primary archaeological context, rather the sculpture was displaced there in antiquity. It is in any case clear that its original location could not be far away from the site of discovery, leading to the assumption that the lion was positioned, probably together with a second sculpture, on a spot which gave access to the Elbistan territory from the west in the vicinity of Tanır or Afşin.

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[13] Actually, while *kapı* is the common Turkish word for 'gate', the origin of *kürki* should probably be traced back to the Armenian term *kürk*/*gürk* which means 'statue' or 'idol' (Scheinhardt 1979). It leads to the equally fascinating meaning 'the gate of the statue/idol'.

In a wider context, the process of displaying political and ideological power through the erection of landscape stone monuments was already fully established in Anatolia during the Hittite imperial period (Glatz 2021: 158-174). In this context, rock sculptures and inscriptions were located in geologically evocative places and served the specific purpose of establishing colonial claims to borderland territories (Harmanşah 2017: 40-43).

During the Iron Age, a proliferation of stone monumental art is instead attested especially through the architectural decoration of outer facades and gates as well as the innermost spaces of the temples. These monuments were marked by a strong continuity with the Hittite prototypes, revealing the intent of the new ruling classes to adhere to an already codified idea of political power (Mazzoni 2013: 472-473; Feldman 2014: 67-72). As a matter of fact, with the breakdown of the Hittite supremacy, the disputes over the inner frontiers ceased and the appropriation of places of power was only partially resumed by the elites of the newly created Iron Age regional states (Harmanşah 2011: 57-61). Indeed, the free-standing lions of the Elbistan plain follow new and original trajectories compared to the ancestral heritage of the Hittite Empire. They follow a uniform line of development evidenced by the adoption of the same uninscribed figurative repertoire, which indicates a program conceived as a coherent whole. Moreover, if during the Late Bronze Age places with strong, distinct geological traits such as sinkholes, springs, mountain peaks, caves, or rock outcrops were preferred, the new program overturns this convention in favor of new locations whose significance was embedded in the physical features of the landscape itself as well as emphasized by the presence of specific networks of communication.

Considering the 'virtual' nature of the gates guarded by protecting figures and the fact that they were always erected at important road junctions, the interpretation of the lions of the Elbistan plain as proper boundary monuments, instead of simple landmarks, seems to be highly reasonable. The concept does not of course imply the adoption of a modern notion of border, in the sense of an imagined cartographic feature embracing a finite, abstract, and quantifiable geo-political entity (Harmanşah 2017: 38-40). Indeed, they were not necessarily thought to be placed along a line on a map separating two different controlled and organized areas; rather they marked important places within the cultural landscape, entailing a deep knowledge and awareness of the territory.

In the light of this, an interesting parallel can be found, even on a smaller scale, with the case of the early Neo-Assyrian expansion that preceded the provincialization period of the 8$^{th}$ century BC. This phenomenon was boldly outlined by M. Liverani (1988), following the assumption that the Assyrian territorial control of fringe zones initially did not spread systematically and uniformly (the 'oil-stain' paradigm), but rather was based on the control of a host of communication nodes ordered into a network system. The Assyrians' repeated campaigns then had the purpose of either thickening the meshes of this pre-existing network or setting up further branches of the system at a greater distance. Despite the obvious differences, it might be speculated that the monumentalization of some significant places in the Elbistan plain may represent an analogous attempt at thickening the webs of a pre-existing road system, the borders of which were not outlined by imagined cartographic features and finite geo-political spaces.

With this in mind, a final obvious question arises: how and by whom were these lions erected? There can be no doubt that these sculptures were made by skilled stonemasons and sculptors. At the same time, it goes without saying that quarrying, sculpting and transporting the rough-hewed blocks, as well as performing their final carving and positioning, required a considerable manpower (Seeher 2009: 120-125; Summers, Özel 2012: 515-516). Hence, it is hard not to think that this work was organized and executed under the auspices of a certain prominent political power.

In conclusion, two main hypotheses can be discussed in this regard. Considering their dating, it can be supposed that the lions represent either the evidence of the existence of an independent local power in the 12$^{th}$ century BC or the consequence of the expansion of the kingdom of Malizi after its conquest of the Elbistan region from the *c.* 11$^{th}$ century BC.

## 5. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The role of the Elbistan plain in the political scenario of the last centuries of the 2$^{nd}$ millennium BC is generally considered, by the scholarship, strictly connected to the issue concerning the genealogical line of the 'Great

King' Ir-Tešub, named on the stele found at the site Karahöyük (Özgüç, Özgüç 1949: 69-72). Paleographically, this dates to sometimes in the 12th century BC, since it shows similarities with the late-13th century BC inscriptions known from the southern Anatolian plateau. This lead scholars to assume a derivation of Ir-Tešub from the ruling dynasty at Tarḫuntašša (Hawkins 2000: 287-289; Hawkins, Weeden 2016: 10-11; Hawkins, Weeden 2017: 288-289). On the other hand, many arguments have also recently been raised to support a possible association of this ruler with the genealogy of kings of Karkemiš (Giusfredi 2010: 41-43; Harmanşah 2011: 65-69; Bryce 2012: 85-87; Simon 2013: 824-826).

It is noteworthy that scholars working on this topic have almost exclusively focused their attention on understanding which cultural or political entity, i.e. Tarḫuntašša or Karkemiš, might have indirectly shown its power through this monument, entailing an influence or control over the Elbistan plain during the 12th century BC. But the Karahöyük stele also testifies to the irrefutable existence of a local authority during this period. The inscription is dedicated to the Storm God of the land POCULUM by the local ruler Armananis, called the 'Lord of the Pithos-Men', and it commemorates the visit into this territory by the above-mentioned 'Great King', further describing the condition of the land and the donation of cities at the time of this event (Hawkins 2000: 288-295).

The stele was found during the one-year intensive investigation conducted at the Elbistan-Karahöyük settlement in 1947 (Özgüç, Özgüç 1949: 66-72). It was erected in a large open area and found in association with ash deposits and animal bones, leading to the interpretation that this was a public space characterized by cult activities and feastings (Harmanşah 2011: 65-68).[14] Remarkably, the hieroglyphic Luwian signs POCULUM. PES.L.67 (REGIO) carved on the stele designate, without any doubt, the land of Elbistan and probably the city of Karahöyük itself, but the reading of this toponym is completely unknown (Hawkins, Weeden 2017: 289). As mentioned, the supposition that Karahöyük was the epicenter of a political entity based in the Elbistan territory is further supported by the evidence that the site stands out as the single largest documented mound in the whole region (Çifçi, Greaves 2010: 93).

The presence of the stele at the site as well as its dating, context of discovery and subject support the presence of a local authority in this region during the 12th century BC with its capital at Karahöyük. With this is mind, the lion sculptures positioned at the borders of the Elbistan plain can certainly represent material evidence of this political power, marking the access to and from its territory. This is also supported by the fact that, as mentioned, the lions show a proper style of their own and are marked by some specific characteristics that have been not observed so far in any other of the renowned Syro-Anatolian sculptural cycles.

Alternatively, a further although remote possibility is to associate the erection of the lions with the events that affected the nearby kingdom of Malizi/Melid (Hawkins 2000: 282-329). The latter had its capital at the site of Arslantepe and its domain extending to the Malatya plain and the surrounding western valleys, north-eastward of Elbistan (Di Filippo, Mori 2019). Two quite similar bas-reliefs brought to light at Arslantepe and both dated to the 12th century BC, i.e. MALATYA 9 and MALATYA 10, respectively show the Storm God of the city POCULUM and of the city Malizi receiving libations (Hawkins 2000: 320-322; Hawkins, Weeden 2017: 289; Manuelli 2019). The fact that the Storm God of the city POCULUM, which most probably corresponds to Karahöyük itself, was worshiped by a local ruler of the kingdom of Malizi on an official monument found in its capital is of course remarkable. It entails on the one hand the relevance that the city of Karahöyük and its territory had in the scenario of the Syro-Anatolian states at the beginning of the Iron Age, and on the other hand the strong cultural, religious, and political relationships linking the regions of Elbistan and Malatya.

The so-called stele from Izgın shows instead how things had already changed during the 11th century BC. It has been found reused as a headstone in the cemetery of the namesake village, ca. 2 km southwest of Karahöyük itself. It describes the extension of the borders of the kingdom of Malizi, celebrating the building of new cities and the settlement of people by a local ruler called Taras (Hawkins 2000: 314-318). Considering its location it seems

[14] Despite providing new important data about the Iron Age occupation at the site, the new round of investigations conducted at Elbistan-Karahöyük since 2015 have not yet supplied specific information related to the context of discovery of the stele (Uysal, Çifçi 2019: 411-412).

quite obvious that the stele commemorates the colonization and annexation of the Elbistan region into the Malizi realm (Alparslan 2017: 214; Hawkins, Weeden 2017: 289). The perpetuation of this relationship, or at least the fact that from time to time the kingdom of Malizi extended its domain into this region, is testified by the later inscription from Tanır. Located on a natural rock in proximity to a spring source and along an important pass that connects the Elbistan plain to the west, the inscription, tentatively dated to the 9th-8th century BC, mentions the name of the city Malizi and contains a badly preserved group of signs probably indicating the name of one of its rulers (Doğan-Alparslan, Alparslan 2013).

In summary, despite the fact that it fails to provide an adequate historical context and explanation for the uniqueness of this phenomenon, the hypothesis that the lions erected around the Elbistan plain were a manifestation of the control exerted by the kingdom of Malizi over this territory from the 11th century BC onwards cannot be completely excluded.

The fact that the sculptures show only few iconographic and stylistic similarities with the set of lions' representations known from Arslantepe can certainly suggest the existence of some more provincial production, as well as the employment of different craftsmen and workshops. Indeed, differences in iconographic models and details are in general recognizable when the images carved on the reliefs from Arslantepe are compared with contemporary artworks visible on the monuments coming from the territory around the site, such as Ispekçür and Darende (Poli 2008: 258-264).

To conclude, there are more than a few points concerning the fascinating phenomenon of the free-standing lions of the Elbistan plain that still need further explanation. However, this study has established their prominence and uniqueness within the artistic scenario of the Syro-Anatolian world of the late-2nd and early-1st millennium BC, showing their important role as boundary monuments marking essential places of the cultural landscape. Moreover, the analysis has clearly demonstrated how computational spatial models can efficiently be applied to iconographic and stylistic aspects in order to provide fresh new data that help to answer complex and unsolved archaeological and historical questions.

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# Just a Series of Misunderstandings? Assyria and Bīt-Zamāni, Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu, and Aramaic in the early Neo-Assyrian State

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**Abstract.** The region of the Upper Tigris serves as a key case study in understanding the early expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Nevertheless, various aspects of its incorporation within the Neo-Assyrian pale remain obscure, particularly the date and nature of the establishment of the province of Amēdu or Na'iri, previously the Aramean polity of Bīt-Zamāni. After a summary of prior arguments and an investigation of the polity's Middle Assyrian past, two overlapping and complimentary histories are written, one of the political interactions between Assyria and Bīt-Zamāni, and another of Assyria's provincialisation of the Upper Tigris. The former finds that Bīt-Zamāni was remarkably resilient in the face of Assyrian aggression, while the latter argues that an early Assyrian presence at Damdammusa was replaced in 879 BC by the provinces of Sinābu/Na'iri and Tušḫan. These two histories are then supplemented by a prosopographical investigation of the Assyrian eponym of 849 BC, the first attested governor of Na'iri, one Ḫadi-libbušu or Iḫtadi-libbušu. It is demonstrated that the two contemporaneous variants of his name within the Assyrian textual corpus may be explained as an ambiguity in translating the Aramaic personal name **ḥdhlbbh* into Akkadian for use as an eponym date. It is hence likely that Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu was an indigenous potentate made governor, and thus that the polity of Bīt-Zamāni serves as a previously unrecognised example of the Postgatian 'transitional case' within the Early Neo-Assyrian Empire analogously to Bīt-Baḫiāni/Gūzāna. Indeed, it is argued that a similar phenomenon of translating the transitional ruler/governor's name into Akkadian for *limmu* dating may here be attested for Gūzāna's two initial governors. In light of these findings, their broader implications for the use of Aramaic in correspondence or record-keeping within 9th century Assyria are considered, and it is suggested that Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu's correspondence was conducted in Aramaic, whence scribes must have had recourse in spelling this potentate's name. This would mark the earliest use of Aramaic within the Neo-Assyrian bureaucracy presently known. It is then finally concluded that the threat of Urarṭu in the last years of Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's reign may well have compelled him to enter in a manner of compact with Bīt-Zamāni, and that the indigenous rulers were thereafter made Assyrian governors, only to be unseated in favour of Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur, *šāqiu rabiu* to Salmānu-ašarēd III just prior to Amēdu's rebellion in the succession war of 826-820 BC, after

which it was conclusively incorporated. Some insufficiencies of present theories of Neo-Assyrian imperialism in explaining this complex historical scenario are finally highlighted.

**Keywords.** Upper Tigris, Neo-Assyrian Empire, Aramaic, bilingualism, expansion, Amēdu/Diyarbakır, Bīt-Zamāni, Gūzāna/Tell Halaf.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The region of the Upper Tigris presents a vital scenario for investigating Neo-Assyria's expansion, particularly considering the wealth of archaeological and philological information which might be brought to bear.[1] Separated from the Fertile Crescent by the Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, the ancient Kāšiāri, its enclosed basin witnessed Assyrian intervention, conquest, settlement, and provincialisation both in the Middle and Neo-Assyrian eras, rendering it a fascinating counterpoint to contemporaneous historical phenomena on the Upper Ḫābūr. Like the latter region, an archaeological image of excellent resolution has emerged over the past decades, the most exemplary thereof being the Assyrian provincial capital of Tušḫan,[2] where a plethora of information on the late Neo-Assyrian settlement including monumental architecture, cuneiform documents, and floral and faunal remains has been evinced. In turn, extensive surveying and further investigations at companion sites have provided a fuller picture of the Assyrian settlement pattern.[3]

Rich and informative as this history of the Assyrian Upper Tigris basin has become, archaeological and philological knowledge of the important Aramean polity of Bīt-Zamāni and its capital at Amēdu[4] has remained scant, and often Assyria's interactions with it have been portrayed as little more than a prelude to the construction of the Assyrian province of Tušḫan.[5] Despite the difficulty and apparent contradictions of many of the textual sources available, it is nonetheless the present author's conviction that the heavily disputed issue of the date and nature of Bīt-Zamāni's annexation can be satisfactorily solved, and a new history of this historical scenario written.

This is accomplished through the undertaking of two parallel but interconnected histories of Assyria and Bīt-Zamāni in the early Iron Age. The first of these focuses upon Assyria's interactions with this Aramean polity and *Machtpolitik* within the region. The second of these examines Assyria's early provincialisation of the Upper Tigris. These two histories overlapping in time and space demonstrate that the actual history of Bīt-Zamāni/Amēdu's integration into the Upper Tigris region was far more complicated and nuanced than has previously been understood. From these, the personage of the first governor of Amēdu attested today as both Ḫadi-libbušu and Iḫtadi-libbušu within Assyrian dating formulae is investigated, and the puzzling alternate versions of his name within the Assyrian textual record explained. The evidence collected is then compared to the 'transitional case' of Bīt-Baḫiāni/Gūzāna. Before a concluding reconstruction is presented of the annexation of Bīt-Zamāni/Amēdu, the repercussions of the

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[1] This article is an expanded version of a subchapter of the present author's doctoral dissertation, *Warum eroberst du ohne Ende?' Studies in the Birth of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Edmonds 2018), the publication of which is forthcoming. A discrete publication was undertaken on the strength of the interesting and unnoticed figure of Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu, the repercussions of his name for the integration of client states during the 9th century BC, and its contribution to the history of Aramaic within Assyria. The present author extends his gratitude to Andreas Fuchs, John MacGinnis, Herbert Niehr, and an anonymous reviewer for their comments during this paper's initial draft. The present author's views remain his own, his spelling of ancient and modern toponyms generally follows the normalisation principles of the TAVO's register, and of personal names generally the PNA.

[2] Almost indisputably modern Ziyaret Tepe, Turkey. For a very recent summary of excavations undertaken here, see Matney *et al.* 2020.

[3] Cf. recent syntheses in Szuchman 2009; Köroğlu 2016; Matney 2010; Matney *et al.* 2020; Wicke 2013.

[4] Modern Diyarbakır, Turkey. The present author follows TAVO's vocalisation of Amēdu, despite some misgivings due to the byname Andi (cf. fn. 13).

[5] A particularly egregious example thereof is Parker's treatment of the Upper Tigris, in which a lengthy recapitulation of Assyria's interactions with Bīt-Zamāni (2001: 165–173) abruptly concludes with Salmānu-ašarēd III in favour of discussing the establishment of the province of Tušḫan. Amēdu is later mentioned only in passing (e.g. 228, fns. 1007 and 1008).

onomastic findings on Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu are briefly discussed in relation to the history of the use of Aramaic in the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Firstly, however, the problem of the annexation of Bīt-Zamāni/Amēdu must be considered.

## 2. THE PROBLEM OF BĪT-ZAMĀNI'S ANNEXATION

The writing of the history of the annexation of territories to the *māt Aššur* generally follows a series of historical inferences. On the one hand, the eponym (or *limmu*) lists and chronicles and administrative texts hailing from the established empire are exhaustively scoured for the names of governors of provinces, presenting a diachronic array of first attestations of various provinces, and, on the other, annalistic accounts of campaigning by Assyrian kings are studied to identify expansion. These two sets of information are then harmonised. Archaeological evidence is generally employed to support these claims where necessary. Such intricate work demands constant refinement as new information becomes available.[6]

Two provinces are attested within the Upper Tigris during the later stages of the Assyrian Empire, namely the aforementioned province of Tušḫan, inaugurated 879 BC by Aššur-nāṣir-apli II, and a province known as Na'iri, Sināb̭u, Amēdu, or Bīt-Zamāni.[7] The date of the second province's inauguration generally hinges upon the reconstruction of a period of seventeen years between the failure of Aššur-nāṣir-apli II to capture Amēdu in 866 BC and the appearance of the *limmu* year, or eponym, of one Ḫadi-libbušu or Iḫtadi-libbušu, governor of the land of Na'iri, in 849 BC. The only extant occurrence punctuating this is a brief and uneventful account of Salmānu-ašarēd III's march through the land of Bīt-Zamāni in 856 BC.[8] Following Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu, the eponym of another governor is known, one Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur, from 838 BC, although he still governed Raṣappa at the time, and must only have later been posted to Na'iri. Finally, Amēdu rebelled during the succession war which rocked Assyria between 826 and 820 BC[9] but was brought once more to heel soon thereafter.[10]

The point at which Bīt-Zamāni became an Assyrian province has long been debated. Views generally fall within one of two camps, namely those proposing an annexation between 866 and 849 BC,[11] and those championing a later incorporation during the last quarter of the 9th century.[12] Both views rest upon complex inferences.

The 866-849 camp adopts an argument rooted in the eponym lists and the *Stelenreihen* of Aššur; while very convincingly armed with Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu's *limmu* in 849 BC, the major stumbling block of the argument is that the geographical extent of his province is unknown, and must be inferred from Aššur Stelae nos. 39 and 47, which belong to the later governors Marduk-šimanni (eponym for 799 BC) and Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur (eponym for 838 BC) respectively. Amēdu does not appear on these stelae, but rather 'Andi', which must hence be taken as a byname for the city.[13]

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[6] The most comprehensive recent study is Radner 2006b.

[7] Radner 2006b: 49–50. Na'iri was the Assyrians' traditional moniker for the broader region, Sināb̭u was the name of the most prominent 'Assyrian' city within its extent, previously its Middle Assyrian provincial capital.

[8] 'Moving on from the city Kār-Salmānu-ašarēd, I crossed over Mount [Ḫa]sumu and went down to the land of Bīt-Zamāni. Moving on from the city of Bīt-Zamāni, I crossed over Mounts Namdānu and Merḫisu.' (A.0.102.1 ii 40–41 = Grayson 1996: 19).

[9] 'When Aššur-da"in-apla, at the time of Salmānu-ašarēd (III), his father, acted treacherously by inciting insurrection, uprising, and criminal acts, caused the land to rebel and prepared for battle; (at that time) the people of Assyria, above and below, he won over to his side, and made them take binding oaths. He caused the cities to revolt and made ready to wage battle and war. The cities Nineveh, Adia, Šibaniba, Imgur-Enlil, Iššabri, Bīt-Šašširia, Šīmu, Šibḫiniš, Tamnuna, Kipšūna, Kurbail, Tīdu, Nabulu, Kaḫat, Aššur, Urakka, Raqmat, Huzirīna, Dūr-balāṭi, Dariga, Zaban, Lubdu, Arrapḫa, and Arbail, together with the cities Amēdu, Tīl-Abnē, and Hindānu, — altogether twenty-seven towns with their fortresses which had rebelled against Salmānu-ašarēd (III), king of the four quarters, my father, sided with Aššur-da"in-apla. By the command of the great gods, my lords, I subdued (them).' (A.0.103.1 i 39–53 = Grayson 1996: 183).

[10] For a list of known governors of Amēdu, see Radner and Schachner (2001: 770–772).

[11] Kessler 1980: 100–102; Radner 2006b: 49.

[12] Forrer 1920: 30; Lipiński 2000: 160–161; Younger Jr. 2016: 306.

[13] A correction of *an-di* to *ti*$^{i}$*-di*, i.e. the Assyrian settlement of Tīdu, seems unlikely considering that Andi appears both in Stelae nos. 37 & 49. A reduction of Amēdu to Andi suffers from the fact that the toponym's middle vowel has otherwise weathered the ravages

Those suggesting a later annexation generally focus their argument upon the nondescript accounts of the campaigns of 856 and 830 BC which could be taken to imply an enduring vassaldom on Bīt-Zamāni's part, and the description of the succession war of 826-820 BC, which may intimate that Amēdu was still a client state at the time, rather than a province.[14] Nonetheless, the proponent of Amēdu's clientship up to the last quarter of the 9th century must contend with the unequivocal attestation of two governors of Na'iri prior to Amēdu's rebellion.

Having introduced the basic argumentation, the main historical investigations of this paper may begin in earnest; prior to this, however, a brief study of the preceding Middle Assyrian period must be undertaken.

## 3. BĪT-ZAMĀNI IN THE MIDDLE ASSYRIAN PERIOD

The first attestation of Bīt-Zamāni hails from the 13th century, referring to a *ḫassiḫlu* of the *ḫalzu* of Bīt-Zamāni.[15] This startlingly early reference would locate it firmly within the era in which Assyrian kings conquered much of the Upper Tigris during their Mitannian campaigns.[16] While the actual extent of their conquests remains difficult to judge, a reference to Šināmu[17] in an administrative document detailing the dispatch of *hurādu*-troops for work there during the reign of Salmānu-ašarēd I[18] heavily implies the establishment of an Assyrian presence in the region focused upon this city.[19] This would have been accompanied by the creation of *dunnu*-settlements as typified by the site of Giricano and other hallmarks of Middle Assyrian provincialisation.[20]

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of time, appearing as 'Amida' during Late Antiquity and as 'Amed' among Kurdophones today. Comparison with 'Amādīya in modern Kurdish Iraq (possessing the same Semitic etymology *'md* as the supertigridine toponym under discussion) is perhaps instructive. While vocalised with a long second vowel in Arabic, it has been reduced to 'Amɛdya by those of its inhabitants who speak North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (cf. Greenblatt 2011: *passim*). It is entirely possible that two parallel forms reflecting alternate interpretations existed in parallel, thus Akkadian 'Amēdu' (= **'amīd*) implying a QaTiL construction, and an Aramaic 'Āmɛd following Lipiński reconstruction of a QāTiL (Lipiński 2000: 153). While Amēdu's medieval Arabic spelling 'Āmid is fronted by an alif madda, the loss of the initial 'ayn only muddies things further.

[14] As already noted by Forrer (1920: 30) the three final cities declaring for Aššur-da"in-apla, Amēdu, Til-Abnē, and Hindānu are separated from the other twenty-four by the particle *adi*, implying that the latter threesome were still-unincorporated clients, which is, indeed, borne out by the case of Tīl-Abnē, and Hindānu.

[15] $^{lú}$*ḫa-síḫ-li ša ḫal-zi* É *za-ma-ni* (Billa 6, l. 8 = Finkelstein 1953: 124–125). Younger is wary but offers no alternate reading (Younger Jr. 2016: 293–294).

[16] Hence well before the appearance of the other Aramean polities of the *bītu*-type.

[17] To be equated with Neo-Assyrian Sinābu. While localised at Pornak since Kessler (1980: 111–120), this is a consequence of Kessler having already assigned the important site of Üçtepe (find site of the Kurḫ Stelae) to Tīdu. This, in turn, was motivated by an equivalence between the Mitannian capital of Taidu and Neo-Assyrian Tīdu as mentioned on Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's Kurḫ Stele. Advancements in present knowledge now place Mitannian Taidu squarely in the Upper Ḫābūr (cf. Röllig 1983), most likely at Tall al-Ḥamīdīya, and, indeed, all Neo-Assyrian references to a Tīdu or Tēdu save that on Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's Kurḫ Stele are also best situated there; cf. especially its aforementioned appearance among superchaburine cities siding against Šamšī-Adad V in A.0.103.1 i 39-53 (= Grayson 1996: 183) and a *tākultu* text's reference to a Samanuḫa of Tēdu, otherwise best known from Šadikanni's pantheon (cf. Pongratz-Leisten 2011: 121). The logical conclusion is that the Assyrian historical geographer's favourite bugbear, *toponymie en miroir*, has struck again, and that Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's Upper Tigridian Tīdu was less than consequential for Assyrian history, *pace* Radner and Schachner 2001: 756–757; Schachner 2018: 108–109. To Sinābu must go the spoils of Üçtepe with its monumental late Neo-Assyrian structures (cf. Köroğlu 2016: 315); given the provincial history further outlined herein, this is entirely cogent.

[18] KAV 119 (cf. Jakob 2003: 206–207).

[19] Note also the reference to the *pāḫatu* of Šināmu in the Broken Obelisk of Aššur-bēl-kala (A.0.89.7 14 = Grayson 1991: 102), which would imply its provincialisation. Both Šināmu and Tušḫan are mentioned in the Giricano documents and a considerable Middle Assyrian occupation is attested for Tušḫan, but there is not sufficient textual evidence to infer that the latter was its own province. Brown's notion that Šināmu's lack of attestation in the *ginā'u* lists implies that they were never officially incorporated into the Middle Assyrian state is interesting, but lacks further evidence (Brown 2013: 114).

[20] See the recent survey of the Middle Assyrian Upper Tigris in Düring (2020: 83–86).

In considering Bīt-Zamāni itself, its designation as a *ḫalzu* is key; while this term's precise use and semantics remain disputed,[21] a defensive connotation seems likely.[22] In turn, the title *ḫassiḫlu* may imply a culturally Hurrian origin for the region's administration.[23] Nonetheless, its marcher lord's solidly Assyrian name of Aššur-kāšid son of Bēl-qarrād demonstrates that this region was under Assyrian control.[24] A similar practice may also be evidenced for a region southwest of Šināmu, Eluḫat, conquered by Salmānu-ašarēd I and colonised by Assyrians, later termed Halziluḫa in Neo-Assyrian sources.[25] Quite evidently, the Assyrian settlements founded on the wide plains of the Upper Tigris were protected by *ḫalzu*-districts such as the two evidenced, presumably appended to the province.

Aramean troubles of the 12th and 11th centuries seem to have heavily undermined the Middle Assyrian state's authority in the region and may have led to the abandonment of the lowland settlements.[26] Despite the chaos intimated by mention in Broken Obelisk of Aššur-bēl-kala of a battle with Arameans at Dunnu-ša-Libur-zānin-Aššur[27] in the *pāḫatu* of Šināmu, the White Obelisk of Aššur-nāṣir-apli I[28] describes the king pursing an enemy north of the Kāšiāri.[29] It is probably apt to consider the Upper Tigris to have been in a state of political flux.[30] As will be further discussed, this instability would seem to have given both the relict Assyrians of the region and the polity of Bīt-Zamāni a necessity for self-reliance and sense of independence which would hamper Assyrian efforts in the region during the Iron Age. What must also be stressed is that Bīt-Zamāni's past as a fringe military holding of the Middle Assyrian state may well explain the unusual and invasive relationship which Assyria had with its vassal in the 9th century, and its later history.

## 4. BĪT-ZAMĀNI IN THE ASSYRIAN (RE-)CONQUEST OF THE UPPER TIGRIS

While no campaigns to the Upper Tigris region can yet be attested for the reign of Aššur-dān II, his early reimposition of vassaldom upon the kingdom of Katmuḫu on the north of the modern Cizre plain was a necessary precondition for such.[31] His successor Adad-nārārī II's explosive campaigning featured an early concentration upon the Upper Tigris, to which he ventured four times.[32] This likely began in 908 BC, and was certainly concluded in

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[21] Cf. Postgate 1995: 1–2. That *pāḫatu* 'province' and *ḫalzu* were not conceived of as exactly interchangeable is demonstrated by MARV 4, 119 (cf. Llop 2012: 93).

[22] Cf. Jakob 2003: 18.

[23] This raises the fraught question of Bīt-Zamāni's etymology, and hence ethnic composition; Zadok posits a Hurrian etymology to explain the earliness of this attestation (1991: 113), while Lipiński elects for a conventional Semitic interpretation (2000: 135–136). The latter is probably to be preferred, but for want of more information this must remain open.

[24] Note the same's appearance, along with his son, at Šibaniba, although it remains unclear as to whether this was coterminous with his posting there or not (cf. Machinist 1982: 22–23).

[25] A.0.101.1 i 101-103 (= Grayson 1991: 200). Cf. Liverani 1992: 99; Postgate 1995: 1.

[26] The end of the Giricano archive around 1068 BC being a case in point (Radner 2004: 115).

[27] Note Fales' recent emendation of this toponym (2012: 103).

[28] The present author considers the White Obelisk an inscription of Aššur-nāṣir-apli I; this is founded not only in the incompatibility of its account with the early reign Aššur-nāṣir-apli II, but also in its affinities with the other texts presently attributed to Aššur-nāṣir-apli I (cf. discussion in Frahm 2009: 117–123).

[29] A.0.101.18 '18-'33 (= Grayson 1991: 256).

[30] Brown 2013, cf. Roaf and Schachner 2005.

[31] A.0.98.1. 33-41; A.0.98.2 17'–22' (= Grayson 1991: 133–134; 137). See Radner 2006a on passage through the Ṭūr 'Abdīn. Generally overlooked are the eastern routes into the Upper Tigris region, such as those offered via the plains of Şırnak and Siirt. While arduous for a large army such as Xenophon's Ten Thousand, they would not have posed exceptional difficulties to messengers or small caravans. The course of the Tigris itself can also be followed; Layard did so, heading southwards by way of Çelikköy and descending into the plain of Cizre at Fındık (Layard 1853: 50–51). See also Comfort and Marciak 2018: 34–41.

[32] A.0.99.2 30 (= Grayson 1991: 148).

903 BC.[33] The first two and probably the fourth of his campaigns are fragmentarily extant,[34] describing *chevauchées* into the Upper Tigris. At some point during these campaigns, he annexed three formerly Assyrian towns which had fallen to Šubria.[35]

It is only come Tukultī-Ninurta II that Bīt-Zamāni swims into focus; the close of a campaign in 887 BC presents a unique occurrence within the annals, a miniature campaign of sorts conducted by the son of Ammi-ba'lī against one *Bi*alasi in Udu of the land of Nirdun on Assyria's behalf, forwarding the spoils to Assyria.[36] That a campaign by a local polity ostensibly performed on the Assyrian king's behest would make it into the annals is astounding enough, but is easily surpassed by the events of the following year.

In 886 BC, a figure with a fragmentary name and title[37] wrote to Tukultī-Ninurta II stating that Bīt-Zamāni had further aspirations in the region, seeking, indeed, to march through the Kāšiāri. Tukultī-Ninurta II pre-empted this and ravaged the countryside around the city of Patiškun belonging to Bīt-Zamāni, depriving the region of grain and putting Ammi-ba'lī's sons to the sword. This harrying must have driven Bīt-Zamāni to negotiate; Ammi-ba'lī submitted, and Assyria took spoils from his palace. Most striking, however, is that Tukultī-Ninurta II had its ruler Ammi-ba'lī swear that Bīt-Zamāni would no longer sell horses to any power but Assyria.[38] This singular agreement was accompanied by two other unusual developments, namely that Assyrian officials were stationed within Bīt-Zamāni, and the displaced population of Bīt-Zamāni was peacefully internally resettled by Tukultī-Ninurta II.[39] The significance of this reference to horses cannot be stressed enough.[40] Assyria's anxieties that rival polities may gain a superiority in horses likely fuelled her endless campaigns to the Zagros even during the first half of the 8th century BC.[41]

While Ammi-ba'lī delivered tribute in 882,[42] he was assassinated in a putsch in 879 BC by the nobles of Bīt-Zamāni and one Bur-Rammān, which prompted Aššur-nāṣir-apli II to return to the region, have Bur-Rammān flayed at Sināb, confiscate the polity's considerable wealth, impose a much higher tribute, and deport some 1500 Ahlamean soldiers in Ammi-ba'lī's pay to Assyria.[43] Ilānu, Ammi-ba'lī's brother,[44] was installed as the new client ruler.

Following the leanly attested mid-period of the king's reign, during which he likely fought inconclusive skirmishes with the transeuphratine polity of Bīt-Adini and then undertook his much-lauded 'March to the Sea', Aššur-nāṣir-apli II returned to the region for the last time, burning his way along the Euphrates and annexing the

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[33] This analysis, and that of Tukultī-Ninurta II's campaigns which follows is the result of the present author's ascription of five unattributed royal inscriptions published by Eckart Frahm (2009) to Adad-nārārī II and Tukultī-Ninurta II, as outlined in the appendix of the present author's unpublished doctorate (Edmonds 2018). A discrete publication of these findings is in preparation.

[34] Na'iri Campaigns 1 & 2 = VAT 10107 (= Frahm 2009: 97–98, no. 47); Na'iri Campaign 4 = VAT 11320, ls.1'–6' (= Frahm 2009: 104–105, no. 53).

[35] A.0.99.2 35 (= Grayson 1991: 149). This evidences direct territorial expansion in the region for the first time, and raises the question of these conquests' administration, to be discussed in the following section.

[36] A.0.100.5 4–8 (= Grayson 1991: 171).

[37] See discussion in the following section.

[38] A.0.100.5 24–25 (= Grayson 1991: 171–172).

[39] A.0.100.5 20–24 (= Grayson 1991: 171–172). This exceptional situation strangely blends vassalage and provincialisation, with Assyria seeking to influence Bīt-Zamāni internally far more than was usual with a client kingdom, see the following section.

[40] Sworn before the local divinity of Adad, this may be the earliest attestation for the later commonplace *adê* oath. It should be recalled that Tukultī-Ninurta II's reign also witnesses the first evidence of the use of cavalry by the Assyrian army (A.0.100.5 37 = Grayson 1991: 173).

[41] The efforts made by the Assyrians to maintain a superiority in horses are striking cf. Āl-sūsānī, i.e. 'horse trainer-town' (Bagg 2017: 26). Other evidence of the value placed upon horses includes ritual activity to protect them within the Assyrian army (Maul 2013).

[42] A.0.101.1 ii 12 (= Grayson 1991: 202).

[43] See Edmonds 2019a for discussion of Ahlameans in the Iron Age.

[44] The ambiguous wording of the annals has led many to consider Ilānu Bur-Rammān's brother despite the counter intuitiveness of this arrangement, cf. Sano (2015).

region of Mallānu by the modern Karacadağ.[45] Damdammusa had defected to Bīt-Zamāni and it was forced to surrender Ilānu's men, whom Aššur-nāṣir-apli II proceeded to impale before the city of Amēdu. Despite this shock and awe,[46] Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's final assault on Amēdu proved all but fruitless, save for the orchards that he hacked down.[47] On the route home, the king pillaged the most likely unsuspecting settlement of Udu nestled in the Ṭūr 'Abdīn,[48] presumably to collect some token loot both to placate his army and to gild an otherwise lukewarm triumphal return to Assyria. The absence of any further annalistic accounts of campaigns for the remainder of this monarch's reign perhaps intimates to the scrappy nature of his final years, likely preoccupied with the outbreak of war with Urarṭu.[49]

Ten years later and some 175 miles or so to the southwest, Salmānu-ašarēd III departed from Tīl-Barsip,[50] marching up the Euphrates to strike at the very heart of Urarṭu by way of the Upper Tigris, a deed immortalised in a royal epic still read in the last years of the Assyrian Empire.[51] His passage through Bīt-Zamāni was uneventful, as was that of his *turtānu* Dayyān-Aššur in 830 BC, some 19 years after the first attestation of a governor there.

What this survey of the interactions of Assyria with Bīt-Zamāni and their occasional hostilities demonstrates is the striking dynamism of this supertigridine Aramean polity. Not only did it undertake its own campaigning, but it even threatened to march over the Kāšiāri. In turn, it successfully enticed Damdammusa to its side, and made other territorial gains.[52] Its wealth is apparent from its ability to field chariotry and its stores of metals. In turn, its nobility seemed repeatedly keen to rebel from Assyria, perhaps more from confidence than desperation. This is demonstrated by the absence of the city of Amēdu from Assyrian sources prior to 866 BC; its strategic position was easily defensible[53] and all Assyria could do was to ravage the countryside around. It seems unlikely that Aššur-nāṣir-apli II succeeded in conquering this difficult city during the remainder of his reign without leaving an account, and the absence of more than passing mention of the polity in Salmānu-ašarēd III's annals is also telling. Most likely, a diplomatic solution of some sort was undertaken by Assyria between 866 and 856 BC.

## 5. BĪT-ZAMĀNI IN THE PROVINCIALISATION OF THE UPPER TIGRIS

That some manner of Assyrian 'pre-provincial'[54] structure was already in place in the Upper Tigris prior to the inauguration of Tušḫan in 879 BC is evidenced from various intimations of such within the textual record. Firstly, Adad-nārārī II's early annexation of three formerly Assyrian towns which had fallen to Šubria[55] must be

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[45] A.0.101.1 iii 101 (= Grayson 1991: 220).

[46] The city's resistance is a remarkable example of the potential ineffectiveness of Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's 'calculated frightfulness' (cf. Olmstead 1918).

[47] A.0.101.1 iii 109 (=Grayson 1991: 220). See Cole 1997 for discussion of this common Assyrian tactic.

[48] Already the target of Bīt-Zamāni's campaigning in 887 BC.

[49] As has been convincingly argued by de Filippi, the variance between Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's geographical summaries stating 'to Nērbi' and 'to Urarṭu' clearly demonstrates a significant later campaign to Urarṭu by this king (1977). Cf. Grayson's commentary to A.0.101.1 iii 122 (Grayson 1991: 221).

[50] Modern Tall Aḥmar, Syria.

[51] Today preserved in a damaged copy from Sultantepe, SAA 3 17 (= Livingstone 1989: 44–47). Interesting therein is a frustratingly fragmentary reference to his father's campaigning (l. 16).

[52] Note also that the settlement of Barzania, subjugated by Tukultī-Ninurta II (VAT 9752 & 9782 = Frahm 2009: 92–97, nos. 45–46, l. 17') appears to have fallen into Bīt-Zamāni's hands come 866 BC, should it be identical to the town of Barzaništun (A.0.101.1 iii 104 = Grayson 1991: 220).

[53] Ammianus Marcellinus notes a natural spring within its walls within his description of the siege of Amida: '*In ipso autem Amidae meditullio sub arce fons dives exundat, potabilis quidem, sed vaporatis aestibus non numquam faetens.*' (*Res Gestae* XVIII, 9, 2, cf. Rolfe 1950: 464); indeed, a stone tunnel with a spring was also recently identified underneath Amida's mound. The present author is grateful to the team from Dicle Üniversitesi for an impromptu tour of the site.

[54] The present author employs Liverani's terminology (1992: 115) for want of a better expression.

[55] A.0.99.2 35 (= Grayson 1991: 149).

considered.[56] Secondly, Tukultī-Ninurta II was warned of Bīt-Zamāni's imminent march across the Ṭūr ʿAbdīn in 886 BC by a figure who may have been a governor.[57] The candidates for such an individual within the 9th century Upper Hābūr are thin,[58] and a 'man on the spot' in the Upper Tigris seems more likely.[59] In turn, following his confrontation of Bīt-Zamāni during the same campaign and swearing of oaths, Tukultī-Ninurta II installed officials to supervise the polity;[60] it seems unlikely that such an implementation would have been effective were there not an existing Assyrian administration in the region to support them.

Proceeding from these inferences, concrete candidates for a location for this might be considered. Within Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's Kurḫ Monolith, the tribute gathering of 879 BC is described as having been centred upon four cities, Tušḫan, Sināb̭u, Tīdu, and Damdammusa;[61] the first of these is qualified as having just been rebuilt after a period of decline,[62] while Sināb̭u and Tīdu are stated to have been reclaimed from the 'Arameans' the same year.[63] It must hence be concluded that Damdammusa was the only significant Assyrian-held settlement in the Upper Tigris prior to this episode, and hence the focal point of Assyrian control; indeed, Damdammusa is termed an *āl šarrūtīya* 'city of my kingship' in Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's annals, implying that it contained an Assyrian royal residence.[64]

In turn, the Kurḫ Monolith not only relates the establishment of Tušḫan, but also the provincialisation of regions of Na'iri.[65] These would logically have been assigned to Sināb̭u considering its later synonymy with the province of Na'iri.[66] It hence seems apparent that both Sināb̭u/Na'iri and Tušḫan were formally established in 879 BC, and that this constellation replaced a previous situation in which Damdammusa was the key Assyrian possession in the region, irrespective of whether or not it is to be considered an early province; the explanation for this is to be found in the rebellion of Ḫūlāya.

In 882 BC, Aššur-nāṣir-apli II received a report that one Ḫūlāya, lord of the relict Assyrians of Ḫalziluḫa had been courting the city of Damdammusa. The inhabitants of Ḫalziluḫa, the descendants of Assyrians settled by Salmānu-ašarēd I,[67] would have been largely left to fend for themselves and co-operate with neighbouring groups such as Hurrians, Arameans, or *ḫabḫu*-folk, creating a manner of independent 'frontier spirit'.[68] Something of the relative egalitarianism usually exhibited by offshoot societies may well be reflected in the name of the leader of the

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[56] The nearest province to which they could have been appended at this early date would have been Katmuḫu on the other side of the Kāšiāri. It is conceivable that 'pre-provincial' Assyrian territory was notionally a direct possession of the king, which could explain the frequent use of *ana ramānīya aṣbat* in the annals and the assignment of rough border zones to members of the royal court.

[57] A.0.100.5 24–25 (= Grayson 1991: 171–172). Grayson reads GÌR².ARAD², i.e. *šakkanakku*. Should this reading be correct, then it would be highly unusual; this highly antiquated title was restricted to the Assyrian king's titulary during the Neo-Assyrian period.

[58] No eponyms from the period fit the traces ]-*la-a*². Should it be presumed that one of the governors of the Upper Hābūr had been tasked with the surveillance of the Upper Tigris and reported this on to the king, then it would presumably be that of Katmuḫu or Raqmat, Naṣibīna having only been annexed the previous year after the violent rebellion described in VAT 14402 (= Frahm 2009: 108–111, no. 56; cf. appendix in Edmonds 2018). While Raqmat was not particularly close to the Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, the Assyrian outpost of Huzirīna would likely have fallen within its territory. Regardless, the strange title of *šakkanakku* would hardly fit such an ascription.

[59] It is tempting to identify this mysterious *šakkanakku* ]-*la-a*² with none other than Ḫūlāya, the leader of the relict Assyrians of Ḫalziluḫa.

[60] A.0.100.5 20–24 (= Grayson 1991: 171–172).

[61] A.0.101.19 97 (= Grayson: 261).

[62] A.0.101.1 ii 2–7 (= Grayson 1991: 201).

[63] A.0.101.19 92–94 (= Grayson 1991: 261).

[64] A.0.101.1 i 103 (= Grayson 1991: 200). Note that when this city defects to Bīt-Zamāni it is termed Ilānu's 'fortified city' in contrast to his own 'royal city' of Amēdu (cf. discussion of this term in Ikeda 1979).

[65] A.0.101.19 99–100 (= Grayson 1991: 262).

[66] Note also in this context Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's annexation of Mallānu, attested as part of Na'iri in Aššur Stelae nos. 39 and 47, in 866 BC on the way to Amēdu (A.0.101.1 iii 101 = Grayson 1991: 220).

[67] A.0.101.1 i 101–103 (= Grayson 1991: 200). While it is entirely possible that they were settled by Salmānu-ašarēd II, his forbear's mention of conquering Eluḫat and the parallelism with Bīt-Zamāni in the 13th century renders him the preferable candidate.

[68] *Pace* Dewar (2020: 116-117) whose Conradian parallels and ideological dichotomy between 'Assyrian' and 'non-Assyrian' hardly capture the region's complexity during this period.

wayward Assyrians, Ḫūlāya, 'The one of the road' or 'Roadling', possibly a name for a foundling.[69] They most likely resented the return of external Assyrian power to the region. The close of this rebellion saw it quashed and Ḫūlāya flayed at Damdammusa. The two major flayings of this period recorded, Ḫūlāya at Damdammusa in 882 and Bur-Rammān at Sināb̆u in 879 BC, both occurred at key locations; that the king meted justice over Bīt-Zamāni from Sināb̆u is telling considering both the Middle Assyrian past and that these territories would be amalgamated but decades in the future into a single province.

Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's creation of a new provincial structure in the aftermath of this insurrection sought to end the power monopoly of this less than reliable Assyrian city. This, in turn, neatly explains Damdammusa's defection to Bīt-Zamāni around 866 BC; having lost its previously privileged status in the region, the city sided with its wealthy neighbour. In the wake of this provincial reorganisation and Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's failure before Amēdu in 866, it may be presumed that they did not undergo any further territorial changes until Sināb̆u absorbed Bīt-Zamāni.

856 BC witnessed Salmānu-ašarēd III's march through Bīt-Zamāni as detailed, and the first known governor of Na'iri is attested thereafter as the eponym for 849 BC, one Ḫadi-libbušu or Iḫtadi-libbušu. For many scholars, this serves as the *terminus ante quem* for Bīt-Zamāni's annexation. The next attested governor of the region is Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur, eponym for 838 BC albeit still governor of Raṣappa then.[70] His governance of Amēdu is suggested rather by Aššur Stele no. 47, wherein he is styled *šāqiu rabiu* and ascribed the holdings of Andi, Sināb̆u, Suḫna, Mallānu and Alzu;[71] that these constituted the province of Amēdu is demonstrated by the Aššur stele of the next known incumbent, one Marduk-šimanni, eponym for 799, which is near-identical in its toponymy.[72]

Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur's stint in charge of Na'iri presents some interesting features. The title of *šāqiu rabiu* is first attested in the reign of Aššur-nāṣir-apli II and appears to have existed parallel to the better-known office of *rab šāqê*, or cupbearer.[73] Considering that Mulissu-mukannišat-Nīnua, queen of Aššur-nāṣir-apli II and Salmānu-ašarēd III, was the daughter of the earlier *šāqiu rabiu* Aššur-nīrka-da''in, it might be assumed that this was an influential position. In turn, the province of Raṣappa had grown to become a vast and distended province by Salmānu-ašarēd III's time, encompassing the lower course of the Ḫābūr, the Middle Euphrates down to Sūḫu, and the Sinǧār by this period, the province effectively dividing the extreme west of Assyria's realm from the heartland.[74] It may well be that Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur's appointment to this post and the assignment of the province of Na'iri's territory was an attempt by the king to alter the balance of power between his various magnates and to sever Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur's connection with his powerbase.[75]

Another potential thesis for Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur's posting is that Salmānu-ašarēd III may have been experimenting with the creation of marcher provinces along Assyria's wilder borders, as is far better known from the late

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[69] Consider the analogous foundling names Suqā'a or Šulâ/Šulâya 'One of the street, Streetling' common in Babylonia, the latter also borne by a hapless messenger to the Zagros in a likely portion of the Na'id-ŠIḪU Epic (Edmonds 2019b: 329–330). Ḫūlāya would be the logical equivalent of such a name within a more rural setting. The assignment of distinct names to foundlings is frequently attested within ancient cultures; besides the mythical example of Oedipus, 'swollen-foot', in reference to his laming on his abandonment, the infamous case of the assignment of 'copronyms' to infants found on dunghills in Hellenistic Egypt serves as a particularly striking example (cf. Pomeroy 1986).

[70] Finkel and Reade wish to amend the entry for 838 BC which displays *r]a-ṣap-pa* to Na'iri on grounds of Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur appearing as the governor of Na'iri on Aššur Stele no. 47 (= Andrae 1913: 53–54, cf. Millard 1994: 111) and suspect that dittography is responsible for this writing (Finkel and Reade 1998: 248), but this is unnecessary.

[71] Andrae 1913: 53–54.

[72] Andrae 1913: 49.

[73] Mattila 2000: 47–48.

[74] See Radner 2006b: 52–53 and recently Parpola 2017. After reaching its zenith under Pālil-ereš, who may even have sought to incorporate Sūḫu into Assyria under his own initiative, the province was subdivided. While Laqû had become a discrete province by 736 BC at the latest, Ḫalzi-adbāri's mention in Tukultī-apil-Ešarra III's inscription at Mila Mergi from 739 BC would imply an even earlier division, should this province be localised in the Sinǧār, formerly Raṣappa's north-easternmost reaches, a proposition which is, however, still uncertain, as Cizre is probably the better source of basalt (*adbāru*) within the vicinity of ancient Ulluba.

[75] Indeed, the latter half of Salmānu-ašarēd III's reign is already characterised by the emergence of powerful officials jockeying for positions, cf. esp. Fuchs 2008; Grayson 1994.

Neo-Assyrian period.[76] In 830 BC, Salmānu-ašarēd III's *turtānu* Dayyān-Aššur passed through Bīt-Zamāni once more on campaign to Urarṭu, ultimately trouncing Sarduri I.[77] Regardless of when precisely Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur's Amidine incumbency had begun, it was likely brought to a close with the outbreak of the succession war in 826 which engulfed Assyria in Salmānu-ašarēd III's terminal years.

An interesting archaeological correlate in this context is a perceived reduction in activity at Ziyaret Tepe following the reign of Salmānu-ašarēd III,[78] perhaps due to the chaos of the rebellion, or perhaps from the region bracing itself for a coming Urarṭian onslaught. To the Assyrians' credit, it would seem that this defensive strategy largely succeeded; save a foray by Minua, the Urarṭians ultimately circumvented the region and extended their influence down to the Syro-Aramaic polities of the west by way of the western bank of the Euphrates until Tukultī-apil-Ešarra III dramatically broke their hold west of the Euphrates in the opening years of his reign. With 745 BC and the advent of empire proper, the present history of the region may conclude. A final interesting point is the survival of the name Bīt-Zamāni into the later stages of the empire, not only in the eponym lists and imperial correspondence,[79] but also in an Aramaic missal.[80]

The later profusion of names for this province, i.e. Na'iri, Amēdu, Sināb, and Bīt-Zamāni is striking. It may well be that this phenomenon genuinely belies a battle of precedence between Sināb/Na'iri, the senior settlement, erstwhile capital, and 'Assyrian' face of the province, and Amēdu/Bīt-Zamāni, the natural city from which to govern,[81] but also an Aramean addition to the original province. Having presented these two histories, the figure of Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu may now be investigated.

## 6. ḪADI-LIBBUŠU OR IḪTADI-LIBBUŠU, THE FIRST GOVERNOR OF NA'IRI

Little ink has been spilt on Ḫadi-libbušu or Iḫtadi-libbušu,[82] and, quite surprisingly, the peculiar variation in his name has not yet been explicitly discussed within academic literature. It is first expedient to consider the various attestations of this figure and their details.

As might be noted, these attestations are all associated with his eponymate. Outside of date formulae, nothing is known presently to have been written of him by Assyrian hand. Nonetheless, something of his origins and career might be inferred; his name serves as a reasonable point of departure.

Firstly, it should be noted that the individual Ḫadi-libbušu (Akk. 'His heart is joyful') also occurs as Iḫtadi-libbušu (Akk. 'His heart rejoiced') within the Neo-Assyrian textual record; these variants present differing forms of the same verb in Akkadian, *ḫadû*, 'to rejoice'. While to the present author's best knowledge otherwise unattested, both are plausible and grammatically correct Akkadian personal names. In turn, despite these two names' clear semantic propinquity, they are both phonologically and graphically distinct enough that arbitrary confusion between them seems unlikely.

While it is common to misremember an individual's name for one perhaps better known,[83] it must be recalled that Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu's name appears solely in the context of his eponymate. His name would have been used

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[76] Support for this notion is lent by the die of the *masennu* Aya-ḫālu (or Yaḫālu), mentioning his governorship of the difficult westernmost flank of the Zagros (cf. Millard 1994: 8–front.).

[77] A.0.102.14 141–146; A.0.102.16 228'–267' (= Grayson 1996: 69, 81).

[78] Cf. Köroğlu 2016.

[79] For example, Nasḫir-bēl, governor of Amēdu in Šarru-ukīn's reign, himself refers to his province as such in correspondence.

[80] Mirrored in an attestation of *bny zmn* in an Aramaic document from Tall Šiūḫ Fawqānī (cf. Fales *et al.* 2005: 609, fn. 101).

[81] On a clear day, one can still see across the entire Upper Tigris basin from Diyarbakır's citadel today.

[82] See Ambos 2000. Remarkably, Lipiński's otherwise exhaustive discussion of Bīt-Zamāni omits any mention of Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu (Lipiński 2000: 160–161). This name is to be distinguished from the otherwise attested and near homophonous apotropaicon Ḫādê-līpušū 'Let the malevolent do (as they wish)!', perhaps to be read Ḫādê-lipūšū 'May they scorn the ill-wishers!'.

[83] Correspondence postal, telephonic, and electronic addressed to one 'Mister Edwards' is a strange and irksome constant in the present author's life.

**Table 1.** Attestations for Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu.

| Graphy | Reference | Provenance | Date | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $^{m}$*ḫa-di-i* [ | A 1 ii 14 | Nineveh | last entry 659 | eponym list |
| $^{m}$*ḫa-di li-bu-*[ | A 2 ii 4’ | Nineveh | last entry c. 670? | eponym list |
| $^{m}$*ḫa-di li-bu-šu* | A 6 i 6 | Nineveh | last extant entry 697 | eponym list |
| *d*]*i li-bu-šu* | A 7 vi 25 | Aššur | last extant entry 659 | eponym list |
| $^{m}$*ḫa-d*[*i* | A 8 ii 7 | Sultantepe (ancient Ḫuzurīna) | last entry 750 | eponym list |
| $^{m}$*ḫa-di li-bu-šú ša* $^{uru}$*na-’i*-[*r*]*i* | B 5 i 1 | Nineveh | fragment, last extant entry 847 | eponym chronicle |
| [$^{m}$]*ḫa-di li-b*[*u* | Billa 77 r. 1 | Tell Billa (ancient Šibaniba) | dated 845 | eponym date mentioned in administrative text describing military drafts |
| $^{m}$*iḫ-ta-di li-bu-šu* GAR $^{kur}$*na-i-ri* | RIMA 3 A.0.102.18:21’ | Aššur | dated 849 | eponym date on clay clone containing annalistic account |
| $^{m}$*iḫ-ta-d*[*u* ...] $^{uru}$*si*-[ | RIMA 3 A.0.102.18:21’ | Aššur | dated 849 | eponym date on clay clone containing annalistic account |
| ]-*ta-du li-bu-šu* [...] $^{kur}$*na-i-ri* | As 3975:5’ | Aššur | dated 849 | eponym date on clay clone |
| *i*]*ḫ-ta-du l*[*i* ...$^{l}$]$^{ú}$GAR KUR $^{kur}$*na-*$^{r}$*i*$^{?}$-[*ri*] | As 9094:4 | Aššur | dated 849 | eponym date on clay clone |

universally within the Assyrian administration not only during the year of his incumbency, but also for years thereafter,[84] this rendering the confusion between these two forms even stranger; sheer legal and administrative imperative would dictate a modicum of uniformity.

The present author should like to propose the following solution in light of these remarks, namely that this name had been translated from Aramaic, and that an ambiguity in the writing of the original name provoked these variant appellations; indeed, should the names Ḫadi-libbušu and Iḫtadi-libbušu be translated into Old Aramaic as a thought experiment,[85] then the results are as follows:

| Akkadian | Old Aramaic | Aramaic orthography |
|---|---|---|
| Ḫadi-libbušu[86] | *ḥādɛ-libbeh[87] | **ḥdhlbbh* |
| Iḫtadi-libbušu[88] | *ḥadā-libbeh[89] | **ḥdhlbbh* |

As is evident, while both Aramaic forms of the name are easily distinguished aurally, they are nonetheless graphically identical. Without foreknowledge or context, a reader cannot deduce the pronunciation or semantics of this name due to its ambiguous writing, then as now. While Assyrian royal annals and private and administrative documents alike can sport strange manglings of Aramaic personal names, this individual’s name had been chosen to date a year, and hence its precise rendering would have been necessary. Accordingly, the present author suggests

[84] That Iḫtadi-libbušu was merely misremembered as Ḫadi-libbušu by the compilers of the eponym lists and chronicles perhaps centuries later is effectively discounted by the Billa tablet, composed only four years after the eponymate, when the year name would have remained in the collective memory.

[85] The Old Aramaic vocalisation in Folmer (2011) is here employed; for *ḥdy* as a translation for Akk. *ḫadû*, cf. Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995, vol. 1: 349, sub. ḥdy$_1$.

[86] 3. s. stat. G *ḫadû*.

[87] masc. s. act. part. *ḥdy*.

[88] 3. s. perf. G *ḫadû*.

[89] 3. s. perf. *ḥdy*.

that the scribes of the Assyrian administration resolved to translate this individual's name into good Akkadian;[90] unfortunately, however, there were two competing schools of thought, and both translations became common within the administration before a single rendering could be standardised.[91]

As is immediately apparent, underlying this interpretation of an otherwise perplexing state-wide administrative contradiction is the crucial premise that the name was known only known to the scribes of the Assyrian bureaucracy in Aramaic writing and not orally. Nevertheless, Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu's position as governor of an Aramaic-speaking province on the far edge of Assyria's extent renders this not implausible. In turn, it is no great step to assume that Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu hailed from this very region, and, indeed, that he was, in fact, also the local ruler following Ilānu. This inference is rendered all the more plausible when the similar situation within another Neo-Assyrian province of the 9th century BC is considered, Bīt-Baḫiāni/Gūzāna, a so-called 'transitional case'.

## 7. BĪT-ZAMĀNI AS A TRANSITIONAL CASE

J. Nicholas Postgate's seminal article 'The Land of Assur and the Yoke of Assur'[92] first introduced what he termed 'transitional cases', client states exhibiting some but not all of the hallmarks of incorporation into the Neo-Assyrian Empire during the 9th century.[93] While various examples of this may be found within the Neo-Assyrian textual and archaeological record,[94] the present author should like to focus upon the prominent example of Bīt-Baḫiāni/Gūzāna.

The Aramean polity of Bīt-Baḫiāni coalesced within the radius of the newly founded Iron Age settlement of Gūzāna[95] in the 11th to 10th centuries BC in a region with a long history of imperial endeavour, most saliently embodied in the nearby settlement of Sikānu, formerly the Mitannian capital of Waššukkan(n)i, which had also played host to a Middle Assyrian administration before finally adopting a primarily cultic function during the early Iron Age.[96] Gūzāna swiftly became affluent should the somewhat outlandish monumental structure of Kapara be anything to go by.

In stark contrast to its more easterly neighbours, Naṣibīna and Gidāra/Raqmat, Bīt-Baḫiāni did not war with Assyria in the 9th century BC, but rather remained circumspect, rendering tribute when approached by Adad-nārārī II, but allowing him access solely to Sikānu.[97] Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's annals also present an image of docile clientdom.[98]

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[90] The translation of Aramaic personal names into Akkadian is a well attested phenomenon, the most famous example being the later Assyrian queen Naqī'a/Zakūtu.

[91] The implications that this bears for the workings of the Assyrian administration in the 9th century are discussed at this article's close. Various solutions present themselves for the peculiar writing *ḫa-di-i* beyond mere scribal mistake, none of which is particularly enticing. Firstly, considering that a break ensues, it is plausible that this is, in fact, a hypochoristicon, i.e. Ḫadî, although a cursory perusal of the eponym lists did not yield any other examples of commensurate informality in year-naming. Another solution is that a scribe took *ḫa-di* as a nominal form within an omitted anticipatory genitive construction, i.e (Ša-)ḫadî-libbušu 'The joy (of) his heart', and thus spelt it plene as *ḫa-di-i*. Finally, at a very considerable stretch, *ḫa-di-i* could be taken as an Assyrianised 2. f. s. imp. D, thus Ḫaddî-libbušu 'Make him happy!', the obvious downside of this being the male addressee. Of these, the second option is perhaps the least miserable.

[92] Postgate 1992.

[93] 'This was not the same as the later practice of attaching an Assyrian agent to a local court, best attested in the Phoenician ports. Rather, it entailed replacing the local ruler by, or converting him into, a 'governor' answerable to the king, but probably not the incorporation of his territory or local administration into the Assyrian system proper, as they do not appear to have been provincial governors of the regular variety' (Postgate 1992: 257).

[94] Brevity demands the selection of a single case study. To Postgate's examples of Gūzāna and Sūḫu may, in the present author's mind, be added Hindānu and the holdout Assyrian local dynasty at Šadikanni likely only unseated come the succession war. Additional textual documentation and further detailed historical investigation would likely yield more such examples.

[95] Modern Tall Ḫalaf, Syria.

[96] Cf. the very recent overview from Elsen-Novák and Novák (2020).

[97] A.0.99.2 100–104 (= Grayson 1991: 153).

[98] A.0.101.1 iii 57–58 (= Grayson 1991: 216).

No mention is made of the polity within annalistic accounts of Salmānu-ašarēd III's campaigning, and it is assumed to have been incorporated into the empire during this period. Indeed, its first governor, Šamaš-nūrī, is attested as eponym for 866 BC, the next, Adad-rēmanni, for 841 BC. Finally, an Assyrian campaign to the city is known from 808 BC, the region having evidently gone its own way during the chaos of the latter quarter of the 9th century.

A tidy end to Bīt-Baḫiāni's sovereignty in 866 BC at the very latest would be a done deal were it not for a celebrated bilingual inscription of Adad-it'i/Adda-yis'ī, son of Šamaš-nūrī, in Aramaic and Akkadian discovered at Tall Faḫḫārīya.[99] As is now well known, the inscription styles both of them as governor, *šaknu*, in the Akkadian, and as king, *malk*, within the Aramaic. It is this ambiguity between languages and the lack of any concomitant political events which renders Bīt-Baḫiāni a transitional case within the expansion of the early Neo-Assyrian Empire; the local rulers had been dubbed governors within the Neo-Assyrian 'co-prosperity sphere', but evidently continued to depict themselves as Aramean kings to their own populace.

The question of translation and ambiguity runs even deeper in this case, and becomes at once highly pertinent to the present study inasmuch as the common Assyrian name Adad-rēmanni 'Adad have mercy on me!' of 841 BC's *limmu* is not dissimilar to the Aramaic name of the Faḫḫārīya inscription's commissioner, Adda-yis'ī, 'Adda is my help'. This has prompted the suggestion that Adad-it'i/Adda-yis'ī's name had been translated into Akkadian[100] for the sake of eponym dating. Beyond a chronological congruency,[101] this is supported in the present author's mind by a crucial point, namely that while Adda-yis'ī's name is rendered Adad-it'i in Akkadian, this is in the cuneiform of his own, local inscription; it cannot be proven that the Assyrian central bureaucracy at all referred to him as such.[102] In turn, the same inscription reveals Šamaš-nūrī to have been Sās-nūrī (*ssnwry*) all along.[103] The uprising ending in 808 BC, after which Gūzāna would have found itself under the governance of the obviously Assyrian Mannu-kī-Aššur, thus spelt the end of a local dynasty. Even then, Gūzāna would rebel again between 759 and 758 BC, and Bīt-Baḫiāni is even referenced in the Book of Isaiah, this demonstrating an enduring local identity.[104]

The parallels to Bīt-Zamāni's fate are at once apparent, and it might reasonably be suggested that Amēdu was an Upper Tigridian example of such a 'transitional case'. Both cases evidence affluent and powerful Aramean polities with traditions rooted in the Late Bronze Age. In both cases, no forceful takeover can be evidenced, and, in turn, the governors are most likely local rulers in Assyrian guise whose names were translated into Akkadian for the eponym list.[105] This last point must be examined against the backdrop of the history of Aramaic within early Neo-Assyrian administration.

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[99] See Dušek and Mynářová 2016 for a recent edition of this inscription and discussion.

[100] 'This quite common type of Akkadian proper names may have been used as an Assyrian adaptation of Hadd-yiṯ'i's Aramaic name. Incidentally, no other eponym of that period bears a name with the theophorous element Hadd/Adad.' (Lipiński 2000: 129). Dornauer concurs with this assessment (2010: 57).

[101] Adad-it'i must otherwise be shoehorned in between his father in 866 and Adad-remanni in 841; it must be hypothesised thereby that the junking of the local dynasty did not spell any unrest worthy of mention in extant Assyrian sources, but that a rebellion occurred come 808 BC for reasons unrelated. By means of comparison, the endurance of the local ruling family until their final replacement by Mannu-kī-Aššur raises little in the way of further difficulties, and is hence to be preferred for want of evidence to the contrary.

[102] Note Younger's erroneous objection on grounds that '[t]he Akkadian scribes were entirely capable of translating the Aramaic name into Akkadian: Adad-it'i' (Younger Jr. 2016: 265). 'Adad-it'i' is not a translation of 'Adda-yis'ī', but rather a partial 'Akkadisation', as 'it'i' is merely a phonetic rendering of 'yis'ī' without semantic import.

[103] Due to the closeness and occasional mutual comprehensibility of these languages, the distinctions between a phonetic rendering of an Aramaic name by means of cuneiform, the 'Akkadianisation' of an Aramaic name, and its outright 'translation' are often ambiguous; whether Sās-nūrī himself would have considered 'Šamaš-nūrī' an Akkadisation or a translation of his name is unclear.

[104] Demsky 2008.

[105] While there are eponyms with Aramaic names already attested in the 9th century, such as Il-milkī and Aya-ḫālu the *masennu*, and perhaps Yarî, there is no evidence that these had previously been local rulers. Indeed, should they have belonged to the Assyrian court, as Aya-ḫalu must have, then an entirely different milieu from the governors of 'transitional cases' could be assumed for these individuals; current scarcity of evidence precludes judgement.

## 8. ON THE USE OF ARAMAIC IN THE EARLY NEO-ASSYRIAN STATE

A final issue raised by the thesis of this paper is that of the use of Aramaic and the Aramaic script within the 9th century Neo-Assyrian sphere. As has been contended, the confusion between Ḫadi-libbušu and Iḫtadi-libbušu could only have occurred if the bureaucracy of the Neo-Assyrian heartland was in possession of the first governor of Amēdu's name in Aramaic script but were unsure as to its vocalisation in Aramaic, and hence created two competing Akkadian translations of his name. This implies that Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu's correspondence as governor would have been written in Aramaic, and whatever of it reached the Assyrian heartland's bureaucracy was not concertedly, centrally, or systematically translated into Akkadian, but rather consulted on the fly by scribes, and presumably translated as required, if at all; moreover, were there to have been a 'card index' of Assyrian potentates then the first governor of Na'iri had evidently been either omitted or double filed. This finding has considerable bearing both on the history of the development of the Aramaic script, and on its use within Neo-Assyrian administration.

The precise dissemination of the Aramaic alphabet eastwards from Phoenicia to the Upper Ḫābūr and finally the Assyrian world is difficult to trace.[106] Something of a milestone for present purposes is an inscribed altar from Tall Ḥalaf which dates to the early 9th century,[107] a few decades at most before the creation of the Faḫḫārīya Inscription.[108] By means of contrast, Kapara's inscriptions of the previous century had been in crude Akkadian. In the case of Bīt-Zamāni, Tukultī-Ninurta II's annals exceptionally appear to quote verbatim a letter from Ammiba'lī's son to the Assyrian king;[109] unfortunately, its brevity and broken state permit scarce judgement on whether this had been written in Akkadian with Aramaicisms or in Aramaic and subsequently translated for the annals.[110]

Turning to Assyria, intimations as to the advent and degree of adoption of Aramaic within the Neo-Assyrian state apparatus are scant.[111] Perhaps the earliest traces of Aramaic within an institutional context are the bricklayer's marks found at Fort Shalmaneser at Kalḫu,[112] albeit these were for the benefit of workmen, not scribes.[113] Come the era of Adad-nārārī III, the Nimrud Wine Lists attest for the first time to Aramean scribes within a palatial setting.[114] In turn, the first depiction of the thereafter common trope upon reliefs of two scribes counting spoil, one with tablet and stylus, the other with pen and scroll, hails from Tukultī-apil-Ešarra III's Central Palace at Kalḫu.[115] The tight proximity of this pair in all attested examples implies some manner of institutionalised tandem documentation. With the famous letter from Šarru-ukīn demanding letters be written in Akkadian rather than Aramaic,[116] the floodgates were well and truly open.[117] Rare Aramaic texts such as the Aššur Ostracon imply that colleagues within the administration might tend to write each other missals on other media in between com-

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[106] See discussion in Gzella 2015: 57–63.
[107] KAI 309, cf. Dankwarth and Müller 1988.
[108] Cf. linguistic discussion in Gzella 2015: 63–67.
[109] A.0.100.5 5–6 (= Grayson 1991: 171).
[110] *nota bene*, however, Lipiński's interesting reconstruction of a phrase within this passage as *ištu Udu ana Šūaru ana siliḫi irtedīma* 'he went from Udu to Šūaru within this javelin's throw' which he takes as an Aramaicism analogous to a Hebrew phrase found twice in the Book of Job (Lipiński 2000: 139–140). There is no Akkadian word *siliḫu*, and this would have to have come from Aramaic *šlaḥ*, itself only weakly attested.
[111] Elsen-Novák and Novák (2020: 146–147) present an interesting, albeit highly tenuous equivalence of the script of Taymā' as mentioned by Yariri of Carchemish with the Temanite Arameans of the Upper Ḫābūr and hence the Aramaic script. Were such an admittedly conjectural thesis proven to hold, then it would imply an earlier dispersal of the Aramaic script eastwards into the Assyrian sphere than otherwise thought.
[112] Millard 2008: 268.
[113] Considering that the bricks formed a cuneiform inscription when assembled correctly together, however, it may well be that a scribe literate in cuneiform had been the one who had patiently annotated these bricks with Aramaic letters prior to their transport to the building site so as to prevent any mix-ups.
[114] CTN 1, no. 9, rev. 20 (=Wilson 1972: 138).
[115] See discussion in Reade 2012: 706.
[116] SAA 17, 3 (= Dietrich 2003: 5–6).
[117] Cf. Beaulieu 2006.

posing tablets,[118] while themes known later from Aramaic 'romances' may already have permeated Assyrian literary compositions.[119]

Considering the present overview, the correspondence from Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu, although not extant, would nonetheless serve as the earliest present attestation for the use or at least reception of Aramaic within the Neo-Assyrian state's administration.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The elements are now all present to present a new portrait of Bīt-Zamāni's incorporation within the *māt Aššur*. In the first historical section, it was demonstrated that Bīt-Zamāni was a more powerful force in the Upper Tigris than is usually depicted. Not only was it affluent, but it also pursued an active foreign policy, campaigning within the Upper Tigris basin and even planning to march over the Kāšiāri against Assyria herself. In the following section on the provincial history of the region, it has been established that the political reality in the Upper Tigris was more complicated than the pristine establishment of the provinces of Tušḫan in 879 BC and Na'iri in 856 BC respectively often advanced. Rather, an Assyrian administration at Damdammusa existing perhaps already in the reign of Adad-nārārī II was replaced in 879 BC with two provinces, Na'iri/Sināb and Tušḫan, in response to difficulties with the local Assyrian population. While Na'iri/Sināb did not encompass Bīt-Zamāni/Amēdu, the meting of justice to Bur-Rammān on Sināb's walls already presaged a provincial relationship akin to that during the Middle Assyrian period. In turn, although Aššur-nāṣir-apli II's invasion of Bīt-Zamāni due to Damdammusa's insurrection proved futile, the Aramean polity was once more under heel come 856, and had a governor by 849 BC.

These two overlapping histories converge in this very figure, Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu, who, it has been argued, possessed an Aramaic name which had been translated in conflicting manners into Akkadian by Assyria's central bureaucracy. This, in turn, suggests that he was an indigenous ruler promoted to governor, an example of the Postgatian 'transitional case'. The clear parallels to Bīt-Baḫiāni/Gūzāna, another Aramean polity on the edge of the Assyrian pale, would seem to support this. Indeed, it has been argued that the names of its first two governors, whose incumbencies coincide with that of Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu, also had their names translated into Akkadian for the benefit of the eponym systems. This translation implies that their correspondence would have been in Aramaic, and that Assyrian scribes translated this *ad hoc* and as required within their bureaucracy.

From these findings, the date and nature of Bīt-Zamāni/Amēdu's annexation might finally be resolved. With hostilities with Urarṭu on the horizon, Aššur-nāṣir-apli II made a startling *volte face* and reconciled with Ilānu at some point in the years following his failed siege of 866 BC, making him governor of the province of Na'iri/Sināb/Amēdu/Bīt-Zamāni and thus amalgamating the Assyrian and Aramean holdings into an uneasy single territory.[120] While a compromise, it ensured the region's safety, much as the *ḫalzu* of Bīt-Zamāni had in the Middle Assyrian era, and access to the equines vital to Assyria's military. This situation continued with Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu, who was even 'honoured' with an eponymy, and the indigenous dynasty was only unseated with Salmānu-ašarēd III's installation of the powerful Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur at some point after 838 BC, most likely in 830 BC when Dayyān-Aššur passed through the region. This situation likely provoked Amēdu's subsequent revolt during the succession war of 826-820 BC,[121] after which it was likely placed under Assyrian governorship again, Marduk-šimanni appearing as its governor and eponym in 799 BC. As a 'transitional case' between perhaps already 865 and

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[118] Cf. Fales 2010.

[119] Edmonds 2019b: 344.

[120] This could potentially explain the broken line of the Salmānu-ašarēd III Epic wherein it is stated 'Aššur-nāṣir-apli harnessed and mobilized the land of Na'iri [ ...]' (SAA 3 17, 16 = Livingstone 1989: 44).

[121] Note that this presents a potential harmonisation of the rebellion of Amēdu during the succession war of 826-820 BC: Its stint as a 'transitional case' had only just concluded and the Šamšī-Adad V's scribes still considered it such in their list of rebellious cities. Or, it could be presumed that Ninurta-kibsī-uṣur never actually arrived at his new posting prior to the rebellion's outbreak.

830 BC, the date of its actual annexation depends entirely on one's own definition. This finding naturally bears repercussions for the further investigation of Assyria's expansions, especially during the 9th century.

As has been demonstrated, contradictions and ambiguities in the governance of the early Neo-Assyrian realm are to be understood as precisely such. A coherent doctrine of Assyrian expansion as known from the reign of Tukultī-apil-Ešarra III onwards with its irreversible three-step program of initial contact to client state to Assyrian province struggles to explain the complexities of the 9th century, and has yielded controversy over Bīt-Zamāni's annexation. Diachronic and thematic studies of the early Neo-Assyrian period grounded in an understanding of Middle Assyrian precedent[122] are the only corrective to the counterproductive imposition of the paradigmatic strictures of late Neo-Assyrian expansion upon these fragmentary and byzantine historical scenarios.

These findings are also a vital qualification to the study of Assyrian imperial 'discourse', essentially the most recent iteration of the 'propaganda' school in Assyrian historiography, demonstrating the potential degree of misunderstanding between the Assyrian heartland and its own peripheries; if Ḫadi-/Iḫtadi-libbušu ever consumed the stuff of Assyrian annals, a doubtful prospect, then it was probably in Aramaic. Indeed, while it must be presumed that this governor of the province of Na'iri visited Aššur to hobnob with the king and his other magnates at New Year's, dragomen presumably in tow, it can only be speculated as to the contents of his *limmu* stele, should it ever be found; were an inscription of his to be unearthed at the citadel of Diyarbakır, however, then the present author would wager it reading *ḥdhlbbh mlk ʿmd*.

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[122] Düring 2020 is very much an archaeological step in the right direction.

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# The arm-shaped vessels in Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age: a morphological and contextual analysis

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**Abstract**. The so-called libation arms found in Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age, belong to the ceramic class Red Lustrous Wheel-made Ware, characterized by a very fine fabric, a careful cooking and a red slipped and polished surface. Even if they were thoroughly analyzed, it was generally assumed that these objects were linked to religious or cultic activities and destined to libatory action. However, no systematic investigation was carried out in relation to their finding contexts. This paper presents the results of a morphological and contextual analysis of this specific artifact. It offers suggestions for production areas, function and distribution on the base of a catalog that collects all the pieces found so far and on the analysis of each finding context. The data seem to indicate an Anatolian type of production unrelated to that of the Red Lustrous Wheel-made Ware, which is solely linked to religious activity.

**Keywords.** Pottery, Late Bronze Age, Anatolia, Cyprus, Cilicia, Levant, Eastern Mediterranean, Red Lustrous Wheel-made Ware, Arm Shaped Vessels.

## 1. INTRODUCTION[1]

The aim of this paper is to present typological and contextual observations on, as well as hypothesize about the distribution of, the so-called libation arms. Libation arms are vessels in the shape of an outstretched human arm ending in a hand holding a cup that were distributed not only in Anatolia, but also in Cilicia, the Levant and Cyprus – a large area that, during the Late Bronze Age, experienced a period of intense economic, political and social interactions. This research includes the study of the

[1] This article is based on the master thesis discussed by the author at the University of Florence in October 2018, Prof. Marina Pucci (Supervisor), Prof. Giulia Torri (Second Supervisor) *"I cosiddetti bracci libatori in Anatolia e nel Mediterraneo Orientale nel Tardo Bronzo: studio morfologico e funzionale"*.

published material, taking into consideration all the sites where the libation arms were found that have already been mentioned in the study by K. Eriksson (1993) and updated by D.P. Mielke (2006: Table 2), and adds the most recent finds in other sites not mentioned in the two previous studies. Furthermore, this research also focuses on the analysis of the contexts of these specific vessels[2]. This study led to the creation of a database to collect all the published libation arms and updated distribution maps, as well as established a first typology and a possible correlation between the morphological type and the context. The single contexts have been analysed in detail and reduced to five main categories based on the information reported in the excavation reports. Since it is not possible to explain the individual contexts in detail here, the context category to which each artifact belongs is listed in the appendix. At the same time, a systematic catalogue was compiled to collect all published libation arms[3]. In addition, the research and the database were implemented through the study, still on-going, of the unpublished libation arms[4] recovered from the Southern Ponds secondary filling of Boğazköy/Hattusa, partially analysed by T. Pilavci (2017) in her PhD thesis[5] and not discussed in this article. Therefore, the goal of this research is first to analyse the libation arms by focusing on their morphological features, which are studied only marginally in the literature. This research helps demonstrate the presence of workshops in certain areas by shedding light on the function of the libation arms – different morphological types of libation arm may could belong to different production centres that may further be associated with a certain style. Secondly, this study focuses on the geographic and chronological distribution of libation arms to combine the typology and workshop analysis with interregional connections. The article also takes into consideration the finding contexts to better define function and chronological distribution.

## 2. CRAFT PRODUCTION

The so-called libation arms (Fig. 1) consist of three parts manufactured separately: a long cylindrical tube, in most cases wheel-made; a hand-modelled part that includes the hand and the bowl it supports; and a third element that is the junction between the two parts, represented by modelled rings that can differ in number (from two to four). The libation arms are closed vessels that are hollow inside and whose only opening is a perforation visible on the side of the bowl. Most of the finds belong to the Red Lustrous Wheel-made Ware (RLWmW[6] hereafter) class, which is characterised by a compact fabric, consisting of a very fine red or orange clay with few inclusions and uniformly fired. The surface, in most cases, is covered with a red or orange self-slip and is carefully polished to give a shiny appearance. The vessel's dimensions are variable – some examples are longer than 60 cm, while others, according to the diameter of the bowl, appear to be much smaller. The hand that is represented is the right hand. The bowl, in almost all cases, is deep and in a few cases is wider and shallower. The bowl is supported from the bottom, with the fingers sometimes wrapping around it up to the edge of the rim, although in two examples the hand is holding the bowl from the side.

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[2] See Tab. 3

[3] This is the list of analysed sites with their acronyms: A: Alaca Höyük; AA: Alalakh-Tell Atchana; AH: Tell Abu Hawam; AI: Ayos Iakovos; AL: Alishar; AM: Arslantepe-Malatya; AP: Aya Paraskevi; B: Boğazköy; BE: Beycesultan; BH: Büyük Höyük; DM: Dede Mezarı; E: Eskiyapar; EN: Enkomi; GV: Göksu Valley; HST: Hala Sultan Tekke; K: Korucutepe; KA: Kayalıpınar; KB: Kourion-Bamboula; KI: Kilise Tepe; KK: Kaman-Kalehöyük; KU: Kuşaklı-Sarissa; M: Mashat Höyük; MR: Maroni; ND: Not Defined; OS: Ortaköy-Šapinuwa; P: Porsuk; TA: Tarsus; TP: Tepecik; TR: Troy; UG: Ugarit; YU: Yumuktepe-Mersin. The acronyms of each site are used both within the catalogue and in the text.

[4] Fantoni 2021, in press

[5] I would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. A. Schachner his support and for having allowed me to study the material from Boğazköy. Recognition is also due to Prof. J. Seeher and Prof. U.-D Schoop for having allowed me to study the unpublished material and for the interesting discussions.

[6] The other two most common forms belonging to this ceramic class are Spindle Bottles and Pilgrim Flasks (Eriksson 1993: 23-25). While it can be assumed with relative certainty that the purpose of the Spindle Bottles and Pilgrim Flasks was to transport liquids, including valuable liquids such as oils, because of the easily sealable shape of the rim, the function of the libation arms is speculated.

Residue analyses carried out on the inner surface of some fragments of RLWmW that belong to Arm-shaped vessels from Anatolia, Rough Cilicia[7], and Cyprus showed residues of animal and vegetable fats that could not be distinguished from each other, but also remains of beeswax, commonly used to waterproof the interior of the vessels (Steel et al. 2007: 192-195). Interestingly, traces of beeswax were only found in the Arm-shaped vessels fragments from Boğazköy (17 sherds out of 30 that have been analysed by Knappett *et al.* (2005: 49)). Knappett *et al.* (2005: 49) assert that either these Arm-shaped vessels were coated with beeswax and thus waterproofed on arrival in Boğazköy following a Hittite practice, or that the liquids possibly transported in these Arm-shaped vessels and destined for the Hittite capital were somehow covered with beeswax as an additional layer of protection during the journey. In the first case, the container would have been imported, while the content would have been added once the container arrived in the Hittite capital; in the second case, a liquid would be imported and further protected by beeswax used as a sealant. Some vessels from Cyprus show trace of bitumen, which was also used to waterproof the interior of the vessels. However, Cyprus has no indigenous resources of bitumen and further analysis suggests that its source must have been in the area of Ras Shamra-Ugarit in Northern Syria. Therefore, it seems like that Arm-shaped vessels were used as containers to transport or to keep of liquids (Knappett et al. 2005: 49).

Petrographic and chemical analyses carried out so far on the wares from Central Anatolia, Cilicia and Cyprus have shown that the composition of the RLWmW (disregarding the shape of the vessel) must correspond to a single production centre, or to several centres located in the same geographic area. Initially, Cyprus was proposed as the main production site (Eriksson 1993: 151), a conclusion reached on the basis that the largest amount of RLWmW was found in Cyprus and that the ware continues throughout the Late Bronze Age period, with a change of distribution from Egyptian contexts to Hittite contexts (Eriksson 1993: 57-58, 133-134). However, in later years investigations in Anatolia have shown that a huge amount of pottery of this class was found mainly in Boğazköy and in other Anatolian sites (Mielke 2007: 163). In addition, a Cypriot origin was also supported by the fact that Cyprus had the largest number of shapes belonging to the RLWmW (seven forms: jugs, jars, bowls, tankards, spindle bottles, pilgrim flasks and arm-shaped vessels (Eriksson 1993: 18-30) as opposed to only four in Central Anatolia (represented by Boğazköy, which yielded Spindle Bottles, Lentoid Flasks, Libation arms and Bowls). Recent studies (Kozal 2015: 57-62; Kibaroğlu et al. 2019) have shown that most of the shapes were found at the site of Kilise Tepe in Cilicia, where four other types of craters have been discovered alongside the seven known Cypriot shapes. The analysis of the shapes shows that these were clearly inspired by the oldest Anatolian shapes (Ancient Hittite period, up to the Assyrian colonial period and Early Bronze III) rather than by the Cypriot ones (libation arms are an exception, with no precedent in either Anatolia or Cyprus). In Anatolia the first examples of RLWmW appear during the Old Hittite period (Mielke 2007: 162-163 and in Cyprus during the Late Cypriot IA (Eriksson 1993: 149-153). Since there is no information or evidence of possible connections between the two territories in the above-mentioned periods, it is more plausible to assume that the origin of this pottery is to be found in Anatolian rather than in Cypriot territory since they would not have had examples on the island from which to draw inspiration (Kozal 2015: 61-62).

Petrographic and geochemical analyses have highlighted that the area of Anamur and Ovacık, in Rough Cilicia, is geologically compatible with what was analysed in the RLWmW samples (Knappet et al. 2005: 48-49). If this is the case, it should be assumed that one or more production centres are located in this area and that the land and sea routes of distribution of RLWmW started from a main route towards the north (through land), then towards Central Anatolia, and one towards the south, to the Mediterranean. It has been suggested that the ancient Hittite port of Ura[8], known only from textual sources, was located at the mouth of the Göksu River in the Silifke area, and that the sea routes to Northern Cyprus, the Levant and the Aegean area started from there (Kozal 2018: 223-224 with further literature). Consequently, in terms of archaeological and archaeometrical analysis it has been proposed that the source of the RLWmW has to be located in Rough Cilicia (Kozal 2018: 225, Fig. 4).

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[7] The catalog includes nine pieces generally coming from Cilicia, however only two (one from Rough Cilicia and one from plain Cilicia) can be assigned to one and the same morphological group. Therefore, distinguishing Plain and Rough Cilicia in two distinct region was not useful for this analysis.

[8] Regarding the discussion on Ura and its location see De Martino 1999 with references.

## 3. CONTEXTS AND THEIR DATINGS

Table 1 presents the distribution of the arm-shaped vessels according to the dating of the contexts provided by the archaeologists who published them, considering that the artefact could be dated to a period previous or contemporary to the context itself. Until a reconsideration of the dating of these contexts takes place, the dates are considered here as valid. According to the data collected during the Master thesis, it appears that the 'oldest' sherds, belonging to the 16th-15th centuries BC,[9] are mostly found in public contexts (palace, administrative, temple) and the only private context is the funerary one. During the 14th century BC there is no evidence of arm shaped vessels from funerary contexts (mainly due both to the lack of Late Bronze Age burial sites in Anatolia and to the impossibility of dating some of the finds in Cypriot burials), and all the vessels are retrieved from domestic/templar contexts until the 13th century BC, when almost all the sherds are recovered from temple contexts.

The type of context (cf. Tab. 1) with the highest number of sherds is the temple context type (or its immediate surroundings). This could support the hypothesis of a cultic function of the object. The fact that the sherds recovered in this type of context come not only from Anatolia (which generally has the largest number of specimens) but also from Cilicia and Cyprus may suggest that their use is indeed cult-related. The date of these vessels seems to not extend beyond the 14th century BC, also considering the uncertainly of some Cypriot contexts. The sherds from Cilicia for which a dating was provided, like those from Kilise Tepe, cover a time span between 15th and the second half of the 14th century BC (Kibaroğlu *et al.* 2019: 415). The finds from Anatolia cover a time span from the 16th to the end of the 13th century BC, while in the Northern Levant the libation arms seem to appear later, during the 14th-13th centuries BC, as the arms from Tell Atchana and Ugarit shows.

## 4. PROPOSED TYPOLOGY

The typologically relevant parts of a libation arm are the hand, the wrist, and the base, the first two of which are connected to the third by a wheel-made tube (which can be cylindrical or slightly wider towards the base, mainly ranging between 50 and 70 cm in length but without other useful typological characteristics). The rest of the object is hand-made. Until now, no specific morphological analysis has ever been carried out on the rendering of the hand, the rings decorating the wrist, or the base in order to establish a typology for the libation arms. In previous studies, the only morphological distinction was related only to the size of the whole object: a specimen from Enkomi (Cyprus), complete with base, wrist, and hand, has for a long time led to the assumption of the existence of a long and a short type of libation arm (Bittel 1957: 33-42). Pilavcı (2017: 116-117) makes a distinction between long and short types, adding two new types: miniature and votive. She distinguishes the characteristic parts (fingers, wrist, and base) but makes morphological distinction only for very noticeable exceptions. In this study, I decided not to refer to this type of dimensional distinction introduced for the first time by Bittel (1957: 36-38) and based on the length of the object because only nine vessels out of 220 analysed and catalogued can be defined as complete: eight would belong to the 'long' type while only the Enkomi specimen would belong to the short one. Although the state of preservation of the remaining libation arms is fragmentary, following observations on the tube fragments can help in solve the question long/short arm, it seems to remain constant throughout the preserved length in most cases, while the diameter of the specimen of libation arm defined as belonging to the short type increases visibly towards the base. None of the fragments analysed that are part of the arm show an accentuated increase in base diameter that would make them part of the short type. Therefore, it can be assumed that the long type is the most common in the analysed areas. The morphology presented here is related to the single parts forming the vessel rather than to its general shape.

[9] Two pieces have a more controversial date. The first (EN01) has been dated to a range of 17th-12th century BC and therefore does not have a secure date. The second piece DM01, found in the necropolis of Dede Mezarı, is hypothetically dated to the Middle Bronze Age. It is, however, the only piece dated to the Middle Bronze Age and since its chronological assignment is hypothetical, it is not possible to affirm the existence of these artefacts in the Middle Bronze Age, also considering that the RLWM seems to appear during the 16th century BC.

**Table 1:** Context type and Chronological distribution with the number of sherds.

| CONTEXT[1] DATINGS | Temple | Domestic | Palace | Domest. /Templ. | Funerary | Administr. | Palace/ Adm. | ND | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16th-15th century BC | 7 | | 11 | | 5 | 9 | 5 | | 37 |
| 14th century BC | 9 | 3 | | 33 | 3 | | | | 48 |
| 13th-12th century BC | 52 | 6 | 3 | | | 1 | | | 62 |
| ND | | | 10 | | 1 | | | 37+31 | 66 |
| TOTAL | 68 | 9 | 24 | 33 | 9 | 10 | 5 | 68 | |

[1] For specific reference to type of context see Appendix references.

### *4.1. Base*

Six base types could be identified among the 50 bases recorded: ring base (BA, Fig. 13), narrow ring base (BAS, Fig. 14), disc base (BDI, Fig. 15), button base (BB, Fig. 5), flat base (BP, Fig. 16) and rounded base (BR, Fig. 17).The majority of the bases belongs to the narrow ring and button type (9 and 8 sherds each respectively) and suggests that the primary function of these objects was not to be used in an upright position, as the vessels do not show a suitable base for this purpose.

### *4.2. Wrist*

The wrist is defined as the junction between the wheel-made part of the arm and the handmade part of the hand, a point that corresponds to the anatomical part of the human wrist. The joint is highlighted through a decoration commonly found on all the wrist fragments. It consists of a series of 'rings' of different sizes and executed in different ways. In most cases they are in relief and are placed close together, but it cannot be excluded the existence of examples with an incised decoration along the circumference of the wrist and other rings in relief with some space between one and the other. Among the 66 sherds with complete or partial wrist decoration, it was possible to distinguish three types of decorative execution of the rings: relief decoration (PRI, Fig. 18), spaced relief decoration (PRID, Fig. 7), incised decoration (PIN, Fig. 8). The analysis of the number of rings executed on the vessels allowed the definition of vessels with three rings, two rings and four or more rings.

These data show that the most common combination between the number of rings and the way they are represented is three rings in relief. There does not seem to be any correlation between the number of rings and the way they are executed: one can find three incised rings as well as two raised rings without any apparent precise pattern.

### *4.3. Hand*

The hand, together with the bowl, represents the frontal part of the libation arm and the only way to fill the container.

The analysis of 80 sherds displaying the hand at various degree of preservation led to the definition of some distinctive criteria to group them. These are based on the rendering of the thumb, fingers, and nails[10].

The subdivision according to the morphological differences led to the creation of ten groups:

M1 (Fig. 19): Thumb in high relief, fingers of the same length, even, stop before the rim, executed in low relief and with naturalistic nails; M1a (Fig. 20): Fragments of which only the thumb is in high relief and the naturalistic nail remain visible. To this category also belongs the only example of a representation of a left hand; M2 (Fig. 6):

[10] 1) Thumb: high relief; parallel to fingers 2) Fingers: low relief; engraved; naturalistic; even; converging at one point; reach rim of cup; stop before rim; not distinct from one another 3) Nails: engraved without attention; naturalistic

Thumb in high relief, fingers of the same length, even, stop before the edge, naturalistic renderings and naturalistic nails; M2a (Fig. 9): Unique variant of category M2, the whole hand is realistically rendered, the fingers are well-spaced and the knuckles are recognisable. M3 (Fig. 21): High-relief thumb, fingers of the same length, even, stop before the brim, rendered in low relief and with carelessly incised nails; M3a (Fig. 10): Fragments of which only the high-relief thumb and the carelessly incised nail are visible; M4 (Fig. 22): High-relief thumb, fingers of same length, converging at one point, stop before the rim, rendered in low relief and with carelessly incised nails; M5 (Fig. 23): High-relief thumb, fingers of same length, converging at one point, stop before the brim, rendered in low relief and with carelessly incised nails; M6 (Fig. 24): Thumb parallel to the other fingers, fingers of the same length, even, stop before the rim and incised; M7 (Fig. 11; Fig. 12): Thumb in relief with the last phalanx very protruding, the knuckles are all aligned and the fingers are in low relief and separated by deep incisions; M8 (Fig. 25): Naturalistic fingers; the hand, however, is in a different position: instead of supporting the bowl from underneath, the hand supports it from the side; M9: ND, it is not possible to define any characteristics.

The largest group is M3, followed by M2, M4 and M1, excluding groups M1a and M9 which are mostly composed of fragments that are too poorly preserved.

### *4.4. Production areas*[11]

Based on the morphological analysis, it is evident that the most discriminating element defining the shape of the libation arms is the hand, identifiable on approximately 36% of the pieces compared to the total number of analysed sherds (220), while typology of the bases and wrists did not show relevant results. The following four main types of hand may refer to different workshops.

Group M3, which can be summarised as a poorly made hand, is mostly found in Boğazköy, both in the Lower Town (B39; B42) dating to the 14th century and in the Upper Town (B52; B55; B68) and near Temple 15 (B64) dating between the 13th and 12th centuries BC. (Fischer 1963: 149-150; Parzinger-Sanz 1992: 116). Two arms from Boğazköy (B02; B03) come from a layer without any information on context or dating (Bittel 1937: Table 16). The remaining libation arms come from Ortaköy-Šapinuwa (OS13; OS14), more specifically from the remains of Building D, dated between the 15th and 14th centuries BC (Kiymet and Süel 1999: 474); from the Late Bronze Age Levels of Korucutepe (K07) (Ertem 1988: 18) and Kilise Tepe (KI04) (Symington 2001: 169-170); from Tomb 2 of Enkomi (EN04) dated to the 14th century BC (Courtois *et al*. 1986: 18, 27-28); and from Level 2 (Hittite architectural level) of Alaca Höyük (A02) (Koşay-Akok 1966: 169). The libation arm YU01, coming from the level of the early 15th century BC of Yumuktepe, differs macroscopically from the other vessels: the surface, instead of being red, is closer to brown and the body is dark brown and richer in inclusions than the typical RLWmW body. It has been suggested that this is a local production, based also on the evidence of a less careful manufacture if compared to the other specimens (Manuelli 2009: 259-260). The same brown-coloured clay can also be found, however, in fragment B40, recovered from Level 1 (14th century BC) of the Lower Town of Boğazköy.

The second largest group, M2, is characterised by a more naturalistic execution of the hand. Among the thirteen vessels in this group, four come from Cyprus: AP01, for which no date has been given (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893:385); AI02 from the 14th century BC sanctuary (Gjerstad 1934: 358); EN02 from Tomb 69 dated between the 15th and 14th centuries BC (Åström 1967: 8; Courtois et al. 1986: 41); and MR01 from Tomb 7 dated between the 15th and 13th centuries BC (Åström 1972a: 205). The fragments from Boğazköy were mostly found in the Lower Town (B19; B37) and one of them (B50) is the only specimen recovered not far away from Temple 1. Only one vessel (B96) comes from the Upper Town, from Temple 6, while a single sherd (B07) comes from the citadel of Büyükkale (Fischer 1963: 150). Fragment UG01, on the other hand, belongs to the Ugarit Recent 2 period, corresponding to a time spanning from the second half of the 15th century BC to the first half of the 14th century BC (Schaeffer 1949: 210). Of the specimens from Alaca Höyük, one sherd (A03) could not be contextualised but

[11] Production areas and chronological distribution are shown in Tab. 2

belongs to the Hittite period level, while another sherd (A10) is classified as belonging to Level 2 (Koşay-Akok 1966: 169). Only one vessel belonging to this group comes from Korucutepe (K06), found in L-17 I.tb 400-410 but there is no date (Ertem 1988: 18). There are no substantial differences in the ware, which is fine and reddish, nor in the reddish-orange and polished surface.

The arms of group M4, characterised by a poor execution and the fingers converging towards the centre, were all found in Boğazköy and all within the Upper Town Area, dated between the 13th and 12th century BC: fragments B75 and B77 belong to Temple 15; fragment B72 came to light south of Temple 4; and fragments B57, B78 and B82 were found in the debris without any context. All sherds share the same type of fine, reddish body and reddish-orange polished surface (Parzinger-Sanz 1992: 116). One fragment recovered from Kaman-Kalehöyük also belongs to this group, but it is not possible to define the context of its discovery (Omura 1999: 219).

The fragments belonging to group M1 may, at first glance look the same as group M3, but they are distinguished by a more naturalistic rendering of the fingers and nails. Fragments B53 and B84 come from the Upper Town of Boğazköy, found near Temple 4 and fragment B76 from Temple 15 (Parzinger-Sanz 1992: 116), all dated between 13th and 12th century BC; the libation arm AA01 was found inside House 37 in Alalakh dating from the mid-15th century to the first half of the 14th century BC (Woolley 1955: 178); and fragment KA04 comes from Building B in Kayalıpınar, dated between the 15th century BC and the 14th century BC, which has been interpreted as an administrative building (Mühlenbruch 2014: 115-117). The sherds from Boğazköy have the same fine, reddish ware and reddish-orange polished surface. The surface of the fragment from Alalakh is also red and polished, while the fragment from Kayalıpınar cannot be described more precisely.

The M7 group, although it includes few sherds, is one of the most interesting. The hand differs visibly from that of the other groups as its rendering is rather naturalistic, even if the knuckles are represented with a clear detachment from what should be the back of the hand and the fingers are separated by deep incisions that make them appear in relief. The thumb is still made in relief, but the last phalanx is very prominent compared to the other vessels. The specimen from Enkomi, EN01 (Courtois et al. 1986: 44-45), was found inside Tomb 57, in use from LC I to LC II A-C (17th-12th c. BC (Steiner and Killebrew 2014: Tab. 4. 3). It has been suggested that the fragment from the Dede Mezarı Necropolis (Üyümez *et al*.: 2010: 939-943, 949) belongs to the Middle Bronze Age phase, as this is the longest period of use of the necropolis. Even if the chronological indication for these two objects is not certain, their specific morphological features and the fact that both seem to belong to the most ancient contexts, it seems likely that they are more or less contemporary and represent the first appearances of these artefacts. Therefore, it can be assumed that arms of this type were widespread during this early time within funerary depositions while later their use shifted to temple, palatial, administrative, or domestic contexts. However, as there are no other examples of burial sites from this period in Cyprus or Anatolia, it is impossible to say anything with certainty.

Comparing the most numerous morphological groups (M3, M2, M4 and M1) with their geographical areas and the type of contexts in which they were found, it appears that only group M4 is found exclusively in the Anatolian area, and in six out of seven cases it belongs to a temple-type context. On the other hand, the other groups do not seem to be related either to a single type of context or to a single geographical area.

Mielke (2006: 164-165) considers libation arms with a ware different from the RLWmW to be imitations. Manuelli (2009: 262-263) considers it more appropriate to speak of "different local productions" rather than of imitations[12]: the production of libation arms with different wares or with special surface treatments and a more accurate execution can be seen as a sign of Anatolian involvement in the creation and development of this form thanks to the contacts that took place over a long period in the area of the southern coast of Cilicia.

Because it was not possible to analyze the ware of all specimens, it is only possible to suggest possible morphological differences: the only two vessels that differ significantly from the standard are KU08 (Fig. 25) and BH01, where the right hand holds the cup from the side and not from the bottom. Rather than a local imitation or production, it has been suggested that this rendering reflects a misinterpretation or reworking of the most common

[12] The piece is YU01 from Yumuktepe-Mersin excavation. It belongs to M3 group and its finding context is dated to 15th century BC.

type of libation arm. If these vessels were indeed local productions, they would still be an exclusively Central Anatolian product. However, as there is no more precise information on the type of ware or on the finding context[13], this should be considered as a working hypothesis.

The analysis conducted so far, considering that the number of vessels showing any useful characteristics for this research is rather limited (80 individuals) and that it was based on morphological and macroscopic criteria, led to the conclusion that the existence of different production areas specialised in a specific morphological type can be considered another working hypothesis. Considering the Anatolian plateau, only three specimens belonging to specific morphological group were found outside North Central Anatolia, cf. appendix.

Recent studies show that a large group of RLWmW fragments are produced by the same fabric with a main workshop. From the analysis conducted on RLWmW samples, 9 arm shaped vessels from Kilise Tepe, Hattusa, and Tell Atchana were analysed. Those from Kilise Tepe and Hattusa have the same ware, and therefore the same workshop, as most of the pieces in RLWmW (Kibaroğlu *et al.* 2019: 416, 422-430 with further references). The number of ASVs analysed is only partially representative. Therefore, an analysis based on morphology is proposed as a working hypothesis. From a purely morphological and geographical distribution point of view, the proposal that more than one workshop may exist can be considered, as the chronological and contextual element is not discriminating (except for group M7). The M3 group, characterised by a more schematic and less accurate rendering of the hand with the fingers represented all at the same length along an imaginary line, seems to be widespread mostly in North-Central Anatolia (11 pieces) and covers a period ranging from the 15$^{th}$/14$^{th}$ century BC to the 13$^{th}$/12$^{th}$ century, contemporary to those from Cilicia (two pieces) and Cyprus (one piece). It is therefore possible to assume the existence of a Hittite production centre from which the pieces found in Cyprus and Cilicia were distributed. It should also be noted that this group is the only one found in Rough Cilicia, while the other geographical areas yielded evidence of several morphological groups, but the limited number of identified sherds makes it impossible to assume anything else.

Group M2, with its more naturalistic style, visible in the precise realisation of the nails and fingers in which the knuckles are sometimes also recognisable, shows vessels that were mainly disseminated in Anatolia (eight pieces) from the 14$^{th}$ to the 13$^{th}$ century BC. The only vessel from the Levantine area is dated to the same period. The vessels from Cyprus (four specimens) come from a funerary context, which is not represented in the other two areas, and are too broadly dated to allow a more precise determination. It is not possible to establish a single production centre for this morphological type, but it can be hypothesised the existence of a Cypriot production centre (with the oldest examples) and an Anatolian one (with the largest number of pieces). However, more data needs to be acquired in order to prove this hypothesis.

The M4 group, characterized by a more schematic and less accurate rendering of the hand but with the fingers converging in one point, seems to bring together fragments not only from Anatolia but also from the Upper Town of Boğazköy (six pieces), if we exclude the out-of-context vessels from Kaman-Kalehöyük. Therefore, it can be assumed the existence of a specialized centre for the production of arm shaped vessels on the site or in the surroundings of the Hittite capital as an example of a local production intended exclusively for temple use.

Group M1, with a more accurate rendering of the nails than M3, is attested only in Anatolian (six pieces) and Levantine areas (two pieces) from the 14$^{th}$ to the 12$^{th}$ century BC[14]. The hypothesis of an Anatolian production centre that exported this group in the northern Levant can be postulated.

The data collected on the geographical distribution of hand morphological types suggests the exclusion of a single centre of production of libation arms since it is not possible to define a single morphological type attested in a single period. Because there are several contemporary productions, it can be postulated that several workshops existed. However, the too broad dating of the contexts prevents the precise identification of these production cen-

[13] Only the fragment from Kayalıpınar seems to belong to an administrative context, but the function of the building is still unclear (Mühlenbruch 2014: 216-217)

[14] The libation arm KA04 (Mühlenbruch 2014: 115-117), is indicated as belonging to a context of the 15$^{th}$/14$^{th}$ century BC so that it could be also slightly earlier than the others.

tres or the relationships between them, apart from the exceptions represented by groups M4 and M2. In any case, I think that the hypothesis of a single production centre covering the whole time span should be excluded.

## 5. FUNCTIONS

In the first analyses of these objects (Bittel 1937: 25-26), libation arms were associated with Egyptian censers. During the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2055-1650 BC; Bard [2013: 48]), an arm-shaped censer appeared in both visual representations and in the archaeological repertoire: these bronze censers, ended with a flat surface representing a hand (with no distinctions between right or left hand) with an open palm or, later, a papyrus plant. The opposite end was instead decorated with a hawk's head, which during the Middle Kingdom was turned outwards while in the New Kingdom it was turned inward (to the deity). A small container for storing the incense grains was often located on the arm, where, in later times, a figurine representing the kneeling pharaoh was sometimes added. The removable combustion chamber located on the hand was initially hemispherical and later of conical shape (Laisney 2009: 231-232) (Fig. 2). Since the inside of the arm is hollow, Laisney (2009: 248) assumed that the bronze covered a wooden core, to reduce the weight of the censer.

Egyptian pictorial representations (Ertem 1988: Fig. 31) also showed combustion chambers surmounted by small lines interpreted as flames or smoke from incense (Fig. 3). Given the similarity between Egyptian censers and the arms found in Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean, it was initially assumed that they had the same function (Bittel 1937: 25-26). However, if the Anatolian arms were used as incense burners, they would have shown a trace of combustion inside, either through fire or smoke. As there is no evidence of burning, they likely did not fulfil this function (Mielke 2007: 164).

By looking for a prototype to which the libation arms could have been inspired, Amiran (1962) identified comparisons in elephant tusks or bovine horns hollowed out on the inside with the smallest opening ending in the form of a very wide cup or spoon found in the Egyptian area. The specimens most reminiscent of ceramic libation arms were found in funerary contexts, which suggested a use related to deposition rituals. (Fig. 4). However, the association of the Anatolian and Eastern Mediterranean libation arms with the bovine horns suggested by Amiran as a possible prototype remains only an unverified assumption.

The most widespread opinion, given its shape and the fact that it was a hollow vessel, is that the function of the libation arms was to pour liquids during rituals. The contexts point towards the use of libation arms during rituals, as most of these containers were found in or near temple-type contexts. Following Eriksson's hypothesis (1993: 27), if they contained precious and perfumed oils, it can be suggested that the libation arms also had something to do with the use of these oils: perhaps oils were poured from the spindle bottles into the arm and from the arm onto a person or statue. By doing so, the bowl in the libation arm would receive the oil, that would be then mixed with water inside the arm before being poured out. The arm would therefore be used for anointing rather than libation (Mielke 2007: 164; Güterbock 1983).

However, also considering the lack of reference of such tools in more private contexts, with the exception of one specimen, it might be suggested that it was a personal object to be given to the deity as an offering, which might justify its presence also in the domestic sphere. An interesting change in function, yet unexplored, might have occurred from the end of the Middle Bronze Age, when the vessels was mainly recovered from funerary contexts to the 13$^{th}$ century BC, when the arm shaped vessels come from templar contexts.

Steel (2018: 204-206) does not doubt that they are still objects intended for libation but, in line with Mielke's analysis, sees them as containers intended for pouring liquid. Since there are no textual or iconographical information on how these objects were used, it can be assumed, given their bulky size, that these vessels required a certain amount of skill and experience to handle during libation. It has also been assumed, given the small capacity of the cup, that it was a container made especially for pouring that used an exact amount of liquid during libations. According to Harmanşah (2020: 235 with further references) the libation arm is associated with the Hittite term "GIŠ.ŠU.NAG.NAG or *kattakurant*" from Hittite ritual texts, which refers to a vessel in the

shape of a cut or amputated arm widely used for libations of wine and other sacred liquids offered to the gods in sacred locations.

According to Pilavcı (2017: 245) the libatory function of these objects is undoubted but she redefines their function from containers that pour the liquid to containers that receive the liquid itself for the libation. In this case, the hand holding the cup represents the reception of the offering by the deity who, by presenting his outstretched arm, participates in the ritual. The interpretation of the vessels as the arm of the deity has been suggested for several reasons: the rendering of the hand in such an accurate and naturalistic way, compared to the schematic rendering of the part of the arm, might suggest that the tubular part was hidden under cloths that covered the statue, leaving only the part of the hand holding the cup visible. The vessel could be seen as an abbreviated form of the statue of the deity and thus placed on a surface or it could have been associated with a transformative value. Once poured, the liquid becomes immediately and directly accessible to the deity because it passes from the cup into the arm where it is contained. Furthermore, if the vessel is placed horizontally on a surface, it is possible that by filling it over the course of days the liquid was always present inside the cup, a fact that could be interpreted as the deity always being satisfied (Pilavci 2017: 221-225). Steel (2018: 204-206) wanted to shift the focus of the discussion regarding the RLWmW from the exclusive analysis of what was contained inside the libation arms to how these were used, noticing a substantial difference between the Cypriot and Anatolian contexts in which these artefacts were found. While the Cypriot contexts are mostly funerary contexts where the preservation of the pieces is good, the Anatolian contexts are mostly ritual and the libation arms found there are fragmentary or very poorly preserved. It is therefore clear that such objects in Anatolia were always available, in circulation, frequently used and just as frequently replaced. The differences between these two types of contexts show that there were different types of interaction between the objects and their users, which also reflect the different values attributed to them.

From the analysis of the artifacts, I find Pilavci's interpretation more likely. She sees these objects as something that receives the libation liquid during the ritual, rather than pours it. In fact, the size of a libation arm, combined with their weight that increases once the liquid is poured into them, makes the entire object difficult to handle and move. Moreover, the rim of the cup is often straight or not very everted, a condition that would make it very difficult to pour the liquid in a smooth and precise way. If these, as proposed by Pilavci, were placed on an inclined surface, the entrance of the liquid through the narrow passage that leads from the hand to the arm would be facilitated because the cup would never be filled. In this way everyone would be able to make such a gesture, even in domestic or private environments. I also agree with Steel's observations regarding the different type of interaction that occurs with the same type of object in Anatolia (fragmentary but abundant preservation) and Cyprus (more complete vessel but in funerary contexts): the almost daily use of the objects in Anatolia differs with their symbolic value and funerary function in the Cypriot contexts. This seems to be supported by the evidence from the contexts.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on these data, it is possible to postulate that the function of the libation arms is ritual. It is not yet clear, given the absence of mention of a similar object in written sources and figurative representations, whether it is a tool for rituals carried out by a priest, a private object to be used as an offering to a deity or used in private contexts as a representation of the deity himself to make an offering. In any case, any hypothesis that links them to incense burners or to any instrument that has to do with combustion is to be excluded, given the absence of traces of smoke or fire. It is more likely to be interpreted as an object into which the liquid is poured rather than one from which the liquid is poured.

The creation of a morphological typology demonstrates for the first time the existence of groups of libation arms with differences in the stylistic rendering of discriminating characteristics. By associating these groups with the contexts in which they were found and the regions to which they belonged, it is possible to detect that around the 16$^{th}$ century BC in Anatolia the piece belonging to group M7 suggest a funerary function. There are no more examples of libation arms in funerary contexts after the 14$^{th}$ century BC until we arrive at the almost exclusive

association with temple-type contexts in the 13th century BC both in Anatolia and in the Levant. The morphological typology also suggests the existence of two production centres during the Late Bronze Age: one in Anatolia (with groups M3, M4 and M1) and maybe another in Cyprus (most of the libation arms belonging to M2 were found in Anatolia but the vessels from the oldest contexts have been found in Cyprus. Also, the arm from Ugarit is more likely to come from a contact with Cyprus rather than with Anatolia).

Alongside the question of function is the question of the area of provenance. Cyprus can be reasonably excluded as the main place of production of these objects and this hypothesis can be confirmed by the fact that the Hittite world is well known to have included Hurrian and North Syrian religious practices in its culture (Mielke 2007: 164; Güterbock 1983). The written sources clearly state that the Hittites did not adapt any rituals from Alašiya (Cyprus) to their cult, and up to now there is no mention of such an object for libations in the numerous ritual texts found. Similarly, although the act of libation is often represented, there are no depictions of a similarly shaped vessel in Anatolia, even though most of the contexts in which they were found are templar-like. Furthermore, although the place of production of the entire ceramic class of RLWmW has been identified in Rough Cilicia, it should be noted that in the case of the libation arms this needs more evidence. Instead, these data seem to indicate Central Anatolia as the main place of production for this shape.

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| Catalog nr. | Original Inventory nr. | Bibliography | Dimensions (in cm unless indicated otherwise) | Morphological Type | Finding Context | Context Type | Datings | Geographical Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A01 | Al. c 219 | Koşay 1951, p. 124, Tab.60 n° 3a/b | Lenght: 16,3; Diameter: 5,6 | BAS | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| A02 | Al. g 94 | Koşay-Akok 1966, p. 169, Tab. 17 n° g 94 | Lenght: 11; Diameter: 0,7 | PRI, M3 | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| A03 | Al. h 153 | Koşay-Akok 1966, p. 169, Tab. 17 n° h 153 | Lenght: 11,2; Depth: 4,6 | PRI, M2 | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| A04 | Al. J 154 | Koşay-Akok 1966, p. 169, Tab. 17 n° j 154 | Lenght: 12,2; Hand Diameter: 4,9; Opening Diameter: 3,7 | PRI, M1a | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| A06 | Al l 108 | Koşay-Akok 1966, p. 169, Tab. 17 n° l 108 | Lenght: 22; Diameter: 3,9 | ND | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| A07 | Al. l 109 | Koşay-Akok 1966, p. 169, Tab. 17 n° l 109 | Lenght: 20,9; Diameter: 3,9 | ND | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| A08 | Al. n 109 | Koşay-Akok 1973, p. 80, Tab. 38 n° n 109 | Opening Diameter: 3,5 | BR, PRI, MND | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| A09 | Al. r 43 | Koşay-Akok 1973, p. 80, Tab. 38 n° r 43 | Lenght: 7,5; Width: 5 | ND | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| A10 | Al. p 156 | Koşay-Akok 1973, p. 80, Tab. 82 n° p 156 | Lenght: 9; Width: 3,5 | PRI, M2 | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| A11 | Al. r 42 | Koşay-Akok 1973, p. 80 | Lenght: 5,5; Height: 5 | ND | Level 2 | ND | Hittite Level | Anatolia |
| AA01 | ATP/37/225 | Woolley 1955, p. 178, Tab. CXXV (a) | Lenght: 59 | BDI; PRI; M1 | Casa 37, Room 9, Level IV | Domestic | 14th-12th century | Levant |
| AA02 | ND | Woolley 1955, p. 178, Tab. CXXV | ND | ND | Casa 37, Room 11, Level IV | Domestic | 14th-12th century | Levant |
| AA03 | ATP/37/226 | Woolley 1955, p. 178 | ND | PRI, M1 | Casa 37, Room 12, Level IV | Domestic | 14th-12th century | Levant |
| AA04 | ND | Woolley 1955, p. 178 | ND | ND | Casa 37, Room 13, Level IV | Domestic | 14th-12th century | Levant |
| AH01 | 47.1741/6 | Balensi and Herrera 1985, pp. 110-111, Fig. 14.6 | ND | ND | Level V, Fortification Wall | ND | 14th-12th century BC | Levant |
| AI01 | 54 | Gjerstad 1934. p. 358, n°54; Amiran 1962, Tab. XX, on the left; Åström 1972a, p.205 | Lenght: 69,9 | BP, PRI, MND | Sanctuary, Late Bronze Age | Temple | 14th century BC | Cyprus |
| AI02 | 55 | Gjerstad 1934. p. 358, n°54; Amiran 1962, Tab. XX, on the right; Åström 1972a, p.205 | Lenght: 54,3 | PRI, M2 | Sanctuary, Late Bronze Age | Temple | 14th century BC | Cyprus |
| AI03 | 56 | Gjerstad 1934. p. 358, n°56; Åström 1972a, p.205 | Lenght: 53,6 | ND | Sanctuary, Late Bronze Age | Temple | 14th century BC | Cyprus |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AI04 | 57 | Gjerstad 1934. p. 358, n°57; Åström 1972a, p.205 | Lenght: 41,9 | ND | Sanctuary, Late Bronze Age | Temple | 14th century BC | Cyprus |
| AI05 | 58 | Gjerstad 1934. p. 358, n°58; Åström 1972a, p.205 | Lenght: 27,7 | ND | Sanctuary, Late Bronze Age | Temple | 14th century BC | Cyprus |
| AI06 | 59 | Gjerstad 1934. p. 358, n°59; Åström 1972a, p.205 | Lenght: 50 | ND | Sanctuary, Late Bronze Age | Temple | 14th century BC | Cyprus |
| AI07 | ND | Åström 1972a, p.205 | ND | ND | Sanctuary, Late Bronze Age | Temple | 14th century BC | Cyprus |
| AL01 | c 1276 | Von Der Osten 1937 p. 190, p. 166 fig. 207, Tab. VI n° c 1276 | Height: 11,4; Diameter: 7,9 | BAS | Found approximately 3,20 m depth in I 30 | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| AL02 | c 1277 | Von Der Osten 1937 p. 190, p. 166 fig. 207 | Height: 12,2; Diameter: 7,2 | ND | Found approximately 3,20 m depth in I 30 | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| AM01 | ND | Manuelli 2013, p. 192-193; Fig. III.65 n° 8 | ND | MND | Level Vb or IV | ND | Late Bronze Age | Anatolia |
| AP01 | ND | Ohnefalsch-Richter 1893, p. 385, Tab. XL n° 8 | Lenght: 51,6 | BAS; PRI; M2 | ND | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| B01 | 9921 | Bittel 1937, Tavola 16, Fig. 1a-b-c | ND | PRI | ND | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| B02 | 9923 | Bittel 1937, Tavola 16 Fig. 2a-b-c | ND | PRI;M3 | ND | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| B03 | 9922 | Bittel 1937, Tavola 16 Fig. 2a-b-c | ND | PND;M3 | ND | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| B04 | 11 103 | Bittel 1937, Tavola 16 Fig. 4 | ND | ND | ND | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| B05 | 11 104 | Bittel 1937, Tavola 16 Fig. 5 | ND | ND | ND | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| B06 | 554/f | Fischer 1963, p. 149, Tab. 124 n° 1089, Bittel 1957 | Arm Diameter: 4,4; Bowl Height: 6,2 | M3a | Buyukkale p/16, disturbed context in front of the walls | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B07 | 124/i | Fischer 1963, p. 149, Tab. 124 n° 1090, Bittel 1957 | Preserved Height: 3,2 | M2 | Buyukkale m-n/14, Building D Level III | Palace | 13th century BC | Anatolia |
| B08 | 159/n | Fischer 1963, p. 149, Tab. 124 n° 1090, Bittel 1957 | Preserved Lenght: 4,2 | M1 | Buyukkale ee/15, immediately below the after Hittite slope pavement | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B09 | 94/i | Fischer 1963, p. 149 n° 1092, Bittel 1957 | Preserved Height: 7,5 | ND | Buyukkale m-n/13-14, post hittite level (Bittel 1957: building D) | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B10 | ND | Fischer 1963, p. 149 n° 1093, Bittel 1957 | Preserved Height: 5,2 | ND | Buyukkale t/12, debris | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B100 | ND | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 145, Tab. 48 n°12 | ND | ND | Upper Town, Level 3 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B101 | ND | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 145, Tab. 48 n°6 | ND | BDI | Upper Town, Level 4 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |

| Catalog nr. | Original Inventory nr. | Bibliography | Dimensions (in cm unless indicated otherwise) | Morphological Type | Finding Context | Context Type | Datings | Geographical Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B102 | ND | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 146, Tab. 48 n°7 | ND | BR | ND | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| B103 | 80/83 | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 146, Tab. 48 n°8 | ND | M6 | ND | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| B104 | ND | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 146, Tab. 48 n°11 | ND | BR | ND | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| B105 | 80/54 | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 146, Tab. 48 n°13 | ND | PRI, MND | ND | ND | ND | Anatolia |
| B106 | 83/508,769 | Neve 1984, pp. 364, 372 | ND | ND | Upper Town, Casa 12 | Temple/Domestic | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B107 | 83/502 | Neve 1984, pp. 362, 372 | ND | ND | Upper Town, Casa 15 | Temple/Domestic | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B11 | 372/e | Fischer 1963, p. 149 n° 1094, Bittel 1957 | Preserved dimensions: 4x3,5 | ND | Buyukkale t/12, debris | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B12 | 128/o | Fischer 1963, p. 149, tav 124 n° 1095 | Preserved Lenght: 4,2; Diameter Max.: 4 | PRI | Buyukkale z-aa/11 | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B13 | ND | Fischer 1963, p. 149 n° 1096 | Preserved Lenght: 4,1 | ND | Buyukkale, not specified | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B14 | ND | Fischer 1963, p. 149, Tab. 122 n° 1097 | Preserved Lenght: 7,2; Reconstructed Diameter: 10 ; Reconstructed Base Diameter: 6,7 | BA | Buyukkale, Building K, Room B below level IVa | Palace | 13th century BC | Anatolia |
| B15 | 403/n | Fischer 1963, p. 149, Tab. 124 n° 1098, Bittel 1957 | Preserved Lenght: 6,1 Bottom; Reconstructed Arm Diameter: 5,16; Base Area Diameter: 3,4 | BDI | Buyukkale u/17, south-west corner of building H, inside a foundation column | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B16 | ND | Fischer 1963, p. 149, Tab. 124 n° 1099 | Preserved Lenght: 3,7; Diameter Max.: 5,3 | BB | Buyukkale z-aa/11, deposit under hittite walls | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B17 | 214/a | Fischer 1963, p. 149 n° 1100, Bittel 1957 | Preserved Lenght: 3,8; Diameter: 4,4 | ND | Buyukkale w/9, Building A, level III | Palace | 13th century BC | Anatolia |
| B18 | ND | Fischer 1963, p. 149 n° 1101 | ND | BDI | Buyukkale, dirt discharge | Palace | ND | Anatolia |
| B19 | 113/l | Fischer 1963, p. 149, Tav 122 n° 1102, Bittel 1957 | Lenght: 16; Body Wall Diameter: 4,7; Arm Diameter: 5; Arm Sherd Lenght: 13 | PRI; M2 | Lower Town K/20, disturbed context of Level 4 wall, dating from level 2 (no level 3 buildings remain here) | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |

| Catalog nr. | Original Inventory nr. | Bibliography | Dimensions (in cm unless indicated otherwise) | Morphological Type | Finding Context | Context Type | Datings | Geographical Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B20 | 246/o | Fischer 1963, p. 149, Tav 124 n° 1103 | Preserved Lenght: 7,3; Height: 4; Bowl Diameter: 4,4; Arm Diameter: 3,5 | M6 | Lower Town J/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B21 | 477/o | Fischer 1963, p. 149, Tav 124 n° 1104 | Preserved Lenght: 6,4; Breaking point Arm Diameter: 2,9 | M6 | Lower Town K/21, just below the upper limit of level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B22 | 432/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1105 | Preserved Lenght: 8 | ND | Lower Town J/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B23 | 278/h-i | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tav 124 n° 1106, Bittel 1957 | Preserved Lenght: 6,7; Breaking point Arm Diameter: 3 | PRI | Lower Town K/20, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B24 | 218/p | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1107 | Preserved Lenght: 6,3 | ND | Lower Town J/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B25 | 435/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tav 124 n° 1108 | Preserved Lenght: 7; Breaking point Arm Diameter: 3,3 | PIN | Lower Town J/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B26 | 278/h-2 | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tav 124 n° 1109; Bittel 1957 | Preserved Lenght: 9; Diameter: 2,6 | PRID | Lower Town K/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B27 | 278/h-3 | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1110; Bittel 1957 | Preserved Lenght: 5,4 | ND | Lower Town, K/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B28 | 434/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1111 | Preserved Lenght: 5; Arm Diameter: 4,5 | ND | Lower Town J/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B29 | 248/h | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1112; Bittel 1957 | ND | BAS | Lower Town K/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B30 | 247/h-2 | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tab. 124 n° 1113; Bittel 1957 | Preserved Lenght: 5; Diameter: 7,5 | BA | Lower Town K/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B31 | 247/h-i | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1114; Bittel 1957 | Preserved Lenght: 5,5; Diameter: 6,5 ; Base Diameter: 3 | BAS | Lower Town K/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B32 | 281/h1-2-3 | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1115-1117; Bittel 1957 | Preserved Lenght: 4,5; 4,2; 4,0 | BB | Lower Town K/20, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B33 | 135/o, 433/o, 467/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1118-1120 | Preserved Lenght: 3,2; 1,7; 2,5 | BB | Lower Town J/20-21, Level 2 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B34 | 476/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1121 | LenghtPreserved: 7,5; Breaking point Arm Diameter: 4,3 | ND | Lower Town J/21, Level 1b | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |

| Catalog nr. | Original Inventory nr. | Bibliography | Dimensions (in cm unless indicated otherwise) | Morphological Type | Finding Context | Context Type | Datings | Geographical Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B35 | 485/o, 489/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tab. 124 n° 1122-1123 | Preserved Lenght 1122: 12,5 - Diameter 1122: 4,8; Preserved Lenght 1123: 8,4- Diameter 1123: 4,1 | BR | Lower Town J/21 h/10b-d, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B36 | 97/l | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tab. 122 e 124 n° 1124; Bittel 1957 | Lenght: 59,3; Bottom Arm Diameter: 8; Base Diameter: 4,7 | BAS, PRI, MND | Lower Town K/20 a/1, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B37 | 106/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tab. 124 n° 1125; MDOG 89 (1957) | Preserved Lenght: 14,3; Bowl Diameter: 4,6x5,1; Arm Diameter: 5,7 | M2 | Lower Town J/20 i/1 a-b, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B38 | 127/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tab. 124 n° 1126 | Preserved Lenght: 3,5; Bowl Diameter: circa 2,5 | M6 | Lower Town J/20 g/1 a, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B39 | 142/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tab. 124 n° 1127 | Preserved Lenght: 5; Bowl Diameter: circa 2; Arm Diameter: circa 2 | M3 | Lower Town J-K/19, just below the surface (Level 1) | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B40 | 430/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150, Tab. 124 n° 1128 | Preserved Lenght: 9,1; Arm Diameter: 3,1 | PIN, M6 | Lower Town J/20, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B41 | 431/o | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1129 | Preserved Lenght: 4,4 | ND | Lower Town J/20, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B42 | 114/l | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1129; Bittel 1957 | Preserved Height: 2,8 | M3a | Lower Town K/20 a/1, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B43 | 115/l | Fischer 1963, p. 150 n° 1131; Bittel 1957 | Preserved Height: 3 | ND | Lower Town K/20, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B44 | ND | Fischer 1963, p. 151 n° 1132-1133-1134 | Preserved Lenght: 1132- 5,9; 1133- 4,3; 1134- 4,5 | ND | Lower Town K/20, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B45 | 146/o | Fischer 1963, p. 151 n° 1135 | Preserved Lenght: 4,5; Max. Arm Diameter: 5,1 | ND | Lower Town J-K/19, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B46 | 202/o | Fischer 1963, p. 151, Tab. 124 n° 1136 | Preserved Lenght: 3; Reconstructed Diameter: 5,3 | BP | Lower Town J-K/19, surface finding | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B47 | 115/o | Fischer 1963, p. 151 n° 1137 | Preserved Lenght: 5,9; Diameter Max.: 5,4 | BB | Lower Town I-J/20, building just inside the walls: Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B48 | ND | Fischer 1963, p. 151 n° 1138 | Preserved Lenght: 2,9; Diameter Max: 5,7 | ND (BP?) | Lower Town K/20 b/1, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B49 | 98/o | Fischer 1963, p. 151 n° 1139 | Preserved Lenght: 6; Diameter Max: 4,15 | ND (BR?) | Lower Town J/20 f/1b, Level 1 | Domestic/Temple | 14th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B50 | 2195/g | Fischer 1963, p. 151, Tab. 124 n° 1140 | Preserved Lenght: 11,9; Arm Diameter: 5,1 | PRID, M2 | Temple 1: near the south-western corner of the templar building, in the debris above the road | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B51 | Bo 86/506 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 115, Tab. 76 n°1 | Lenght: 26; Height: 5 | M5 | Upper Town L/6-c/6, outside the remains of a building south of Temple 4 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B52 | Bo 86/245 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 76 n°2 | Lenght: 7,1; Height: 4,8 | M3 | Upper Town M/7-e/10, debris southern area of Temple 26 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B53 | Bo 86/223 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 76 n°3 | Lenght: 19,2; Height: 4,6 | PRI, M1 | Upper Town L/6-c/6, layer debris south of Temple 4 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B54 | Bo 83/776 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 76 n°4 | Lenght: 8,6; Height: 4,1 | PRI | Upper Town L/9-i/9, Temple 12 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B55 | Bo 86/115 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 76 n°5 | Lenght: 17,5; Height: 5,5 | PRI, M3 | Upper Town, debris layer in M/7-a/10 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B56 | Bo 86/189 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 76 n°6 | Lenght: 10,9; Height: 5,4 | PRID, MND | Upper Town M/7-e/10, debris of a building southern of Temple 26 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B57 | Bo 85/402 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°1 | Lenght: 6; Height: 6,3 | M4 | Upper Town, debris in L/9-d/4 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B58 | Bo 83/574 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°2 | Lenght: 5,5; Height: 6,3 | M1a | Upper Town, surface debris in L/9-h/8 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B59 | Bo 86/119 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°3 | Lenght: 8,8; Height: 5 | M1a | Upper Town, surface debris in M/7-a/10 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B60 | Bo 85/127 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°4 | Lenght: 7,8; Height: 3,1 | PRI, M5 | Upper Town, Temple 20 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B61 | Bo 83/1004 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°5 | Lenght: 7,5; Height: 3,5 | PRI | Upper Town M/9-e/9, rock debris of House 18 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B62 | Bo 83/469 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°6 | Height: 3,2; Diameter: 2,9 | M1 | Upper Town L/9-e/5, from Temple 15 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B63 | Bo 84/12 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°7 | Lenght: 13,5; Height: 6 | PRI, M5 | Upper Town M/8-b/3, southern cella of Temple 19 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B64 | Bo 83/462 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°8 | Lenght: 5,3; Diameter: 3,7 | M3 | Upper Town L/9-e/5, from Temple 15 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B65 | Bo 86/350 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°9 | Lenght: 6,7; Height: 4,7 | MND | Upper Town, surface debris of L/9-d/5 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B66 | Bo 86/350 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°10 | Lenght: 5,5; Height: 3,1 | PRI | Upper Town, water basin in L/6-h/6 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B67 | 83/456 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°11 | Lenght: 5,4; Height: 3,1 | ND | Upper Town L/9-e/5, from Temple 15 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B68 | Bo 86/210 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°12 | Lenght: 9,7; Height: 3 | PRI, M3 | Upper Town, water basin in L/6-i/6 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B69 | Bo 80/54 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°13 | Lenght: 8; Diameter: 3,2 | PRI | Upper Town, from "ancient cella" in L/7-h/6 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B70 | Bo 83/759 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°14 | Lenght: 8,2; Diameter: 5,4 | PRI | Upper Town M/8-b/3, from Temple 19 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B71 | Bo 83/983 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°15 | Lenght: 5,2; Height: 5 | ND | Upper Town M/9-b/8, from debris of Temple 18 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B72 | Bo 86/328 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°16 | Lenght: 3,6; Height: 2,7 | M4 | Upper Town L/6-c/6, backfill south of Temple 4 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B73 | Bo 86/244 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 77 n°17 | Lenght: 5,3; Height: 2,9 | M6 | Upper Town M/7-e/10, backfill south of Temple 26 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B74 | Bo 83/770 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°1 | Lenght: 9,1; Height: 6,1 | ND | Upper Town, from Temple 12 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B75 | Bo 83/472 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°2 | Lenght: 6,9; Height: 4,1 | M4 | Upper Town, from Temple 15 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B76 | Bo 83/468 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°3 | Lenght: 5,8; Height: 4,6 | M1 | Upper Town, from Temple 15 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B77 | Bo 83/907 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°4 | Height: 6,3; Diameter: 4,8 | M4 | Upper Town, from Temple 15 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B78 | Bo 80/17 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°5 | Lenght: 4,3; Height: 4,1 | M4 | Upper Town, debris layer in L/7-i/7 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B79 | Bo 83/239 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°6 | Lenght: 5,3; Diameter: 3,1 | ND | Upper Town, surface debris in L/8-c/5 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B80 | Bo 83/903 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°7 | Lenght: 8,1; Width: 6,3 | BB | Upper Town, from Temple 12 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B81 | Bo 86/159 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°8 | Lenght: 10,9; Diameter: 5,7 | PRI | Upper Town M/6-a/1, backfill south of Temple 26 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B82 | Bo 86/261 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°9 | Lenght: 5,1; Height: 4,1 | M4 | Upper Town, backfill of M/7-f/8 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B83 | Bo 83/772 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°10 | Height: 5,5; Diameter: 6,2 | M1a | Upper Town, from Temple 12 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B84 | Bo 86/325 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°11 | Lenght: 2,7; Width: 2,2 | M1 | Upper Town L/6-c/7, backfill south of Temple 4 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B85 | Bo 83/775 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°12 | Lenght: 4,1; Diameter: 4,1 | PRI | Upper Town, from Temple 12 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B86 | Bo 86/397 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°13 | Lenght:16,7; Diameter: 4,1 | BDI | Upper Town L/6-b/7, backfill south of Temple 4 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B87 | Bo 83/908 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°14 | Lenght: 4,5; Diameter: 5 | PRI | Upper Town, from Temple 15 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B88 | Bo 86/218 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°15 | Lenght: 3,7; Diameter: 2,6 | PRI | Upper Town M/7-e/10, remains of the buildings in Houses 24-30 area, south of Temple 26 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B89 | Bo 86/308 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°16 | Lenght: 5,7; Width: 3,4 | ND | Upper Town M/7-e/10, remains of the buildings in Houses 24-30 area, south of Temple 26 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B90 | Bo 83/467 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°17 | Height: 5,5; Diameter: 5,5 | BAS | Upper Town, from Temple 15 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B91 | Bo 80/83 | Parzinger-Sanz 1992, p. 116, Tab. 78 n°18 | Lenght: 5; Height: 4,8 | ND | Upper Town L/8-e/1, debris layer | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B92 | ND | Seeher 2002, pp. 60-70 | ND | ND | Upper Town, Southern Pond 1 | Temple/ND | 13th century BC | Anatolia |
| B93 | 82/e | Neve 1984, pp. 368, 370 | ND | ND | Upper Town, Temple 7 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B94 | ND | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 145, Tab. 48 n°1 | ND | BAS | Upper Town, Temple 6 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B95 | ND | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 145, Tab. 48 n°2 | ND | ND | Upper Town, Temple 6 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B96 | 81/18 | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 145, Tab. 48 n°3 | ND | PRI, M2 | Upper Town, Temple 6, Room 34 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B97 | 79/211 | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 145, Tab. 48 n°4 | ND | BAS | Upper Town, Level 3-4 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B98 | ND | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 145, Tab. 48 n°9 | ND | BND | Upper Town, Temple 6, Room 8 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| B99 | ND | Müller-Karpe 1988, p. 145, Tab. 48 n°10 | ND | BR | Upper Town, Temple 7 | Temple | 13th-12th century BC | Anatolia |
| BE01 | ND | Mellaart 1995, p. 63; Tab. 41 n° 1 | ND | PRI, | Level Ib | ND | Late Bronze Age | West Anatolia |
| BE02 | ND | Mellaart 1995, p. 63; Tab. 41 n° 2 | ND | BDI | Level Ib | ND | Late Bronze Age | West Anatolia |
| BE03 | ND | Mellaart 1995, p. 63; Tab. 41 n° 3 | ND | BA | Level Ib | ND | Late Bronze Age | West Anatolia |
| BH01 | ND | Omura 2004, p.39, Fig. 64.6 p. 58; Mielke 2007, p. 160 | ND | M8 | Survey | ND | Late Bronze Age | Anatolia |
| DM01 | H5-1 | Üyümez, Koçak e Ilaslı 2010, pp. 943-944, Fig. 2-3 p- 949 | ND | M7 | Middle Bronze Age Necropolis (?), Square H5 | Funerary | Middle Bronze Age (17th century BC?) | West Anatolia |
| E01 | ND | Mellink 1970, p. 161 | ND | ND | Hittite Level | ND | Late Bronze Age (?) | Anatolia |
| EN01 | 97 4-1 1301, A33 | Courtois et al. 1986, pp. 44-45, Tab. XXX n°8 | Preserved Lenght: 28,6; Diameter Max.: 8; Wrist Diameter: 2,8; Base Diameter: 5,9; Wrist Opening Diameter: 1,5 | BA; PRI; M7 | Grave 57 | Funerary | LCI-LCIIA (17th-12th century BC) | Cyprus |
| EN02 | 97 4-1 1108, A32 | Åström 1967, p. 8, n° 5; Courtois et al. 1986, p. 41 | Lenght: 61; Bowl Diameter: 3,7; Base Diameter: 6,7 | BA; PRI; M2 | Grave 69 | Funerary | 15th-14th century BC | Cyprus |
| EN03 | A 1423 | Åström 1972a, p.205 | Lenght : 62 | ND | Grave 69 | Funerary | 15th-14th century BC | Cyprus |
| EN04 | AM 2355 | Courtois et al. 1986, p. 27-28, Tab. XXX n° 9 | Lenght: 67,5; Diameter Max.: 5,1; Bowl Diameter: 3,7 | BP; PRID; M3 | Grave 2 | Funerary | 14th century BC | Cyprus |
| EN05 | ND | Courtois et al. 1986, p. 50 | ND | ND | Grave 7 | Funerary | LCII (14th century BC) | Cyprus |
| EN06 | 97 4-1 1320, A34 | Åström 1972a, p.205 | Bowl Diameter: 3,9; Wrist Diameter: 3,1; Wrist Opening Diameter: 1,1 | ND | ND | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| EN07 | ND | Åström 1972a, p.205 | ND | ND | ND | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| GV01 | ND | French 1965, pp. 184, 197, Fig. 4.1 | ND | ND | Survey | ND | ND | Rough Cilicia |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| GV02 | ND | French 1965, pp. 184-185, 198, Fig. 5.17 | ND | ND | Survey | ND | ND | Rough Cilicia |
| GV03 | ND | French 1965, pp. 184, 201, Fig. 11.28 | ND | ND | Survey | ND | ND | Rough Cilicia |
| HST01 | ND | Eriksson 1993, p. 260 nr. 1034-1038 | Lenght: 5 | ND | Area 22, F 6031 | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| HST02 | ND | Eriksson 1993, p. 260 nr. 1034-1038 | ND | ND | Tr. 1, F 1 | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| HST03 | ND | Eriksson 1993, p. 260 nr. 1034-1038 | ND | ND | Area 8, F 1317 | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| HST04 | ND | Eriksson 1993, p. 260 nr. 1034-1038 | ND | ND | Area 8, F 1530 | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| HST05 | ND | Eriksson 1993, p. 260 nr. 1034-1038 | ND | ND | Area 21, F 5060 | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| K01 | ND | Griffin 1980, p. 89, Tab. 10 H | Lenght: 5,3; Base Diameter: 3,2; Preserved Diameter: 6,1 | BAS | Fase J, Layer CXXX, N11 [1-4](3) | ND | 14th-12th century BC | East Anatolia |
| K02 | ND | Griffin 1980, p. 88, Tab. 10 I | Base Diameter: 6 | BA | Fase H, Layer CX, U 13 [3-4] (6) | ND | 16th-15th century BC | East Anatolia |
| K03 | ND | Griffin 1980, p. 88, Tab. 10 E | Lenght: 7,6; Base Diameter: 6 | BA | Fase E-I, O17 [2](2) | ND | ND | East Anatolia |
| K04 | ND | Griffin 1980, p. 88, Tab. 18 B | Lenght: 5,5; Base Diameter: 7 | BA | Fase J, Layer CXXX (?), O 21 NE (3) | ND | 14th-12th century BC | East Anatolia |
| K05 | Krct 73/97 | Ertem 1988, pp.18, Cat. N° 31 | Lenght: 7,2, Diameter Max.: 6,2; Bowl Diameter: 3,7 | PRID, M2a | L-10, inside room n° 7 | ND | Hittite Period | East Anatolia |
| K06 | Krct 74/28 | Ertem 1988, pp.18, Cat. N° 32 | Preserved Lenght: 7,6; Diameter Max.: 3,4; Bowl Diameter: 3,9 | PND, M2 | L-17 I.tb 400-410 | ND | ND | East Anatolia |
| K07 | Krct 74/15 | Ertem 1988, pp.18, Cat. N° 33 | Preserved Lenght: 4,6 | M3 | M-20 IV.tb.(III)-610 | ND | Hittite Period | East Anatolia |
| K08 | Krct 76/64 | Ertem 1988, pp.18, Cat. N° 34 | Preserved Lenght: 9,3; Diameter Max.: 3,7 | BB | N-19 I.tb. -330 | ND | ND | East Anatolia |
| KA01 | ND | Mühlenbruch 2014, p. 115-117, Tab. 30 n°3 | ND | ND | Building B, Level 4 | Administrative (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KA02 | ND | Mühlenbruch 2014, p. 115-117, Tab. 30 n°4 | ND | ND | Building B, Level 4 | Administrative (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KA03 | ND | Mühlenbruch 2014, p. 115-117, Tab. 30 n°5 | ND | PND | Building B, Level 4 | Administrative (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KA04 | Kf 210 | Mühlenbruch 2014, p. 115-117, Tab. 30 n°6 | ND | PND, M1 | Building B, Level 4 | Administrative (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KA05 | ND | Mühlenbruch 2014, p. 115-117, Tab. 30 n°7 | ND | PRI | Building B, Level 4 | Administrative (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KA06 | Kf 55.124 | Mühlenbruch 2014, p. 115-117, Tab. 31 n°1 | ND | PRI, M1a | Building B, Level 4 | Administrative (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KA07 | Kf 101 | Mühlenbruch 2014, p. 115-117, Tab. 31 n°2 | ND | MND | Building B, Level 4 | Administrative (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KA08 | Kf 146 | Mühlenbruch 2014, p. 115-117, Tab. 31 n°3 | ND | M1a | Building B, Level 4 | Administrative (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KB01 | 96 2-1 64, A8 | www.britishmuseum.org | Preserved Lenght: 7,2; Bowl Diameter: 4; Wrist Diameter: 4,2 | ND | Grave 102 | Funerary | End of 14th century BC | Cyprus |
| KB02 | 54-41-16 | www.penn.museum | Preserved Lenght: 9,6; Diameter Max.: 4,1 | ND | Grave 16 | Funerary | ND | Cyprus |
| KB03 | 1926 3-24 1, A9 | www.britishmuseum.org | Preserved Lenght: 11,3; Wrist Diameter: 3,15; Opening Diameter: 1,2 | ND | ND | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| KI01 | ND | Baker et al. 1995, pp. 180-182, Fig. 17 n° 1; Kibaroğlu *et al.* 2019, p. 415 | ND | PRI | I20, Level III, Destruction phase | ND | 15th-second half 14th century BC | Cilicia |
| KI02 | ND | Baker et al. 1995, pp. 180-182, Fig. 17 n° 2; Kibaroğlu *et al.* 2019, p. 415 | ND | BR | J20, Level III, Destruction phase | ND | 15th-second half 14th century BC | Cilicia |
| KI03 | ND | Baker et al. 1995, pp. 180-182, Fig. 17 n° 3; Kibaroğlu *et al.* 2019, p. 415 | ND | MND | I20, Level III, Destruction phase | ND | 15th-second half 14th century BC | Cilicia |
| KI04 | ND | Symington 2001, pp. 169-170; p. 179 Fig. 6; Kibaroğlu *et al.* 2019, p. 415 | ND | M3 | Level III, Destruction phase | ND | 15th-second half 14th century BC | Cilicia |
| KI05 | ND | Symington 2001, pp. 169-170; p. 179 Fig. 6; Kibaroğlu *et al.* 2019, p. 415 | ND | MND | Level III, Destruction phase | ND | 15th-second half 14th century BC | Cilicia |
| KI06 | ND | Symington 2001, pp. 169-170; p. 179 Fig. 6; Kibaroğlu *et al.* 2019, p. 415 | ND | BAS | Level III, Destruction phase | ND | 15th-second half 14th century BC | Cilicia |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KK01 | ND | Omura 1999, p. 219; Fig. 9 n° 1 | ND | M4 | Layer IIIa | ND | 15th-second half 14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KU01 | KU 97/18 | Mielke 2007, pp. 42; Tab. 80 n°1 | Bowl Diameter: 4,4 | MND | Great Building, debris of Level III | Palace/ Administrative (?) | End 14th-half 13th century BC | Anatolia |
| KU02 | 93/758 | Mielke 2007, pp. 42; Tab. 80 n°2 | Bowl Diameter: 4,5 | MND | Filling of House 2, Level III | Domestic | End 14th-half 13th century BC | Anatolia |
| KU03 | KU 95/263 | Mielke 2007, pp. 42; Tab. 80 n°3 | ND | M5 | Great Building, debris of Level III | Palace/ Administrative (?) | End 16th-half14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KU04 | KU 95/257 | Mielke 2007, pp. 42; Tab. 80 n°4 | ND | M5 | Great Building, debris of Level III | Palace/ Administrative (?) | End 16th-half14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KU05 | 95/579 | Mielke 2007, pp. 42; Tab. 80 n°5 | ND | MND | Outside Great Building, Level III | Palace/ Administrative (?) | End 16th-half14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KU06-KU07 | KU 95/257- KU 95/257 | Mielke 2007, pp. 42; Tab. 80 n°6-7 | ND | PRI | Great Building, debris of Level III | Palace/ Administrative (?) | End 16th-half14th century BC | Anatolia |
| KU08 | 95/231 | Mielke 2007, pp. 42; Tab. 80 n°8 | ND | M8 | Debris of Level III | ND | End 16th-half14th century BC | Anatolia |
| M01 | Mşt 76/56 | Özgüç 1982, p. 102, Tab. 47 n° 4a-b | Lenght: 42; Diameter: 5 | PRI, M1a | Hitte I Level, Three Rooms House | Domestic | 13th century BC | Anatolia |
| M02 | | Özgüç 1982, p. 102, Fig. 35 | Lenght: 22; Diameter: 5 | BP | Hitte I Level, Three Rooms House | Domestic | 13th century BC | Anatolia |
| MR01 | 98 12-1 122, A51 | Åström 1967, p. 8 fig.3; Åström 1972a, p.205 | Lenght 64,5; Bowl Diameter: 3,8; Wrist Diameter: 3,4; Base Diameter: 5,4 | BDI; PRI; M2 | Grave 7 | Funerary | Half 15th-beginning 12th century BC | Cyprus |
| ND01 | A 1424 | Eriksson 1993, p. 261 nr. 1042 | Preserved Lenght: 6,2; Dm coppa: 3,3 | ND | ND | ND | ND | Cyprus |
| OS01 | Building A, N°1 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 468 | Preserved Lenght: 4; Diameter: 3,5 | ND | Building A | Palace | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS02 | Building A, N°2 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 468 | Preserved Lenght: 12; Diameter: 6,7 | ND | Building A | Palace | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS03 | Building A, N°3 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 469 | Preserved Lenght: 7,5 | ND | Building A | Palace | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS04 | Building A, N°4 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 469 | Preserved Lenght: 8 | ND | Building A | Palace | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS05 | Building A, N°5 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 470 | Preserved Lenght: 5 | ND | Building A | Palace | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS06 | Building B, N°1 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 470 | ND | ND | Building B | Administrative | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS07 | Building C, N°1 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 471 | Preserved Lenght: 9; Diameter: 4,2 | ND | Building C | Temple | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |

| Catalog nr. | Original Inventory nr. | Bibliography | Dimensions (in cm unless indicated otherwise) | Morphological Type | Finding Context | Context Type | Datings | Geographical Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OS08 | Building C, N°2 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 471 | Preserved Lenght: 12; Diameter: 6,3 | ND | Building C | Temple | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS09 | Building C, N°3 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 472 | Preserved Lenght: 10,5; Diameter: 5,5 | ND | Building C | Temple | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS10 | Building C, N°4 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 472 | Preserved Lenght: 5; Diameter: 6,2 | BDI | Building C | Temple | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS11 | Building C, N°5 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 473 | Preserved Lenght: 4; Diameter: 4,1 | BR | Building C | Temple | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS12 | Building C, N°6 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 473 | Preserved Lenght: 3; Diameter: 2,5 | BB | Building C | Temple | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS13 | Building D, N°1 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 474 | Preserved Lenght: 35,5; Diameter Max.: 4 | PRI, M3 | Building D | Palace (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS14 | Building D, N°2 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 475 | Preserved Lenght: 12,5; Diameter Max.: 2,4 | PRI, M3 | Building D | Palace (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS15 | Building D, N°3 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 476 | Preserved Lenght: 21,5; Diameter: 6/7 | BAS | Building D | Palace (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS16 | Building D, N°4 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 476 | Preserved Lenght: 16,5; Diameter: 6/7 | BR | Building D | Palace (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS17 | Building D, N°5 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 477 | Preserved Lenght: 13; Diameter:3,6 | ND | Building D | Palace (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS18 | Building D, N°6 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 477 | Lenghtecca Preserved: 5; Diameter: 3,6 | PRI | Building D | Palace (?) | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| OS19 | Ağilönü, N°1 | Kiymet and Süel 1999, p. 478 | Preserved Lenght: 24; Diameter: 8,5 | ND | Ağilönü | Temple | 15th-14th century BC | Anatolia |
| P01 | ND | Dupré 1983, pp. 26, 53, Tab. 41 n°250 | LenghtPreserved: 19; Base Diameter: 2,8 | BAS | Area IV, H2; Level V | Administrative (?) | 14th-12th century BC sec. a.C | Anatolia |
| TA01 | ND | Goldman 1956, p. 218, Fig. 328 n°1229 | Preserved Lenght: 7,3; Preserved Diameter: 7,3 | BB | Hittite Temple, Late Bronze Age IIa | Temple | Half 14th-second half 13th century BC | Plain Cilicia |
| TA02 | ND | Goldman 1956, p. 218, Fig. 328 n°1230 | Preserved Lenght: 16,2; Preserved Diameter: 3,8 | ND | Hittite Temple, Late Bronze Age IIa | Temple | Half 14th-second half 13th century BC | Plain Cilicia |
| TP01 | ND | Duprè 1983, p. 26, 12 | ND | ND | | ND | ND | East Anatolia |
| TR01 | ND | Blegen et al. 1953, p. 282; Tab. 402 n° 12 | Preserved Diameter: 5,8 | ND | Square J 7-8, Level VIg | ND/Domestic (?) | End 14th century BC | Coastal Anatolia |
| TR02 | ND | Blegen et al. 1953, p. 282; Tab. 402 n° 13 | Preserved Diameter: 8 | ND | Square J 7-8, Level VIg | ND/Domestic (?) | End 14th century BC | Coastal Anatolia |

| Catalog nr. | Original Inventory nr. | Bibliography | Dimensions (in cm unless indicated otherwise) | Morphological Type | Finding Context | Context Type | Datings | Geographical Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UG01 | AO 122230 | Schaeffer 1949, p. 210, Fig. 87 n° 6 | LenghtPreserved: 12; Diameter Max.: 5 | PRI, M2 | Trench IV, near topographical point 55 | ND | Half 14th-first half 13th century BC | Levant |
| UG02 | P. 705 | Astrom 1972b, p. 743 | ND | ND | ND | ND | ND | Levant |
| UG03 | ND | Courtois et al. 1986, p. 163 n° 371 | ND | ND | South of the Acropolis, 118 E area | ND | ND | Levant |
| YU01 | ND | Manuelli 2009, p. 259-260, Fig. 2 | ND | PRI, M3 | Level IX | ND | Beginning 15th century BC | Plain Cilicia |

**Fig. 1:** Arm-shaped vessel from Maroni (modified from © The Trustees of the British Museum)

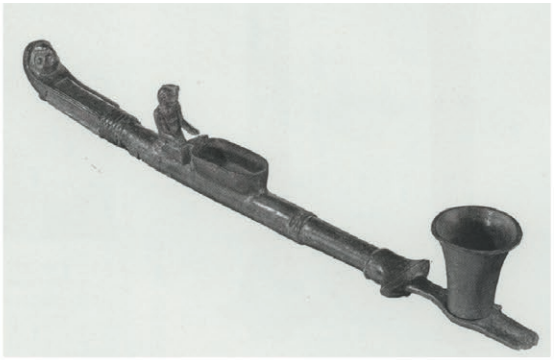


**Fig. 2:** Egyptian incense-burner (modified from Laisney 2009: Tab. 34, Fig. 3)

**Fig. 3:** Painting of egyptian incense-burners (modified from Ertem 1988: Fig. 1)

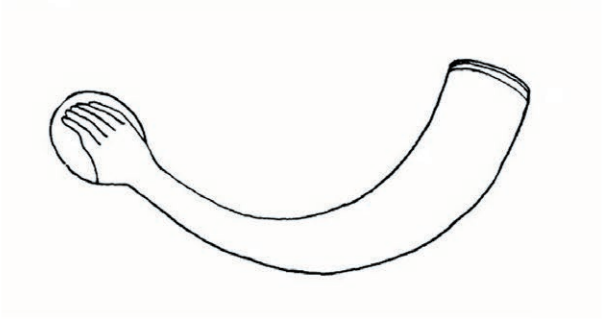


**Fig. 4:** Bovine-horn vessel in the shape of an arm and a hand holding a bowl (modified from Amiran 1962: Fig. 3, 2)

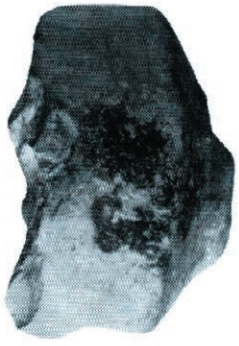


**Fig. 5:** Button-base type. Cat. B16 (modified from Fischer 1963: Tav. 124 n. 1099)

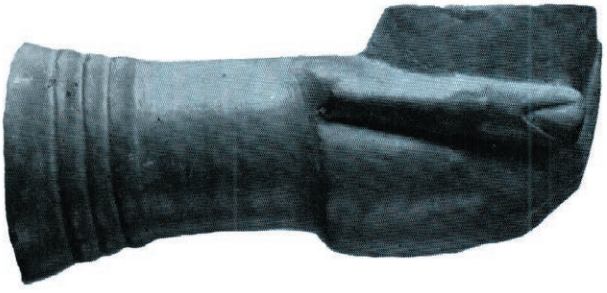


**Fig. 6:** Raised-ring decoration type of the wrist. Cat. B37 (modified from Fischer 1963: Tav. 124 n. 1125)

**Fig. 7:** Spaced-rings wrist decoration. Cat. B26 (modified from Fischer 1963: Tav 124 n. 1109)

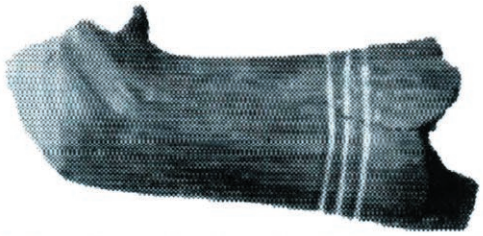


**Fig. 8:** Incised-rings wrist decoration. Cat. B40 (modified from Fischer 1963: Tav. 124 n. 1128)

**Fig. 9:** M2a hand type. Cat. K05 (modified from Ertem 1988: Fig. 31)

**Fig. 10:** M3a hand type. Cat B80 (modified from Parzinger-Sanz 1992: Tav. 78 n. 7)

**Fig. 11:** M7 hand type. Cat. DM01 (modified from Üyümez *et al.* 2010: 949, Fig. 2.3)

**Fig. 12:** M7 hand type. Cat EN01 (modified from © The Trustees of the British Museum)

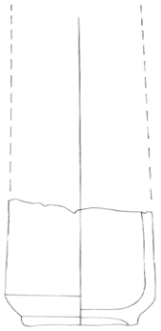


**Fig. 13:** Ring base type. Cat. BE03 (modified from Mellaart 1995: Tav. 41 n. 3)

**Fig. 14:** Narrow ring base type. Cat. P01 (modified from Dupré 1983: Tav. 41 n. 250

**Fig. 15:** Disc base type. Cat. BE02 (modified from Mellaart 1995: Tav 41 n. 2)

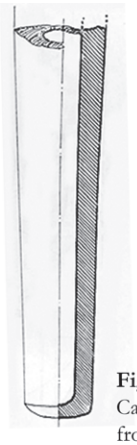


**Fig. 16:** Flat base type. Cat. M02 (modified from Özgüç 1982: 102, Fig. 35)

**Fig. 17:** Rounded base type. Cat. KI02 (modified from Baker *et al.* 1995: 180, Fig. 17 n. 2)

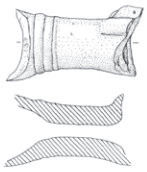


**Fig. 18:** Raised-Ring decoration type. Cat. B69 (modified from Parzinger-Sanz 1992: Tav. 77 n. 13)

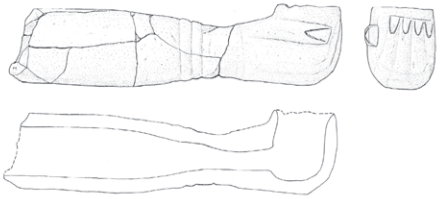


**Fig. 19:** M1 hand type. Cat. B53 (modified from Parzinger-Sanz 1992: Tav 76 n. 3)

**Fig. 20:** M1a hand type. Cat. B58 (modified from Parzinger-Sanz 1992: Tav 77 n. 2)

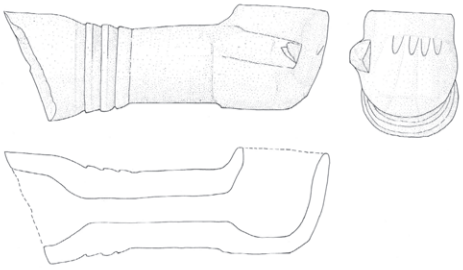


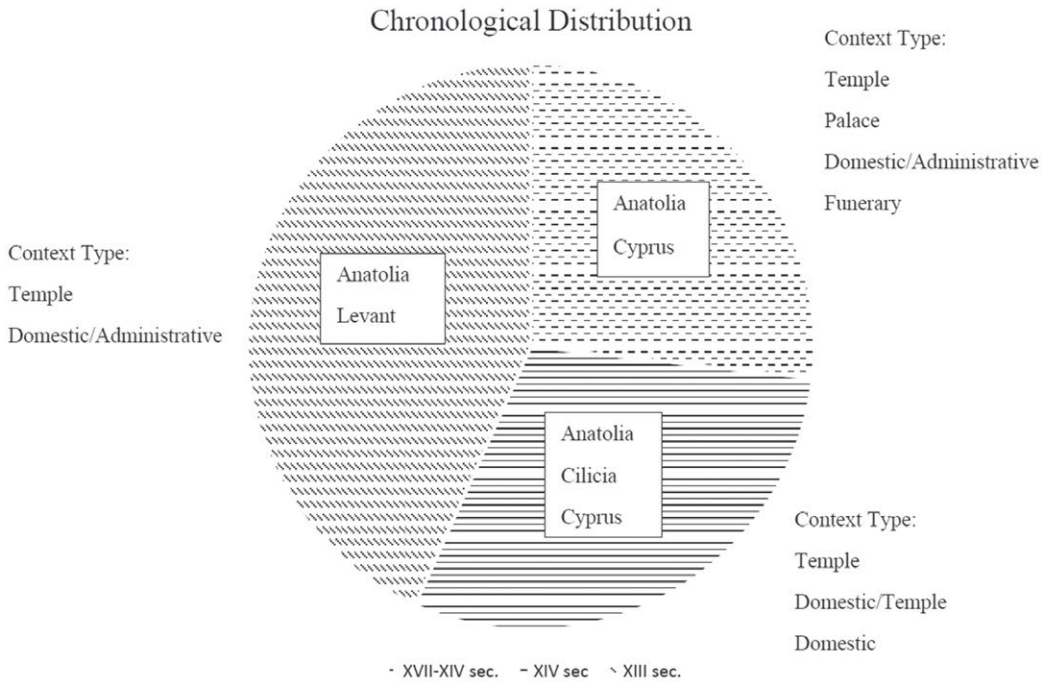
**Fig. 21:** M3 hand type. Cat. B55 (modified from Parzinger-Sanz 1992: Tav 76 n. 5)

**Fig. 22:** M4 hand type. Cat. B77 (modified from Parzinger-Sanz 1992: Tav 78 n. 4)

**Fig. 23:** M5 hand type. Cat. B63 (modified from Parzinger-Sanz 1992: Tav 77 n. 7)

**Fig. 24:** M6 hand type. Cat. B73 (modified from Parzinger-Sanz 1992: Tav 77 n. 17)

**Fig. 25:** M8 hand type. Cat. KU08 (modified from Mielke 2007: Tab. 80 n. 8)




**Tab.2:** Chronological distribution and production areas chart

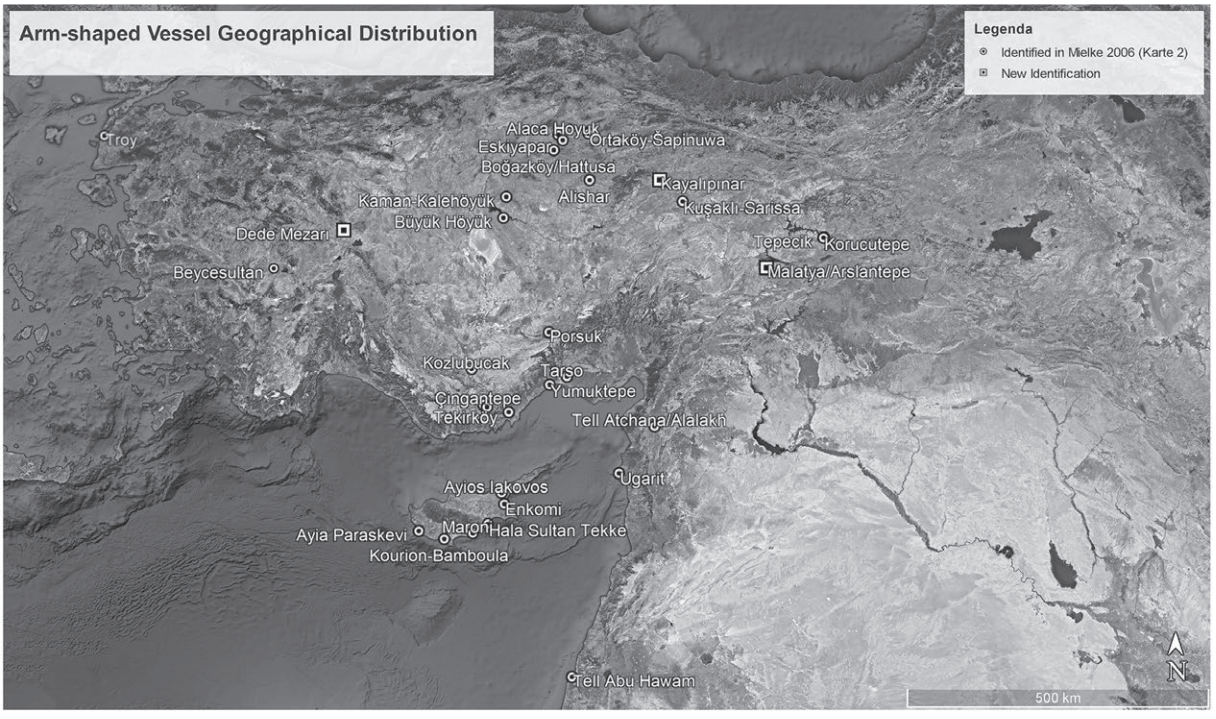



**Table 3:** Arm-Shaped Vessel geographical distribution map

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**Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

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# The EB-MB Transition at Tell Afis: a Reappraisal

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**Abstract**. The passage from the 3rd to the 2nd millennium BC in Inner Syria is still a matter for debate both in historical and archaeological studies. This is only partially due to lack of evidence: it is much the way one interprets the extant evidence that affects the discourse, emphasizing a break or a transition, and viewing this time as a period of crisis or not. In this article relevant archaeological evidence from the site of Tell Afis is revised and some new data, including 14C dates, are offered in order to resume discussion on the question. Focus will be specifically on pottery: by recovering various strands of development in the local pottery repertoires from the Early Bronze to the Middle Bronze, the article aims to contribute to the reconstruction of this archaeological phase at a regional level as well.

**Keywords.** Inner Syria, Tell Afis, EB-MB transition, continuity, pottery.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

On November 29th, 2018, a small group of scholars gathered at the University of Florence to confront and discuss the pottery repertoire of inner Syria between the second half of the 3rd to the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. The title of the meeting – *From the kingdom of Ebla to the kingdom of Yamkhad: data from the pottery repertoire* – made the deliberate choice to refer to the kingdoms of Ebla and Yamkhad, two historical and geographical entities at the same time (taken, admittedly with some liberty), to provide both the spatial and temporal scope for the enquiry and stimulate discussion about possible political and historical implications.[1] The sites involved, Afis, Ebla, Shiyukh Tahtani, Tuqan, Tilmen, Zincirli, represented just a small but significant selection of settlements known for the period of the Early and Middle Bronze Ages in the region which could

[1] The exact extension of the kingdom of Ebla at its apogee is still a matter of debate: see Bonechi 2016: fig. 1; Archi 2021. On the kingdom of Yamkhad, of which the capital was Aleppo, see still Klengel 1992: 44-64.

offer data to start a real engagement with the evidence[2] and eventually set the stage for a larger debate involving a greater number of sites.[3] The inclusion of sites such as Shiyukh Tahtani, Tilmen, Zincirli was meant as an attempt to extend our inquiry even beyond the possible extents of the above mentioned kingdoms, in order to explore connections to the north and the east and counterbalance the more heavily exploited, west- (i.e. 'Amuq) and south-oriented (i.e. Hama), perspectives.

From the point of view of pottery traditions and assemblages, it has to be said that some phases within that lapse of time, such as the EB IVB and full MB, are relatively well established, both at a local and at a regional level. The definition of the passage from one period to the other remains more uncertain.[4] The question of the transition between the Early Bronze and Middle Bronze has been the subject of discussion, especially during the late '90s and early 2000s; in relation to the site of Tell Afis, in particular, the question has been addressed in a preliminary way on a number of occasions, especially focusing on materials associated or next to a large pottery kiln uncovered at the site, kiln A (Felli, Merluzzi 2002; 2005; 2008; Mazzoni, Felli 2007). The reason for resuming the issue here lies in the need for an update in light of the most recently published excavation reports with data from the last excavations in Syria 2007 – 2010. It is also in response to the stimulus provided by a number of focused articles on the topic on behalf of scholars directly engaged in the field in the area (*inter alii* Iamoni 2014; Schwartz 2017; D'Andrea 2018a, b; 2019a, b).

In the following pages I shall present the evidence from Tell Afis, integrating the most recent excavations and the results of relevant 14C analyses, in an effort to provide a better definition of the assemblage characterizing the passage between the 3rd and the 2nd millennium at the site. On the occasion of the workshop I circulated a list of individual ceramic types which in my view are significant because their period of attestation bridges – at Afis at least – the crucial period under examination. Emphasis will be thus on morphology: it is hoped that these data will stimulate further investigations of ceramic repertoires from other sites.

## 2. FOCUS ON THE TRANSITION: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF TELL AFIS

Tell Afis is located in the agriculturally rich Jazr plain of northwestern Syria (Fig. 1). It is just north of Ebla, certainly the main regional centre during both the EB and the MB periods. Perhaps on account of its lesser role, Afis did not seem to experience a disruption at the end of the EB period like that postulated for Ebla (see Matthiae 2020; 2021: 18, 145). Nevertheless, Afis allows for a diachronic perspective needed to appreciate possible settlement discontinuity (Schwartz 2007: 48) since it provides a long stratigraphic sequence spanning the period under enquiry and the periods before and after. The situation is not ideal from the point of view of sampling, however: most information from both the EB and MB periods derive from peripheral areas of the settlement, and thus no data are presently available on the urban layout in the central part in these phases. We know quite well that the MB settlement was as large as the actual tell, composed of an acropolis and a lower town (Mazzoni 2005: 9). The size of the EB settlement is less clear, since 3rd millennium levels have only been substantially exposed in area E3, on the western side of the acropolis mound. The most recent excavations in area N on the eastern slope of the acropolis mound, however, have provided evidence suggesting that the 3rd millennium acropolis was at least as wide as it is nowadays (Fig. 2).[5] Moreover, a *tannur* with associated EB IV materials retrieved in excavations in area B located in the northern part of the fortifications of the Lower Town may be evidence for the existence of a lower town already in this period (Mazzoni 2002a: 15, fig. 6.11-14). Relying on a minimum scale, i.e. the excavated area

[2] See the most welcome articles by Marta D'Andrea and Agnese Vacca in this volume.

[3] A first outcome in this direction has been the organization of a workshop at the 12th ICAANE of Bologna in 2021 by the title "Entangled Narratives: Regional Developments and Inter-Regional Connections during the 3rd Millennium BC in the Northern Levant" along with A. Vacca, M. D'Andrea and G. Mouammar.

[4] For a quite recent overview on excavations of EB sites see Ascalone, D'Andrea 2013; for a general synthesis on the MB period see last Morandi 2013.

[5] See Affanni, di Michele 2007: 11, 12.

E3, we realize that the existing data could be changed by future investigations in other parts of the tell. However, assuming that the history of a single area is significant per se, the resulting picture of continuity allows at least to argue reasonably that no break in the occupation at the site took place in the period in question.

Knowledge about the history of occupation of this part of the acropolis in the EB age (Afis IV) has been greatly expanded thanks to excavations in the area in the years 2006-2010 (Fig. 3). Now an articulated sequence spanning at least EB IVB-EB III has been brought to light in the northern portion of the area (Mazzoni 2013a: 95; Mazzoni in press). The industrial character of the area, already revealed by the excavations of a large EB-MB working area connected to pottery manufacturing (Fig. 4) and food production activities in the southern portion of area E3, is now verified for the earlier phases as well, thus confirming earlier suspicions (Felli, Mazzoni 2007: 212; Grifoni, Spinazzi Lucchesi in press). Investigations in both sectors of the area in the last campaigns at the site have provided a better understanding of its wide extension and complex articulation. The sequence of events in the area can be reconstructed as follows: the erection of the fortification wall M. 1115 in the MB period (Afis V) erased part of the stratification underneath, initially preventing the recovery of traces of occupation dated between the latest EB level reached (level 17a: Giannessi 1998: 103, figs 6, the section above, 11; Mazzoni 1998: 32, 33) and the MB rooms brought to light to the east of the fortification wall, most likely part of the contemporary MB settlement (L. 1110, 1120 and 1122: Giannessi 1998: 104, figs 13, 15.2). On the basis of the material recovered, this latter settlement should be dated to the end of MB I or beginning of MB II, at the latest (Mazzoni 1998: 35). It is impossible to say when the earlier city wall M. 1117 was built, but apparently its construction cut one of the last floors of the EB IVB rooms (Giannessi 1998: figs 6, section above, 11), thus indicating at least a slightly later date for its construction. Presumably the wall was still functioning until a change in political circumstances possibly urged a new construction. In this outer part of the acropolis, a domestic quarter with open-areas for industrial installations linked to pottery production and food preparation continued through the end of the third millennium and into the beginning of the following second millennium (Afis IV-V).[6] As already pointed out, at some point in time, activities ceased in the working area and it was abandoned. With the erection of wall 1115 and a further stretch to the south (Afis V), the space immediately inside was given a different arrangement (Felli 2000: 12, figs 7, 8.1; Felli, Merluzzi 2002: 25, fig. 16; 2008: 103, fig. 10). These works were part of a large initiative to strenghten the whole fortification system of the town, also attested on the opposite part of the tell, in area N (Affanni, Di Michele 2007). This construction probably took place around the same time that the lower town wall was built, this indicated by the dating of the graves found both beneath and above the rampart in area B, mostly ascribed to MB I, apart from one dated to the initial MB II (Repiccioli, Giannessi, Aletta 2002: figs 4, 5.2; Mazzoni 2002a: 14, fig. 6.1-4; Aletta 2005: 28, 31).

The results of the most recent excavations underneath the "transitional" structures (Felli in press) have reached lower levels which are characterized by materials which correspond well with the local EV IVB repertoire. Such findings confirm the existence of a separate phase on its own.

In particular, an earlier firing installation dug underneath kiln A itself (Fig. 5.1) has provided a quantity of late EB IVB materials, including Smeared Wash sherds, a triangular ledge rim pot and a rare example of a Simple Ware collared bowl (Fig. 5.2-5). The latter, with a smooth carination and probable plain flaring rim (Fig. 5.4) is most likely an early attestation of the later MB(?) type (cfr Ansari: Suleiman, Gritsenko 1987, tav. I.26).[7] Interestingly the latter is still found at Afis at the beginning of MB (Fig. 5.6), evolving into more sharply carinated versions.[8] In CqIV18-19, beneath the floors of two rooms in the southernmost part of the fortification dated to the MB I (US 1890 and 1877: Felli, Merluzzi 2002: fig. 16), at least two superimposed floors have been brought to light, these directly above a level clearly associated to late EB IVB pottery (Felli in press). A similar situation has been encountered in every place where it has been possible to penetrate below the MB phase in this area.

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[6] For a possible attribution of this phase to MB I see Mazzoni 2013b: 48, fig. 23.

[7] Similar plain rim biconical beakers are found also in the EME 6 repertoire, and continue into the following period (Sconzo 2015: 135, pl. 28.3, type 135).

[8] See Matthiae 2006: fig. 10.5 for an example from Ebla, Archaic Palace MB IA.

## 3. CHRONOLOGY: SOME NEW DATA

Although the dating and character of the passage between the two (EB and MB) periods will exhibit some variation among sites (Schwartz 2017: 120), chronological synchronization at a regional level is nonetheless deemed necessary and much impulse has been given in recent years to this end.

Traditionally, EB IVB, now equated with phases ENL 5 and 6 in Arcanian terms, is dated 2300-2000 BC, although a possible further subphase, EB IVC, covering the last century of the 3rd millennium, has been suggested (Schwartz 2017: 91, 93). Considering that MB is conventionally made to start at around 2000 BC, not much space is left to accomodate a transitional period between the EB and MB, as desired. A shared idea is that the transition should be a short period, maybe dated from 2000 BC to 1900 BC, thus extending into the second millennium BC (Porter 2007: 94).[9]

If radiocarbon determinations are now increasing in Inner Syria for the third millennium, they are generally coming from earlier EB contexts (Manning *et al.* 2020: 6). One exception are the 14C dates for Qatna Phase 18, Area J, which indicate the interval 2040–1930 BC for the transition between the EB IVB and MB I (Morandi 2013: 414). 14C available dates for Qarqur equally place the end of EB IVB occupation around 2000-1950 BC (Karoll 2011: 97).

In order to provide radiocarbon dates for the EB-MB transition at Tell Afis, analyses were carried out on a larger number of samples than the three already obtained from the context of kiln A (Felli, Merluzzi 2005: 52): given here are uncalibrated dates so that the raw data can be considered independent of adopted calibrations. [10]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| E.2011.16 | 62.50 ± 0.47 | 3775 ± 60 |
| E.2011.17 | 61.48 ± 0.61 | 3910 ± 80 |
| E.2011.18 | 63.23 ± 0.79 | 3680 ± 100 |
| E.2011.19 | 63.17 ± 0.68 | 3690 ± 85 |
| E.2011.20 | 64.19 ± 0.41 | 3560 ± 55 |
| E.2011.21 | 63.89 ± 0.52 | 3600 ± 65 |
| E.2011.22 | 64.14 ± 0.41 | 3570± 55 |
| E.2011.23 | 63.05 ± 0.37 | 3705 ± 50 |

The results offer a chronological anchor separate from pottery: on the basis of the available results, the life span of the kiln falls between the 3rd and 2nd millennium, fitting quite nicely with Qatna radiometric determinations. Dates available from the immediately underlying EBIV B levels in the northern sector of the area, seen in the table below, confirm the proximity of the two phases:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| E.2011.1 | 63.10 ± 0.75 | 3700 ± 100 |
| E.2011.3 | 62.69 ± 0.32 | 3750 ± 40 |
| E.2011.4 | 62.63 ± 0.33 | 3760 ± 40 |

Unfortunately, we lack dates from the overlying MB levels. If we consider other sites, it is worth mentioning the radiocarbon dating of one of MB IB grave from area V at Ebla, D.6384 (Baffi 2000: fig. 8.1), which is 2026-1896 cal BCE (3605 ± 25 BP) (Skourtanioti *et al.* 2020: e18). Additional datings from Ebla come from the EE midden, ascribed to the beginning of MB in archaeological terms, 2140-1910 cal. BCE (3652 ± 35 BP) and 1980–1740 cal. BCE (3545 ± 45 BP) (Peyronel 2019: 750, note 36), although the peculiar nature of the context here makes the chronological indications less tight.

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[9] The possibility of the existence of a gap at Ebla between the two periods of not more than fifty years taken into consideration by Pinnock 2001: 22 note 11 seems no longer accepted.

[10] Calibrated dates will be found in a forthcoming study with Maria Elena Fedi, INFN Florence, who has carried out the analyses. An array of uncalibrated dates from Western Syria sites is provided by Schwartz 2017: 98-113.

Although more dates are needed, it is nonetheless clear that the issue concerning the EB-MB transition cannot be solved through radiometric determinations alone; the intervals are still rather large compared to the prescribed archaeological phase, which should be quite short. In terms of relative chronology, and therefore archaeological phases, terminology certainly plays an important role: the aspects each scholar sees predominant in the material culture characterizing these phases in terms of tradition or innovation are determinant in deciding how to call it, if still very late EB, thus stretching this phase at its maximum, or early MB. There is space for reconciling these different positions, but for now, we leave the matter open and maintain the term EB-MB transition.

## 4. THE EB-MB POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE

The previously held view concerning the passage between EB IVB and MB in inner Syria was described as follows: "the material culture registers a crucial transformation, with a complete substitution of the Caliciform tradition, that undoubtedly represented a cultural high point, not comparable with the initial Middle Bronze ceramic culture, still rough and uneven, especially as concerns the clays and the fabrics" (Nigro 2002a: 102). This perspective can now be mitigated in the light of the increase of pottery evidence from a number of sites filling in the gap. In her recent synthesis on the question from the point of view of Ebla, Marta D'Andrea has argued for strong cultural continuity between the EB and MB and for a more refined development of the pottery repertoire of the EB IVB period at the site than previously suggested. Through an integration of the existing evidence with new data from the most recent excavations in areas HH and D, she now counts four subphases (2004-2007: see last Matthiae 2020).[11] Nonetheless, though acknowledging the coexistence of "standard EB IVB types, late evolutions of these types, and new innovative shapes" in local EB IVB3-4 contexts, as we shall see below, the absence of a phase comparable to the transitional one identified at the site of Afis, Qatna, Tell Nebi Mend (Kennedy 2015: 302-310) and possibly Qarqur (Karoll 2011), is confirmed as well as the clear-cut distinction between EB IVB and MB I pottery repertoires, ascribed to the break caused by the second destruction of Ebla at the end of the EB IVB (D'Andrea 2019b: esp. 279).[12] Without questioning the validity of this reconstruction, one aspect which should probably be taken into greater consideration is the impact made by different types of contexts, for example official buildings at Ebla versus houses and working areas at Afis and Qatna.[13] Such differences may perhaps explain the presence or absence of certain types, thus constituting an alternative scenario to chronological discrepancies/variances.

In the absence of substantial breaks, a pottery repertoire is not expected to change all at once through time. Rather, an evolution from earlier to later attestations is a more usual pattern than sudden "pop-ups", although the latter cannot be totally discounted; paces of development may vary greatly if we are dealing with short-lived productions. They are more subject to fashion trends than luxury wares, for example, or with long-lived types such as storage vessels. Although some changes did occur over the long run, at Afis no clear sharp line can be drawn to indicate two totally different pottery repertoires.

Just summing up the general characteristics of the corpus found in association with the installations of the working area and related rooms in area E3, we can observe a sharp decrease in painted wares, especially of the specific type which is the hallmark of the EB IVB in the region, the painted and incised beaker.[14] It is true that some sherds are still found in this intermediate phase, but there are no complete vessels, and some of the smaller fragments could represent residuals; the same applies to Smeared Wash Ware and Metallic Ware sherds.[15] From the

[11] For the materials from the favissae in area HH see Sala 2012.

[12] See already Pinnock 2014: 227. For a different interpretation of the available data see Alkhalid 2018. The possibility of the existence of a hiatus is also advanced by Porter 2007: 86. For an account focused on the pottery from area H see D'Andrea 2016.

[13] See for example the case of richly decorated trefoil mouth jugs found in abundance in the HH temple at Ebla and only sporadically encountered at Afis, namely in a probably ruined grave: Giannessi 1995: 256, fig. 10.1-4.

[14] See last Cooper 2020.

[15] Percentages of distinctive classes such as Reserved Slip, Pattern Combed and Smeared Wash are already rather low (especially the first two) in the late EV IVB phase also at Ebla: see for example, the assemblages of the first phase of the Archaic Palace; Area T next

point of view of less specialized productions, Simple Ware is by far the most common, followed by Cooking Ware, these being common traits of the late EB and early MB levels at the site as well (Felli, Merluzzi 2005: 51, 52). These two macroscopically defined wares are clearly identifiable at a petrographic level. First analyses conducted on samples from kiln A and the room to the east showed that Cooking Ware fabrics are characterized by a reddish matrix with abundant calcite crystals, calcareous and marble fragments. Simple Ware ones gather around a brown to greenish brown or reddish brown groundmass rich in volcanic and calcareous rocks fragments with further mineral components (quartz, plagioclase, olivine, pyroxene, biotite, calcite, iron and titanium oxides); some sherds show many clay nodules (*chamotte*), some also vegetal temper or fossils (Morbidelli 2005). The definition of sub-fabrics within these groups is now in progress and will be the subject of a dedicated study.[16] Certainly there is a trend towards a reduction of fabrics in the passage from 3rd to 2nd millennium, although this already started in the EB IVB or possibly even earlier (Mazzoni 2002b: 77-79).[17] It is worth mentioning that a "semplificazione dei processi produttivi" is also acknowledged at Ebla by Cristiana Pezzetta in the passage between EB IVA and EB IVB, when limestone grits are found in the paste of fine wares, including the painted ones (Pezzetta 2003: 28, 29; see also the observations in Pinnock 2009: 75). A similar situation is also encountered at Qatna, where some EB morphological types at the end of the 3rd millennium sequence show pastes more similar to those in use in the MB phase (Iamoni 2014: 12, fig. 3.7).[18] As to the disappearance of specialized wares, it is also worth recalling that phase J of the Amuq sequence is characterized by the disappearance of 'white-on-black' decoration in Painted Simple Ware and of Smeared Wash Ware, in addition to the disappearance of distinctive Simple Ware features (cylindrical spouts and goblets) (Welton 2014: 343).

Turning to ceramic morphology, when first publishing the Afis material, we defined it as "transitional", following upon Porter's observations of the pottery from Building 2 at Tell Kabir on the Euphrates River (Porter 1995: 149).[19] This was not so much based on the presence of "transitional" types as it was the coexistence of EB IV types alongside those anticipating MB developments (Felli, Merluzzi 2005: 52; 2008: 103). Nonetheless, when commenting upon individual types, we were able to identify some types or rather, variants, which could be taken as quite specific components of the assemblage of this *facies*. Of course, any reconstruction should take into consideration the casualties behind presence/absence of single pieces. Therefore, too rigid slots into which material should be fitted have been avoided, allowing instead for more permeable limits in order to enable comparison with other sites where different developments may have occurred.

In this perspective, it is important to make reference to current knowledge about the two assemblages with which our material is most associated namely, the late EB IVB on one hand, and MB I on the other. Similarities among types attested in both phases have already been underlined both at Afis and Ebla: Stefania Mazzoni, for example, has suggested that expanded rim bowls found quite frequently in early MB contexts at Tell Afis may descend from a similar type encountered in EB IV levels (Mazzoni 1998: 34, fig. 20.2; 24.28). As for Ebla, Cristiana Pezzetta noticed that the EB IVB pottery of the Archaic Palace[20] showed traits of future developments, in the less accurate usage of the wheel, for example. The double rim bowls are a bit different from the EB IVB ones and more similar in the development of the lower part of the rim to the ones with high carination at the beginning of the MB (Pezzetta 2003: 33).[21] "The similarities between typologies overlapping from one horizon to the other"

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to the Northern Gate and the Northern Fort which are illustrated in the distribution graphs in Pezzetta 2003, pp. 28, 37-39. A distinction can instead be made for painted wares which are still relevant in Area T and in the Northern Fort. On Smeared Wash Ware see Rova 2014: 205-208.

[16] A reexamination of the samples from Syria kept in the storerooms at the University of Florence is carried out by Simona Raneri, ICCOM-CNR, Pisa.

[17] For analyses on EB IVB pottery from Tell Afis see Falcone, Lazzarini, Galetti 1995; Falcone, Lazzarini 1998: 485-487.

[18] A first evaluation of the EB-MB transition at the site can be found in Morandi 2008.

[19] On Kabir see also Cooper 1998; Porter 2007.

[20] Now ascribed to EB IVB3 in the new phasing of Ebla: see last Pinnock 2020: 74, table 4.1. According to the most recent reconstruction the building was abandoned at the time of the destruction of Ebla and then rebuilt in MB I: Matthiae 2020: 91, 98.

[21] D'Andrea 2018a: 228 acknowledges bowls with modelled slightly ridged rims (fig. 13, on the right) and bowls with vertical rims

have also been acknowledged by Frances Pinnock (2009: 75). More recently, it is Marta D'Andrea who has focused on the subject in a number of contributions (D'Andrea 2018a, b; 2019a, b). In particular, she identifies among the types ascribed to the very late phase of EB IVB at Ebla, especially from area HH 4 and area T, those which appear a bit later than others. In addition to the typical bowls with vertical grooved rims, she notes goblets with modelled bases, small jars with triple-grooved rims and combed surfaces (D'Andrea 2018a: figs 10.23–24, 11. 4–5, 12), and jars with double everted rims (D'Andrea 2018a: fig. 10.25; see also Pinnock 2009: 75, Fig. 5.2), these anticipating a very common type of MB jars (here Fig. 7.2). Other forerunners of the MB types include carinated bowls, bowls with slightly incurving rims, bowls with incurving slightly carinated walls and everted rims (D'Andrea 2018a: 228, 229, fig. 10.18, 20, 22; see also D'Andrea 2019b: figs 1.4; 2.13, 14, 17; 8.7; 9.3) and jars with vertical triple rims, as already suggested by Nigro (2009: 308, fig. 6.7). Nonetheless, the hallmarks of the Simple Ware repertoire of these late EB IVB phases at Ebla (EB IVB3–4) are still the unpainted goblets, either plain (D'Andrea 2019b: fig. 10: 7–9, 13) or with combed decoration (D'Andrea 2019b: figs 10: 10–12, 11: 1–3), sharing shapes with the same goblet types of the Painted Simple Ware, which are still very frequent.[22] This aspect is also encountered in late EB IVB at Afis, where similar types have still some quantitative significance, but not in the transition (apart from residuality), and that is one main difference which makes the two assemblages separate from one another.

If we look instead at later types, we admit that while the ceramic assemblage of the full MB period is well known in the region (Nigro 2002a, b; 2009; Pinnock 2005), that of the beginning of the MB is still somewhat obscure due to the limited amount of materials which can be securely ascribed to this phase. At Ebla, the pottery from the intermediate floors of the Archaic Palace (phases II-III: Matthiae 2006: figs 9, 10), which has been for long "the only stratified assemblage available from Inner Syria for the time span 2000-1900 B.C." (Nigro 2002a: 101), is too limited in kind to provide a large sample for comparisons with other sites (Nigro 2002a: 102). The materials from the houses in area T, where a continuous sequence from EB to MB has also been brought to light, are not yet fully published as far as the Middle Bronze period is concerned,[23] and even so, it consists mostly of "small jars and proto-collared bowls" (Nigro 2002a: 101 note 50). Further, more specific assemblages of the early MB come from funerary contexts: Tomb 16 in area G, redated to MB IA by Lorenzo Nigro (Nigro 2002a: 99 table 7 and 102; Peyronel 2019: 749), [24] and some of the graves on the ramparts (for example D6922: Nigro 2009: 299; see also Alkhalid 2018: 260, 261; Peyronel 2019: 749).[25] The most recently added material to the Ebla MB I corpus, from the midden from area EE (Peyronel 2019: see also below), is much more abundant and varied, but lacks the requirements of a closed context which would allow secure chronological attribution.

On the basis of the Ebla evidence, the MB IA pottery horizon is defined by the following diagnostic types: Simple Ware slightly carinated bowls, "Gublite bowls," "proto-collared bowls," craters with expanded rim and combed decoration, jars with collared rim, and, slightly later, collared bowls and bowls with sharp carination and ovoid jars with double rims; cooking pots, mostly with rounded bodies and unburnished surfaces. Finally, no specialized wares are attested, since Black Burnished ware is considered an outcome of MB IB (Peyronel 2019: 748-750).[26] As we have seen, many of these types are in fact anticipated in the local late EB IVB levels: the Afis transitional evidence may contribute to providing further ties bridging the apparent gap.

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(fig. 10.19, sometimes slightly incurving: fig. 13, on the bottom left) as newly introduced late types.

[22] According to Pezzetta 2003, p. 33, corrugation in painted wares of the EB IVB material from the Archaic Palace is more similar to combing as in the MB period.

[23] For the EB IVB materials see Matthiae 1993: 634-637, figs 12, 13; on T north see also Dolce 2001: 17, fig. 5; on T centre and south see Pinnock 2009: figs 2, 3.

[24] An recent overview of the graves from area G is offered Polcaro 2014-2015.

[25] Two of the tombs brought to light in area Z are now dated to late EB IVB (D6707, 6709: D'Andrea 2019: 20, 23, fig. 16.1-5.

[26] See however Pinnock 2014: 229, fig. 2 who includes "an almost miniature version of Syrian bottle" among the innovations of MB I.

## 5. SIMPLE WARE

At Afis, the repertoire of small-sized open vessels of the late EB IVB includes, apart from goblets, different types of bowls. Among them is a cup-like form, with rather vertical sides and flat bases (Fig. 6.1). Another is carinated, with a slightly inturned, beaded or plain vertical rim and shallow ring base (Fig. 6.4). Both forms are still attested in the EB-MB assemblage which we are trying to define here (Figs 6.2, 3 the cup-like form and 5, the inturned rim bowl; for the first, see also Felli, Merluzzi 2005: fig. 42.4). They apparently survive the disappearance of painted and incised beakers. An interesting specimen of the second type has bitumen dots on the outer surface (Felli, Merluzzi 2008: fig. 6.7) which recalls a decorative technique common in the late third and early second millennium BC levels (EJ5) at some Jazira sites, such as Tell Brak and Tell Mozan (Rova 2014: 19). The former type seems to disappear in the early MB levels at Afis. It is also not attested in MB IA at Ebla, unlike the other which is considered, as we have seen before, a good indicator of MB IA, disappearing thereafter.

The relationship between the carinated bowl with inturned rim and the so-called "gublite bowl", a biconical bowl with everted rim and ring base which, in the Ebla sequence, marks a more advanced phase of the MB IA that continues into MB IB (Nigro 2002a: 102; 2009: 373; Peyronel 2019: 749; but see *contra* Pinnock 2005: 120) requires further investigation. The dating of the gublite bowl is based on the fact that it is thought to be a derivation from metal propotypes, of which the earliest example known is attested in the Montet jar from Byblos, dated, on the basis of the glyptic enclosed there, to MB I (Nigro 2002a: 102, note 60). However, at both Afis and Ebla, the earliest examples of gublite bowls are made of the same paste as the other Simple Ware bowls and no "metallic", i.e. metal-inspired, specimens are attested, the latter being a later phenomenon so far encountered only at Ebla.[27] In addition, at Afis, both the narrow (Fig. 6.6, 7) and the wide variety (Fig. 6.8; for a comparison from Ebla see Nigro 2009: fig. 6:4 on the right; Pinnock 2014: fig. 1) make their appearance in the transitional level where they are found together with the types above mentioned and seem to represent a local evolution within that tradition (Fig. 6.9), antedating the beginning of the MB, as it is now clear also at Ebla.[28] According to the reconstruction offered by Nigro (Nigro 2009: 343, 344: see also Pinnock 2005: 37; 2014: 231), the gublite bowl is, in its turn, replaced by the collared bowl, this becoming the typical drinking vessel in Middle Bronze II, anticipated by protocollared bowls already in MB IA (Nigro 2002b: 301, fig. 4).[29] We have seen above the possibility that a plain rim variety of collared bowl, or biconical beaker as it can also be termed, has an antecedent in late EB IVB levels (Fig. 5.4). In transitional and early MB levels, the most common collared rim type has a straight or slightly flaring rim, usually with flat base (Fig. 6.10); the height of the rim is not relevant until the end of the sequence (see for example Gabarrini 1995: fig. 15.5). A more rounded and usually larger variety (Fig. 6.11) is also found in the transition and recalls Middle Euphrates examples attested already during the EME 5 and continuing in the EME 6 (Sconzo 2015: 133, type 121).

Speaking of carinated forms, there is another type, the everted rim bowl with high carination, which is found in late EB IVB levels not only at Afis (Felli, Merluzzi 2008: fig. 5.6), but, as seen above, also in other sites such as Ebla (D'Andrea 2019b: fig. 1.4, 12, 13), where it is thought to anticipate the development of everted rim carinated bowls characteristic of MB IA (Nigro 2009: 302, fig. 6:3 top left; [30] see also Pinnock 2005: 34). At Afis an intermediate type is represented by the carinated bowl, with flaring rim, slightly convex sides and flat base (Fig. 6.12). This bowl, also encountered in the Hama J1 assemblage, was manufactured in the pottery kiln A and has a still dense, well fired fabric recalling the tradition of fine wares of the Early Bronze Age (Felli, Merluzzi 2002: 100 and

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[27] For Ebla, Pinnock 2005: 121. It is perhaps not out of place to recall here that if the vessel in the hands of the stone seated statues found at Ebla is a gublite bowl as it has been suggested (dating to MB IA: Pinnock 2005: 120 note 14, and 38, note 65, for the possibility of metal specimens), it has to be considered that Rita Dolce dates at least two of them well ahead the end of the third millennium: Dolce 2008: 179, 180, figs 4.a, b, 9.

[28] For late EB IVB attestations at Ebla see for example D'Andrea 2018b: fig. 10.22; 2019b: fig. 8.7.

[29] See already Marchetti, Nigro 1997: 12, notes 37-39, fig. 6.13, where however the vessel is dated to MB IB.

[30] Here called "coppa con carenatura arrotondata" and assimilated with the inturned rim carinated bowl, in my opinion a different type, for which see above.

note 12). This suggests a continuing favour of the shape throughout the period and not a MB inception. We also note the presence of some thicker and more rough, in terms of manufacture, examples which possibly reflect an experimental stage of the more canonical type of carinated bowl (Fig. 6.13, 14).

Moving to larger vessels, deep bowls with horizontal grooved rims have been found at Afis in a phase just after the dis-use of kiln A (Mazzoni, Felli 2007: fig. 4.5, 6). They are similar to MB specimens, although the latter are generally taller and have more pronounced rims (see for example Nigro 2002: pl. XVII.20, 21). The biconical shape of the Afis examples is probably due to separate manufacture of the two parts of the vessel body, built first by coils and then finished on the wheel. Those retrieved in the earlier phase (Fig. 6.15, 16) have generally a less distinct rim from the wall and can be ascribed to the transition or even to the very late EB IVB. Examples with less pronounced rims are in fact encountered in late EB IVB contexts at Afis (Fig. 6.17), but also at Tuqan, in area N, where grooved rim deep bowls are attested already in EB IVB levels along with triangular rim jars (Baffi, Peyronel 2013: fig. 9.15, 16 and 19), the latter also encountered in transitional contexts at Afis (see below). Large, carinated bowls with grooved rims on the top are ascribed to the transitional period at sites further afield, such as Šavı Höyük in the Birecik area.[31]

Regarding closed forms, jars at Afis offer investigations of a long term perspective, since they are frequently attested in both the 3rd and 2nd millennia, perhaps due to the functional character of the structures brought to light in area E3 in which they were found. This situation is different than EB IVB Ebla, for example, where jars are on a whole less abundantly represented, with few complete forms.[32]

First of all, it is to remind that, as shown also by the new data from Ebla, jars with double everted rims, once acknowledged as diagnostic of the MB (Fig. 7.1), can also be ascribed to the late EB IVB period (Fig. 7.2). At Afis, however, they do not seem to be very frequent before the transitional level in comparison to simple or thickened, everted rimmed jars and then grow in frequency during the MB occupation.

We already noticed that globular jars attested in transitional contexts are much in the EB IV tradition (Felli, Merluzzi 2008: 100), but we can now try to be more specific. Round-bodied jars had already been found in an EB IVB context during earlier excavations at Afis (L. 1112: Mazzoni 1998: 32, fig. 17.2, 3). Another similar, almost complete, jar, with everted rim, large rounded body and convex base, and potter's mark (Fig. 7.3), has been found *in situ* in a room excavated in 2009, to the east of L.1112. This context can now be now securely dated by 14C to a time range between 2435 and 2205 BC. Smaller specimens are also found in pieces in the context of kiln A, similarly provided with pottery marks, another trait of the late EB tradition (Felli, Merluzzi 2008: fig. 6.5, 10, 12). This type of medium-sized serving jar is still attested in the earliest phase of the fortification, to the north of the complex (Felli 2000: fig. 10.5), originally dated to MB I, then ascribed tentatively to the EB-MB transition (Felli, Merluzzi 2008: 102). It is not attested in the phase just above, apparently losing popularity in comparison with more ovoid shapes. A possible late evolution of the type could be the large jar with sloping shoulder (Fig. 7.4) found in a narrow room (L. 1444), which presumably gave secondary access to the inner rooms to the west in the MB fortification. The jar, which has a simple incised and impressed decoration at the point of maximum expansion of the body, finds a close comparison, though on a smaller scale, to the specimen found in the tomb of the Princess at Ebla, which has been dated to MB IB (Matthiae 1979: fig. L.6; see also Nigro 2009: 139, pl. VIII.3). The latter piece appears rather isolated within a pottery equipment composed mostly by medium-sized jars with more ovoid bodies and flattened bases (Nigro 2002b: fig. 7.19, 20).

Interestingly, round bodied jars are explicitly mentioned along with neckless ovoid jars with "flower pot" bases as diagnostic types of the transitional period in the assemblages of Ebla area T and Afis level 17 by Anne Porter (2007: 85). Jars with "flower pot" or perforated bases are in fact attested at Afis both in the transitional and early Middle Bronze phases (two are attested in the same contexts as the ones mentioned above for the round bodied jars: Mazzoni 1998: fig. 17:4; Felli 2000: fig. 10.6), presumably responding to the specific need linked to the preservation of cereals and protection from humidity (Sollee 2020: 628 note 11). Leaving aside this aspect, the latter

[31] Dittmann 2008: 160, fig. 2.TT27.

[32] For some examples see Sala 2012: 61-63, fig. 10.1-12.

have generally a more barrel shaped body, little or no neck and a thickened, externally double profiled rim type, which seems to have been particularly fashionable during this intermediate stage, as attested by the retrieval of several specimens in the firing installation/kiln B in the southern part of the area (Felli, Mazzoni 2007: 214-216, figs 4.7-10). Generally the rim profile is less marked than in the full MB specimens, some showing a shape which is still close to their EB IVB antecedents (Fig. 7.5, 6).[33]

The last type of rather common jar both late EB and transitional levels is distinguished by a thickened, roughly triangular shaped rim (Fig. 7.7; see also Felli 2000: fig. 10.6). Some of these jars have a double or triple series of horizontal grooves on the walls, a type of decoration which has usually been considered an MB feature (Pruss 2007). This assumption can now be questioned and not only on the basis of the Afis evidence. In fact this type of decoration appears already on big jars in the last levels of Amuq J (Braidwood, Braidwood 1960: fig. 341.7, 9); it is attested in the lowest depth at Tayinat and included in the Second Mixed Range, ascribed either to the very end of phase J or, less convincingly, to the Middle Bronze period, phase K or L (Braidwood, Braidwood 1960: 463, fig. 363). Since at Tayinat no occupation later than EB IVB was found until the Iron Age, Robert Braidwood, persuaded that this decoration had to be dated to the MB period (phase K or L), put forward the hypothesis that someone had brought along these vessels from Tell Atchana, though admitting, as a less probable option, they could represent the very last part or Amuq J.[34] That comb incised decoration dates back to the late EB IVB, as confirmed by the Ebla evidence mentioned above, is in much better accord with the inception of this decoration in the Jazira, where it appears before the end of the 3rd millennium (Schwartz 2007: 260 for the chronological implications).

## 6. COOKING WARE

Cooking Ware is another realm in which patterns of steady development through time can be followed. The EB IVB Afis Cooking Ware repertoire includes large, open bowls with thickened rims, often provided with ledge handles (Mazzoni 1998: 33, figs 16.18; 18:11, 12 and 19), and round bodied pots, some with a triangular lug at the rim (Mazzoni 1998: figs 16.17; 17.1)[35]. Fragments of bowls and platters of the former type are still present in transitional contexts (Fig. 8.1-3), including an interesting, somewhat hybrid, open vessel with an EB form, but with burnishing on its surface, akin to MB cooking vessels (Fig. 8.4). It is worth mentioning that at Ebla, some specimens of wide bowls with more hammerlike, thickened rims and outer grooved surface, unburnished, appear in late EB IVB contexts (D'Andrea 2018a: fig. 8.5) and seem to anticipate the classic MB hammer rim platters and bowls, with ring bases and heavy burnishing (Nigro 2002a: 103). A similar bowl, without grooving, is also attested at Hama J1 (Fugmann 1958: fig. 103, 3D697) and possibly represents an early attestation of the MB type as well.

Cooking pots with rounded bodies and simple or thickened everted rims are clearly innovations of the EB IVB (Mazzoni 1998: 33), gradually replacing earlier hole-mouth pots and starting a tradition which lasts throughout the Middle Bronze period. EB IVB specimens are generally unburnished, but this again seems not to be a rule. The same applies to transitional (Fig. 8.5) or very early MB cooking vessels, where burnishing, when present, is less pervasive and accurate than on later examples. Triangular ledge rim pots, typical of the EB IVB period (Fig. 5.5), are instead customarily burnished and continue to be so when still attested in the transitional contexts, though apparently disappearing thereafter (Felli, Merluzzi 2002: fig. 18.6).

Cooking ware also includes peculiar vessels that take the form of long-stemmed censers, whose paste can resist thermal shock:[36] at Afis they are found stratified in the earliest MB contexts, such as in the southernmost part

[33] A comparison can possibly be found in the burial container of grave D 6922 at Ebla, now dated to MB IA, of which only an artistic drawing is published but is described as a "giara con orlo doppio derivato dall'orlo triplice del Bronzo Antico" (Nigro 2009: 299).
[34] The exact length of the Amuq J phase is an issue still to be investigated, although the idea is that ended earlier than at Qarqur and Afis: Welton 2014: 359.
[35] Further examples have been encountered in the most recent campaigns: Mazzoni in press.
[36] This is the common trait of all cooking ware vessels: see however the use of the more neutral definition of coarse ware at Taynat to go round the difficulty that not all similarly tempered vessels serve cooking purposes (Welton 2014: 352).

of the trench, on a floor on which MB I materials were found (Fig. 8.6). Similar vessels are found in the favissae F.5237 and F.5238 (lower levels) at Ebla, where they were originally ascribed to MB IB (Marchetti, Nigro 1997: figs 6.16; 7.33-36; 2000: fig. 6.1-3, 5[37]; see also 2002b: 305), but now to MB IA (Nigro 2009: 318, 319).[38] The type, however, is not an entire novelty of this period, but evolves out of a tradition of stemmed censers in Cooking Ware attested already in EB IVA at Ebla (see for example Marchetti 2013: fig. 27.5.6, 7) and continuing also in EB IVB (see for example Qarqur: Dornemann 1999: 93, fig. 167, on the right; Tayinat: Welton 2014: fig. 9.3, 4). To this date should be also ascribed the large fragment of bowl, most likely the upper part of a censer, found at Afis embedded in the foundations of one of the MB walls (Fig. 8.7).

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In sum, we observe that the changes in the use of the space attested in area E3 at Tell Afis (houses/workshop/fortifications) do not require an explanation which falls outside the normal reshaping of a continuously settled site; the scale and specialization of the pottery (and possibly other craft) manufacturing area corresponds with the standards expected within a thriving community of an urban society. The reinforcement of fortifications may be a sign of a critical time, but not necessarily of a crisis of the site itself. As far as pottery production is concerned, the "transitional" assemblage speaks for some degree of continuity between the EB and MB traditions and shows no signs of impoverishment: the decrease of specialized, luxury wares has to be seen within the context of an incipient process of standardization which finds its full achievement in the Middle Bronze Age. Several morphological developments can be followed within both the simple and cooking ware from the EB IVB to MB. Beyond Afis, the possibility of a similar, gradual pattern of development can be envisaged at other sites where both EB and MB occupation are attested, once the ceramic types described above are not all seen as exclusively MB in date.[39] To provide but one example, one can see the presence of profiled rim jars, grooved rim deep bowls and carinated bowls and cups similar to those found at Afis at the nearby site of Mastuma, in stratum V, now currently dated to the MB period. These types are also encountered in the preceding stratum VI, which is ascribed to the EB (strata VI-X EB IV: Wakita 2009; see also Ascalone, D'Andrea 2013: 219). This evidence could well be an indication, not of an interruption in settlement between EB and MB, but of some gradual passage between the two phases, and maybe suggesting also an earlier dating of level V.

The results of the survey in the Jazr plain around Afis have shown that the EB IVB was a period of intensification of settlement which most probably continued up to the beginning of the MB period (Mazzoni 2006: pls 6, 7). Some sites, in particular, such as Tell Suffane, Tell Serji (Fig. 1),[40] have yielded materials mostly ascribable to that time span, thus indicating that occupation in favoured agricultural zone continued to thrive even at a critical time elsewhere (Mazzoni 2013: 50-52). A similar pattern has also been suggested by the archaeological research undertaken in the Matkh region (Peyronel 2014: esp.116, 123-125). Here excavations in area N in the lower town of Tell Tuqan, located just to east of Afis, have yielded a sequence from EB IVB to MB IIA which attests to continuing occupation of the settlement during the time period of interest (Ascalone 2011). No transitional phase, however, has been detected at the site (Peyronel 2014: 124-126). The succession of phases assigns phase 7 to EB IVB, phase 6 to MB IA and phase 5 to MB IB, along with a number of graves similar to those at Ebla and Afis (Ascalone 2011; 2014).

At the regional level thus the question of the passage between the 3rd and the 2nd millennium still remains open, although continuity would seem to be a widespread trend. The evidence from Tell Afis challenges the

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[37] It is unclear on what basis the dating of the pieces from F. 5238 is MB IIA in the 2000 article while, in the 1997 one, only two, fig. 7.34, 36, are ascribed to that phase.

[38] The incense burners of Tell Akhtarine are instead dated to MB IB in Nigro 2009: 365, fig. 6:22.

[39] See for example Nigro 2009: 299 according to which EB IVB types in Hama H5 level can only explained as "probabilmente provenienti da depositi dei livelli J2-J1".

[40] I wish to express my gratitude to Benedetta Fiorelli who kindly provided me with information on the still unpublished results of her study on the material from the site.

diagnostic validity of types so far identified as solely indicative of one phase and asks for more permeable limits between phases. Such an approach may hopefully have an impact on the issue in the near future and open up new possibilities for inter-site correlations.[41]

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[41] A reassessment of intersite-correlations would only be possible by means of a fruitful synergy among scholars such as the one in the Florence workshop. I wish to thank all participants, Marta D'Andrea, Valentina Orsi, Paola Sconzo, Sebastiano Soldi and Agnese Vacca, for sharing results of their work and for the living subsequent discussion. My gratitude goes here also to the anonymous reviewer for comments and advice not only on the content but also on the form of the present paper.

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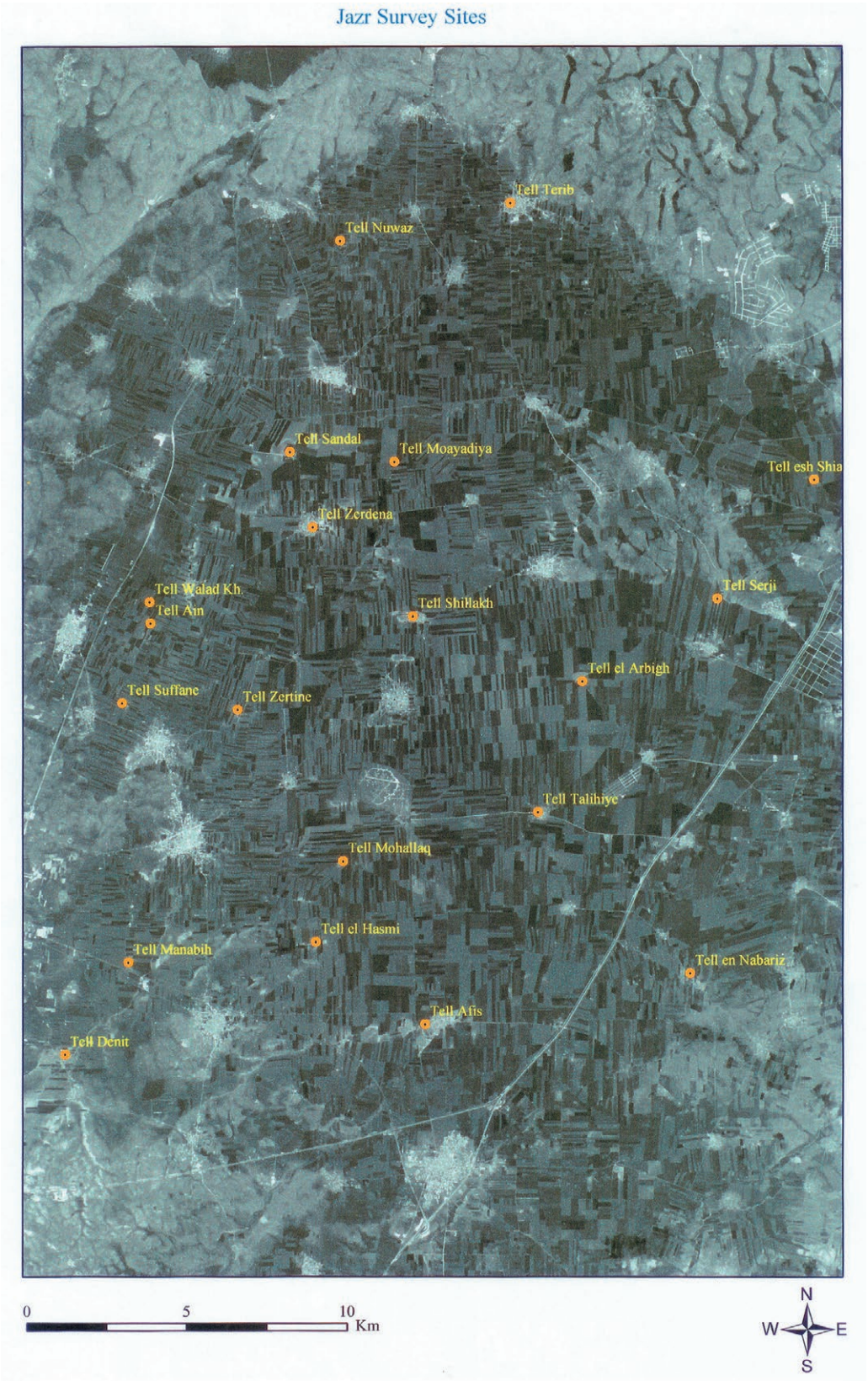


**Fig. 1:** Satellite map of Jazr plain Syria showing the location of Tell Afis and surveyed sites around it (copyright Afis expedition).


**Fig. 2:** Satellite image of Tell Afis with indications of excavation areas mentioned in the text.

**Fig. 3:** Area E3, view from the north of some of the EB-MB firing installations in course of excavations in the northern sector in 2006 (in the background, to the west, stone foundations of MB wall 1115 are still visible, with EB IVB remains underneath) (copyright Afis expedition).

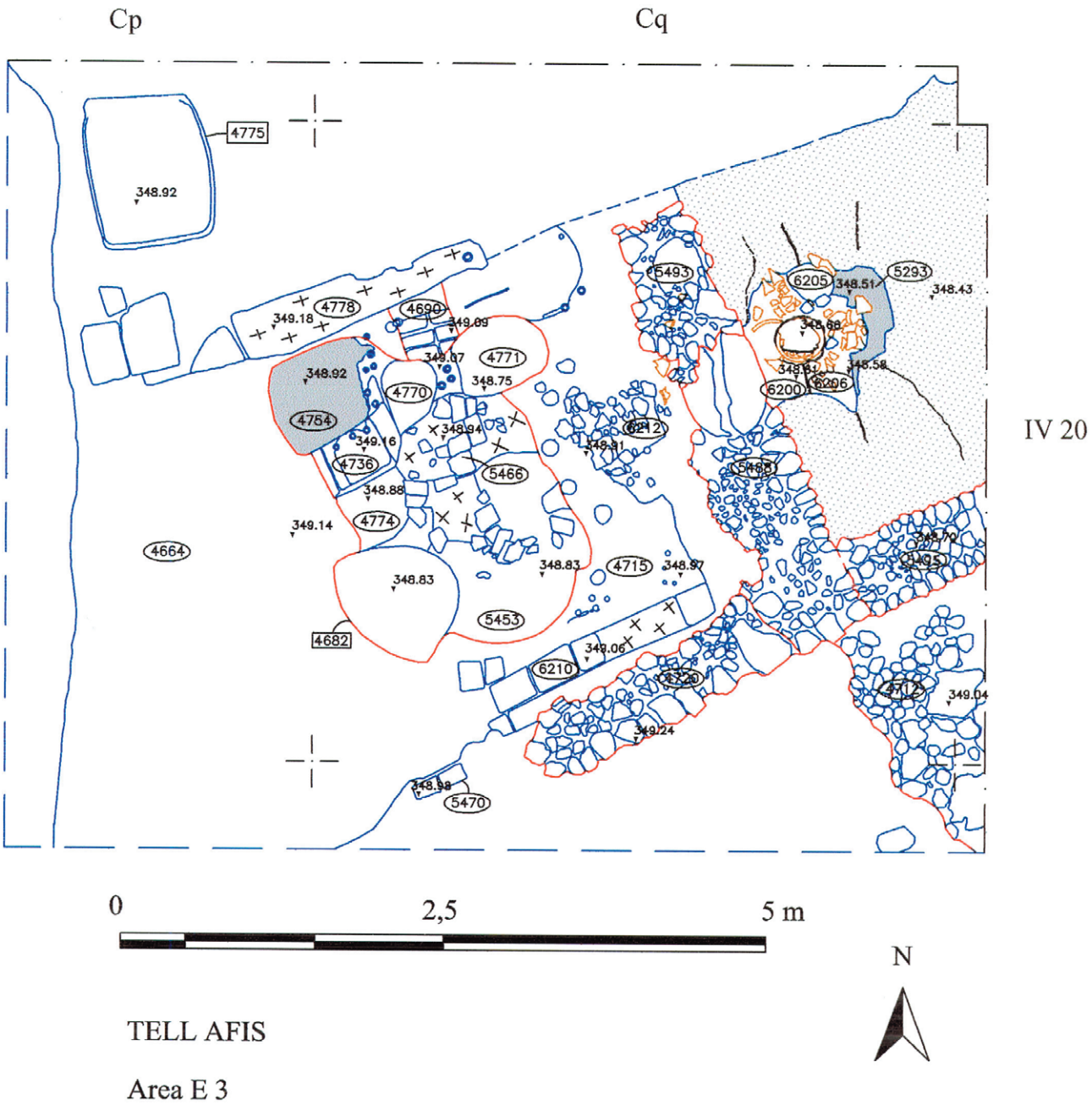


**Fig. 4:** Area E3, plan of kiln A and adjacent room to the east (CAD processing P. Del Vesco: copyright Afis expedition).

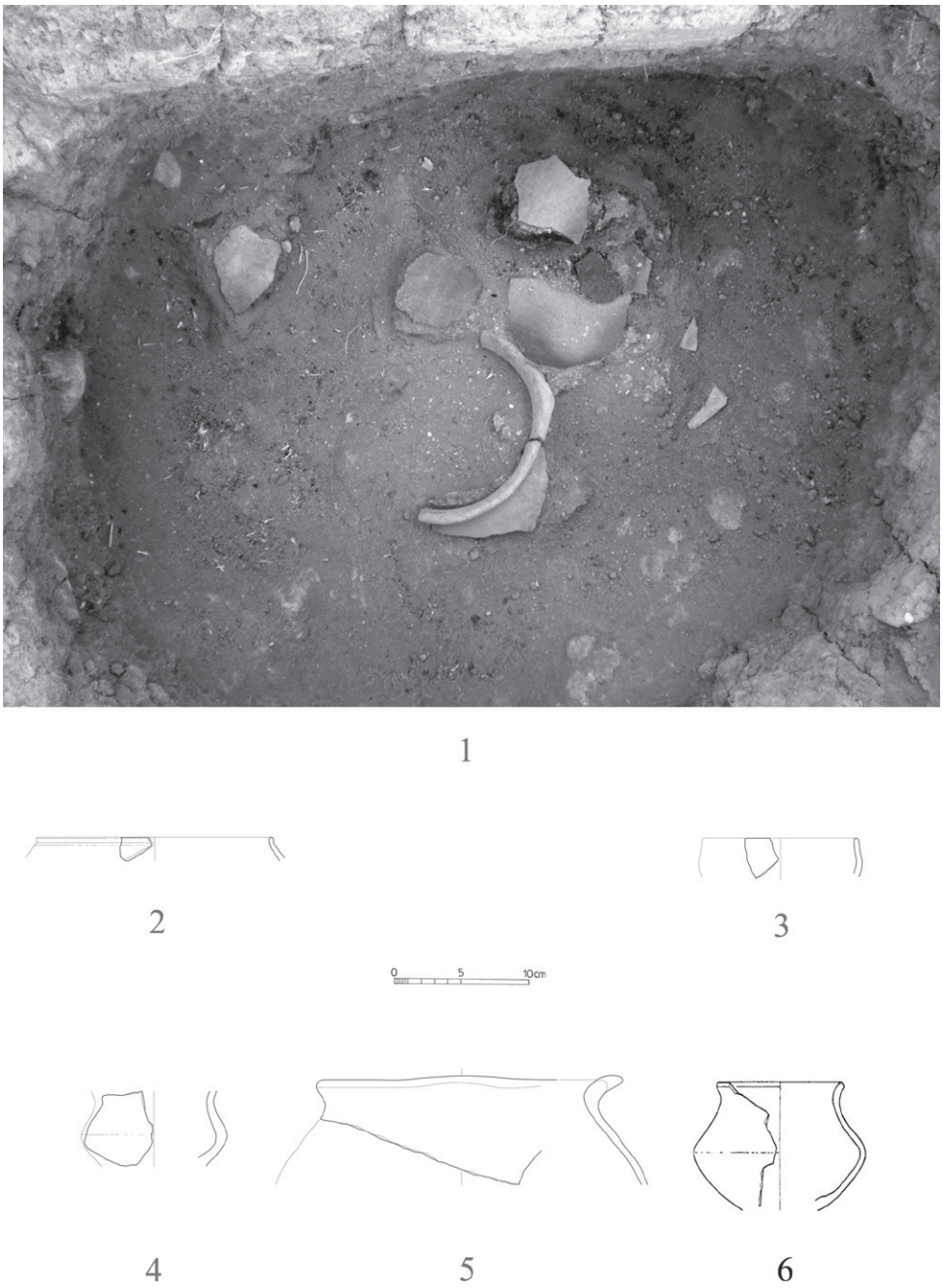


**Fig. 5:** 1) Bird's eye view of the fire installation beneath kiln A (copyright Afis expedition); 2-5) pottery from the installation; 6) MB comparison of collared bowl (all drawings of the Afis pottery are by Sergio Martelli).

| N. | Excavation code | Area, Square | Context | Form | Ware | Date | Bibliography |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | TA.10.E.460/2 | E3, CqIV20 | US 9996 | Carinated bowl | Simple Ware | EB IVB | - |
| 3 | TA.10.E.460/3 | E3, CqIV20 | US 9996 | Inverted rim bowl | Simple Ware | EB IVB | - |
| 4 | TA.10.E.460/4 | E3, CqIV20 | US 9996 | Collared bowl | Simple Ware | EB IVB | - |
| 5 | TA.10.E.460/1 | E3, CqIV20 | US 9996 | Jar | Cooking Ware | EB IVB | - |
| 6 | TA.96.E.528/3 | E3, CqV2 | L. 1706 | Collared bowl | Simple Ware | MB I | - |

| N. | Excavation code | Area, Square | Context | Form | Ware | Date | Bibliography |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | TA.94.E.268/1 | E3, CpV3 | Grave 1476 | Everted rim cup | Simple Ware | EB IVB | Photo copyright Afis expedition. Merluzzi 1995: fig. 8:2 |
| 2 | TA.01.E.1447/1 | E3, CqIV20 | Kiln A US 4753 | Beaded rim cup | Simple Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 3 | TA.01.E.1438/1 | E3, CqIV20 | Kiln A US 4763 | Plain rim cup | Simple Ware | EB-MB | Felli, Merluzzi 2002: fig. 18.3; 2008: fig. 7.1 |
| 4 | TA.94.E.138/3 | E3, CpIV20 | US 1456 | Interned rim carinated bowl | Simple Ware | EB IVB | Felli, Merluzzi 2008: fig. 5.9 |
| 5 | TA.02.E.342/1 | E3, CqIV20 | Kiln A US 5439 | Inturned rim carinated bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 6 | TA.09.E.350/ | E3, CqV2 | US 9345 | Everted rim biconical bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 7 | TA.02.E.165/2 | E3, CqIV20 | US 5474 | Everted rim biconical bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB? | Felli, Merluzzi 2008: fig. 9.2 |
| 8 | TA.01.E.1426/2 | E3, CqIV20 | Kiln A US 4748 | Everted rim biconical bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 9 | TA.06.E.973/1 | E3, CqIV19 | US 8179 | Everted rim biconical bowl | Simple Ware | EB IVB | - |
| 10 | TA.03.E.841/3 | E3, CqIV20 | US 6206 | Collared bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB/MB I? | Felli, Merluzzi 2008: fig. 9.4 |
| 11 | TA.02.E.159/2 | E3, Cq IV20 | Kiln A US 5287 | Collared bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB/ late EB IVB? | Felli, Merluzzi 2008: 99, fig. 6.9 |
| 12 | TA.01.E.1431/1 | E3, Cq IV20 | Kiln A US 4744 | Everted rim carinated bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB | Mazzoni, Felli 2007: fig. 4.4 |
| 13 | TA.05.E.323/1 | E3, CqIV19 | US 7051 | Everted rim carinated bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB/MB I? | - |
| 14 | TA.05.E.343/1 | E3, CqIV18 | Kiln B US 7082 | Everted rim carinated bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB/MB I? | - |
| 15 | TA.04.3.1132/5 | E3, CqIV18 | US 6747 | Grooved rim deep bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 16 | TA.02.E.386/1 | E3, CqIV20 | US 5474 | Grooved rim deep bowl | Simple Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 17 | TA.94.E.138/5 | E3, CpIV20 | L.1456 | Grooved rim deep bowl | Simple Ware | EB IVB | - |

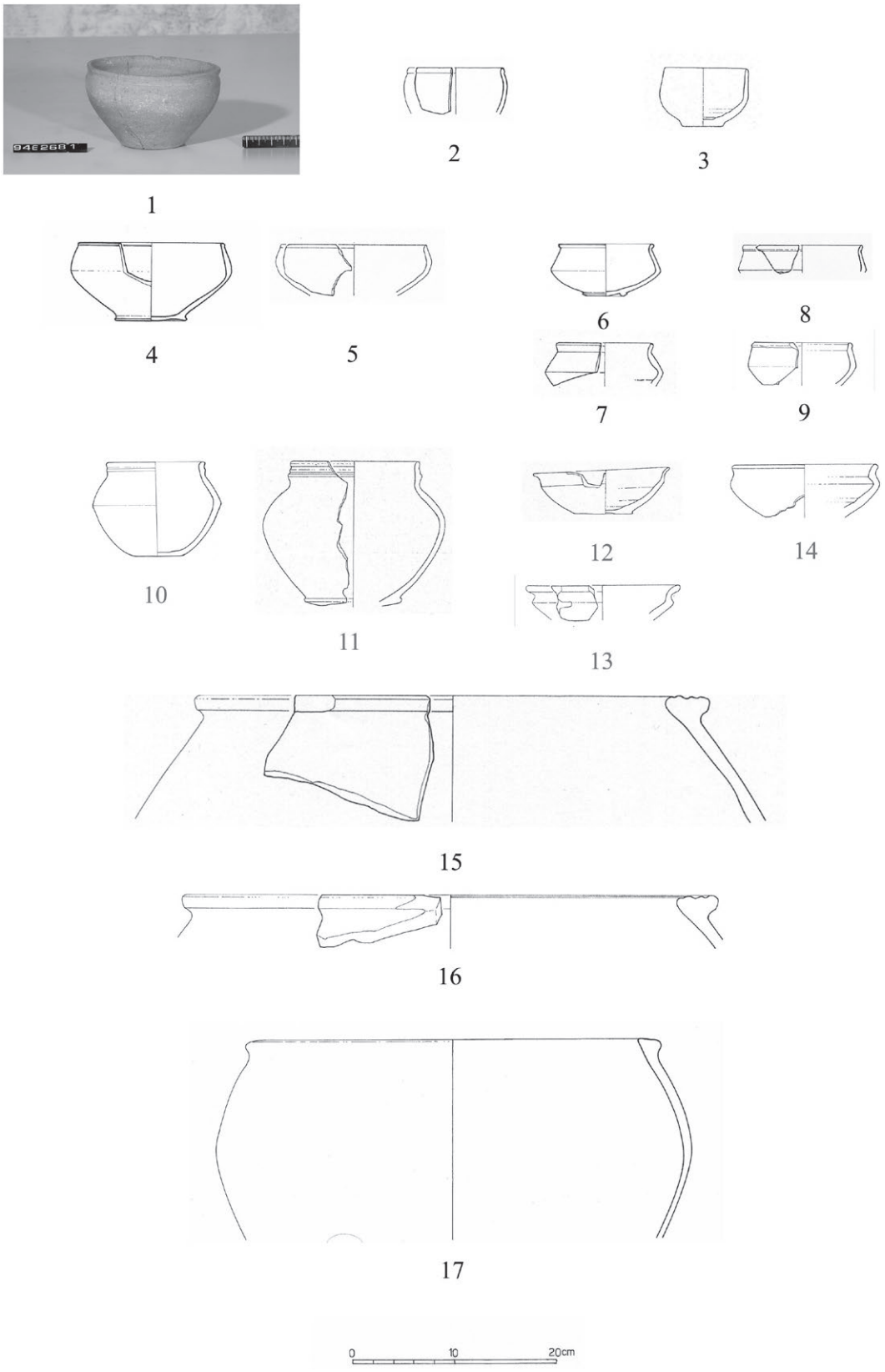


**Fig. 6:** Simple Ware open forms.

| N. | Excavation code | Area, Square | Context | Form | Ware | Date | Bibliography |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | TA.97.E.355/3 | E3, CqIV18 | US 1890 | Double everted rim jar | Simple Ware | MB I | - |
| 2 | TA.05.E.351/1 | E3, CqIV18 | US 7093 | Double everted rim jar | Simple Ware | Late EB IVB | - |
| 3 | TA.09.E.320/1 | E3, CpqV2 | US 9347 | Thickened everted rim jar | Simple Ware | Late EB IVB | - |
| 4 | TA.96.E.539/1 | E3, CqIV20 | L.1444 | Thickened everted rim jar | Simple Ware, incised and impressed decoration | MB I | - |
| 5 | TA.03.E.971/1 | E3, CqIV20 | US 6299 | Thickened, externally profiled rim jar | Simple Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 6 | TA.04.E.1188/2 | E3, CqIV18 | US 7014 | Thickened, externally profiled rim jar | Simple Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 7 | TA.05.E.308/1 | E3, CqIV18 | US 7036 | Triangular rim jar, incised decoration | Simple Ware | Late EB IVB/ EB-MB | - |

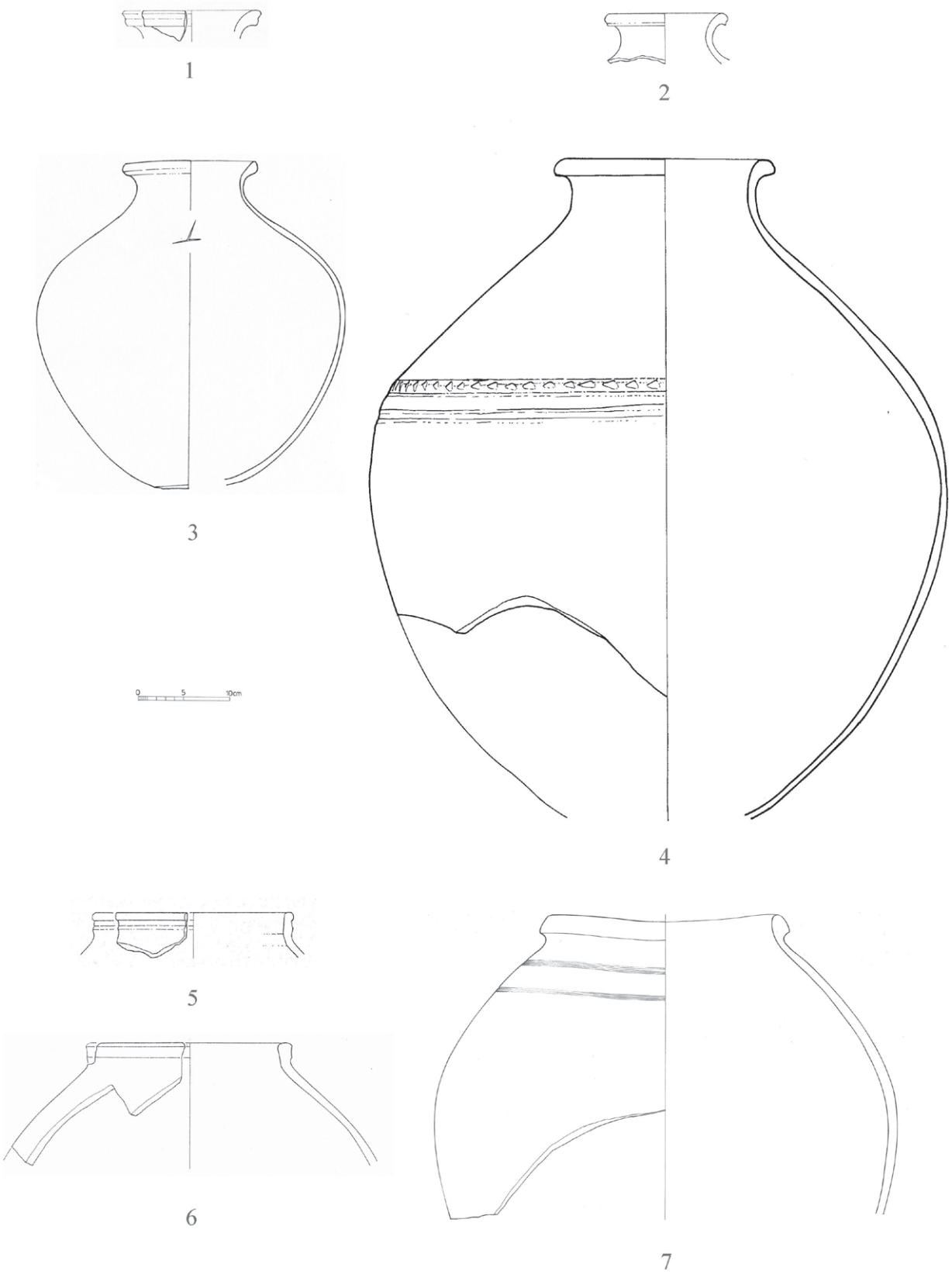


**Fig. 7:** Simple Ware jars.

| N. | Excavation code | Area, Square | Context | Form | Ware | Date | Bibliography |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | TA.03.E.885 | E3, CqIV20 | Kiln A US 6275 | Thickened rim bowl | Cooking Ware | EB-MB/ late EB IVB? | - |
| 2 | TA.03.E.973/1 | E3, CqIV20 | Kiln A US 6269 | Ledge handle | Cooking Ware | EB-MB/late EB IVB? | - |
| 3 | TA.04.E.1120/3 | E3, CqIV18 | US 6718 | Thickened rim bowl, incised decoration | Cooking Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 4 | TA.01.E.1410/6 | E3, CqIV20 | Kiln A US 4731 | Thickened rim bowl, irregularly burnished | Cooking Ware | EB-MB | - |
| 5 | TA.05.E.367/1 | E3, CqIV18 | US 7112 | Everted rim cooking pot | Cooking Ware | EB-MB | Photo copyright Afis expedition |
| 6 | TA.04.E.1116/1 | E3, CqIV18 | US 6710 | Incense burner, burnished incised decoration | Cooking Ware | MB I | - |
| 7 | TA.05.E.309/1 | E3, CqIV19 | US 4745 | Thickened rim bowl of incense burner | Cooking ware | EB-MB/ late EB IVB? | - |

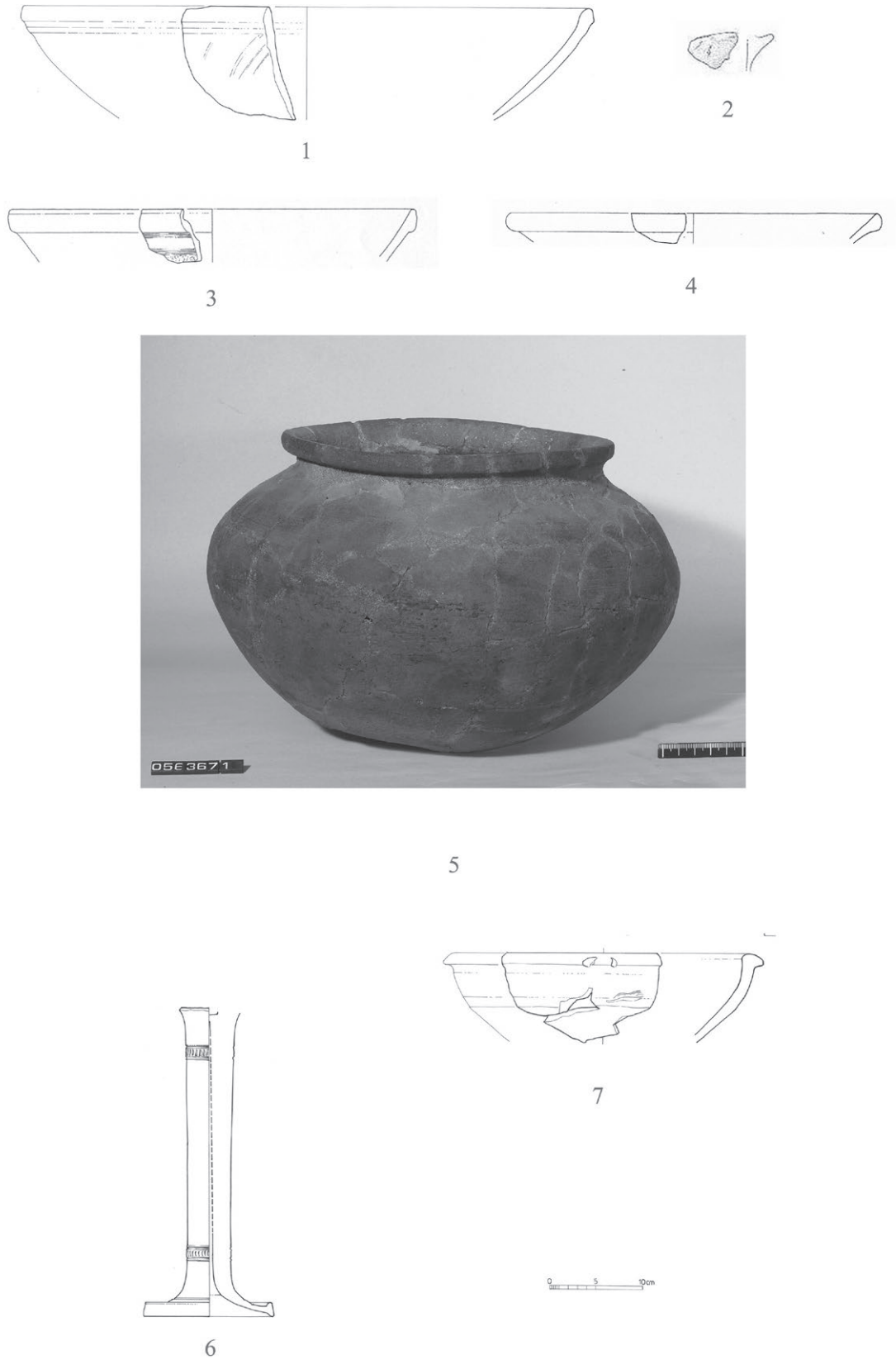


**Fig. 8:** Cooking Ware vessels.

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**Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

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# An Unexpected Journey - The French Expedition of Charles Fossey at Hatra (Iraq)

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**Abstract**. This paper deals with the overlooked French Expedition of the famous architect Charles Fossey at the end of the 19th century at Hatra (Northern Iraq) using information of unpublished documents from the Archive Nationale de France. The collected data shed new light on the understanding of Small Shrine 2, one of the fourteen small shrines built inside the districts of the city.

**Keywords.** Hatra, French Expedition, Fossey, Small Shrine 2, Parthian period.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The archaeological site of Hatra, al-Hadr in Arabic, is located at about 80 kms from Mosul (Iraq) in northern Mesopotamia. During the 2nd and 3rd century AD, the centre became the capital of an important buffer state placed between the Roman and Parthian Empires (Hauser 2000; Venco Ricciardi 2008; Hauser 2009; Foietta 2018: 141-150). The settlement, founded during the Post-Assyrian period (end of 5th-4th century BC)[1], flourished during the first two centuries of the Common Era. The city was delimited by a double pseudo-circular curtain wall defining a large built area of about 300 ha. The complex urban layout was framed by a tortuous street network, demarcating districts, where dwelling areas, small shrines, and monumental funerary buildings are recognizable. In the centre of the city is the Temenos, built in ashlar blocks, where the most important temples were located.[2]

Numerous archaeological, historical, and epigraphic questions have been answered, thanks to different archaeological expeditions and explora-

[1] For a brief account of the first phases of the city: Kaizer 2013: 59-60.

[2] For a general overview about the site: Venco Ricciardi 2000; Foietta 2018. For the fortifications: Gawlikowski 1994; Foietta 2015; 2016. For the recent researches and studies on different topics about the city and related references: Sommer 2003; 2005; Dirven 2013a; Dorna Metzger 2016; Venco Ricciardi, Parapetti 2016; Foietta 2018; Marcato 2018; Moriggi, Bucci 2019.

tions carried out during the 19th and 20thcenturies, from the first preliminary expeditions by English explorers, to the contemporary archaeological excavations of the Iraqi, Polish, and Italian archaeologists.[3]

This paper focuses on the overlooked French Expedition to Hatra, directed by Architect Charles Fossey at the end of the 19th century, which was the first archaeological excavation at the site, furnishing new suggestions about Small Shrine 2, built in the city layout.

## 2. BEFORE THE FRENCH ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION: THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH EXPLORERS AT HATRA

In May1836, John Ross, an English surgeon working in Baghdad, left the capital with the purpose of reaching Hatra. It was not a well-planned undertaking, for several reasons. It would be detailed for the first time a few years later, along with a subsequent trip, in a long article published on the Geographical Journal in 1839 (Ross 1839: 443-470). During that first visit, which lasted only a few hours, the small group was forced to flee from the site due to an attack from the Shammar, a nomadic local tribe that controlled the area ruled by the Pasha of Mosul (Ross 1839: 443).

Their second attempt, the following year, was better organised by involving local chiefs of the Shammar tribes to prevent reprisals from their groups as well as attacks from the other big local tribe, the belligerent Aneizah. This allowed Ross to visit Hatra safely for several hours on 15 May 1837 (Ross 1839: 460, 463). On that occasion, Ross drew the first simplified plan of the site, reporting for the first time the Sasanian circumvallation wall (Hauser, Tucker 2009; Hauser 2013), the main pseudo-circular wall, the inner wadi, at the time registered as a channel, several funerary buildings in the western part of the city, mounds for the residential areas in the eastern part of the city, and the central Temenos, containing some buildings (Ross 1839: 467-470) (Fig. 1). The paper wrongly reported a diameter of approximately 2 miles, together with other incorrect data about the main curtain wall, such as the ones regarding the regular distance between the defensive towers and the homogeneity of the building technique for the fortifications (Ross 1839: 467). Nevertheless, the information reported have been of great importance and usefulness to scholars throughout the years. Ross also identified the two funerary buildings N and E outside the curtain wall, in front of the city gates (Ross 1839: 467-468). Such ruins were still clearly visible during the German Expedition, directed by W. Andrae, and were accurately documented in his fundamental volume published in 1912. Ross also mistakenly reported a strict division of the city in a western, residential part and an eastern part assigned to the necropolis, which was rectified by scholars in later studies (See the plan of Ross 1839: 470).

Ross' analysis focused on the Temenos central complex, particularly on the Great Iwans and Twin Iwans, suggesting they served as a palace or a temple, the latter function being confirmed by the systematic Iraqi investigations and cleaning of the site undertaken in the 1950s[4] (Fig.2). The English author provided the general measures of the ruins, reporting that there were less blocks and debris in the eastern part than in the western one, which featured important constructions, such as the Great Iwans and the Twin Iwans (Ross 1839: 468-470).

Ross describes the iwans from south to north. He started by analysing the small south iwan and preceded to the small north iwan, as they are called, from the Great Northern Iwan. He indicates the approximate measures of the rooms and describes the architectural decoration, focusing on the 'flat' masques on the blocks and the sculpted voussoirs *in situ* (Ross 1839: 468-469)[5]. The architectural decoration was described at length by explorers and archaeologists of the time; the historical photographs by G. Bell and W. Andrae of the voussoirs and decorated ashlars from the Great and Twin Iwans are well known and famous to all the scientific community, along with

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[3] For the history of research and relative bibliography: Venco Ricciardi 2000; Foietta 2018: 7-24. A new Italian Expedition began the works at the site in 2020 (University of Padova and ISMEO). For a general account: https://www.ismeo.eu/portfolio_page/hatra/. Last view: 10/06/2021

[4] For an account of the Iraqi expeditions and related references: Foietta 2018: 14-18.

[5]For the architectural decoration in the temples of the Temenos: Venco Ricciardi 2015.

their interesting drawings.[6] Strangely enough, Ross does not report the presence of statues on the ground at the site, although they had been mentioned by members of the local tribes.

In the same year of Ross' trip, the site was briefly visited by H.B. Lynch, English Lieutenant, whose expedition had the purpose of drawing a trigonometric map from the Armenian mountains to Baghdad. In his short report however, the author did not mention the ruins of Hatra, even if he places the site on the map (Lynch 1839).

During the spring of 1840, a group composed by E.L. Mitford, A.H. Layard, Mr Rassám, and W. Ainsworth, together with an expert local guide and a convoy sent by the Pasha of Mosul, visited North Mesopotamia. A first report of this expedition was published by W. Ainsworth in 1841 on the Journal of Royal Geographical Society and republished using the same data in *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea and Armenia II* (Ainsworth 1841). It provided a more detailed description of the ruins at the site and rectified Ross' division between a necropolis and dwelling area. Also, the tortuous inner wadi was correctly attributed and no longer considered as a channel. A long part of the paper is devoted to the study of the ruins of the central Temenos, with the publication of some drawings by A.H. Layard of decorated blocks with masques from the Iwans and a sketch of the elaborated lintel placed between the Square Temple and the South Iwan (Fig. 3). A façade of one of the funerary stone buildings of the city, which is difficult to identify, is also represented.[7] Also, quoted here for the first time are the Zengid inscriptions engraved on the Great Iwans mentioning the names of the Atabeg of Mosul (Ainsworth 1841: 14; Andrae 1912: 108; Aggoula 1991: X; Parapetti, Venco Ricciardi 2013: 220).

Layard's report was published only several years later (1891) in *Transactions: Vol. VII. New Series*. His description of the city mostly coincides with the accounts given by Ainsworth and Ross, while also focusing on water resources at the site (Layard 1891: 64-65). The graphic documentation drawn on tracing paper by Layard is extremely interesting. His plan of the Temenos identifies many of the important architectural complexes, which would be uncovered only in the later works by Andrae and Iraqi archaeologists (Layard 1891) (Figs 4-5). In 1897, Ch. Jacquerel, Ingenieur des Ponts et Chaussées at Mosul, published a short paper in French after a visit to the site, under the title 'Les Ruines de Hatra' on the *Revue Archéologique*. Jacquerel reported some significant information about the urban layout and the fortification, identifying on the field the most important elements of the curtainwalls and the line of Sasanian circumvallation.[8] Jacquerel also accurately described the central ruins of the Temenos, publishing a plan of the Great Iwans complex and of the Twin Iwans, the latter represented as a single room due to the rubble found inside, just as in Ross' previous drawings. The French scholar also sketched some drawings of the voussoirs, door frames, and lintels, including the one situated between the Square Temple (Fig. 6) and the Great South Iwan, as well as the inscription H246.[9]

## 3. THE FRENCH EXPEDITION OF CHARLES FOSSEY – A FORGOTTEN EXPEDITION

In 1898, after submitting a first request to Constantinople for permission to excavate at Çatal Tepe in Turkey, the French architect Fossey, was authorized to start working at al-Hadr (Hatra), in Mosul district. Fossey's expedition proposal came at a particular time, that is when France was falling behind other European nations, especially Germany, in the field of excavations and archaeological research in the Ottoman Empire territories (Chevalier 2002: 63-112). Fossey submitted his request, after the failed attempt of creating a first 'Mission de Costantinople' -suggested by A. Joubin and J. Cambon, consul at Constantinople (Chevalier 2002: 83-89) - and when the 'École française d'Athene', directed by T. Homolle had just advanced a similar proposal (Chevalier 2002: 89-90). In the summer of 1898, after receiving fundings (15.000 francs) from the French Ministry, this new French centre was finally created

[6] Andrae 1912, 107-165, Taf. VII-XXIII. The photographs regarding Hatra preserved at the Gertrude Bell's Archive are 79: R001-48, Q227-236. The pictures R0049-68 represent Ottoman troops placed close to Hatra and tribesmen. http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/search_photos_results.php?search_photos=Hatra&start=0, last view: 10/06/2021.

[7] For the funerary buildings: Dorna Metzger 1998; 2000.

[8] Jacquerel 1897: 344. On the Sasanian wall: Hauser 2013 with extended references.

[9] Jacquerel 1897: 351. This inscriptions, as others from Hatra, mentions the Temenos as Esagil (Aggoula 1991: 123; Beyer 1998: 77).

under the direction of the Byzantinist Charles Diehls. Fossey had previously studied at the School of Athens for three years, starting from 1894, and had spent one year at the 'Institut Français du Caire', building contacts that turned out to be useful to obtain the permission documents from the Sacred Door (Nougayrol 1946: 25).

Having already spent part of the money at Mosul for his two-month stay without the excavation permit (*irade*), Fossey decided to reach Hatra immediately after its release at the beginning of January. The field report and the story of his travel are preserved in a folder of unpublished documents stored at the Archives Nationales de France - Paris (F17/2963).[10] Without having viewed such documents, B. Aggoula mentioned Fossey's expedition in his book on Hatra inscriptions, suggesting that the French archeologist did not even visit the site directly.

In Fossey's folder the information reported in a letter he sent to the French Ministry dated 30 April 1899 (Fig. 7) is of great relevance (Appendix 1), as are the enclosed photographs, which remain the first pictures ever taken at the site (Figs 8-14).[11] The letter, which Fossey wrote to obtain new funds for a second mission that would focus mainly on the Temenos area, reports two field trenches. However, Fossey's expedition did not last long, as the attacks of local tribes forced Fossey and his team to seek refuge inside the Temenos for several days.

The exact location of the French trenches became known thanks to the data published in 1912 in W. Andrae's volume, where the areas explored more or less ten years earlier are mentioned (Fig. 15) (Andrae 1912: 61, 70). A first trench (a) reaches across a landfill located west of Small Shrines 3 and 4, in the western part of the city. The area is placed precisely inside urban area AU16 and in squares l11 or l14 of Andrae's grid (Foietta 2018: 310-313; Andrae 1912: 61).

The second trench (b) was dug in correspondence with the Small Shrine 2, named Gebäude T by Andrae, and with a partially excavated house added westward (Andrae 1912: 70). This is where the French expedition focused its efforts; the same area that would later be explored in depth by an Iraqi expedition in the 1950s (Safar 1952: 37-52). The archive folder does not include any plans of the explored rooms, nor a more detailed documentation about the trenches and works.

The French Expedition also explored and surveyed the Temenos area, probably without carrying out any soundings. The tent camp for the workers and for Fossey's staff was certainly pitched in this area where, according to one of the pictures, the most remarkable pieces from this expedition were identified: a relief depicting an attendant or a god, a dog on a pedestal, and a standard, now preserved at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum (Fig. 13).[12]

## 4. THE DISCOVERY FINDINGS

Fossey's letter does not mention any object from the landfill area (a) (Fig. 15); here a large quantity of pottery sherds and organic layers was probably discovered, as successively reported by W. Andrae for similar areas or for another area excavated by J. Ibrahim north of the Temenos (Urban area 10 - AU10) (Ibrahim 1997-1998; Foietta 2018: 209).

From the area of Small Shrine 2 and the house built westward comes a Hatran inscription, identified with H28, engraved on two blocks (56 x 23 cm e 57 x 32 cm) and probably belonging to the base of a statue (Aggoula 1991: 22-23; Beyer 1998: 35) (Fig. 11). Interestingly, the inscription reports the name of Sanatruq II (AD 200-241), the last king of Hatra, and his wife and son, the last one with the title *pšgrb'*, usually translated as 'crown-prince' (Gnoli 2002: 79). It is probably a dedication from the statue of Sanatruq II's wife, *btsmy'* (Marcato 2018: 45), 'Daughter of Samya', placed inside or in front of Small Shrine 2, as customary for several small shrines in the city, or in the nearby west dwelling area. The French expedition left the inscription at the site due to the weight of the blocks and it was later found and published by the Iraqi Archaeological Expedition that cleared the area near the shrine (Safar 1953: 15).

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[10] I visited the Archives Nationales de France in 2017; I would like to thank this institution for allowing me to publish these documents and the photographic documentation.

[11] The photographs have been already published in Foietta 2018: 32; while the text of the letter is unpublished.

[12] See the next paragraph for the description.

A statuette of an enthroned woman on a base with an inscription fragment, a bust of a naked male, a small statue of a warrior god with a sceptre (Fig. 12), and another fragment were also collected in the area of Small Shrine 2.

On the basis of the iconography, the statuette of the woman (h. 29 cm), whose head is not preserved, could be most probably be interpreted as a goddess on a throne, with a dog sculpted to her right and another crouching animal to her left (Fig. 16). She wears a tunic with sleeves at the elbow and a long garment with an elaborate drapery. A long girdle tied at the waist softly falls on her the knees. Her neck and breasts are adorned with two interesting necklaces: a short torques with small pendants and a long necklace with loop-in-loop chain with a round central medallion. She holds a palm branch, or a feather, in her left hand, and a small oblong object (stylus or distaff) in the other hand. The analysis and study of the sculpture has been proposed by L. Dirven, finding convincing comparisons inside and outside Hatra (Dirven 2013b). According to preliminary works by H.J.W. Drijvers and H. Ingholt, the goddess should depict Atargatis, but an identification with Allat or another local goddess of the Hatrean pantheon is far more likely, as suggested by Dirven (Dirven 2013b: 148-153). The statue is now preserved at the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul (inv. no. 3831), following the partition law of antiquities, which established that 2/3 of the findings belonged to the Ottoman Empire, while the remaining 1/3 could be brought to the foreign state (Chevalier 2002: 497-500). As stated by Dirven, the museum acquired the statue, a few years after its discovery (1908).

Given the image preserved in Fossey's folder (Fig. 13), the famous relief with dog (55 x 45cm), attendant/god and standard (*samya*) was probably discovered inside the Temenos area, possibly close to the Great Iwans.[13] The object, now preserved at the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul (inv. no. 3829) (Homès-Fredericq 1963: 56), was also studied in detail by Dirven in the same paper examining the enthroned goddess (Dirven 2013b: 151-152) (Fig. 17). On the right of the relief, a dog is engraved in left profile on a plinth. A keeper or a god with a spear (?) in the right hand and a sword on the left one is represented on the left part of the relief. Between the two described elements, an elaborated standard (*samya*) is sculpted. The dog on the pedestal is usually interpreted as the representation of a statue of the god Nergal, considering also the title Nergal *klb'*, attested several times in Hatran inscriptions, and translated differently as 'Nergal the dog', 'Nergal of the dog' or 'Nergal keeper of the dog' (Dirven 2013b: 151, footnote 43).

The naked bust of a man, as indicated by Fossey, was probably brought to France and its precise location at the moment is unknown, while the small headless deity, probably in *marmar* (gypse), was taken to Istanbul as per the partition law (Fig. 12).

## 5. SHEDDING A NEW LIGHT FROM AN ARCHIVE RESEARCH. SMALL SHRINE 2: COMBINING DATA FROM THE FRENCH AND IRAQI EXCAVATIONS

An Iraqi Archaeological Expedition, directed by F. Safar, excavated the Small Shrine 2 and the western house built close to it during the 1950s (Safar 1952: 37-52) (Fig. 18a, b). The shrine is located south of the Temenos along the so-called south circumvallation, where the Small Shrines 1 and 8 were also built.[14] The shrine is similar in shape to other religious complexes situated in the dwelling area, with a wide antecella (16.2 x 5.9 m) and a narrow square cella (5.1 x 5.0 m), T-shaped shrine (Jakubiak 2014: 72-74) (Figs 19-20). Two square basements flanked the entrance were located, and were probably the plinths for the statues or the guardian lions, as in the case of Small Shrine 1.

Along the walls of the cella there are no basements, which in other cases sustained statues of gods, kings or lords, priests, and nobles. Two rooms were built on both sides of the cella during a second phase of the shrine.

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[13] The relief could have also been discovered in Small Shrine 2 and brought only subsequently to the French camp in the Temenos area. However, this suggestion is questionable, because other objects that were found there were photographed near Small Shrine 2 and not by the Great Iwans.

[14] On the circumvallation: Foietta 2018: 203.

These rooms were probably part of the domestic complex built to the west. According to Safar, the domestic area should be interpreted as part of the palace of Sanatruq II, the last king of Hatra, even if he did not provide further data to support this idea (Safar 1951).

Several goddesses statues have been found inside the shrine:

- a goddess on a round bas-relief resting on a carved crescent moon (Safar, Mustafa 1974: no. 193) (Fig. 21);
- a fragmentary female statue. A tunic covering the lower part of her body drapes over her shoulder, a necklace with a medallion decorates her naked breasts and a partially broken crescent moon extends from her shoulders. A diadem on her head (Safar, Mustafa 1974: no. 194) (Fig. 22);
- a relief with three standing goddesses wearing long tunics. The goddess on the right shows a halo and a moon crescent on her upper back (Safar, Mustafa 1974: no. 192) (Fig. 23).

A burner was also discovered in the antecella (h. 90 cm, w. 35 cm, t. 30 cm). On its main face is carved a bearded male figure, who has been identified with Nergal for the similarity of the iconographic features with the famous 'Cerberus relief' from Small Shrine 1, or better a Zaqiqu, given the presence of the inscription H13 on it, mentioning this particular god (Fig. 24).[15]

According to the archaeologists who excavated the shrine, Small Shrine 2 was dedicated to Atargatis for the iconography of the female goddess (Safar, Mustafa 1974: 204) (Fig. 22), while according to K. Jakubiak, it was dedicated possibly to Nanaya, Atargatis, or to another local goddess (Jakubiak 2013: 93-94; Jakubiak 2014: 72-74).

The findings uncovered by the French Expedition, whose location is impossible to attest precisely, must be added to the statues found by the Iraqi Archaeological Expedition. The presence of the enthroned goddess (Fig. 16) confirms the hypothesis that the entire shrine could be devoted to an important goddess, who was worshipped alongside other 'secondary' deities, as was a common practice in smaller shrines at Hatra. The recovery of the small warrior deity statue with a sceptre must be considered in this sense. The small statue could be identified with a local god, quite similar to others recovered in other minor shrines. The naked male bust could be identified with a fragment of a Herakles/Nergal, although only a direct survey of the statue would settle the issue.[16] The left arm seems to be in fact at a right angle as to hold something, perhaps a cup or the apples of the Hesperides, similarly to other statues of Heracles/Nergal at the site (Fig. 12).

The inscription (H28) mentioning the mother of Sanatruq II's son, 'bad Samya, could come both from the area of the small shrine, given the numerous dedications of statues discovered inside the small shrines, or from the domestic complex, reinforcing Safar's suggestion that this was the palace of Sanatruq II, although the dimensions and features of the rooms do not seem to support this assumption. It is interesting in any case that the statue of Sanatruq II's wife and mother of the crown-prince was not discovered during the French and Iraqi Excavations. For this reason, it is possible to suggest that the statue was most likely located in an area of the house that had not been excavated yet, or that the buildings (shrine and house) were sacked during the final siege of Hatra (AD 240/1), or (more plausible) that the 'queen' statue was incomplete and still had to be placed on its basement. Perhaps the dramatic historical events of the last years of Hatra prevent its placement on the basement?

The study of the finds discovered inside Small Shrine 2, or in its proximity, by cross-checking both published and unpublished information from different archaeological expeditions, allows 'fresh' interpretations that are based on the existing photographs, notes and archive documents, without the need of new field research. This method is economically sustainable and is indeed relevant because it could be further improved and rapidly extended to other religious contexts of the city. In fact, the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage archive contains a considerable amount of unpublished information concerning the Small Shrines excavated in the Fifties, which, alongside data preserved in other archives of archaeological expeditions, would represent a fundamental source for the future to better understand such religious buildings, where kings, aristocrats and priests made their offerings to the deities of the local pantheon.

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[15] Safar, Mustafa 1974: 191; Foietta 2019: 201. On H13, see Aggoula 1991, 11-14.

[16] For the identification as a male bust, see Appendix 1.

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## APPENDIX 1

Charles Fossey's Letter to the Minister of Education (Ministre de l'Instruction et des Beaux Arts)

Monsieur le Ministre,

Vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'accorder en 1898 les premiers fonds nécessaire pour entreprendre des fouilles à Tchatal Tépé et, au printemps dernier, sur un avis de l'Ambassade, je partais pour Constantinople. Le Gouvernement turc déclarait ne pas s'opposer aux fouilles et attendre seulement le consentement du propriétaire du terrain pour un délivrer l'autorisation nécessaire. J'espérais obtenir en consentement contre une indemnité raisonnable, mais je me heurtai à des prétentions inacceptables. Féherir – Pacha voulait que l'Ambassadeur le fut nommer Montessarif d'un sanjah indépendant; il se serait contenté d'une promesse mais appuyée d'un dépôt de quarante mille francs. J'avais perdu trois mois à négocier avec lui et fait une première brèche avec crédits qui n'étaient alloués : je voulais une compensation. J'échouai encore dans une demande que je fis pour fouiller à Laktché Gömel dans la même région que Tchatál tépé et c'est au mois de Septembre seulement que j'obtins du Ministre de la Liste civile la promesse ferme d'une autorisation pour El-Ḥaḍra. Je me trouvais ainsi amené par le force des circonstances à entreprendre des travaux beaucoup plus considérables que ceux pour lesquels j'avais demandé et obtenu des crédits : je devais en outre faire jusqu'à Mossoul un long et couteaux voyage. Mais que je crus que l'essentiel était de faire quelque chose et je partis sans hésiter. Malgré les promesses du Ministre, j'attendis encore à Mossoul deux mois pendant lesquels mes fonds allèrent sans cesse diminuant. D'autant plus que, pour utiliser et séjour forcé sur les bords du Tigres, j'avais entrepris d'aller à Bavian estamper les inscriptions de Sennachérib. Quand enfin l'iradé arriva, quand j'eus réglé les dernières formalités avec les autorités locales, je m'aperçus qu'il ne me restait guère que l'argent nécessaire a mon retour. Je pouvais d'autant moins y songer que devant fouiller sur un terrain appartenant

au Sultan, j'avais obtenu de pacha de la liste civile à Mossoul des conditionnes tout a fait exceptionnelles. Il m'accordait conformément à l'ancienne loi turque, la seule qu'il connaît sans doute, le tiers des objets trouvés et je savais que la sortie des antiquités par Bassorah n'offrait aucune difficulté. J'adressai donc l'Académie des Inscriptions une demande des subsides et j'organisai mon départ pour El-Ḥaḍra. Je partis de Mossoul le 7 Janvier avec une cinquantaine d'ouvriers et des provisions pour deux mois, car je ne devais rien trouver sur place, mon champ de fouille se trouvait en plain désert, à trois journées de Mossoul et à deux journées du village le plus rapproché. Arrivé le 9 Janvier, je ne pus commencer les travaux que le 16, à cause d'une bande de Bédouines qui nous tint assiégés sur le ruine du palais jusqu'à l'arrivée des secours envoyés par le Vali. J'attaquai alors un de nombreux monticules qui entourent l'enceinte du palais comme le montrent le photographies, 1., 2. et 3., et j'eus le bonheur de trouver des les premiers jours une inscriptions en caractère araméennes (photo n. 4), une statuette féminine avec une inscription araméenne sur la base, un torse de homme (photo n. 6) et deux autres fragments de statuettes. J'ouvris plusieurs autres tranchées, mais je ne puis pas les pousser assez loin, spécialement dans un endroit que je suppose avoir été le sanctuaire particulier du palais : les murés sont conservés dans toute leur hauteur mais le voûte très centré a, en s'effondrant, entassé sur le sol plus de trois mètres de pierres. La somme que j'avais eu pouvoir avancer en attendant la réponse de l'Académie des Inscriptions, était épuisée e comme je l'appris en rentrant à Paris, des préoccupations plus graves avaient empêché Monsieur Collignon de transmettre une demande à l'Académie.

Je dus donc interrompre les travaux et suivre au retour. L'inscription araméenne restait sur le chantier, faute de ressources pour la transporter i parmi les autres objets. Je choisi le torse que je rapportai en France et que je tiens à la disposition du Musé du Louvre.

Je n'ai guère pas fait qu'un sondage à El-Ḥaḍra, mais il m'a paré justifier pleinement mes espérances et démontrer l'intérêt que présenterais des fouilles sinon complètes – le champ est immense du moins prolongées. Il faudrait dégager les pièces principales du palais et tout d'abord celle où je place le temple, reconnaître une certain nombre d'édifices disséminés dans l'enceinte de la ville et fouiller une certaine de maisons comme celle qui m'a fourni les objets mentionnés plus haut.

Les résultats seraient certainement importants pour l'épigraphie sémitique et pour l'histoire de l'art.

Je vous demanderai dons Monsieur le Ministre.

1° de vouloir bien de me faire rembourser une somme de deux mille cinq cents franc que j'ai dépensais en plus de crédits qui m'était alloué.

2° de m'accorder le crédit nécessaire pour entreprendre et mener à bien des fouilles sérieuses. Je le voudrais suffisant pour être assuré que les travaux ne seront pas une seconde fois interrompus. Chaque interruption, chaque voyage représentent une perte d'argent considérable. Mon désir serait de rester sur le terrain, au tant au moins dans la contrée, jusqu'au l'achèvement des fouilles. Si elles doivent être suspendues pendant quelques mois d'été. Je voudrais, au bien de rentrer en France, explorer le pays et notamment la montagne de Sindjar.

Notre connaissance de villages du Mossul est si imparfaite qu'on ne peut pas [...] avec parti de données géographiques contenues dans les inscriptions assyriennes.

Mes dépenses, en fouillant avec une cinquantaine d'ouvriers, s'élèvent à environ cent franc par jour. Il me faudrait donc trente mille francs pour travailler dix mois, plus dix mille francs pour voyage d'aller et retour, achat de matière, transport des antiquités, etc, soit en tout quarante mille francs.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Ministre, l'assurance de mon profond respect.

Fossey

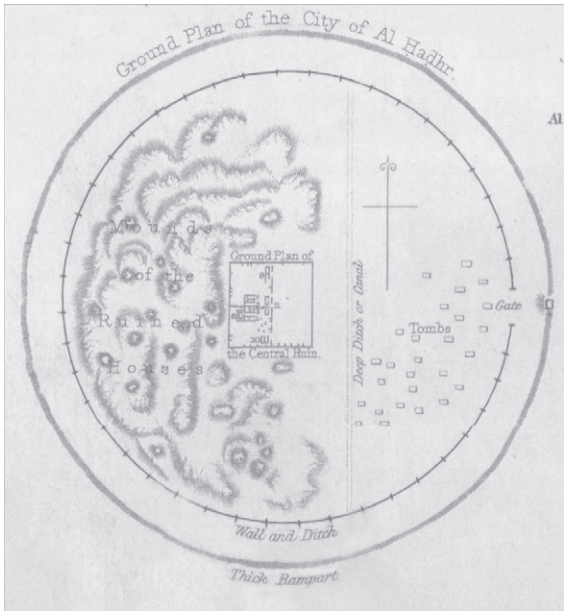



**Fig. 1:** General plan of Hatra (Ross 1839: pl. II).

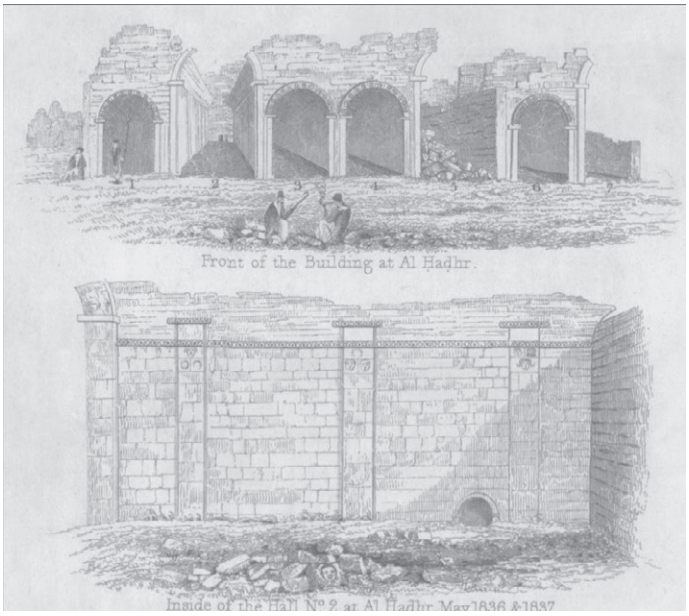



**Fig. 2:** Sketch of the Great Iwans and Twin Iwans and inner part of the Great South Iwan (Ross 1839: Pl. II).

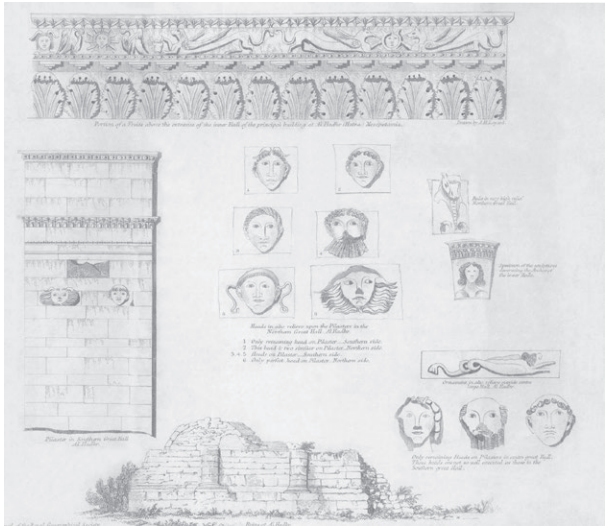


**Fig. 3:** Lintel decoration of the door between the Square Temple and the Great South Iwan, masques and decorated voussoirs of the Great Iwans. Façade one funerary building of the city (Ainsworth 1841: Pl. I, Layard's drawings).

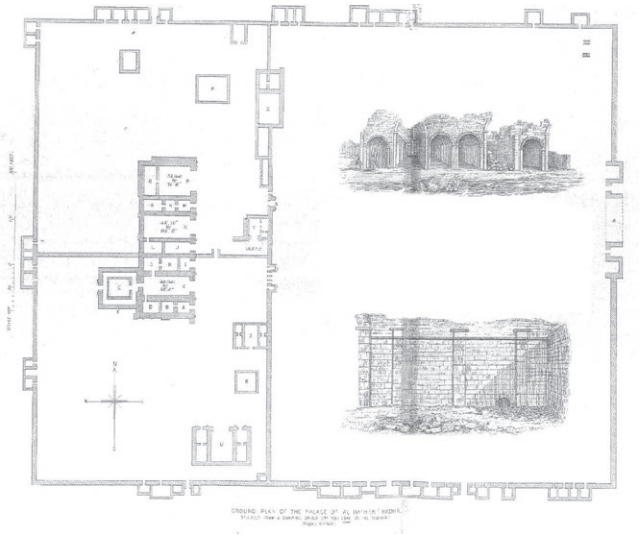


**Fig. 4:** General plan of the Temenos and sketch of the Great Iwans and Twin Iwans and inner part of the Great South Iwan drawn by Ross (Layard 1891).

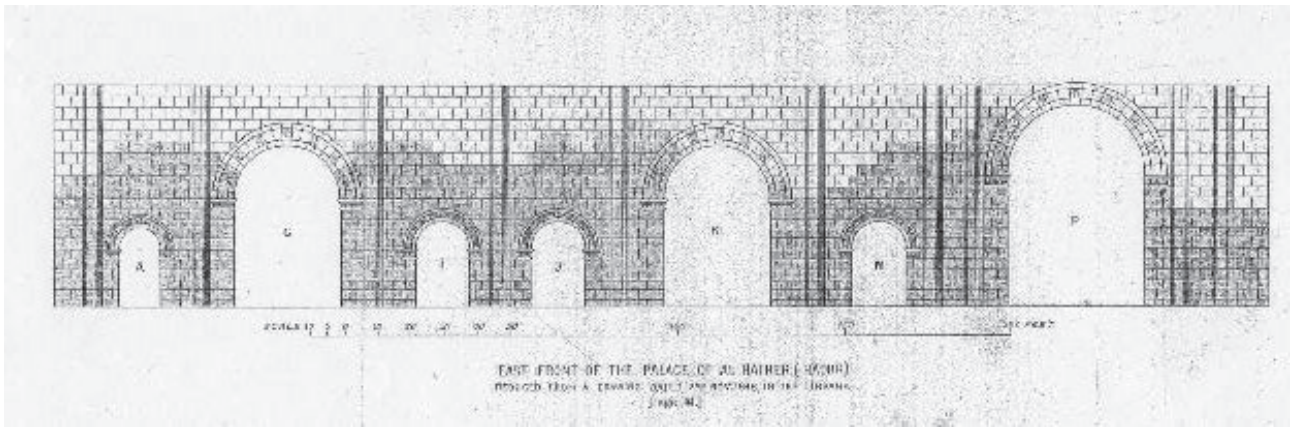


**Fig. 5:** Façade of the Great Iwans (Layard 1891).

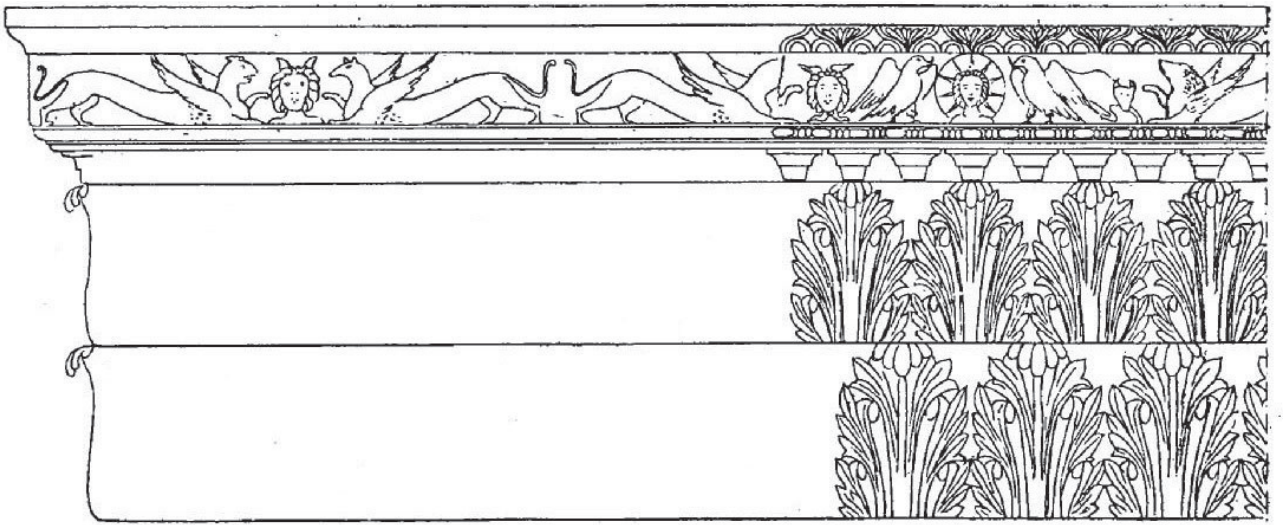
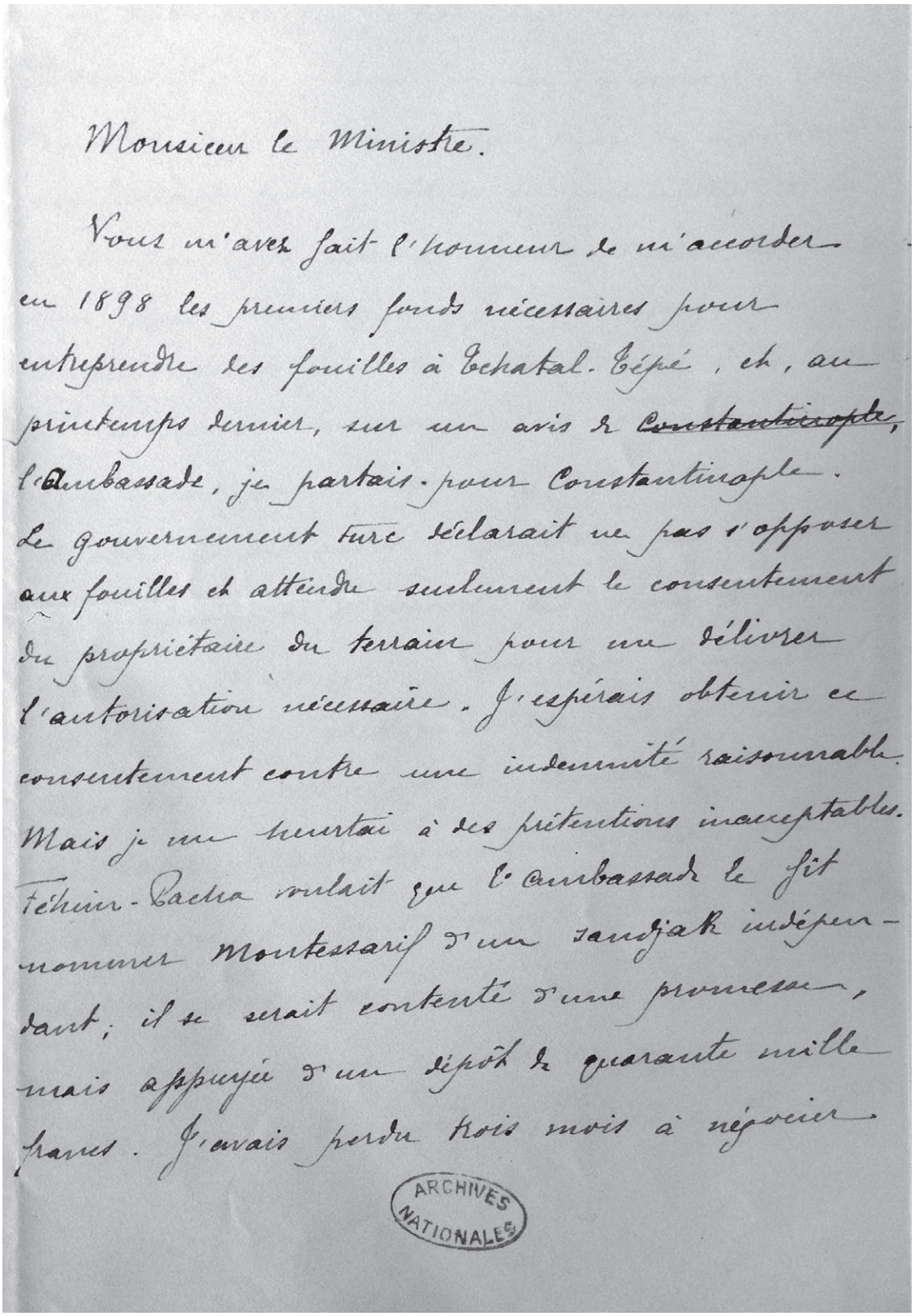


**Fig. 6:** Lintel decoration of the door between the Square Temple and the Great South Iwan (Jacquerel 1897: 350, fig. 7).



Monsieur le Ministre.

Vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'accorder en 1898 les premiers fonds nécessaires pour entreprendre des fouilles à Echatal-Eyuk, ch, au printemps dernier, sur un avis de ~~Constantinople~~, l'Ambassade, je partais pour Constantinople. Le gouvernement turc déclarait ne pas s'opposer aux fouilles et attendre seulement le consentement du propriétaire du terrain pour me délivrer l'autorisation nécessaire. J'espérais obtenir ce consentement contre une indemnité raisonnable. Mais je me heurtai à des prétentions inacceptables. Tchuin-Pacha voulait que l'Ambassade le fit nommer Mutessarif d'un sandjak indépendant; il se serait contenté d'une promesse, mais appuyée d'un dépôt de quarante mille francs. J'avais perdu trois mois à négocier



**Fig. 7:** First page of letter sent by Ch. Fossey to the French Ministry dated 30 April 1899 (Archives Nationales de France - Paris F17/2963).

**Fig. 8:** General view of the Temenos area – Dossier Fossey, Photograph no. 1 (Archives Nationales de France - Paris F17/2963).

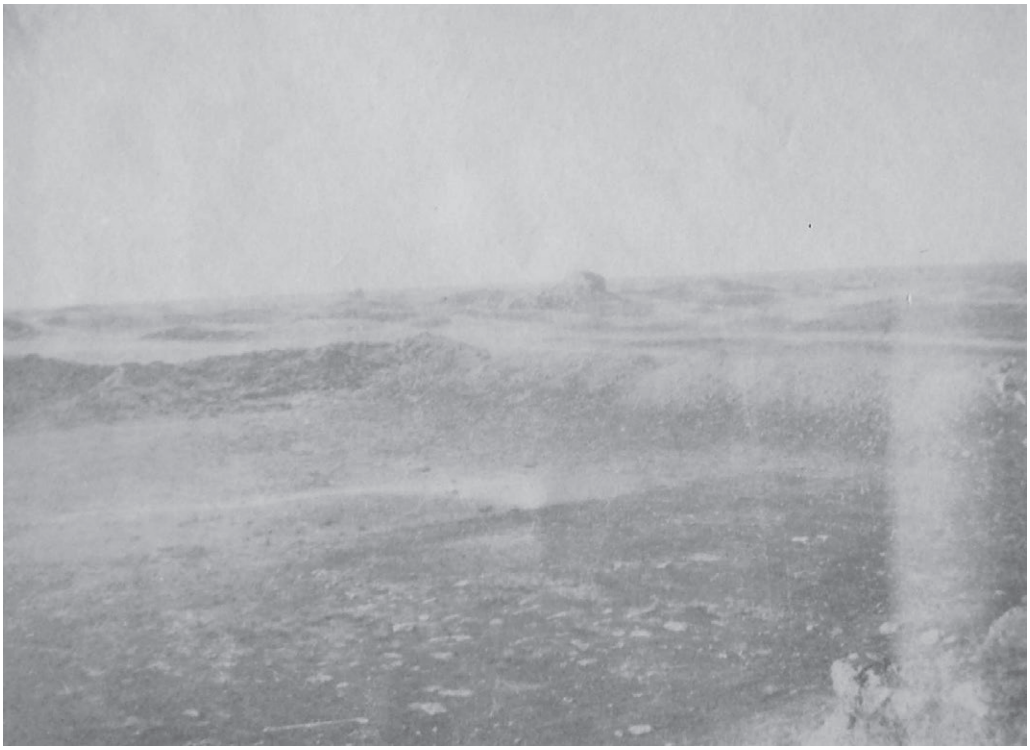


**Fig. 9:** General view of the Temenos area – Dossier Fossey, Photograph no. 2 (Archives Nationales de France - Paris F17/2963).

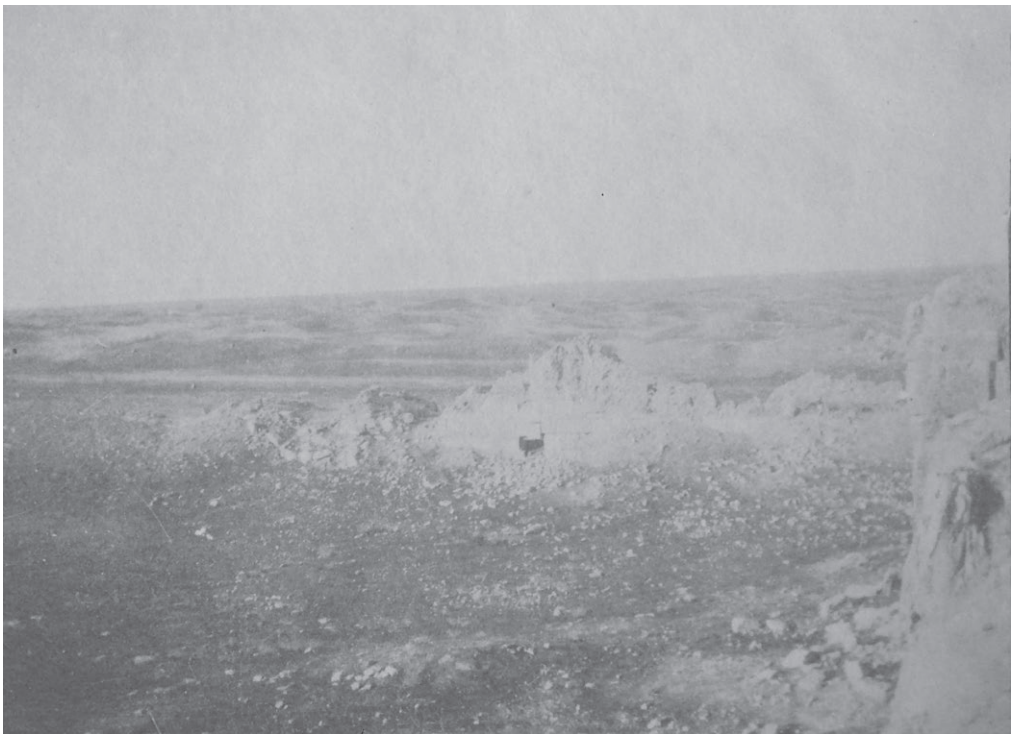


**Fig. 10:** General view of the Temenos area – Dossier Fossey, Photograph no. 3 (Archives Nationales de France - Paris F17/2963).

**Fig. 11:** Inscription H28 from Small Shrine 2 or the nearby west dwelling area - Dossier Fossey, Photograph no. 4 (Archives Nationales de France - Paris F17/2963).

**Fig. 12:** Sculptures recovered by the French Expedition in the area of the Small Shrine 2 and the dwelling area nearby - Dossier Fossey, Photograph no. 5 (Archives Nationales de France - Paris F17/2963).

**Fig. 13:** Relief with a dog on a basement, attendant/god and standard (*samya*) - Dossier Fossey, Photograph no. 6 (Archives Nationales de France - Paris F17/2963).

**Fig. 14:** Picture of the trench area (Small Shrine 2 and dwelling area nearby) - Dossier Fossey, Photograph no. 7 (Archives Nationales de France - Paris F17/2963).

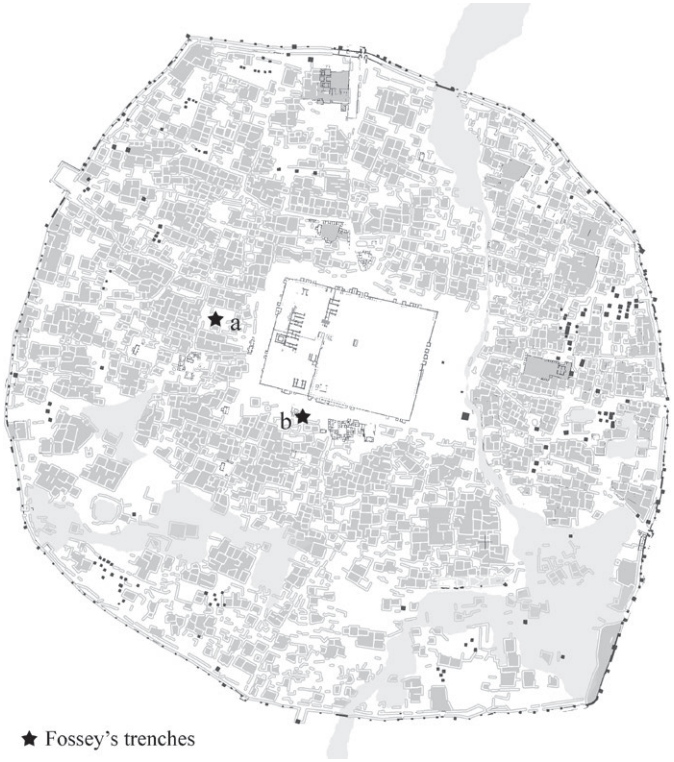



**Fig. 15:** Placement of Fossey's trenches (HatraGIS).

**Fig. 16:** Enthroned goddess from Small Shrine 2, Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, inv. no. 3831 (Dirven 2013b: 156, figs 1-4).

**Fig. 17:** Relief with a dog on a basement, attendant/god and standard (*samya*), Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, inv. no. 3829 (Dirven 2013b: 157, fig. 5).


**Fig. 18a-b:** Location and general plan of the Small Shrine 2 and the dwelling area nearby (HatraGIS – E. Foietta from Safar, Mustafa 1974: 303).

**Fig. 19:** Antecella of Small Shrine 2 from South (Archivio della Missione Archeologica Italiana a Hatra – Torino).

**Fig. 20:** Cella of Small Shrine 2 from South (Archivio della Missione Archeologica Italiana a Hatra – Torino).

**Fig. 21:** Goddess on a round bas-relief resting on a carved crescent moon (Al-Salihi 1978: 27).

**Fig. 21:** Goddess on a round bas-relief resting on a carved crescent moon (Al-Salihi 1978: 27).

**Fig. 23:** Relief with three standing goddesses wearing long tunics (Safar, Mustafa 1974: no. 195).

**Fig. 24:** Altar with a god carved on the main face (Al-Salihi 1978: 36).

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# Meeting a Learned Society: The Archaeology of ASOR as Reflected in its Annual Meeting, Boston 2017

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**Abstract.** This article is a study of the ASOR society, based on a database compiled from the 2017 annual meeting at Boston, one of the largest meetings in its history. Such a study has not been performed before. We study the research of ASOR as represented in the meeting by the roles of the scholar-members (poster presenters, lecture presenters, and session chairs), their research subjects (geographic areas, periods, and topics), and their affiliations (gender and institutions). The analysis leads to several questions – and conclusions – about Archaeology in the Ancient Near East (ANE). Despite important progress by ASOR (e.g., in addressing gender), ANE archaeology is still a privilege of the 'west'. Rarely a 'local' scholar spices up the discussions. Modern politics and ideologies determine what areas are studied and what topics of research are 'in'. Political neutrality is proclaimed, but not achieved, in the spaces of the meeting. The aim of the article is to foster discussion about these systematic issues, which do not have easy solutions. By presenting quantified data, they can no longer be dismissed as unsubstantiated, personal impressions.

**Keywords.** ASOR, History of Archaeology, Ethics, Power Relations, Ancient Near East, Oriental, Israel/Palestine.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The large and important American Society of Overseas Research (at time of writing, still the American Schools of Oriental Research) (ASOR) is unearthing the past of the Ancient Near East (ANE) since 1900, and is itself a worthy subject for research (see King 1983; Seger 2001; Clark and Matthews 2003; Shirley and Seger 2020). In this article we study the current research of ASOR, by using the abstract book of its annual meeting at Boston (Abstract Book 2017) as a database. To the best of our knowledge, no such study has been performed in the field of ANE Archaeology (in other fields see, for example, Simon-Madea 2016). Boston 2017 was one the largest of ASOR's meetings, with over 600 lectures. Hence, it was an

obvious choice for this study. The data shows diverse aspects of the current research of ASOR, as performed by the scholar-members who have actively participated in the meeting. They performed as poster-presenters, presenters of papers (lecturers) and session-chairs, and we can study their institutional affiliations, gender, and research interests (areas, periods, topics of research, etc.).

This article raises issues that pertain to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in the twenty-first century, and its ideological and political backgrounds. Our conclusions can and should be debated. An open discussion will do ASOR the best service and reflect best its noble mission of 'fostering original research, encouraging scholarship, and disseminating research results while adhering to the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse' (Abstract Book 2017:4).

The Boston Abstract Book (Fig. 1), with more than 600 abstracts, gives a good picture of current ASOR research.[1] There are, naturally, limitations. The book does not represent all those attending the meeting. Some scholar-members attend the meeting, but do not give presentations; others do not attend (membership of ASOR, at about 1800 members, is not limited to scholars). A study of one meeting cannot offer a *longue durée*, but hopefully, it can be achieved by future studies of more meetings.

The data in the Abstract Book is also partial. An abstract is not always a precise summary of a delivered presentation. To know, one has to attend the presentation; but this is impossible with 600 presentations, of which many are simultaneous. A few last-minute changes or cancellations might not appear in the Abstract Book (but do not affect the general conclusions). The institutional affiliations marked for the presenters (except the so-called 'independent scholars', which are few) do not match exactly nationality, ethnicity, or residence. We can connect an affiliation to a country (or countries), where the research is being administered (even if the fieldwork is done in the ANE).

ASOR maintains overseas centers in the ANE (Luke and Kersel 2013; Kersel and Luke 2018). Yet almost all the scholars that participated in the Boston meeting under such an affiliation, for example, from the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, work there temporarily; they are not 'locals'. Hence, they are considered here according to the host institutions (mostly in the USA). The American University of Beirut operates only in Lebanon and is not an organic part of ASOR; therefore, scholars affiliated to it are labeled under 'Lebanon'. Needless to say, a few cases of doubt exist in any database of this kind; but their number is small.

We discuss the data in three sections, according to the different roles of the scholar-members participating in the meeting: posters, presentations, and sessions.[2]

## 2. POSTERS

Thirty-seven 'posters on parade' were presented in Boston. The geographic regions dealt with by the posters were Jordan (10 posters), Israel (8), Cyprus (4), Turkey (4), Arabia and the Persian Gulf (3), Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan (2), and Egypt (1). Two more posters concerned the Southern Levant, a term that usually denotes Israel/Palestine, Jordan, and northern Sinai. The remaining three posters were more general in scope: one on the history of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the second on *tholos* architecture, and the third on loom-weights.

The geographical regions (above) reflect modern states. The ancient cultures, which have existed in the same areas, usually cut the modern borders or are subsumed within them. The four Turkey-labelled posters give an

[1] For disclosure, the author participated in the 2017 and in various other annual meetings of ASOR. Some of the terminology of the Abstract Book is followed here, for example "presentations" (and not lectures/papers) and "chairs" (not chairpersons). Common abbreviations are used for periods: EB for Early Bronze, MB for Middle Bronze, and LB for Late Bronze. The periods are equated between regions (e.g., EB with Early Dynastic Mesopotamia and Old Kingdom Egypt). Such approximations enable us to avoid breaking up the discussion between different regions. Areas follow modern entities. Mesopotamia, however, includes Iraq and parts of Syria and Turkey. We kept 'Mesopotamia', because many presentations (e.g., on cuneiform sources) do not fit modern borders.

[2] We do not discuss here keynote speakers and managerial roles (board and committee members). Since the contribution of this article is not in the realm of statistics, we use simple percentages and avoid statistical jargon.

example: though they are related to sites in modern Turkey, three concern the Ḫatai region, which can be seen, culturally, as North Syrian in some periods. The fourth poster, on Kültepe in central Turkey, is partially 'Mesopotamian' in that it treats cuneiform documents. There were no posters in the 2017 meeting about the Hittite Empire, Urartu, or Phrygia, which are all cultures of Asia Minor, presently Turkey. None of the four Turkey-labelled posters was made by a scholar affiliated with a Turkish institution.

Twenty-six posters were focused on more-or-less specific periods of time. The most popular period was the Iron Age (11 posters: five on Israel, two on Arabia, two on south-eastern Turkey; and one each on Jordan and Iraqi Kurdistan). Second in place was the Hellenistic/Roman periods (five posters: two on Cyprus, and one each on Egypt, Israel, and Jordan), followed by Prehistory and EB (four posters, on Jordan and the Southern Levant) and the MB (three posters on Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey). Two posters (on Israel and Turkey) were dedicated to the LB period, one (on Cyprus) to the MB-LB, and one to pre-Islamic Arabia. Ten other posters where not focused on a specific period.

Among the ten posters on Jordan, four encompassed a wide range of time, and the rest were divided, with one poster for each of the following periods: Prehistory, EB, MB, Iron Age, and Roman. In contrast, five of the eight posters on Israel were dedicated to the Iron Age. The focus on the Iron Age period in the archaeology in Israel is not a new phenomenon. It relates to modern national feelings, since this period is viewed as 'our' period, of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, or the First Temple period (in past studies also called 'the Israelite period'; on archaeology and nationalism in Israel see Roth and Meskell 2002; Baram and Rowan 2004; Kletter 2006; Kohl *et al*. 2007; Thompson 2009; Oestigaard 2013; Sherrard 2015).

Seven posters were dedicated to pottery; six presented a site or a group of sites, and two addressed each of the following subjects: settlement patterns, textiles/weaving, architecture, and art. Other subjects (agriculture, heritage, history of archaeology, etc.) were represented by single posters.

Seventy-eight scholars participated in making the posters. Four posters involved large teams of scholars: nine (all from the American Center of Oriental Research at Amman – in this case tagged 'Jordan', based on the names); seven (five scholars from the USA, two from Dubai); six (all USA); and four (three from the USA and one from Israel). Teams of three scholars cooperated in five posters (two posters by American teams, one Israeli, one German, and one 'mixed' team from the USA, Canada, and Germany). Pairs of scholars were responsible for eight posters (five USA pairs, one Czech pair, one USA-UK pair, and one Germany-Italy pair). It seems that cross-country cooperation in posters was quite limited, mostly to excavation projects shared by scholars from several countries. Twenty posters were presented by single scholars, as follows: USA (11), Canada (5), Australia (1), Finland (1), Spain (1), and the UK (1).

The posters were quite equally divided between female (41) and male (36) scholars (we did not manage to verify gender in one case). The dominancy of the 'West' in the archaeology of ASOR can be seen by the fact that the majority (59) of the poster makers have 'western' affiliations (USA 41, Canada 6, Germany 5, Czech Republic 2, UK 2, and one each from Italy, Finland, and Spain). Scholars from institutions in the Middle East were a small minority: nine from Jordan/ACOR (all in one poster; but the institution itself was 'western', and likely not all the nine participated in person in the meeting), seven from Israel, and two from Dubai.[3]

Religious influence on the archaeology of the ANE should be discussed (ASOR itself was founded by ministers and for many years dedicated to Biblical Archaeology). However, the present database is too limited for studying this aspect. The religious affiliation of some institutions (mainly from the USA) is noted in their titles. For example, institutions of the Seventh Day Adventists (posters by five scholars), Baptists (three), and Mormons (three). However, such affiliations do not necessarily reflect the beliefs of individual scholars. Other institutions may carry religious titles on account of their long history, without having a religious character at present.

Data from the books of the ASOR meetings can be used to chart social networks of scholars, based on their sharing of posters, presentations, sessions, etc. Recent, interesting work on this subject is performed by Edwards

[3] We excluded the 36 'Digital Posters' (Abstract Book 2017: 54–55) from the discussion, because these posters focused on one specific aspect – digital archaeology – and were perhaps chosen by different criteria than the regular posters.

(for preliminary results see Edwards 2019). One must be aware that such networks reflect power relations more than scientific qualities. Scientific work happens across the entire network, in each and every nodule. Whether some nodules are described by Social Network Analysis in terms of 'weak' or 'strong', it bears no relation to their scientific merits. Many scholars in the humanities tend to work alone or in small groups. The scientific quality of their work has no direct match to the number of the 'connections' that they share. ASOR rules wisely state that a scholar can give only one presentation and serve as chair of only one session per each annual meeting. Occasionally, exceptions are made for scholars who come from far-away countries and/or do not have sufficient funds to join every year. Unfortunately, in recent years at least some fame-driven scholars have managed to bypass the rules. Usually, it is professors with access to large grants who direct teams of excavations (or other large projects). They hold a position of power over their students. They use it to plaster their names on posters and presentations, which are the product of the students.[4] The students are in no position to object; they are told that it is an honor and a common procedure to share work in this way with the heads of the project. In fact, it is a means of self-publicity, adorning oneself with borrowed plumes. To give examples, in the 2017 Boston meeting one professor was named on 16 posters, and in the San Diego meeting (Abstract Book 2019) one professor was named in the title of seven presentations, beside a panel discussion and a chair-role.[5] A professor may appear alone on one lecture, and together with team members on another, in the same meeting, concerning the same site (for example, compare Abstract Book 2017: lectures 2c1 and 2j3). It seems that the ideology of "shared by all" binds the team members, but not the professors who direct them.

This deserves condemnation, not admiration. Fame-driven scholars might claim that they should be mentioned in titles (not, as should be the case, in acknowledgements), because they make the studies possible by raising the necessary funds. Following this logic, titles of posters, presentations, and scientific publications should include also the names of the donors, because they too make the studies possible. Also, names of rectors and presidents of universities and of related State officials.

## 3. PRESENTATIONS

We numbered each presentation ('lecture' in other conferences) according to the session initials in the Abstract Book and a running number (so for example, the second presentation in session 3c is '3c2'). We excluded cancelled presentations (when made known in advance). In total, we counted 602 presentations, delivered over three days (days 1-3, 16th-18th November 2017; the plenary presentation was marked as Day 0).

It was difficult to decide, for one item, if it was a mere introduction to a session, or a full presentation. The short program (Abstract Book 2017: 35) referred to this item as an introduction, but the abstract (Abstract Book 2017: 133, 6j1) gave it in the format of a full presentation (bold title, full abstract). The author wrote:

> *I will present the main finds from the five seasons of excavations conducted at the site, and summarize their implications for the history of the site from the first settlement during the Early Bronze Age III period, through the Middle Bronze Age, when the site was fortified with a mud brick wall on a solid stone foundation, and mainly during the Late Bronze Age, when remains were found in almost all the excavated areas. I will focus also on the Iron Age IIA and IIB period, from which remains are also found in most parts of the site... An important part of the presentation [sic] will be the next settlement peak at the site that happened during the Persian period and continued into the early Hellenistic period...* (Abstract Book 2017: 133).

All this and more in five minutes? Fifty-five more sessions at Boston included short introductions (Abstract Book 2017: 20–55), and the chairs never thought that their introductions required a long, special abstract. They

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[4] It seems, but this goes beyond the subject of this article, that some also add their names to publications that are generated by their students, under the pretext that "all the team" shares every publication.

[5] Referring by the session initials and a running number, the presentations were 7c2, 7h5, 8e4, 9i3, 11g5, 12g5, and 12g6; the panel discussion 8i; and the chair-role 11g.

just wrote 'introduction', that's all. This chair invented a new academic genre: a long, detailed abstract for a five-minute introduction. Giving it the benefit of doubt, we counted 602 presentations.[6]

### *3.1. Geographical Areas of Presentations*

The most popular area in terms of presentations was Israel (168 presentations, 28% of all presentations) (Table 1), followed by Mesopotamia (55, 9.1%), Jordan (54, 9%), Turkey (40, 6.6%), and Egypt (35, 5.8%). The list was closed by few presentations that related to the outskirts of the ANE (Libya, Tunisia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus).

If one considers the size of each area, the disparity in the geography of the presentations is obvious. For Turkey, each presentation 'covered' an area of about 19,575 km$^2$, while for Jordan 1655 and for Israel 124.

Cyprus and Lebanon were quite well represented (27 and 17 presentations, respectively), considering their relatively small areas.[7] The Aegean World (including Greece) was practically missing, except a few presentations on western Turkey. This is because Greece is traditionally considered to be part of Europe, not of the ANE.

Syria was hardly represented, except the north Syrian/Orontes area, which was divided, since five-six presentations about it were tagged 'Syria' (with Cilicia, 12) and nine 'Turkey'.

Israel dominated the meeting with 168 presentations (*ca*. 28%). It also tended to dominate sessions on the 'South Levant' and 'South Phoenicia'. One obvious reason for this is the participation of many scholars from Israel, who often receive funds for travel to conferences from their institutions. Also, the stability and friendly relations of Israel with the USA encourage work in Israel and travel to conferences in the USA. There is also the presence of branches of 'foreign' research in Israel, particularly the Albright Institute in Jerusalem. Finally, there is the influence of 'the Land of the Bible' (even if explicit 'biblical' presentations were few at Boston).

### *3.2. Periods of Presentations*

Of 602 presentations, 138 were general, that is, they encompassed several periods, or had no clear indication of a specific period (Table 2). Excluding these general presentations, the Bronze Age (*ca*. 2300 years) was represented by 153 presentations; the Iron Age (600 years) by 91; the Classical – Hellenistic to Byzantine – periods (1000 years) by 106; and the 'Late' (Islamic to Modern) periods (1400 years) by 46. Most of the presenters, therefore, dealt with the Bronze, Iron, and Classical periods.

Prehistory barely appeared, while the long Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods received modest attention. We see a steady flow of presentations on the EB (32), MB (44) and LB (37) periods (roughly 5.3–7.3% of all the presentations). Then, a sharp increase with 91 Iron Age presentations (15%). The Roman Period was the most popular among Classical periods (28 presentations). Presentations on Islamic periods were rare (13, 2.2%); but interest revived in the modern period (33 presentations, 5.5%).

### *3.3. Topics of Presentations*

The variety of the subjects offered at the 2017 meeting was impressive. Popular topics were, in alphabetic order:
Archaeozoology and Archaeobotany: 18 presentations (11 and seven, respectively).
Architecture (palaces, fortifications, gates...): 30
Art history (frescoes, statues, masks, etc.): 20
Burial and death: 32.

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[6] We based the analysis on the more detailed abstracts, and noticed the discrepancy *vs*. the short program for this item only at a later stage.
[7] In earlier meetings of ASOR there were only a few presentations on Lebanon (I thank one of the readers of Asiana for this observation). So the relatively large number in 2017 may well be an exception. As mentioned, we have here the picture of one meeting, not a representative picture over time.

Complexity (mainly formation of cities/states): 17.
Data analysis and recording (GIS, CRANE, ARCHEM, OCHRE): 27.
Economic aspects (debt, slavery, trade, weights, hoards, etc.): 35.
Excavation and survey reports: 63 (mostly on recent/current projects).
Gender: 20.
Heritage and cultural resources: 17.
Honorary presentations: 12.
Pottery: 29.
Religion (temples, cults, votive objects, etc.): 29.
Science in Archaeology: 18.
Seals: 12.
Settlement patterns: 13.
Texts and inscriptions: 47.
Water (baths, réservoirs, tsunami deposits, etc.): 17.

Other presentations (101) included the following topics: biblical (6), figurines (8), glass (6), History of archaeology (4), identity (8), maritime archaeology (9), senses (6), and overseas centers (6). Thirty-seven additional presentations were defined as 'general', covering an array of different subject, such as transitions between periods and stratigraphy.

### *3.4. The Presenters*

The total number of presenters was 846. It signifies roles rather than people, since some presenters were listed more than once (in shared presentations); quite many presentations were shared by two (78 presentations), three (29), and even more scholars (26).

Fourteen presentations were listed with four scholars each; six with five scholars; two with six scholars (6c1; 1j1); two with seven scholars (3c2, 11a4), one with nine scholars (1a3), and one with 12 (9a1). Did so many persons make together one presentation? It is unlikely. Many of those listed did not even attend the annual meeting. We have therefore decided that in the case of presentations with four or more names, we register the first two and the last, and exclude the rest as 'additional' scholars. We did not apply the same measure to posters, since the number of posters (and posters with many co-authors) was small. ASOR requires that the name of the person delivering the presentation is underlined in the program. When marked thus, we included this person, regardless of the order in the list. Based on these criteria, we defined 56 'additional' scholars, 16 female and 40 male.[8] We believe that excluding them reduces biases.

The remaining 790 presenter-roles were quite evenly divided between men (190) and women (174). (Table 3) As expected, the USA led the list with 364 presenter-roles (46.1%). This is only natural for a conference of a USA society that is held in the USA. The second place was occupied by Israel, with 168 presenter-roles (21.3%); but of them, men (102) outnumber women (66).

Only three other countries had more than 20 representatives: the UK (39, 4.9%), Canada (35, 4.4%), and Germany (24, 3%). Next in order were several European countries – Italy (19 presenters), France (15), Austria (13), and the Netherlands (11).

Together, the 16 represented European countries had 163 presenter-roles (20.7%), equally divided between women (81) and men (82).[9] In contrast (excluding Israel), ten countries located in or on the outskirts of the Near

[8] Seven of the 'additional' female scholars were affiliated with the USA, two were independent scholars, and one each was affiliated with Austria, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, and Poland. Of the forty 'additional' male scholars, nine were affiliated with Israel, eight with the USA, seven with Georgia (all in one presentation, 9a1), four with Dubai, two with Australia, two with France, two with Germany, and one each with Belgium, Canada, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey (add one independent scholar).

[9] The countries were: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK.

East (Cyprus, Dubai, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia, and Turkey) had only 31 presenter-roles (3.9%; 18 women and 13 men).

The vast majority of the presenter-roles were affiliated with the 'West' (USA, Canada, and Europe: 562 roles, 71.2%), and about a fifth with Israel (168, 21.3%). The economic giants of the Far East were barely represented, and the same was true about Middle Eastern countries (excluding Israel).

### *3.5. Discussion of Presentations and Presenters*

So far, we have looked at separate aspects of presentations and presenters. Here we offer observations about relations between these fields.

ASOR has made significant progress towards gender equality, but there are still borders to cross. All the ten presenters in the two gender sessions (10i, 11e) were women, affiliated (except one from Spain) with USA institutions. Presenters in the 'dress and body' sessions (9b, 10b) were almost all women too. Is gender a feminine subject, does it 'happen' only in the (north-) western Hemisphere? Does such an unbalanced representation reflect rooted conservativism in archaeology, or in the ASOR? Or, it is a random feature of one meeting? Comparisons to more meetings are necessary before one can reach conclusions.

With European countries, the USA, and Canada, there was equality in the roles of presenters between women and men; however, considerably more male (102) than female (66) presenter-roles were from Israel. This varied between institutions (Table 4).

Against sessions with mostly women with USA affiliations presenting on gender, there were sessions with predominantly men from Israeli institutions presenting on Iron Age Israel. In the 'Yerushalayim, Al Quds, Jerusalem I' session (1b), five men from Israeli institutions discussed the First and Second Temple periods. Only one USA-based presenter was female, giving the sole 'Al Quds' presentation in this session. The 'Archaeology of Israel I' (2c) did include one woman (and four men); but the 'Archaeology of Israel II' (3c) was composed of eight men (if we include the four 'additional' scholars of 3c2, the ratio "improves" to 12:1). Adding two more sessions, on Persian Period Judah (4i) and 'Rethinking Israel' (8c, an Honorary session), the overall ratio in five sessions (1b, 2c, 3c, 4i, 8c) is 26 men to four women; and the chairs were all men too. Similarly, in the two 'Archaeology and Biblical Studies' sessions (3b, 4b) the ratio of men to women was 14:2. Compare this with the nearly equal ratio in the three sessions on 'Iraqi Kurdistan' (2a, 3a, 4a): 12 men and nine women. The scholars lecturing on Iraqi Kurdistan were mostly from the USA. One may suggest that they bring gender equality with them to an area that is 'traditional', despite the challenging working conditions there. Yet, the 'western' and Israeli scholars who lecture on Iron Age Israel, Persian period Israel, Archaeology in Israel, and Biblical Archaeology work in the opposite direction: they carve a chauvinistic niche at the heart of 'western' science.

We do not imply that every conference session must be gender balanced. The composition of a single session can be random or unintentional.[10] However, the analysis (above) seems to reflect a trend.

The 168 presenter-roles affiliated with Israeli institutions involved 126 presentations. A hundred of them (79%) were on the area of Israel. Of the rest, eight presentations were on the Levant and Southern Levant, and six on Phoenicia (some of these presentations were also focused on Israel). Remaining were a few presentations on Egypt (3), Syria (1), Cyprus and Israel (1), Levant and Cyprus (1), and four general presentations. This implies that scholars affiliated to Israeli institutions hardly discuss other areas than Israel. It is partly due to the fact that Israelis cannot work in neighboring, mostly Arab countries.

Concerning periods, 25 of these 126 presentations were general. The remaining 101 presentations were divided as follows: Prehistory and the Bronze Age (28 presentations); LB-IR (3); Iron (29); Persian and Persian-Hellenistic (7); Classic (29); Islamic/Medieval (3); and Modern periods (2). So the archaeology of scholars from Israeli institu-

[10] Such as that of a session on economy chaired by the author ('Meeting the Expenses', ASOR 2019). Of all those invited, those who actually joined the session happened to be all men.

tions is focused on 'our' periods – the Iron Age and the Classic periods; that is, the First and Second Temple and the Mishna and Talmud. Compare the data about tenured positions in Israel: in the academic year 2010/11 there were 66 fully-tenured faculty positions in archaeology in Israeli institutions. Of them, 40 (c. 61%) were in the fields of the Bronze, Iron and Classical periods, and only three in Islamic and medieval archaeology (Mazar 2011: 12). No data was given as to how many of the positions were held by women (on the underrepresentation of women in academic conferences in Israel see Eden 2016).

To compare with Israel, we grouped eight countries into an arbitrarily 'European entity' (Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the UK). Together, these countries had 186 presenter-roles in 132 presentations, equally divided between women (94) and men (92). Enjoying better access, the presenters of this imaginary 'European entity' studied many areas: the Aegean (3 presenters), Far Asia (2), Arabia (7), Cyprus (5), Egypt (13), Iran (3), Iraqi Kurdistan (9), Israel (14), Jordan (1), Lebanon (6), Levant and Southern Levant (3), Libya (1), Mesopotamia (19), Syria (10), and Turkey (8); 17 other presentations were general). The presenters of the 'European entity' dealt with Prehistory and the Bronze Ages (63 presentations), more than with the Iron and Classic periods.[11] To be fair, they represent only the 'Near Eastern' segment of the archaeology of their countries. Were we to analyze archaeology as a whole, say, in Austria or France, we would probably discover that the majority of the archaeologists working there focus on the archaeology of Austria and France (and perhaps on periods that are considered especially important to the Austrians and the French).

Is there a difference in presentations between the days of the conference? We compared the 223 presentations on Day 1 with the 198 presentations on Day 3. Both days saw similar numbers of presentations on Egypt (11 on both days), Iran and central Asia (seven on Day 1, nine on Day 3); Lebanon (4:3), Mesopotamia (16:19), and Syria (6:4). Sometimes, allocation of one-two sessions on a specific topic means that this topic is limited to a single day.

However, Day 1 appeared to be the day of Israel, Iraqi Kurdistan and, to a lesser degree, Jordan (Table 5). It was also an Iron Age day, with 47 Iron Age presentations (21% of the day's total). Day 3 was the day of Arabia, Libya, Turkey, and the Biblical Exodus. A title with the explicit 'biblical' word is rare in recent ASOR meetings. Was the allocation of this session to Day 3 random? Or, did it reflect a relegation to the same status as the above-mentioned Arab countries? We cannot tell. Yet, Iron Age presentations became a rarity in Day 3 – only 12 (6.1%). Day 2 stood in the middle with 32 Iron Age presentations (17.1% of the 181 presentations).

Clearly, the Iron Age had a preference in the Boston meeting, being given the 'center-stage' of the first day. Perhaps it was also related to the movement, by Day 3, of presenters engaged in biblical archaeology to the parallel conference of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL).

## 4. SESSIONS AND WORKSHOPS

In this part we consider the larger units in the conference – the sessions and the role of chairs. In total, there were 120 sessions in the meeting. We refer to them by the codes in the abstract book (2c, 9d, etc.).

### *4.1. Geographical Areas of Sessions*

Many sessions were general (the entire ANE, the Levant, etc.). Geographical areas covered by one-two sessions included Iran (1), Libya (1), Lebanon (2), the Northern Levant (1), and Southern Phoenicia (2).[12] They all represented Islamic countries, except Southern Phoenicia, divided between Israel and Lebanon. Areas discussed by three-four sessions each were Arabia (3); Egypt (3, including two Hyksos sessions, covering also the Southern

[11] Presumably, there are specific conferences for Classical archaeology, where European scholars can present, so joining the ASOR meeting is not a 'must' for them. It is also, for them, more expensive than joining a conference in Europe.

[12] 'Southern Phoenicia' is a term used by scholars to denote northern Israel (e,g,, sites like Achzib/Zib and Tell Keisan, which were Phoenician) and southern Lebanon. See, for example, Gilboa 2005; Eshel et al. 2018; Sader 2019: 9, 17).

Levant); Mesopotamia (3); Iraqi Kurdistan (3); Cyprus (4), and the Southern Levant (4). There were also three 'biblical' sessions (3b, 4b, and 11g), but no sessions on Syria, perhaps due to the crisis there.

Turkey seemed to be well represented with seven sessions. However, one of these was shared for Turkey, Armenia and the Caucasus (9A), and three concerned the Orontes region, which may be defined culturally as North Syrian (7g, 8g, 11h). This left only three 'Turkish' sessions (two on Anatolia, one on Sardis).

Jordan was represented by eight sessions and two more were mostly about Jordan (11f and 10e). Israel was represented by the highest number of sessions (14). Consider that there were also more presentations on Israel in sessions on the Southern Levant, Southern Phoenicia, and biblical archaeology.

### *4.2. Periods of Sessions*

Many sessions were general (77), or encompassed a wide range of time, such as Chalcolithic to Iron Age (1), or Early Bronze to Iron (2).

Prehistory was not represented in titles of sessions, and the Bronze Age in general only in two (9g; 4g; several 'general' sessions included Bronze Age presentations, e.g., 3k and 10j). There were two more 'early' sessions: Chalcolithic-Bronze (1) and EB-MB (1). Bronze and Iron as one continuum was quite popular (7 sessions). Two sessions were focused on the MB and two on the MB-LB. While no session was 'purely' LB, four were mixed LB-Iron sessions. The Iron Age was covered by six sessions. One session discussed the Iron-Persian periods, and one the Persian period. Nine sessions were dedicated to the Classical (Hellenistic to Byzantine) periods.

Islamic periods were hardly represented. Two sessions were defined as Hellenistic to Islamic and Classic to Islamic, and one 'Islamic Society' session (10h) included presentations from Byzantine to modern. Six sessions treated the recent/modern world (the history of archaeology, career options, and gender).

### *4.3. Themes of Sessions*

Many sessions were general. We divided 82 sessions with more specific topics into the following groups:

1. Sites (11 sessions, seven of which concerned sites in Israel).
2. Inscriptions and seals (six sessions: inscriptions four, seals and sealing two).
3. Computerization, digital data, cyber research, etc. (six).
4. Cultural heritage and history of archaeology (five).
5. Sciences (five: archaeobotany/archaeozoology, bioarchaeology, isotopic investigations, organic residues, and technology in archaeology).
6. Gender (four: gender two; dress and the body two).
7. Economy (four).
8. Biblical archaeology/Exodus (three).
9. Sessions in honor of scholars (three).

The remaining 36 sessions were varied.[13] The wide range of subjects is notable, and ASOR should be proud of being able to offer such a variety.

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[13] Altered states/complexity (2 sessions); ambiguity (3); art history (2); baths-bathing (1); borders of cities/kingdoms (1); career options (2); Classic periods (1); connectivities (2); death and dying (1); digital humanities (1); engaging global challenges (1); feasting/foodways (1); glass (1); houses/households (2); Hyksos (2); identities (2); interconnections (1); Islamic society (1); Yehud (1); maritime archaeology (1); religion (1); senses and sensibilities (2); settlement landscape (1); theory/anthropology (1); and violence (2).

### *4.4. Chairs of Sessions*

Sessions were normally organized by one or two chairs. Only one session was registered under four (all from the USA), and three under three scholars each (one USA team; two 'mixed' USA-UK teams). Forty-six sessions were chaired by pairs of scholars. Of them, thirty were pairs from institutions in the US and one from Israel. The other pairs formed 'international' teams: Austria-Lebanon (2); Italy-Canada (2); Israel-Canada (1); USA-France (7); USA-Italy (1); USA-Libya (1); and USA-UK/Qatar (1). Seventy sessions had one chair, affiliated to institutions from the USA (50), Israel (10), Canada (3), Austria (2), Lebanon (2), Finland (1), France (1), and Germany (1). To stress again, these are work affiliations, not a direct match for nationalities and ethnicities. An example, perhaps atypical, is the author – born in Israel, resident of Estonia, and chairing a session with affiliation in Finland.

The 120 sessions were organized by 175 chair-roles (some persons chaired two sessions, while others shared the same session): 92 males and 83 females. The 131 USA chair-roles were divided equally between female (68) and male (63). Similarly, the 19 chair-roles with European affiliations included 11 men and eight women. However, the 13 Israel-affiliated chair-roles included only two women.

Perhaps for US tenured scholars, being a chair in an ASOR meeting is a duty more than a prestigious role. Still, it is a role that reflects hierarchy, one step above presenters, with its special badge – a green ribbon added to the name tag. It seems that this role at Boston was equally divided between USA and European men and women, while from Israel only a few women reached the position of chairs.

### *4.5. Sessions by Days*

Comparing the days of the conference, we find that some sessions (on careers, Jordan, and Mesopotamia) were evenly distributed (Table 6). Yet, ten sessions on Israel were placed on Day 1 and four on Day 2. More presentations on Israel in the two 'Southern Phoenicia' sessions were also placed on Day 1. In contrast, there was not even one session on Israel in Day 3, but this day saw sessions on Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Libya, Islamic Society, the Northern Levant, and Gender.[14]

If one wishes to focus on the Archaeology of Israel, the concentration of so many sessions on one day is a hindrance. Religion plays a factor here, since Day 3 is Saturday (affecting observant Jews and Seventh Day Adventists). However, the large majority of presenters from Israeli institutions at ASOR are not religious. Likely, since chairs cannot know in advance who will submit proposals for papers, they ask not to put their sessions on a Saturday. Naturally, this should be respected. However, the result is lack of equality. Many presenters, who are not observant, enjoy lecturing on Day 1, year after year; on Friday evening or Saturday they move to the green fields of the SBL conference.[15]

### *4.6. ASOR-Sessions versus Member-Sessions*

Are there significant differences between standing ASOR sessions and those organized by members? With standing sessions, the subjects are fixed and members are asked to be chairs. In member sessions the chairs choose the subjects.

There were 55 ASOR standing sessions at Boston (henceforward, A-sessions)[16] and 65 member sessions (M-sessions). The 76 A-sessions chair-roles (38 women, 38 men) were almost exclusively from USA institutions (except

[14] In the seven last ASOR meetings (2013–2019), the gender sessions sponsored by ASOR were placed once on Day 1 (2014), twice on Day 2 (2015, 2018), and three times on Day 3 (2013, 2016, 2019).

[15] This Exodus is hardly observant, if moving with luggage involves vehicles. The issue is not the (excellent) organization of the Boston meeting, but constraints placed on it by preferences/conflicts of participants. Perhaps a slight change of date will benefit ASOR, to prevent having Saturday as Day 3 and also avoid a conflict with the conference of the American Anthropological Association.

[16] Including session 9c, missing from the list (Abstract Book, 2017:202–204).

three Canadian, two Italian, two French, and one Lebanese affiliation). The 65 M-sessions were chaired by 99 chair-roles (51 women, 48 men). Of them, 65 were related to USA institutions (women 34, men 27) and 34 to institutions abroad (women 11, men 23, mainly due to the 'contribution' of Israeli institutions).

Otherwise, the sessions were quite similar. There were 257 presentations in A-sessions and 344 in M-sessions. Both types of sessions had similar numbers of presentations on most of the areas (Table 7). A-sessions included fewer 'general' presentations than M-sessions, probably because they focus on specific areas, which do not fit well 'general' presentations.

Concerning periods, there were more MB presentations in M-sessions (34) than in A-sessions (10); the same with MB-LB (15:5, respectively) and Classic periods (28 to 12). A-sessions included 87 general presentations (in terms of periods), as against 47 in M-sessions. A-sessions encompassed 157 female and 203 male presenter-roles; whereas in M-sessions the relation was 221:210.[17] So it seems that while members reflect gender equality in their roles as chairs of member-sessions, the A-session chairs accept more men than women as presenters in A-sessions.

## 5. MISSING 'OTHERS' AND ETHICS

One 'other' that is missing at ASOR is Palestine. Israelis and Palestinians share the same land. A presentation on Jericho can be labeled under Israel, Palestine, or even Jordan (which ruled this area in 1948–67). We tagged presentations as 'Israel' when they appeared in sessions titled 'Archaeology of Israel' or were offered by scholars from Israeli institutions.

Members from the Albright Institute in Jerusalem suggested that ASOR maintains neutrality in Middle East politics (Abstract Book 2017: 183–184). This is also the official ASOR website position. Yet in the meeting halls one can hardly find this neutrality. Israel is dominant (97 presentations on the prestigious first day) while Palestine is an absentee. In the history page (Abstract Book 2017: 7) 'Palestine' appears only as a term from the past, before 1948. There is no session on the Archaeology of Palestine, and not even one of the books advertised in the abstract book mentions Palestine. Add the stress on 'our' periods and the scarcity of sessions on Islamic periods.

Presentations like 9i3 reflect the atmosphere. The title and abstract seem neutral: the 'Jordan Valley five miles north of Jericho', survey and ethnographic work in a modern 'Bedouin' village. The real focus is, however, the 'adaptive strategies of the settlers' of an Iron Age site (Abstract Book 2017: 159). The 'Bedouins' are Palestinian Muslims, the site is located in the West Bank, and the presenters excavated there even before the 2017 meeting (so it was not just a 'survey').[18] It was not a salvage excavation. One presenter is affiliated to Averett, a Baptist University,[19] and the second with Ariel University, located in the West Bank and identified with the modern Israeli settlers.[20] ASOR's professional code of conduct endorses the Hague Convention and its first protocol, but not the second protocol of 1999 (for which see O'Keefe, 2006: 261–3; Gerstenblith 2014: 86–87, 95).[21] The second protocol prohibits 'any archaeological excavation, save where this is strictly required to safeguard, record or preserve

[17] Since the available data from the meeting has nothing on third genders, the discussion is limited to women and men.

[18] http://digs.bib-arch.org/digs/khirbet-el-mastarah.asp (accessed December 2017); https://www.christianpost.com/news/archaeological-discovery-evidence-hebrew-exodus-from-egypt-found-near-jordan-river-227564/ (accessed October 2018);

[19] http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/12/01/controversy-shorter-over-faith-statements ; and http://blog.bibleplaces.com/2016/11/new-excavation-khirbet-el-mastarah-in.html ; https://www.facebook.com/jordanvalleyexcationproject/ (accessed December 2018).

[20] The project's aims, as presented to students, do not mention any "Bedouins": "Are you fascinated by the book of Joshua and its stories about the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, how the walls of Jericho tumbled down, and how Joshua defeated Hazor, "the head of all those kingdoms" (Josh 11: 10)? If so, then you should definitely volunteer to work on the pioneering new excavation at Khirbet el-Mastarah, located just west of the Jordan River in what may have been the area of the earliest Israelite settlement. This intriguing site [...] is dated to the time of the first settlement of the Tribes of Israel, as described in the book of Joshua" (http://averett.abroadoffice.net/internal-program-description-REL-315-Archeology-and-the-Bible-BIO400-Field-Experience-in-the-Biological-Sciences--169209-0.html (Accessed June 2018). Compare Hawkins and Ben-Shlomo 2018; Bohatrom and Schuster 2018.

[21] http://www.bu.edu/asor/about/policies/conduct.html (accessed December 2017), especially paragraphs III.B.3-5.

cultural property' in occupied territories. We do not raise this issue as a legal case, but as an ethic one: by giving such a presentation a respected public stage, ASOR promotes it. This is not 'neutrality'.

Perhaps ASOR does not care much for ethics, despite the claim about 'the highest ethical standards' in its mission statement (Abstract Book 2017:4).[22] The mission statement is limited mainly to excavating and to preventing trade in antiquities. Being an ethical archaeologist is not just about safekeeping the remains of the past. It is mainly about our relationships today (Williams 2013:288; Zorzin 2014: 116; Kletter 2019).

In the 2012 meeting of ASOR in Chicago, Jane Cahill and Robert Mullins chaired a session about ethics and excavations in East Jerusalem (for this subject see Sulimany 2013; Greenberg 2014; Feige 2015; Hason 2017; Greenberg 2018; Sulimani and Kletter 2017; Kletter 2019).[23] The session was disturbed by people who did not agree with the opinions of Rafi Greenberg and (presumably) others. The result was that ASOR decided not to hold such sessions in the future. By this act, ASOR gave a prize to those who disrespect academic etiquette. It is not avoiding politics, but supporting the politics of one side and preventing open discussion.

Tellingly, there were no sessions on ethics at Boston (or in the meetings of 2018–19). Only one of 602 abstracts (by Rannfrid Thelle, 8f1) and one of 37 posters (by Rachel Risk and Deirdre Fulton) mentioned the word 'ethics' (Abstract Book 2017: 147, 192).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The ASOR meeting in Boston was a large and successful meeting. The organization was excellent and the scope of the presentations wide: the use of derelict buildings in Oman (12a5)? Curved snakes on objects from Iran (7f5)? Smiling terracotta camels from Sardis (9h5)? All these and much more was on offer. There was also a healthy interest in scientific methods and the digital world.

However, the old ASOR (cf. Sherrard 2011) was present too. Research was focused on limited slices of the ANE, stressing Israel and Jordan. Difficulties of access are not the fault of scholars, but we should be aware how the borders of our science are shaped by modern politics and ideologies. There were sessions on 'Iraqi Kurdistan', since this area became more accessible recently (Ur 2017). Will the ASOR dare call similar sites, only slightly more northward, 'Turkish-Kurdistan'? Certainly not. Palestine was an absentee and there were no sessions on Greece, because it is 'Europe'. The Boston meeting could accommodate sessions on Tunisia and the Caucasus, but Greece was kept outside the 'Orient'.[24]

The (temporary) lack of sessions on Syria in the Boston meeting raises the worry that too much is focused on excavations (Kletter and De Groot 2001; Bonnie 2011; Cherry 2011). When the shower of new digs is cut, the presentations might dry up.

ASOR made significant progress concerning gender, but the timing of the gender sessions at Boston left something to be desired. With audiences fresh and excited, Day 1 held *manels* on the Iron Age Archaeology of Israel. The gender sessions were placed on Day 3, when many have already left for the SBL conference. The lack of presentations by men in the gender sessions is also a worry, though not the fault of ASOR or of the chairs of these sessions.

Archaeology of the ANE has always been, and is, a privilege of the 'West'. We replicate the old Colonial model of archaeology (Pollock and Bernbeck 2005; Moro-Abadía 2006; Hamilakis 2012; La Salle and Hutchings 2018). Rarely a 'local' scholar spiced up the discussion in Boston. The 18 presentations on Iraqi Kurdistan (sessions 2a, 3a,

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[22] Hopefully this will change: in the coming 2020 Annual Meeting two member-organized sessions are devoted to ethics. We also should not ignore the work done in 2013 (Dodd 2013).

[23] The session (A80) was titled "Current Issues in Biblical Archaeology", with the theme "Legal, Ethical, Political, and Social Issues Posed by Excavations at the City of David in East Jerusalem. That it was decided not to accept such sessions was told to me unofficially by a board member.

[24] A ray of light in the Denver 2018 meeting was a session discussing to finally drop the 'Oriental' from the name of ASOR, organized by Danielle Fatkin and Kathleen Bennallack. The word was dropped out since and the entire or 'wider' Mediterranean is now in focus.

4a), by 21 presenter-roles, were affiliated to American, European, and Japanese institutions; only one scholar had a 'local' affiliation (2a5). In the two 'Archaeology of Jordan' sessions (7d, 8d) only one of 15 presenter-roles was from a Jordanian institution. Excluding Israel, among 161 chair-roles only four were affiliated to Near-Eastern countries.

Going to the ASOR annual meeting is an expensive business. This explains much of the scarcity of 'local' presenters from less-rich countries, where institutions do not regularly cover expenses for academic travels. For a German or a Swiss, participation in the ASOR meeting means (roughly) two weeks' salary.[25] For someone from Turkey or Jordan, it means an equivalent of 3-4 months of work, and from Tunisia or Syria, 6-8 months. Add the strict visa requirements of the USA. The scientific gap is an economic and political gap.

Our analysis also warns against the trend of putting "all the names" on the titles of lectures (and publications), and on seeing scholars in terms of 'strong' or 'weak' nodules in a social network. The use of SNA is beneficial, but networks must also be seen in terms of power relations. Science happens across the network; the social status of scholars do not match the scientific merits of their work. ASOR should adhere to its rules, which limit participation to one lecture and one chair role per meeting, and condemn, not praise, those who manage to by-pass them.

In the Boston meeting Israel held an exceptional position. In between the developed and the developing worlds, native and colonial at the same time. More than a fifth of all the presenter-roles in Boston were affiliated to Israeli institutions (168, 21.3%). The East-Coast location (Boston) is maybe one factor. More important are the political stability and friendly relations, which draw 'western' scholars to Israel and Israelis to the ASOR meetings. Israeli archaeology is a success story, being led by Israeli scholars. In developed countries this is the norm, but not so in all the Near Eastern countries. Another important factor is the allure of the Bible, with the related stress on the Iron and Classical periods (First and Second Temple, the time of Jesus, etc.). Biblical Archaeology thrives in ASOR, although the word 'biblical' is no longer common in titles of lectures and sessions. The picture of Israeli archaeology as represented by most of the Israel-affiliated scholars at Boston was nationalistic and secluded.

It is worthwhile to compare the Boston meetings with a similar, large-scale meeting in Europe. We can treat here, as an example, only one aspect of such a meeting. The ICAANE 12 meeting in Bologna (postponed due to Corona to 2021 and held digitally) included a total of 593 lectures (Callieri et al. 2021). Of them, 53 lectures (c. 9%) were focused on the area of Israel (one more lecture 'mixed' Israel and Jordan, Callieri et al. 2021: 317). The 53 lectures treated the following periods: Prehistory 6 (1 Paleolithic, 4 Natufian, 1 Chalcolithic); Bronze Age 14 (1 general, 7 EB, 1 EB4-MB, 2 MB, 1 MB-LB, and 2 LB); LB and Iron Age 4; Iron Age 10, Persian 1; Classical Periods 7 (1 Hell-Rom, 1 Rom-Byz, 4 Roman, and 1 Byzantine); and Islamic Periods 6 (a few more lectures were not period-specific). In the 381 pages of the ICAANE 12 abstract book, the word Israel (also Israeli, Israelite, Kingdom of Israel, but excluding private names) appeared 33 times in the abstracts of 20 lectures.[26] The majority of the lecturers on the area of Israel did not use this term, but 'Southern Levant' (or, rarely, Canaan). This could be a personal choice, an adaptation to the circumstances/audiences of ICAANE, or both. In this meeting we see a different facet of Israeli Archaeology than that seen at Boston. Namely, the early periods were important and Islamic periods had a place, as against the acute stress of 'our' periods in the Boston meeting.[27]

Presentations like 9i3 in Boston raise more issues of politics and ethics. ASOR should maintain political neutrality as far as possible, but this cannot be achieved by mere declarations (cf. Davies 2017). It requires awareness to the political uses/abuses of archaeology and a readiness to engage with them.

Some of our conclusions are not surprising – and could be felt just by entering the conference spaces from

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[25] Based on average salaries. Academics earn much more, but presumably the gap is maintained between levels of salaries in different countries.

[26] Eight of these references were in a single lecture, Callieri et al. 2021: 225).

[27] The 53 lectures did not include 6–7 lectures on areas of the Palestinian Authority, labelled as "Palestine". Palestine was not an absentee in this meeting – the term Palestine/Palestinian was mentioned 28 times in relation to 16 lectures. The ICAANE 12 abstract book (arranged by alphabetical order) and program (arranged by days and themes) did not give the affiliations of scholars (except for opening addresses and keynote speakers). There are a few cases of doubt with sorting the lectures by periods/regions, but they require no further discussion here.

the more multi-cultural streets outside (cf. Peters 2017 about the SBL). The ASOR Annual Meeting seems content inside the white marble halls of the same regularly visited, wealthy American cities. In part it is related to keeping the conferences beside those of the SBL; but the conference also serve as a showcase of affluence. The SBL is trying to reach out to new communities, and its International Conference at least is moving to new places.

Boston was charming (Fig. 2), and reading the entire ASOR 2017 book from A to Z for the sake of science was a unique pleasure. Using the database, the issues discussed here can no longer be treated as unsubstantiated impressions. They are deep, systemic issues, which do not have an easy solution. Addressing them with an open mind will advance ASOR's mission and make it more relevant today.

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**Table 1:** Areas – 602 Presentations.

| Area | No. | Sub-area and/or comments |
|---|---|---|
| Aegean | 9 | Including Crete (7b4, 11b4), Greece (5i5), and Turkey and Greece (11b3). |
| Farther Asia and Iran | 27 | Afghanistan (4f5, 5a1); Armenia (1f5, 9a4, 12f4); Bactria (5a2); Caucasus (9a1, 12d2, 12d3); Mongolia (12d5); Indus Valley (3k6); Iran-Central Asia (3k2, 9b5); Turkmenistan (7f2); Zagros (2d1); and Iran (12 presentations). |
| Arabia | 19 | |
| Cyprus | 27 | Including two on Cyprus and Egypt/Israel (6e1, 5e3). |
| Egypt | 35 | Including two on Nubia (11d1, 11d5), two on Egypt and Sinai (1d4, 4d1), and one on Egypt and Israel (9f5). |
| General/more than one area | 69 | Including seven on biblical subjects. |
| Iraqi Kurdistan | 18 | Including one that discussed also the Zagros Mts. (3a1). |
| Israel | 168 | Including three on Israel and Jordan/Sinai (3b6, 3f5, 12e4). |
| Jordan | 54 | Including one comparing Jordan and Cambodia (5c5). |
| Lebanon | 17 | |
| Levant, South Levant, South Phoenicia | 31 | Levant 7 (including one Levant-Cyprus); South Levant 16 (including one South Levant-Cyprus, and two focused on Israel); South Phoenicia 8. |
| Libya, Tunisia | 5 | Libya 5 (10f1–5); Tunisia one (6c1). |
| Mesopotamia | 55 | Including one marked as Iraq (7c3). |
| Palestine | 7 | |
| Syria | 21 | Of them, five are marked as Orontes, one north Syria, and one Zinçirli. |
| Turkey | 40 | 12 discussed Anatolia, 6 Sardis, 5 Antioch, 3 Cilicia, 2 Kanish, 2 Lycia, 1 Ḫattusha, 4 Ḫatai/Orontes/Euphrates areas, and 4 Turkey in general. |

No. = no. of presentations.

**Table 2:** Periods – 602 Presentations.

| Period | N | Sub-periods and comments |
|---|---|---|
| Prehistory and Chalcolithic | 34 | 2 Holocene/Pleistocene (10a1, 10c3); 4 Prehistory and Prehistory-Bronze; 8 Neolithic; 1 Neolithic-Chalcolithic; 4 Neolithic-EB; 9 Chalcolithic, 3 Chalcolithic-EB (1a2, 2j6, 11b1), 1 Chalcolithic-LB (2a2), 1 Chalcolithic-MB (9j3), 1 Chalcolithic-Bronze (1e6). |
| Bronze Age general | 17 | 13 general; four EB-MB (4g1, 9e1, 9c3, 9a3) |
| Bronze EB | 32 | |
| Bronze EB4/MB1 | 3 | |
| Bronze MB | 44 | |
| Bronze MB and LB | 20 | |
| Bronze LB | 37 | |
| LB-Iron | 10 | |
| Iron Age | 91 | Including one on Iron and Neo Babylonian periods in Israel (1g2). |
| Iron-Persian | 3 | |
| Persian | 21 | Including two Persian-Classic and two Persian-Hellenistic presentations. |
| Classic general | 54 | Classic general 22; Roman-Byzantine 13; Hellenistic-Roman 9; Nabatean 4 (5j2, 8d3, 11f2, 11f3); Hellenistic-Byzantine 2; four other (1a4, 4a1, 10d3, 12a4). |
| Classic Hellenistic | 10 | |
| Classic Roman | 28 | Including three Late Roman (7j4, 9h6, 11h2). |
| Classic Byzantine | 14 | |
| Islamic, Medieval, and Ottoman | 13 | 9 Islamic (four Islamic in general, two Early Islamic, one Ayyubid, one Islamic and Modern, and one Byzantine and Early Islamic); one Crusader-Mamluk (7i6); two medieval (7a4, 3b1); and two Ottoman (12b3-4). |
| Modern | 33 | On the history of archaeology, heritage management/protection, gender today, career options, ethnography, etc. |
| General | 138 | Including 11 Bronze-Iron; 5 MB-Iron; 2 Classic and medieval (5a3, 11h5); 2 Byzantine-Crusader (2b6; 12h3); and one each on: Chalcolithic-Byzantine (10c4), Byzantine-modern (4a3), Iron-Islamic (2b4); Iron Age Europe (1f5), Iron-modern (9i3); Classic-Abbasid-Crusader (7j3); and Classic-Medieval (5f4). |

Notes: N = number of presentations.

**Table 3:** Affiliation and Gender – 790 Presenter Roles.

| Affiliation | Female | Male | All |
|---|---|---|---|
| Argentina | 1 | | 1 |
| Armenia | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Australia | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Austria | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| Belgium | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Canada | 18 | 17 | 35 |
| Cyprus | 2 | | 2 |
| Czech Republic | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Denmark | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Dubai | | 1 | 1 |
| Finland | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| France | 9 | 6 | 15 |
| Georgia | 1 | | 1 |
| Germany | 13 | 11 | 24 |
| Greece | | 1 | 1 |
| Independent Scholar | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Iran | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Iraq | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Israel | 66 | 102 | 168 |
| Italy | 10 | 9 | 19 |
| Japan | | 4 | 4 |
| Jordan | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| South Korea | 1 | | 1 |
| Lebanon | 4 | 5 | 9 |
| Libya | 1 | | 1 |
| Mexico | 1 | | 1 |
| The Netherlands | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| Norway | 1 | | 1 |
| Poland | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| South Africa | 1 | | 1 |
| Spain | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Sweden | | 3 | 3 |
| Switzerland | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Tunisia | 1 | | 1 |
| Turkey | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| United Kingdom | 17 | 22 | 39 |
| United States | 174 | 190 | 364 |
| Total | 373 | 417 | 790 |

Note: three independent scholars were affiliated by countries, based on personal knowledge.

**Table 4:** Affiliations of Presenter Roles – Israeli Institutions.

| | Haifa Univ. | Hebrew University Jerusalem | Tel Aviv Univ. | Bar Ilan Univ. | Ben Gurion Univ. | Ariel Univ. | IAA | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 19 | 19 | 14 | 3 | - | - | 5 | 6 | 66 |
| Male | 17 | 17 | 22 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 18 | 12 | 102 |
| Total | 36 | 36 | 36 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 23 | 18 | 168 |

Notes: IAA = Israel Antiquities Authority; Univ. = university. Other institutions include the Geological Institute (1f), Weitzman (1f), Kinneret College (1f, 4m), Nature and Parks Authority (2m), Hebrew Union College (1f, 2m), Israel Museum (1f, 1m), Technion (1f), and three independent male scholars.

**Table 5:** Presentations – Days 1 and 3.

| Area | Day 1 | Day 3 | Area | Day 1 | Day 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Iraqi Kurdistan | 17 | 1 | Arabia | - | 18 |
| Israel | 97 | 21 | Biblical | - | 6 |
| Jordan | 22 | 10 | General | 15 | 29 |
| Levant/South Levant | 10 | 5 | Libya | - | 5 |
| South Phoenicia | 8 | - | Turkey | 6 | 33 |

**Table 6:** Sessions – Days 1 and 3.

| DAY 1 (43 sessions) | No. | DAY 3 (41 sessions) | No. |
|---|---|---|---|
| General sessions | 19 | General sessions | 15 |
| Modern period (career options 1, digital humanities 1) | 2 | Modern period (cultural diplomacy overseas centers 1; applying to career 1) | 2 |
| Israel | 10 | Gender | 4 |
| Biblical archaeology | 2 | Israel's Exodus | 1 |
| Southern Levant (4h) (presentations on Israel, except one on Jordan) | 1 | Southern Levant (with 2 presentations on Israel) | 1 |
| Southern Phoenicia | 2 | Northern Levant/Levant interconnections | 2 |
| Jordan (Madaba project) | 2 | Honor Thomas Parker (mostly Jordan); Jericho-Tel Hammam (MB and LB) | 2 |
| Mesopotamia | 1 | Mesopotamia | 2 |
| Iraqi Kurdistan | 2 | Egypt (1), Egypt-Levant (Hyksos, 2) | 3 |
| | | Arabia (3), Libya (1), Turkey (5), | 9 |

**Table 7:** Geographical Areas – ASOR and Member Sessions.

| Area | Aegean | Arabia | Asia | Cyprus | Egypt | General | Iran | Iraqi Kurdistan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASOR | 4 | 19 | 5 | 24 | 11 | 17 | 9 | 18 |
| Member | 5 | | 7 | 1 | 24 | 52 | 6 | |

| Area | Israel | Jordan | Lebanon | Levant | Libya | Mesop. | S. Phoen. | Syria | Turkey |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ASOR | 74 | 23 | 14 | 12 | | 14 | | 9 | 17 |
| Member | 94 | 31 | 3 | 10 | 5 | 40 | 8 | 13 | 23 |

Notes: Mesop. = Mesopotamia; S. Phoen. = South Phoenicia; add three M-presentations on Palestine and one A-presentation on Tunisia. Total 601 presentations (excluding the plenary presentation).


**Fig. 1:** Boston, November 2017 (R. Kletter).


**Fig. 2:** Boston, November 2017 (R. Kletter).

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# Along and Across the Nahr el-Quweiq: EB I-IVA Ceramic Horizons and Interregional Connections

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**Abstract**. The Quweiq and Matkh plains, in north inland Syria, were densely settled areas during the Early Bronze Age, crossed by the River Quweiq, flowing north-south from the plateau of Gaziantep to disappear into the Matkh paleolake. The northern sector of the Nahr el-Quweiq was surveyed in 1970s, providing information on the 3rd millennium BC occupation of the Aleppo's hinterland. However, to date, only little evidence is available from archaeological excavations carried out in the area, hampering to crosscheck the ceramic periodisation derived from the Nahr el-Quweiq survey, which has therefore been used, or referred to, for general comparisons only. The article aims at revising the chronology and connections of the Aleppo region during the EB I-IVA period in the light of recent excavations and surveys carried out in neighbouring areas (the Ebla region, the Middle Euphrates, the Sajur and Jabbul plains), ultimately exploring the role of the Aleppo region as a 'bridge area', which provided access to important commercial routes towards the Euphrates Valley, the 'Amuq plain and the area of Gaziantep. The north-south axis – linking the Ebla region with Aleppo – had to be particularly important during EB IVA, when ḫalab appears to belong to the Ebla kingdom and was the seat of the cult of the Storm God as we learn from cuneiform texts from Palace G archives.

**Keywords.** Early Bronze I-IV, Aleppo, Quweiq river, Ebla region, Euphrates Valley.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The basin of the Quweiq River extends for ca. 130 km in a north-south direction, and ca. 45 km east-west, originating in the plateau of Gaziantep and crossing the like-named plain from north to south (Fig. 1). The Quweiq-basin can be divided into an upper and lower sector. The upper one is comprised between the Nahr el-Quweiq catchment and Aleppo, within the triangle formed by the sites of Aleppo, Bab and Aazaz, while the lower sector corresponds to the area comprised between Aleppo and the Matkh depression. The Matkh plain, measuring ca. 30 km N-S and 15 km E-W (ca. 450 km2), is a vast and irregular marshy swamp once occupied

by a lake, in which the perennial water of the Nahr el-Quweiq and of several seasonal wadis flowed (Cantelli et al. 2013). Nowadays, the lake has almost completely dried up, except for some residual swamps visible especially during the rainy fall season. Ancient environmental conditions were favourable for dry-farming agriculture, with annual precipitation attested around the values of ca. 250-300 mm (Mantellini et al. 2013: 163-164; Cantelli et al. 2013, fig. 17.6), allowing the cultivation of cereals (mostly barley and wheat), as well as of lentils, olive groves, and fruits to be carried out (Arnoldus- Huyzendveld 2013; Wachter-Sarkady 2013).

During the Early Bronze Age (henceforth EBA), the Quweiq basin was a fertile and densely settled area, with small to medium sites clustering along the river and *wadis* system and around the Matkh lake. Until the last decades, the majority of information regarding the 3rd millennium BC occupation derived from surface explorations carried out in the 1970s in the Matkh plain and along the northern sector of the Nahr el-Quweiq. The only exception was represented by the excavation of a sounding at Tell Rifa'at in years 1956-1960 that yielded little information about the EB IV period.

Since 2006, renewed excavations at the site of Tell Tuqan, located along the south western fringes of the Matkh paleolake, provided new data about the EBA period, revealing a long uninterrupted sequence spanning the EB II/III and the EB IVB periods (Peyronel 2011; Baffi and Peyronel 2013; Vacca 2014; 2020: 173-180). Although the earliest EB III levels have been investigated by means of a deep sounding carried out in the northern sector of the Lower Town, the evidence brought to light thus far is noteworthy since it fits well with the sequence excavated at Tell Mardikh/Ebla (Mardikh IIA), enabling a refined chronological sequence based on these two key-sites to be outlined (Vacca 2014; 2020).

Moreover, in the past decades excavations and surveys have been conducted in neighbouring areas, along the Middle Euphrates, the River Sajur and in the Jabbul plain, making new materials available to foster the discussion about cultural connections, also in the framework of international research projects (e.g., the *Arcane Project*, the *Ebla Chora Project*, the *Land of Karkemish Project*). Thus, based on fine-tuned chrono-typological discourses and in the light of new hypothesis it is possible to look once again at the materials from the Nahr el-Quweiq area to exploit its informative potential.

This work will consider the EB I-IVA ceramic horizon of the Aleppo/Nahr el-Quweiq area within a regional context in order to explore its cultural connections with the Jabbul plain and the Rivers Euphrates and Sajur eastwards and northwards, and with the Matkh plain and the Ebla region southwards. A brief overview of past works in the Nahr el-Quweiq and Matkh plains will be addressed to evaluate the available dataset. Subsequently, the EB I-IV ceramic assemblage from the Quweiq plain will be discussed focusing, in particular, on ceramic commonalities with the regions mentioned above (Table 1).

Based on data discussed in this article,[1] it appears that during EB I-III – and especially in EB IVA – the Quweiq area was characterised by the overlap of diverse ceramic traditions, as demonstrated by the co-presence of typical productions of both the Ebla and the Euphrates areas (especially the Karkemish, Tishrin and Tabqa sec-

**Table 1.** Periodisation table with reference to the Quweiq survey and excavated sites in the Quweiq and Matkh basins.

| Traditional Chronology | Approximate Dates BC | Quweiq Survey | Tell Rifa'at | Tell Kadrich | Tell Qaramel | Alep (Ansari) | Tell Tuqan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EB I | 3100–2900 | G | | | | | IA |
| EB II | 2900–2750 | | | | | | IB |
| EB III | 2750–2550 | H | | | | | IC |
| EB IVA | 2550–2300 | x | x | x | | | IIA |
| EB IVB | 2300–2000 | x | x | | x | x | IIB |

[1] This research was supported by the PRIN 2017 Project, Big Data and Early Archives (Big-DEA). Measuring Settlement Dynamics and Environmental Exploitation in the Ebla Region during the 3rd Millennium BC: Archaeological Record, Cuneiform Texts, and Remote Sensing (headed by Luca Peyronel).

tors), which converge in the Aleppo/Nahr el-Quweiq region. The 'bridging' character of the Quweiq plain was probably favoured by the frequent movement of goods and people, as also hinted by Palace G cuneiform texts mentioning markets, merchants and traded goods. It seems, indeed, that besides the west-east route linking the Ebla region with the Euphrates through the Khanaser corridor, two other, northernmost axes – that intersected at Aleppo – were important roads, connecting eastwards and northwards the Ebla kingdom with the Euphrates Valley and the Sajur/Gaziantep area, where other important polities were located (Fig. 1).

## 2. EXCAVATIONS AND SURVEY DATA

### *2.1. The Nahr el-Quweiq*

The River Quweiq was investigated in years 1977-1979 by a team from the Institute of Archaeology, London University (Matthers 1978; Matthers ed. 1981). Intensive surveys carried out over an area of approximately 1300 km$^2$, from the Nahr-el Quweiq catchments to the northern fringes of the Matkh depression, allowed identifying a total number of 88 sites dating from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic to the Mameluke period (Fig. 2). The survey also included an eastern area between the Nahr el-Quweiq and the Nahr edh-Dhahab (the latter river flowing into the Sabkhat al-Jabbul), close to the modern city of Al Bab; here further 8 sites were surveyed (Matthers 1981a: 18). The southernmost tells explored by the British archaeologists corresponded to Tell es-Is, located along the eastern bank of the Quweiq river, and Tell Hader, on the opposite side, both situated at the northern fringes of the Matkh, where the Nahr el-Quweiq disappears into the paleolake. Hence, the Matkh plain was not included in the survey since it was the objective of an intensive surface exploration carried out by the Italian Expedition to Syria (MAIS) in previous years, between 1970-1974 (de Maigret 1978; 1981; see below).

In the Quweiq River survey almost all the sites visited yielded evidence of Neolithic to Early Bronze Age occupation, a situation that seems favoured by the geology of the Quweiq-basin since most of the sites were not buried in the alluvium; conversely, the virgin soil was still visible along the valley (Dorrell 1981).

As for the prehistoric and Early Bronze Age phases (pre-EB IV) a total amount of 1000 sherds was selected and studied in order to assess the chronological sequence. J. Mellaart (1981) distinguished 8 main periods spanning from the Pre-pottery Neolithic to EB III, which he named Quweiq A-H (Table 1). The periodisation was based on parallels with the chronological sequences of extensively published sites, such as Hama, and those in the 'Amuq. The latter, in particular, was used as the main reference, and the prehistoric phases of the Quweiq settlements were paralleled with the 'Amuq sequence established by Braidwood and Braidwood (1960). Thus, for instance, Phase Quweiq F corresponds to 'Amuq F, Phase Quweiq G to 'Amuq G, and Phase Quweiq H to 'Amuq H, dated by Mellaart to EB I (4000–3250? 3300? BC), EB II (3300? 3250?–2900 BC) and EB III (2900–2500 BC) respectively (see Table 1 *infra* for a chronological discussion of the Quweiq phases).

During the first half of the 3$^{rd}$ millennium BC (Phases G-H) the Quweiq plain is densely settled, with a total number of ca. 34 to 37 settlements (Fig. 2). In the following EB IV period, the number of sites rises to ca. 43, showing a continuous trend and a further expansion of human occupation throughout the plain. The chronology for this period, elaborated by Matthers (1981b), is mainly based on diagnostic types attested at Tell Mardikh/Ebla in the pottery horizon of Mardikh IIB, especially Caliciform Ware pottery, as well as at Hama J, 'Amuq I-J and at other sites along the Middle Euphrates River Valley.

However, with the exception of some types exclusively attested either in EB IVA or in EB IVB, for the majority of sites a neat chronological subdivision could not be made, based on published materials only, since the latter encompass several long-lasting vessel types (Matthers 1981b: figs 210-211). Nonetheless, the bulk of surface materials and, especially, those collected at the pottery dump relative to an EB IVA kiln from Tell Kadrich (Matthers 1981: 327-330, 342-345) convey an image of how the local EBA ceramic horizon should look like. Additional archaeometric analyses carried out on selected samples from the Kadrich furnace and from 23 sites in the region are provided as a complement to typological information (Riley 1981).

Overall, apart from the British survey of the Nahr el-Quweiq, the area around Aleppo and along the northern sketch of the river is part of a poorly studied ceramic province as far as the EBA period is concerned. In fact, the lack of large exposures of archaeological sites hampers the possibility of crosschecking the chronological sequence established for the Nahr el-Quweiq survey with stratified materials from secure contexts, and to better characterise the local ceramic horizon.

The only exception is represented by the sites of Tell Rifa'at and Tell Qaramel and by the shaft grave discovered at Ansari, in the southern periphery of Aleppo. While at the latter two sites only EB IVB levels have been investigated thus far,[2] Tell Rifa'at provided evidence of an earlier EB IVA occupation. The site, located ca. 35 km north of Aleppo, was briefly investigated by V. Seton Williams (Institute of Archaeology of London University) in two campaigns, in 1956 and 1960 (Seton Williams 1961; 1967; Matthers 1981b: 327-341). It consists of a high tell – rising ca. 36 m above the surrounding plain – and probably extending over a surface of, at least, 5.8 ha, as its slopes are completely surrounded by the modern town. The excavation of a trial trench in the lower town of Tell Rifa'at (squares F I-II) allowed identifying EB IVA levels (Level IV) with child burials and badly preserved mud-brick architecture.

Recently, the northern Quweiq area has been the focus of a research project, headed by K. Kohlmeyer and J. Klinger, aimed at understanding the role of Aleppo as central place in a diachronic perspective. These studies have raised new interest about the region, although key archaeological information concerning the 3rd millennium BC are still missing (Knitter *et al.* 2014; Del Fabbro 2012). In particular, data from the important ancient tell of Aleppo are virtually absent for the EBA, while spectacular remains for later Late Bronze and Iron Age periods are known (Gonnella *et al.* 2005; Kohlmeyer 2009; 2020). The only evidence dating to EB IVA consist of spotted remains of an earlier structure below the later Storm-God temple and a *cache* of metal weapons associated with the earlier structure (Kohlmeyer 2016; 2020). Interesting data concerning the role of Aleppo as crossroads have been extensively discussed in a recent article by R. Del Fabbro (2012), who reconstructs the importance of trade for the Aleppo region in a diachronic perspective (see *infra*).

### *2.2. The Matkh Plain*

The Matkh plain was firstly explored in 1964 by the Italian Expedition at Tell Mardikh/Ebla in connection with excavations launched at the site (Liverani 1965). In the 1970s, a geoarchaeological survey was carried out by A. de Maigret, who documented a total number of 54 sites spread around the Matkh paleolake (Fig. 1). The systematic collection and study of diagnostic pottery allowed de Maigret to assess the chronological developments of a substantial number of tell-sites from the Late Chalcolithic (Phase I) to the Persian period (Phase VII), and to reconstruct the major phases of occupation of the Matkh region in relation to the fluctuation of the paleolake (de Maigret 1978; 1981). Recently, works in the Matkh plain have been resumed by the *Ebla Chora Project* with the aim of characterizing land-use, environmental conditions, and settlement patterns during the EBA in the area defined as the *chora* of Ebla (Mantellini *et al.* 2013; Ascalone and D'Andrea 2013; Peyronel 2014; Vacca 2019; 2020).[3] The results of these works allowed to finetune the regional chronology and to re-evaluate the dating of surface materials in the light of a broadened set of data deriving from long-term excavations at several sites, notably Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Tell Afis and Tell Tuqan.[4]

During the EBA period the Matkh plain appears densely settled, with a total amount of 22 sites identified, 11 of which occupied from EB I-III. A distinct increase of settlement is observable in the following EB IVA (2550-2300 BC), when the number of sites almost doubled (from 11 to 19). Larger sites situated in strategic positions

[2] For excavations at Tell Qaramel see Ławecka 2016.

[3] Recently the project *Ebla Chora Landscape Studies – Trends in Settlement Patterns from the Early Bronze to the Iron Age* obtained funding from the Shelby White and Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications to support the final publication on surveys and territorial studies carried out in the region of Tell Mardikh/Ebla by the Sapienza University of Rome.

[4] For the EB III-IVA period see Vacca 2020: 214-221.

controlling access to the Matkh plain could have been Tell Tuqan (> 5 ha?) on the western side of the lake, Tell Dlamah (> 5 ha?) to the north-east of the Matkh depression, and Tell Berne (14 ha?), in the southern sector of the Nahr el-Quweiq, also surveyed by the British team.

The only excavated site in the Matkh plain is Tell Tuqan (Fig. 1, Table 1). Archaeological investigations, launched in 1978 with four short excavation campaigns and resumed since 2006 by the Italian Expedition of the University of Salento headed by F. Baffi, provided new evidence on earliest 3rd millennium BC phases, as well as on the EB IVB period. In particular, the excavation of a deep sounding in Area P South (Lower Town North) revealed a long EB III architectural sequence, including a workshop for pottery manufacture and a later phase with large storage and crop-processing facilities, and a subsequent EB IVB occupation characterised by domestic buildings and storage structures. The EB IVA is not documented, with the exception of two infant burials dating to an ancient phase of the EB IVA, probably EB IVA1 or Initial EB IVA2.[5]

Although the Matkh plain is part of the Nahr el-Quweiq drainage system from a geographic point of view, it has stronger link with the Ebla region, located only 15 km westwards, in terms of material culture and ceramic production throughout the EBA period. In fact, the ceramic horizons of the Idlib and Matkh plains are largely comparable and can be ascribed to the same northern inland Syrian ceramic region, which is characterised by a relatively homogeneous pottery assemblage in terms of vessel shapes, manufacturing techniques and decorative styles. A second degree of similarity can be recognised with the ceramic assemblage of the northern sector of the Quweiq river, suggesting interconnections with the latter area during EBA.

## 3. MAJOR FEATURES AND DIACHRONIC TRENDS IN POTTERY PRODUCTION

In the following analysis selected wares and morpho-functional types are discussed,[6] focusing on their chrono-typological variation and geographical distribution in the Nahr el-Quweiq plain. Comparisons with neighbouring areas, such as the Ebla region, the Jabbul plain and the Euphrates River Valley, will be explored. In order to allow comparisons with the different regions to be made only widely shared diagnostic shapes and wares have been selected, thus leaving aside vessels types that can be considered exclusively local productions. The discussion follows a chronological order, starting from EB I to EB IVA, thus from the beginning to the third quarter of the 3rd millennium BC. It must be noted that several EB IVA types discussed in this section are long-lasting shapes documented throughout EB IVA-B/ENL 4-5/EME 4-5 and thus the exact dating of surface materials cannot be pointed out. In order to have firm points, EB IV types selected for the discussion include at least one specimen coming from Tell Rifa'at and/or Tell Kadrich. The type's nomenclature follows that adopted in typological studies on the EBA period of norther-inland Syria and the Euphrates Valley.

### *3.1. Reserved Slip Ware*

Reserved Slip Ware (RSW) is a typical pottery decoration of the Late Chalcolithic (LC 5, Early Reserved Slip Ware) and the beginning of EBA (EB I–II, Late Reserved Slip Ware), characterised by a painted light-coloured slip which is wiped-off in oblique radial lines, or sometimes in alternating oblique and horizontal lines, to expose the darker clay underneath. RSW is widespread in northern Syria and south-eastern Anatolia, particularly along the Syrian-Anatolian Euphrates (in the Sajur plain,[7] at Birecik-Karkemish, Tishrin, Karababa and Elaziğ). According to the new Arcane periodisation the RSW complex covers the first half of the 3rd millennium BC (3100/2900–

[5] For a detail description of the Tuqan stratigraphic sequence see Peyronel 2011; Vacca 2014; 2020: 171-180.

[6] The criteria of selection depend upon materials published in Matthers ed. 1981. Preference has been given to types and wares described by the different authors as the most common and best represented in each phase, or to types that are more frequently attested based on published sherds and wares per period.

[7] For rsw FROM Tilbeshar Höyük see Dessene 2002.

2700/2600 BC) and corresponds to Periods EME 1–2, EUE 1, EJZ 0–1 and ENL 1–2 (Jamieson 2014). This ware is still attested, albeit less frequently, in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, in a form with reserved horizontal bands (Horizontal Reserved Slip Ware; Mazzoni 2002: 75).

Along the Nahr el-Quweiq RSW is particularly abundant among surface materials assigned by Mellaart to Phase Quweiq G. It occurs at 19 sites (Fig. 3) and the most recurrent shapes are preservation jars – some of which identical to those documented in the Jabbul plain survey[8] – and shallow or carinated bowls (Mellaart 1981: figs 157-158). The latter type is particularly well-represented at Tell Berne, which yielded several exemplars of bowls manufactured with a fine ware and with spiral reserved slip decoration on the inner surface (Mellaart 1981: fig. 158: 873, 875, 877, 879). Similar decorations on bowls are attested at Tell Tuqan, 23 km further south from Tell Berne in the Matkh basin. A bowl from the pottery workshop of Phase 10 (EB III) is decorated with the reserved slip technique, with the yellowish-buff slip wiped off in horizontal lines on the outer surface below the rim, while on the inner side the paint is reserved in a spiral pattern (Vacca 2014: fig. 6:1). Reserved slip decoration on bowls is quite common from period EME 2b in the Euphrates Valley, while in earlier phases it appears restricted to closed vessels and applied especially on the jar's shoulder (Sconzo 2015: 94).

While in the Quweiq plain RSW seems quite widespread, following the trend documented along the Upper and Middle Euphrates, in the Matkh plain and in western inland Syria this production is less frequently attested, similarly to what has been observed for the Tabqa Dam area (Sconzo 2015: 94; see also Jamieson 2014: 98). In the 'Amuq plain, RSW occurs in small percentage in Phase G (3-8%) and H (1-6%) contexts (Welton 2020: 59). At Ebla findings of EB I-II beakers with reserved slip decoration in oblique radial bands and reserved slip jars come from pre-Palace G levels (Mazzoni 2002: pl. XXX: 11-12; Vacca 2020: pl. XII: 1-2). In later EB III phases RSW is still attested, although occurring in small percentage at both Ebla and Tuqan (ca. 1%; Vacca 2020: 97-98). RSW is also found as surface materials at Tell Suffane in the Jazr plain (Mazzoni 2006: 384, fig. 4: a-f) and in LC-EB I levels at Tell Afis (Mazzoni 2002: pl. XXX: 7-8, 13).

### *3.2. Painted Simple Ware*

During the first half of the 3rd millennium BC, different regional painted styles developed across Northern Mesopotamia and the Levant. In the Upper Turkish Euphrates, several types of painted ware are attested, such as the Elaziğ Ware of Keban and Karakaya regions, the Gelinciktepe Painted Ware of the Malatya region, and the Karababa Painted Ware (Rova 2014: 11–16). Along the Middle Euphrates, from the Tabqa Dam area up to Qara Quzaq, another typical production is documented – the Euphrates Monochrome Painted Ware – characterised by a red dark or purple painted geometric decoration applied by means of a brush-like tool and reminiscent of the western Multiple-Brush Painted Ware (Sconzo 2015: 95, EME 2; Russo *et al.* 2018). In western Syria peculiar local productions are documented in the Ebla region during EB II-III (local Painted Simple Ware, PSW) and in the 'Amuq Plain (Multiple-Brush Painted Ware; Braidwood and Braidwood 1960). The production of the Ebla region (documented at Tuqan, Ebla, Tell Mastuma) is characterised by an opaque black or red-brown painting with geometric motifs (lines, zigzags, latticework, undulated or horizontal lines) resembling the Multiple-Brush style of the 'Amuq and the PSW of the Orontes Valley (Vacca 2020: 98-99).

Along the Nahr el-Quweiq, only few wall fragments of painted sherds were collected among surface materials and classified by Mellaart (1981: 186) as Multiple-Brush Painted Ware. These are characterised by a matt brown painted decoration consisting of wavy horizontal lines. Similar undulating motifs occur also on jars from Umm el-Marra VI (Schwartz *et al.* 2003: fig. 3: 1, 3-4). The findings from the latter two areas, considered by the authors as reminiscent of Multiple-Brush Painted Ware of the 'Amuq, can be understood as local productions stylistically comparable with the painted tradition of the Matkh and Idlib plains, where jars with wavy lines are quite common, besides other stylised and simplified patterns occurring on both closed and open shapes.

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[8] Compare Mellart 1981: fig. 155:287 and Schwartz *et al.* 2000: fig. 19:17.

### *3.3. Platters and Platter-bowls*

A characteristic production of the EB II-III period in the Levantine area (coastal and inner Syria, Lebanon, and southern Levant) is represented by plain or slipped and burnished large shallow platter-bowls or platters, generally made of red-orange or dark-red clays, displaying a variety of inwardly protruding to upright rims (Vacca, D'Andrea 2020 with relevant bibliography).

In the survey along the Quweiq River several specimens of platter-bowls were collected from a consistent number of sites and assigned to Phase H (Fig. 4). These vessels are manufactured with buff, red or orange clays and can be either plain or slipped and burnished (Phase H; Mellaart 1981: 186–187, figs 164–167). A similar surface treatment is applied to jars dated to the same period and characterised by a thin red slip then burnished (8 exemplars; Mellaart 1981: 188, nos 973-980).

In the Jabbul plain, platter-bowls are rarer, and some specimens were collected in EB II levels investigated in a small sounding at Tell Abu Danne (Tefnin 1980: 197-199, figs 22:7-9; here Fig. 7: 4).

In the Ebla region, several platters and platter-bowls are documented in stratified contexts dating to EB III from Ebla, Tell Tuqan and Tell Mastuma (Fig. 7:2, 5, 7). Similarly to the Quweiq river exemplars, the specimens from the Ebla region can be manufactured either with buff clays or with red-orange pastes (Fig. 7: 1, 3, 6). The surface is plain, or it is covered with a white or red slip and burnished horizontally. The latter surface treatment is rare, and it occurs almost exclusively on platter-bowls accounting to ca. 1% of the EB III assemblage of both Ebla and Tell Tuqan (Vacca 2020: 97, fig. 3.7).

Platters and platter-bowls appear to be a production exclusively documented in the Ebla region and in the Quweiq and Jabbul plains, being instead virtually absent in the early 3rd millennium BC ceramic assemblage of the Middle Euphrates. In the latter area, red slip and burnished wares are very rare and mainly confined to the Turkish sector of the Euphrates, occurring on different vessels categories (high-stemmed bowls; stemmed carinated bowls; small jars with four pierced lugs; Sconzo 2015: 95; EME 2). Moreover, few exemplars of hand-made bowls with inverted bent rims documented in the Karkemish and Tabqa areas are restricted to the very beginning of EBA (EME 1), without any further development in the following period (Sconzo 2015: 113). Thus, based on published data the Jabbul plain together with the Quweiq river basin, appear to be the easternmost areas where platter-bowls are documented thus far.

### *3.4. Pots with Triangular Lugs*

A long-lived type very common along the Euphrates River Valley, especially in the Karababa and Karkemish sector, from period EME 3 to EME 5 is represented by Cooking Ware globular or ovoid-shaped pots with triangular lugs protruding from the rim (Figs 5, 6: 8-13). The fabric is generally coarse and quartz-tempered, while the outer surface of the pots is usually burnished (Cooper 2006: 15, fig. 1.4:1; Sconzo 2015: 125, type 75, here Fig. 7: 12). This morphological type, close to the eastern EJZ 3a tradition, extends further west from the Euphrates Valley into the Quweiq river basin and the Jabbul plain starting from EB III, while it seems completely absent in the Matkh plain and, more generally, in the Ebla region.[9] Later on, during EB IVA, some reminiscent forms of lugged pots occur in western contexts, such as Phase I of the 'Amuq (EB IVA, Braidwood, Braidwood 1960, figs 308: 3-6, 309: 2) and Building P4 at Ebla (Marchetti 2013: fig. 7.36: 48). In the Quweiq river survey CW pots with triangular lugs have been documented at 19 sites and dated to both Phases G and H (Fig. 5). Mellaart (1981: 186-187, nos 890-955) recognises two varieties: one earlier type (Type A, Quweiq G), hand-made and manufactured with buff wares with the outer surface burnished, and a later type (Type B, Quweiq H), wheel-made and manufactured with a grey or brown paste, with the outer surface left coarse or poorly burnished.

[9] The presence of a fragmentary triangular-lugged cooking pot from Tell Afis (Cecchini, Mazzoni 1998: fig. 16.17) is reported by Marro 2007: 229.

### *3.5. Sugar-loaf Beakers and Ovoid Corrugated Goblets*

From around the mid-3rd millennium BC (EME 3, ENL 3), a trend toward specialisation of the ceramic repertoire, with the introduction of new morphological types for serving and consuming liquids, is documented over a large area spanning the Levant, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia.[10] Different local traditions of drinking sets develop approximately at the same time with distinct morphological types reflecting different drinking behaviours and socio-cultural preferences.

Along the Middle Euphrates Valley quite characteristic of EME 3 are the truncated-conical beakers manufactured in Euphrates Metallic Ware with a sightly corrugated outer surface. During period EME 4 this shape evolves into the so-called 'sugar-loaf' beaker, characterised by a fully conical shape and a rounded base (Fig. 8: 1-2).[11] The latter type is widespread in the Karkemish and Karababa areas and along the Sajur river, while toward the south (Tabqa Dam) it occurs rarely (Cooper 2006: 13, fig. 1.3: f; Sconzo 2007: 254-256, fig. 17.7; Sconzo 2015: type 90). The 'sugar-loaf' beaker is documented in the Jabbul plain, at Umm el-Marra (Schwartz pers. comm.), and along the northern sector of the Nahr el-Quweiq; a complete specimen was retrieved in an EB IVA pit grave, while other fragmentary vessels were found in EB IVA levels excavated at Tell Rifa'at (Matthers 1981: fig. 204: 14-16, Tomb 5; fig. 205: 10-11; here Fig. 8: 1). From the same layers also come a fair amount of plain or corrugated goblets with an ovoid or cylindrical-shaped body (Matthers 1981: figs 205: 27, 206: 5-8, 22-23, 30-31). The latter, also known as Caliciform Ware goblets, are a typical western Syrian production originating in the Ebla and Orontes regions during period ENL 3 and produced throughout ENL 4-5, with several types locally manufactured in each region showing a wide geographic distribution (Mazzoni 2002; Welton, Cooper 2014; D'Andrea, Vacca 2019). During late EB IVA/ENL 4, Caliciform Ware goblets spread over a large area encompassing towards the east the Quweiq, Sajur and Jabbur plains, and the Euphrates Valley, where they are referred to as 'Hama goblets' (Fig. 8: 3-4). These vessels were inspired by Syrian prototypes, but locally manufactured at several sites (Cooper 2006: 18, fig. 1.5: g-i; Cooper, Welton 2014: 334; Sconzo 2015: type 89).

In the Quweiq basin, in addition to the goblets found at Tell Rifa'at, several exemplars were retrieved as surface materials at 32 sites across the plain, as well as in the kiln dump at Tell Kadrich (Matthers 1981b: 329, 347, figs 208, 210; here Fig. 8: 3).

### *3.6. Bowls with inturned moulded rim and bowls with ribbed band*

Two types of bowls have been selected by Matthers (1981: 329) as diagnostic elements of EB IVA among surface materials collected during the Quweiq river survey. The first type encompasses 'bowls with a crescentic rim and a cordon below the rim on the outside' (Matthers 1981b: 329; Fig. 8: 8-10). These bowls were found in good number in the kiln dump at Tell Kadrich, in stratified contexts at Tell Rifa'at, as well as among surface materials being attested at 25 sites across the plain (Matthers 1981b: figs 206: 29, 208: 10-14, 210). Matthers (1981: 329) compares the type with similar bowls from Palace G at Ebla. It seems reasonable to assume a western connection for this type; in fact, similar vessels are widely attested in the Ebla region and in stratified contexts at Tell Mardikh (Palace G and Building P4) with different varieties, from shallow to deep bowls with vertical or curving sides and triangular to everted ledge rims, in some cases with tripod bases (Fig. 8: 11-12; Mazzoni 1982: figs XXVII: 3, 5, XXXI: 5, 24; Marchetti 2013: figs 7.30: 15, 7.35: 21). Although the comparison with the western types is the most likely, especially for bowls with ribbed bands from Tell Kadrich and Tell Rifa'at, a similarity of some bowls with ribbed bands collected during the survey with that of EME 3-4 fruit-stands cannot completely excluded, based also on the occurrence of some stems and trumpet-like bases among surface materials (see Mellaart 1981: fig. 169: 964, 967-970). However, bowls on fruit-stand are generally carinated and have band rims.

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[10] See D'Andrea, Vacca 2019 with relevant bibliography.

[11] Sconzo (2017) has traced the evolution of the beaker shape in the ceramic repertoire of the Euphrates valley during EB III-IV based on their occurrence in burial contexts at Tell Shiyukh Tahtani.

The second type is a Simple Ware 'small bowl with upright rim' (Matthers 1981b: figs 208: 6-7, 210), which was found at 26 sites across the Quweiq plain, as well as among discarded materials in the kiln dump at Tell Kadrich (Fig. 8: 13-15). The author compares the bowl type with specimens retrieved in Palace G at Ebla (Mardikh IIB1, Matthiae 1980: fig. 16: 3rd row, fig. 17: top row). However, according to published drawings, the bowls from the Quweiq survey are rather comparable with similar types from the Euphrates Valley, which are characterised by a more or less inturned and modelled rim, marked by an exterior groove (Fig. 8: 13-18). This kind of bowls, produced in Simple or Euphrates Banded Ware, is documented during period EME 4-5, and distributed in the Karkemish, Tishrin and Tabqa sectors (Sconzo 2015: type 82, Pl. 15: 22-23).

### *3.7. Jars with Ovoid Body and Swollen Rim*

At Tell Mardikh/Ebla, jars with ovoid body, swollen rim, and tripod, pointed or rounded bottom are well-documented in destruction levels of the EB IVA city. Fragmentary and complete exemplars have been found in Palace G (Mazzoni 2013: fig. 5.25, 5.32) and in Building P4 (Marchetti 2013: fig. 7.33:40). Specimens from Palace G were mainly retrieved in a storeroom located to the back of the Court of Audience (L.2617), where 19 jars were found empty and stacked, on three horizontal rows, against the wall in the back of the room (Fig. 9: 4-5). These large containers are characterised by a highly fired hard fabric, with pinkish brown or red colour pastes, and by a fine matrix with quartz, gehlenite, and calcite aggregates (D'Andrea, Vacca 2013). They were manufactured through wheel-coiling technique, with highly smoothed outer surfaces; some of these jars also bear cylinder seals and potter's marks on the outer surfaces of the vessels (Mazzoni 1992). Their capacity clusters around 40-50 litres, with few larger exemplars containing ca. 100 litres (D'Andrea, Vacca 2013: fig. 6.12). The manufacturing technique, the hard metallic-fired fabric and the limited number of exemplars found in sealed contexts at Ebla indicate a specialised function of these vessels, probably to contain prized liquids, such as wine (D'Andrea, Vacca 2013). S. Mazzoni (1992; 2013) suggested a local manufacture of ovoid and tripod jars in the area of Ebla and a distribution of these containers towards a northern circuit including the Quweiq and the Euphrates areas.

Jars with thickened rim are documented at different sites in the Quweiq river survey and from stratified context excavated at Tell Rifa'at, although no one is complete (Matthers 1981b: fig. 211, hole-mouth jar types 2, 4; here Fig. 9: 1). These jars are made of hard light brown ware, with pale grey core and white grits among the inclusions; diameters range from ca. 18 cm to ca. 36 cm. One jar from Tell Chair bears an impression of a cylinder seal applied below the rim with a herring-bone or vegetal motif (Collon 1981: fig. 259; Fig. 9: 2).

Further north jars with swollen rim occur along the Sajur river at Tilbeshar Höyuk (Kepinski 2007: 156, fig. 10.5), while in the Middle and Upper Euphrates this type is virtually absent. The exemplar from Tilbeshar, characterised by a cordon or ribbed band at the junction between the neck and the body, is comparable with a complete specimen from Ebla (Fig. 9: 3, 5).

### *3.8. Necked jars with moulded rim*

Together with the previous jar type, 'small fine jars with thickened rim' have been considered diagnostic shapes to recognise an EB IV occupation at several sites along the Quweiq river (Matthers 1981b: fig. 211, types 1-3). At least two different types of jars are comprised within this category, including jars with vertical rim and an inner concavity (type 1) and necked jars with moulded rim marked by a groove and in some cases characterised by an inner step (types 2-3). All these different types were found in stratified layers at Tell Rifa'at (Matthers 1981b: figs 204: 15, 205: 31, 206: 9-10, 13), as well in the kiln dump at Tell Kadrich (Matthers 1981b: fig. 208: 27-28, 30-32), and can be compared with similar vessels from the Euphrates are. Overall, during EB IV a limited set of similar rim types occur on different kind of vessels, from small and medium size jars to spouted vessels and chalices (Fig. 10: 1-12).

The first type, although represented only by fragmentary exemplars, is similar to small low-footed chalices from Gre Virike Period II, as well as to contemporary spouted vessels from Tell Hadidi (Fig. 10: 1-3).

The second type, encompassing necked jars with moulded rim, is the most frequent, occurring at 20 sites in the Quweiq plain, and finds comparisons with similar types produced in the Middle Euphrates area (Fig. 10: 4-7), between the Karkemish and Tabqa sectors during period EME 4-5 (Cooper 2006: 18, fig. 1.6: a-b; Sconzo 2015: type 103). Thus, the Quweiq area together with the Jabbul plain, where the latter type occurs at Umm el-Marra (Schwartz *et al*. 2006: fig. 21: 6-7), represent the western area of diffusion of necked jars with moulded rim.

## 4. REGIONAL TRENDS AND EB I-IVA CERAMIC HORIZONS

### *4.1. Early Bronze I-III*

As argued above, the pottery assemblage of the first half of the 3rd millennium BC is documented only by surveys carried out in the northern sector of the Nahr el-Quweiq basin, while stratified sequences that can be used as chronological reference are documented in nearby areas all around the Quweiq plain (e.g., Tell Tuqan, Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Umm el-Marra, Oylum and Tilbeshar Höyük, as well as at different sites excavated along the Euphrates river). Based on these data surface materials from the Quweiq survey can be framed within a broader context and the chronological attribution of each phase could be slightly revised, while the overall considerations on single period assemblages can be maintained. For instance, Phase Quweiq F can be assigned to a Late Chalcolithic horizon (LC 1-3/4?) as suggested by the occurrence of Coba bowls, deep cups with rounded profile, everted rim jars, and internal-hollowed rim jars, as well as by the ubiquitous presence of Chaff-Faced Ware.[12]

Phases Quweiq G and H assemblages can be instead assigned to the late LC-first half of the 3rd millennium BC. According to Mellaart, Phase G is characterised by Reserved Slip Ware, Multiple-Brush Painted Ware, and pots with triangular lugs (Mellaart 1981: 154-157) and can be tentatively dated to the LC-EB I/II or EME 1-2 with respect to the Middle Euphrates sequence (see Sconzo 2015: 91-92 for the beginning of period EME 1). However, most of the wares and vessel types of Phase G is said to continue also in Phase H (Mellaart 1981: 158-159), possibly dating to EB III/EME 3. These include pots with triangular lugs (more properly assigned to this phase rather than Phase G), Reserved Slip and Multiple-Brush Painted Wares, while other ware categories, such as Brittle Orange and Red Burnished Wares, and vessel types, such as platter-bowls, are considered typical of Phase H.

Looking at the distribution of the discussed wares and types it appears that during the first half of the 3rd millennium BC some major trends, characterising also the following period, start to emerge. The close formal affinities of the pottery from the surveyed sites allow to define the Quweiq region as a regional ceramic area, characterised by the occurrence of local traits (e.g., a fair number of orange and red burnished vessels) and other features that it shares, instead, with the nearby Jabbul and Sajur areas, and more broadly with neighbouring regions of Ebla, the 'Amuq and the Middle Euphrates (e.g., Reserved Slip and Painted Simple Wares).

Besides this, it is possible to also notice the occurrence of some features that characterise the Quweiq plain as a 'buffer' area where different traditions converge. This aspect is recognizable in the spatial patterning of some types, such as in the case of platter-bowls and pots with triangular lugs, the former linked to a western Levantine production and the latter related to an eastern tradition of the Euphrates and Jazirah areas (Figs 4-5). Based on published evidence, each of these types is only sporadically documented beyond the River Quweiq basin. Direct and frequent connections with the Sajur plain and the Karkemish/Karababa sectors are indicated by the high incidence of RSW and by the presence of fruit-stands,[13] pots with triangular lugs (Fig. 7), and trays with triangular lugs and notch

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[12] See, for instance, Mellaart 1981: 154 and figs 145: 736-739; 147: 770-772; 148: 784-785, 152: 809; see also Welton 2017 who correlates this horizon with 'Amuq Phases E-F.

[13] According to some authors fruit-stands are a typical production of the Karkemish sector, with a western extension towards the sites of Oylum Höyük (Sertok 2007: 247) and Umm el-Marra (Sconzo 2015: type 57), which represent the south-westerly limit of the distribution of the type. However, the occurrence of a fragmentary stem among surface materials might suggest an extension in the area of distribution of the type in the Quweiq valley or the presence of imported fruit-stands (see Mellaart 1981: fig. 169: 964).

decoration, which are very similar to vessels from Gre Virike, Period II (Engin 2007: fig. 18.8.10-14).[14] Likewise, significant connections can be traced with the Matkh plain, noticeable in the occurrence of reserved slip bowls at Tell Berne and Tell Tuqan, and in the presence of plain and burnished platter and platter-bowls (Fig. 7).

### *4.2. Early Bronze IVA*

With respect to the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, besides survey data, additional information is available and come from a small sounding carried out at Tell Rifa'at and from the fortuitous discovery of a kiln dump at Tell Kadrich. Overall, the EB IVA pottery repertoire shows a trend towards homogenization in terms of manufacturing techniques and wares, with finer pastes fired at high temperatures (McGrath, Grabrovaz 1981).

During EB IVA ties with neighbouring areas are even more evident than before. From this period onward, the Quweiq region appears highly integrated in a large network of contacts in all directions, and especially towards the south-west with the Ebla area and towards the east with the Middle Euphrates, with which the Quweiq region share similar modes of ceramic production and consumption, as well as common cultural and culinary preferences, reflected in the use of comparable cooking and table ware ceramic assemblages (Fig. 8).

According to S. Mazzoni (1985: 10), during EB IV the Quweiq basin forms part of the north-central 'caliciform' culture – extending from Ebla to the Jabbul and along the whole course of River Quweiq – characterised by the prevalence of pedestal and tripod pots, multiple-grooved rim bowls, spouted jars, and teapots. Similarly, C. Kepinski (2007: 155), discussing the evidence from Tilbeshar Höyük, maintains that during the second half of the 3rd millennium BC a same ceramic horizon is recognizable along the Euphrates sector – from Lidar to Emar – and in the Sajur, Nahr el-Quweiq and Jabbul plains. Differently, C. Marro (2007: 229), analysing the pottery assemblage of Oylum Höyük considers the site as part of the same ceramic province as Tilbeshar and Gaziantep (at least in EB III-IV), which is different from that of the Quweiq area, the latter showing stronger links with Ebla.

Looking from the perspective of materials collected in the seventies in this region, and analysed in this article, it seems that the remarks put forward by the different authors hold true for the Quweiq valley, where we can find the presence of two different, but mutually influenced cultural traditions. The Quweiq area is, in fact, characterised by strong interconnections with both the Ebla and the Euphrates areas – the same trend has been also noticed for the later MBA period (Nigro 1998) – as testified to by the convergence of peculiar regional productions in the Quweiq plain. This is the case, for instance, of bowls with inturned and moulded rim, typical of period EME 4-5 along the Euphrates, which are quite widespread also in the Quweiq plain (but not documented further south in the Matkh and Idlib plains), or of bowls with ribbed band, a diagnostic type of EB IVA2 in the Ebla region that is quite common also in the Quweiq basin (but not documented further east in the Euphrates area) (Fig. 8: 8-18). The contemporaneous local production of vessel typologies of both 'eastern' and 'western' tradition is further supported by the discovery of a kiln dump at Tell Kadrich. Among overfired, and in some cases melted, sherds – mixed with collapsed pieces pertaining to the kiln structure – we can find corrugated goblets and bowls with ribbed band, as well as necked jars and bowls with moulded rims (Fig. 8). The same association can be seen in EB IVA burials and stratified levels excavated at Tell Rifa'at. At the latter site we can also find ovoid goblets together with 'sugar-loaf' beakers (Fig. 8: 1, 5). It thus seems that the Quweiq valley was located at the intersection of both 'eastern' and 'western' ceramic industries.

Due to its geographic position at the crossroads between different areas, the Quweiq plain probably played an important role also in the diffusion of some ceramic types and stylistic features between the Euphrates and inland Syria area by means of imports or stylistic and technological transfer.

Besides the so-called Hama goblets (discussed above), typical western Syrian types that are found along the Euphrates River Valley encompass painted trefoil-mouthed jars and ovoid corrugated jars (Sconzo 2015: Pl. 20: 8-9, type 107; 21: 9-10, type 113).

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[14] The trays occur at 4 sites in the Quweiq plain: Tell Akhtereine, Tell Qaramel, Tell Maled and Tell Soussiane (Mellart 1981: nos 997-1000).

Conversely, vessels types that can be ascribed to a local Middle Euphrates tradition that spread in the western area encompass, for instance, tripod bowls and the so-called Syrian bottles. Along the Euphrates river, tripod hemispherical bowls are documented since Period EME 3 in different domestic and funerary contexts (Sconzo 2015: types 53, 85) and appear in the western inland Syria ceramic assemblage slightly later during EB IV, as documented by the findings from Palace G and Building P4 at Ebla (Mazzoni 2013: fig. 5.15; Marchetti 2013: fig. 7.26: 8; here Fig. 8: 12).

Finally, spouted jars, teapots, and bowls with beaded rim, as well as grooved-rim jars, are common types shared by the Middle Euphrates and northern inland Syria apparently developing at the same time in the local ceramic tradition of both regions (Fig. 10: 3, 12).

However, it should also be noted that some ceramic productions remain confined in the different geographical areas and are not documented, at least based on published evidence, in the Quweiq plain. This is the case of Euphrates Banded Ware, a typical production of the Euphrates area during EME 3-4 (Falb *et al.* 2014; Sconzo 2015: 99-100, 104-105), that is virtually absent along the Quweiq river (while it is quite common in the Jabbul plain)[15]; the presence of sporadic findings of this ware in western Syria attests for imports and long-distance connections between the two areas. Imported Euphrates Banded Ware vessels are thus far documented in stratified context at Ebla in pre-palace phases (Building G5, EB IVA1) and at Hama in houses of Phase J8, dating to the same period (Vacca 2015; 2020: 94-95, 273-274, fig. 6.15: 1). Similarly, Painted Simple Ware jars and deep bowls (e.g., Mazzoni 1982: fig. XXVIII: 3-8; Marchetti 2013: fig. 7.22: 20, 23, 7.35: 33, 36), characteristic of western inland Syria and the Ebla region, are virtually absent along the Euphrates river, as well as in the Quweiq plain, while some specimens can be found at Umm el-Marra, together with painted trefoil-mouthed jars (Schwartz 2016: figs 9:4, 17, 18:2). In the latter two cases, the spatial patterning of types highlights a west-east connection between the Ebla region and the Jabbul plain, which was equally important as the north-south axis in the EBA network (see Steinkeller 2021).

### *4.3. Across and Beyond 3rd Millennium BC Borders*

Overall, while the geographic distribution of types and styles highlights patterns of connectivity between different areas, it is however difficult to determine whether these patterns might be associated with relevant socio-economic activities, political interests, and more broadly historical events. In this respect, information gathered from textual evidence, especially from the Ebla archives, can shed light on the late EB IVA socio-political and socio-economic context of the northern Levant. However, several interpretative constrains in reconstructing the geographic horizon of the Ebla texts derive from the uncertainties in identifying ancient toponyms with archaeological sites (Bonechi 1993; Biga 2015).

For instance, any of the tells of the Quweiq plain has been so far identified; however, some proposals have been advanced, such as the possible identification of Tell Tuqan or Tell Hader with the city of NIrar, an allied kingdom near to Ebla, frequently quoted in the texts and located in close proximity to a water source tentatively identified with the Matkh lake ('at the waters of Mašat'; Biga 2008; Biga, Karbotly 2020).

The only site along the River Quweiq that has been identified to date with an ancient toponym is Aleppo (*Halab$_x$*(LAM)$^{ki}$, Ḫalab), quoted in the Mari and Ebla texts (Lambert 1990). The site is mainly mentioned in the texts with reference to the cult of the Storm God Hadda, who regularly received offerings and official visits of the ruling family of Ebla during annual celebrations (Bonechi 1990: 31-33; Archi 2010; 2013; Biga 2013: 264; 2019). The city is also the seat of fairs (KI:LAM$_7$), where precious timber[16] among other commodities was sold (Catagnoti 2016: 32; Biga 2003). Aleppo was not a capital of a kingdom during the EB IVA, as also inferred by some documents mentioning an overseer, ugula, who administrated the cultic centre on behalf of Ebla (Archi 2010). In this view it

[15] Schwartz *et al.* 2006: fig. 11: 7-9, Tomb 3 (painted Euphrates Banded Ware).

[16] Boxwood or fir, for the interpretation of the type of timber see Catagnoti 2016 and Steinkeller 2021.

has been argued that the city was probably part of the Ebla's reign long before the period covered by the archives, at least since the reign of the fifth but last king Kun-damu.[17] The cultural affinity of the centres located in the Aleppo area with the Ebla region has been suggested also based on the analysis of personal names related to different locations quoted in the Ebla texts (Bonechi 1990; Catagnoti 2010). A broader Semitic region corresponding to Syria could be recognised with further onomastic sub-regions, such as that of Ebla (including Aleppo, Emar and Karkemish), the Middle Euphrates (from Mari to Tuttul), the Mediterranean coast, the Cilician area, the Khabur triangle and the area encompassing the foothills north of Aleppo (Gaziantep) as far as Harran (Bonechi 1991: fig. 1; Catagnoti 2010).

So far, only few archaeological information is available for the EBA occupation of Aleppo. Remains an earlier structure dating to EBA were discovered through limited soundings carried out in the inner *cella* of the LBA temple of the Storm God (Kohlmayer 2016: 301). The identification of limestone slabs laid over the bedrock, as well as of remains of wall foundations and of an EBA floor led the author to assume the existence of an EBA predecessor of the later temple with a similar layout and orientation. Moreover, a foundation deposit containing several bronze and precious stone objects was discovered in connection with this early building (Kohlmayer 2016: fig. 20; 2020: 15-18, figs 14-15). It consists of a lapis lazuli pendant, a gold sheet, one toggle pin, a ring, three spearheads and a dagger, plus other small bronze tools. Interestingly, the bent-tanged spearheads, characterised by a pair of parallel slots on the blade, pertain to a typology widespread in northern Syria and Anatolia (e.g., Tarsus, Tell Ahmar/Til Barsip hypogeum, 'Amuq I; Stronach 1959: 107-111; Philip 1989: 337-339, fig. 16: 32, type 15).

The relationships of the Ebla kingdom with the area of the Euphrates have been reconstructed based on Ebla texts and the renowned 'Enna-Dagan Letter' (*ARET* 13, 4) sent by the king of Mari to the king of Ebla Irkab-damu and recalling the history of relationships between the two kingdoms throughout several generations (Fronzaroli 2003).

During the last years of Igriš-Ḫalab reign, the king of Mari Iblul-il defeated Abarsal and attacked two fortresses in the land of Ḫassuwan. The Mari's military campaigns along the Euphrates led Ebla to pay heavy tribute to avoid armed conflict, a situation that would lasted several years, from the end of Igriš-Ḫalab reign and for the most part of the reign of Irkab-damu (Archi 2015a). The Mari's attempt to control the Euphrates Valley through a series of military expeditions was probably aimed at defining areas of influence, rather than establishing actual territorial control (Archi 2015a). This situation seems to have reversed a few years later during the reign of Irkab-damu, when the territory under the control of Ebla extended up to Karkemish and down to Emar along the Euphrates River (Archi *et al*. 1993: 238-239; Archi and Biga 2003; Archi 2015a; 2015c: 172).

In the 'Treaty between Ebla and Abarsal' (*ARET* 13, 5) several centres and 'castles' are listed among the Ebla's and Abarsal's domains, all located in an area encompassing the eastern and western banks of the Euphrates and probably the Khabur river (Fronzaroli 2003). Leaving aside the identification of archaeological sites with ancient cities, which still remains hypothetical, the fact that the sphere of Ebla political influence extended up to include both Aleppo and Karkemish, as well as Emar to the east, might let us assume that the Quweiq plain, in the Aleppo's hinterland, was comprised within the territory controlled by Ebla, being geographically located in-between those cities.

Other independent city-states formed an alliance with Ebla, enjoying favourable conditions for trade as it follows from the 'Treaty between Ebla and Abarsal' (*ARET* 13, 5, Fronzaroli 2003: 43-82; Archi 2011). Among these Ḫaššum/Ḫassuwan, Ursa'um, and Kakmi'um were important cities, capital of local kingdoms. Regular relationships between Ḫassuwan and Ebla are testified to by the frequent mention in the texts of merchants, scribes, and workers arriving at Ebla from Ḫassuwan (Archi 2015b: 421). This city had a king (*malkum*) and was one of the tributary kingdoms of Ebla until the fourth year of Ish'ar-damu, when it is supposed to have been ultimately conquered by the latter king (Archi 2015b: 424). Other texts mention the allied city-states of Ursa'um and Kakmi'um, sending man to Ebla or receiving spearheads probably in relation to an imminent military campaign (Archi 2015b). Ursa'um and Ḫassuwan were probably neighbouring states and their location north/north-east of Ebla, in

[17] Archi 2010: 3; see also Bonechi 2016: 77.

the area of Gaziantep, has been proposed also based on their mention in later 2nd millennium BC texts (Bonechi 1991; Archi 2015b; Biga 2015). Thus, the northern periphery of the area under Ebla's influence, probably extended close or beyond the Syrian-Turkish border.

The Sajur plain, situated in a strategic position at the crossroads between northern Syria and the Euphrates Valley, could have been home of one of these city-states. The Sajur Valley has been surveyed by Archi, Pecorella and Salvini in the 1970 (Archi *et al*. 1971) and, more recently, by an international team of the Durham university (Wilkinson *et al*. 2016). A high number of EBA sites is documented, with some large tells such as Tilbeshar Höyük, reaching 56 ha of extension in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC (Kepinski 2005). This large mound has been tentatively identified with the cities of Ḫaššum/Ḫassuwan or Ursa'um (Archi *et al*. 1971: 44-45; Archi 2015b).

Also in this case the identification remains hypothetical; however, the area of the Sajur valley shows ceramic links with both the Euphrates and the Quweiq plain and appears to be the northernmost area of distribution of ovoid jars with swollen rim, testifying to the existence of models and technological features that were commonly adopted across the Ebla, Aleppo and Sajur areas.

The Aleppo region, as well as the Sajur plain, were areas specialised in olive oil and wine production.[18] Excavations at Tilbeshar Höyük revealed the widespread presence in houses of level IIIC (EB IVA, ca. 2500-2300 BC) of plastered basins with concentration of tartaric acid, as well as high number of olive stones and grape seeds among botanical remains (Kepinski 2007). According to the Ebla texts the most of wine seems to have been received from different centres located to the north of Ebla (Archi 1993: 18; Milano 1994: 435-437).

Overall, the emergence and consolidation of the Ebla kingdom likely fostered a new set of economic and political relations and a more integrated economic system, reflected in terms of material culture in a trend towards homogenization of the pottery repertoire. Besides this, common characters, and similarities with the ceramic tradition of the Ebla region appear over a larger area, and especially at sites on the right bank of the Euphrates river, directly communicating with the areas of Rivers Sajur and Quweiq, and with the Jabbul plain. The introduction of locally manufactured vessels inspired by western Syrian prototypes in the Euphrates Valley might suggest frequent economic relations as a consequence in the change of the balance of political powers, with Ebla extending its political authority as far as the city of Karkemish towards the north and the independent city-state of Emar to the east (an inter-dynastic marriage between the latter two cities is documented during the reign of Irkab-damu; Archi *et al*. 1993: 290). This expansionist policy of Ebla, however, did not affect local productive systems, and despite the good parallels between the Euphrates and inland western Syria during EB IVA the Euphrates region 'continued to follow its own developmental trajectory' (Cooper 2019: 191). Looking specifically at the archaeological evidence of the Ebla influence along the Euphrates little can be said and, apart from the existence of heavily fortified centres that would lead one think to 'castles' (bàd$^{ki}$-bàd$^{ki}$) mentioned in the Ebla texts – but which are actually much older in date than EB IVA –, there is no proof of Eblaite direct administrative control (official seals and sealings) in the Valley (Cooper 2010).

Ebla as one of the most important trading powers of northern Levant established a number of political and economic agreements with neighbouring kingdoms, ensuring through the enlargement of its sphere of political influence the control over major trading routes, as also suggested by the lively activity of merchants and trading agents coming from different cities and kingdoms mentioned in Ebla texts (for merchants see recently Benati, Bonechi 2020: 56-57). Via Aleppo, Ebla had direct access to key commercial roads leading to Cilicia through the 'Amanus Gate' (probably to be identified with the powerful kingdom of Armi; Bonechi 2016: 86; Steinkeller 2021; but see also Archi 2011), to the 'Amuq plain through the River Afrin (probably Kakmiʾum; Bonechi 2016: 59), to the Sajur plain and the area of Gaziantep (probably Ḫaššum/Ḫassuwan or Ursa'um) by way of A'azz, and to the Euphrates basin crossing through the Nahr edh-Dhahab or the Jabbul plain via Tell Abu Danne and Umm el-Marra (Del Fabbro 2012: fig. 6; here Fig. 1). Evidence for Aleppo's status as a hub for the trade is also hinted by

[18] In the 2nd millennium BC, we have evidence from the Mari texts that wine was being produced locally, but also imported in large quantities from the northern centres of Emar, Karkemish and Aleppo and shipped along the Euphrates River (Chambon 2009).

the mention of a market (KI:LAM$_7$), where timber – one of the more valuable marketed commodities – was sold (Catagnoti 2016: 32; Benati, Bonechi 2020; Steinkeller in press).

The Quweiq plain seems to have acted in mediating relationships between the Ebla core area and other polities that fell under the sphere of political influence of Ebla. Its role as a 'buffer' zone (or 'land bridge'; Del Fabbro 2012: 203) seems reflected in the composition of the ceramic assemblage, which displays some south-western Syrian elements typical of the Ebla region besides characteristic features of the Middle Euphrates Valley, especially of the Karkemish/Tishrin/Tabqa sectors, and the Sajur area. This liminal character can be detected also during the first half of the 3rd millennium BC, when a similar 'duality' in the material culture is noticeable and reflected in the production and circulation of types inspired by both a 'western' and an 'eastern' tradition. Substantial ceramic connections between Ebla, the Quweiq-Jabbul plains and the Euphrates can be envisaged also for the EB IVB period, following the disruption of the city of Ebla (D'Andrea pers. comm).

Looking at the distribution of EBA sites across the Nahr el-Quweiq plain (Fig. 2), compared with a chart of soil exploitation, a correlation between settlement location and rivers system has been noted (Del Fabbro 2012: 207-208, figs 2-3). Moreover, according to Del Fabbro (2012: 209) the presence of rivers and *wadis* along transit routes 'ensured many rest stops and easy access to water'. In addition to these roads that cross the plain, another pattern that stands out is the distribution of several sites along a north-south alignment bordering the western fringe of the Nahr el-Quweiq plain, close to the Jebel Sim'an foothills and overlapped to the modern road that leads to the Syrian-Turkish border passing through A'zaz and Kilis (Figs 1-2).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Due to the exiguous documentation the Quweiq valley has always been used, or referred to, for general comparisons only, without exploiting its informative potential. A recent research project focused on Aleppo and its hinterland, aimed at understanding the role of Aleppo as central place in a diachronic perspective, has raised new interest on the region (Del Fabbro 2012; Knitter *et al*. 2014), although key archaeological data about the 3rd millennium BC occupation are still meagre.

The route Ebla-Aleppo had to be particularly important during the EBA (Del Fabbro 2012), not only for north-south connections linking Ebla, Aleppo, and the Sajur/Euphrates areas, but also for west-east connections with the city of Emar and centres located along the Tabqa Dam basin. This could be an alternative path – likewise modern motorways (Fig. 1) – to another important west-east road that passed through the corridor of Khanaser (Peyronel 2014: 116; Steinkeller 2021). The analysis of the pottery repertoire collected during the 1970s survey in the Nahr el-Quweiq plain – and its comparison with better-known stratified sequences from the nearby Ebla region, Euphrates Valley, and Jabbul and Sajur plains – allowed to detect some significant patterns of connectivity in a diachronic perspective and to further elaborate on the possible key-role of the Aleppo region with respect to the Ebla's socio-political and socio-economic interests during the EB IVA period.

Although little evidence is available thus far, the informative potential of the Quweiq area opens up to future research aimed at understanding its role with respect to Ebla and neighbouring regions during the Early Bronze Age.

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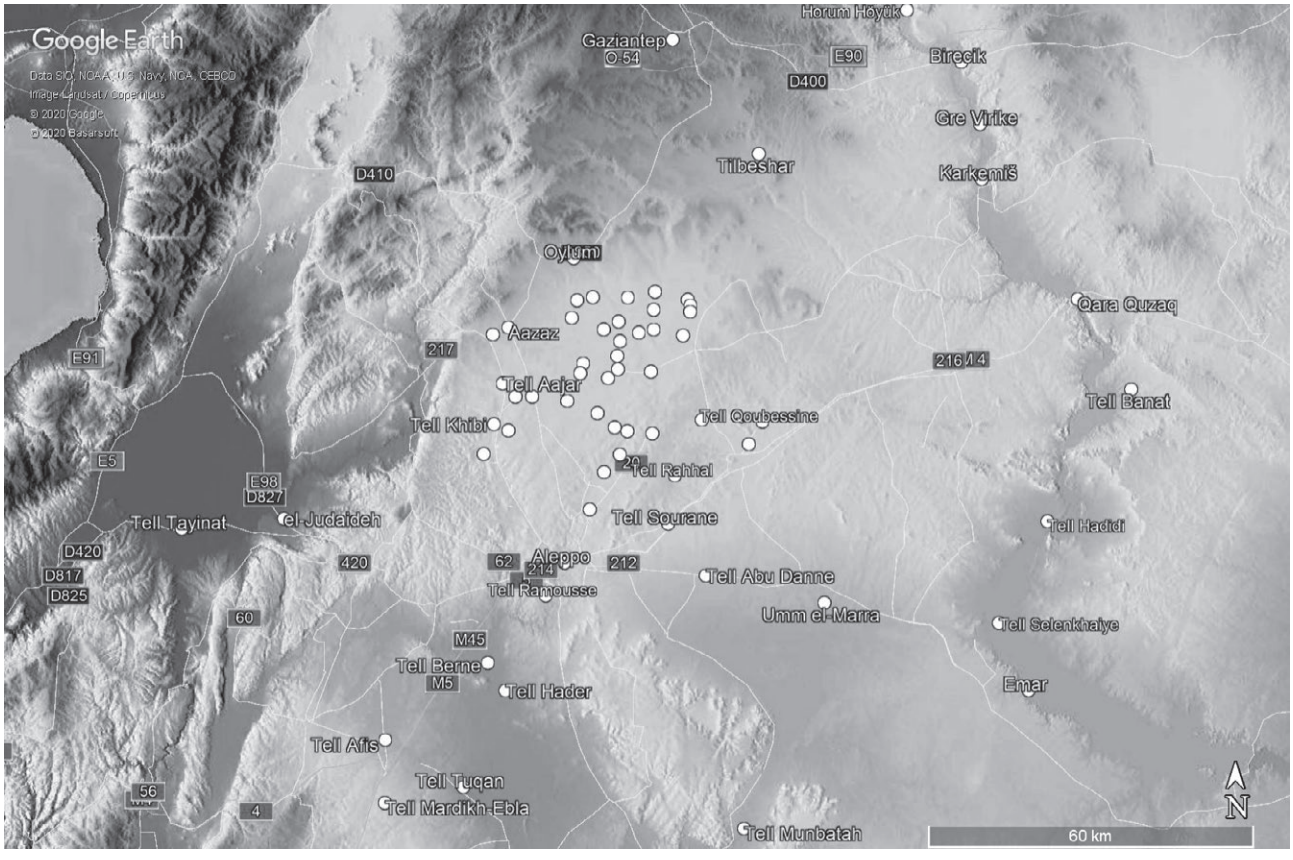


**Fig. 1:** Map showing sites mentioned in the text and EBA sites surveyed along the Nahr el-Quweiq (white unnamed dots), with main modern roads (on Google™ Earth Pro imagery).

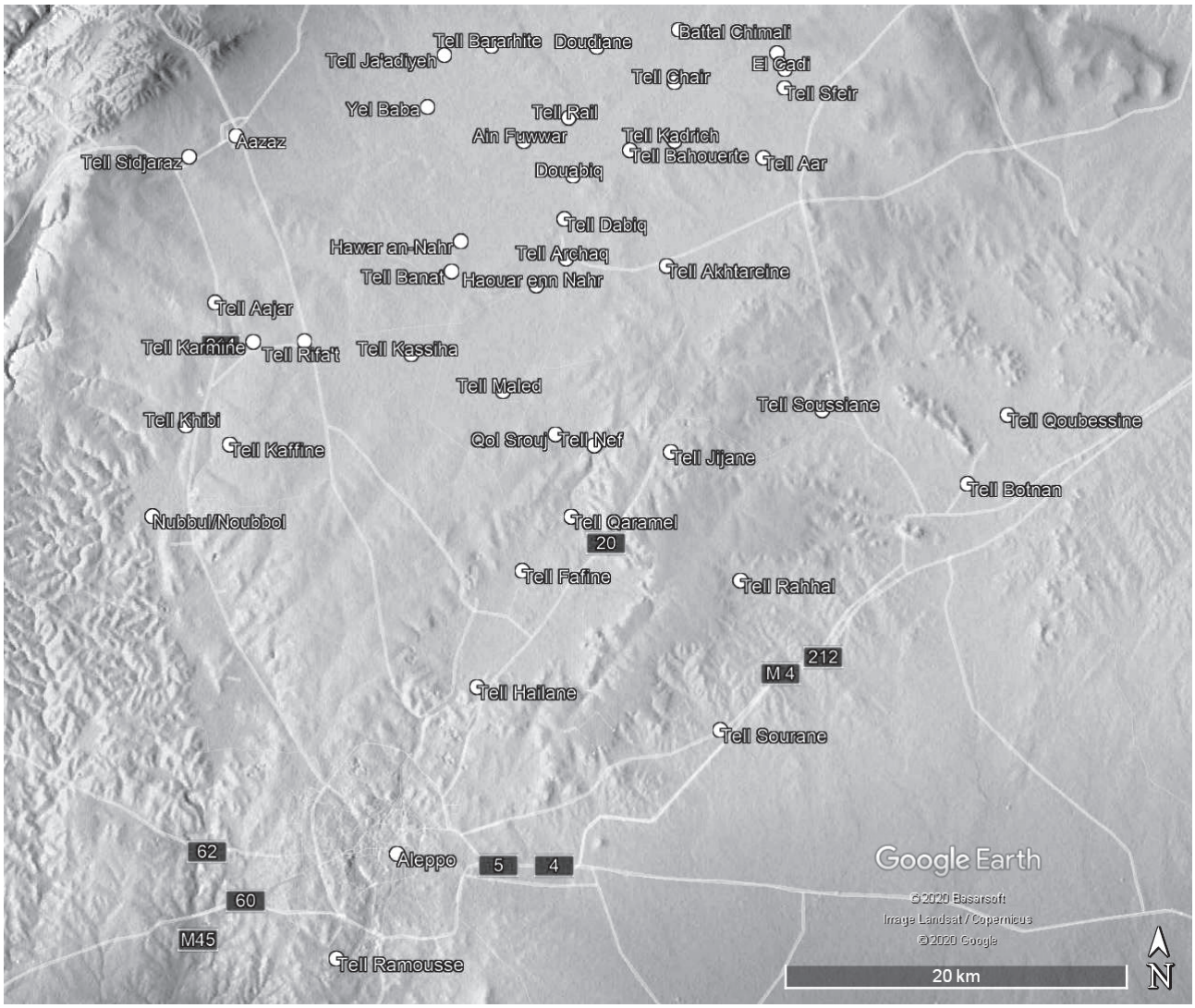


**Fig. 2:** Detailed map of the northern Nahr el-Quweiq survey with EBA sites (on Google™ Earth Pro imagery).

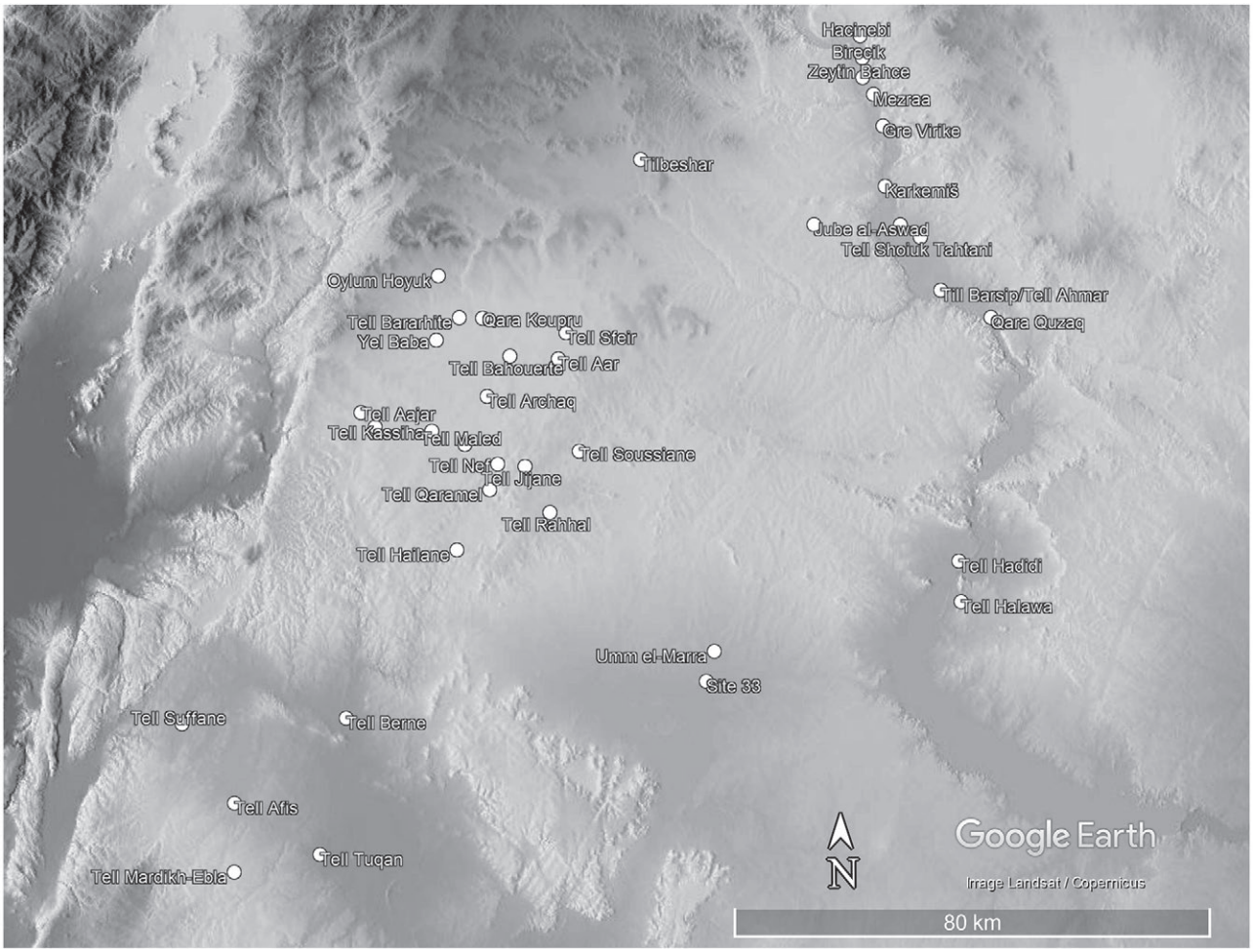


**Fig. 3:** Map of distribution of Reserved Slip Ware (on Google™ Earth Pro imagery).

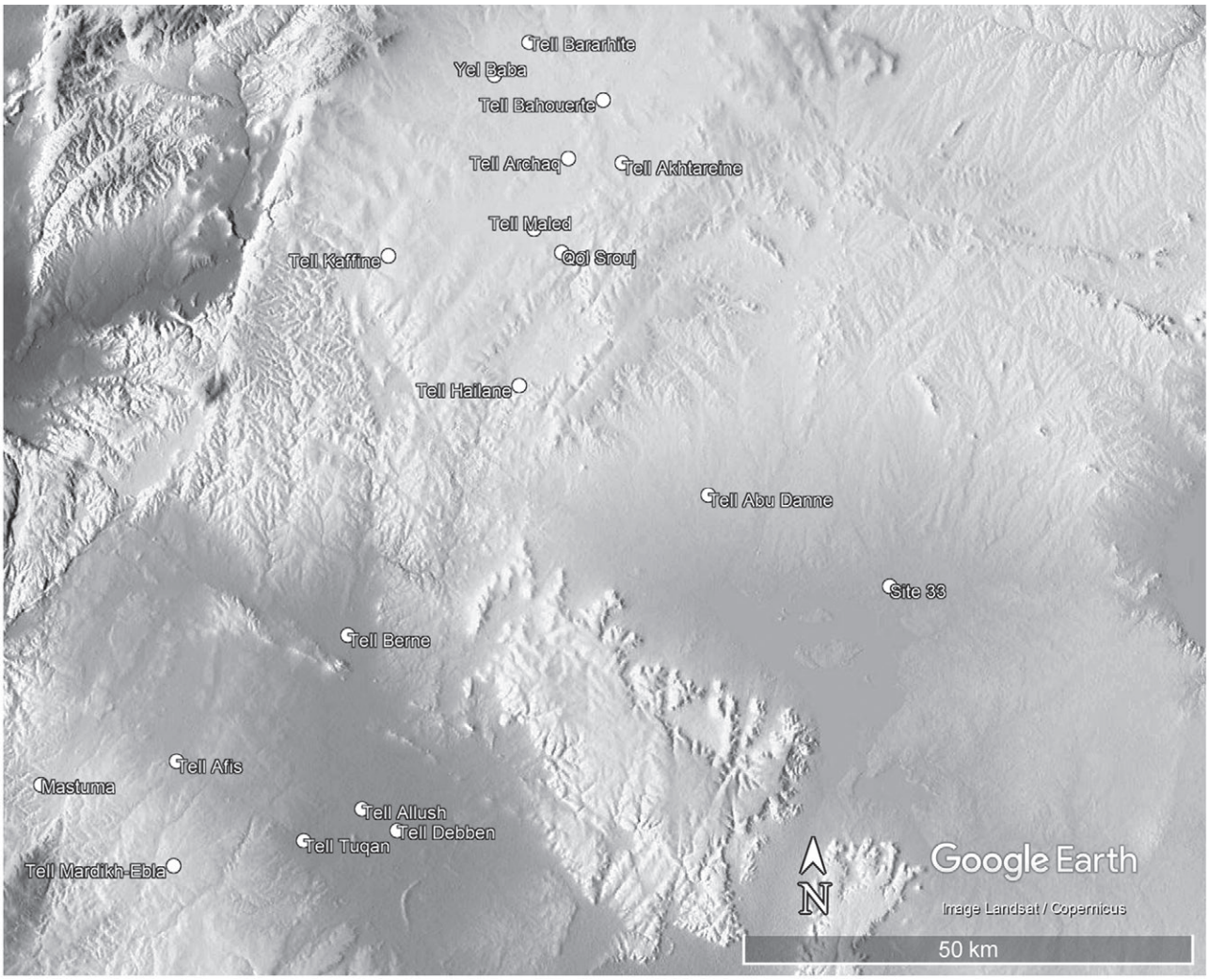


**Fig. 4:** Map of distribution of platter-bowls (on Google™ Earth Pro imagery).

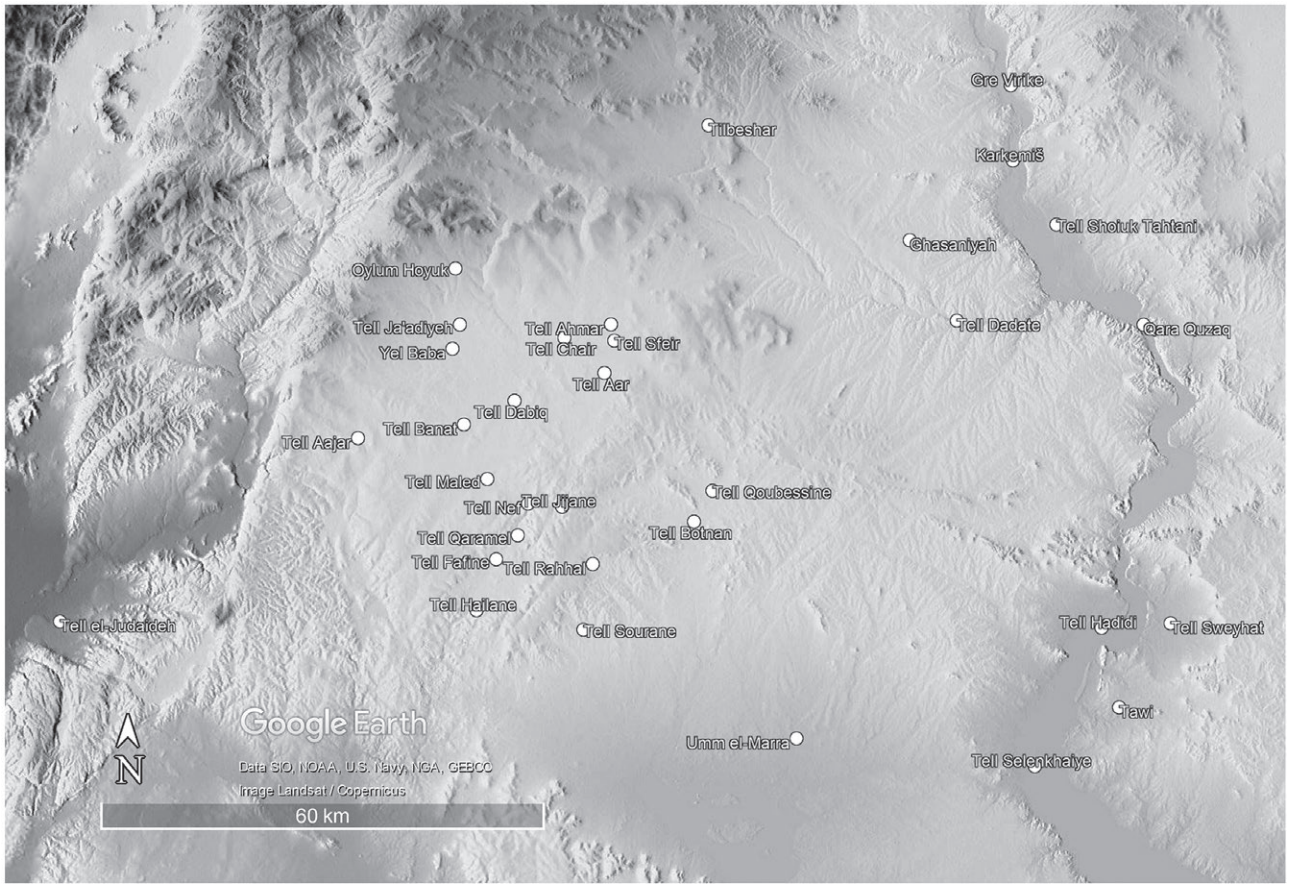


**Fig. 5:** Map of distribution of pots with triangular lugs (on Google™ Earth Pro imagery).

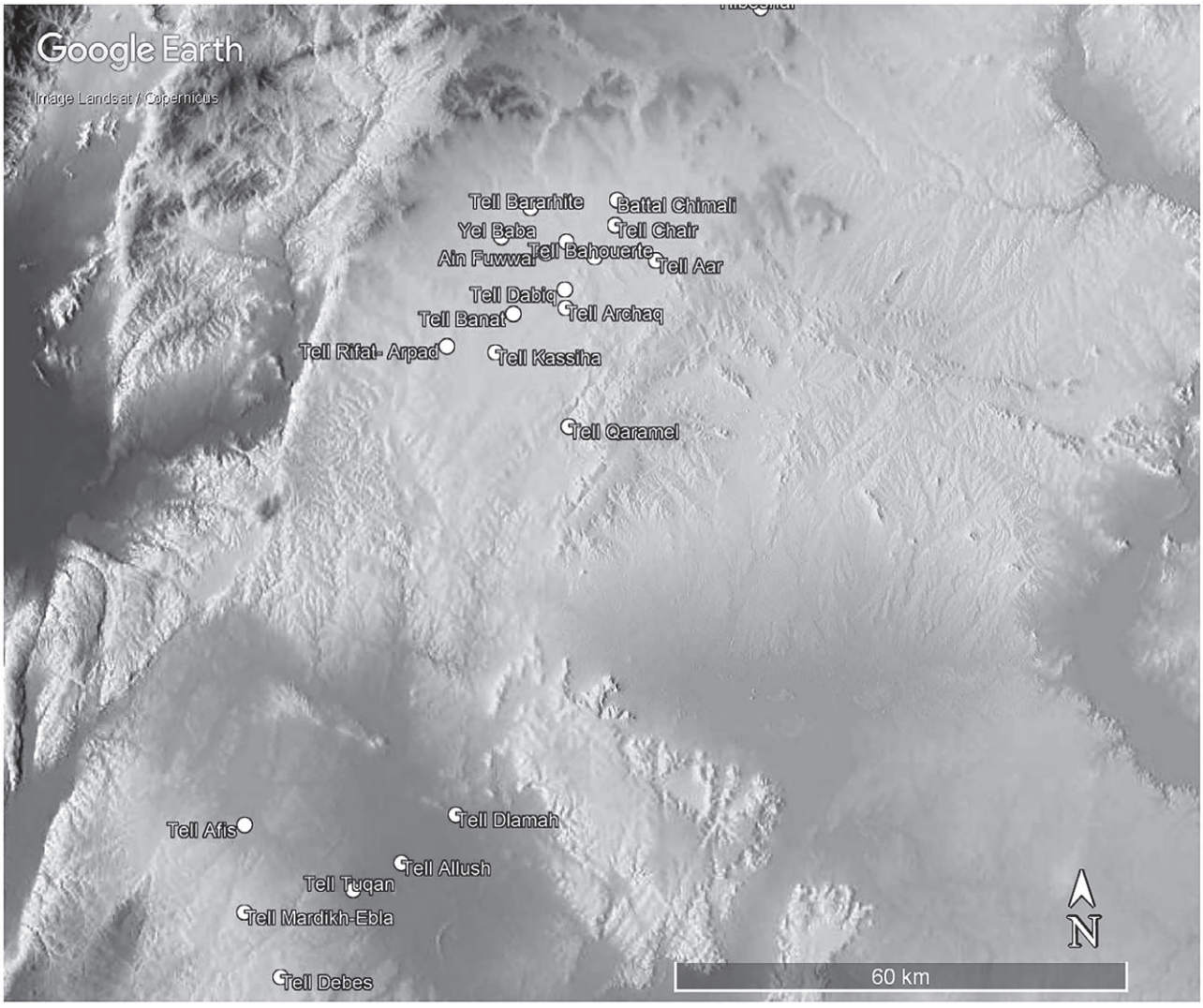


**Fig. 6:** Map of distribution of jars with ovoid body and swollen rim (on Google™ Earth Pro imagery).

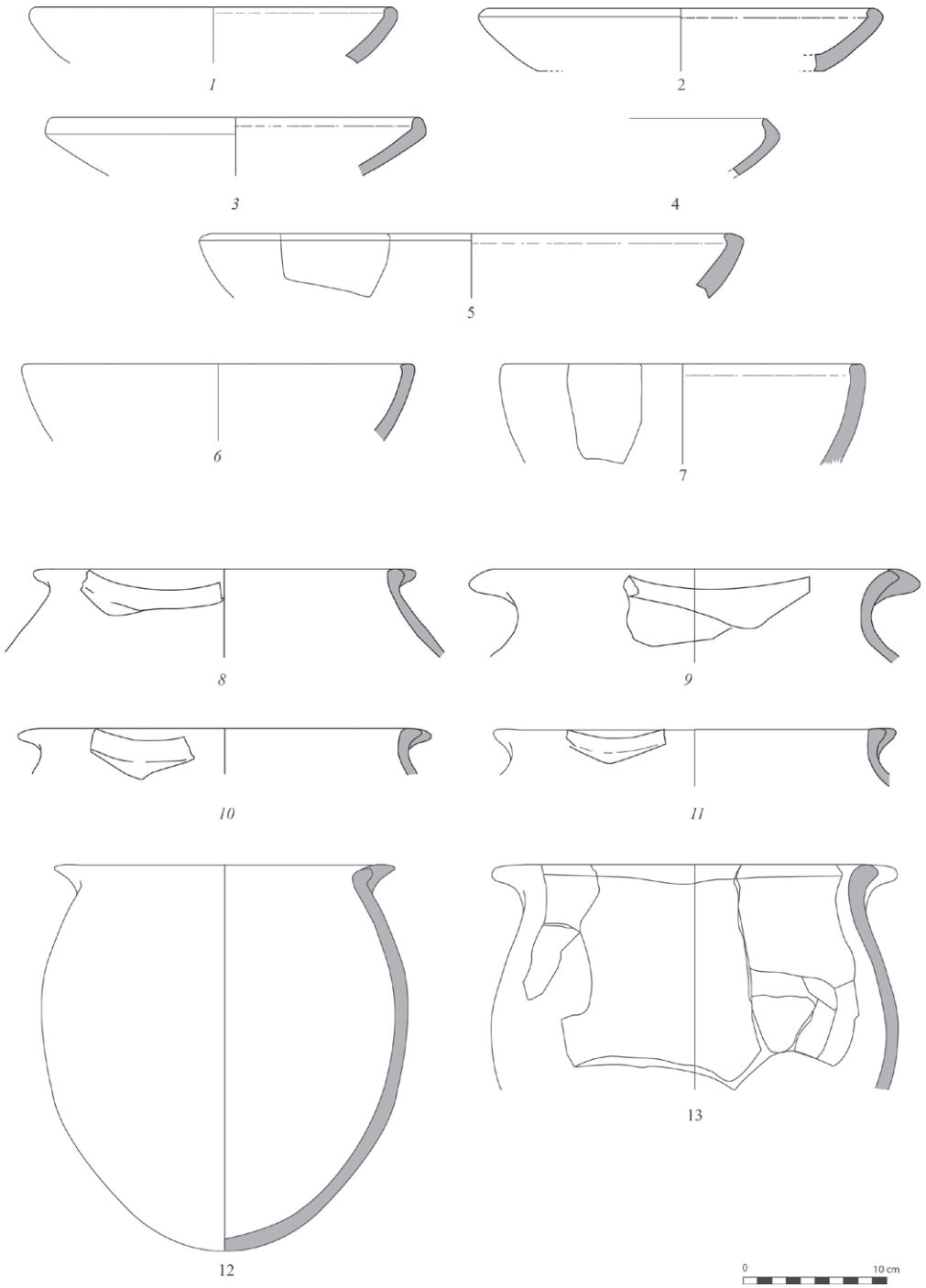


**Fig. 7:** *Platter-bowls and Pots with triangular lugs*. **1**. Tell Berne (redrawn after Mellaart 1981: fig. 166: 945); **2**. Tell Tuqan, Phase 8, L.982 (TT.20.P.474/3, Vacca 2020: fig. 4.7: 16); **3**. Tell Maled, Quweiq Survey Phase H (redrawn after Mellaart 1981: fig. 164: 932); **4**. Tell Abu Danne, niveau VII (redrawn after Tefnin 1980: pl. XII, fig. 22: 9); **5.** Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Area CC, S.7277 (TM.98.CC.123/7, Vacca 2020: pl. XLVIII: 9); **6.** Tell Archaq, Quweiq Survey Phase H (redrawn after Mellaart 1981: fig. 164: 925); **7.** Tell Tuqan, Phase 7 (TT.09.P.421/4, © MAIS); **8.** Tell Botnan, Quweiq Survey Phases G-H (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 162: 917); **9**. Tell Qoubessine, Quweiq Survey Phases G-H (redrawn after Mellaart 1981: fig. 161: 897); **10**. Tell Fafine, Quweiq Survey Phases G-H (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 162: 914); **11**. Tell Botnan, Quweiq Survey Phases G-H (redrawn after Mellaart 1981: fig. 162: 915), **12**. Kurban Höyük, Period IV (EME 3; redrawn after Sconzo 2015: type 75, pl. 14: 12); **13**. Horum Höyük, Area B (redrawn after Marro *et al*. 1998: pl. 14: 1).

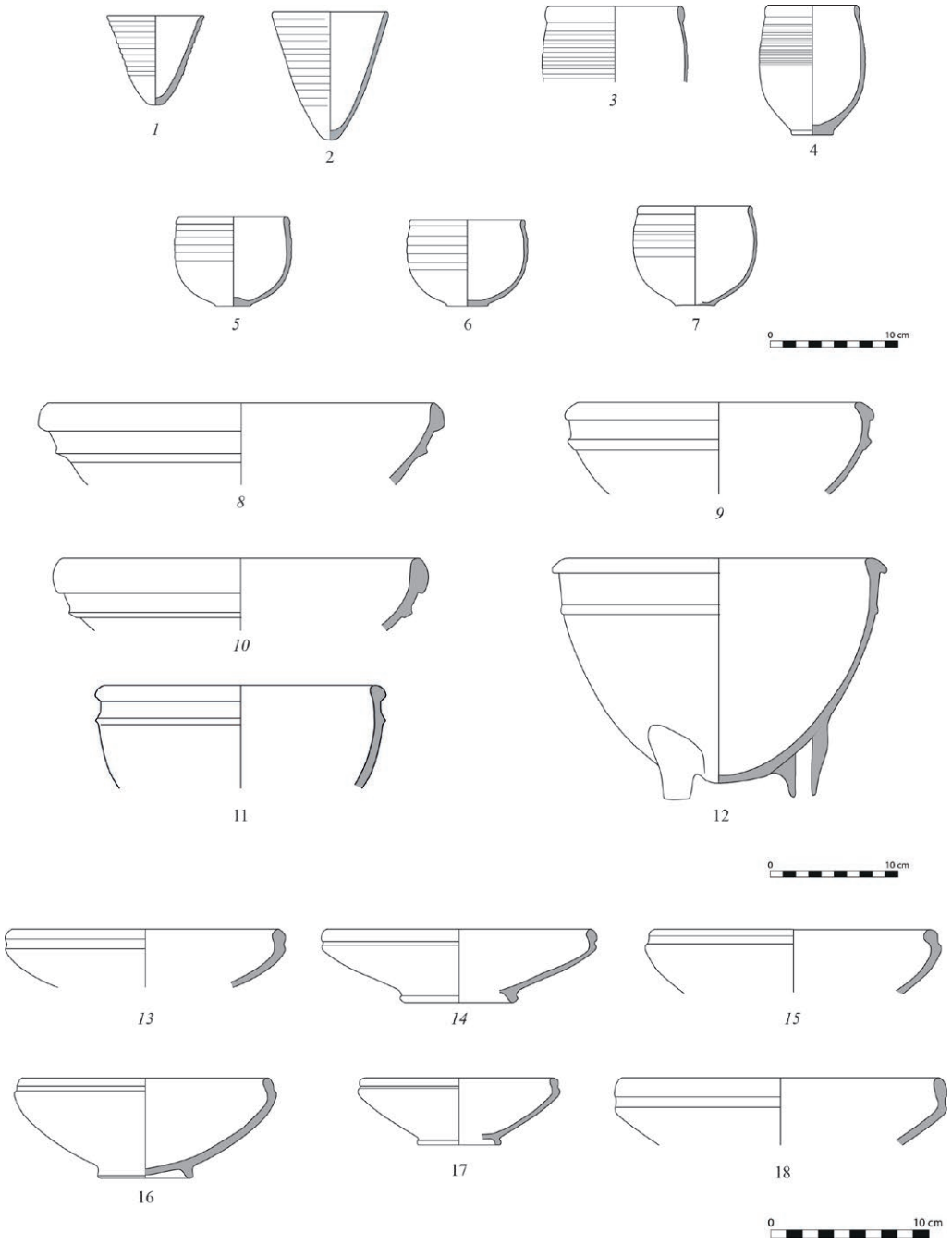


**Fig. 8:** *Sugar-loaf Beakers, Ovoid Corrugated Goblets and Bowls with inturned moulded rim or with ribbed band*. **1.** Tell Rifa'at, Burial 5 (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 204: 14); **2.** Hammam al-Turkman (redrawn after Sconzo 2015, pl. 17: 14); **3**. Tell Kadrich, kiln dump (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 208: 17); **4.** Ebla Palace G, (TM.82.G.511/2, redrawn after Mazzoni 1994: fig. 2: 21); **5.** Tell Rifa'at, Burial 2 (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 204: 10); **6**. Umm el-Marra, Burial 3 (redrawn after Schwartz *et al.* 2006: fig. 10: 10); **7**. Ebla, Building G5-Ph. 2, L.7704a (TM.99.G.549/1a+b, Vacca 2020: pl. LXIV: 27); **8**. Tell Rifa'at, Lower level of EB IV (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 206: 29); **9**. Tell Kadrich, kiln dump (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 208: 11); **10**. Tell Kadrich, kiln dump (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 208: 14); **11**. Ebla, Palace G (redrawn after Mazzoni 1983: fig. XXXI: 5); **12**. Ebla, Palace G, L.3463 (TM.82.G.511/7, redrawn after Mazzoni 1994: fig. 7: 13); **13**. Tell Kadrich, kiln dump (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 208: 3); **14**. Tell Kadrich, kiln dump (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 208: 5); **15**. Tell Kadrich, kiln dump (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 208: 7); **16**. Wreide, Tomb W086, Chamber B (redrawn after Sconzo 2015: type 82, pl. 15: 22); **17**. Tell Hadidi, Tomb LI (redrawn after Dornemann 1988: fig. 13: 7); **18**. Tilbeshar Höyük, Phase IIIC (redrawn after Kepinski 2005: fig. 4:3).

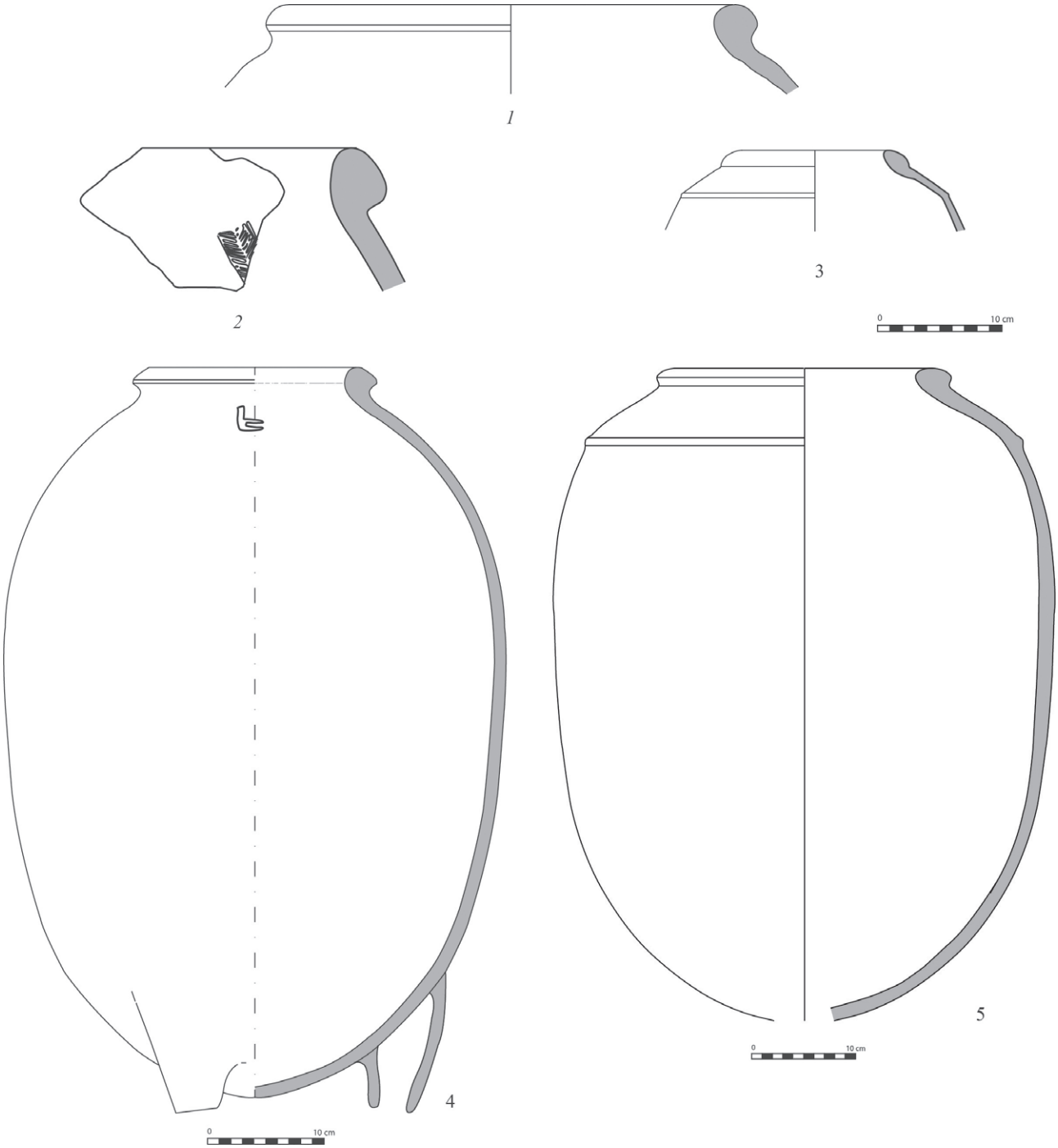


**Fig. 9:** *Jars with Ovoid Body and Swollen Rim*. **1**. Tell Rifa'at, Lower level of EB IV (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 206: 12); **2**. Tell Chair, survey (redrawn after Collon 1981: fig. 259, scale uncertain); **3**. Tilbeshar Höyük, Phase IIIC (redrawn after Kepinski 2007: fig. 10.5:12); **4**. Ebla, Palace G, L.2617 (redrawn after Mazzoni 2013: fig. 5: 25); **5**. Ebla, Palace G, L.2617 (redrawn after Mazzoni 1992: pl. XXV).

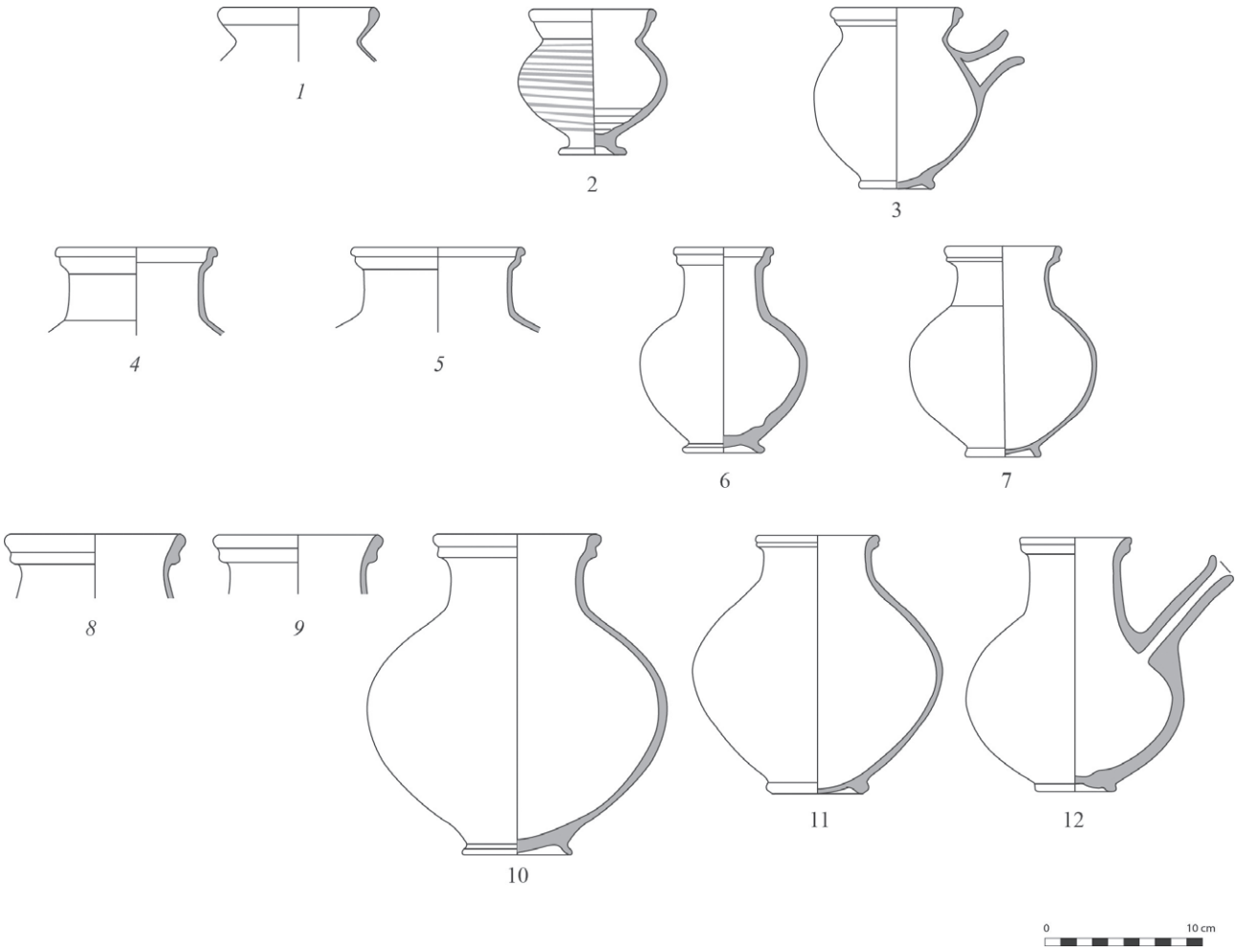


**Fig. 10:** *Necked jars with moulded rim.* **1.** Tell Kadrich, kiln dump (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 208: 28); **2.** Gre Virike, Period II (redrawn after Engin 2007: fig. 18.6: 9); **3.** Tell Hadidi, Tomb LI (redrawn after Dornemann 1988: fig. 14: 5); **4-5**. Tell Kadrich, kiln dump (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 208: 31-32); **6**. Tell Shiyukh Tahtani, Period X (redrawn after Sconzo 2015: pl. 19: 15); **7**. Tell Hadidi, Tomb LI (redrawn after Dornemann 1988: fig. 14: 1); **8-9**. Tell Rifa'at, Lower level of EB IV (redrawn after Matthers 1981: fig. 206: 9-10); **10**. Terqa, Tomb Phase III.1 (redrawn after Sconzo 2015: type 103, pl. 19: 16); **11**. Tell Hadidi, Tomb LI (redrawn after Dornemann 1988: fig. 14: 11); **12**. Selenkahiye, Sq. W13, Tomb I (redrawn after Sconzo 2015: pl. 20: 6).

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