

DATING THE DESTRUCTION OF CANAANITE HAZOR *WITHOUT* MYCENAEAN POTTERY?

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INTRODUCTION

Hazor of the Late Bronze Age is considered one of the most powerful and flourishing Canaanite kingdoms (NA'AMAN 1997; FINKELSTEIN 1996). The history of the site begins in the Early Bronze Age, but it gains its prominent position within the framework of Canaanite city-states only in the second millennium BC, from the Middle Bronze Age and well into the Amarna period (YADIN 1972, MAIER 2000). The end of this mighty kingdom which was designated by the biblical writer as “the head of all those kingdoms” (Joshua 11: 10), is one of the major events in the history of Canaan.

Hazor, the largest Canaanite city-state in the southern Levant, occupies the upper tel and its lower city. The site was partially excavated already by Garstang in 1928. Several seasons of excavations by a team from the Hebrew University led by Yigael Yadin revealed a large and prosperous city, (YADIN 1972). Fortifications, temples, public and domestic buildings and a wealth of small finds and works of art were published in the final reports (YADIN *et al.* 1958, 1960, 1961, 1989). Early relations of the city with the Aegean world, probably through Syrian intermediaries, are indicated by the Kamares Ware sherd found in a Late Middle Bronze Age context in the Lower City (DOTHAN, ZUCKERMAN and GOREN 2000).

The renewed Hebrew University excavations at Hazor, led by Prof. Amnon Ben-Tor, revealed a wealth of new material from the final phase of the Late Bronze Age city (BEN-TOR 1998, BEN-TOR and RUBIATO 1999). A large ceremonial complex was discovered on the acropolis of the Tel (the “Canaanite Palace” – Area A). Another monumental building which is tentatively interpreted as the administrative royal palace of Hazor (ZUCKERMAN forthcoming) was uncovered on the northern slope of the Tel facing the Lower City (the “Podium Complex” – Area M) (Fig. 1). The end of both these Late Bronze Age monumental buildings is marked by a huge con-

flagration that brought an abrupt and violent end to the glory of Hazor.

This event has been a major issue in the research of the site, and the debate over its dating and interpretation can be traced back to the first excavations in the lower city directed by Garstang (GARSTANG 1931, BEN-TOR 1998 for a recent summary). Following Yadin's excavation seasons at Hazor in the 1950s, and the accumulation and publication of the rich finds of the period, the problem became a cornerstone in the archaeological research of Canaan (YADIN *et al.* 1960, 159–60, YADIN 1972, 46, 108). The main dating criteria used by both Garstang and Yadin were the existence (or absence) of Mycenaean pottery at the Late Bronze Age destruction level on the one hand, and the interpretation of the biblical narrative concerning the destruction of Hazor by Joshua on the other hand. In the following, I will assess our current knowledge of Mycenaean pottery at Hazor, and discuss its limited contribution to the debate over the dating and interpretation of Canaanite Hazor's destruction.

PUBLISHED MYCENAEAN POTTERY FROM YADIN'S EXCAVATIONS

Mycenaean finds from Hazor, notably absent from Garstang's first excavations at the site, were naturally not included by Stubbings in his pioneering study of Mycenaean pottery in the Levant (STUBBINGS 1951). This absence was rectified by Hankey, who included the finds published in the three volumes of Yadin's excavations at Hazor in her study (HANKEY 1967, 123). In her later reappraisal of the material, Hankey mentions less than 50 vessels found in domestic and cultic contexts at Hazor, ranging from LH IIA/LH IIB, through LH IIIA2 and ending in LH IIIB (HANKEY 1993, 106). In the most comprehensive corpus of the Mycenaean pottery in the Levant, Leonard mentions 53 complete vessels or sherds from Hazor (LEONARD 1994, 205–6). Of the 53 Mycenaean sherds discussed by Leonard,

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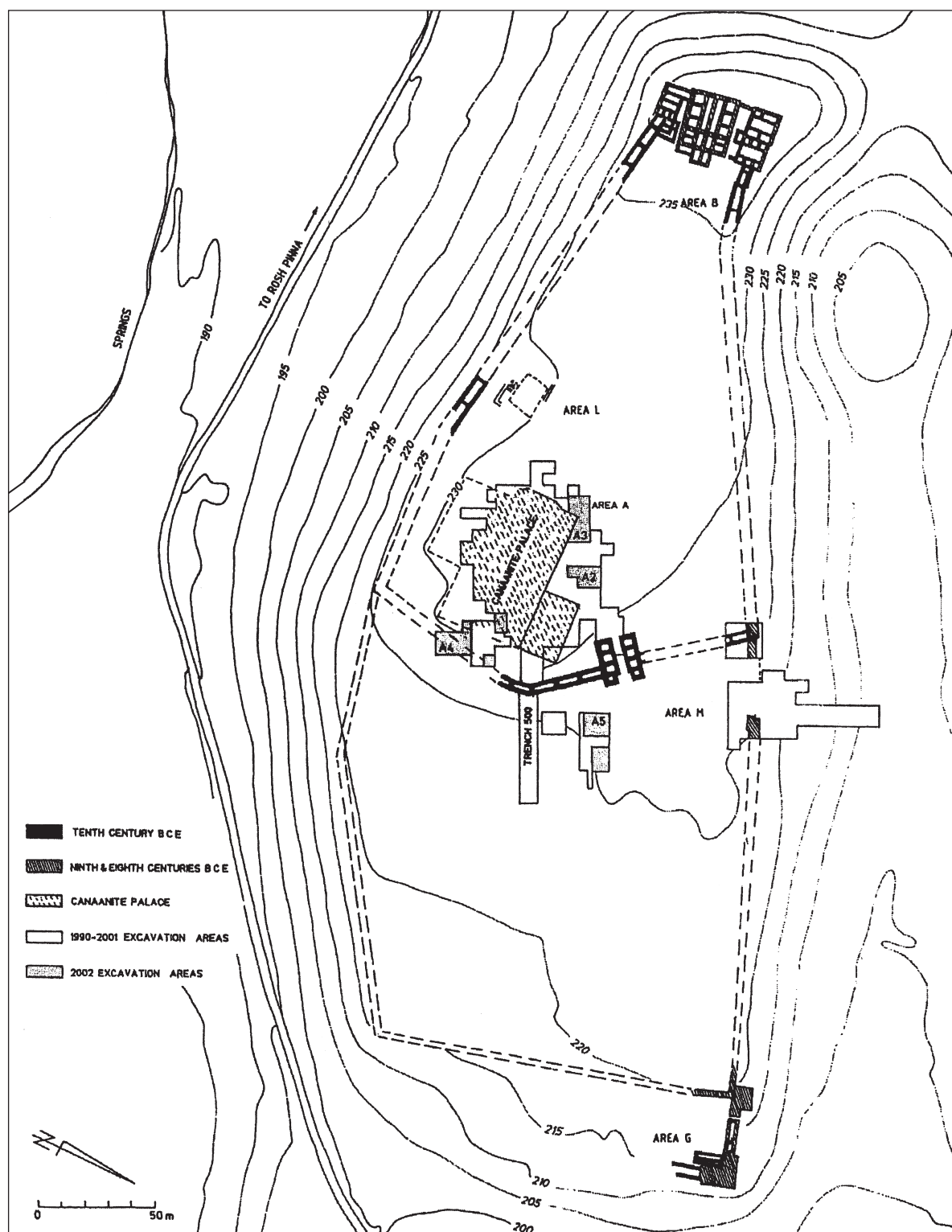


Fig. 1 A Plan of the Renewed Excavations at Hazor: Areas A and M

two are attributed to the LH IIB, 7 to the LH IIIA2, 84 are defined as LH IIIA-B and 10 to the LH IIIB (see now also WJNGAARDEN 2002, 76–77, catalogue III). The latest sherd is attributed by Leonard, following Hankey, to the LH IIIB2 (but see below). A

handle of a LH IIIB flask or stirrup jar was found in area P, which was published after Leonard's corpus appeared (MAZAR 1997, 377, fig. V.4:4). Five more sherds were added to the corpus by WJNGAARDEN (2002). The small bull figurine from str. 1A in area H

(the “orthostats temple”) was recently published as belonging to the LH IIIB in the final report (YADIN *et al.* 1989, 271). The figurine was previously dated to the LH IIIA–B (LEONARD 1994, 139, no. 2236). A recent assessment of this date is suggested by Elizabeth French, who prefers to lower the date of this figurine to the last third of the 13th century BC (i.e. LH IIIB2) (French, per. Comm. July 2003).¹ This assessment should, however, be regarded as tentative until personal inspection of the figurine is possible.

The majority of the Mycenaean pottery of Hazor thus belongs to the LH IIIA2, LH IIIA–B1, and was found in all excavation areas, mostly in contexts of stratum 1B (=XIV). Sherds defined as LH IIIB were mostly found in area F. Three of these vessels belong to Tomb 8144, and probably represent the latest phase of use of the tomb (YADIN *et al.* 1960, pl. CXXXVII: 3, 9, 10). All the others were found in domestic buildings around the area, and are attributed to str. 1B or the rebuilding phase of str. 1A (*ibid.*, pl. CXLVIII: 2–7). Other LH IIIB sherds were found in phase B of the gate in area P (contemporary to str. 1B), and in the last Late Bronze Age phase of the domestic buildings on the acropolis (area BA).

One Mycenaean sherd is worth special mention. It is a very small sherd found in a cistern in area D, in connection with a burial (YADIN *et al.* 1958, pl. CXXXI: 12). The sherd was identified by Hankey and later published by Leonard, as part of a bowl FS 284 group B, belonging to the LH IIIB2 (LEONARD 1994, 119, no. 1772).² The sherd is very small, and its published drawing renders its correct identification almost impossible. The fact that acceptance of this date will make it the latest Mycenaean sherd found at Hazor to-date necessitates a very cautious approach to its dating. This is emphasised by the fact that the sherd was not found in the upper phase of the cistern but in an earlier stratum (YADIN *et al.* 1958, 138–40).

In conclusion, most of the Mycenaean sherds that were found at Hazor and attributed to strata 1B, can be safely attributed to the LH IIIA2. This period witnesses the increase in international trade in the eastern Mediterranean and marks the floruit of Mycenaean imports to Syria-Palestine (HANKEY 1993). Hazor is playing a secondary role in the active system of inter and intra-regional trade in this period, and probably relied on the services of intermedi-

aries such as the gateway sites of Tell-Abu-Hawam, Akko and Tel-Dan (HANKEY 1967, GUNNEWEG and MICHEL 1999, BEN-DOV 2002). Also quite common at Hazor are Mycenaean vessels of the early LH IIIB1, dated to the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 13th centuries BC (WIENER 1998, and see below).

During the end of stratum 1B at Hazor vessels of LH IIIB1 appear at the site in small quantities, probably for the limited use of the inhabitants of the cultic precinct (?) of area F. These are the latest Mycenaean sherds that can be safely attributed to Late Bronze Age Hazor.

MYCENAEAN POTTERY FROM THE RENEWED EXCAVATIONS (Fig. 2)

More than 150 Mycenaean sherds were reported in both excavation areas at the upper tel of Hazor during the renewed excavations. Most of these can be attributed to the final phase of the Late Bronze Age, and thus present an opportunity for a fresh discussion of the Hazor Mycenaean finds, both old and new, in the context of the last days of the Canaanite kingdom of Hazor.

The relative amount of Mycenaean sherds in the renewed excavations is very small, and they form less than 1% of the total assemblage of pottery in the destruction layer. Most of these sherds were found in later Iron Age fills and in disturbed contexts. Of the sherds found in-situ, area M is relatively rich in finds and about 60 sherds were found in the different parts of the “Podium Complex”. In area A, the “Canaanite Palace” itself is almost devoid of Mycenaean sherds, and only a handful of sherds were found inside the structure (Fig. 2:3, 18–19). Most of the sherds in area A were found scattered around the building.

A selection of the Mycenaean sherds from the renewed excavations is presented in Fig. 2. Most of the sherds belong to closed vessels, and include stirrup jars (Fig. 2:19–21), piriform jars (Fig. 2:12–16), pyxis (Fig. 2:18) and a flask (Fig. 2: 17). Also represented are shallow cups (Fig. 2:1–2), goblet (Fig. 2:3) and kraters (Fig. 2:4–7).

Most of the sherds are well-levigated and highly burnished and show high technical level of workmanship. The forms and motifs are typical of the LH IIIA2, and continue to appear in the LH IIIB1. The distinction between these two families is very

¹ I would like to thank Dr. Elizabeth French for her comments on this important figurine.

² Leonard based his identification on earlier impressions of

V. Hankey (A.L. Leonard, per. comm.). It is not clear if Hankey relied on the published drawing or was shown the actual sherd by Yadin.

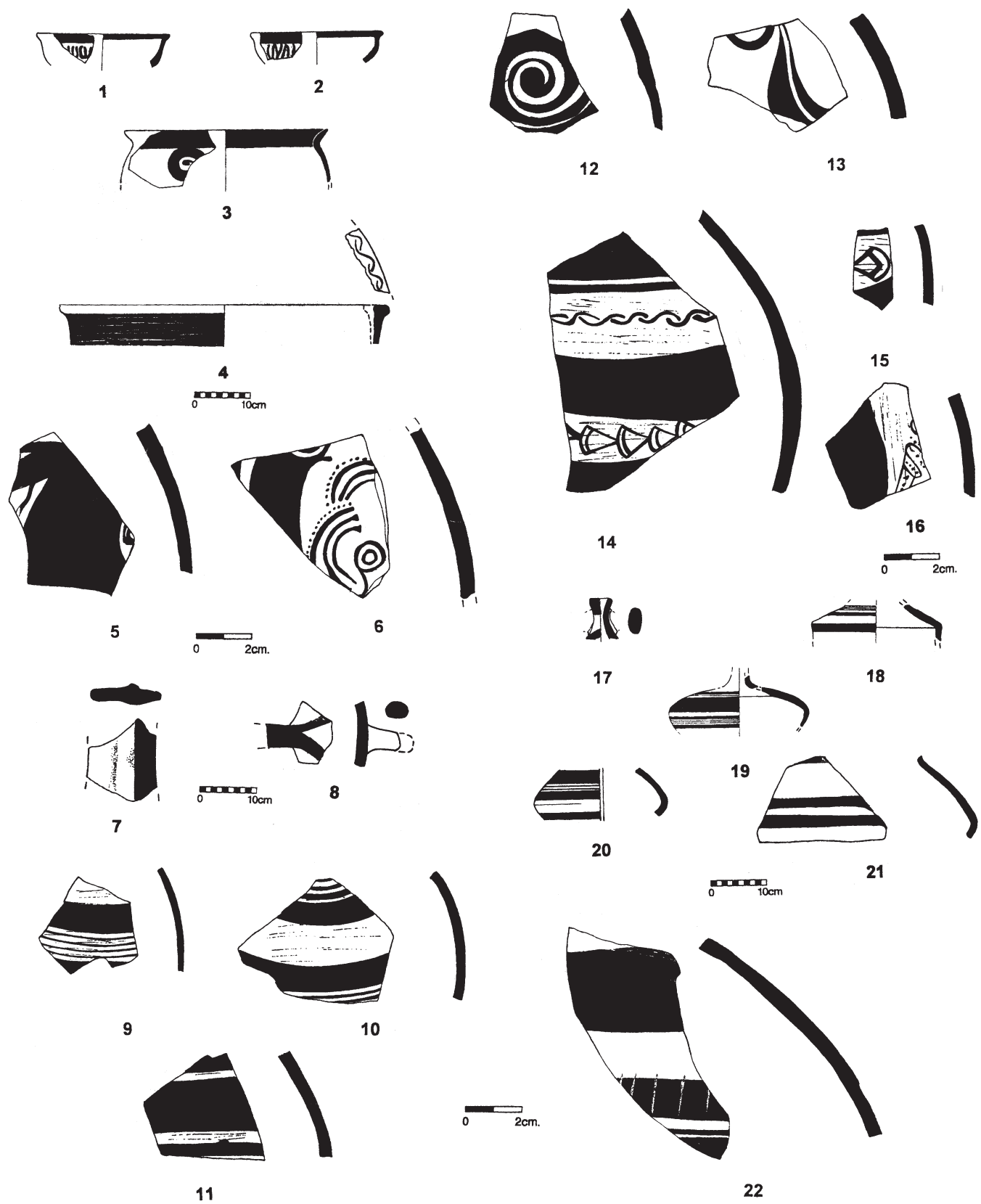


Fig. 2 Selected Mycenaean Sherds from the renewed Excavations

difficult, especially when dealing with sherds and not with complete vessels (MOUNTJOY 1986, 93–5). No sherd that can be safely attributed to the LH IIIB2 was identified in the renewed excavations.³

DISCUSSION

Mycenaean pottery was initially the only archaeological means (together with biblical and historical considerations) for the dating of Hazor LB strata in general, and the final destruction of the city in particular. Garstang considered its absence in his excavations of the lower city as evidence for dating the Late Bronze Age destruction *before* 1400 BC (GARSTANG 1931, 198). Yadin dated the final destruction of Hazor, on the basis of LH IIIB sherds found in Str. 1a (=XIII) contexts, to the second third of the 13th century around 1230 BC (YADIN 1972, 46, 108–9). This dating was based on Furumark's chronological scheme of the LH IIIB (1300–1230 BC) (FURUMARK 1941, 113–5). The wider chronological range of LH IIIB (1320/00–1185/80 BC) accepted today necessitates reappraisal of this date and its implications (WARREN and HANKEY 1989, 154–162, WIENER 1998 and see below). The contribution of Mycenaean pottery to the question of dating Hazor's destruction should be evaluated in the light of better knowledge of the chronological and spatial distribution available to-date.

Chronological distribution of Mycenaean pottery of Hazor

For the purpose of dating the Late Bronze Age levels at Hazor, the important chronological peg is not the end of the appearance of LH IIIB pottery in the Levant, as suggested by Yadin (YADIN 1972, 46, 108–9). This event is safely dated to the first half of the 12th century BC, based on the last appearance of LH IIIB vessels in the temple of Deir 'Alla together with a Cartouche of Queen Tausert (MOUNTJOY 1986, 8 table I, WARREN and HANKEY 1989, 152–162, FRANKEN 1992, 30, fig. 3–9: 5). There is no reason to assume that the latest Mycenaean vessels imported to Hazor are contemporary with the last imports of such pottery to the Levant. The assessment of the latest date possible for the Hazor imports should incorporate other lines of evidence in their context (see below).

Of more relevance to the dating of Hazor is the transition between the Mycenaean pottery of LH IIIA2 (characteristic of str. 1B=XIV) and LH IIIB1 (appearing in the last days of str. 1B and continuing into str. 1A). According to Warren and Hankey, the end of LH IIIA2 in the Levant should be dated to the end of the Amarna period, in the days of Tut-Ankh-Amun (1340–1330 BC). This dating is based on the discovery of LH IIIB1 in tombs from the end of the XVIIIth dynasty (HANKEY and ASTON 1995), and the appearance of such vessels in the temple of Kamid el-Loz (WARREN and HANKEY 1989, 151–154; JUNG and WENINGER 2004, 218–219).

The temple of Kamid el-Loz was recently published, so the latter argument can be tested (METZGER and BARTHEL 1993). Of the Mycenaean vessels attributed by Warren and HANKEY (1989, 153) to the temple which was allegedly destroyed in the days of Akhenaten (i.e. temple T2 in its various phases), three actually belong to the later temple (i.e. T1) which is dated to the 13th century BC. Not surprisingly, most of the vessels defined as LH IIIB actually belong to the later temple (METZGER and BARTHEL 1993, Tafn. 103: 8, 118: 2–3, 128: 4 and 141: 4, 9, 11). Only one rhyton (designated as LH IIIB Early) can be attributed to the last phase of the earlier temple T2a (METZGER and BARTHEL 1993, Tafn. 130–131). Recently, Elizabeth French identified only **one** rhyton from temple T1 as LH IIIB, while all the other vessels are to be dated to LH IIIA2 (quoted by WIENER 1998, 311). These observations weaken the arguments for the early appearance of LH IIIB in Kamid el-Loz and in Syria. Wiener's conclusion is that the last appearance of LH IIIA2 and the first appearance of LH IIIB imports should be placed at 1320/1300 BC, with some preference for the later date based to the analysis of the Ulu-Burun Shipwreck (PULAK 1997, 250, WIENER 1998, 314–5). The earliest possible date for LH IIIB1 in Levantine contexts is thus the last two decades of the 14th century and the beginning of the 13th century BC. This date fits well with the dating of the end of str. 1B at Hazor, represented by the rich assemblage of Tomb 8144–8145 in the Lower City (YADIN *et al.* 1960, pls. CXXVIII–CXXXVIII).

How long into the 13th century does the import of LH IIIB vessels to Hazor continues is a different matter. It should be evaluated against the short duration of str. 1A, where most of these sherds were

³ I wish to thank Dr. Marta Guzowska for her comments on the Hazor Mycenaean sherds, and R Jung read and

commented on a draft of the article. All mistakes and omissions are the authors responsibility.

found, their small quantity and their limited spatial and functional distribution at Hazor.

Functional and spatial distribution of Mycenaean pottery of Hazor

Most of the Mycenaean vessels found at Hazor are closed shapes, with only a few open vessels and several zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines (LEONARD 1994; WIJNGAARDEN 2002). This type of assemblage is typical to inland Levantine sites, and is different from that of the major coastal emporia, such as Ugarit and Tell Abu-Hawam, and Cypriot centers such as Enkomi and Kition (LEONARD 1981). Based on her study of these finds, Hankey suggested a possible link between Hazor and the port at Tel Abu-Hawam (HANKEY 1967, 123–125) but such a claim is yet to be tested by other means, such as chemical analyses (cf. GUNNEWEG and MICHEL 1999).

The spatial distribution of the Mycenaean pottery at Hazor shows clear preference to burial contexts over public and domestic contexts. A majority of Mycenaean vessels found in the lower city of Hazor were found in burial contexts in areas F (13 complete or almost complete vessels in tomb 8144 alone) and D. A detailed contextual study of the published Mycenaean pottery of Hazor can be found now in WIJNGAARDEN (2002). His interpretation of the spatial distribution of Mycenaean sherds and vessels emphasizes the existence of such sherds in all excavation areas at Hazor, although their dominance in public and especially funerary contexts is admitted (WIJNGAARDEN 2002, 94–97). Wijngaarden explains the restricted access to Mycenaean pottery in the tombs as reflecting consumption strategies of urban social groups, not necessarily belonging to the elite (*ibid.* 270–273). However, the scarcity of tombs of the LB II inside the city of Hazor, together with the architectural elaboration of tomb 8144–8145 and the rich repertoire found in it, are a hint to the high (possibly elite) status of those buried in it. The rest are small sherds found scattered throughout all the excavation areas. Noteworthy is the scarcity of Mycenaean sherds in cultic contexts, such as the temples in areas H (One Zoomorphic figurine and two sherds) and C (small sherds in the vicinity of the temple and a figurine on the surface outside the temple) (YADIN *et al.* 1958, 109, YADIN *et al.* 1960, 80, YADIN *et al.* 1989, 271). Similar distribution pattern was observed at Megiddo, where Mycenaean vessels and figurines were found mainly in tombs and in public contexts, and are absent from cultic contexts (LEONARD and CLINE 1998, 15–16). This type of limited distribution stands in sharp contrast to the situation in coastal

sites such as Tell Abu-Hawam and Ugarit, where Mycenaean vessels were found throughout all excavation areas in a variety of contexts (MONCHAMBERT 1983, YON *et al.* 2000, 6–10, 68–69). Concentration of imported vessels in graves and their absence in contemporary settlement contexts is a known phenomenon in Levantine and Cypriot sites throughout the 14th and 13th centuries BC (CADOGAN 1993, STEEL 2002, BEN-DOV 2002). A relatively large number of Mycenaean vessels, usually consisting of closed vessels such as stirrup jars, piriform jars, pixides and flasks, is characteristic of rich high-status burials. Well-known examples are the “Governor’s Tomb” at Tel el-^cAjjul (STEEL 2002, 39–44), The “Persian Garden” at Akko tombs (BEN-ARIEH and EDELSTEIN 1977), the “Mycenaean Tomb” at Tel Dan (BEN-DOV 2002) and Tomb 8144–8145 at Hazor (YADIN *et al.* 1960, pl. CXXXVII: 1–13).

This phenomenon has far-reaching implications for understanding the process of enhancing social hierarchy in Canaanite city-states, and the accumulation of wealth and economic control in the hands of élite groups (STEEL 1998). The goods stored in these vessels, mainly wine, perfumed oils and unguents, were used in the Aegean area in contexts of communal meals and feasts and incorporated within rituals of competitive consumption (HAMILAKIS 1996, 1999). Their appearance in local contexts in Cyprus and the Levant might hint to the emulation of such habits by the local élites, as part of their participation in the *koine* of the eastern Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age (SHERRATT and SHERRATT 1991, CLINE 1994, STEEL 1998, STEEL 2002, 42–43). In any case, the consumption of Mycenaean pottery at Hazor, a city on the edge of the maritime trade system during the Bronze Age, is uncommon and limited mainly to certain contexts of elite burials, a situation similar to that noted by Steel for Tell el-^cAjjul (STEEL 2002, 44–46). The historical context within which such a phenomenon can be explained is the 14th century BC, and more specifically the Amarna period. This is the time of major building activities initiated at Hazor by its powerful kings, such as Abdi-Tirshi mentioned in the Amarna correspondence (MORAN 1992, 288–290, 362). Most of the Mycenaean vessels probably arrived to Hazor during that period, for funerary and ceremonial use by the élite groups. In the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 13th century BC, only a small number of vessels were consumed by the same, now weakening élite groups of the deteriorating city. The exact length of time of this last phase of trade and consumption cannot be assessed with certainty, but can be esti-

mated by its meagre remains to have been of a relatively short duration.

CONCLUSIONS

Our current knowledge of Mycenaean pottery at Hazor is constantly expanding, and the renewed excavations at the site enable a fresh look at different aspects of the distribution of this imported ware at the site and its vicinity.

However, Mycenaean pottery by itself can no longer be regarded as the sole chronological tool for dating the Late Bronze Age levels of Hazor. See the recent discussion of the methodological problems inherent in the use of Mycenaean pottery for dating Near Eastern Contexts (YASUR-LANDAU 2004). An answer to the thorny question of dating Hazor's destruction should rely on a variety of means, such as Egyptian written sources and objects, cuneiform tablets, ^{14}C datings and, above all, the rich assemblage of local pottery found in the destruction level. Such a comprehensive discussion is beyond the scope

of this paper and will be presented elsewhere. Suffice it to say that the Mycenaean pottery discussed above, taken in conjunction with other lines of inquiry, seems to support an early date for the destruction of Hazor in the first (rather than the second) half of the 13th century BC (ZUCKERMAN 2003).

A project of NAA analyses of Mycenaean sherds from Hazor and related sites in northern Israel is planned by the author for the near future. Recent studies of Mycenaean pottery, found at sites such as Tel-Dan, Akko and Tell Abu-Hawam in Israel and Tell el-Amarna and Qantir-Piramesse in Egypt, point to an intricate international trade and intra-regional distribution system of these desirable items (HOFFMANN and ROBINSON 1993; GUNNEWEG *et al.* 1992, 1999; HANKEY 1997; MOUNTJOY and MOMMSEN 2001). The on-going efforts to establish the existence of pottery production centers on mainland Greece will no doubt open new horizons for the reconstruction and understanding of these trade patterns (MOMMSEN *et al.* 2001).

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