

# RITUAL DEPOSITIONS VERSUS GARBAGE PITS: A RE-EVALUATION OF POTTERY DEPOSITS AND OFFERING PITS AT THE LATE BRONZE AGE CITY OF HALA SULTAN TEKKE, CYPRUS

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*Abstract: This paper examines the material from a number of pits and wells from suburban areas of Hala Sultan Tekke, Cyprus. The aim is to identify pits and wells which contain intentionally deposited material other than rubbish. The Late Bronze Age metropolis of Hala Sultan Tekke offers an excellent opportunity for this study, as a considerable number of pits and wells spanning the complete Late Cypriot Bronze Age were excavated and well-documented over the course of almost five decades of archaeological research. As we have very little evidence of ritual practice – distinct cultic structures are as yet unknown at Hala Sultan Tekke – the re-evaluation of selected pottery deposits will offer a key towards a better understanding of possible ritual activities. In addition, Hala Sultan Tekke is – so far – the only Late Cypriot site, where we can see a clear connection between offering pits containing mainly pottery deposits and tombs, as these structures are found in close proximity to each other. This situation supports the view that the material from the offering pits reflects specific rituals for the deceased. Finally, the evidence of ritual feasting at other Late Cypriot sites, such as Kouklia Evreti, Kalavassos Ayios Dhimitrios and Enkomi, will briefly be discussed in order to present a more comprehensive picture.*

*Keywords: Cyprus; Late Bronze Age; Pits; Wells; Refuse; Intentional Deposits; Ritual; Feasting; Burial Practice*

## Introduction

Hala Sultan Tekke (Fig. 1) is located on the southern coast of Cyprus, close to the modern town of Larnaca. It was one of the largest towns on the island during in the Late Cypriot period. So far, remains from mainly around 1200 BCE, i.e. the later part of the Late Cypriot (henceforth LC) IIC and the LC IIIA periods, have been unearthed. However, only a minor part of the town has been

explored so far, but the total area of occupation may have been up to 20ha (as suggested by KNAPP 2013, 355, fig. 95, which is based on the estimate by ÅSTRÖM 1986, 8; 1996, 10). Ongoing excavations by the New Swedish Cyprus Expedition under the direction of Peter M. Fischer since 2010 have revealed a number of new city quarters. In addition, georadar and geomagnetic surveys were carried out in order to trace the total extent of the Late Bronze Age town (FISCHER 2011, 70–72; TRINKS and FISCHER in FISCHER and BÜRGE 2013, 57–59; TRINKS *et al.* 2013; TRINKS 2015).

Although it is clear from the presence of ceramics and other materials from settlement and burial contexts that there was a settlement at Hala Sultan Tekke already at the end of the Middle Cypriot period, i.e. before 1650/1600 BCE, no architectural structures can be assigned to this period. The earliest buildings are dated to the LC IIC period, viz. roughly the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Most of the excavated structures, however, are dated to the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE, i.e. the LC IIIA period. Based on our present knowledge this indicates that the size of the town increased suddenly and relatively quickly in the latter half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE until it reached its peak around 1200 BCE. Thus, this prosperous period seems to have lasted only for a few decades, until Hala Sultan Tekke was finally destroyed around the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century BCE never to be reoccupied again (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2015, 2016, 2017a; FISCHER 2017; FISCHER and BÜRGE in press). The LC IIC/IIIA town is characterised by a number of city quarters, of which some have monumental buildings of ashlar masonry (HULT 1981; ÅSTRÖM 1996). The rich finds from the settlement and tombs within the settlement and suburban areas attest to the prosperity of Late Bronze Age Hala Sultan Tekke. Most of the burials contained plenty of jewellery of gold, silver and precious stones, imported pottery and other coveted objects such as weapons, bronze tools, and objects of ivory (e.g. BAILEY 1976; NIKLASSON 1983; FISCHER and BÜRGE 2017b). The obvious prosperity of the inhabitants of Hala

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Sultan Tekke was certainly based on trade, because the town had the best protected harbour on the island which functioned as a hub in inter-cultural connections (ÅSTRÖM 1986; DEVILLERS *et al.* 2015; FISCHER 2017, 191–193). Other major activities, which contributed to the socio-economic development of the town include copper working (MEHOFER in FISCHER and BÜRGE 2014, 75) and purple dyeing (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2016).

### Refuse pits and wells at Hala Sultan Tekke

Pits and wells are known from all Late Cypriot settlements and are usually found in domestic and industrial areas. Refuse pits belong to the usual “house and workshop inventories” and are characterised by their contents of fragmented pottery, building material, animal bones and other organic remains from food processing and consuming, broken and discarded tools of various materials, and workshop debris. Usually, rather shallow pits were dug for the disposal of garbage, but also out-of-use wells and cisterns were backfilled with refuse.

At Hala Sultan Tekke wells or cisterns were excavated in Area 8 (ÅSTRÖM 1998, 7–65), Area 6 (north of CQ1; HATZIANTONIOU 1983, 107, 116–117, 131, fig. 308; ÅSTRÖM 1998, 65), Area 23 (ÅSTRÖM 1998, 67–130), City Quarter (CQ) 1, CQ2 (FISCHER and BÜRGE in press), CQ3 (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2016, 45), Area A (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2015, 46–50; 2016, 47–49; 2017a) and to the west of Area A (ÖBRINK 1983). The wells are characterised by a circular layout with a diameter of roughly 1.5 m and a depth of at least 5–6 m. Steps are cut on two sides, approximately 40 cm apart (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2015, 46–50, esp. tabs. 1 and 2; FISCHER and BÜRGE 2017a; see also ÅSTRÖM 1998, 68, figs. 108, 110).<sup>1</sup> While Area 6, CQ1, CQ2 and CQ3 are clearly domestic and partly also industrial areas, the character of Area 23 is not as clear. Surprisingly, the wells in Area 23 are located at the highest points of Hala Sultan Tekke (cf. Fig. 1), where it certainly was necessary to dig deeper than in other areas in order to reach groundwater. The four tombs in the eastern part of the area (Tombs 20,

21, 22, 24) indicate that Area 23 was also used for burials in the LC IB–IIC period (ÅSTRÖM 1983; ÅSTRÖM and NYS 2007, 27). A similar situation can be observed in Area A, which according to the georadar results (TRINKS 2015) is undeveloped and is most likely a suburban area of the Late Bronze Age town. Fourteen wells (A, C–I, M, O, Q, S, T, W) have been excavated in Area A so far, of which one, Tomb/Well A, was reused as a burial for six humans and a canid (FISCHER and SATRAKI 2014; STOLLE in FISCHER and BÜRGE 2015, 42–44; STOLLE 2016). In addition, five tombs dating from different time spans within the LC IB–IIIA period (Tomb 1, Tomb 2, MLA 1162, MLA 1173, Tomb X) were excavated in and close to Area A (KARAGEORGHIS 1976, 1984; SAMAES and NYS 2010; FISCHER and BÜRGE 2017b). Four pits (B, N, P, V) contained “special deposits” of complete and broken ceramic vessels, loom weights and other finds – but no human bones whatsoever, and therefore are considered as “offering pits”. The high number of wells in Areas A and 23 (cf. Fig. 1), the short distance between each other, and the combination of wells, tombs and offering pits in a quite limited area is remarkable.<sup>2</sup>

Admittedly, it is sometimes difficult to clearly distinguish midden areas from ritual depositions in the archaeological record. It may seem obvious how to define refuse – for instance, as STASKI and SUTRO (1991, 3) put it – as “the by-products of any human activity that are deemed useless and, therefore, disposed of or abandoned.” However, the type of material considered as rubbish and finally discarded differs from one society to the other and depends on various circumstances, for instance, on what was regarded as particularly valuable or not, and what was recyclable or reusable (KAMP 1991; STASKI and SUTRO 1991, 3).

Nevertheless, it is hardly conceivable that refuse was carried over long distances in order to be dumped, which also explains the secondary function of nearby abandoned wells as refuse pits. Thus, we can assume that the composition of pottery and other finds corresponds to the objects used in the vicinity of the pit or well. Consequent-

<sup>1</sup> A similar way for the construction of wells is, *inter alia*, known from Enkomi (DIKAIOS 1969, 139, 208).

<sup>2</sup> In the course of the 2017 season of excavation, two tombs and a number of “offering pits” and wells were discovered in Area A. Since the paper was submitted before the excavation, these new features will not be discussed here. However, they perfectly match the evidence described in the present paper.

<sup>3</sup> A special case is represented by a pit in CQ2 (Stratum 2) at Hala Sultan Tekke, which contained around 300 kg material from copper production including tapped slag, furnace walls, crucible fragments, copper/bronze fragments and pieces of raw copper fragments (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2014, 72; see also the note by MEHOFER therein, p. 75). These finds attest the various steps of the copper-production process.

ly, we can draw conclusions on the activities carried out near pits or wells.<sup>3</sup> On good grounds we can anticipate that in domestic areas a considerable number of plain wares, storage and cooking vessels were discarded. In contrast, fine tableware is expected to constitute a small percentage of the total amount of pottery<sup>4</sup> in garbage pits. In addition, a large number of small pottery fragments with few matches may hint at a secondary function of these wells as garbage disposal. However, many of the wells at Hala Sultan Tekke contain a multitude of complete objects, which obviously were deliberately deposited in the well (see e.g. ÅSTRÖM 1998, 43, figs. 70–74; FISCHER and BÜRGE 2015, 46–49, figs. 37, 28, 30; 2016, 48, fig. 17). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate if there is a preference for the deposition of certain objects or specific vessel parts, or if a high number of matching fragments may hint at a deliberate breaking and deposition of these objects. Moreover, the osteological and botanical materials need to be taken into consideration. Bones from animals most common in other areas of the settlement, such as sheep or goat, may indicate a backfilled well as a garbage area, whereas the remains of more uncommon or “exclusive” animals, such as fallow deer, cattle, equids and others, possibly consumed during larger-scale feasts, may hint at ritual-related activities (see similar considerations by HALSTEAD 2016, 397). The same applies to botanical remains, i.e. common versus more exclusive food stuff.

### Offering pits and ritual well fillings from Hala Sultan Tekke

Pits and wells with “special deposits” from the suburban Area A and Trench 1/4, which is to the west of Area A, will be discussed under this heading (Fig. 2).

The offering pits at Hala Sultan Tekke are so far unique. Their outlines are circular (Pits B and P), oval (Pit N, which is not discussed in this paper) or figure-eight-shaped (Pit V). The circular pits closely resemble wells (see below) in both size and layout. However, they have no steps, which are characteristic of wells, nor are they deep

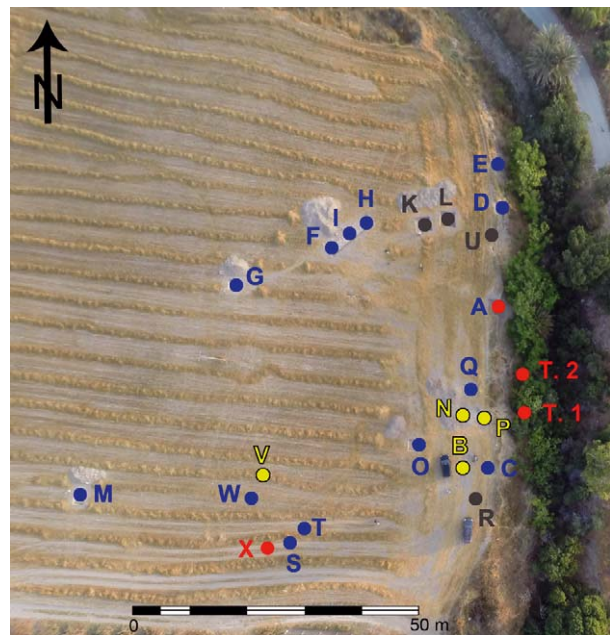


Fig. 2 Aerial photo of Area A with the positions of the excavated features: red = tombs, blue = wells, yellow = “offering pits”, grey = modern features (photo by T. Bürge and P. M. Fischer)

enough to reach groundwater, i.e. they were not dug deeper than approximately 1.5–3 m. This clearly distinguishes these pits from wells – considering that today’s groundwater level in Area A, which was measured from a modern drill-hole, is approximately at 10.5 m below surface.<sup>5</sup> The exact groundwater level during the Late Bronze Age is unknown, but according to the depth of the excavated wells it is unlikely that it was higher than 5–6 m below today’s surface.

Only two of the wells, Well Q and the well in Trench 1/4, will be discussed here, although other wells also contained remarkable finds in the backfill (see e.g. FISCHER and BÜRGE 2015, 47, fig. 27; 48, fig. 28; 49, fig. 30; 2016: 48, fig. 17; 52, fig. 22), which will require further studies.

#### Pit B

This feature has a circular shape with a diameter of roughly 1 m (Fig. 3a; see preliminary report in FISCHER and BÜRGE 2015, 45–46). It is approximately 3.2 m deep. The first complete objects

<sup>4</sup> At Hala Sultan Tekke, CQ2, for example, Plain, Coarse and Pithos wares constitute together almost 80%; while White Painted Wheel-made ware constitute less than 15%, Mycenaean imports less than 1%, White Slip less than 2% and Base-ring ware less than 2% of the total amount of sherds in Strata 1 and 2 (FISCHER and BÜRGE in press). The

rare occurrence of fine tableware inside the settlement cannot be explained solely by the fact that all these wares – except for White Painted Wheel-made – are residual.

<sup>5</sup> The absolute elevation of the surface at this spot is 10.7 m a.s.l.

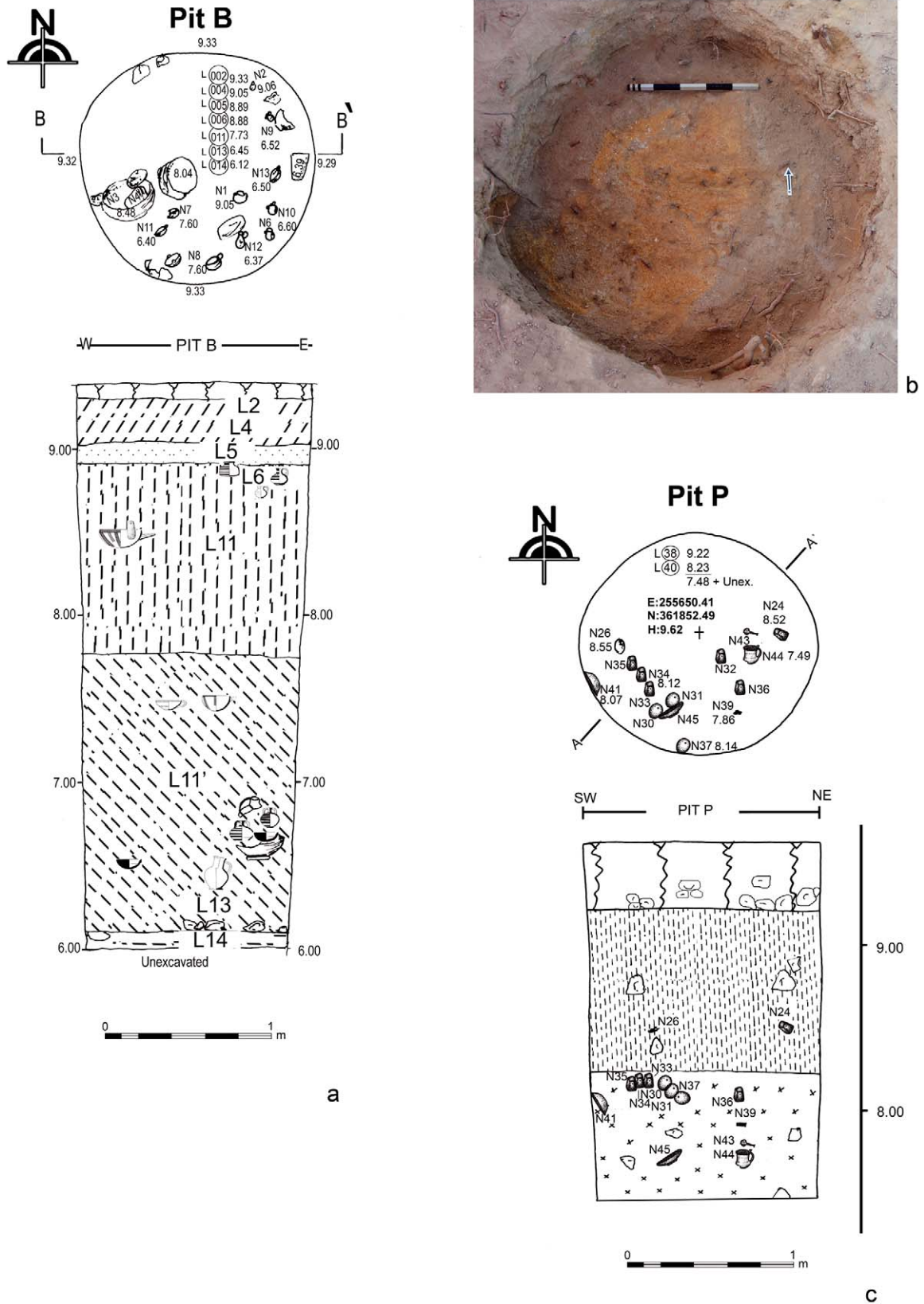


Fig. 3 (a) Plan and section of Pit B; (b) Pit B with other layer/sealing; and (c) plan and section of Pit P (drawings by M. Al-Bataineh; photo by P. M. Fischer)



Fig. 4 Selected vessels from Pit B (photos by T. Bürge and P. M. Fischer; drawings by M. Al-Bataineh)

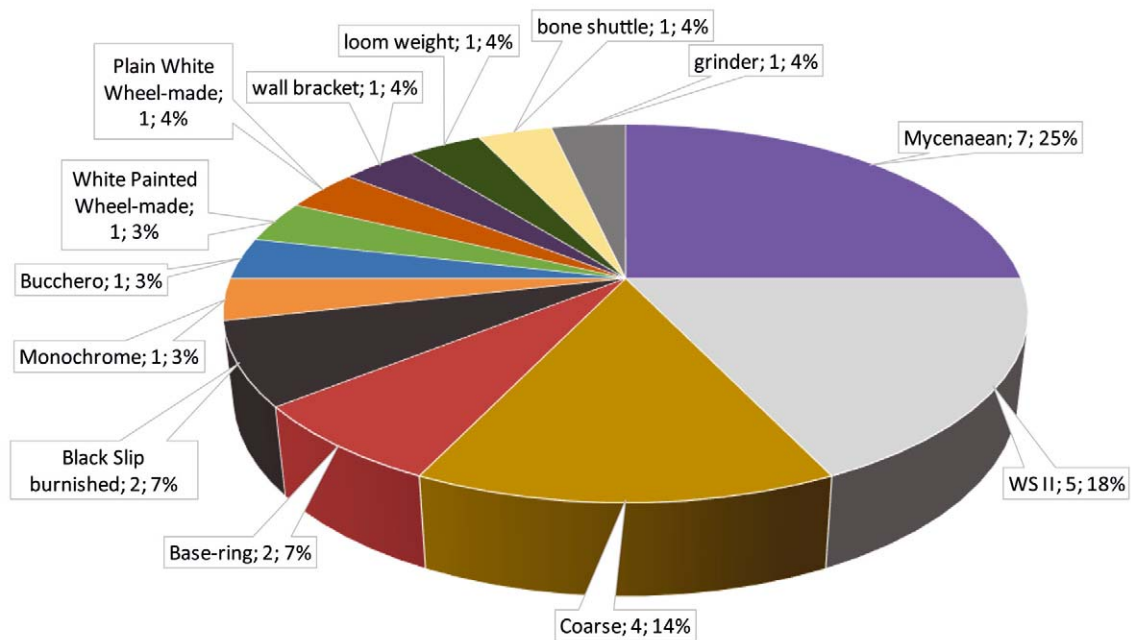


Fig. 5 Distribution of pottery and other finds from Pit B

appeared 0.3 m below the surface: an intact Mycenaean alabastron (Fig. 4:8), an intact Mycenaean juglet (Fig. 4:11) and parts of a baking tray.

Below a layer of yellowish-orange soil, which consists of a mixture of ochre and limestone (Fig. 3b), several other complete objects were found fairly close together: a loom weight of fired clay lying inside a complete White Slip II bowl (Fig. 4:4), another White Slip II bowl, a bowl of Monochrome ware (Fig. 4:2), a cooking pot, a lamp, a baking tray of Coarse ware (Fig. 4:6), a wall bracket and a bone shuttle. The layer of ochre-coloured soil seems to have been used to “seal off” the objects.

The next layer of soil contained a Mycenaean juglet (Fig. 4:10), a Mycenaean shallow cup (Fig. 4:9), two Mycenaean stirrup jars (one in Fig. 4:7), the upper part of a White Painted Wheel-made trefoil-mouthed jug, the rim of a Plain White Wheel-made jar, two White Slip II late bowls (one in Fig. 4:3), the lower part of a Bucchero jug, a Base-ring II jug (Fig. 4:1), two small hand-made, wheel-finished bowls with vestigial handles and black slip and a highly burnished surface (one in Fig. 4:5), and a stone grinder (see distribution of finds in Fig. 5). Between 300 and 400 fragments of scale mail were positioned along the outlines of the shaft (see also LINDQVIST 2015).

Faunal remains from Pit B comprise fish and bird bones, a bird eggshell and much crushed *hexaplex*. Preserved botanical remains include a capsule fragment of *Linum usitatissimum* and a cereal grain – which could have ended up in the pit by coincidence judging by this very small amount.<sup>6</sup>

The contents of the shaft were found virtually undisturbed, which can be seen by the largely complete or intact vessels and other objects and the unbroken ochre “sealing”. The material can be dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE, i.e. the LC IIC period.

#### Pit P

This feature has a circular shape with a diameter of approximately 1.2–1.4 m and a depth of 2.1 m (Fig. 3c; see preliminary report in FISCHER and BÜRGE 2016, 51–52). The fill inside the feature is of reddish-brown colour and compact texture. A hand-made cooking pot of Coarse ware, a loom weight and two bone shuttles were found 0.4 m below the topsoil.

A concentration of complete finds started at 1.4 m below the surface. These finds comprise four shallow bowls of Plain White Wheel-made ware (one in Fig. 6:5), a lamp of Plain ware, a bowl of

<sup>6</sup> The study of bones and shells from Pits B, P and V, and Well Q were carried out by David Reese; the botanical studies by Dominika Kofel.



Fig. 6 Selected vessels and elephant ivory inlay (?) from Pit P. The fragments of Bichrome Wheelmade and Proto-White Slip in the upper row are residual (photos by T. Bürge and P. M. Fischer; drawings by M. Al-Bataineh)



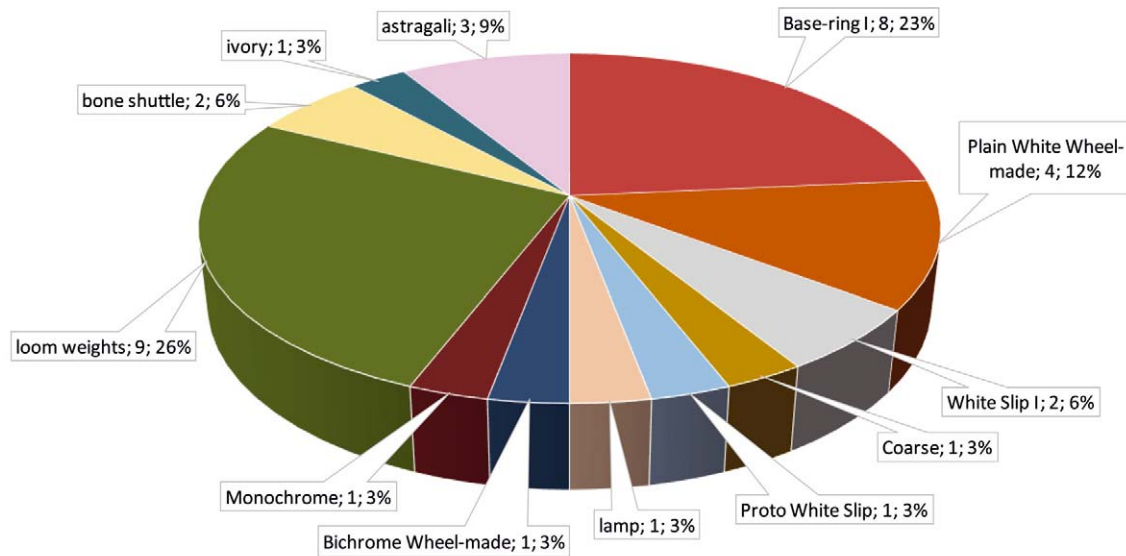


Fig. 7 Distribution of pottery and other finds from Pit P

Monochrome ware, four bowls (one in Fig. 6:6), two juglets (one in Fig. 6:7), a jug and a tankard (Fig. 6:8) of Base-ring I ware, the rim of a krater of Bichrome Wheel-made ware (Fig. 6:1), a fragment of a Proto-White Slip bowl (Fig. 6:2), a White Slip I bichrome bowl (Fig. 6:3), and a White Slip I monochrome bowl (Fig. 6:4). A flat, square inlay (?) of ivory (Fig. 6:9), and nine circular, oval or pyramidal loom weights were also found in the fill (see distribution of finds in Fig. 7).

Faunal remains from the pit include bones of small mammals, birds and rodents and three ground-down astragali of *ovis/capra*. Pit P did not contain any human osteological material but the numerous complete and even intact finds mostly fit into the LC IB period (15<sup>th</sup> century BCE).

#### Pit V

The pit has the shape of a recumbent “8”, approximately 3.55 × 2.2 m in size and orientated east-west (Fig. 8). A considerable quantity of Mycenaean pictorial sherds of high-quality vessels showing decorations of humans, animals, plants, and geometric motifs were found already in the disturbed/ploughed soil. Farming explains the missing sherds of almost complete vessels which were noted during processing and mending, despite meticulous sieving and surveying of the area around the pit.

After excavating down to 0.4–0.5 m from the surface, the concentration of sherds in the already sherd-rich fill of soil increased dramatically. Intermingled with the sherds were a Mycenaean Psi-figurine and a Mycenaean horse figurine, the latter being part of a chariot group with at least two horses. Sherds from the same vessels were found scattered over the entire double pit. In total, at least 60 ceramic vessels were found in Pit V, most of them with complete profiles.<sup>7</sup> A 0.4 m circular pit cut into the north-eastern section of the eastern chamber was also filled with broken pottery. Pit V did not contain any skeletons nor any other objects than those of fired clay, with the exception of one fragment of a faience bowl and nine pieces of ostrich eggshell.

Amongst the locally produced wares are eleven White Slip II bowls, two Base-ring I jugs with plastic decoration, three Base-ring II jugs with painted decoration, a Base-ring II juglet with painted decoration, three Base-ring bowls, a Base-ring jug or juglet, and a Base-ring juglet. In addition, two jugs of Bucchero ware could be reconstructed so far. White-Painted Wheel-made ware from Pit V includes five shallow bowls, a deep bowl, a spouted juglet of possible Mycenaean type, and a jug. Another bowl is of Plain-White Wheel-made ware. There is also a White-shaved

<sup>7</sup> Considering the large number of fragments, it was not possible to reconstruct all vessels in the short time at our disposal between the excavation and the present study. Fur-

ther conservation and study of the material will certainly increase the number of vessels. Therefore, the indicated ratios are only preliminary.

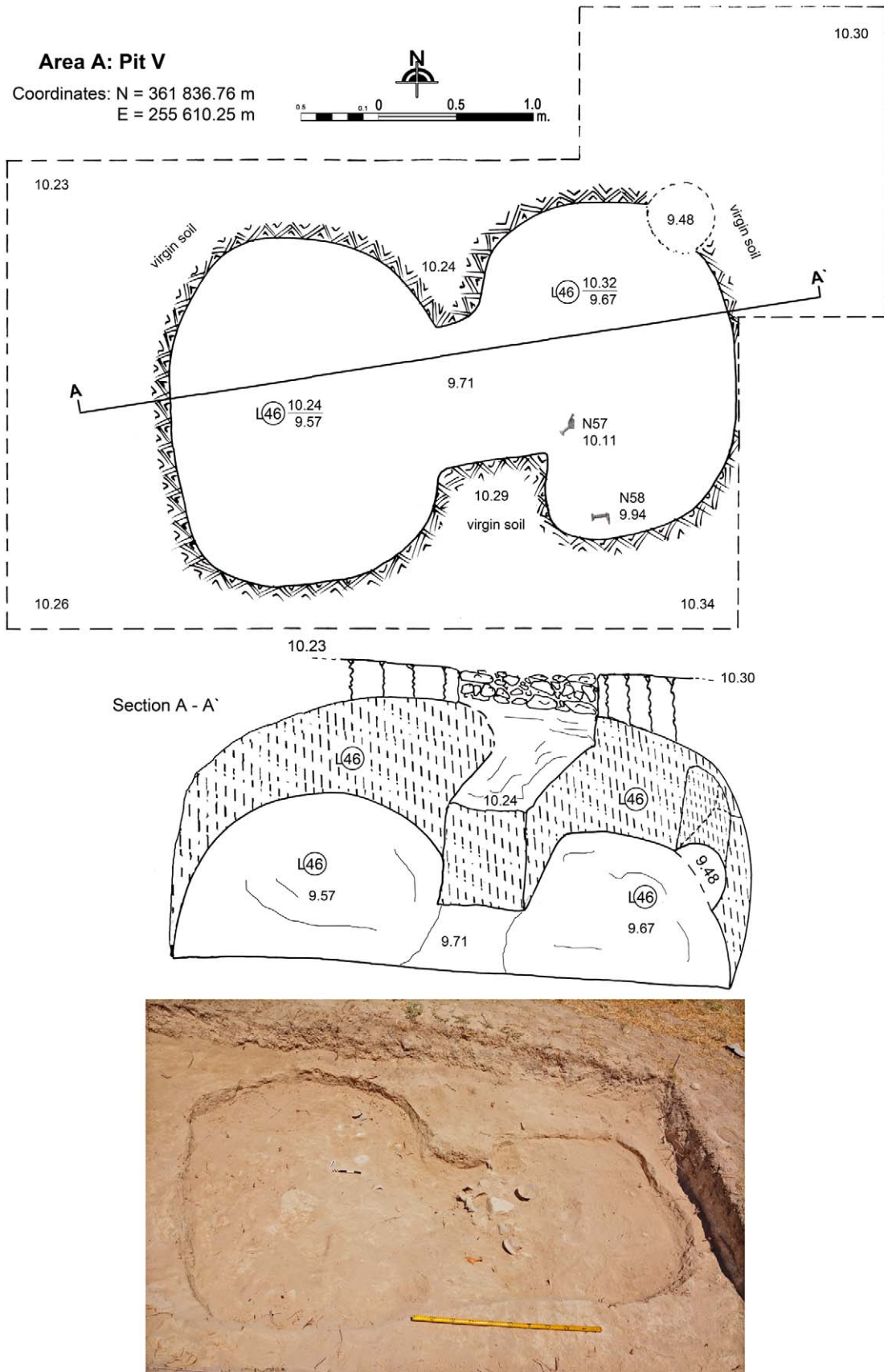


Fig. 8 Plan and photo of Pit V: Since the remains of vessels were discovered all over this double pit, they are not included in the drawing; photo taken during excavation (drawing by M. Al-Bataineh and T. Bürge; photo by T. Bürge)

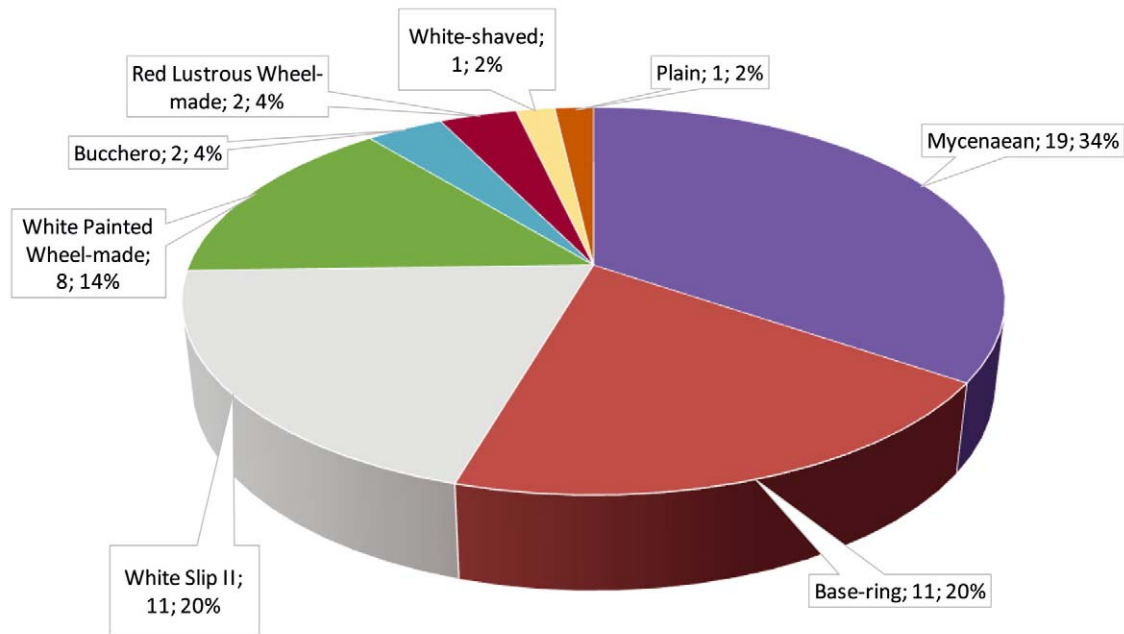


Fig. 9 Preliminary distribution of pottery wares from Pit V; only complete or almost complete profiles are counted

juglet and two Red Lustrous Wheel-made spindle bottles (see preliminary distribution of wares in Fig. 9).

A total of 19 Mycenaean imports have been recorded so far, which constitute roughly 34% of the material: six piriform jars, two straight-sided alabastra, a jug, a juglet, a jug with cutaway neck, a beaked jug, a stirrup jar, a flask and a krater. There are four Mycenaean amphoroid kraters which have pictorial motifs: one is decorated with geometric motifs and a bird, two depict chariots, and the fourth vessel, of which only the lower part is preserved, has the depiction of a female, a part of a chariot, and another, most likely male person (Fig. 10; see the preliminary report in FISCHER and BÜRGE 2017a, and the full catalogue and a discussion of selected finds in FISCHER and BÜRGE 2017b).

Some of the Mycenaean imports can be dated to the Late Helladic (henceforth LH) IIIA1 period, i.e. roughly the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. However, the majority of the pottery should be dated from the LH IIIA2 to the LH IIIB period, i.e. from 1350–1200 BCE. There are no sherds which can be dated to a period later than LH IIIB or LC IIC. As this time span of c. 200 years seems relatively long for one single deposition episode, it

is evident that more than one deposition is reflected in the backfill of this pit.

#### Well Q

Well Q (BÜRGE in press) has a diameter of 1.3–1.5 m and was excavated to a depth of 2.8 m. The backfill consisted of a large amount of pottery intermingled with soil and some bones and shells. Unfortunately, the upper part of the backfill (down to 1.3 m from the surface) was disturbed in a later period, which could be recognised by the presence of articulated leg bones of a young *Camelus* and a ceramic pipe of likely Ottoman date in its upper portion. Further down, Well Q does not contain any other intrusions judging by the pottery, which can be exclusively dated to the Late Bronze Age.

The well contained in total 1900 pottery fragments (Fig. 11). Of these, 56% belong to the plain wares<sup>8</sup> and include tableware, such as bowls, kraters, jugs, or juglets, but also storage vessels and a high number of undiagnostic fragments, which so far could not be assigned to a specific vessel type. The Mycenaean pottery constitutes 11% of the total amount and is represented by a variety of decorated tableware, of which more than

<sup>8</sup> The evaluation of the material from Well Q is in progress; the figures are so far based on sherd count. The ongoing analyses will also take into account other methods of

measuring and comparing the quantity of ceramics, e.g. estimated vessel equivalents (see e.g. BADER 2010).

two-thirds are closed shapes and almost one-third are open.

The third most common ware in Well Q is Coarse ware with 9%, which includes mainly

cooking pots but also some baking trays. Base-ring wares constitute 8% and are mainly bowls, jugs and juglets. White Slip II is represented by 8% and comprises almost exclusively hemispheri-



Fig. 10 Pit V: LH IIIA2 amphoroid chariot krater (head reconstructed) (photo by P. M. Fischer; drawing by M. Al-Bataineh)

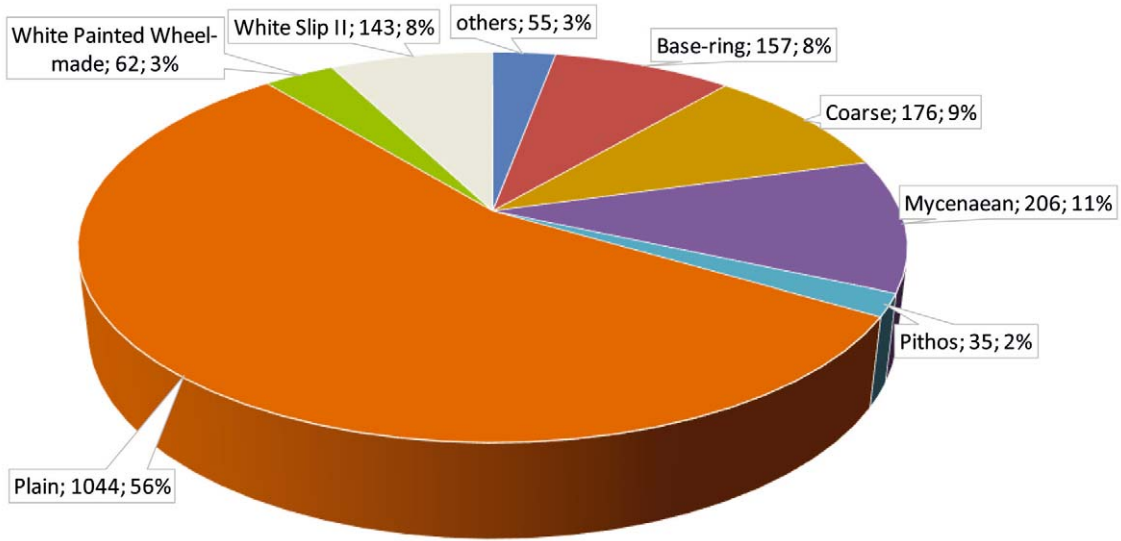


Fig. 11 Distribution of pottery wares from Well Q, based on sherd count

cal bowls and, occasionally, tankards. The remaining 8% includes other locally produced tableware, such as White Painted Wheel-made, White-shaved, Red Lustrous Wheel-made and Bucchero as well as storage or transport vessels, such as pithoi and Canaanite jars. Other finds include a Base-ring figurine of a female, a White Painted figurine of a sitting human, two loom weights and a number of worked bones: two ground-down astragali of sheep or goat, a bone beater and six holed shells. In addition to the remains of a camel, the preliminary analysis of the osteological material yielded bones – partly burnt – of cattle, sheep/

goat, hedgehog and birds as well as shells and sea snails.

The preliminary dating of the material below the disturbance covers a time span from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Further analyses of the pottery from Well Q, which include not only relative chronological studies but also an exact account of vessel types and shapes, the number of matching fragments and the position of breaks, and of the faunal and botanical remains, will shed further light on the reuse of this well. The extraordinarily high amount of fine tableware and Mycenaean imports in Well Q resembles that from Pit V. Similarly, the high number of matches compared to other contexts in the Late Cypriot settlement of Hala Sultan Tekke may hint at a deliberate breaking and deposition of tableware, perhaps as part of commensal rituals (see below).

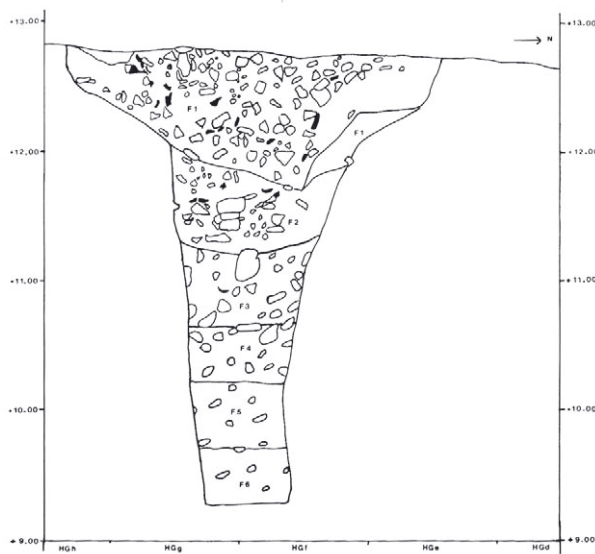


Fig. 12 Section of well in Trench 1/4 (after ÖBRINK 1983, 36, fig. 18)

#### *The well in Trench 1/4*

The well is located 150–200 m south-southwest of Area A (cf. Fig. 1; see also location in ÅSTRÖM 1989, fig. 2). It was excavated in 1971 (Trench 1) and 1972 (Trench 4) down to a total depth of 3.45 m but not to its full depth due to security reasons (ÖBRINK 1983, 16; 36, fig. 18; ÅSTRÖM 1998, 7). The mouth of the well is considerably wider than the lower part of the shaft (Fig. 12; ÖBRINK 1983, 36, fig. 18). This enlargement may have been caused by erosion after the well came out of use, or when it was backfilled.

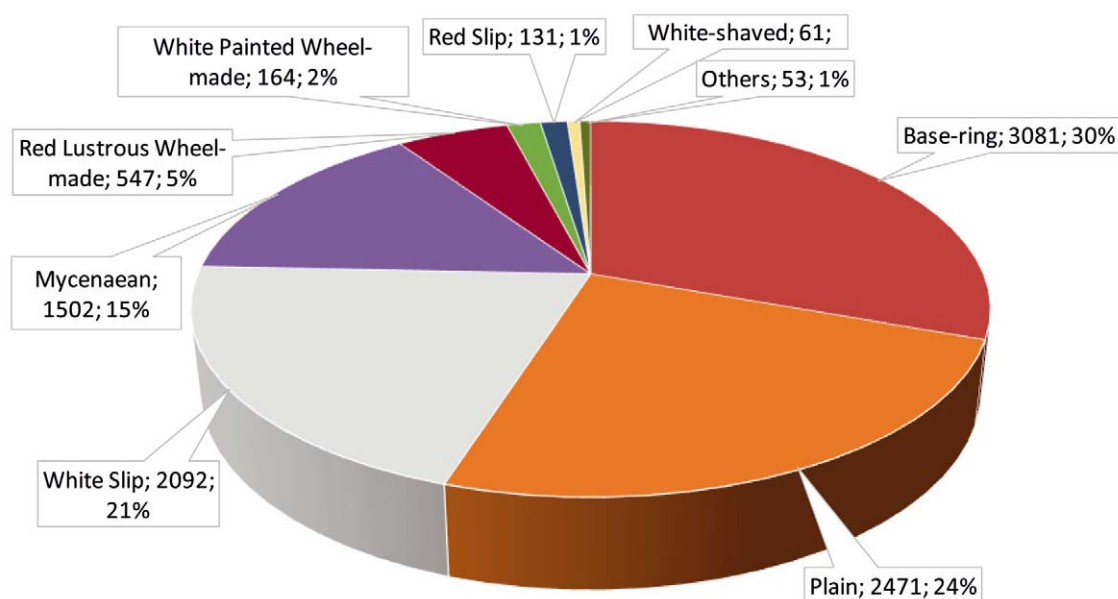


Fig. 13 Distribution of pottery wares from well in Trench 1/4, based on sherd count (after ÖBRINK 1983, 35, table 2)

The fill contained 10102 fragments of pottery,<sup>9</sup> of these 30% are Base-ring, 24% Plain ware, 21% White Slip, 15% Mycenaean imports, 5% Red Lustrous Wheel-made, 2% White Painted Wheel-made and 2% of other wares (ÖBRINK 1983, 34, table 1). The bulk of pottery comes from the uppermost two units, F1 and F2, at a depth of approximately 1.5 m below topsoil. Faunal remains include cattle, donkey and various marine shells (REESE 1998, 136). The pottery was dated mainly to the LC IIA–B / LH IIIA1–2 period, in absolute terms to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The material from this feature certainly needs further study but it is interesting to note that, for instance, the diagnostic Mycenaean imports mainly consist of closed shapes (n = 52), and only one krater, one open vessel and one rhyton could be identified (Fig. 13; ÖBRINK 1983, 35, table 2).

According to ÖBRINK (1983, 31), the material was taken from a tomb in order to backfill the well. However, the total lack of human bones in this well does not support her conclusion. In addition, the material does not correspond to usual grave inventories, which also contain, for instance, textile production tools, jewellery, seals, scarabs, weapons or cooking vessels. ÖBRINK (1983, 16, 30) mentions a high number of sherd matches from different layers of the fill, which resembles the situation in Pit V and Well Q.

### Conclusions: ritual and feasting at Late Bronze Age Hala Sultan Tekke

Summing up, we have two different types of “offering pits” at Hala Sultan Tekke. The first type is represented by Pits B and P with a circular layout, which contained mainly complete objects. Apart from ceramic vessels, these pits contained, *inter alia*, textile production tools, fragments of scale mail and objects of bone and ivory. This inventory corresponds to that often found in tombs.

Pit V, Well Q and the well in Trench 1/4 belong to the second type of “offering pit”, which may also be referred to as feasting deposit. Here, we

exclusively find ceramic products of mainly fine tableware and figurines. Vessels have been intentionally broken and thrown into the pits. No doubt, many lower parts of large vessels show an untypical break-pattern: they were deliberately cut to form cups, which points to their secondary use as drinking vessels before they were thrown into the pits – possibly combined with deliberate breaking – that is, “ritual killing” of vessels.<sup>10</sup>

Both types of “offering pit” have one feature in common: the lack of human bones. While Pits B and P, containing complete objects, most likely reflect single depositions, the time spans reflected in the other three discussed features, Well 1/4, Well Q and especially Well V represent as much as 200 years, which precludes the possibility that a single, one-time deposit was made and indicates use over a considerable time. It is possible that the contents from the pit and the wells came from somewhere else and were finally deposited there.

The high amount of Mycenaean imports in some of the offering pits – but especially in Pit V, where Mycenaean pottery constitutes 34% of the total amount of vessels (Fig. 9), may have chronological reasons: the bulk of material from this pit can be dated to the period of most intense influx of pottery from the Aegean to Cyprus. Although Mycenaean were certainly present on Cyprus during this period, this does not explain the high number of Mycenaean imports found in tombs, especially during the LC IIB–C (LH IIIA2–IIIB) period. It rather seems that these imports, especially the skilfully decorated pictorial vessels, functioned as status symbols for the Late Cypriot elite and may have been used first in domestic contexts and then deposited in tombs (STEEL 1998, 293; 2004b, 77–78) or – as at Hala Sultan Tekke – in offering pits.

The majority of the discussed features are in Area A, which has been thoroughly investigated over the course of the past four years. Obviously, Area A had multiple functions: on the one hand, it was used for the supply of water, on the other hand for burials.<sup>11</sup> Although it is difficult to date the life cycles of wells – when they were built, used, and

<sup>9</sup> Here too, the indicated quantities of sherds are based on sherd count. A reanalysis of the material would therefore be desirable.

<sup>10</sup> On this topic, see e. g. MORRISON and PARK 2008.

<sup>11</sup> In 1968, when KARAGEORGHIS (1976, 71) excavated Tombs 1 and 2 at the western edge of the channel (see Figs. 1, 2), information on further tombs was provided by workers, who actually dug the irrigation channel in 1952. They reported many (looted) finds of gold – obviously from tombs. Consequently, the total number of tombs in this roughly 2 ha area is considerable.

finally abandoned – it seems from the contents of these wells that, in general, they are more recent than the tombs; and yet, temporal overlapping seems to occur as well. As argued previously (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2017b), it seems most likely that the area was originally used for burials and later on mainly for wells, although during a certain period the area obviously had both functions.<sup>12</sup> A similar combination of wells and tombs is present in Area 23, where four tombs (Tombs 20–22, 24) dated to the LC IB–IIC period (ÅSTRÖM 1983; ÅSTRÖM and NYS 2007, 27) were found in the vicinity of eight wells (cf. Fig. 1; see also ÅSTRÖM 1998, 67–130).<sup>13</sup>

The location of the offering pits in Area A suggests that they are connected to the adjacent burials. Therefore, it is proposed that the complete vessels and other objects from Offering Pits B and P were deposited in the course of rituals for and worship of the departed, very likely in connection with burials and during ceremonies honouring earlier deceased relatives or important persons. It is most likely that Offering Pit P and Tomb 2 excavated in 1968 (KARAGEORGHIS 1976) – both along the western edge of the irrigation channel (Figs. 1, 2) – are associated with each other (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2016, 51–53; 2017b). Pit P may have been used for the deposition of offerings during a ritual connected with the earliest burial of Tomb 2 and/or other burials in its vicinity. KARAGEORGHIS (1976, 89) dated the earliest burials of Tomb 2 to the end of LC I or the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century BCE, which corresponds to our dating of Pit P to the LC IB, i.e. roughly the 15<sup>th</sup> century BCE (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2016, 52). Correspondingly, Offering Pit B from the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE is likely to have been associated with Tomb 1 from 1968, which was dated to the end of the LC IIB to the end of LC IIC, i.e. from roughly 1320 to 1200 BCE (KARAGEORGHIS 1976, 89), or with another tomb in the vicinity.

The similarity of layout of Pit V and Tomb X, which is approximately 10 m apart, is striking, as both structures resemble a recumbent “8” and approximately have the same dimensions (FISCHER and BÜRGE 2017a, 2017b). Here too, we have a chronological overlap, as Tomb X covers the time

span from roughly 1550–1200 BCE, that is, from LC IB to IIC, whereas the material from Pit V can be dated to the period from 1400/1350–1200 BCE, i.e. from LC IIA1 to IIC.

Rituals connected with the burials or worship of the deceased might have taken place at various locations in the area, and the material remains from these ceremonies might have been moved to their final resting place in the pits and reused wells, such as Pit V and Wells Q and 1/4. Feasting rituals, specifically those for the deceased, are attested not only in Cyprus (cf. the extensive study of burials and mortuary rituals in Bronze Age Cyprus by KESWANI 2004) but also in the Aegean, the Levant and Egypt (e.g. WRIGHT 2004; PFÄLZNER *et al.* 2012, 2014). However, in these regions outside of Cyprus, there is substantial evidence, both written and iconographic, for such rituals, whereas on Cyprus, we have to rely solely on the material evidence. This mainly includes deposits of tableware similar to that from Pit V, in combination with large amounts of animal bones and other food remains, such as seeds. This is reported from administrative Building X at Kalavassos *Ayios Dhimitrios* (SOUTH and RUSSELL 1993; STEEL 2004a, 169–174). The difference between the remains from Kalavassos and those from Pit V at Hala Sultan Tekke is the almost complete absence of animal bones and botanical remains in the latter. Another interesting parallel is the filling of two wells (TE III and TE VIII) at Kouklia *Evreti* (VON RÜDEN *et al.* 2016), which contained fragments of local and Mycenaean and Minoan imported ceramics, bronze vessels and weapons, faience and stone objects, textile production and metallurgical tools, seals and weights, worked bones, animal horns and an ivory hoard. This deposit may at least partly represent the disposal of feasting debris, which accumulated over a long period of time.

Another evidence of feasting with the deceased can be seen in the interior of the ashlar-built Tomb 66 at Enkomi, which is one of the wealthiest tombs known in Cyprus. It was capacious enough to allow several persons to stand or sit inside on low benches against two of the walls. Therefore, CREWE (2009) suggested that such stone-built

<sup>12</sup> One may wonder about the problem of water pollution: it seems somewhat absurd to dig wells inside an area where people were buried. On the other hand, during the Late Bronze Age, the choice for the location of wells was certainly guided by other considerations.

<sup>13</sup> The fillings of these wells will be analysed according to the criteria applied in the present paper in a future study.

tombs not only housed deceased but were also places for ritual feasting, a practice that has parallels in the Aegean and the Near East, where this kind of tomb architecture and such rituals are well documented – for example, at Ugarit, Byblos or Qatna (see e. g. LANGE 2012, 2014; NIEHR 2015).

As argued in this paper, at Hala Sultan Tekke, not only do Pits V, B, and P reflect the remains of ritual feasting or offering, there are also a number of well fillings, which may contain feasting debris, similar to those at Kouklia *Evreti* (BÜRGE in press; cf. also ÖBRINK 1979; FISCHER and BÜRGE 2015, 46–49; 2016, 48–49). In order to establish what exactly might have been consumed during these commensalities, residue analyses are planned. In the coming excavation campaigns, further “pits” will be examined in Area A. The combination of pottery studies from offering pits, wells and tombs, statistical analyses on the occurrence of certain wares and vessel types, analyses of break

patterns and the distribution of sherds within the excavated feature, and osteological and botanical studies will certainly shed further light on feasting rituals and burial customs at Late Bronze Age Hala Sultan Tekke.

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