

THE BRONZE TO IRON AGE TRANSITION AT TELL TWEINI (SYRIA)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The presence of the Sea Peoples was especially hard felt in the northern coastal region of Syria, according to historical documents from the city of Ugarit and on the Temple of Ramesses III in Medinet Habu.² The appearance of those groups of marauders, migrants or in any case groups of a hard to define composition, has been linked to the destruction of the city of Ugarit around 1200 BC.³ The situation in northern coastal Syria after the destruction of Late Bronze Age Ugarit, however, remains understudied and is badly understood. The disappearance of the community at Ugarit and its political and economic power must have been a watershed in the history of the region but how the remaining communities unfolded their socio-political evolution is largely a question mark. New excavations at a border site of the Ugaritic kingdom, Tell Tweini, may increase our knowledge of the early Iron Age period in this region (fig. 1). In this paper, the focus is on the situation of Tell Tweini⁴ (Syria) and its immediate region at the end of the Late Bronze Age and the earlier phases of the Iron Age.

2. HISTORY OF THE HABITATION

Tell Tweini lies in the coastal area of Syria, around 30 kilometres south of the modern harbour town of Lattakia. The tell measures about 11 hectares and rises about 15 to 20 meters above the surrounding fields. It is located just outside the limits of the modern town of Jebleh, and is probably to be identified as the ancient Gibala/Gabala. The tell is now situated at 1,7 km from the sea, at the junction of two rivers. The full extent of the settlement was always limited to the actual surface of the tell. Field walks around the tell could not provide any archaeological material related to the habitation layers on the tell. Constant inundation of the river banks and the little valley may, of course, have buried any existing habitation outside the tell. Geomorphological research in combination with pollen analysis suggests that an incursion of the sea created a lagoon in the area to the north of the tell⁵ (fig. 2). If further research confirms this thesis it would explain the location of Tell Tweini and its incredible advantage of having such harbour. The research further suggests that the silting of the harbour was completed in the first half of the Iron Age. This would account for the relocation of the town of the ancient Gibala to the location of the modern town of Jebleh at the coastline and the gradual abandonment of the site from the Persian period onwards.

Excavations⁶ have revealed deposits of the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age as well as of the Iron Age.⁷ No historical material from the site itself can help us to reconstruct its history. The site

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² Ramesses III writes that the people from the “Great Green” assembled in the land of Amurru, traditionally seen as the northern and coastal part of Syro-Palestine (Breasted 1927: nos 1-150).

³ Yon 2006.

⁴ The Tell Tweini Interdisciplinary Project of the K.U. Leuven would like to congratulate the archaeological team working at Tell Afis for their continuous effort to clarify the history of Syria. The excavations at Tell Tweini form part of the Jebleh Project, a multi-disciplinary research program initiated by the Syrian Directorate of Antiquities in which the team from the K.U. Leuven is a partner. The 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).

⁵ Al Maqdissi et al. 2007.

⁶ A complete bibliography from the project at Tell Tweini can be found at www.telltweini.com.

⁷ Bretschneider et al. 1999; Bretschneider-Van Lerberghe 2008.

was settled in the second part of the 3rd millennium BC. Structures from Early Bronze Age IV were built on top of a limestone plateau. This natural hill must have been a visible elevation above the then-existing lagoon. Many other sites were founded in this period of urbanisation along the Syrian coast. While the history of Tell Tweini is related to that of other sites such as Ugarit the settlement is probably first mentioned in the tablets from Ugarit in the 13th century BC.⁸ From a study of those texts one could suggest that Gibala formed the southernmost border of the kingdom of Ugarit.⁹ Tell Tweini would be a very suitable candidate for an identification with this Gibala.

The destruction of Ugarit in 1192 BC (?)¹⁰ provides an external historical reference to which archaeological discoveries could be matched. To date, no clear archaeological event at Tell Tweini can be linked to this date and the dramatic events which took place in the city of Ugarit. While Ugarit was quickly deserted, Tell Tweini remained occupied throughout the 12th and 11th century BC. Yet, the nature of the habitation did change and perhaps this is related to a different organisation of the community. Such upheaval in the social and economic network of the region would not be surprising given that research related to the silting of the lagoon suggests that the decline in habitation and of the economic situation in the entire region could be linked to a drastic climatic change at the end of the 13th century BC, igniting the turbulent events traditionally ascribed to the Sea Peoples.¹¹

Excavations have been carried out in several parts of the tell mainly in search of remains of the cultural periods of the Late Bronze Age and the earlier Iron Age. The results from Field A are presented here. Excavations in other fields did not yet reach below the cultural levels of the Iron Age, except for a number of squares in Field B in 2008.

The stratigraphy of the tell exists out of a number of phases valid for the entire tell (fig. 3). Those correspond to one or more levels in the various fields. So far, eleven levels have been discerned in Field A. Most of those correspond to a cultural period, starting with the end of the Early Bronze Age of which only a few fill layers have been excavated before bedrock was hit. The Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age and later Iron Age were periods of extensive occupation. Only the Levels 7C to 6A which represent the 13th till the 8th century BC are discussed here.¹²

3. PHASE TWEINI VIIB, LEVEL 7B-C

The buildings of Level 7B-C are characterized by their large size and stone pavements. Similar features occurred at the end of the Late Bronze Age II at Ugarit. A limited number of ashlar blocks were found reused in the next level and may originally have belonged to this level. The walls of the houses in Level 7B-C were all newly constructed and grand in their scope (fig. 4). Somewhere near the end of the Late Bronze Age, probably before the destruction of Ugarit, and a date based on ceramic chronology, some parts of the site of Tell Tweini were destroyed by fire. This may have been the case in other parts of the tell as well but large construction efforts in Iron Age II have created fill layers which often resemble destruction layers and which have obliterated much evidence. On top of that, the Late Bronze Age houses were often laid out on terraces which were levelled in the Iron Age. In most parts of Field A the Iron Age I layers disappeared and Level 7A can not be recognised.

Lacking sufficient historical records from Tell Tweini, we rely on the stratigraphic information of the excavation in combination with ceramics to obtain some dating of the archaeological features. This by itself not being 'absolute dating', the ceramic typologies of the Syrian coast entices much enthusiastic researchers but remain often rather vague. Dating systems such as 'between 1200 and 900' BC are more common than one would wish. The destruction of Ugarit just after 1200 BC forms at least one bench mark archaeologists may refer to.

Of course, the contemporary detailed dating system for the Late Helladic ceramics from the Aegean area draws a lot of attention. Not surprisingly, the use of those Late Helladic ceramics is much solicited when working on the Syrian coast and when one deals with the transition from Late

⁸ Al-Maqdissi et al. 2008.

⁹ Van Soldt 1997.

¹⁰ Dietrich-Loretz 2002.

¹¹ Kaniewski et al. 2008.

¹² For a discussion of the ceramic material from the other cultural periods see Vansteenhuyse 2009.

Bronze Age to Iron Age. Tell Tweini too, has delivered a fair amount of Late Helladic ceramics. Neutron Activation Analysis carried out in Bonn suggests that all of the analysed vessels were made in the Aegean area; the northern Peloponnese perhaps.¹³ All of those vessels belong to either Late Helladic III:A2 or, mostly, to Late Helladic IIIB. Late Helladic IIIB ceramics occur in the destruction level in Phase Tweini VIIIB (Level 7B-C), mentioned above (e.g. fig. 5). Even though Late Helladic IIIB ceramics are dated (in the Aegean) between c. 1300 and 1180 BC at the latest,¹⁴ those ceramics are found in the destruction layer at Ugarit and are the most common type. If Ugarit was indeed destroyed just after 1200 BC, and if the ceramic development would closely follow those from the Aegean region, then more Late Helladic IIIC ceramics are to be found in Ugarit¹⁵ since Late Helladic IIIC appears in the Aegean region just after 1200 BC, a development not necessarily followed in other regions.

One could suggest a similar situation in Tell Tweini as in Ugarit: a fierce fire and perhaps a battle ended life in the city. Arrowheads were found within the destruction layer. However, an immediate rebuilding phase seems to be present in the stratigraphic sequence. This level contains local Late Bronze Age pottery but no imported ceramics. It is important to mention that no Late Helladic IIIC ceramics have been found at Tell Tweini. Though it is an argument ‘ex silentio’ it may nevertheless be of great importance. In absolute dates this suggests that the consumption of Late Helladic ceramics ended in the region of Ugarit with its destruction, just after 1200 BC.

Based on the many imported luxury goods found at Tell Tweini such as Late Helladic ceramics, ivory or faïence, and also the identification of several Cypro-Minoan or related signs one can conclude that the material culture of the Late Bronze Age points to the existence of an elaborate network of international relations and commercial activities.¹⁶ The archaeological discoveries from the latest phase of the Late Bronze Age at Tell Tweini parallel the same cultural developments at Ugarit.

4. PHASE TWEINI VII A-B, LEVEL 6G-H AND 6E-F

There is a serious decrease of the construction activity at the end of the Late Bronze Age. This period remains, however, badly understood in Field A of Tell Tweini since the builders in Iron Age II have been very active in removing or reusing earlier material. Finds in the 2008 season in the northwestern part of Field A now indicate that there has clearly been a Phase Tweini VII in most of Field A but the correlation between all loci from this layer needs further study. Within those layers, we lack an important diagnostic element such Late Helladic IIIC ceramics, which always appears as the strongest argument to suggest an occupation phase in Iron Age I. Other markers thus deserve our attention.

4.1 Handmade Burnished Ware = *Céramique à la stéatite*?

At Tell Kazel, the transition of the Late Bronze Age to Iron Age I displays a similar evolution. The Late Bronze Age II layers are destroyed at some point in time and replaced by a type of squatter occupation in most parts of the tell. These layers are defined by the appearance of a remarkable ware: Handmade Burnished Ware (HBW).¹⁷ Forms of this ware are little jugs and bowls with little handles and a decoration in appliqué. In Greece and on Cyprus, the ware has been promoted to a marker of the earliest phases of the Iron Age I.

Many archaeologists have linked HBW to the so-called “*céramique à stéatite*” as has been found

¹³ Personal communication by H. Mommsen.

¹⁴ Shelmerdine 2001: 332-333.

¹⁵ Monchambert (2004: 279) published some sherds of the “transition IIIB/IIIC” which were found in the destruction layer.

¹⁶ Bretschneider et al. 2005.

¹⁷ This ware is described in Tell Kazel as: “L’argile est brune avec un noyau noir. La surface est brun rougeâtre avec des taches gris-noir. (...) Les inclusions sont, selon Pilides (1994: cat. no. 26), d’une couleur grise, blanche ou noire et du mica est visible en grande quantité à la surface. La surface des vases est polie.” (Badre 2003: 89-90; Pilides 1991; 1994). HBW is found in combination with ‘Trojan ware’ (Capet 2008). Fig. 11:6 (idem) presents an interesting ‘hybrid’ form between the HBW and the Trojan Ware. The handle parallels those used in Fabric 3B at Tell Tweini.

at Ras el Bassit,¹⁸ Ras Shamra,¹⁹ Ras Ibn Hani,²⁰ Tell Sukas,²¹ Daruk²² and Beirut²³ where all examples are dated to Iron Age I,²⁴ with the exception of the examples from Ras Shamra.²⁵ Since all neighbouring sites of Tell Tweini are mentioned in the list above, one would expect to uncover the HBW or the “*céramique à stéatite*”, apparently the same ware, at Tell Tweini.

In order to answer this question, a clear distinction has first to be made between HBW and the “*céramique à stéatite*”. The names, and the wares, are not interchangeable, in contrast to what some former publications seem to suggest. It is foremost clear that the excavations at Tell Tweini do not allow to identify HBW, as it has been described and found by Badre and Pilides at so many sites in Greece, Cyprus and the Lebanese coast, in Tell Tweini. In fact, no clear indications of HBW have been found north of Tell Kazel along the coast, and certainly not at Tell Tweini. The “*céramique à stéatite*” on the other hand is quite common on those sites, as in the Jebleh region and also at Tell Tweini. Moreover, and to make it even more complicated, the “*céramique à stéatite*” must be split up in two different wares. One ware dates back to the Late Bronze Age predating the HBW but continuing into the Early Iron Age (hereafter Fabric 3B), and a second one dates to Iron Age II antedating the HBW. The last ware developed into both the “Iron Age - *céramique à stéatite*” of the Jebleh region (hereafter Fabric 3A) and the Broad Handled Ware in the Amuq plain.

4.2 Fabric 3B (Late Bronze Age II – Iron Age I)

The cooking pots from Ras Shamra in the “*céramique à stéatite*” have nearly vertical walls. In the catalogue of Monchambert²⁶ one can find five cooking pots with a slightly inturning rim, made of a grey to black fabric, often polished and burnished. The upper part of the body curves a little inwards. Similar vessels were found at Tell Tweini in Level 7B-C. The fabric of those vessels is very distinctive (fig. 6). It was termed Fabric 3B.²⁷ The material added to the clay is largely metamorphic. It does not contain any fossilised items. Whereas those elements are typical for the local wares and material, the lack of this material would suggest a completely different production technique or perhaps even a non-local origin. The vessels made of Fabric 3B are all polished and have a smooth soapy surface.²⁸ While the HBW also has a polished surface, the colour is mainly dark brown compared to the black or dark grey surface of Fabric 3B. The last lacks the large organic inclusions which are often present in the HBW.

A large vessel made of Fabric 3A and with vertical walls, flat base and rounded rim has been found in situ with a *kylix* of Late Helladic IIIB:1-2 (fig. 7-8). In Greece, the HBW appears in Late Helladic IIIB:2 until Late Helladic IIIC.²⁹ The contexts at Tell Tweini and Ras Shamra would thus be quite early examples of the combination of HBW and Late Helladic wares. At Tell Kazel, the HBW is found in *Niveau 5* and is even no longer associated with either Cypriot or Aegean imports,³⁰ again in contrast with the context in Tell Tweini. The conclusion may be that this type of CS LB cooking pot is local and did spread throughout the Ugaritic region in the last phase of the Late Bronze Age. It predates the appearance of the HBW in the southern coastal areas. The CS LB stands therefore in no direct relation to the Sea Peoples movement³¹ just before or after the destruction of Ugar-

¹⁸ Badre 2003: 95.

¹⁹ Lagarce-Lagarce 1974: 21.

²⁰ Bounni et al. 1981: 245-255, fig. 27.

²¹ Buhl 1983: pl. VII.97-101.

²² Oldenburg-Rohweder 1981: fig. 33.169, 175.

²³ Badre 1998: 76-77, fig. 4a-b.

²⁴ The fragments from Tell Sukas were found out of context and have been dated simply by reference to Ras Ibn Hani (Buhl 1983: 115).

²⁵ The examples from Ras Shamra date to the end of the Late Bronze Age (e.g. Bounni et al. 1979: 254-255).

²⁶ Monchambert 2004: nos 1262-1265.

²⁷ du Piêd terms this material ‘talc-tempered’ (du Piêd 2008: 164).

²⁸ du Piêd 2008: 164.

²⁹ Pilides 1994: 1.

³⁰ Badre 2003: 97.

³¹ The absence of LH IIIC ceramics do not exclude the possible involvement of the Sea Peoples in the region (Gilboa 2005).

it at the beginning of the 12th century BC. It may, however, be linked to a Cypriot Monochrome Ware dated just before or after the destructions on the island of 1200 BC, as suggested by Du Piéd.³² In this scenario, it would testify of the continued interaction between the Levantine and the Cypriot communities.

The same fabric, be it Fabric 3B or ‘talc-tempered’, continues to be in use during the Early Iron Age. At Tell Tweini, it has been found in Level 6G-D layers. The ware defines the Early Iron Age layers in Ras Ibn Hani and Ras el-Bassit.³³ The straight body and rounded base remain typical for this ware. The spread of the ware ranges from Ras el-Bassit in the north to Daruk in the south. Similar forms appear in Late Bronze Age Porsuk³⁴ and Tell Afis.³⁵ The examples from Tell Afis are later in date and are suggested to relate to Anatolian examples rather than the coastal region.

4.3 Fabric 3A

A study of the ceramic collections from the Amuq plain in Turkey has found close parallels for this “*céramique à stéatite*”.³⁶ It is suggested in that study that the Broad Handled Ware from the Amuq Plain developed out of the cooking pots in “*céramique à stéatite*”. The last, on its turn, has its origins at the Syrian coast and even further in the Aegean ceramic material of the Late Bronze Age because the forms would have arrived in Syria via the HBW. The ceramic typology at Tell Tweini confirms the connection between the Broad Handled Ware from the Amuq plain and the “*céramique à stéatite*” from the Syrian coast (or Fabric 3B) but the connection between the last type and the Aegean traditions is harder to make as explained above.

Some confusion may arise from the fact that all “*céramique à stéatite*” is lumped into one group and thus all examples are placed in the group of the Fabric 3B or the ‘talc-tempered’ wares. The “*céramique à stéatite*” from Tell Sukas, for example, is described as a light grey fabric which is exclusively used for holemouth jars, probably made by hand and without a polished surface. This fabric and the form can be found at Tell Tweini in Level 6A, being Iron Age II. The fabric from Tell Tweini (which we call Fabric 3A) is defined as a fabric with large quantities of bio-clastic material and quartzite inclusions. The fabric has a light grey colour. Similar forms can be found at Tell Afis, for example in Level 2 of Area E, dating to the 9th century BC.³⁷ This is well in accordance with the dating from Tell Tweini. The handles of those vessels are broad and carry two to three lines drawn by the fingers of the potter (fig. 9-10). Therefore, the name of Broad Handled Ware, as given to the ware from the Amuq Plain from the later Iron Age, can be applied to this ware. This type of ware may be a marker of the 10th to 8th century BC in northern and coastal Syria. It is possibly derived of the Fabric 3B.³⁸

4.4 Other ceramic material

The 2008 season has provided, for the first time, clear layers of Levels 6G-H and 6E-F, postdating the destruction of the Late Bronze Age and predating the large reconstruction works of the later Iron Age. The levels may thus be placed in absolute dates between 1200 and 900 BC. The study of the excavated layers is underway but a first analysis suggests that the number of semi-complete storage jars found in those layers probably date to the 11th century BC.

Moreover, LH IIIB/C (transitional) ceramics have been identified in Ras Shamra in the layers dating to the final destruction of the city (Monchambert 2004).

³² du Piéd 2008: 167.

³³ See du Piéd 2008 (164-167) for a synthesis of the material from both sites and further bibliography.

³⁴ Dupré 1983: 169-172.

³⁵ Mazzoni 1998: 168, fig. 20.7-8.

³⁶ The examples from the Amuq plain are called Broad Handled Ware because of the form of the handle (Birney 2005). This handle shape is indeed typical for the vessels made in Fabric 3A at Tell Tweini (*cf.* an example of HBW from Kition, see Pilides 1991: fig. 14.3), but not for the vessel shapes made in Fabric 3B which precedes Fabric 3A in chronological terms.

³⁷ Mazzoni 1998: fig. 25.10.

³⁸ A similar conclusion is reached for the pots from Ras el-Bassit, suggested by du Piéd (see 2008 fig. 5d as an early example of a holemouth cooking pot).

Before this discovery, evidence for this cultural period was scarce and scattered but provided some clear hints to the dating. Local ceramics were found in *loci* which lacked any of the traditional ceramic markers for the Late Bronze Age such as White Slip Ware or Late Helladic sherds. This suggested at least that the ceramics belonged no longer to the Late Bronze Age as traditionally defined and that they hint at an occupation of the site in the 12th to 11th century BC. One example of these vessels is a crater with a trellis motive (fig. 11). The motive is not unknown in the Late Bronze Age but both form and decoration of the krater are interestingly similar to an Iron Age I krater from Tell Kazel.³⁹

The group further consists of craters which carry a wavy line and horizontal bands in black and red (fig. 12). They have a ring base and two vertical handles. For the latter two characteristics one often refers to Late Helladic III C1 craters.⁴⁰ Problematic, however, is that the general form and the decoration scheme are also attested in Iron Age II.⁴¹ At least the form is thus not an absolute criterion to date the vessels in Iron Age I. Some craters⁴² with a wavy line on the neck just below the rim, also carry a frieze of three parallel zigzag lines on their shoulder. Gilboa has termed this last design the “Overlapping Multiple Diagonal Strokes” and summarizes evidence for its popularity in the Syrian Iron Age I (starting in Middle Bronze Age).⁴³

Three other craters⁴⁴ of a similar form found in this level carry only a wavy line on the shoulder. Those craters carry no decoration on the neck and below the wavy line are a series of alternating black and red bands. A red band indicates the transition from neck to shoulder. This group resembles a ‘wavy-line crater’ from Tell Sukas.⁴⁵ That particular crater is regarded as part of the Early Iron Age tradition in the coastal region.⁴⁶ It is remarkable that a ‘wavy-line crater’ from Ras Ibn Hani, suggested to be part of the same tradition, represents a rather different type. The only elements in common between the craters from those three mentioned sites are the ring base and the wavy line. The example from Ras Ibn Hani also has grooved handles of which the groove is painted red. Such handles are found at Tell Tweini but not on the ‘wavy-line craters’. The handles may date to the former Level 7A and thus belong to a Late Bronze Age tradition.

Another example of a ‘wavy-line crater’ from Tell Kazel has characteristics of both former craters. It carries a wavy line on the shoulder, red and black horizontal bands below, a line separating the shoulder from the neck but it also carries decoration on the neck. Here, a floral motive, derived from Late Helladic traditions is visible. The crater was found in Kazel Area IV, Level 4 which dates to the first phase of the Iron Age I.⁴⁷ It is interesting to note again that in Tell Tweini none of the Iron Age decoration schemes draw their inspiration from Aegean-style pottery in the Late Bronze Age.⁴⁸

In all, the material found so far at Tell Tweini does not close the chronological gap between the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of Iron Age II. It only offers a few hints that better preserved layers of the early Iron Age are present on the tell but are still to be uncovered.

5. PHASE TWEINI VI, LEVELS 6C-D AND 6A-B

The group of craters from Tell Tweini with a wavy line on the shoulder, and including the one from Tell Sukas, form a different tradition than the crater from Tell Kazel and are probably later in date and belong to a later level, being 6C-D and 6A-B. Kraters with three parallel zigzag lines were also found in this level. As has been argued for similar examples from Tell Afis, these vessels probably

³⁹ Capet 2003: fig. 21n, see also fig. 20a.

⁴⁰ For parallels see Riis 1948: 59, nos 214, 219, fig. 59, no 223.

⁴¹ For some parallels see Aubet 2004: fig. 8.45; Bordreuil 2004: jarre no. 1. A similar decoration scheme can also be found on a 11th-10th century BC crater from Ras el-Bassit (du Piéd 2008: fig. 2b).

⁴² TWE-A-00814-C-077 and 01715-C-005.

⁴³ Gilboa 2008.

⁴⁴ TWE-A-00200-C-001, 00817-C-043 and 04201-C-002.

⁴⁵ Buhl 1983: fig. 16.281.

⁴⁶ Bonatz 1994: fig. 7.3; Bounni et al. 1979: fig. 27.

⁴⁷ Badre-Gubel 1999-2000: 198, fig. 44b.

⁴⁸ Bell (2006) has provided some evidence that the contacts between the northern Syrian coastal region and the Aegean-influenced regions such as Cyprus or the Aegean Sea itself disappeared almost completely in the 12th century BC in favor of a shift to the south.

do not date earlier than the mid 11th century BC. Together with the wavy-line craters, bichrome decorated plates were also found in Level 6A-B (fig. 13). Those plates are replaced in the next level (Level 5) by red painted plates. A survey of such ceramics led to the conclusion that such bichrome ceramics were no longer used after circa 850 BC.⁴⁹ This date is a terminus *ante quem* for the appearance and consumption of these wavy-line craters. Therefore, at Tell Tweini, the vessels mentioned above form part of the first phase of massive re-occupation of the tell in the early 10th century BC.

Occupation increases again at the beginning of Iron Age II, at the very earliest in the 10th century BC. Most buildings of the Late Bronze Age were re-used and the Iron Age II city arises on top of the Late Bronze Age city. The ancient walls must have been visible to the re-occupants of the site. Those inhabitants used most of the walls as foundations for other constructions or even built on top of the Late Bronze Age floors. Some Late Bronze Age II houses had been constructed on several terraces, with a height difference of up to 1.5 meter. This height difference disappeared in Iron Age II when the lower rooms were filled in to level the site. This levelling operation has confused us, as excavators, because the layers contain mixed ceramics from both the Iron Age and the Late Bronze Age. Yet, at certain spots this operation did preserve a Late Bronze Age destructive fire. It also confuses a detailed study of the stratigraphy.

Tell Tweini has been totally redeveloped by the beginning of the 9th century BC. The entire surface of the tell is by now covered by new urban structures. The new orientation of the city structure – streets, squares, monumental buildings and workshops – is easily recognizable on a city map created by geophysical prospection. To the east of the tell, the city is protected by a massive wall which may date back to the Middle Bronze Age.⁵⁰ The main entrance gate of the city is most likely to be found there but has not been excavated. The orientation of the houses dating to the Iron Age II has changed when compared with the houses of the Late Bronze phase. Even the street system seems to have changed between the second and the first millennium.

All recovered constructions were domestic structures with the exception of Building A. This large hall with an impressively large door step on the west side of Field A is the biggest space which we have excavated. In the back of this room a bronze statue of a naked woman was discovered with raised arms. A clear stratigraphic context lacks but parallels may suggest that this was a cultic statue from the beginning of Iron Age II.

In conclusion: a study of the detailed stratigraphic contexts from Tell Tweini offers interesting details on the ceramic material from the end of the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Preliminary studies provide evidence that Tell Tweini was most likely inhabited throughout Iron Age I with only short interruptions but more substantial material can not yet be presented. It may also be obvious from this summary presentation that the early Iron Age or Iron Age I in the wider region is defined too monolithic in terms of relative and absolute dating, as it is set now between 1200 and 850 BC. New excavations along the Syrian coast and their upcoming detailed publications will help to provide a finer chronology.

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⁴⁹ Lehmann 1996.

⁵⁰ Bretschneider et al. 2005.

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Fig. 1 – Overview of coastal Syria with major archaeological sites.

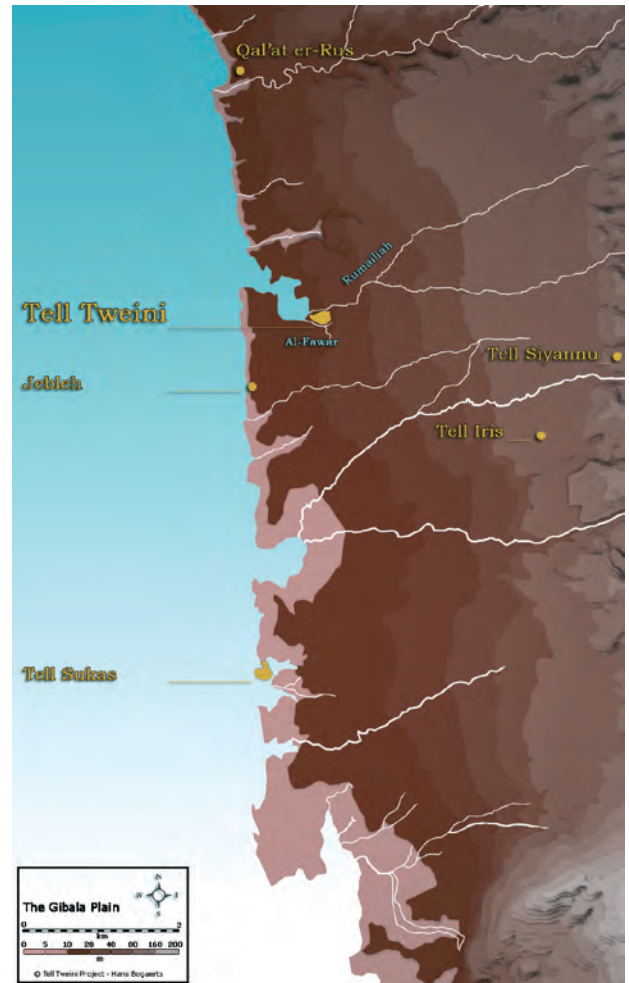


Fig. 2 – Reconstruction of the coast of the Jebelah Plain during the Bronze Age. The relative sea level stands 5m higher than the present.

		PHASES OF TWEINI	FIELD A
1918 –	Modern	Tweini I B	Level 1
	Ottoman	Tweini I A (19 ^c c. AD)	Level 2
1516 –	Islamic		
636 –	Byzantine	Tweini II	
AD 395 –	Roman	Tweini III	
BC 64 –	Hellenistic	Tweini IV	Level 3
333 –	Iron Age III (Persian Achaemenid Period)	Tweini V A-B	Level 4 A-B
400 –			
500 –			
600 –	Iron Age III		Level 5 A-B
700 –	Iron Age II	Tweini VI A-B	Level 6 A-B
800 –			Level 6 C-D
900 –	Iron Age I	Tweini VII B	Level 6 E-F
1000 –			
1100 –			Level 6 G-H
1200 –	Late Bronze Age II B	Tweini VIII B	Level 7 A-B-C
1300 –	Late Bronze Age II A		
1400 –	Late Bronze Age I	Tweini VIII A	Level 7 D-E
1500 –	Middle Bronze Age II	Tweini IX B	Level 8 A-B
1600 –			
1700 –	Middle Bronze Age I	Tweini IX A	Level 8 C-D
1800 –	Early Bronze Age IVB	Tweini X B	Level 9 A-B
1900 –			
2000 –	Early Bronze Age IVA	Tweini X A	Level 10
2100 –	Early Bronze Age III	Tweini XI	Level 11 ?
2200 –			
2300 –			
2400 –			
2500 –			
2600 –			

Fig. 3 – Overview of the phases, levels and corresponding cultural periods for Tell Tweini (Field A), preliminary situation in 2008.

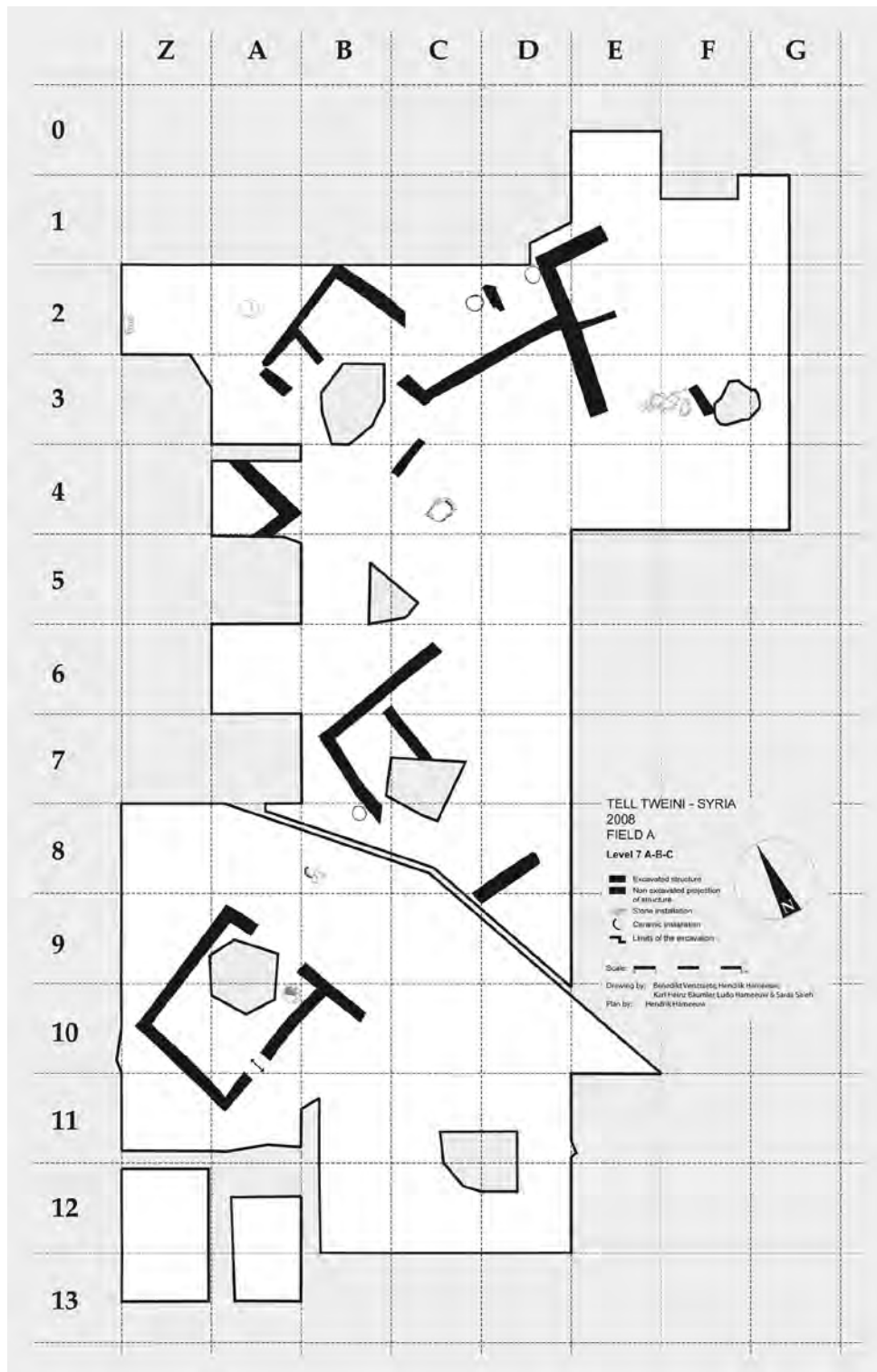


Fig. 4 – Map of the Late Bronze II structures excavated in Field A (preliminary situation in 2008).

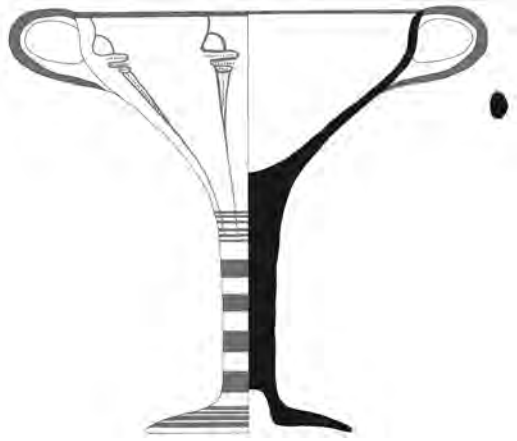


Fig. 5 – Late Helladic III:B kylix (TWE-A-00185-C-024).



Fig. 6 – Example of Fabric 3B (body sherd).



Fig. 7 and 8 – Cooking pot in Fabric 3B (TWE-A-00185-C-021), found in combination with Late Helladic IIIB kylix (Fig. 5).

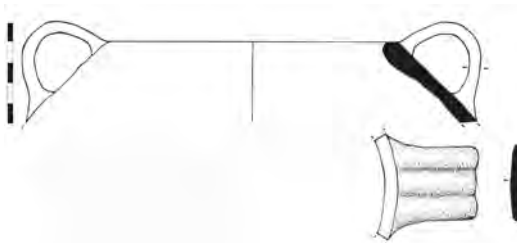


Fig. 9 and 10 – Example of Fabric 3A and holemouth cooking pot in Fabric 3A (TWE-A-03105-C-014).

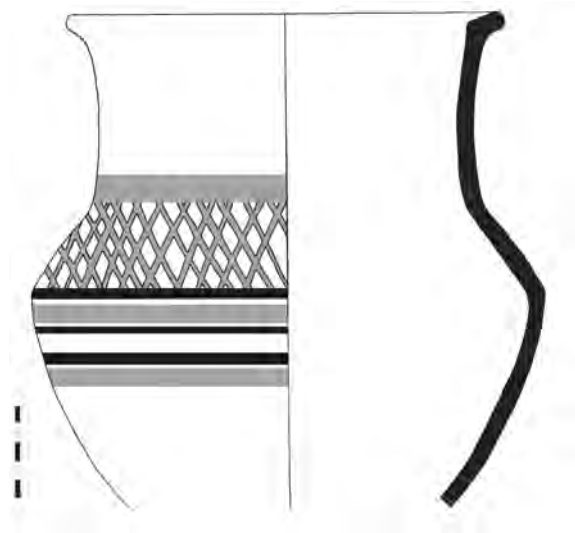


Fig. 11 – Crater with trellis motive (TWE-A-01928-C-001).

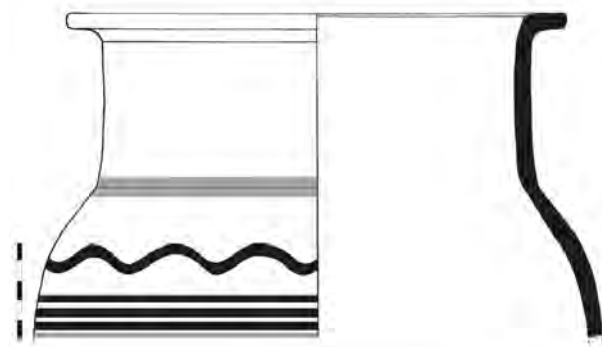


Fig. 12 – Crater with wavy line motive (TWE-A-00817-C-043).

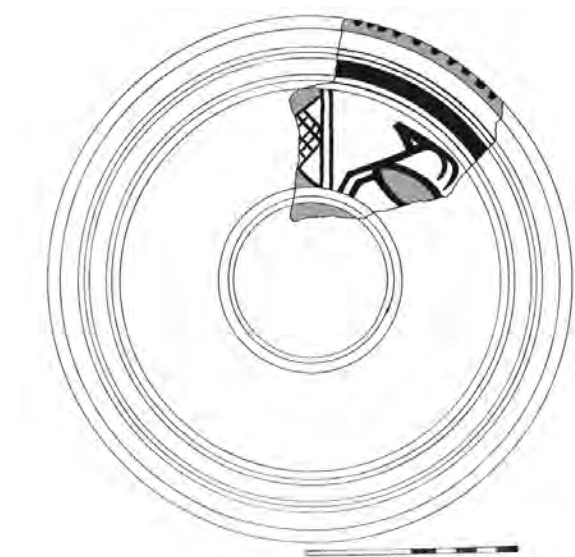


Fig. 13 – Bichrome plate (TWE-A-00816-C-001).