

Proceedings
of the 7th International Congress
on the Archaeology
of the Ancient Near East

12 April – 16 April 2010,
the British Museum and UCL, London

Volume 3
Fieldwork & Recent Research
Posters

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2012
Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Cover illustration: Lions depicted on the Assyrian palace reliefs
of Assurbanipal, 7th century BC, from Nineveh, Iraq.

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen
Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet
über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet
at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

For further information about our publishing program consult our
website <http://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de>

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Printed on permanent/durable paper.

Printing and binding: Memminger MedienCentrum AG

Printed in Germany

ISBN 978-3-447-06686-0

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FOREWORD OF THE EDITORS

It is with great pleasure that we present the Proceedings of the 7th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, held in London jointly at the British Museum and UCL, on 12-16 April 2010 (<http://7icaane.org/>). 7ICAANE hosted an unprecedented number of ancient Near Eastern specialists and students, with an ambitious programme of papers across five major themes, plus sessions on Islamic archaeology, fieldwork, and posters. In addition, we hosted a total of ten workshops, significantly more than in previous ICAANE meetings. As with previous ICAANEs, individual workshop organisers are responsible for publication of their own proceedings, separate from these volumes.

It would not have been possible to organise 7ICAANE without help and funding support from a wide range of people and institutions, to all of whom we express our sincerest gratitude. Funding assistance was generously provided by the British Academy (Worldwide Congress Grant), the British Museum, UCL, the Iran Heritage Foundation, the British Institute of Persian Studies, the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, the Council for British Research in the Levant, the British Institute at Ankara, the British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology, and the London Centre for the Ancient Near East. We thank all the congress participants for making the occasion such a success, and we also offer our sincere thanks to the student helpers who, expertly supervised by Helen Taylor, made the congress run so smoothly.

Publication of the proceedings has been overseen by the congress organisers as editors, with much-appreciated expert assistance from Amy Richardson. Finally, we thank our colleagues at Harrassowitz in Wiesbaden, who have accepted these papers for publication.

Please note that colour versions of the figures for the Colour and Light theme papers (Volume 2) can be found on the included CD.

The Editors

TELL SHIYUKH TAHTANI, SYRIA REPORT OF THE 2006-09 SEASONS

GIOACCHINO FALSONE,¹ PAOLA SCONZO²

ABSTRACT

The Italian excavations at Shiyukh Tahtani have recently resumed, revealing a long occupation sequence on the mound's eastern slope (Area CD). In Trench D23, on the summit, an Iron Age level II building contained a rich array of pottery, sheep knuckle bones, clay 'bobbins' and an unstratified Egyptian scarab of Menkheperre. An earlier massive building (LBA ?) was also excavated below the Iron Age II occupation. Halfway down the slope the lower level of a large burnt complex of Middle Bronze I date contained rich finds and various burials characterized by peculiar rituals. Finally, in a deep trench down below the slope, EB I-II remains included niched mud-brick architecture of fine Mesopotamian tradition as well as many pot burials of the Carchemish 'champagne-cup culture'. All these finds enhance the knowledge about the Bronze and Iron Age civilization of the Syrian Euphrates.

Tell Shiyukh Tahtani is one of many ancient mounds in the Tishrin Dam Basin, North Syria. It lies at the heart of a broad alluvial plain which extends on the left bank of the Euphrates River halfway between Carchemish and Tell Ahmar. The site consists of a steep-sided conical mound, and a square Lower Town, mainly extending to the south and east. Although originally falling within the flood zone, the tell was fortunately spared from the inundation of the Tishrin Lake in the summer of 1999, so that what was originally conceived of as a salvage operation, has become a long-term project.³

The Italian excavations have revealed a long sequence, ranging from prehistoric to Byzantine and Islamic times.⁴ Most interesting, however, is the continuous occupation

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2 Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies (IANES), Eberhard Karls University, Tübingen.

3 For the earlier interim reports, see Falsone 1998; 1999; Sconzo 2006; 2007a; 2007b. Financial support for the 2006, 2008 and 2009 seasons was granted by the University of Palermo central administration, by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the Ministry of Education, University and Research (fondi MIUR ex-60%) and by the 'Consorzio Universitario' of the Agrigento Province (CUPA).

4 The excavations were conducted by a team of the University of Palermo under the auspices of the Syrian Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums. We wish to express our deep gratitude to Dr Bassam Jamous, the Director-General of Antiquities and Museums, Dr Michel Maqdissi, the Director of the Excavation Service, Dr Nadim Faksh, the Director of the Aleppo National Museum, His Excellency Amerio, the Italian Ambassador in Damascus, Prof. Roberto Lagalla, the Rector of Palermo

during the third and second millennia BC throughout most of the Bronze Age. The stratigraphic sequence mainly comes from the Upper Tell, where three different fields have been explored: Area A, on the summit of the mound, where Iron Age levels have been mainly unearthened; Area B, on the west side, where the earliest structures belong to the EB I-II period; and Area CD, on the east side, where various layers of the third millennium underlie a thick occupation deposit of the Middle Bronze Age.⁵ On the other hand, very little exploration has been conducted in the Lower Town, which seems to have mainly expanded in the Roman and Byzantine periods. However, at the bottom of a deep sounding along the northern limit of the eastern quarter (Area G), earlier layers datable to the Middle Bronze Age were identified below a late building with a fragmentary mosaic floor, suggesting that the lower settlement was already inhabited during the second millennium BC.

The present report aims to describe the results of the recent field-work undertaken at Shiyukh Tahtani, which was mainly limited to the investigation of Area CD:⁶ the upper levels of the Iron Age will first be outlined briefly (by G. F.) and a detailed account of the lower Bronze Age contexts will follow (by P. S.).

IRON AGE

The evidence of the Iron Age period at Shiyukh Tahtani is generally rather unimpressive: no lavish public architecture, no monumental reliefs, no outstanding art objects seem to have ever existed here. Only a small village community lived on the top of the mound in pre-Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian times. The excavations on the summit (Area A) have revealed an extensive sector of the Iron Age settlement which was mainly domestic in nature, the basic economy being mainly agriculture and riverine trade. Since no coeval circuit wall has so far been ascertained, the role of the tell as a military outpost is far from being proven. Moreover, the ethnicity of the population is hard to establish purely on the basis of material culture, and mixed groups of Aramaeans and Neo-Hittites of Luvian stock are not unlikely. Life at the site

University, and his delegate, Dr Calogero Licata and Professor Joseph Mifsud, the President of the CUPA. The official Representatives of the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums were Mr Salah Shaker (2006; 2008-09) and Mr Mohammed Fakhru (2009: only half season). All of them have encouraged and facilitated our project in many ways. Moreover we are very grateful to the staff of the Palermo Euphrates Expedition: Silvia Collovà, Sara De Matteis, Marco Eusepi, Abdullah, Khalil and Hussein Al-Hamid, Benedetto Madonia, Federico Nomi, Stefano Oddi, Giovanna M. (Nina) Piacentini, Mohammed Al Roumi; and to the Italian and Syrian students: Enrico Alessi, Maria Elena Barbera, Carla Cugno Garrano, Fabiola Frasca, Husam Haj-Ahmad, Carmelo Manuel Ilario, Leonardo Paladino, Giuseppe Pensabene Perez, Shilan Ramadan, Ahmed Al-Shehabi, Mohammed Sheikh Alestra, Sergio Spoto, Giovanni Temptra, Olga Vitale. Finally, the authors are also grateful to Nikoloh Gilligan for editing the English manuscript.

5 For a plan of the site and the location of the excavation areas, see Sconzo 2007: Fig. 2.

6 Two excavation seasons (2006, 2008) and a study season (2009) were recently undertaken. Apart from Area CD, it was not possible to conduct further work in the other fields.

may have started before the destruction of Til Barsip by Shalmaneser III (857 BC) and continued even after the conquest of Carchemish by Sargon II in 718 BC.⁷ As shown below, the period between these two events is well attested at Shiyukh.

As evidence of Iron Age occupation was previously detected at the top of the slope in Area CD, in 2005 a new trench (D23) was opened on the eastern edge of the summit between Area CD and Area A in order to link their upper levels. In this trench a rich deposit of pottery was found scattered above the floor of two adjacent rooms and sealed by a thick mud-brick collapse (Fig. 1). The assemblage includes a large variety of platters, cups and bowls (either straight-sided or curving with inturned rim), as well as bottles, kraters, necked jars and handmade hole-mouth cooking-pots (Fig. 2). This material (mostly Common Ware) shows close affinities with the Group B pottery from Journ Kabir, dated to the 9th-8th century BC (Eidem 1999): a striking parallel is a fine conical bowl decorated with brown-painted concentric bands (Fig. 2: 8). Another peculiar shape is a tripod dish with loop feet (Fig. 2: 1), a well-known feature of the Middle Euphrates pottery repertoire.⁸ Red-Slip and Assyrian-like ceramics are quite rare, if not absent.⁹

Other special finds from Trench D23 are worth noting. Firstly, a rich hoard of lamb/kid knuckle bones (*c.* 160) was associated with this material on one of the floors: some of them were burnt; others were deliberately sawn on one side or even pierced for suspension (Fig. 2: bottom right).¹⁰ Secondly, on a lower floor of the same building a small hoard of cylindrical ‘bobbin’ of unbaked clay - most probably used as loom weights - was found, suggesting weaving activity and textile production.¹¹

Finally, a unique find from one of the later pits cutting both floors nearby was an interesting Egyptian scarab, bearing the inscribed name of Menkheperre (Fig. 3).¹² This well-known crown name refers to a historical figure of a much earlier period, that of Thutmose III (1479-1425), the victorious Pharaoh who reached North Syria in one of his Asiatic campaigns and crossed the Euphrates River, setting a boundary stela on its banks.¹³ A large number of similar artifacts have been found in the Levant and in the Mediterranean generally: however, since a scarab of unknown context, with a similar hieroglyphic inscription, was also recently uncovered nearby at Shiyukh Fawqani (Sackcho-Autissier 2005: no. 1, pl. 1, figs. 1-2), our finding becomes more significant. In terms of absolute chronology this kind of seal is practically useless since

7 For a historical outline of the region in the Iron Age, see Bunnens 1999; Bachelot and Fales 2005: xxv ff.

8 For loop-footed vessels, see Moorey 1980: 16-17, fig. 3: 19; Eidem 1999 (with further references). A fragmentary *askos* bearing such a feature came from our excavations in Area A (unpublished).

9 For well-dated 7th-century contexts from neighboring sites containing Assyrian imports or local imitations, see Jamieson 1999; Makinson 2005: 455-468; Luciani 2005: 790-799.

10 For the diffusion of such artifacts and discussions on their use and function, see recently Gilmour 1997; Affanni 2009.

11 For recent discussions on similar items, see Cecchini 2000: fig. 1; Luciani 2005: 928-930, pl. 68.

12 The hieroglyphic inscription reads: *Men*-cheper.Raz3 nṯr. I am very grateful to Alessandro Roccati and Ingrid Gamer-Wallert for their kind help in reading the hieroglyphic inscription.

13 Redford 1986; 1992: cols. 154-160; Lipińska 2001; Cline and O'Connor 2006.

it continued to be produced in Egypt for almost a millennium, from the XVIII Dynasty down to Saite times (Jaeger 1982). Although stylistically the Shiyukh Tahtani scarab may be of a relatively early date (10th century BC - reign of Siamun),¹⁴ and given that its dubious find-spot (doubtless much later) does not provide a solid chronological clue, its final use may go back to the late 7th century or even later: whatever the case, it is clear that there were close trade relations between the Middle Euphrates region and the land of the Nile Valley during the Iron Age.¹⁵

LATE BRONZE AGE

This period is rather elusive at Shiyukh Tahtani. Historically, after the conquest of Carchemish by Shuppiluliuma I in 1352 BC, the whole region fell under Hittite power (Hawkins 1980).

In Trench D23, the northern side of a massive mud-brick building was brought to light; the southern part had already been explored and completely removed during previous seasons. Unfortunately, the building, roughly oriented N-S, and heavily eroded to the south, was preserved only to the level of its deep foundations, which were twelve courses high. These foundations consisted of four rows of square bricks and stood up to a height of about 1.30 m. (Fig. 4).¹⁶ No traces of occupation floors or doorways were identified, suggesting that the entire elevation had been razed by later occupants.¹⁷ The function of this enigmatic monumental structure is therefore hard to establish (sacred, military or administrative?). Whatever the case, the surviving layout shows a two-roomed free-standing architectural unit, while its thick foundations suggest that it must have reached a considerable height. Due to the lack of associated material a dating to the Late Bronze Age, though purely hypothetical, is quite possible.¹⁸

(G.F.)

14 Our scarab shows close similarity to the Menkheperre series identified by Jaeger, and assigned to the XXI Dynasty: see Jaeger 1982: 240-242, §1487-1490, ill. 631, figs. 299-300.

15 Various Egyptian bronzes (engraved *situlae*, figurines of deities), faience, sealings and other finds of a late date were uncovered among the buildings (especially House D) of the Outer Town at Carchemish, which, according to Woolley (1921: 125 ff., figs. 44-46, pls. 21 and 26b-c) were destroyed at the time of the Babylonian capture of the city in 605 BC. For other Egyptian or Egyptianizing finds from neighboring sites, see also Moorey 1980: 42-44, nos. 131-132, fig. 8; Luciani 2005: 928 ff., pl. 84: 104.

16 The only complete room to the north was 5.60 by 3 m in size. Its exterior walls reached a thickness of c. 1.80 m, while the inner cross-wall (W 9017) was thinner (1.36 m).

17 Its foundation trenches were clearly visible in several spots along the walls, but contained only very few potsherds of little dating value. The most distinctive find, of an earlier date, however, was a cylinder seal of a fine Old Syrian style (unpublished).

18 This dating of the monumental building is suggested by its stratigraphic position, set as it is between the latest MB II occupation of Area CD and the superimposed Iron Age levels.

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

The Middle Bronze Age levels lay partially below the massive building just described and they extended further east to about half-way down the eastern slope of Area CD, covering a surface of about 300 sq.m. Here a core sequence had already been established during previous seasons, consisting of four main phases (Phases 6-9) dating to the first half of the second millennium BC.¹⁹

Although our recent work was mainly concentrated in clearing out the two lowermost levels (Phases 8-9), datable to the first centuries of the second millennium BC (MB I), it is worth reviewing briefly the evidence from the upper ones (Phases 6-7). These included a building complex, largely destroyed by a violent fire, extending across the entire excavated area, and consisting of a series of small rooms and courtyards arranged around a main hall. The latter, about 8 m long, contained a squarish mud-brick platform abutting its northern wall, and a pair of round ovens to the west. The large quantity of rich furnishings *in situ*, sealed by the heavy destruction layer, included various pouring and serving vessels, storage jars and grinding tools (Sconzo 2007b: fig. 22). Although the nature of the whole building is still to be fully understood, the grinding and cooking facilities would suggest that the central room was used for large-scale storage and preparation of food. The presence of a potter's kiln of rectangular plan, located adjacent to this room, partially filled with hundreds of carinated bowls, further suggests a local mass-production of such small vessels, which were used in contemporary domestic and funerary contexts at the site (Sconzo 2007b: figs. 22: 6, 25: 2-3).

About a dozen graves were sealed below the beaten-earth floor of the central burnt room. Nine of them - two pithoi and seven pit-burials - were set mostly along its walls and contained primary single interments. While pithoi were used for infants (3-9 months old), the pits predominantly contained the remains of children or sub-adults (up to 14 years old).²⁰ Burials of the latter, in particular, displayed a characteristic ritual which included a meat offering, mainly that of sheep/goat.²¹ In this instance a chunk of meat - a tasty portion, such as the leg or part of the backbone - was placed in a dish above the legs or at the feet of the dead, while the inedible parts of the animal (such as head, mandible or feet) were set aside, more often in a separate compartment inside the tomb. In the case of the latter, the funerary pit consisted of a bipartite stepped subdivision, with a lower compartment containing the human skeleton and the grave goods, and the higher one used for the disposal of the discarded animal

19 For an earlier account of the Bronze Age sequence in Area CD (up to 2005), see Sconzo 2007b. The various phases are indicated here by Arabic numbers, while the site periodization is labelled by means of Roman numerals.

20 The anthropological study of the Bronze Age graves at Shiyukh Tahtani has been undertaken by Prof. Luca Sineo (University of Palermo), Dott. Benedetto Madonia and Dr Kirsi Lorentz (University of Newcastle, UK).

21 A preliminary study of the animal remains has been undertaken by Dr. Carolina Di Patti (Museum of Geology, University of Palermo).

remains (Sconzo 2007b: 298, fig. 24). Similar features are found at contemporary sites, and suggest a complex burial ceremony, which, together with the killing of a sheep or goat, possibly included the celebration of a communal funerary meal, in which the family and/or members of the community were involved.²²

The grave pits just described truncated the burnt debris and the floor of an earlier building (Phase 7), which shared a similar ground plan to the upper one and was similarly destroyed by fire. The room had a small *tannur* in a corner and many basalt querns and pestles scattered over the floor, thus performing a similar function for grinding cereals and cooking activities (Sconzo 2007b: fig. 21a-b).

During the last excavation season (2008), after the removal of the floor of this room, five new pit graves were uncovered, among which was a well-preserved child jar burial (T. 111) associated with a complete sheep, set within a separate compartment, thus showing how the burial of humans and animals side by side was a traditional practice in the early second millennium society at Shiyukh Tahtani. While there was no dish with the meat offering in this burial, grave goods included a small deep bowl, a pair of Grey Ware flasks and a few personal ornaments, among which was a pendant of rock crystal in the shape of a stylized lion head (Fig. 5).

The Middle Bronze occupation in Area CD seems to be marked by a strong continuity of architectural layout, as it turned out that the building complex of Phase 7 had been, in turn, erected above the walls of an older structure (Phase 8), duplicating its ground plan and orientation. Strangely enough, this early building had also been destroyed by fire. While its eastern side had been cleared during previous excavations (see Sconzo 2007b: 287-294, figs. 17b-18), the western wing was only brought to light during the 2006 and 2008 operations. It again included a rectangular room, lacking installations, but displaying a quite interesting pottery repertoire, consisting of two tall fenestrated stands, a disc-shaped tray and a large quantity of storage vessels. The material, crushed by the collapse of the roof, had been disturbed by the later pit graves, and does not seem to differ greatly from those previously retrieved in the rooms to the east (Sconzo 2007b: figs. 19-20). Besides the ubiquitous plain and combed wares, there were also a few fragments of a painted trefoil-mouthed eye-vase of Syro-Cilician Ware (Fig. 6).²³

22 Graves with meat offerings are well attested in the ancient Near East, but often have been given little attention. A recent contribution by Cordy, Leon and Tunça (2009) has been devoted to the Middle Bronze Age graves from Chagar Bazar, which show striking similarities to our burials. At Chagar Bazar a strict subdivision between human and discarded animal bones seems also to be a constant feature, since the latter were kept separate in the shaft; while the best edible parts of the animal were put inside the chamber, close to the human remains (Cordy, Leon and Tunça 2009: 55-56). However, no dishes or other containers have been reported from Chagar Bazar. On third millennium animal offerings along the Middle Euphrates, see also Vila 2005.

23 On a similar piece found nearby at Tell Ahmar, the 'eye' is painted rather than applied in relief, as in our example. For a recent review of the origin and development of the 'eye-vase' tradition, see Jamieson 2005.

Another interesting feature of the room inventory was the presence of a number of potmarks which had been incised before firing, usually on the shoulder of large jars. The most common type is a five- or six-tooth fork which occurs on several specimens of both open and closed vessels, while other geometric and vegetal signs are rarer (Fig. 7; see also Sconzo 2007b: fig. 19:19). Bronze Age pottery marking in ancient Near Eastern cultures is quite intriguing, and deserves much more attention and space than is possible in this paper. Potmarks of different technique, form, quality and quantity have been retrieved at many sites in the Near East and the Mediterranean world from the fourth millennium to Hellenistic and Roman times. As a general trend, pot-marking along the middle course of the Euphrates River is a well-known practice in the first half of the third millennium BC, while it seems to decrease slowly towards the end of the millennium (see Sconzo 2010 for a full treatment of this topic). In the second millennium pot-marks are sporadically reported from the nearby site of Qara Qosaq, Level II (Molina and Montero 1994), upstream from Kurban Hüyük, Level III (Algaze 1990) and from Lidar Hüyük (Kaschau 1999) and downstream, in the Tabqa sector, from Tell Sweyhat (Holland 2006), Munbaqa (Czichon 2009) and Halawa A (Hempelmann 2005: 154-158, tables 86-87). Close parallels with Phase 8 marks are however lacking, apart from the tiny squarish mark (Fig. 7: bottom left) which occurs once in the MB levels of Munbaqa (Czichon 2009: 338, 341).²⁴ It is hard to establish whether these pot-marks are related to the function of the burnt building, or indicate the workshop of origin of the pottery, ownership or some other kind of symbol or message.²⁵ It is clear that the MB I potmarks at Shiyukh Tahtani differ in size, technique and shape from those of the third millennium levels, and the practice of pot-marking seems to die out in the following MB II period (Phases 7-6).

Calibrated radiocarbon analyses suggest a date to 2130 – 1880 BC for the destruction of the Phase 8 building.²⁶

EARLY BRONZE AGE

A sequence of five architectural levels has been identified below the MBA remains at the foot of the mound in Area CD, all belonging to the third millennium BC. The latest phases (10-11) included a portion of an urban quarter of the late third millennium, consisting of a N-S street flanked on either side by domestic buildings which have

24 At this site the 'square' is, however, a hallmark of the EB period, when it occurs 12 times (Czichon 2009: 338, 341). In the third millennium it is also attested at Tell el-Abd (Sconzo 2010) and Tell Bi'a (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998: pl. 139:8. Grave U:234; Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 2000: pl. 102:10: 21/62W, level 16-15).

25 Moreover, since a mark is conceived of as an isolated single sign by itself, it usually provides no information as to what is recorded: hence the immediate question as to what it actually means is not easy to answer.

26 Sample C00365. C14 analyses have been conducted by the CEDAD laboratory, University of Salento, Lecce.

been previously discussed (Sconzo 2007a; 2007b: figs. 7-9, 16). On the eastern side, at a lower level (Phase 12), a clay embankment, almost sterile, and later used as burial ground, had also been brought to light. After opening a deep N-S trench along the eastern limit of the excavation, the nature of this artificial clay layer became clearer: it contained a few flimsy walls and floors apparently related to some kind of squatters' occupation and could be dated to the mid-third millennium BC (Sconzo 2007b: 274-276, fig. 4b). More recently, to the north of the trench (Square D1), a large terrace made of clay blocks was uncovered: it was flanked by a sloping narrow path paved with a pebble floor, and was cut by a series of shaft graves datable to the same period.

Impressive architecture was uncovered beneath the clay embankment. This consisted of a complex, dating to the early centuries of the third millennium (Phase 13), if not earlier, and it included two adjacent buildings temporarily designated as 'North Unit' and 'South Unit'.²⁷ Both buildings show similar ground plans, consisting of large open courts to the West, and doorways, flanked by a pair of buttresses, set near the corner, close to the junction with the other building. External approaches were usually found to be indicated by a series of pebble floors of irregular size and shape, often overlapping each other right in front of the doorway. Mud-brick walls, lacking stone foundations, were often lined with lime plaster. Unfortunately very little can be said about the inside layout, since, in both buildings, only a large entrance hall has been partially excavated, and other rooms and partitions may be buried outside the limit of the excavation (Fig. 8).

The complex of Phase 13 seems to have been in use for a long time, as shown by a continuous stratigraphic sequence: remarkable evidence, for instance, was visible in the courtyard of the North Unit, where a 2 m-thick deposit consisted of at least eleven superimposed floors. Three main sub-phases (namely 13A-C) were identified in the life of this building, the walls of which were preserved to a considerable height (up to 3 m).

It is worth emphasizing a few features which characterized the earliest phase (13C) of the North Building. This was represented by a sequence of three beaten-earth floors extending inside the main room. Each of these floors was furnished with a rectangular hearth, flanked by two post-holes, built and rebuilt again in the same spot, thus indicating that the function of the room remained unaltered for a long time.²⁸ Moreover, an inner triple flight of steps was connected with the doorway, since the ground outside was at a higher level. All the inner floors were sealed by thick destruction debris, but unfortunately yielded no material *in situ*. A charcoal sample of the debris (Sample C00301) provides a calibrated C14 date of 3130-2910 BC for Phase 13C. This early dating is further confirmed by the pottery assemblage, characterized by the presence of a large number of band-rim and sinuous-sided bowls occurring side by

27 The upper phases of both buildings have already been briefly described in an earlier report (Sconzo 2007b: 269-273, fig. 4a).

28 Similar fireplaces of rectangular shape, flanked by post-holes, are attested nearby at Zeytinli Bahçe in the EB Ib levels (Trench C 6-7) and recall Late Uruk prototypes (Frangipane 2007: 132, fig. 8.15).

side with some LC features, such as bevelled-rim bowls, comb-incised jars, nose-lug jars and hammer-head bowls. A similar ceramic horizon is attested at neighbouring sites of the Carchemish region - at Shiyukh Fawqani, Period I (Morandi Bonaccossi 2005) and Zeytinli Bahçe (Frangipane 2007: fig. 8.11), where it has been ascribed to a transitional LC-EB I period.

The South Building was also accessed by means of a recessed doorway from a western courtyard, partially paved with pebble floors, thus mirroring the plan of the other building to the north. A much larger portion of the court was exposed here, including some installations (round ovens, silos, storage jars), which suggest domestic activities (Fig. 9: left). A rectangular southern annex, entered from the court, contained an inventory of crushed pots (mainly Simple Ware and cooking-pots, as well as Reserved-Slip Ware) and other tools scattered on the floor (Fig. 10: 1-5), including a pair of pestles, a Cananaean flint blade and a copper-alloy axe-head. Following the removal of these structures and the lowest courtyard floor, a noticeable change in features associated with the earlier Phase 14 was visible. Most striking was the buttressed façade of the South Building, with three pillars resting on an offset, protruding at a much lower depth, thus forming a fine example of niched architecture in typical Mesopotamian tradition (Fig. 9: right). The lack of any doorway suggests that the building was accessed from another side. A thick mud-brick wall running parallel to the façade delimited another building to the west. The latter consisted of a central large room flanked by two small annexes to the south. A square, stepped mud-brick platform, probably free-standing, topped by a white limestone slab, was uncovered along the west section. The floor level of the main room was not reached by the end of the season.

The final features to be described were uncovered in the northern sector of the East Trench, directly below the clay embankment of the EB III period. Here an open court appeared, enclosed on three sides by low mud-brick walls, adjacent and contemporary to the late phases of the North Unit (Phases 13A-B). The main feature was a round mud-brick oven, 2 m in diam., which was surrounded by three cooking-pots embedded into the floor; these were filled with ash containing a large amount of carbonized seeds. One of them was deliberately inserted inside a niche in the western wall, near a squarish hearth. All this evidence again suggests that it was an open area used for domestic activities, mainly food production and consumption (Fig. 11).

In the same area a group of graves was unearthed, belonging to the last occupation of the courtyard (Phase 13A) at the time of, or following, its abandonment.²⁹ Three of them contained infants buried inside cooking-pots, while the others were large pithos

29 These graves may be contemporary with the occupation of Area B, on the western side of the tell.

burials, the first so far discovered at our site.³⁰ The latter contained primary inhumations of young adults associated with a small set of pottery vessels, metal toggle pins and hundreds of tiny polychrome stone beads, probably meant to decorate the garments of the dead. The pottery included high-stemmed ‘champagne’ bowls, *cyma recta* bowls and small jars (Fig. 12). The pithos burials from Shiyukh Tahtani are very similar in shape and contents to the pot-burials first uncovered on the Carchemish citadel mound by the pioneer excavators of the British Museum in the early 20th century and show a character peculiar to the funerary culture of the Middle Euphrates region during the early third millennium BC.³¹

(P.S.)

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30 Another cooking-pot burial (T.116) was retrieved below the floor of the court of the ‘South Building’ (Phase 13B). The latter was laid at the base of a larger squarish pit and sealed by two mud-bricks set horizontally. The pot contained the remains of an infant, and was covered by a ‘champagne cup’, laid upside down and used as a lid. The same practice is attested among the pot burials of the Acropolis Mound at Carchemish (Woolley and Barnett 1952: 215-217, fig. 55c: graves 9, 12, 18, etc.) and now at Zeytinli Bahçe Hüyük, some 12 km to the North, on the Turkish Euphrates (Frangipane 2007: 132-133, fig. 8.16:3).

31 The Carchemish burials are erroneously labelled as ‘Chalcolithic Graves’ in the report (Woolley and Barnett 1952: 215 ff, pls. 53-55), but, as stated by Woolley, two different groups could be distinguished: the earlier one included child burials containing no objects, while the later one was instead contemporary with the cist graves of the Acropolis Mound, and contained ‘champagne cups’ like our burials at Shiyukh, and can be assigned to the beginning of the third millennium BC. For a recent revision of the Carchemish EBA tombs, see Falsone and Sconzo 2007. Pithos burials of the same kind have been also reported from Jerablus Tahtani (Peltenburg *et al.* 1997: 3). For a general survey on the Bronze Age burial customs in the Middle Euphrates region, see Carter and Parker 1995; Cooper 2007.

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Fig. 1: Plan of Iron Age II architecture in Trench D23.
(Drawn by P. Sconzo)

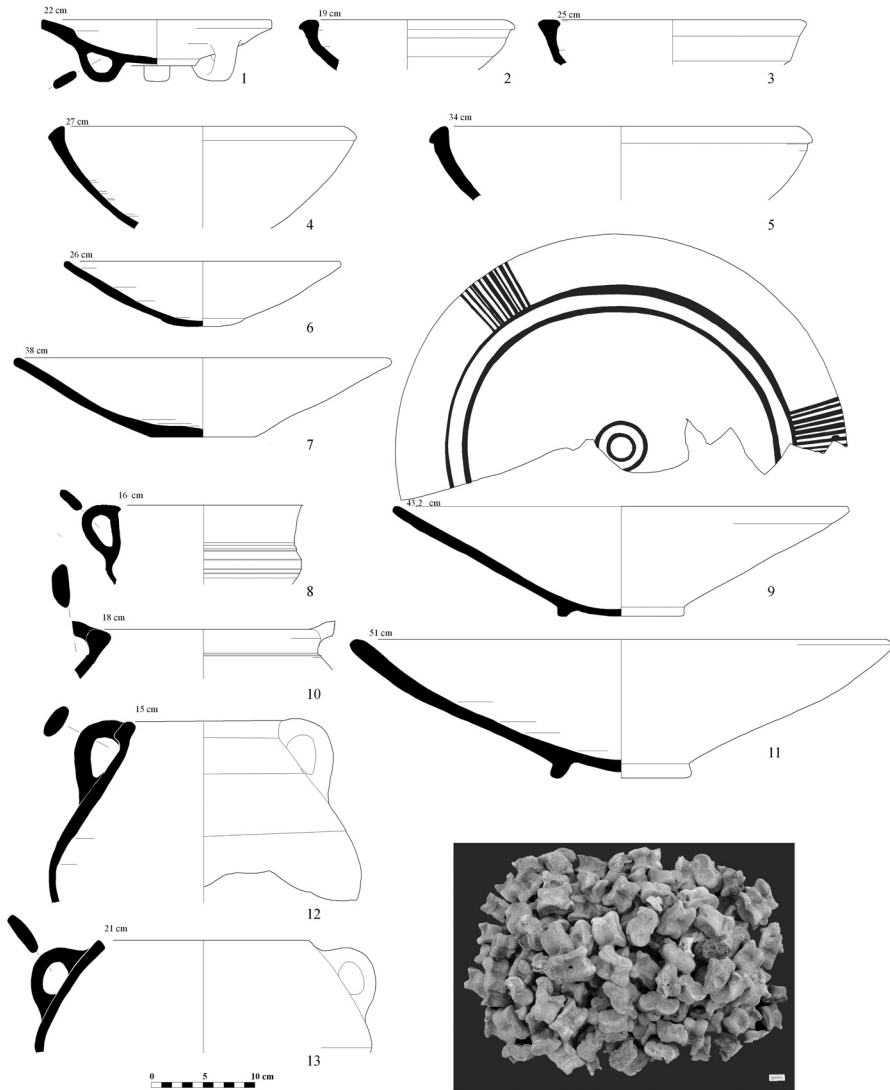


Fig. 2: Selection of main Iron Age pottery types from floors 23024 and 23034 (drawn by A. Al-Hamid and S. Collovà); bottom right, knuckle bones.



Fig. 3: Scarab of Menkheperre/Thutmose III; h. cm 1.4 .
(Photo by M. Al-Roumi)

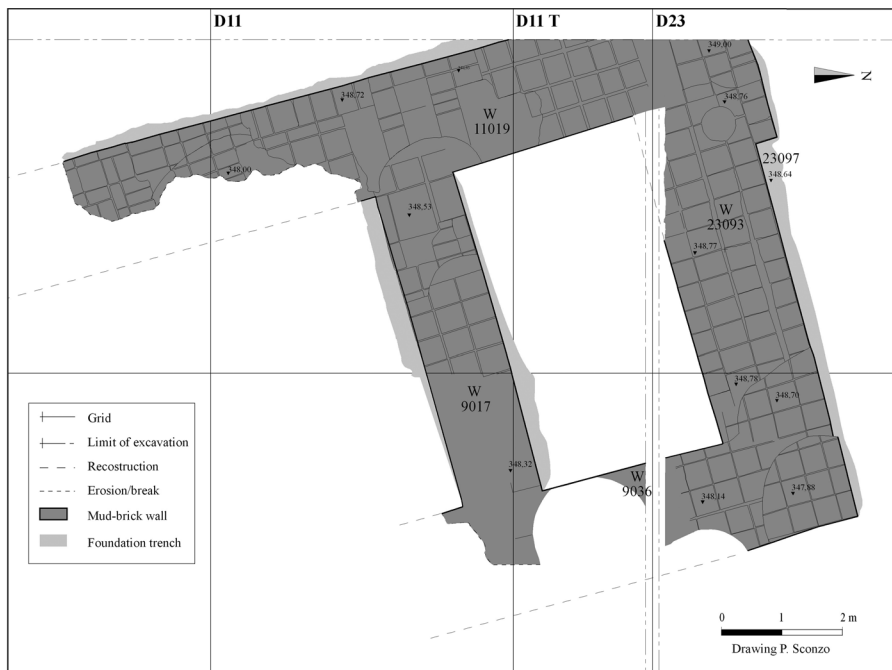
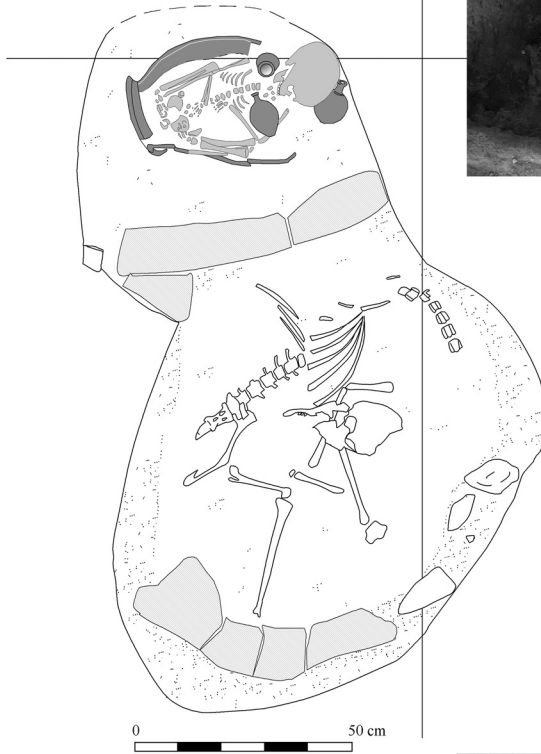
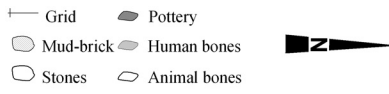


Fig. 4: Plan of monumental building on upper slope of Area CD.
(Drawn by P. Sconzo)

Tomb 111

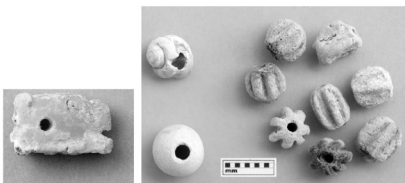
Drawing: S. De Matteis



a



b



c



d

e

Fig. 5: Tomb 111: plan; (a) view of the jar burial; (b-e) finds.
 (Drawn by S. De Matteis; photos by the authors)



Fig. 6: Syro-Cilician 'eye-vase'.
(Photo by S. Oddi)

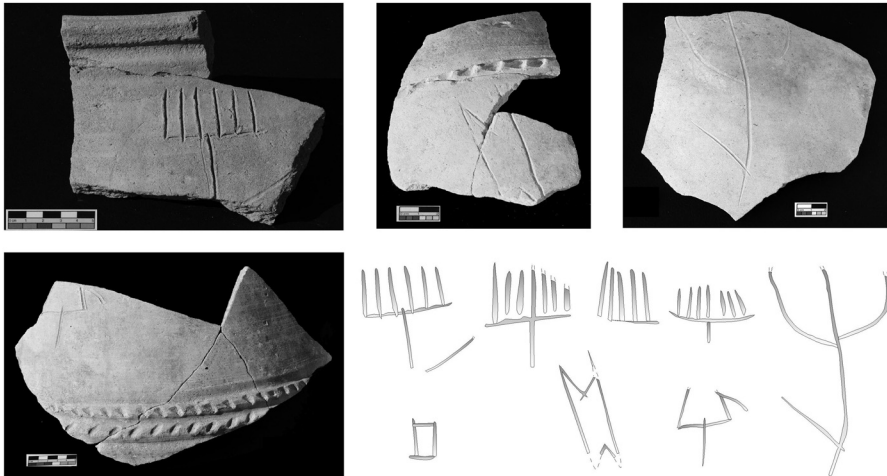


Fig. 7: Pot-marks from MB I burnt building (not in scale).
(Photo and drawing by P. Sconzo)



Fig. 8: Schematic plan of the building complex of Phase 13.
(Drawn by P. Sconzo)



Fig. 9: Left: Phase 13, the west court of the South Unit, and, on the foreground, the annex; right: Phase 14, the niched façade of the South Unit and the SW Building (*from the south*).

(Photos by G. Falsone and M. Al-Roumi)

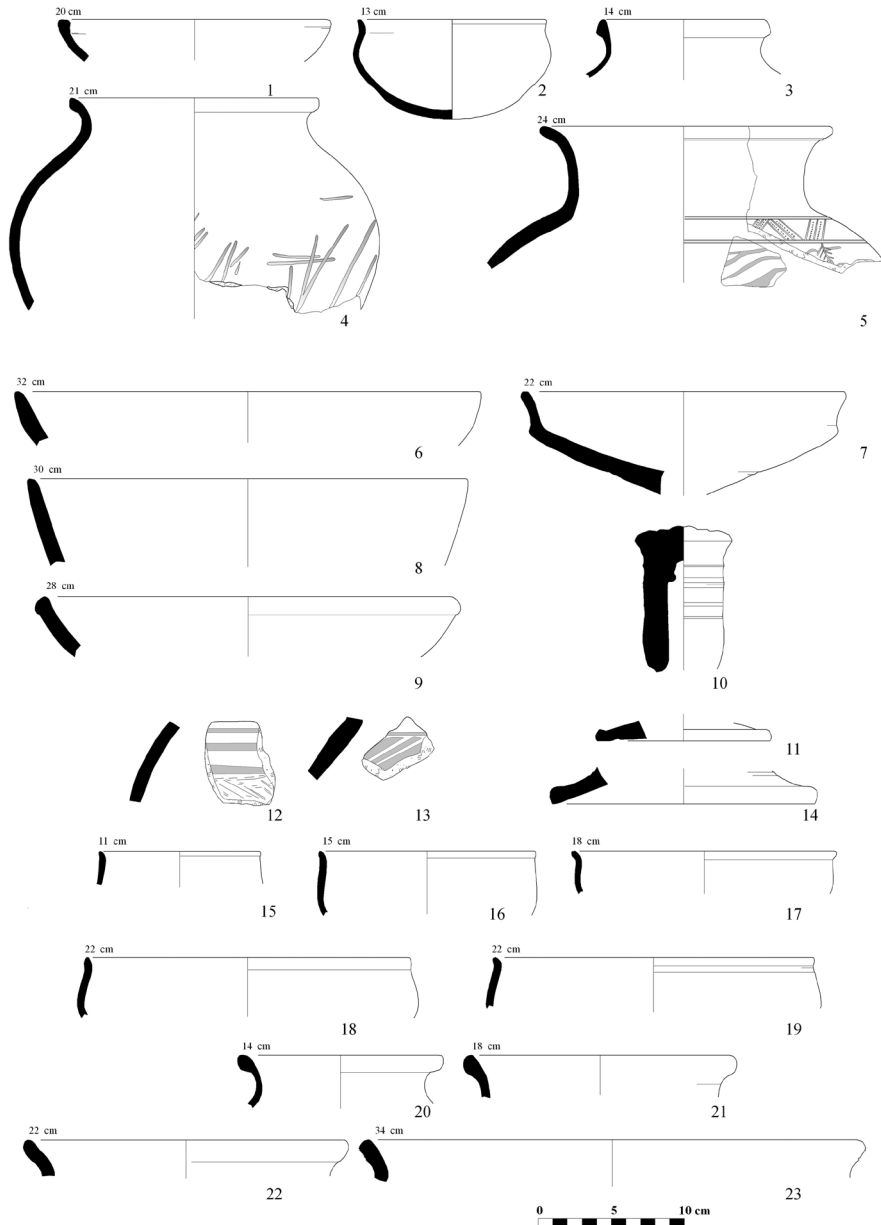


Fig. 10: South Building, Phases 13A-B. Pottery from the annex (nos. 1-5) and the west court (nos. 6-23).

(Drawn by A. Al-Hamid and P. Sconzo)



Fig. 11: Square D1. The court, architecture and burials of late Phase 13
(*from the south*).
(Photo by G. Falsone)



Fig. 12: Pottery assemblage of Tomb 112.
(Photo by S. Oddi)