

MÜNCHENER ABHANDLUNGEN ZUM ALTEN ORIENT
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Münchener Abhandlungen zum Alten Orient

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From Pottery to Chronology: The Middle Euphrates Region in Late Bronze Age Syria

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Umschlagabbildungen: Spätbronzezeitliches Terrakottarelieff eines Lautenspielers aus Tall Bazi (Zeichnung: C. Wolff); Blick ins Euphrattal vom modernen Dorf Tall Banat aus (Foto: A. Otto); Keramikinventar aus Haus 29, Raum 34 der Weststadt von Tall Bazi (Foto: B. Einwag) © Bazi-Archiv

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Introduction to the Chronology, History and Main Challenges of the Syrian Late Bronze Age

ADELHEID OTTO

This volume is the result of an “International Workshop on the Chronology of the Late Bronze Age (15th-13th Century BC) in Northern Syria (Upper Syrian Euphrates Area): Emar, Tall al-Qitar, Tall Munbāqa, Umm el-Marra and Tall Bazi“. It took place on May 5-7, 2012 at the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz and was supported by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung.¹

1 We thank the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung and the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz for their support, especially the students and colleagues of the Institut für Ägyptologie und Altorientalistik. The publication was made possible by a starting grant from the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. Michael Herles helped me with the editing process of the papers. Tom McClellan, Glenn Schwartz and Michael Roaf commented on my introduction and the summary chapters, for which I am grateful. Peter Werner has to be thanked for his work on the publication. I ask all authors of this volume to forgive my delay in publication, for which I am fully responsible.

The programme of the workshop was the following:
Saturday, May 5th: Opening lecture by Tom McClellan (Maine): “The Military Function of second millennium el-Qitar”.

On Sunday, May 6th, public lectures were given by:
A. Caubet: “The French Excavations at Emar 1972 – 1976”; U. Finkbeiner and F. Sakal: “Vom Beginn der deutschsyrischen Ausgrabungen bis zum archäologischen Park Emar-Balis”; A. Porter: “The second millennium remains from Tall Banat and Tall Kabir”; B. Einwag, A. Otto, C. Coppini: “Die Zitadelle von Tall Bazi zur Späten Bronzezeit”; F. Blocher and P. Werner: “Die Stadt Tall Munbāqa – Ekalte zur Späten Bronzezeit”; Glenn M. Schwartz: “Ancestors, Monuments, and Sacrifice: The Bronze Age Occupation at Umm el-Marra”.

The need for the workshop was felt by the excavators of the mentioned sites, because a considerable number of LBA sites has been investigated in the Upper Euphrates area by now, but the relative and absolute chronology of most sites is still a matter of debate. This impedes severely the interpretation of breaks and destruction levels in the settlements and their relation to each other. Only when the relative and absolute chronology has been settled, will it become evident whether the final fate of the sites occurred simultaneously or were caused by more than one event, and how this should be related to the

On Monday, May 7th, the group assembled without audience and presented the material of the individual sites as a basis for the discussions, which form the core of this publication:

- Annie Caubet (Paris): La Chronologie des couches du Bronze Récent à Emar: les resultats des fouilles francaises 1972-76;
- Uwe Finkbeiner and Ferhan Sakal (Tübingen): The Chronology of the Late Bronze age levels at Emar: the results of the German excavations since 1996;
- Peter Werner and Felix Blocher (Halle; Gladbeck): The Chronology of the Late Bronze age levels at Tall Munbāqa /Ekalte;
- Tom McClellan (Maine): The Chronology of the Late Bronze Age levels at Tall al-Qitar;
- Anne Porter (Maine): The Chronology of the Late Bronze Age levels at Tall Banat;
- Glenn M. Schwartz (Baltimore): The Chronology of the Late Bronze Age levels at Umm el-Marra;
- Berthold Einwag, Adelheid Otto, Frances Sachs (Mainz) and Costanza Coppini (Berlin): The Chronology of the Late Bronze Age levels at Tall Bazi.

overall situation in Syria. Our focus is on pottery, since “ceramic data is able to fulfil its potential as a major contributor of information on past societies” (PHILIP 2014: 39).

Chronology is the backbone of history and archaeology. But there are several factors which impede a clear-cut chronological order in Syria and the Levantine region. First, there is a confusing multitude of chronologies for the Middle and Late Bronze Age, depending on the evidence used, the area considered and the methods applied. Several studies and recent workshops have been devoted to Near Eastern Middle and Late Bronze Age chronologies, most of them trying to establish first the relative, then the absolute chronology.² But even an agreement on the subdivision of the periods has not been attained: it is still a matter for debate whether the Middle Bronze Age should be divided into MB I and II or I, II and III, and the Late Bronze Age into LB IA, IB, IIA and IIB or just into periods I and II, and whether transitional periods are helpful for understanding slow shifts in technological developments or not.³ In order to move from relative to absolute chronology, apparent fixed-points from Egypt and the Levant were favoured in the first half of the 20th century⁴, while scientific methods have been dominant since the later 20th century. Radiocarbon dating promised to be most helpful in establishing absolute chronologies, since most archaeological means for dating turned out to be too imprecise: Cylinder seals of the Mittani Common style still cannot be dated accurately enough and cuneiform documents were rarer in Syria and the Levant than in Southern Mesopotamia, and were thus often kept for a longer time. Common pottery wares tend to develop slowly, and imported ceramics such as Cypriote White Slip or the Red Lustrous Wheel-made Ware (RLWM) can serve as rough anchorpoints, but may have been kept for a long time due to their exotic appearance.⁵ But although

more radiocarbon dates and synchronisms are published every year, there is still ongoing discussion about the correct absolute chronology of the Bronze Age especially in Syria and in the Levant.⁶ In this volume, we use the Middle Chronology, because it seems to fit better than most of the other hitherto proposed chronologies.⁷

The most straightforward method to investigate chronology is to study well stratified material from a single site, to compare it to equally significant material from nearby sites, to synchronize it and to relate it to the existent chronological schemes. This was also the idea behind the “Associated Regional Chronologies for the Ancient Near East” (ARCANE) project, which had as its ultimate goal the establishment of a reliable relative and absolute chronology for the 3rd millennium by synchronising regional chronologies. These were established through the comparative analysis of stratigraphically secure material with assemblages consisting of primary, composite or artificial inventories.⁸ McClellan (this volume) puts it this way: “The value of an independent ceramic sequence is that it stands solely on its internal criteria and provides an independent assessment of the other dating material.”

This method seemed to be a useful approach for the Late Bronze Age; but, since several recent studies tried to define extended ceramic regions during the LBA in Syria and Northern Mesopotamia (see especially IAMONI 2012, 185-188), our approach is rather different: we want to investigate contemporary sites in a micro-region, which extends only about 80 km from north to south and about 40 km from west to east (Fig. 1).⁹

But there is a major problem concerning the absolute chronology of Late Bronze Age pottery of the Upper Euphrates region, which may be called “The Hadidi Problem”.

Tall Hadidi – A reliable Anchor of LBA absolute Chronology?

The pottery excavated at Tall Hadidi in the 1970s and published by R. Dornemann in an ideal, exemplary way (DORNEMANN 1979, 1980, 1981) has constituted the back-

2 LUCIANI – HAUSLEITER 2014; IAMONI 2012; AL-MAQDISSI – MATOŠIAN – NICOLLE 2007; BIETAK 2002; MAZZONI 2002; MATTHIAE ET AL. 2007.

3 IAMONI 2014. DORNEMANN 2007 suggested dividing the MB II in IIA (1900-1775BC), IIB (1775-1650BC), and IIC (1650-1550BC), followed by early Late Bronze phases LB IA (1550-1500BC) and LB IB (1500-1400BC). As one of the results of this volume, some of his attributions of ceramic forms to these periods will have to be revised.

4 Various contributions in BIETAK 2002; for the absolute chronology of Egypt and the Hittites see WILHELM 2012.

5 RLWM and its imitations were used throughout the Late Bronze Age in the Eastern Mediterranean region, HEIN 2007; very few pieces are reported from Emar (CAUBET 2007) and from the Weststadt at Tall Bazi (EINWAG – OTTO 2003: 73, Abb. 5,4; OTTO 2006a: 100, 102 Abb. 45,2). Some of them seem to be imitations, and all of them are so exceptional in the assemblages, that they might have been kept for a long time. For Cypriote white slip milkbowls see

SCHWARTZ this volume.

6 HÖFLMAYER ET AL. 2016; ASSCHER ET AL. 2015.

7 ROAF 2012. In Table 1 in the Summary we follow the suggestion of Michael Roaf to label the chronology in use as MC or NC.

8 M. LEBEAU in FINKBEINER AND NOVÁK 2015: 1-3.

9 For the historical geography of the region in the 2nd millennium see FINK 2016, CANCIK-KIRSCHBAUM – HESS 2016, ZIEGLER – LANGLOIS 2016.



Fig. 1: Map of the investigated area of the Upper Euphrates region during the Late Bronze age (map by C. Fink).

bone of the relative and absolute chronology of Late Bronze Age pottery in the Upper Euphrates region until recently. Since the Tablet Building at Hadidi had fallen victim to a sudden destruction, it contained a good collection of primary inventory such as pots, cuneiform tablets and carbonised organic material. Dornemann dated it to the Late Bronze Age I or 15th century based on the analysis of some ¹⁴C samples. This date he thought confirmed by archaeological parallels with rather distant, mainly Levantine sites, and by a tentative dating of the cuneiform tablets.

The excavations at Hadidi formed part of the international salvage campaigns that were undertaken in the Tabqa Dam region. The interest in the area of the Upper Syrian Euphrates, i.e. the stretch of the fertile river valley approximately between Emar and Karkemish, arose first in the 1960s (Fig. 1). While this region had been considered marginal until the 1950s, this image changed abruptly through archaeological fieldwork beginning in the 1960s. Additionally, thousands of written documents from Emar turned out to be one of the most detailed sources on the history, social life and private affairs of the Late Bronze Age Near East. Also other important Late Bronze Age settlements such as Tall Hadidi, Tall Munbāqa, Tall Fray, Tall el-Hajj, Tell Rumeileh and others were investigated in this first series of rescue excavations.¹⁰

Shortly after the dam near Tabqa was completed in 1973 and the lake had drowned dozens of important sites, the Tishreen Dam immediately north of it was planned. The next call for rescue excavations was issued, and more sites were investigated in the Tishreen Dam area. In 1999, the Tishreen Lake covered the fertile Euphrates valley immediately north of the Assad Lake to as far as the south of Karkemish. Among the affected sites are el-Qi-

tar, Tall Bazi / Tall Banat, Tall Shiukh Fawqani and many others.¹¹

In the area under investigation, important settlements were situated exclusively in the Euphrates valley and along other perennial watercourses, since it is situated outside or at the edge of the rain fed zone. This is also the case west of the river, where a cluster of sites surrounds Lake Jabbul. These sites had intensive relations with the Euphrates region, since they are situated on the natural route between Halab / Aleppo and the river. Umm al-Marra, the most important site of the Jabbul region, was included in this workshop, because it features well stratified material closely related to the material from the Euphrates valley and is one of the key sites for the stratigraphy of the Bronze Age in Syria.

The dating of some of the Late Bronze Age sites mentioned has relied completely or partly on parallels with the Hadidi pottery, if these sites do not have their own ¹⁴C results or archaeological means to arrive at absolute dates for their assemblages. This leads to a whole chain of circular assumptions, at the beginning of which stands the Tablet Building at Hadidi. The Hadidi ceramic assemblages have indeed formed the crucial set for any study of Late Bronze Age pottery in Syria until today, i.e. over a period of more than 35 years. Quite recently, M. Iamoni in his study of Middle and Late Bronze Age pottery in Qatna and Syria, took the Tablet Building of Hadidi as one of the few anchor points for Syrian absolute chronology and retained its date in the 15th century. He claims (Iamoni 2012: 170): “The LB I has no fixed determinations for absolute chronology and consequently a clear periodisation cannot be provided. However, help in this respect might come from Tell Hadidi that is, to my knowledge, one of the few sites to have provided significant early LB evidence corroborated by C14 determinations. The Tablet Building has been dated to the 15th century BC...”¹². However, it would be unwise to put so much weight on only three radiocarbon dates, given the well-known problems with this way of dating (see comments below, chapter summary).

10 The rescue excavations in the Lake Assad area changed considerably the notion of Syria and north-western Mesopotamia as a random area of little importance. The discovery of the earliest so far known villages in the world (Abu Hureyra, Mureybet and Sheh Hassan), of several Uruk trading outposts (Sheh Hassan, Jebel Aruda, Habuba Kabira-South and Tall Qannas), and of a strikingly dense network of Bronze and Iron Age sites, among which cities with every sign of a highly structured society, underlined the continuous importance of this region throughout nine millennia. Since Tall Munbāqa and Emar had been situated on natural heights, it was possible to continue excavations also after the closure of the dam and the inundation of the valley.

11 MARGUERON 1975; BEYER 1982; FINKBEINER 2002, 2003; WERNER 1998; CZICHON – WERNER 2008; MCCLELLAN 1986; SCHWARTZ ET AL. 2003; CURVERS – SCHWARTZ 1997; BACHELOT – FALES 2005. For a recent overview of the settlements and their structures see MACHULE – BLOCHER 2013. For the historical geography of the area see OTTO 2009.

12 He added in a footnote that he recalibrated the three ¹⁴C determinations from the Tablet Building, and that two of three seem to be a bit younger. Nevertheless he stuck to the 15th century date. For recalibrated Hadidi ¹⁴C dates, see MCCLELLAN this volume figs. 25, 26.

Tom McClellan summarised the current knowledge of Late Bronze pottery from the Upper Euphrates region in the volume “Céramique de l’âge du Bronze en Syrie, II. L’Euphrate et la région de Jézireh”, Beyrouth 2007: 53-75. He identified the most distinctive Late Bronze ceramic types. But he was puzzled by the fact that most of the pottery from the French excavations at Emar dated to the late 13th and early 12th century, while the material from Hadidi, el-Qitar, Munbāqa and Banat dated to the 15th century. He wrote:

“Elsewhere I have suggested that many Late Bronze Age sites were destroyed in the 15th century. Dornemann first established a 15th century date for the Tablet Building at Hadidi, and I also dated the major destruction of el-Qitar to the 15th century BC, as well as suggesting a similar date for the end of the Late Bronze Age at Tell Banat, Area A. At Munbāqa, the destruction of the Außenstadt is also dated to the 15th century BC by de Feyter, mainly on evidence of parallels with Tell Hadidi and el-Qitar. If it is correct that major occupation at these sites ended in the 15th century, then there is a large gap of up to 250 years in the Late Bronze Age ceramic sequence on the Euphrates from around 1450 to 1200 BC. ... Only further research will tell whether the chronological gap is real.” (McCLELLAN 2007: 57).

The earlier dating of the Außenstadt of Munbāqa is a good example of the circularity of assumptions. De Feyter dated it mainly by comparisons with the Hadidi and Qitar ceramic material.¹³ He further accepted the then proposed early dating of the Munbāqa tablets and concluded: “All evidence points to a date for the Munbāqa town extension within the second half of the 16th and the first half of the 15th cent. BC.” (DE FEYTER 1989: 253). He attributed the destruction of IG II and relating levels in the Innen- and Außenstadt to the struggle of a Hurrian king to gain control over the Euphrates region. The Munbāqa ceramic was thereafter taken as reference material for the 15th century.

McClellan (2007: 57, note 53) also referred to our disagreement about the dating, which was the theme of more than one dinner at our two excavation houses, which lay only a few hundred meters apart from each other in the lovely village of Tall Banat. Two teams excavating at the same site – this can be both a challenge and an opportunity. When in 1993 Berthold Einwag and I began to work at Tall Bazi – which is in fact the southwestern part of

the extended Banat settlement complex – we became neighbours with the team of Tom McClellan and Anne Porter. They had been working at Tall Banat long before our arrival, and although their work on the Early Bronze occupation is much better known, they had already excavated some Late Bronze Age houses at Banat before we arrived.¹⁴

Furthermore, McClellan had worked at el-Qitar, a spectacular site on a rock at the bottleneck of the Euphrates valley just a few kilometers downstream Bazi-Banat. The strategic situation of el-Qitar, which had originally contributed to the construction of fortifications on the natural hill, led to its untimely destruction in the late 1980s, before the team was able to investigate it extensively, since el-Qitar was situated exactly at the spot where the Tishreen Dam was built. The bulldozers had no mercy with the buildings of the second millennium settlement. McClellan had considerable experience with Late Bronze Age sites, since he had been a member of Dornemann’s team at Tell Hadidi in the 1970s. Because the material in the houses of Banat was very similar to that at el-Qitar and Hadidi, McClellan was quite certain about its date.¹⁵ All three sites showed a massive destruction level, and since the material in the destroyed buildings was similar, McClellan attributed it to the 15th century.

Compared to him, Berthold Einwag and I were greenhorns. As usual in rescue projects, we worked extremely hard, since every campaign was supposed to be the final one. Fortunately, the completion of the Tishreen dam was delayed for many years, which gave us the chance to excavate the lower town during six campaigns (1993-1998). We were rewarded with abundant material. The pottery of the lower town extension, the so-called “Weststadt”, constitutes the most abundant collection of “complete” vessels of this period within the Syrian Late Bronze Age. We understand by complete vessels those, which were found broken on the floors or within the collapsed debris of the houses. Several hundred of them were restored.¹⁶ Since we remarked during excavation that sherds had been reused as building material (either between the mortar, or within the bricks, in installations, or as fixation for the roof beams), we considered

13 DE FEYTER 1989: 252: “The parallels for the pottery date the Außenstadt assemblage in the transitional MB-LB and in the LB period... The closest parallels ... occur in the MB II and LB assemblages of Hadidi and Qitar.”

14 McCLELLAN 1991. See A. PORTER, this volume.

15 Tom McClellan commented on this sentence in a personal note: “although that certainty evaporated as time passed.”

16 The restoration was carried out by the members of the team and by our friends from the village of Tall Banat, among whom especially Junis Abdallah proved to be a master. He restored hundreds of pots, including the large ones. All had been kept in the excavation house at Tall Banat until 2015, when all of them were either stolen or destroyed by members of the so-called Islamic State.

only vessels, which were at least preserved to 30%, as belonging to the primary inventory.

Because the inventory of the 20 best preserved houses proved to be very homogeneous¹⁷, and because the houses existed at the same time and were destroyed in one and the same event, the date of the Weststadt pottery is of prime importance. It was based on ¹⁴C datings of three samples of carbonised wood and two samples of carbonised grain.¹⁸ The conventional ¹⁴C-age gives 3054 – 2937 +/- 33-37 BP, i. e. with calibrations interval (68.2%) 1390-1050 cal BC. This means with high probability a date within the 13th century. From this we deduced that the final catastrophe of Tall Bazi should have occurred at the end of the Late Bronze Age, contemporary with the supraregional events which caused the sudden destruction or slow decline of numerous sites and whole areas. We published this hypothesis and had relied on it for many years (EINWAG – OTTO 2003: 86; OTTO 2006a: 12).

But what puzzled us: our material was very similar to what had been found by McClellan and Porter some hundred meters away in the houses of Banat, which clearly belonged to the same ancient settlement.¹⁹ This material was dated to the 15th century by McClellan. Here our dispute began. We are grateful for the discussions of these differing viewpoints as they led ultimately to the organisation of this workshop.

The Chronology of the Late Bronze Age and its Impact on the History of the Upper Syrian Euphrates Region

The lack of a reliable MB and LB chronology impedes considerably the reconstruction of Syria's history. The Late Bronze Age (c. 1600-1200 BC) is one of the periods, when Syria enlarged widely its international relations with Egypt, Anatolia, and Assyrian. Written sources reveal that the Euphrates valley was part of the Mittani kingdom, which extended from the Mediterranean coast in the west to the land of Arrapha in the east in the 15th

and early 14th century. However, the kind of control that Mittani exercised over the polities, which were subject to its hegemony, varied. An essential element of the successful politics of Mittani was, to leave the political organization as it had been before. In coastal Syria on the one hand and in Arrapha on the other hand, there had been palatial societies, which were each ruled by their own kings under the overlordship of Mittani.²⁰ In contrast, many sites in the Euphrates valley were ruled by local collective-governance regimes. The larger sites nominally possessed a king, but the assembly of the elders constituted the supreme power and governed the town together with the city god. Apparently, the temple was the place of their assembly – an early form of a “senate building”²¹. This may explain why no larger, palace-like building has been discovered in any of the sites so far, even though the texts from Emar and Ekalte mention the king and a palace. The king seems to have been *primus inter pares*, and the palace may have been literally a big house (OTTO 2012a; 2014a).

The situation changed radically around 1350, when the Hittite Great King Shuppiluliuma I expanded southwards, installed his son Piyashshili as viceroy in Karkemish, and established his southernmost stronghold in Emar, which flourished until c. 1200. It is generally assumed that the Hittites controlled the whole Euphrates valley between Karkemish and Emar, but there are little to no traces of the Hittite presence in the material culture in most of the Late Bronze Age sites – with exception of Karkemish, el-Qitar and Emar. In el-Qitar, the impression of a Syro-Hittite seal was found on a legal document of the Syro-Hittite type (McCLELLAN 1985: 42f; ARCHI 1993). Additionally, a bulla with the impression of a Hittite stamp seal was found at Tall Fray (MATTHIAE 1980). No Hittite remains were found at Tall Munbāqa, Tall Hadidi or Tall Bazi. Was Hittite domination confined to the western bank, or is the absence a chronological indicator for the abandonment of these sites prior to the Hittite domination? McClellan (this volume) asks the questions: “Does the river form a cultural and political divide or is there a north-south divide between Hadidi and Qitar? Is

17 In total, 50 houses were at least partially excavated. However, only 20 houses contained enough material, for the others were either heavily eroded or had been abandoned and emptied before the destruction of the Weststadt.

18 The samples of carbonised wood stem from Houses 17, 25 and 46, two samples of carbonised grain from Houses 20 and 46. They were analysed by Dr. J. Görtsdorf (D.A.I. Berlin), to whom our thanks are due: GÖRSDORF 2006.

19 We documented dozens of houses that had been washed free in the area between the Weststadt and Banat in 2007, when the water of Lake Tishreen sank by about 1.5 m. We were thus able to establish a direct connection between the Banat and the Bazi houses.

20 VON DASSOW 2014; WARD – JOUKOWSKY 1992; SOMMER 2016.

21 I am grateful to Eva von Dassow for suggesting this term (VON DASSOW 2014: 20, note 26). Several arguments underline this idea: two cuneiform documents, which record the grants of towns to the people of Baširu by the two successive Mittani overlords Saushtatar and Artatama, were kept in the main Temple of Bazi (SALLABERGER – EINWAG – OTTO 2006); the town-plan of Tall Munbāqa – Ekalte is almost completely known through excavation and geomagnetic survey, but there is no sign of a building larger than a house except for the four temples (OTTO 2012a).

there a cultural *koiné* that binds the Upper Euphrates sites together?”

Many once flourishing settlements have been excavated over the past 70 years, contributing greatly to our understanding of the Late Bronze Age. However, the internal chronology of this period remains an unsolved question, because there are few fixpoints such as securely dated dynasties. Especially in inner Syria the dating of the LBA sites is a matter of constant discussion. Suggested dates vary about 200 years and so there is no consensus about the setting of the sites in a historical framework.

Several of the sites mentioned show major destruction levels. But as long as these cannot be dated precisely, we do not know whether they were contemporary or not, and therefore whether they resulted from supra-local events, which were so significant that one might expect to find them recorded in historical texts. It is of considerable historical interest to know whether the destruction levels date to the 13th or to the 14th century, and whether they were provoked by the turmoil at the end of the Late Bronze Age, by the military expansion of the Hittites, by any other historical events, or were purely local.

G. M. Schwartz formulated this in the following way (in AKKERMANS – SCHWARTZ 2003: 331, 341): “Despite the increased availability of written sources from archaeological contexts, the archaeological chronology of the period is incomplete... Radiocarbon evidence from Late Bronze Syria is scarce, and the possibilities of dendrochronological analysis are only beginning to be explored. One of the problems in Late Bronze Syrian chronology is the similarity of Late Bronze ceramics to those of the Middle Bronze Age. Rather than an abrupt break between the two periods, the pottery assemblages display a smooth transition in which many traits of the earlier period persist into the later.” And concerning the middle Euphrates valley: “However, as in other regions, the internal chronology of the period is uncertain because of incomplete ceramic sequences. An excellent opportunity to document a historically dated assemblage was missed when the Emar pottery was only minimally published. As a result, it is difficult to distinguish material culture differences between the period of Mitannian domination and that of the Hittites.”

Also, there are differing views about the subdivisions of the LB I period, with a fluctuating change of LB I to LB II between 1400 and 1350 BC (MC). This absolute date is also dependent on the Hadidi Tablet Building (LB IB), the ¹⁴C dating of which to the 15th century has been one of the few absolute dates for LBA Syria; this material is even taken as chronological indicator for the pottery of Inner

Syria.²² S. Mazzoni (2002: 130) saw a “gradual but general renewal ...[which] covered the 15th and 14th centuries, reaching its apex in the course of the 13th century at the time of the Hittite control and the powerful expansion of the city of Karkemish/Jérablus”.

LB II will be considered in Chapter 10. At this stage no convincing arguments have been put forward for the subdivision of the LBA in LB I and II.

Another obstacle for the study of Late Bronze Age sites, especially those which show clear evidence of the Hittite presence, are modern borders. The sites along the Euphrates, which are now situated in Turkey, are mainly compared to the Hittite and Anatolian realm, while those on the Syrian side are mainly compared to sites within the modern borders of Syria. For example, the recent book about the Late Bronze Age at Arslantepe (MANUELLI 2013) is an important contribution to our understanding of this period: although some of the pottery is very similar to the pottery discussed in this volume, the authors’ search for parallels is mainly directed to sites situated to the north.

Purpose and Methods of the Workshop

The workshop in Mainz tried to tackle the problem of the dating of the Late Bronze Age of the Upper Syrian Euphrates region with the most simple and obvious method. The excavators and pottery specialists of the relevant sites were for the first time brought together. Each team was asked to present its stratified ceramic material and to explain their methods of dating: had the pottery sequence been dated by parallel with another settlement? If so, with which settlement? Or had the stratified material been dated by internal criteria, by written documents or by other well datable objects such as seals, tools and weapons, imported pottery or others? Or had it been dated by radiocarbon or other scientific analyses? The defined aim, which was circulated among the participants in advance, was “By putting together and by comparing the relevant stratified material, it should

22 Mazzoni (2002: 132-33) saw the LB IA – characterized by a continuity of MB II types – represented by Tell Atchana VI-V, Tell Afis VIA, Tell Hadidi Area H XIII; she took as hall-mark for the LB IB the material from Tell Atchana IV, Hama G3-1, Tell Hadidi Tablet Building and el-Qitar. She observed that new trends appear in the LB II, among which the complete absence of Nuzi Ware, the decline of Cypriot pottery and the increase in Mycenaean imports. She cited Emar as the most characteristic site for the LB II period in the Euphrates area.

be possible to discern the consistencies and differences within the material and the reasons for them.”

The quantitative analysis of ceramic assemblages is certainly by far the best method for recognising changes in form, fabric, decoration, and technique, since old types drop out and new ones are introduced. This, however, would be possible only, if the whole documentation of all the relevant sites was published. This has been very rarely achieved in Near Eastern archaeology. For this region, a complete publication of the pottery was assured only for Tall Munbāqa, and the publication of the al-Qitar pottery is near to completion. Therefore it was decided to use another method, which was described by Glenn Schwartz (this volume): “Since quantitative data are not yet available, this report must be limited to the author’s impressions of types that are common or rare, acquired over many years of fieldwork“. Although this method seems subjective at first sight, it is probably not less precise than quantitative analysis, which is extremely dependent on the size and nature of the excavated area, the accuracy of excavation, its documentation and analysis, as well as the typology used and numerous other factors.

It was hoped that the date of the relevant levels and of the various destructions would become evident, when the reliability of the dating of the ‘Tablet Building’ at Hadidi to the 15th century was questioned and when each mission laid open its own dating methods, thereby avoiding the circularity of assumptions that had hitherto prevailed. This was not only achieved, but we were also able to establish new chronological anchor points for the Upper Euphrates valley (see Chapter 10). It was possible only thanks to the excellent cooperation of all participants and their willingness to question the hitherto established datings. Our heartfelt thanks to all of them!

Note concerning the tables:

The descriptions and labellings of the individual pots and shapes have not been harmonized. Consequently, there are different names for the same shape or type, dependent on the individual contributor, since it was impossible for the editor to decide which name was the best. The reader may refer to the illustrations.

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