

# THE LATE MB TO EARLY LBA IN QATNA WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON DECORATED AND IMPORTED POTTERY\*

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## INTRODUCTION

In presenting the discovery of a new palatial building at Tell Mishrifeh, ancient Qatna, i.e. the monumental Building 6 in Operation K, I tried to enlighten the overall results of the preliminary evaluation of the building in the context of the early Late Bronze Age structure of the urban setting of Qatna. The two most important issues were its functional attribution and the precise dating of the main phases of use.<sup>1</sup>

## OPERATION K

In this contribution, instead, I would like to focus on one detail aspect. I shall review stratigraphy and finds, especially decorated and imported pottery, in order to give a first picture of the range of material we encounter in Building 6.<sup>2</sup> I shall base my statistical evaluation mainly on the results of the 2001 campaign, the one which has been processed completely so far. Data from the year 2002 will be used extensively to increase the sample. However, it is extremely important to render explicit on which data my presentation is based.

The location for Operation K was chosen for excavation because on the basis of the scanty remains unearthed close-by in the 1920ies, I believed that the residence of higher officials in the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill. BC might be located in the northern lower city,<sup>3</sup> between the main access to the city, the Northern Gate, and the Royal Palace on the acropolis. The new palace of Qatna – Building 6, Operation K (Fig. 1:1) – was in fact uncovered in the northern Lower City, and more specifically on the topographic outcrop on the surrounding

plain dubbed *Pétite Acropole* some 10m lower than the Royal Palace. It is located north-east of the latter building and some 200m south of the Northern Gate.

The investigated surface of Building 6 has increased from 100 to 500 to 1,400 square meters from the 2000 to the 2002 campaigns. The number of rooms from 3 to 11 to 34.<sup>4</sup> This enormous increase means our work is still in progress and even the most detailed stratigraphic observation will have to be checked and correlated with data intervening as the excavations continue. Most important, however, is that in the last two years we have never excavated more than 30% of the identified rooms. So, if the broad outline worked out already in 2001 still holds<sup>5</sup> it is not to be excluded that significant changes may occur as the research goes on.

Suffice it to mention one example. In the northern part of the building (Fig. 1:2), one room excavated at the end of the 2002 campaign, Room R, containing close to 300 items (ivory and bone inlays, bitumen, tablets, seal impressions, bronzes, terracottas, pottery), has produced secure evidence of the existence of at least three superimposed floors (*terrazzo* concrete and plastered).<sup>6</sup> In its walls, however, at least four constructional phases may be recognised. The jar burial of the last phase (“squatter” Phase K 12?), placed in the south-eastern angle of Room R, destroyed the deeper lying concrete floor (Phase K 14). So far the Room R does not contradict our main frame (i.e. four phases in Room R just like four are the Phases K 15 to K 12). However, this example alone is enough to show that reconstructing the internal correspondence of floors and phases of use becomes more complex as work on Building 6 proceeds. Therefore, our corpus should not

\* I wish to express my gratitude to the organisers and all participants of the Beirut/Tell Arqa conference for sharing their knowledge of pottery in the best of the cooperative spirits.

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<sup>1</sup> LUCIANI in press a.

<sup>2</sup> For the simple ware corpus see Iamoni, this volume. We both tried to include the most significant Late Middle Bronze Age data as well, from the Operation J excavation area, in order to delimit as best possible the connections to that preceding period.

<sup>3</sup> LUCIANI 2002a.

<sup>4</sup> LUCIANI 2003a. In the meantime: over 2000m<sup>2</sup>, 68 rooms, LUCIANI 2006.

<sup>5</sup> The stratigraphy includes an eldest Phase K 15, for which there's sparse but persistent evidence; a Phase K 14: the main phase of use with *terrazzo* floors; a Phase K 13 with some reuse of the previous floors and some mud floors; and lastly a Phase K 12, also dubbed “squatter use” of Building 6.

<sup>6</sup> LUCIANI 2003b. It is the only room displaying so clearly distinct floors made of different materials.

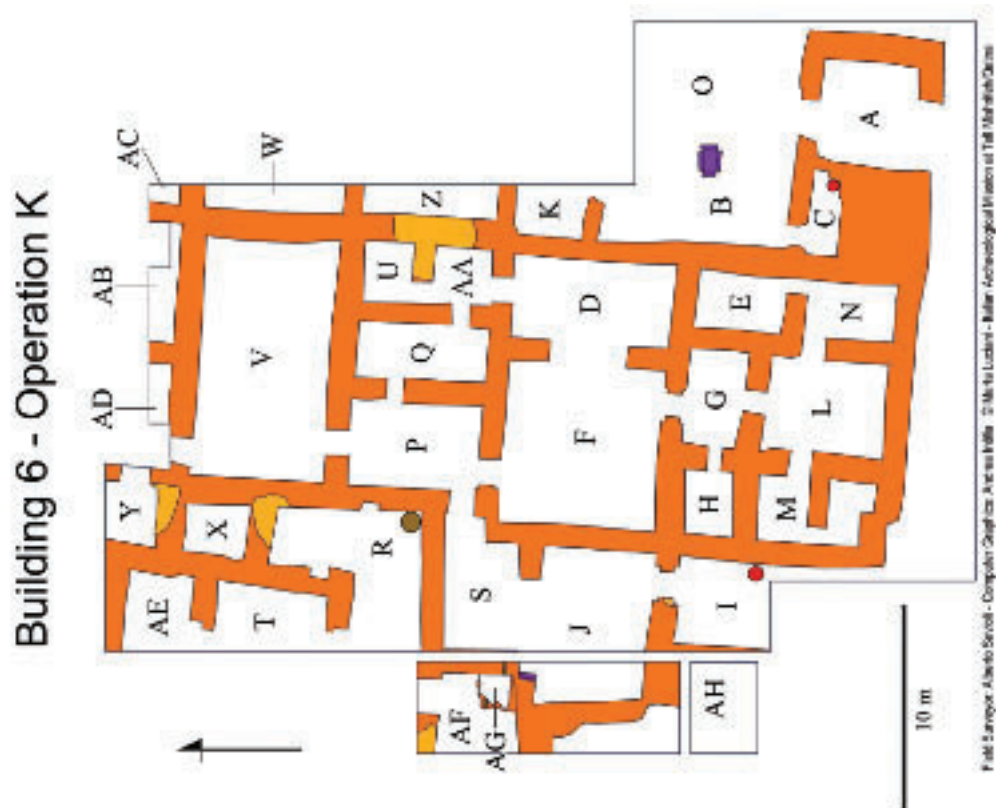
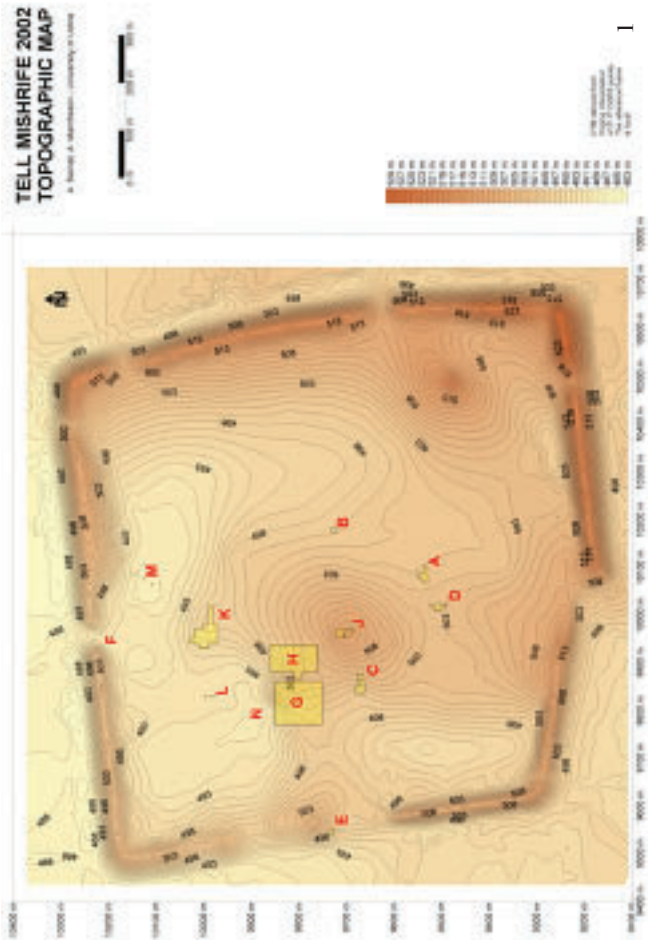


Fig. 1 1: Topographic plan of Tell Mishrife-Qatna; 2: Schematic plan of Building 6 - Operation K at Qatna; 3: Selected finds from Building 6 - Operation K at Qatna

be considered representative of the entire construction, nor of the stratigraphic sequence we shall eventually reconstruct for the entire Building 6. The picture here presented is important in that it offers a first glance of the attested specimens. Although it provides more an impressionistic view on the subject rather than one basing on statistical evaluations of the data, it is meant to circulate material from a region and period very poorly known up to now.

First I shall discuss the main phases of use of Building 6, Operation K from the earliest to the latest (Phases K 15 to K 12). Here also the deposits attributed to the use of the area following that of Building 6 will be taken into account (Phase K 11) because it seems possible some of the material here uncovered might have originated from the underlying building. Then I shall offer some bulk statistic data on decorated pottery from the MBA to the LBA. Finally the repertoire of decorated pottery from Phases K 15-K11 will be presented.

### STRATIGRAPHY

Building 6 is oriented NNW-SSE. Its preservation status is quite remarkable, with plastered walls standing up to 1.5m, concrete floors and basalt orthostats. Almost all walls are lined with different kinds of plaster, for the most part smoothed and painted. As the Building clearly extends beyond our excavation limits in all four directions, it is obvious that the area unearthed until now (see above) is but a small portion of a significantly larger unit<sup>7</sup>.

Stratigraphically, Building 6 is attested on four different phases, three that I here label main phases of use, from Phase K 15 to Phase K 13. Furthermore, there is an overlying Phase K 12, which seems to document a squatter use of the same building. The following Phases K 11-K10 are to be dated to the LBA as well, but Building 6 is abandoned and covered by a seemingly outdoor, double courtyard complex, Building 5.<sup>8</sup>

### Phase K 15

A series of traces, dispersed throughout Building 6, point to the existence of a Phase K 15. However, it is

too early to produce a complete plan of the rooms or parts of the building that were in use and those that did not exist yet or featured a different shape. The traces detected so far but no yet definitely correlated on the level of the entire structure are: (1) different, larger bricks on the wall between Rooms E and N which indicate a restructuring of the wall, that originally might have been aligned with the adjacent one (i.e. the partition between Rooms G and L, see Fig. 1.2<sup>9</sup>). One further element is (2) the superposition of a painted dark red plaster covered by the red-on-cream one visible on all four walls in Room G. (3) The situation in Room R has been briefly described above. The earliest of the four constructional in the mud-brick wall masonry, if the latest is to be equated to our Phase K 12, would correspond to Phase K 15. (4) In Room M there is a clear evidence of two, superimposed concrete floors, and three succeeding partition walls. While the last mentioned evidence is the strongest in favour of a clear differentiation between a Phase K 14 (see below) and a Phase K 15, it is definitely too early to pinpoint date and consistency of this earliest constructional activity in Building 6.

The existence of this earliest phase has been mentioned here only to underline the long use of Building 6 and the possibility of the presence of pottery material dating to earlier periods<sup>10</sup> than those of the main use of the structure (i.e. Phases K 14-13, LBA I).

### Phase K 14

In seven of the 34 rooms documented for the following phase, we have evidence of the presence of a concrete floor (Rooms E, G, M, N, R, U and AA, see Fig. 1:2), made in a sort of *terrazzo* technique that Du Mesnil du Buisson dubbed *sol bétonné*.<sup>11</sup> This feature, common to the Palace of the kings of Qatna and attested extensively in our Building 6, seems to have been erected in a single constructional event. This we attribute to Phase K 14. Only few of the rooms have been excavated down to this phase (Rooms G, M, N, half of Room E and part of the area under Room K), so little may be said yet of the overall plan of Building 6. The bulk of pottery belonging to this phase has not been studied yet, so just single decorated sherds will be mentioned.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For details on the stratigraphy, architecture and finds of Building 6, beyond the description below, see LUCIANI 2003a, 2006b, and in press a.

<sup>8</sup> LUCIANI 2002b, 152–158.

<sup>9</sup> The plan here presented is schematic and contains elements of all phases. It should be considered only as overall reference in order to identify the rooms and areas discussed in the text.

<sup>10</sup> Besides the presence of residual material, it must also be

taken into account that our assemblage does not seem to be deprived of some archaic traits. A similar situation obtains also in Tell Arqa, see THALMANN 2000, 70.

<sup>11</sup> DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935.

<sup>12</sup> Discussion of the other finds (simple ware pottery, terracotta, bronze, inlays, seal impressions, etc.) of this and the following phases is contained in LUCIANI 2002a, 2002b, 2003b, 2004, 2006a and in press a.

### Phase K 13

The best known is the last of the main phases of use, i.e. K 13. All in all it comprised 34 rooms. The building – though its plan is not yet complete – may be described as being made of four different blocks<sup>13</sup> (Fig. 1:2).

The southern-central one is definitely the most unitary one and is composed of 8 rooms in three rows (Rooms D, E, F, G, H, L, M, N). While the southernmost two rows include service rooms such as a bath or toilet (Room M) and a storage unit (Room H), where whole pots have been recovered in situ on a sealed floor, the northern row is composed of two rooms larger than the others (Rooms D and F) which exactly reproduce the scheme of reception suites in Syrian Bronze Age palaces.<sup>14</sup>

The eastern unit is composed of 4 to 5 rooms (Rooms A, B, C, K, O?) of which Room C was a small kitchen and Room B an open courtyard with a basalt basin. The whole eastern wing seems to be a Phase 13 addition, except for the square tower-like structure in the south-east, which appears to have existed in the previous two phases already. As far as stratigraphy is concerned, the eastern area was sealed by 12 successive phases of use. Notwithstanding single Iron Age pits, rather limited in fact, finds from this area (including Room N) should definitely be considered stratigraphically reliable.

The western block is less well defined but, similarly to the eastern one, it features 4 to 5 rooms (Rooms I, J, S, AF, AH?). Here one room features an oven (Room I), with a peculiar gypsum coating.

The northern part of Building 6 is the less excavated, but one that has given very important finds, including cuneiform tablets and ivories. It is composed of 16 rooms laid in at least three rows (Rooms P, Q, T, U, V, X, W, Y, Z, AA, AB, AC, AD, AE, AI, AJ).<sup>15</sup> Room R (built by uniting Rooms AI and AJ) and partially Room Y have been investigated so far in their latest floor levels, i.e. those to be attributed to the following Phase K 12 (see below).

### Phase K 12

The “squatter” use of Building 6, i.e. Phase K 12, displays a number of remarkable features. As far as we

can tell, at least 8 rooms of Building 6 were reused during this phase (Rooms A, B, C, K but also N and H, R and Y). Room C remained a small kitchen, now with built-in oven. It must be stressed that the original definition of this phase of use as “squatter” depended on observations made on the partially destructive characteristics detected in parts of the eastern wing (Rooms A and B). However, as our research advances, the number of rooms in use increases and their finds display features indicating a palatial use of Building 6, it is possible to suggest that this refunctionalisation we dub “squatter” possibly did not involve the whole extension of Building 6. Of course, provided the stratigraphic correspondence to Phase K 12 of the latest floor of Room R (see below) can be ascertained.

Room R and partially Room Y have been investigated and have produced spectacular finds. From the uppermost floor of the former comes the cuneiform archive uncovered during the 2002 campaign<sup>16</sup> and associated with several hundred bone and ivory inlays, seal impressions, beads, bronze objects, bitumen and pottery (Fig. 1:3).<sup>17</sup> We have outlined above the stratigraphy of Room R, with its three superimposed floors and fills. Here, too, later pits or extensive reuses of the this area of Building 6 are very limited and therefore this region of the palace looks extremely promising for obtaining a clean stratified sequence of the different phases of use of Building 6.

A certain presence of pottery and bronze slag, though not consistent, points to the fact that Building 6 deposits have received some refuse material from productive activities. These findings may be interpreted in different ways. (1) They may be an indication of the fact that pyrotechnological (metallurgical or ceramic) activities were taking place in the Lower City Palace, in Building 6 or close-by, and that, therefore, some of the slag material deposited in the room fills. This should not be surprising since such productive areas are known to have been associated to palatial buildings. (2) However, in view of the paucity of the slag material, one additional explanation should not exclude a degree of possible contamination of our contexts. This, in turn, should serve as warning for the same phenomenon involving also single sherds.

<sup>13</sup> While these units are defined on the basis of internal uniformity in construction materials, layout and connected circulation, it is yet too early to judge to which extent this picture is the result of originally planned functional diversity rather than having grown out of the succeeding reconstructions.

<sup>14</sup> LUCIANI 2003a and 2003b.

<sup>15</sup> It is for the sake of synthesis that all 16 rooms here mentioned have been listed together. Most probably they belong to more than one single wing of Building 6.

<sup>16</sup> EIDEM 2003.

<sup>17</sup> LUCIANI 2003b, 2006b.

### Phase K 11

The following Phase K 11 displays a radical change in architecture. Just two large outdoor courtyards (Building 5), some outdoor trodden floors, a small silo and some pits have been detected. Again, the area we have investigated, although by no means limited, may relate to some important building located further up to the north and not yet uncovered. The reason for including the deposits of this phase in the presentation is due to the stratigraphic closeness to the preceding Phase K 12, and the mixing of underlying and overlying deposits so that it may not be excluded that the items assigned to Phase K 11 may partially come from Building 6.

Phase K 10, a reconstruction of the Phase K 11 structures, has been taken into account only for establishing the last step of a trend set from the late MBA to the LBA IIA (see below).

### THE POTTERY

Graph 1 presents the bulk evaluation of the pottery corpus, basing solely on the data from the 2001 campaign, analysed from the latest MB II phase in Operation J, i.e. J 10 to the early LB phases, i.e. K 14-K12 down to the LB IIA, Phases K11-K10. Clearly evident is a trend of decrease in the percentage of decorated pottery from 43% in the MB to 20% in LB. It is of course comb-incision, which makes the great part of the decoration in the older period and though later it is maintained, it decreases strongly in quantity. Partially this decoration is substituted by painted decoration, which increases markedly in the LBA. As we shall see, painted decoration, including the one on imported wares, such as those from Cyprus, is the most significant feature of the early LBA corpus of decorated pottery.

### Decoration

As evidenced above, the small percentage of pottery decorated during the LBA is mainly painted. This presents different classes: bichrome, monochrome black/brown and monochrome red. Some incision, both similar to the previous MBA comb-incised design and as single incisions, is maintained as well as the use of applying small figurines on the neck of jars. The latter, too, an old tradition dating to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> mill. BC had been attested also during the MBA, and is still present in the LBA.

The decorations types listed below are the ones more often attested in Operation K at Qatna. Mostly

painted pottery has emerged, which may be classified as local productions. It may be monochrome, with a rather homogeneous spectrum of motives in brown and red, displaying triangles and scales filled with dots, or more simple geometrical patterns. Bichrome specimen are present as well, mostly on vessels with medium thickness walls.

Only well stratified sherds from the phases K 14 to K 11 have been considered while in single cases similar sherds coming from later deposits have been added. The following list is to be intended as a first presentation in order to stimulate comparisons. The headings do not necessarily indicate homogeneous groups or fragments with likewise appearance or production technique. It is meant to refer simply to the observed decoration pattern. A more precise study will have to follow once the stratigraphic data and the entire corpus has been processed.

### Local wares

*Brown/black monochrome painted* simple geometric designs on vessels with medium thickness walls.

– Vessels include carinated bowls with a simple, single wavy-line and horizontal band design. Good comparisons for this type may be found in Ugarit<sup>18</sup> and are attested at least on two specimen from Operation K in Qatna (2059.3 and 2934.701, Fig. 2:1–2) from both Phases K 12 and K 11. A similar paint, in a horizontal band-and-triangle motif is found also on small globular jars, one from Phase K 13 and one from a later pit (2417.1 and 3120.704). It must be added that specimen representing the same kind of decoration but on a smoothed, buff, vessel surface and with a somewhat less matt paint, are also present, so that it seems that attempts at imitating the looks of Cypriot vessels may have been undertaken also on local pottery.

– Brown paint is also used in order to obtain a different but very characteristically Qatnite motif: an hourglass filled with dots occupying the entire height of a crater's neck. Underneath it, the decoration continues with a row of larger dots, and two further registers: one with arches, the lower one with groups of vertical lines creating metopes (2398.4, 2400.3, 2400.4a 2400.4b, 2940.706, Fig. 2:3). Just like some specimens that use, albeit somewhat differently, dot-filled motives (1152.752, 2059.11, 2379.101), both the latter types of decorations appear in Phase K 13 and are furthermore attested in the following Phase K 12 as well as, in one case, in Phase K 11. The same principle, i.e. geometric motives filled with dots, alternat-

<sup>18</sup> COURTOIS and COURTOIS 1978, fig. 14 no. 6.

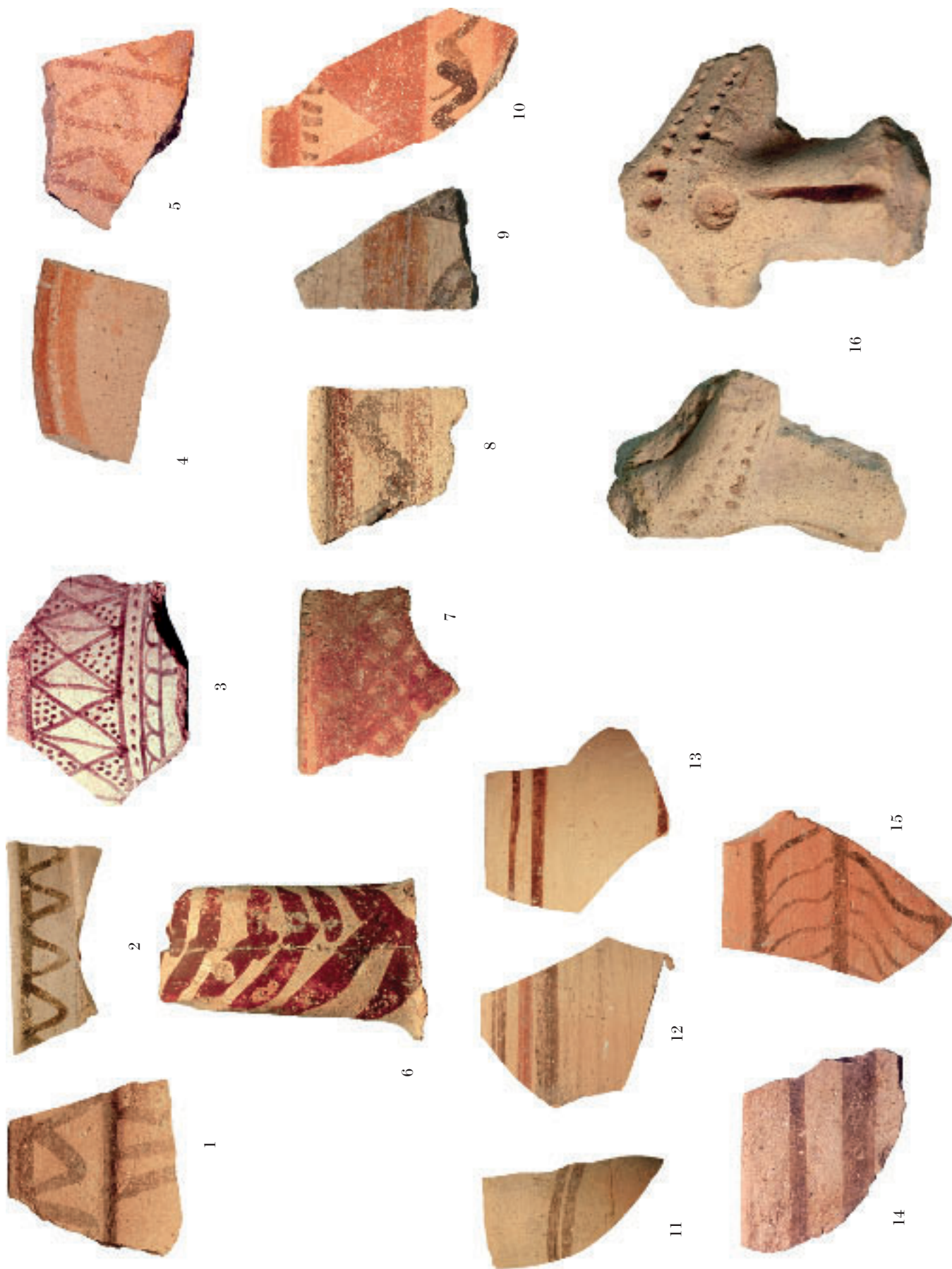


Fig. 2 1-3: Brown/Black monochrome painted; 4-7: Red monochrome painted; 8-10: Bichrome painted; 11-15: thin-walled painted beakers; 16 Applique

ed with a ladder motif, is attested on one specimen already in Phase K 14 (2308.705) from Room N. Even if it is carried out on a seemingly rather coarse crater (?) neck, it is strongly evocative of some Cypriot series, such as the White Painted and Proto-White Slip or White Slip I designs<sup>19</sup> (also on the specimen 3248.701), though carried out with a totally different degree of accuracy.

– Brown and black paint is found also on jar necks and large bowls' handles in simple, broad lines on a variety of fragments, all attested starting with Phase K 12 (2074.3, 2072.4, 2943.704, 2940.704).

– Brown or light brown paint is also used to obtain vertical bands filled with criss-cross motives ending into three or four horizontal lines (2943.702, 3135.703). Comparable with a similar monochrome decoration on large vessels from Ugarit.<sup>20</sup> As in those cases, the surface is smoothed, homogenous and light beige in colour.

In general it may be said that these types of decorations appear on standard simple ware that may surmised to have been of local production. It compares mostly with the Ugarit repertoire dubbed “monochrome figuratif”<sup>21</sup> and some specimens from Alalah<sup>22</sup> so that it seems that these sites shared some regional, common tradition with Qatna in the early LBA. As we have pointed out, imitations of the Cypriot series seem to be attested on a variety of cases.

*Red monochrome painted:* in this case too, the painted decoration is found mainly on vessels with medium thickness walls.

– The eldest examples, from Phase K 14, feature a very characteristic paint covering with broad bands the entire rim area (2532.702, Fig. 2:4). It is very typical of early LBA open vessels<sup>23</sup> and seems to be attested through the entire Levant. The principal of covering extensive areas of the vessel with red paint is visible also on the ring-base 2943.703 from Phase K 11.

– A peculiar motif is that of vertical wavy lines enclosed in vertical lines (1941.1, 2071.1, 2704.702,

2940.702, Fig. 2:5). With one exception it, too, is carried out on vessels with medium thickness walls. This motif seems quite well attested on a number of closed shapes both inland and on the coastal Levantine region.<sup>24</sup>

– A number of simple, thin lines in geometrical patterns are painted in red on vessels with medium thickness walls (69.702, 2071.2, 2074.2, 2074.5, 1152.751, 2940.707). The kind of design, while quite simple, is characterised by different qualities of paint and colours – in all shades of red –, even the clay looks somewhat different, notwithstanding some general common traits. Therefore this should be considered a listing more than a coherent group.

– Various shades of red are applied as broad and very broad bands, sometimes with criss-cross motives or hourglass design. All seem to be applied on vessels with medium thickness walls (1846.2, 1950.11, 2315.1, 2940.703, 2943.701, Fig. 2:7). The extensive criss-cross design finds very close parallels in Ugarit.<sup>25</sup>

A distinctive class of Brownish-red slipped wares has been identified. Only 13% of these display traces of burnishing, possibly imitating red-lustrous wares. No WMRL has been detected so far.

*Painted bichrome:* this kind of decoration appears only starting with Phase K 12 (2068.5, 1958.1, Fig. 2:8–9) mainly on medium size vessels (but also on a beaker) and it appears that the surfaces have been smoothed or even slipped before applying the bichrome paint. Motives include the wavy line bands as well as the multiple register with painted triangles and wavy lines framed by horizontal bands (1817.4, Fig. 2:10). The best comparisons for the latter decoration, though on a large, closed shape, is with the large biconical jar C. 245 found by Ploix de Rotroux in 1928 close to the astronomic cuneiform text uncovered in the *Sondage à Nord Est de la Butte de l'Église* number 12.<sup>26</sup> Painted bichrome simple bands are found also on a thinner-walled sherd (1950.2) with a smoothed surface, which shows some traces of polishing.<sup>27</sup> All in all, however, all the here described specimens do not seem to belong to the so-called Palestinian Bichrome

<sup>19</sup> DIKAIOS 1969, 225–226, pl. 56 nos. 21, 23, 24, 35, 36.

<sup>20</sup> COURTOIS and COURTOIS 1978, 249, fig. 16 no. 13

<sup>21</sup> COURTOIS and COURTOIS 1978, 240–243, especially fig. 14.

<sup>22</sup> WOOLLEY 1955, pl. XCVIII: p (unstratified), pl. LXXXIX: f.

<sup>23</sup> However, it does not correspond exactly to the so-called Mitanni examples and we would like to keep this etiquette out of the discussion, at first.

<sup>24</sup> MIRON 1990, Taf. 70 no. 5 and Taf. 87 no. 2; METZGER 1993, taf. 116 no. 1, COURTOIS and COURTOIS 1978, 240–241 fig. 14 no. 2 and 244–245 fig. 15 no. 8.

<sup>25</sup> COURTOIS and COURTOIS 1978, 244–45 fig. 15 nos. 2, 4, 10.

<sup>26</sup> The results were published by DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1935, 169 and 173, pl. LI. A direct check of the excavation's records has enabled me to confirm this association. I wish to thank A. Caubet, for allowing me to study Du Mesnil du Buisson's records deposited in the Louvre archives and B. André-Salvini, E. Fontan and M.-J. Castor for helping out with numerous advice.

<sup>27</sup> A possible comparison seems to be that with a jar from Ugarit, COURTOIS and COURTOIS 1978, 236 fig. 12 no. 16.

Ware. It is not excluded that some form of relation between this Qatnite production and the Palestinian one might have existed, as the circulation of those luxury vessels might have stimulated phenomena of local production and imitation.<sup>28</sup>

*Thin-walled beakers:* Starting with Phase K 14 the first examples of fine fabric, thin-walled beakers with straight sides start to appear in Operation K stratified deposits (1308.702, 3377.701, Fig. 2:11). They are attested throughout the following phases (2075.4, 2518.701, 2074.4, 1950.5, 1152.753, 2791.701, 2932.701, 1829.1, 3266.768). The surface treatment displays a self-slip, sometimes smoothed, with horizontal painted bands, at different heights of the vessel. Some specimens are worth mentioning. The beakers 2074.4 (Fig. 2:12) and 3457.707 feature bichrome horizontal lines decoration on a surface, which is not smoothed. The better preserved 1950.5 (Fig. 2:13), with very thin walls, slipped surface<sup>29</sup> and brown paint looks different from all others and very similar to geometrically decorated Nuzi beakers. Most specimens feature just the shape of Nuzi beakers,<sup>30</sup> while surface finishing, the horizontal bands (2384.4, Fig. 2:14) as well as, occasionally, wavy-bands design (1956.1, Fig. 2:15), clearly make them local productions, variations to a well known pottery class. On the other hand the near total absence of floral Nuzi pottery and the typical white-on-dark motives<sup>31</sup> seems to reflect quite correctly the elsewhere documented scarce distribution of this kind of luxury pottery<sup>32</sup> in the inland regions of the Ancient Near East, with the exception of Northern Mesopotamia. Thin-walled beakers made of a particularly fine fabric, of course, are best compared with Nuzi beakers, for example from the Mitanni levels in Tell Brak.<sup>33</sup> They start to be attested with the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, just like the Tell Hadidi LB I level pottery,<sup>34</sup> that closely resembles our whole pots from Room H, Building 6, Phase K 13. The Mitanni pottery continues through-

out the entire 15<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Two other typically local productions are:

*Black/grey burnished ware*, attested as a rim fragment of a bottle (2209.2). Much in the tradition of so-called Syrian bottles, identical specimens have also been found in a grave attributed to Phase N (Late Bronze Age I) at Tell Arqa<sup>35</sup> as well as from the Area H XIII assemblage in Tell Hadidi, dated to the LB IA, i.e. the late 16<sup>th</sup> century BC by its excavator.<sup>36</sup>

Another quite traditional decorative element is the use of small pottery figurines as appliques on vessel necks. At least three such items have been uncovered in Operation K (2072.1, 2375.2, 1947.2). Two are different birds (a dove, Fig. 2:16 and an eagle) and one looks like a lizard. The decoration technique is still in use in the early Late Bronze Age, as visible in comparable vessels from Tell el-Qitar<sup>37</sup> or Ugarit.<sup>38</sup>

### Imported wares

#### *Cypriot*

These imports are numerically the most represented group. Different series seem to be attested in Building 6. A first framing into known groups may be undertaken notwithstanding the fact that, handling as we do exclusively with sherds, it is often impossible to exactly determine their appurtenance.

#### – White Painted

There seem to be at least four sherds coming from stratified contexts pertaining to Building 6 (2547.705, 2497.1, 3344.704, 1846.1) and two from later deposits (2521.701, 2767.703) that could be assigned to the Cypriot White painted series. Significant is, in any case, the finding of one specimen in a context starting already with Phase K 14. The items here represented should belong to the WP V–VI

<sup>28</sup> A similar pottery series is documented also in Ugarit, with clearly locally produced vessels which use bichrome paint as means of decoration with a variety of motives, see COURTOIS and COURTOIS 1978, 232–239, figs. 10 to 13.

<sup>29</sup> Also in Tell Hadidi the presence of slip-finished surfaces seems to be the exception, DORNEMANN 1981, 42.

<sup>30</sup> A number of solid feet found in different deposits of Operation K are further evidence that the chalice shape was obtained.

<sup>31</sup> One sherd is actually documented from the Syrian excavation, AL-MAQDISSI 2002, 108 fig. 4 no. 5 and on a sherd from Operation K. Of course, further research could partially

increase the number of attestations. However, it does not seem to be a very significant presence, possibly both because of distributional and possibly also chronological reasons.

<sup>32</sup> MAZZONI 2000, 145.

<sup>33</sup> OATES, OATES and McDONALD 1997, fig. 189: nos. 331–333. From Operation C at Qatna, see AL-MAQDISSI 2002, 108 fig. 4 no. 6.

<sup>34</sup> DORNEMANN 1981.

<sup>35</sup> THALMANN 2000, fig. 58.

<sup>36</sup> DORNEMANN 1981, fig. 12, top.

<sup>37</sup> McCLELLAN 1984–85, 62, fig. 12 no.1.

<sup>38</sup> SCHAEFFER and CHENET 1949, fig. 101 no. 18.



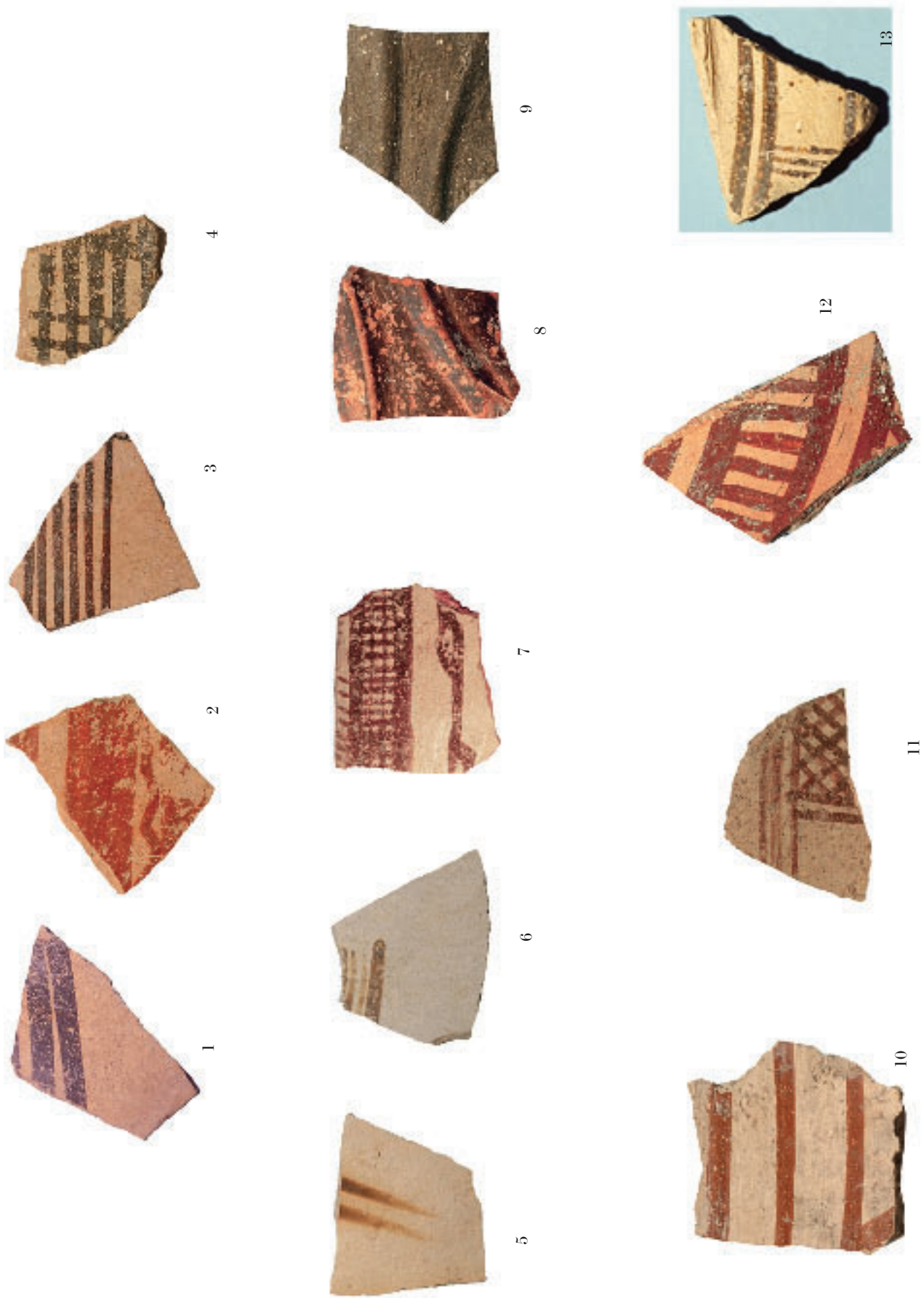


Fig. 3 1-4: Cypriot White painted; 5-7: Cypriot White slip; 8: Cypriot Base-ring; 9: Cypriot Base-ring; 10 Chocolate-on-white imitation; 11-13: Syro-Cilician painted/Levantine painted

series (Fig. 3:1–2), the latter two should be an examples of the WP IV–VI Cross-Line style<sup>39</sup> (Fig. 3:2–4).

#### –White Slip

Both White Slip I and II are attested in Operation K. Only one (2491.701, Fig. 3:5) of the WS I specimens comes from the inside of Building 6 (Room B) and belongs to Phase K 13. The others come from later deposits or are unstratified (2934.702, 9999.701, Fig. 3:6). Two are bichrome. On the contrary, the more numerous White Slip II sherds<sup>40</sup> (1458.3, 1464.2, 1808.1, 1817.1, 1817.2, 1826.5, 2942.701, Fig. 3:7) are never present before Phase K 12, i.e. the last phase of use of Building 6.

#### – Base Ring I

Two sherds have been found, both from layers on top of the latest use of Building 6, i.e. Phase K 11 and K 10 (1828.1 and 2539.701, Figs. 3:8–9). One is rather badly preserved but appears to have had a dark polished surface just like a real Cypriot import. The other, though in colour and shape it is meant to imitate a genuine Cypriot BR I has no slip and no polished surface and it even displays traces of being partially warped, as if it were a waster from a local production.

#### – Chocolate-on-white imitation

It may not be said with certainty that the sherd (2547.701, Figs. 3:10) here represented actually does belong to the so-called Chocolate-on-white production.<sup>41</sup> However, one feature distinguishes it from all other decorated sherds, a characteristic peculiar also of the Chocolate-on-white pottery: the presence on the vessel's surface of a thick, polished, very homogeneous white or whitish slip. On it a geometric design is obtained with brownish paint. Whether this specimen is to be considered local production, imitation of better quality items or simply as a regional variant, will be established as soon as more data will be available and petrographic analysis will have been carried out. Anyhow, as this pottery is present as far inland as the Euphrates site of Tell Hadidi<sup>42</sup> no explanation should be excluded.

#### – Syro-Cilician Painted and Levantine Painted

Three fragments, one from a well stratified context from within Building 6, Phase K 13 and one from an overlying deposit, Phase K 10 (2075.6, 1838.1, and 2921.703 Fig. 3:11–13) highly resemble the earlier, Middle Bronze Age, classes of painted pottery called Syro-Cilician Painted and Levantine Painted, known from previous excavations to have been present in Qatna, too.<sup>43</sup> The fragments are too small and too few to yet decide whether they may be late continuations of that tradition or simply residual sherds which found their way in later deposits.

– Some single sherds coming from later, early Iron Age pits could be local imitations of Late Helladic IIIB Mycenaean style pottery and are comparable to specimens from Ugarit<sup>44</sup> and Enkomi.<sup>45</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

A first evaluation of the trends in decoration in the Qatna pottery corpus in the time range spanning from the late MBA to the early LBA has shown some significant, though surely still preliminary, trends.

There is a marked decrease in the quantity of pottery that is decorated occurring at the end of the MBA and at the beginning of the LBA. Furthermore, decoration shifts from a prevalent use of comb-incision to a variety of painted patterns.

From the productive point of view, it should be underlined that, even though the onset of a clear trend in standardisation is visible, the high number of decorative patterns is surely an indication that there was still room for the use or even the need to experiment the production of differentiated decorations on pottery vessels.

As far as chronology is concerned, in Operation K Late Cypriot wares such as White Slip II series pottery do not appear before Phase K 12. This seems to agree well with all the remaining material from Building 6, discussed elsewhere<sup>46</sup> and pointing to a date in the 15<sup>th</sup> century for the Phases K 14–K13 and the late 15<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century BC for Phase K 12 itself. In the meantime Aegean pottery has also been recovered.

The local painted pottery, on the contrary,

<sup>39</sup> ÅSTRÖM 1972, and fig. IX nos. 10–14.

<sup>40</sup> Just one of the many good comparisons which can be found for these types is in MIRON 1990, Taf. 58 nos. 1–2.

<sup>41</sup> AMIRAN 1970, 158–160, and more recently FISCHER 1999.

<sup>42</sup> DORNEMANN 1981, 42.

<sup>43</sup> DU MESNIL DU BUISSON 1927. But see also possible similar-

ities with Ugarit (COURTOIS and COURTOIS 1978, 208 fig. 4 no. 3) and Tell Sukas (THRANE 1978, 43 fig. 94 no. 442)

<sup>44</sup> COURTOIS and COURTOIS 1978, 294 fig. 33 (suite) no. 21.

<sup>45</sup> DIKAIOS 1969, 238 pl. 61 no. 13.

<sup>46</sup> LUCIANI 2003b.

through comparison with exogenous material, should be dated to the LBI–LBIIA. The recovery of Levantine painted or Syro-Cilician painted sherds could be stratigraphically residual as well as single “heirlooms”, since prolonged use of luxury items, even in the case of pottery vessels, is attested.

Summing up, a long use of Building 6 in Operation K documents the early phases of the Late Bronze Age with some evidence of pottery classes attested already in the late Middle Bronze Age. This should point to the 15<sup>th</sup> century as the main date. The squatter use and subsequent end of Building 6 would ensue after the onset of Cypriot White Slip II on the site. The outer courtyards Building 5 should be placed thereafter, in the 14<sup>th</sup> and possibly early 13<sup>th</sup> century BC.

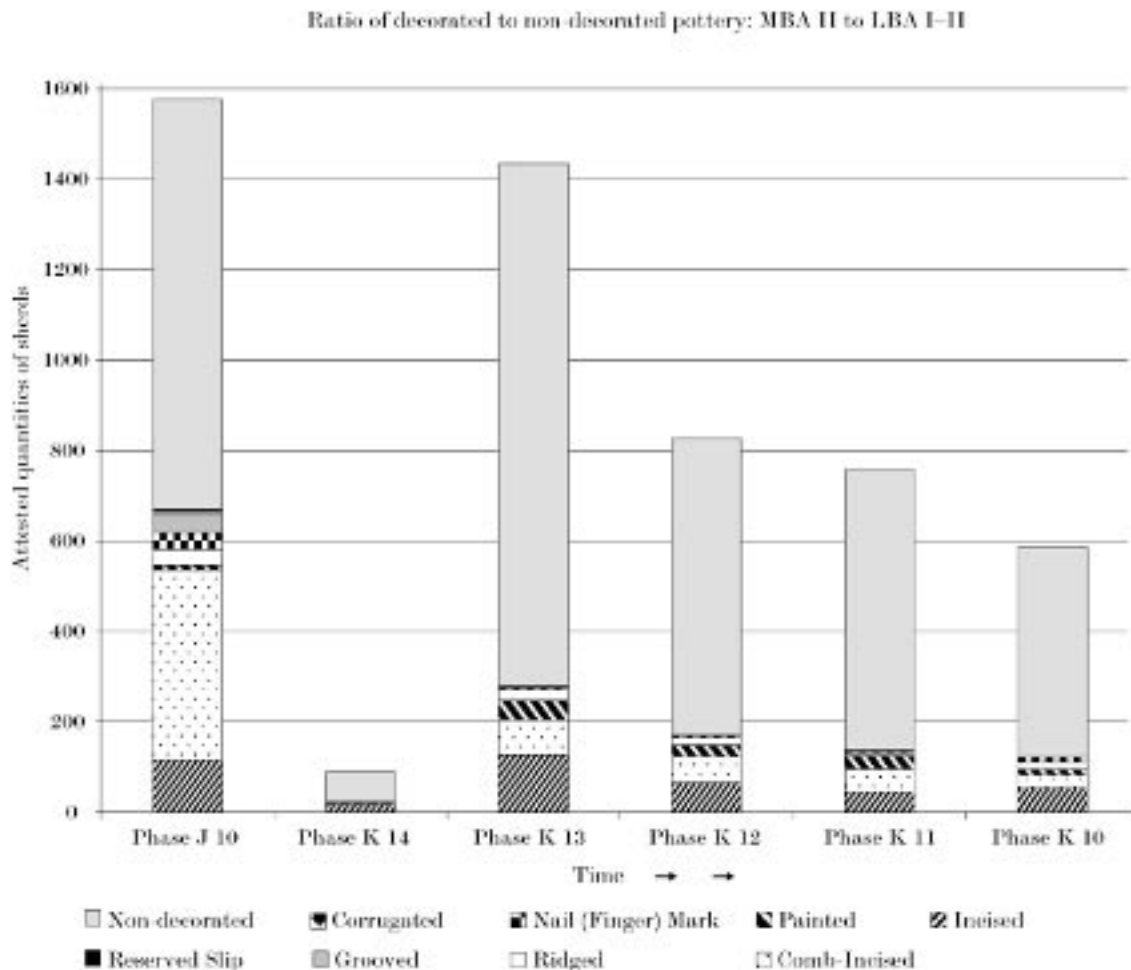
Culturally speaking, judging from the evidence from Operation K, Qatna’s specific role as one of the southernmost provinces of the Mitanni world and at the same time a central place participating in intensive exchange with the Aegean seems to be one of the

most characteristic aspects of the early Late Bronze Age urban settlement.

**Addendum**

The above contribution had been submitted in the year 2003. In the frame of this publication it has been possible only to add the most recent references (LUCIANI 2006a and 2006b) and new discoveries (e.g. Mycenaean Pottery or Brownish-Red Slip wares), as the scope of the paper was firstly a presentation of the material.

A more thorough discussion of new proposals on the dating of the LBA material from Euphrates sites (eg. Tell Hadidi or Tell Bazi) and their relevance for the Qatna corpus will be undertaken in the frame of a dedicated study within the congress proceedings: C. BEUGER, A. HAUSLEITER, M. LUCIANI (eds.), *Recent Trends in the Study of Late Bronze Age Ceramics in Syro-Mesopotamia and Neighbouring Regions*, Berlin, 2–5 November 2006, Berlin, in preparation.



Graph 1

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