

1 The monumental building: north-south wall.

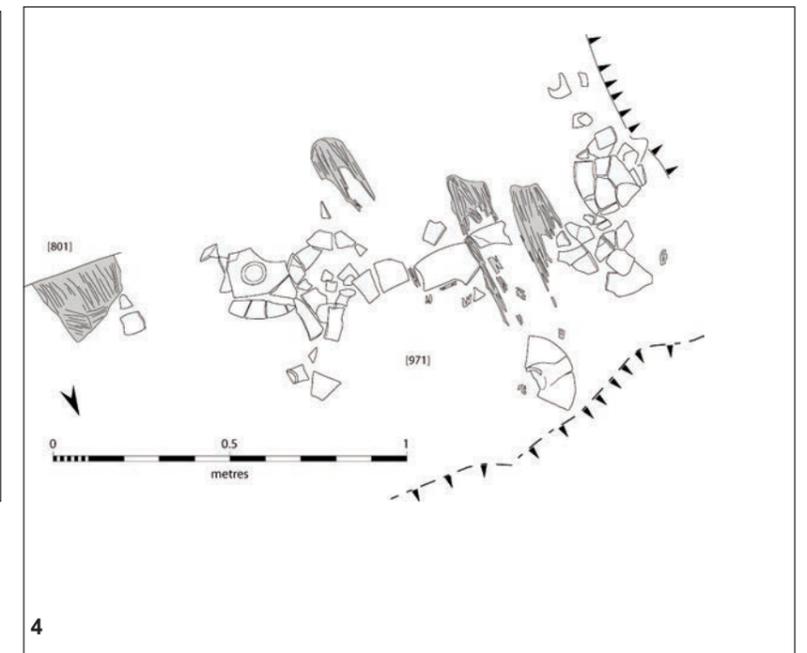
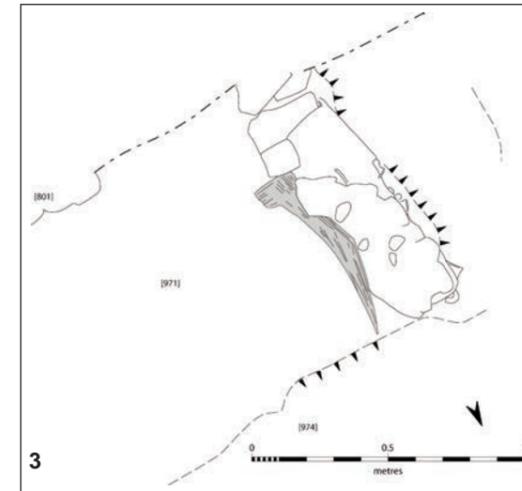
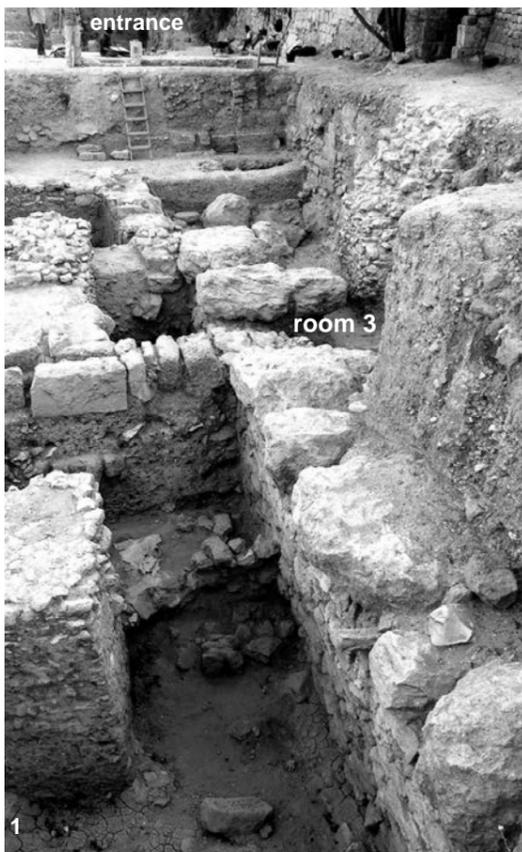
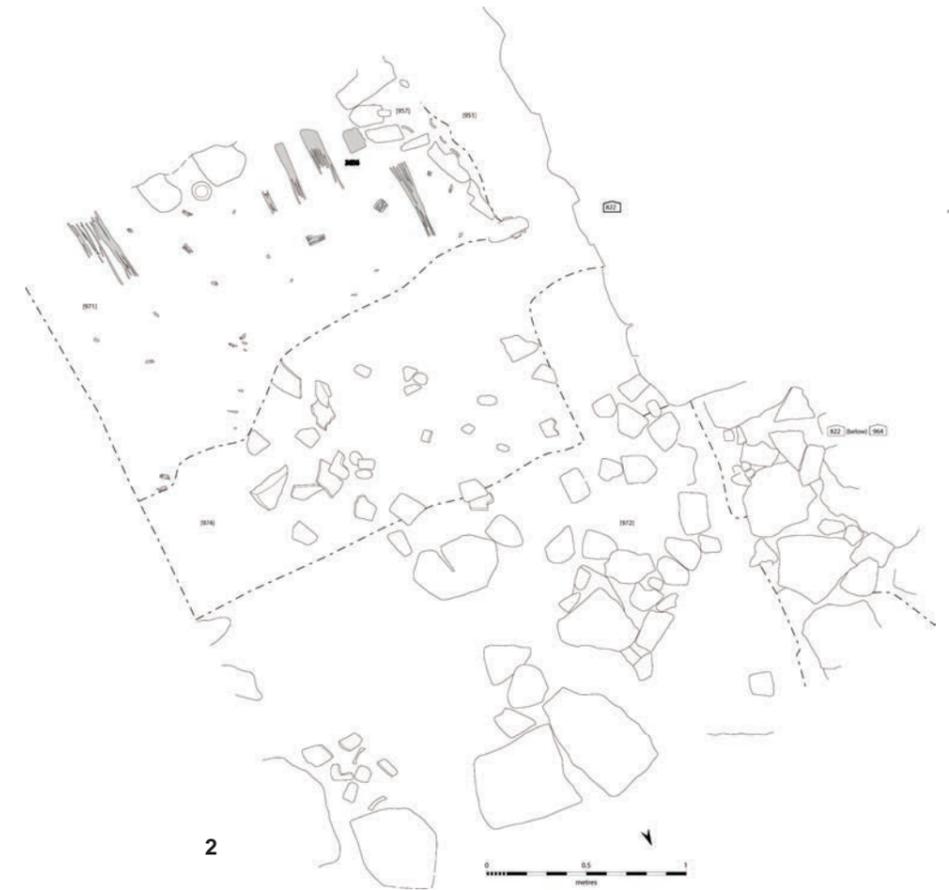
2 Plan of trench 2 showing the cut indicated by a dotted line.

3-4 Context 971 in room 3 with burnt wooden beams.

Introduction

Context 971 was excavated during the 2004 and 2005 seasons and was located in area 1c, trench 2, within Room 3 of a monumental Middle Bronze/Late Bronze Age building (fig. 1). This building, the excavation of which has been continuing since 2000, has well-constructed stone walls and to date the north-south wall has been exposed for a length of 42.66 m, measuring 1.09 wide and reaching 1.22 m in height in the north-west corner (fig. 2). The monumental structure and size is indicative of an important public building. It was used during both the Middle and Late Bronze Age and as excavation continues to uncover the construction, rooms and floor levels within this building, our knowledge of the function and dating of the building is developing¹.

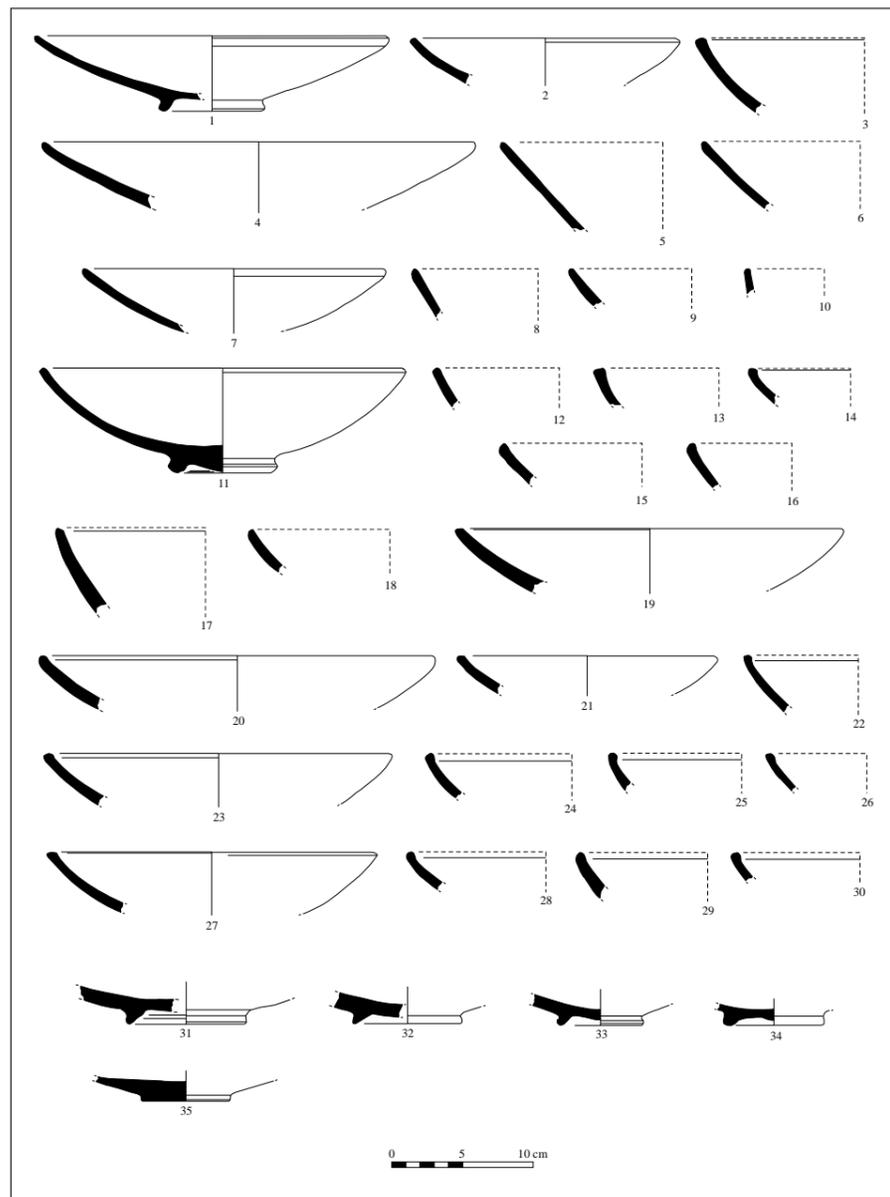
Context 971 consisted of mixed, partly burnt material, lying within and on a white plaster-like floor surface (context 989). The plaster floor surface which extended into trench 2 through the baulk from trench 5 to the south, for a maximum of 1.40 m to the north was then truncated by a very large cut for a pit (fig. 2). Many of the contexts so far excavated in room 3 have been disrupted by this large pit, (the purpose of which is not yet evident), the edge of the pit was particularly clear at this level where it cut through context 971. The area of context 971 which had survived within room 3, measured 1.10 - 1.40 m north-south by 2.30 m east-west. The main impression given was that of burnt wooden beams, mud brick and some bituminous or clay-like matter, together with overturned ceramic vessels smashed on top of the white floor surface and in some parts compacted into it. During the excavation of 971 it was evident that the carbonized lengths of wood and the pieces of mud brick were lying directly on top of pottery sherds indicating that these had fallen down on top of the vessels, probably from a ceiling or roof above. Pieces of charcoal were scattered throughout the context and the largest surviving sections of carbonized wood were clearly aligned in a north-south direction (fig. 2-4). Samples were taken for analysis from one of the most substantial sections (see Allué & Griffiths in this issue p. 23). Apart from the ceramic sherds, a small basalt stone for grinding or pounding (fig. 7, 1) and a gold head of a duck (fig. 8-9) were recovered.



Pottery

During the exposure of this context it was evident that a destructive event, involving fire had occurred which had caused vessels *in situ* to be overturned and broken and that therefore it seemed very likely that the vessels would be able to be reconstructed. However, so far it has only been possible to restore a few incompletely. This is probably at least partly due to the fact that the northern part of this room was cut away for a pit so that sherds which scattered would have been removed by the pit cutting and by whatever other disturbance may have happened at or after the time of the fire. The majority of the pottery sherds actually showed little evidence of burning on their surfaces, only a small quantity are fire blackened but those that were, do reveal that some burning occurred after the vessels were broken and the sherds had been displaced². The ware of almost all of the pottery is plain local ware, only a very small number have any kind of surface treatment or decoration. A selection of the diagnostic vessels and sherds are presented here with some preliminary analysis.

5 Bowls from context 971.

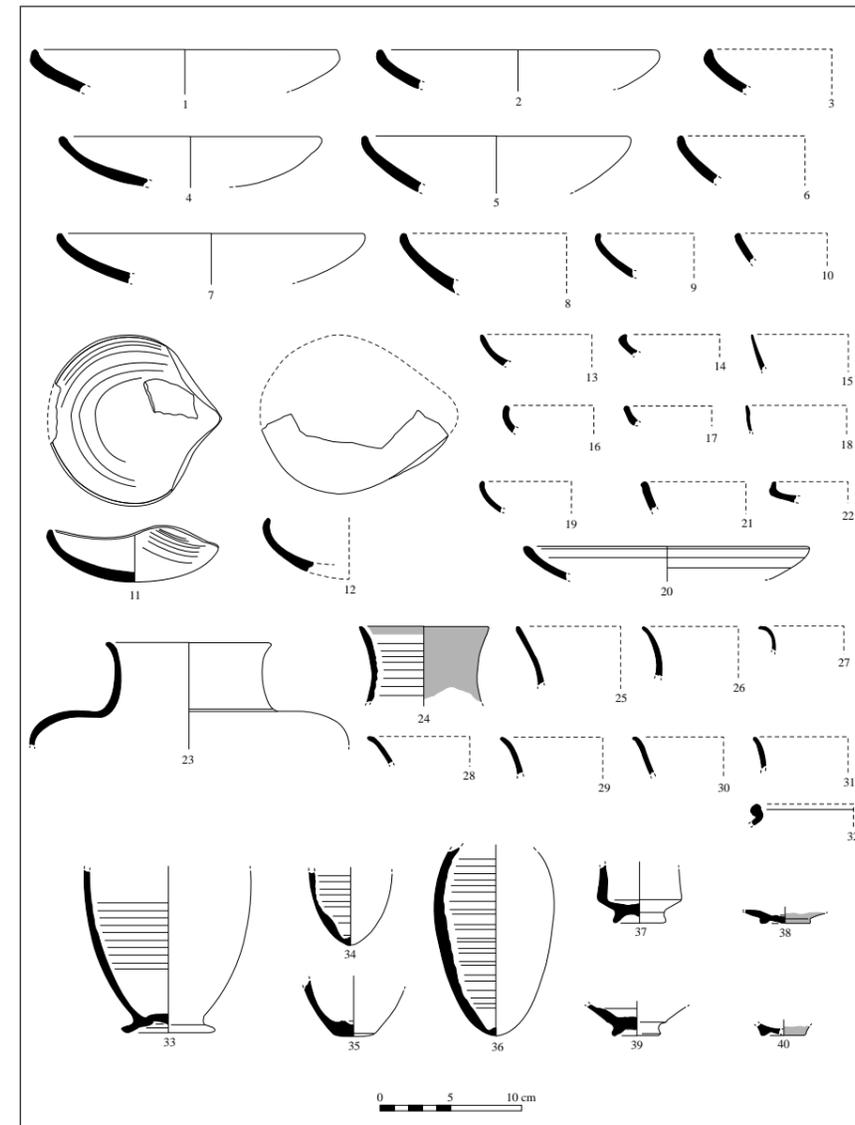


Bowls

Bowls are the most frequent type of vessel represented. Many of them have gently rounded or flaring sides and are of a type which are often described as platters. The rim diameters generally range from 16 to 30 cm and there are only slight differences evident in their forms.

Many are simple rim types with a rounded or very slightly flattened edge (fig. 5:1-19). These bowls belong to a common type which first appears throughout the Levant during the latter part of the Middle Bronze Age period. Two of these bowls have a complete profile (fig. 5: 1 & 11). The bowl with a rounded ring base (fig. 5:1) is paralleled with those from Hazor stratum 3 (Y. Yadin *et al.*, 1960, pl. CIX, 1, 7, 9) and elsewhere dated to the latter part of the Middle Bronze Age or beginning of the Late Bronze. In Jordan they have also been found in MB IIC – LB I contexts at Pella (A.W. McNicoll *et al.*, pl. 53). At Shechem an increase in such plain bowl rim profiles is evident during MB IIC (D. P. Cole, 1984, p. 42 & pl.1) dating to ca. 1650-1550 BC³ and they continue into the LB I period with

6 Bowls, lamps and jars and jugs from context 971.



the bowls exhibiting more oblique flaring walls (J. D. Seger, 1965, p. 95). This can be seen in several of the context 971 examples (fig. 5: 5-9). In Lebanon similar bowls were found at Tyre in Grave 2, stratum XVIII dated to LB I at about the middle of the sixteenth century BC (P. M. Bikai, 1978, p. 65 & pl. LIII, 14 & 15) and those with the flattened rim edge are found at both Kamid – el-Loz and Tell Arqa in levels marking the transition between the Middle and Late Bronze Age (M. Heinz *et al.*, 2004, p.108, pl. 2, a)

Other bowls rims have a very slightly thickened rim producing a slight interior ridge just below the rim edge (fig. 5: 20-30). These have been found in late Middle Bronze Age contexts, for example at Megiddo from Strata XII-IX (G. Loud, 1948, pl. 29, 24). At Sidon similar types have been excavated from context 1254 within the same building (C. Doumet-Serhal, 2004, pl. 4, 32-36).

Five separate bases almost certainly belonged to these bowls. They

exhibit a range of late Middle Bronze base types - a flat disc (fig. 5: 35), two rounded ring bases (fig. 5: 33 & 34), a tapered ring (fig. 5: 32) and a more elaborated form of ring (fig. 5: 31) which can be compared to types found at Shechem at the end of MB IIC (J. D. Seger, 1965, pl. XI, Bp.0.22) ⁴. The base of fig. 5: 11) is also of a more elaborate type. 110

Some of the bowl rims (fig. 6: 1-8) have a more distinctly incurving edge. A few of these may in fact have belonged to lamps: some of them show evidence of burning (fig. 6: 3, 5, 7, 8) though whether or not from use is uncertain. Two of the bowls (fig. 6: 1, 4) are of a different type of ware: a dark grey fabric with fine white temper and with traces of a buff coloured slip over the surface. Fig. 6: 13-22 shows a selection of smaller bowls. One rim (fig. 6: 21) has traces of red paint on the exterior surface and another very small rim fragment (fig. 6: 32) has red painted striations on the rim edge

Lamps

The two lamps which can be reconstructed (fig. 6: 11 & 12) measure 12.5 and 14 cm in length. Stylistically, like the bowls, they can be most closely compared to those dating to the end of the Middle Bronze Age and the very beginning of the Late Bronze Age; they do not have the more pinched in or elongated spout indicative of the Late Bronze II period (see R. Amiran, 1969, pl. 59). Comparison with lamps from excavated sites in Palestine reveals that they are most similar to those dated to the end of the Middle Bronze Age at Megiddo stratum IX (G. Loud, 1948, pl. 55) or Hazor stratum 5 (Y. Yadin *et al.*, 1958, pl. CXVIII). Similar lamps with slightly pinched spout have been discovered in Lebanon at Sarepta from stratum L (W. P. Anderson, 1988, pl. 20, 22) dated to the very end of the Middle Bronze Age in the 17th and first half of the 16th centuries BC and they continue into the late Bronze I period (W. P. Anderson, 1988, p. 369). There are also similar examples from stratum XVIII, Grave 2 at Tyre (P. M. Bikaj, 1978, p. 65 & pl. LIII no.18) and from an early phase of the temple, (T3) at Kamid-el-Loz (M. Metzger, 1993 pl. 133 nos 1-3) dated to the LB I period (G. Marfoe, 1995 p.102).

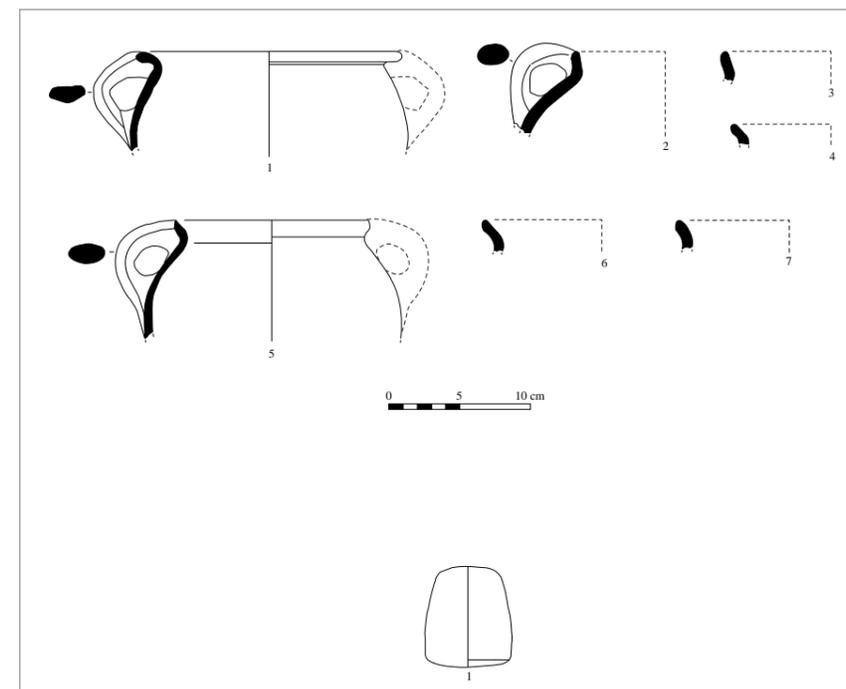
Cooking pots

Several cooking pot sherds come from this context (fig. 7: 1-7), three of the rims sherds have handles attached. They are distinguished as cooking pots on the basis of the fabric of the ware. The rims measure between 14 and 19 cms in diameter. Due to the fact that there is no complete example from this context it is not certain that they all have two handles; they may have had one or none at all. Fig. 7: 1 with an everted rounded rim can be compared to those from stratum 3 of Hazor dating to the end of the Middle Bronze Age (Y. Yadin *et al.*, 1960, pl. CX, 19) and from the MBIIIC period at Shechem (J. D. Seger, 1965, pl. LXIV, e). Those with a rim which has a sloping, slightly concave interior (fig. 7: 4-6) also fit into this time period, close parallels coming from Tell el Ghassil level IX (C. Doumet-Serhal, 1995, pl. IX, A) dated to 1650/40-1540 BC.

Jars and jugs

There is a relatively small selection of closed form vessel types represented among the pottery from context 971. Some of the rims are ambiguous and the absence of associated handles would imply that the rims belong to jars, but they could equally be from jugs or even possibly necked bowls. The rims (fig. 6: 23-31) incline outward with diameters that vary between 9 and 14 cms. It is likely that fig. 6: 23 belongs to a jug with one handle on the shoulder and a flat or slightly flattened base (fig. 6: 35). Fig. 6: 24 has dark red paint over the exterior and on the interior rim edge. There were also other body sherds recovered with a red painted exterior including one with a handle emplacement, as well as a few small ring bases (fig. 6: 38 & 40). The lower body of one vessel (fig. 6: 33) is rather unusual in fabric, surface decoration and form. It has an orange-red slip on the exterior surface with traces of burnishing and a low pedestal base and it most likely belonged to a one handled jug. 111

7 Cooking pots from context 971 and one basalt stone.



The base in fig. 6: 37 is also rather unusual and has similarities in shape to a type of goblet found in Byblos royal tombs 2 and 3 and elsewhere (P. Gerstenblith, 1983, pl. 190) during the Middle Bronze Age.

Also a very interesting discovery from this context was a selection of body sherds of a large, heavy vessel, a few of which have cut edges which are from triangular, or possibly rectangular, shaped fenestrations. One section also has a raised rib with cross hatching incised onto it. These undoubtedly represent

parts of an incense burner similar to those found within the late Middle Bronze Age temple at Nahariya (I. Ben-Dor, 1950, p. 17-18) ⁵.

Gold duck's head (fig. 8-9)

This very small size (1.2 cm x 0.33 cm) gold head of a duck was found among the pottery sherds of this context (fig. 2). It is solid but broken at the neck and has modelled eyes and incised markings on the bill, behind the eye and on top of the head. The most common representations of ducks found during the Bronze Age in the region are duck shaped ivory cosmetic boxes which were especially popular during the Late Bronze Age. These are generally considered to be Egyptian in origin, though produced by local craftsmen ⁶. The incised lines behind the eyes and on top of this gold duck's head are found on some of these ivory ducks heads, for example from the site of Ugarit (J. Gachet, 1987, pl. 2, 22 & pl. 7, 55)

and Egypt (P. F. Houlihan, 1996, fig. 104)⁷. Ducks of gold however are not common. Two gold duck's heads⁸ were found at Byblos in tomb 2 and thought to be handles for (cosmetic) utensils (P. Montet, 1928, p. 185 & pl. CIII). Tomb 2 at Byblos is dated by two objects inscribed with the name of Amenemhet IV who



8-9 Gold head of a duck S/3656.

Conclusion

The ceramic material from this context exhibits characteristics indicative of the latter part of the Middle Bronze Age and the early part of the Late Bronze when compared to excavated sites elsewhere. The chronology of the Middle Bronze-Late Bronze transition is much discussed and in particular in regard to Lebanon, still being developed. A lack of very chronologically distinct diagnostics, specifically imported vessels, makes a closer dating difficult. The fact that there is a limited repertoire of ceramic vessels represented within this context, predominantly open bowls, and also fragments of an incense burner must be significant in regard to the function of the room and of the building as a whole. Further excavation of the monumental building should help to clarify questions about its purpose and dating as well as helping to refine the ceramic typology.

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In regard to the Egyptian connection it is also interesting to note that a pair of small gold ducks heads with an image of the Egyptian goddess Hathor between them (again part of a larger object) have been found in the Middle-Late Bronze Age royal tomb at the site of Qatna in Syria (P. Pfälzner, 2006, p. 22). It does not necessarily follow that the gold duck head from Sidon has a direct Egyptian connection but ducks were much more commonly depicted in many forms of ancient Egyptian art than Levantine, and it is very likely that there was at least some Egyptian iconographic influence involved in its production.

NOTES

1. For further description of this building see C. Doumet-Serhal, 2004, p. 65-74.
2. For instance, the reconstruction of vessel SF 3884 (fig. 6: 33) restored burnt sherds adjacent to those with no traces of burning.
3. MBIC date designated by J. D. Seger, 1965.
4. See also D. P. Cole, 1984, p. 82 E. New forms appearing in Strata XVIII – XVII (late MBIB) at Shechem - ring bases with elaborated profiles.
5. Restoration of the incense burner vessel sherds from 971 will be undertaken. The examples from Nahariya have handles which may also be the case with the Sidon vessel.
6. There is however, discussion of whether the ivory duck boxes found at Levantine/Eastern Mediterranean sites are Egyptian originals, Egyptian imitations or Levantine/Canaanite originals (see C. Lilyquist, 1998).
7. Also see W. Adler, 1996 for a discussion of the different types and styles of ivory ducks found at Kamid – el-Loz and elsewhere.
8. These are hollow and with some silver detailing.

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