

# TELL TWEINI, ANCIENT GABALA, IN THE BRONZE AGE

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Tell Tweini lies in the ancient region of Northern Phoenicia, the coastal area of Syria, around 30 kilometers south of the modern harbour town of Lattakia (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The Tell is located just outside the limits of the modern town of Jbleh, ancient Gibala/Gabala, 1.7 km from the sea, at the junction of two rivers. The larger of these, the Rumailiah river, was navigable as recently as the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This river leads from the Tell directly to the sandy cove at the northern end of the modern town where there is a small bay, visible from the acropolis of the Tell. This is undoubtedly where the harbour of the Bronze Age town of Gibala was situated. In Phoenician times and throughout the Iron Age, the area of the harbour extended to the south, where the modern town of Jbleh is now sited.

## THE PROJECT

The excavations at Tell Tweini form part of the Jbleh Project, a multi-disciplinary research program initiated at the behest of the Syrian Directorate of Antiquities. Project directors are Prof. Dr. Michel Al-Maqdissi and Prof. Dr. Karel Van Lerberghe (KULeuven, Belgium). Co-director for the museum of Lattakia is Mr. Jamal Haidar. Mr. Masaoud Badawy from the Syrian Department of Antiquities and Prof. Dr. Joachim Bretschneider (KULeuven, Belgium) are the field directors since the beginning of the excavations in 1999. Dr. Klaas Vansteenhuyse (UCLouvain, Belgium) is responsible for the pottery and the correlated chronology of Tell Tweini.<sup>2</sup>

The aims of the project are to explore the Middle Bronze–Early Iron Age strata, employing up-to-date scientific techniques and examining, in particular, changes in technology, especially those relating to food processing and ceramic technologies, and economic strategies. We also aim to produce a full ceramic sequence from the

Middle Bronze through the Early Iron Age. During the last four excavation campaigns of 1999 to 2002, different areas have been under investiga-



Fig. 1

<sup>1</sup> The Jbleh Project is a part of the Belgian Program on Interuniversity Poles of Attraction, inaugurated by the Belgian State Prime Minister's Office for Science Policy Programming (IUAP V/ 16). We would like to thank

our colleague and friend Tim CUNNINGHAM for his support of the project for many years.

<sup>2</sup> The study of the ceramics is the subject of project ARKA 0500753 at the UCLouvain.

tion, and excavations so far have revealed deposits of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages as well as of the Iron Age.<sup>3</sup> Of particular interest are the remains of Middle Bronze Age habitation and the archaeological objects dating to the transition to the Late Bronze Age, which remains a puzzle in this region. Likewise, due to the preservation of the crucial Late Bronze to Iron Age transition, Tell Tweini offers a unique opportunity to study cultural, economic and political events

during this still very enigmatic period of the “Sea Peoples”, events which radically changed the entire Near East.

**THE TELL**

The Bronze and Iron Age Tell is roughly pear-shaped, with the narrow end pointing due west towards the sea (Fig. 2). The Tell measures about 400 meters east-west by 290 meters north-south, and its surface is approximately 36.250 square



Fig. 2

<sup>3</sup> For the results of the excavations in 1999 and 2000, see BRETSCHEIDER, CUNNINGHAM and VAN LERBERGHE 1999.



Fig. 3

meters (11.6 hectares), more than 6 times larger than Tell Sukas, and about half the size of Tell Ras Shamra-Ugarit.

The Tell of Tweini rises about 15 to 20 meters above the surrounding fields and the surface at the top varies in absolute height between 19 and 27 meters above sea level (Fig. 3). Currently, there is a fresh water source at the northeastern end of the Tell which still provides ample water for the modern town of Jbleh and the surrounding fields. Nearby, collapsed building remains attest the presence of Bronze and Iron Age architecture, connected to the sources. On the Tell itself, we reconstruct a Phoenician sanctuary connected to a water source in the Iron Age.

The full extent of the settlement remains unknown since no systematic exploration of the lower town has been made. Fortunately, the Tell

area is free of modern buildings, so archaeological explorations can take place in any part of the ancient town. For the campaigns in 2003 and 2004, a geomagnetic survey is planned for the entire Tell to better understand its urban structure.

#### THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT GIBALA/GABALA IN THE BRONZE AGE<sup>4</sup>

In the middle of the second millennium B.C., two world powers were active in Syria: Egypt in the coastal region and the Mitanni Empire in the rest of Syria. There was no well-defined boundary between these two powers, but there were several semi-autonomous mini states, and local rulers cooperated with either one or the other empire. The Late Bronze Age archives of Ugarit provide important information for the region of “Gabala”.<sup>5</sup> These archives cover the time between

<sup>4</sup> A historical overview of Gibala was presented by Tom Boiy at the workshop “The Syro-Lebanese Coastal Plain: The Early Settlements”, KULeuven, 28.2.02. For a history of the Tell in the Hellenistic and Roman periods see: BOIY, in print. A book on the history of the Jbleh plain is in preparation by the Belgian-Syrian team, see:

AL-MAQDISSI, VAN LERBERGHE and BRETSCHEIDER, in preparation.

<sup>5</sup> For the political history of Ugarit and its neighbours, see SINGER 1999, 603–733. For a short summary of the history of the coastal sites in this region, see LAGARCE and LAGARCE 2000, 140–146.

1350 B.C. and the fall of Ugarit in the eighth year of Ramses III (around 1175 B.C.) when the city was destroyed by the Sea Peoples.<sup>6</sup>

For the Middle Bronze Age, however, there is less direct evidence for this region. Though new work at Ugarit has uncovered important archaeological levels from this time, as yet no architecture can be assigned to the first phase of the Middle Bronze Age settlement on Tell Ras Shamra<sup>7</sup> and the textual evidence for the period comes primarily from the Mari Archives.<sup>8</sup>

However, despite the comparative lack of direct evidence, textual or otherwise, funerary remains suggest that Ugarit was resettled at the start of the Middle Bronze Age by Schaeffer's

“porteurs de torques”, Amorite tribal groups moving into the region at that time. Certainly the Mari archives provide documentation of a thriving polity at Ugarit, though curiosities remain.<sup>9</sup> As most of the origin of the public architecture at Tell Ras Shamra once thought to belong to the Middle Bronze Age has been redated to the end of that period or later,<sup>10</sup> we have only the tomb evidence to go on. Regionally, one such Middle Bronze Age tomb has been uncovered at Tell Tweini, containing a fenestrated axe of the ‘duck-bill’ variety (Fig. 4), well known at Ugarit and also found in warrior graves in the Levant and Egypt. Indeed, tomb-scenes at Beni Hasan indicate that by the early 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, people from Canaan



Fig. 4

<sup>6</sup> Overview with bibliography: WATSON and WYATT 1999, 762–823, VEENHOF 2001, 183–190; YON 1997a/b.

<sup>7</sup> MALLET 1996; MALLET 1997; MALLET 2003 for recent investigations at Ras Shamra; SINGER 1999, 609, citing YON 1997b, 26.

<sup>8</sup> or aspects of Babylonian impact on Ugaritic cuneiform culture and literature, see DIETRICH 1996, 36–38.

<sup>9</sup> SINGER 1999, 616–618; Documents from the famous trip of Zimri-Lim fail to name a ruler for Ugarit,

though rulers are named for most of the other sites visited; perhaps some special relation with Mari is indicated here.

<sup>10</sup> See YON 1997a, 258; YON 1997b, 26. For the origin of the Late Bronze Age palace of Ugarit and its allocation to King Niqmaddu II (ca. 1350–1315 B.C.), see: KUSCHKE 1962, 251–299; SCHAEFFER 1962, 310; ABOUD 1994, 24, 40.

had entered Egypt via the Nile Delta. These depictions show them armed with native weaponry – javelins, battle-axes and daggers – such as are known from burials throughout the Levant.<sup>11</sup>

Other evidence for the Middle Bronze Age has come from Tell Siyannu, where, during the recent campaign of excavations, a Middle Bronze Age tablet dealing with exchange of goods to Egypt and Cyprus was found.<sup>12</sup>

The history of the Late Bronze Age is far better known and represented. In 1350 B.C., Ugarit fell under Egyptian control. Around 1330 B.C., a military expedition by the king of Hatti, Suppiluliuma I, resulted in Mitanni subjugation to the Hittites. Ugarit, Amurru, Qadesh and several other small kingdoms passed into the Hittite sphere of influence.<sup>13</sup> From this period onwards, it was the Egyptian and the Hittite Empires fighting for influence and control in Syria. Northeastern Syria came under Hittite influence, as the Hittite king installed a vice-king in Karkemish and local Syrian rulers became Hittite vassals bound by treaty and oath to the Hittite king. The exact boundary with the Egyptian zone depended on the loyalty of Amurru, the most southern vassal state of the Hittite zone. The kings of Amurru tended to shift their loyalties and were often dealing with Egypt. Ugarit was also a Hittite vassal state and several cuneiform tablets from Ugarit illustrate the relation of the Ugaritic king and the Great King, the Hittite overlord.

Gibala is mentioned for the first time in an Ugaritic document from the second half of the fourteenth century, when Niqmepa was king in Ugarit. The Akkadian tablet PRU 4, 71–76 is in fact a treaty between king Niqmepa and king Abdiʿanati of Siyannu-Ushnatu.<sup>14</sup> Siyannu was situated south of Ugarit<sup>15</sup> and is probably identical with Tell Siyannu, a site just seven kilometres east of Jebleh, under exploration for several years by Michel Al-Maqdissi.<sup>16</sup> This text from Ugarit makes it clear that Siyannu had been part of the Ugaritic state and that king Abdiʿanati had been a vassal of Niqmepa of Ugarit. Abdiʿanati was not pleased

with the situation and he appealed to the Hittite king to become a direct vassal of the Hittite vice-king in Karkemish instead of the Ugaritic king. The Hittite king Mursili II agreed, resulting in the treaty PRU 4, 71–76. In this text, two lists of place names appear: one enumerating the places belonging to Ugarit, the other dealing with the places belonging to the kingdom of Siyannu. In the list of Ugaritic places, the name Gi5-bá-la appears showing that Gibala belonged to the state of Ugarit both before and after the separation of Siyannu from Ugarit.<sup>17</sup>

The exact boundaries of this Ugaritic state and the location of Gibala can be studied on the basis of several Ugaritic tablets listing places belonging to Ugarit. PRU 5, 74 is such a list, written in the Ugaritic script. The places mentioned in these lists are classified according to their location so that several groups can be discerned. Gibala appears in the group situated on the southern coast where it appears as the last toponym in the group, which implies that it was the southernmost locality of the Ugaritic territory, near the border with Siyannu. The Ugaritic lists with toponyms are not dated but because the localities from Siyannu are not included, it is clear that they date to the time after the aforementioned treaty PRU 4, 71–76 between Niqmepa of Ugarit and Abdiʿanati of Siyannu was concluded.

Around 1200 B.C. the state of Ugarit collapsed because of the invasions of the so-called “Sea Peoples”. Ugaritic letters from this period are preserved, warning the Ugaritic king about invading troops, and other letters from the Ugaritic king to the king of Alashiya (Cyprus) speak of the disasters taking place in Ugarit. With the downfall of Ugarit, the Ugaritic sources come to an end and Gibala is no longer mentioned for many centuries.

We can conclude from this brief historical overview that Gabala/Gibala was part of the Ugaritic state and certainly attested in the Late Bronze Age since the second half of the fourteenth century, when Niqmepa was king in Ugarit. As mentioned, the Akkadian tablet PRU 4, 71–76

<sup>11</sup> For close parallels of duckbill axes from Tell el-Dabʿa see: BIETAK 1996, 14, fig. 11; plate B (tomb from stratum d/2: 19<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) and tomb F/I-o/19-no 6139.

<sup>12</sup> M. AL-MAQDISSI, personal communication at the workshop “The Syro-Lebanese Coastal Plain: The Early Settlements”, KULeuven, 28.2.02.

<sup>13</sup> See VAN SOLDT 1997, 683f.

<sup>14</sup> VAN SOLDT 1997, 696ff; SINGER 1999, 662–666.

<sup>15</sup> ASTOUR 1979, 11ff.

<sup>16</sup> BOUNNI and AL-MAQDISSI 1998, 254ff.

<sup>17</sup> Recently W. van Soldt has discussed the topography of the state of Ugarit in a series of articles in *Ugarit Forschungen*, see VAN SOLDT 1997; 1998.

is in fact a treaty between king Niqmepa and king Abdi'anati of Siyannu. The double kingdom of Siyannu-Ushnatu is mentioned several times in the Late Bronze Age tablets from Ugarit (14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.). The capital of Siyannu lies in the close neighbourhood of Gibala and is most probably identical with the Tell Siyannu, seven kilometres to the east of Tell Tweini. Based on this historical information, we can expect important occupation-levels for the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. in Siyannu and Gibala. Unfortunately, the archaeological reality for both sites is for the moment quite different. Extensive Late Bronze Age occupation levels are absent from Tell Siyannu, perhaps because the site was levelled in the Iron Age for Assyrian building activities. A Middle Bronze Age tablet has been found by Michel Al-Maqdissi at Tell Siyannu in the last excavation campaign, dealing with trade activities in Egypt, Cyprus and Mari. This still unpublished material seems to be also very important for the chronological research in the Jebleh region.

For the site of Jebleh/Tell Tweini, there is very little evidence because of limited excavation. A similar situation exists at Tell Ras Shamra as far as the Early and Middle Bronze Age levels are concerned, since the historical picture does not fit the archaeological framework either.

### Archaeological fields and phases

At present, three fields (A, B, C) are being excavated at Tell Tweini.

#### *Field B*

In Field B, at the western edge of the upper Tell, a stone platform and annexes have been discovered, interpreted as part of a Phoenician sanctuary of the Iron Age (Fig. 5). A sounding showed that the area of field B was inhabited during most of the Early Iron Age while layers with Late Bronze Age pottery were rare and within the small sounding unconnected to any architecture. In the lower part of the sounding, about 3 meters under the surface level, a Middle Bronze Age bee-hive tomb with a circular corbelled stone structure was discovered. Directly above this structure was a burnt earthen floor from which came one diagnostic sherd datable to Late Cypriot IIC. Since no recognisable

material from a later period was found at this level, it has been assigned to the Late Bronze Age. When found, the Middle Bronze Age tomb was sealed. Once opened, we found a 35 cm high jug with decoration reminiscent of the Bathrobe Ware of the late Middle Bronze/early Late Bronze Age (Fig. 6). The jug has butterfly motives on the shoulder and black parallel lines on the body. A similar jug is known from Tomb 36 in Ugarit, where it is dated to the Middle Bronze Age. It has an identical form and similar decoration. Berthold Einwag classifies this Bathrobe jug from Ugarit as Levantine Painted Ware, also attested in the northern Levant at Tell al Shalihiya, Amrit, Tell Sukas and Ugarit.<sup>18</sup> A further parallel in form and decoration can be found amongst the decorated North Syrian-Cilician Ware or Amuq-Cilician Ware attested in Ugarit, Tell Gudeida, Qatna and Alalah. The butterfly motives of the jugs are especially similar to our find.<sup>19</sup>

In the lower level of the tomb, two adult skeletons were recovered, both articulated, although the heads were damaged. In the case of the second skeleton the head seemed to have been removed prior to inhumation. The first, larger skeleton lay in a fetal position on its right side with the legs bent beneath and the head facing east. The second skeleton lay on its back, facing up, and arms crossed over its chest. Lying next to the shin of the larger skeleton was a fenestrated bronze axe of the duckbill variety well known from Ugaritic tombs and datable (according to Schaeffer) to Ugarit Moyen II.

Due to the limited excavated area in Field B, our information for the Middle and Late Bronze Age is very incomplete. The Phoenician/Iron Age strata in this part of the Tell are around 1.5 meters thick, with another 1.0 meter of occupation levels lying between the Early Iron Age and the top of the Middle Bronze Age tomb. The information from the small sounding is too limited at the moment to draw further conclusions. Subsequent investigations in this area by the Syrian team might still possibly clarify the Late Bronze Age situation.

#### *Field A*

Field A lies to the east of Field B, near the center of the Tell. Here excavations revealed the remains of a large building, the full extent of which has

<sup>18</sup> EINWAG 1998, 142ff., Verbreitungskarte 5. For a parallel at Ugarit, see MALLETT 1997, 547, n. 4.

<sup>19</sup> EINWAG 1998, 137ff., Abb. 64, 1–2.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

not yet been determined (Fig. 7). We have identified two major architectural phases with three sub-phases of occupation substantially reusing the same walls. A sounding in the western part of the complex uncovered the oldest occupation horizon of the building with at least one wall that had remained in use into the later sub phases. A great deal of pottery was recovered from this building, with many complete or semi-complete vessels from in situ floor deposits. Much of the pottery was decorated in styles consistent with Early to Middle Iron Age ceramics from the Southern Levant and Cyprus. Also notable are seven seals and sealings as well as other small finds probably connected to workshop activity.

Phase A (yellow) is the most recent Iron Age level in the building, reusing walls and spaces

from the older building in phase B (red). Several rectangular rooms with general east-west orientation can be attributed to phase B. Several floors and a grave in this building<sup>20</sup> belonging to phase B have ceramic assemblages datable to the 10<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. Some of the interesting finds include a body sherd of a storage jar with Aramean writing,<sup>21</sup> sherds with decoration in a Mycenaean tradition,<sup>22</sup> and a Phoenician bichrome barrel jug from the grave. Several seal stones come from this level. Phase C (blue) and phase D (light green) are the oldest Iron Age levels in Field A, and it is only in some of the rooms that we have been able to excavate down to the floors of these periods. From phase C, a floor was noted in the eastern part of the building. Where the earliest Iron Age architectural

<sup>20</sup> Locus TWE-A-00216.

<sup>21</sup> TWE-A-locus-00117.

<sup>22</sup> TWE-A-locus-02107.

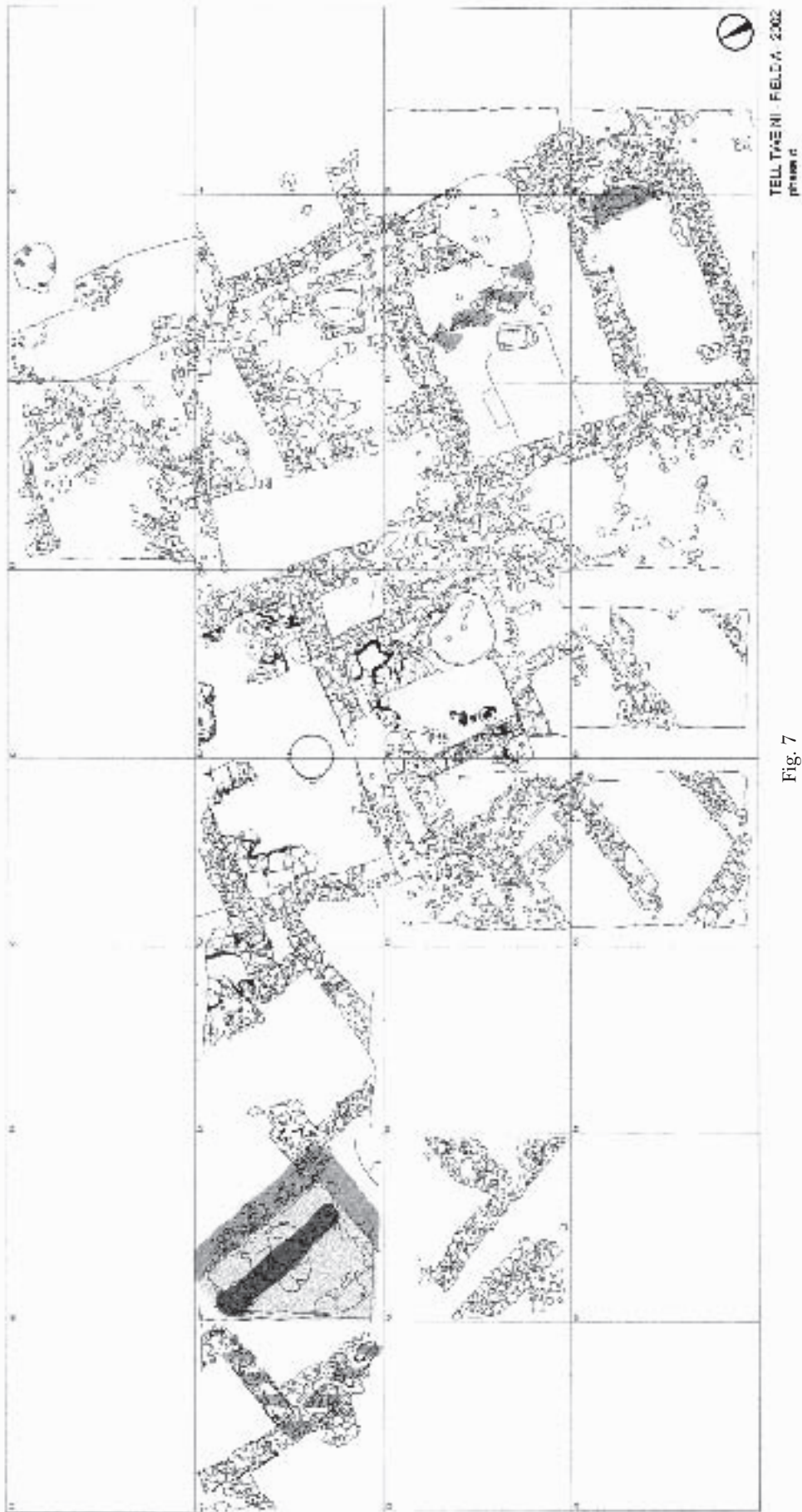


Fig. 7





Fig. 8

structures of phase D (light green) are concerned, we discovered a room with a large amount of pottery on the floor (Fig. 8). The assemblage<sup>23</sup> contained jars, cups, jugs and a clay seal impression (Fig. 9)<sup>24</sup> all pointing to a date in the 11<sup>th</sup> century or perhaps slightly earlier. Some of the cup types have parallels in LB II vessels from other sites such as Sarepta<sup>25</sup> and the whole context resembles an Early Iron Age one from Tell Sukas.<sup>26</sup> While the cups are reminiscent of the end of the Late Bronze Age, the jars belong to a long-lived type from the Early Iron Age type, also attested at Tall Daruk<sup>27</sup>. In addition, com-

parison with sherds from Ugarit<sup>28</sup> confirmed that neither vessel types nor fabrics in these and stratigraphically higher layers of Tell Tweini resemble those found at Ugarit. This means that this Iron Age assemblage was probably not deposited before the destruction of the city of Ugarit in the 12<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>29</sup>

Late Bronze Age levels were only reached in a very small sounding in the western part of the building, under the rich floor deposits of locus TWE-A-00027. Here, the Late Bronze Age levels are around half a meter thick and overlie a Middle Bronze Age grave. The Late Bronze layers were

<sup>23</sup> Locus TWE-A-00027.

<sup>24</sup> BRETSCHNEIDER, CUNNINGHAM and VAN LERBERGHE 1999.

<sup>25</sup> PRITCHARD 1975, fig. 28:4 and 28:5.

<sup>26</sup> See VANSTEENHUYSE, in print. RIIS *et al.* 1996 mention that the cups at Tell Sukas are similar to vessels from Ugarit and can be dated to Ugarit Récent 3.

<sup>27</sup> Similar jars there have been dated to 950–600 B.C., see OLDENBURG and ROHWEDER 1981, 39.

<sup>28</sup> We sincerely thank Dr. Monchambert for his assistance and guidance through the storage facilities at the 'Mai-

son Archéologique de l'Expédition Française à Ras Shamra' in Lattakia.

<sup>29</sup> The season 2002 has provided for the first time uncontaminated loci containing sherds typologically belonging to Iron Age I and dating back to 1050 B.C. These loci (TWE-A-00908, TWE-A-00828) contained semi-complete milk bowls and storage jars of the oldest Iron Age type. Whether these loci are covering extensive Late Bronze Ages layers remains to be verified (VANSTEENHUYSE, K. 2002, Ceramic Report Tweini).

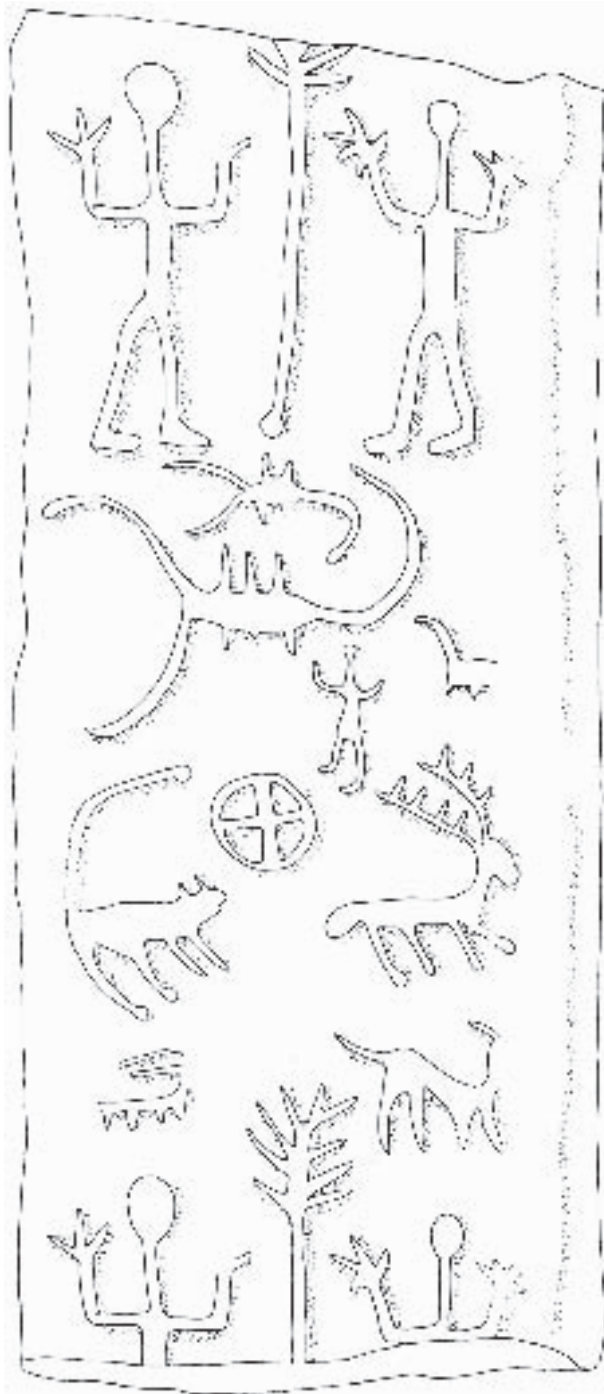


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

quite mixed, however, containing tiny fragments of milk bowls in the White Slip II tradition,<sup>30</sup> Base Ring Ware<sup>31</sup> and local wares and forms. In the percentage of fabrics from phase D to this older phase we note a clear change. A brittle fabric, common in several Late Bronze and Middle Bronze wares<sup>32</sup> of the region increases to almost 5%,<sup>33</sup> as compared to the higher Iron Age layers.

Beneath the Late Bronze Age layers, a jar tomb of the Middle Bronze Age was exposed (Fig. 10). The large jar contained one skeleton and five ceramic vessels: two red slipped juglets,<sup>34</sup> one dipper juglet,<sup>35</sup> a little carinated bowl and

<sup>30</sup> TWE-A-00032-C-016, TWE-A-00043-C-028.

<sup>31</sup> TWE-A-00043-C-012.

<sup>32</sup> A sherd in local ware and style can be dated to Ugarit Récent 1 (1600–1450 B.C.). It finds parallels in BUHL 1983, 262 and in SCHAEFFER 1949, fig. 50:19.

<sup>33</sup> VANSTEENHUYSE, AL-MAQDISSI and VAN LERBERGHE 2002.

<sup>34</sup> One of these jugs resembles a piriform jug from Sukas (THRANE 1978, fig. 61) (MB II). A similar jug was also

found in Ras Shamra in Grave XXXVI (SCHAEFFER 1949, figs. 102, 105, 107, 109, and 129, pls. XXXVIII and XLIV).

<sup>35</sup> The dipper juglet is similar to Type 1 jugs from Sukas (THRANE 1978: fig. 54). The type was a long-lived one. It can also be found at Ras Shamra (SCHAEFFER 1949, fig. 106: 14 from Ugarit Récent 1) (*ibid.*, fig. 105: 26 from Ugarit Moyen 2/3).

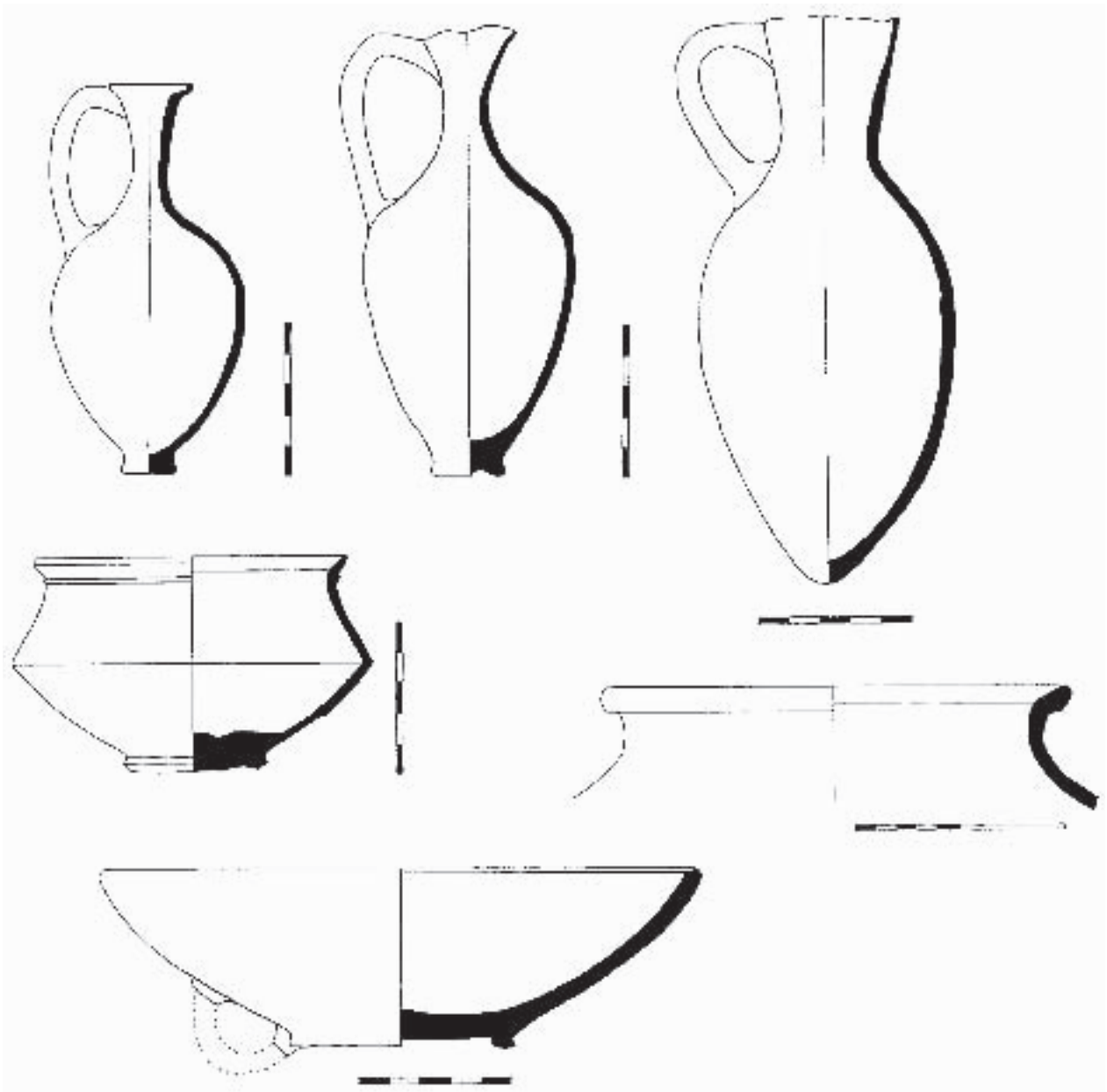


Fig. 11

one red slipped plate with a three-loop handled base (Figs. 11–12).<sup>36</sup> The typology of the storage jar<sup>37</sup> itself places this context in the Middle Bronze Age, but the whole assemblage of the five vessels provides a more precise dating. For in Ugarit, we find tombs with exactly the same composition of grave gifts. In a pit under Tomb

XXXVI, a Kamares ware cup of Middle Minoan II was found together with a collection of similar vessels as those from the jar tomb at Tweini. The whole assemblage was dated to Ugarit Moyen II.<sup>38</sup>

The second Late Bronze Age context is situated in a room in the southeastern part of the building where we excavated down to the foun-

<sup>36</sup> A parallel has been found at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, made of Egyptian Nile alluvium, dating to MB IIA–B (Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> 4629), see MCGOVERN 2000, pl. 9c.

<sup>37</sup> The storage jar resembles a jar from Sukas which has been dated to Ugarit Moyen 2 or MB II (THRANE 1978, fig. 71; SCHAEFFER 1949, fig. 100: 31).

<sup>38</sup> SCHAEFFER 1962, pl. XV, fig. 5.

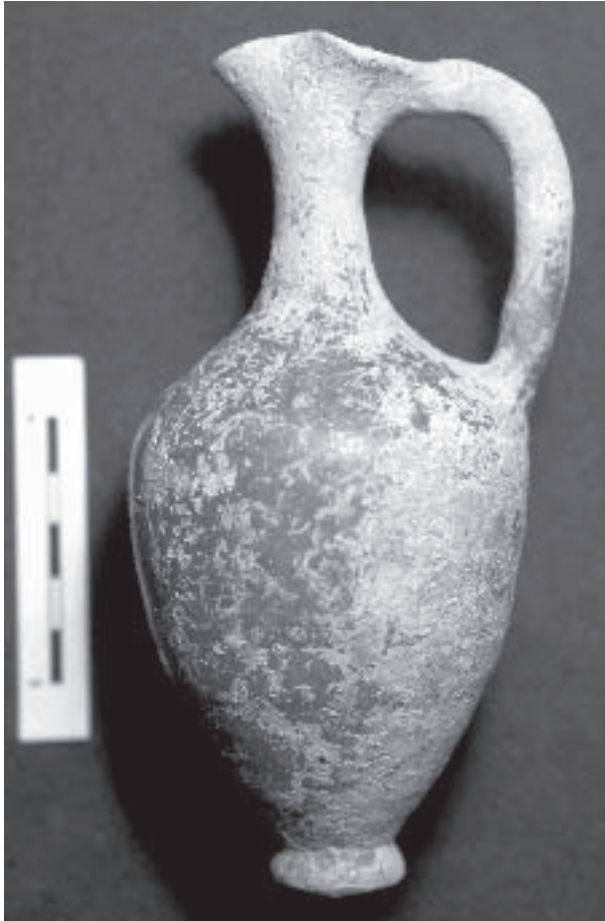


Fig. 12

dations (Fig. 13). Floor patches were visible, probably belonging to the earliest occupation of the room in the early Iron Age. Below that floor, layers with Late Bronze Age ceramics were excavated, but again not in association with architecture as was the case in the soundings. Here we found a nearly complete profile of a milk bowl, decorated in the Cypriot White Slip II tradition (Fig. 14).<sup>39</sup>

Some fragments of a bilbil in Base Ring Ware were also found. Just beneath the Iron Age layers, we found a jar handle inscribed with a possible Cypro-Minoan sign.<sup>40</sup> A similar sign was also

found on an Aegean coarse ware stirrup jar in Tomb V at Ugarit.<sup>41</sup> Further surface finds from Field A included three fragments of Late Bronze Age wishbone handles.<sup>42</sup>

All this confirms occupation at the Tell or very close by during the Late Bronze Age. However, the Base Ring Ware and the milk bowls also suggest that this habitation was rather LB II than LB I in date. What happened during the transition from the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze Age at Tell Tweini remains vague at present, as is the case at Ugarit.

#### *Field C*

On the eastern flank of the Tell, a massive fortification wall was excavated during the campaigns of 2001 and 2002 (Figs. 15–16). The length of the preserved wall is nearly a 100 meters and its actual preserved height is over five meters (Fig. 17). The construction date of this still impressive architecture remains in debate, but, like at Ugarit, it is possible that it was constructed during the Middle Bronze Age and reused in the Late Bronze Age. In a small sounding at the foot of the wall, only the Iron Age levels have been exposed until now, but these could have been deposited as a result of runoff from the Tell surface. Further investigations will be carried out in the following seasons.

#### **The place of Tell Tweini in the northern Levant**

This chronological situation is not surprising if one looks at other sites in the region.<sup>43</sup>

Tell Sukas, five kilometres to the south from Tell Tweini, must have been inhabited during the Middle Bronze Age, but so far mainly tombs have been found dating to this period.<sup>44</sup> Clear traces of habitation can be found again only in LB II.<sup>45</sup>

Qalat Er-Rouss, about 9 kilometers to the north of Tweini, is a potentially interesting site. Forrer<sup>46</sup> did note in 1934 that it was one of the largest tells in the plain. He made some test trenches and suggested a very long and uninterrupted habitation at the site. SCHAEFFER (1949,

<sup>39</sup> TWE-A-00908-C-001.

<sup>40</sup> TWE-A-00821-C-001. The sign consists of a triangle with a vertical line crossing it and three horizontal lines positioned a little higher on the handle; see BUCHHOLZ 1999, 521 for a parallel.

<sup>41</sup> HIRSCHFELD 2000.

<sup>42</sup> TWE-A-00102-C-011, TWE-A-00200-C-072, TWE-A-00400-C-074.

<sup>43</sup> See also LAGARCE and LAGARCE 2000 for a broader overview.

<sup>44</sup> THRANE 1978.

<sup>45</sup> One can refer here to the 'sanctuary' as discussed in RIIS *et al.* 1996.

<sup>46</sup> Forrer never published his excavation report but partial notes were printed in EHRICH 1939.



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

42), on the other hand, did note that there appears to have been a break in habitation from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age. We have tried to restudy the pottery excavated by Forrer but the

collection, first studied in the thirties of the last century, has apparently disappeared from the storage facilities at the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania and from Bryn Mawr College.<sup>47</sup> However, a recent rescue excavation at the site by the Museum of Lattakia uncovered numerous fragments of milk bowls and Base Ring Ware. These finds make it certain that at least LB II is well attested at Qalat Er-Rouss.

It is also interesting to note that Late Bronze Age levels are nearly absent at Tell Siyannu. Yet, it is possible that the construction of the later Assyrian fortress destroyed much of the evidence.<sup>48</sup>

A pattern emerges in which there seemingly was only a single central site flourishing in LB I:

<sup>47</sup> K. Vansteenhuyse wants to express his gratitude to Dr. S. White (University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania) and Dr. C. Campbell (Bryn Mawr College) for their help in searching the respective collections. Part of the collection was published as EHRICH 1939.

<sup>48</sup> M. AL-MAQDISSI in a paper presented at the workshop "The Syro-Lebanese Coastal Plain: The Early Settlements", KULeuven, 28.2.02; BOUNNI and AL-MAQDISSI 1998.



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

the site of Tell Ras Shamra or Ugarit. Is it possible that the plain of Jebleh was indeed a border region, as suggested by VAN SOLDT (1998) on the basis of tablets found in Ugarit? The contestation of sites in this border region, such as Tell Tweini, by various political authorities would explain why most sites are not very large in LB I.

In any case, the site of Ugarit remains the reference site for the entire region. This may especially be evident in the relative chronology we have used in the presentation of the ceramics of Tell Tweini. At this moment we have no absolute

dates from our excavation. Of course, it is our goal to use some of the unexcavated parts of partially excavated primary contexts to retrieve material for absolute dating in the near future. Unfortunately, few such dates, C14-datings for example, exist for the site of Ugarit. This is why we have decided to present no absolute dates here but only cross-references. The interrelated network of ceramic typology in the archaeological material may be growing fast in the Northern Levant but there is still a lot of work to be done in order to fix it to precise absolute dates.

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Fig. 17

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