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SIDON – BRITISH MUSEUM EXCAVATIONS 1998–2003

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Sidon was, from the earliest times, an important city-state in the Ancient Levant. It is mentioned thirty-eight times

in the Old Testament and appears in Genesis as the oldest Canaanite city, 'the firstborn of Canaan'. Moreover, the Old Testament, like Homer, often uses the term 'Sidonian' to refer to all Phoenicians. The territory of Sidon consists of two parts, one coastal, the other inland, a duality encountered in ancient texts and emphasized by the terms 'Little Sidon' and 'Greater Sidon', 'Sidon of the Sea' and 'Sidon of the Plain'.

The spectacular discoveries of the nineteenth century provided a multiplicity of archaeological material. The villages in the lower foothills of the Lebanon range, and the gardens surrounding Sidon, were an 'inexhaustible mine of antiquities' in the words of Ernest Renan. The discovery of the sarcophagus of Eshmunazar, the fifth-century BC king of Sidon, in the outlying districts of Greater Sidon at Magharat Abloun made news in the scholarly publications of the time.

Another important discovery was the royal necropolis of Ayaa, found in 1887. In it was found the sixth-century BC sarcophagus of King Tabnit, father of Eshmunazar. Other marble sarcophagi known respectively as the Alexander, the Lycian, the Satrap and the sarcophagus of the Weepers were also found in this necropolis. In 1901, at Bostan esh-Sheikh, four kilometres to the northeast of the city, Theodore Macridi Bey uncovered the remains of a large sanctuary dedicated to the Phoenician god of healing, Eshmun; this was excavated between 1960 and 1975 by Maurice Dunand.

But what about the port city, or 'little Sidon', built on a promontory between two bays, like many Phoenician ports?

It is said that mediaeval cities are defined by their walls, as Gaillardot noted when drawing a plan of the city in 1846. Sidon was a city enclosed by its fortifications. Because of the scale of subsequent destructions, the line of the once very extensive walls can unfortunately no longer be traced on the ground. It is, however, known from Gaillardot's plan (published by Renan) that in the south of the city the wall extended in a straight line all the way to the shore.

The defences included two castles:

The 'upper' castle, also known as the Land Castle or the Castle of St Louis, was built on the ancient mound and dominates the city; despite its name, there is no evidence that Louis IX (St Louis) ever stayed there. The other castle, known as the Castle of the Sea and built in the winter of 1227–1228, is in a most unusual position. Poised on and completely covering an offshore rock between the city and the sea, it is linked to the shore by a bridge about eighty metres long. These two castles, one



1 College site situated on the northern slope of Sidon's ancient tell. View of the excavation.

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on the ancient tell, the other by the sea near the port, have remained until now the fixed northern and southern points of the historic city, which extends over an area of sixteen hectares.

Because it is densely built up, the city has never been systematically explored. From 1914 to 1920, the French archaeologist Georges Contenau took several soundings around the Land Castle. In 1963, Maurice Dunand directed several soundings on adjacent sites.

Thanks to the Emir Maurice Chéhab, then Director General of Antiquities, in 1967 the Directorate General of Antiquities of Lebanon acquired three parcels of land with a total area of thirty thousand square metres, in the centre of the city. The first parcel consists of the land on which the Castle of St Louis stands. The second,

Sandikli site is separated from the first by a road. The third, which is known as the College site, is situated on the northern slope of the mound (fig. 1 & 2). It was once occupied by two educational establishments, the College of the Marist Friars and the school of the American Protestant Society, both torn down around 1965. It is there that Maurice Dunand conducted some of his soundings. In 1998, the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities authorized the British Museum to undertake research in the city. It was clear from the beginning that this very first opportunity of systematically excavating Sidon, so well known historically and from ancient texts, was a unique opportunity.

The excavations are being sponsored by the British Museum, the British Academy, the Council for British Research in the Levant, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as well as by private Lebanese organizations, including the Hariri Foundation, the Byblos Bank and Nokia,

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Trench 1b on College site



Lebanon. The work has the support of the Lebanese Directorate General of Antiquities. The team includes Dr John Curtis, Keeper of the Department of the Ancient Near East at the British Museum, acting as special advisor to the excavation, Sarah Collins from the same Department, Rod Brook, Jonathan Crisp, & Emma Markiewicz archaeologists, James Osborne, Toronto University, Dr Dafydd Griffiths, University College, London, Hugh Barnes, surveyor as well as a team of students from the Lebanese University at Sidon.

In parallel with these excavations, a series of core samples was taken in the old city with the help of the University of Aix-en-Provence, and, in an attempt to find the limits of the harbours, in the port area as well.

The area selected for the beginning of the excavations in 1998 was the College site. Several considerations governed this choice:

The discovery around 1880, in the course of excavations for the foundations of the American Mission school, of marble fragments from a moulded column base and an Achaemenid capital with addorsed bull protomes. Charles Clermont-Ganneau thought that this area represented the remains of a pleasure garden of the Persian period, the 'apadana of Sidon' mentioned by Diodorus of Sicily.

Secondly, there being no information about the topography of the city, we worked from the hypothesis that there had been a general continuity in the foundation and development of the heart of the city. The line of the medieval defences was already known. The College site is situated along the mediaeval ramparts, on the site of the ditch. It seemed to be the ideal place to begin the excavations since a ditch, being part of the defences, is generally free of construction.

Dunand found only disturbed material in his 1967 soundings on the College site. In his report, he describes a situation comparable in all respects to the one we experienced at the beginning of our excavations.

'On the site of the foundations of the school', Dunand writes, 'no stratigraphy was discernible although in places we reached a depth of five metres. The walls have been torn down, one barely begins to get through and out of this disorder.'

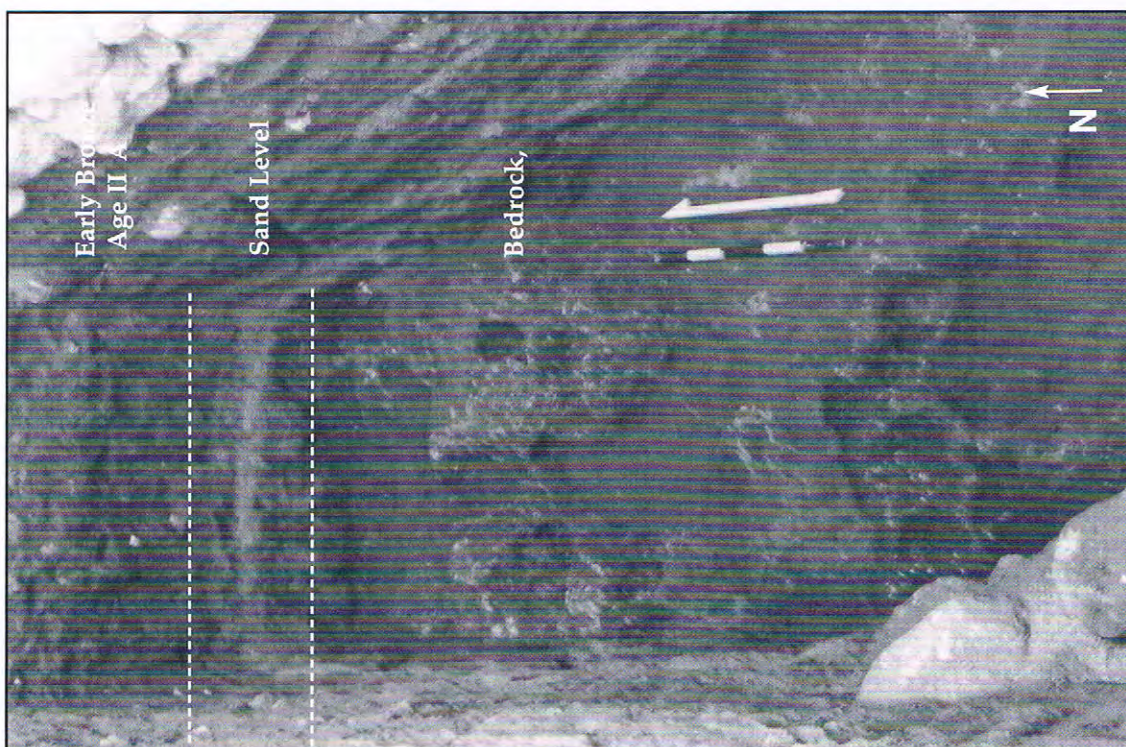
It took three weeks of work with a mechanical digger in 1998 to reach undisturbed stratified levels. Fragments of columns, capitals and statues were discovered in the fill, and notably a statue of Hermes wearing a chlamys covering one of his shoulders.

We now have a continuous stratigraphy for Sidon, from its first appearance at the beginning of the third millennium until the end of the second millennium, around 1300–1250 BC. Iron Age levels have also been identified.

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM – THE EARLY BRONZE AGE

Sidon is now the only site on the Lebanese coast where levels from the beginning of the third millennium BC are easily accessible to excavation. The stratigraphy of Sidon consists of six habitation levels, suggesting continuous development and a gradual evolution from the end of Early Bronze I to the end of Early Bronze III (end of the third millennium to the beginning of the second millennium). The only observable hiatus (fig. 3-4) is between the end of Early Bronze I and the beginning of Early Bronze II, that is around 3000 BC.

The earliest level, on bedrock, is level 1. The bedrock is sandstone, the local *ramleh*, which was also found at the time of the core sampling campaigns around the edges of the harbours. In this earliest level, the presence of three types of pottery with red or black slip (over whose origins much ink is still being spilt) typical of the begin-



3/4 3-4 The six levels of occupation in the third Millennium BC.



the ceramics found at this level are bowls used for eating or drinking, whereas in the later levels most

ning of Early Bronze Age I is attested, as well as the common vessels that reflect the persistence of Chalcolithic traditions, such as straight-sided bowls and pedestal bases. Study of the frequency with which the various sorts of vessel occurs shows that most of

The discovery of these Chalcolithic remains, together with the discovery in our excavations of the occupation level immediately on top of bedrock, provide evidence of a continuation of occupation from Dakerman. We are thus witnessing a relocation of habitat at the beginning of the third millennium, with the new occupation concentrated on the *tell*, much nearer to the more sheltered harbour – the northern harbour near the Castle of the Sea (see p. 71-74). This new organization of urban space marks a noticeable change

from the arrangements of the previous period, and signals the beginnings of trade linked to the economic development of Sidon and to the developments of its harbour installations.

Level 2 (fig. 3-4) follows immediately on level 1, and is a relatively poor period, almost a break in occupation, with a layer of about twenty centimetres of sand containing very few sherds.

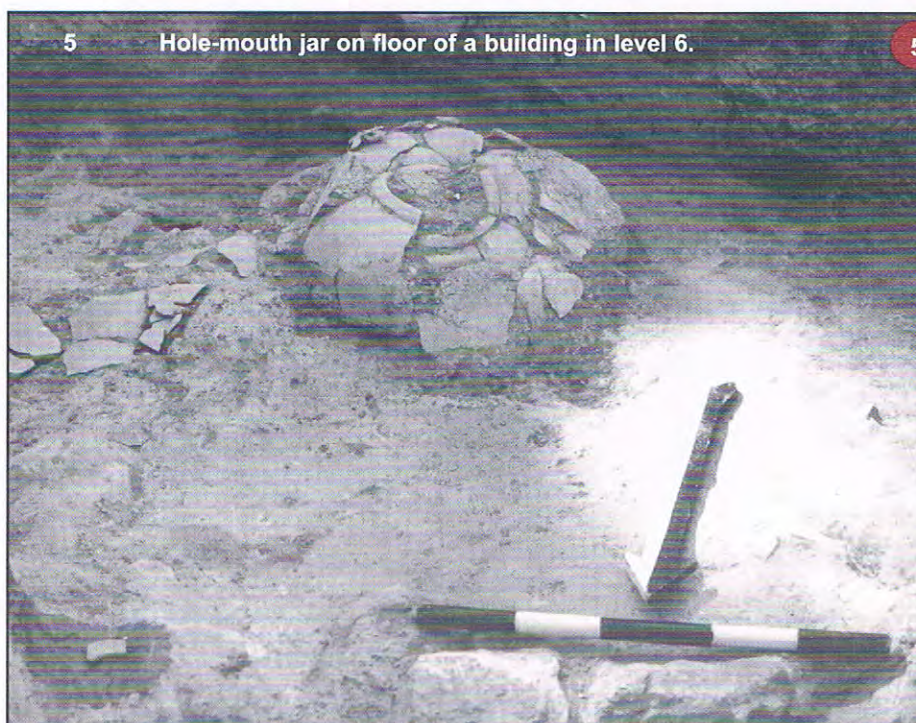
Levels 3 and 4 (fig. 3-4) which follow and represent Early Bronze II A/B, that is to say around 3000 BC, are character-

are closed vessel types used for storage or transport.

The first occupation at Sidon was of the Chalcolithic period, at Dakerman, a site about a kilometre to the south of our current excavations. Dakerman is about three hundred metres from a wide circular inlet designated as the 'southern Egyptian harbour' on the plan Gaillardot drew for Ernest Renan's *Mission de Phénicie*. The core sampling programme undertaken in the last few years has, however, demonstrated that this inlet was never used as a sheltered harbour, but was at most a staging post to and from the open sea, one from which ships could be hauled up onto the beach (see p. 74-76).

terized by the disappearance of most of the earlier types of pottery and the appearance of numerous new types, such as carinated bowls, the type fossil of Early Bronze II. Levels 5 and 6 represent Early Bronze III A/B (2700–2350/2300 BC) and are a continuation of the previous levels.

Not one sherd of the pottery known as Khirbet Kerak ware, which characterizes the Early Bronze Age III levels of Palestine, has been found at Sidon. However, the ceramic vessel, that in terms of percentage of finds really defines the character of the production of the end of the third millennium is the hole-mouth or neckless jar as it is sometimes called with ridges on the outside of the body (fig. 5). This type of vessel is interesting for two reasons: first of all it indicates a geographical distribution unusual in that comparisons occur not



5 Hole-mouth jar on floor of a building in level 6.

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with the neckless jars found in Palestine of the same period, as might be expected in Sidon, but rather with Syrian models (the first such association found at Sidon) from Hama, Tell Mardikh and the Amuq valley. Secondly, the high percentage of jars that culminates at the end of Early Bronze III B (level 6) indicates a tendency to a standardization of shapes apparently linked to the demands of increased production. This standardization, and the increase in the number of sherds unearthed, are significant indicators of developments in urbanization.

- 6 **An Early Bronze Age building destroyed in a fire with mudbrick walls, uncovered during the 2003 season.**
- 7 **Base of a juglet covered in black slip contemporaries of which were found in tombs of the First Dynasty in Egypt.**

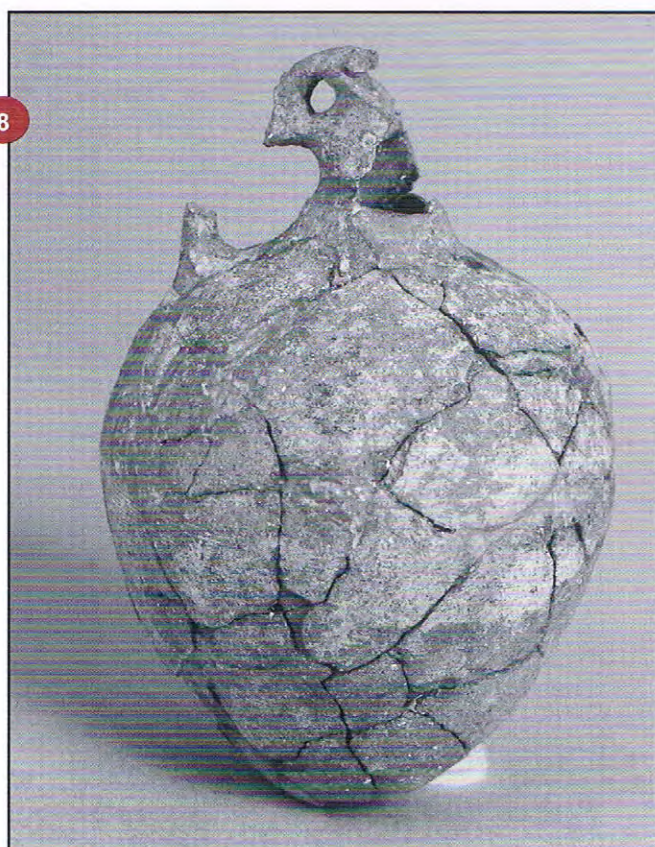


Certain types of vessel, comparable to similar ones found in Egypt and at Byblos helped to date the levels found at Sidon:

A juglet base (fig. 7) covered in black slip with vertical burnishing attested at Byblos and at many sites in Palestine is of

a type found in tombs of the First Dynasty at Abydos, as well as at Sakkarah, and is one of the links connecting Palestinian chronology, namely the beginning of Early Bronze II, to the chronology of Egypt.

A jar, found in level 6, with combed decoration is very similar to examples from the necropolis of Giza securely dated to between the IV and the V Dynasties, about 2500 BC.



8 A jug with the handle in the shape of a ram, level 6.

A jug, found in level 6, (fig. 8) of which the upper end of its handle terminates in a ram's head with the muzzle resting on the rim of the vessel, may be

compared to a double jug with one handle from Byblos dated between 3100 and 2800 BC. Maurice Dunand found other similar examples in the temple in the sacred precinct, where the deposits of offerings are dated to the period preceding the destruction of the city around 2200–2150 BC.

The extent, character and dispositions of the walls and rooms will be determinable only after further excavation. At this stage, the presence nearly throughout of lime plaster floors associated with domestic installations have been ascertained. In the latest phase of level 6, the domestic installation (fig. 9) consist of a basalt mortar, a lower millstone made of limestone and a basalt basin, all of which were found next to some wide, flat stones, which could have served as a work table.

Twenty-two cylinder seal impressions on jars were found at Sidon, some on the surface, others in stratified levels. Most of the impressions had been rolled horizontally around the shoulders of the jars, but some were rolled diagonally. One of the distinctive aspects of these impressions is the combination of a Levantine tradition already well known from Byblos with the discovery of a regional variation characteristic of the work of Sidonian artisans.

The seal impressions of this period exhibit the classical geometric motif consisting of a net pattern. A single motif, a vertical imbricated spiral, shows iconographic analogies with examples from about 2500–2400 BC found at Lerna in Greece.

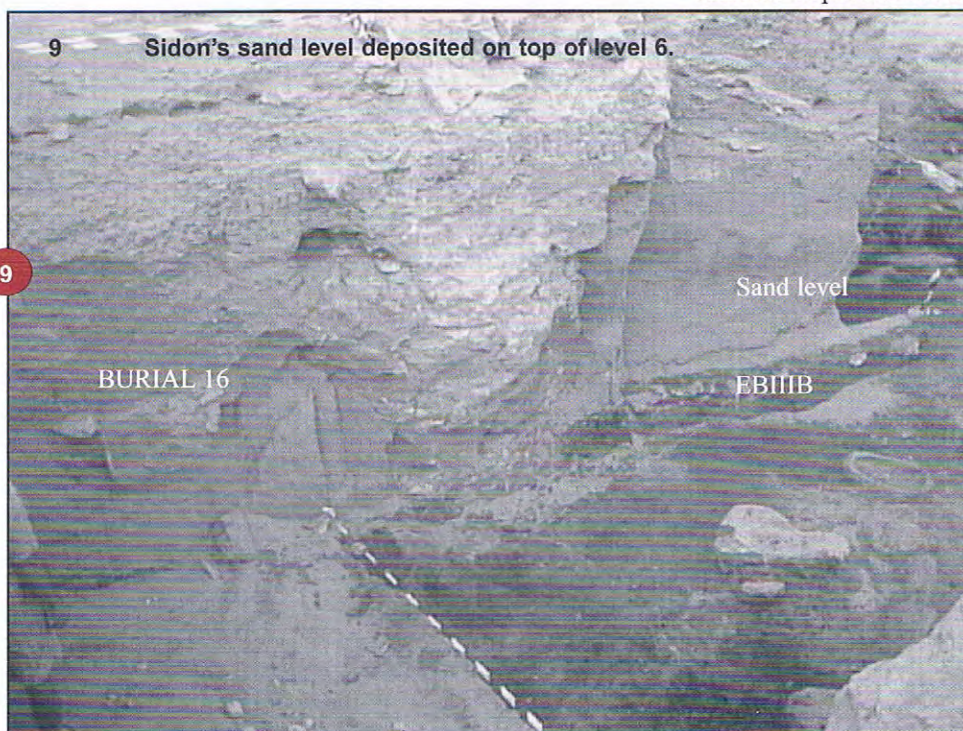
The animal motifs are widely attested with the lion being the animal most frequently represented at Sidon.

The motif of the lion and ibex *tête-bêche* characteristic of the Byblos style is also found at Sidon. These impressions are so similar that one may suppose that the seals were engraved in the same workshop. But the most remarkable seal impressions found at Sidon are what we can only call 'cult scenes'. One group of impressions includes a personage with many animal characteristics, with one arm raised and accompanied by a lion. Although this figure does not altogether resemble

the personage with a human stance and the large horns of an ibex frequently found in Palestine, it is similar in being essentially human in form, but having animal characteristics. Another impression illustrating a fertility rite shows a figure – again accompanied by a

lion – standing, plainly ithyphallic, with one arm raised and three fingers of the hand extended, brandishing a branch with the other hand.

THE SECOND MILLENNIUM – THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE



In 2001, our excavations were extended to the south the Early Bronze III domestic installation discussed above (fig. 9) was covered by a deposit of sand up to 1.5 metres thick. Pits in the sand are visible in the section; these contained burials of the Middle Bronze Age. According to analyses of the sediments undertaken at the university of Aix-en-Provence, the sand is from the dunes at the seashore nearby. It is a sea sand in which the only inclusions are a few worn down *Foraminifera* and some broken and flattened sea urchin spines. At this stage the reason why and how all this sand was brought to the site is not known. What is

known is that it was deposited at the very end of Early Bronze III B and before Middle Bronze I or II A, or during this period, i.e. around the beginning of the twentieth century BC. I should like to draw attention to a parallel between the stratigraphy noted here and that described by Patricia Maynor Bikai at Tyre. Above her stratum XIX, which she places at the extreme end of the Early Bronze Age, she describes a stratum XVIII, consisting of virgin sand from 0.90 m to 1.40 m deep, in which she found three graves dating to Late Bronze I A, and thus later than the burials at Sidon. Bikai ascribes the sand deposit to a catastrophe such as a Tsunami, which we would question. Be that as it may, it is interesting to note the similar deposits of sand at the two sites at the very

end of the Early Bronze Age.

The thirty six burials thus far excavated belong to five phases clearly distinguishable by type of burial and by grave goods. The positions as well as the orientation of the skeletons vary.

PHASE 1 is from the first part of the nineteenth century BC, the first part of Middle Bronze I or II A, contemporary with the XII dynasty in Egypt. This phase is distin-

guished by 'constructed graves' which contained the remains of warriors with their bronze weapons, except for two, which contained the remains of children, one of which was buried with jewellery and a weapon.

Animal remains are present in all the burials. Constructed Grave 12 even contains the complete skeleton of a goat (the animal bones were identified by Emmanuelle Vila, CNRS, Lyon).

Two types of rectangular constructed grave were found in phase 1: graves with low walls about 50 cm high made of local sandstone implanted in the sand and coated on the inside with a sort of grey

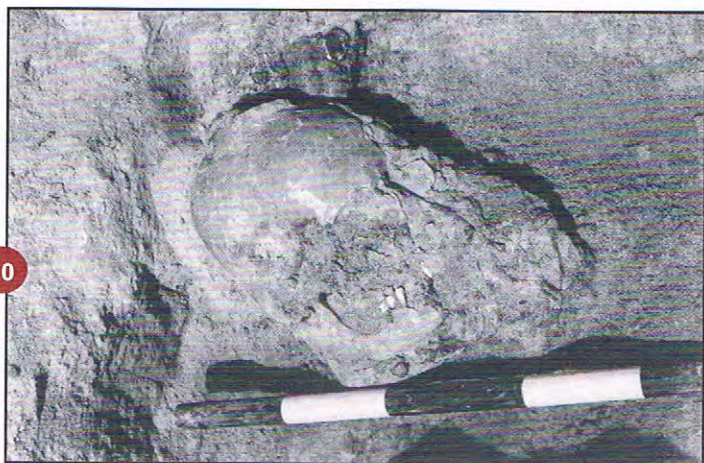
clay plaster, and graves that had only low clay walls. In Constructed grave 12, the inner surfaces of the walls were carefully plastered. Grave 5 is distinguished by the presence of small lumps of clay, which were placed under the head of the deceased as a

support. The skeletons in these inhumations consist of adult males buried with an axe and a spear, and that of a child about five years old, flexed, with a piece of gold leaf, a silver anklet and a dagger blade. All the human bones were identified by the University of Bradford.

The weaponry found as grave goods consists mainly of an axe associated with a spearhead. Two types of axe were found, the fenestrated or duckbill axe, the weapon of prestige *par excellence*, or the notched axe with a narrow blade. The axes were generally placed with the blade under (fig. 10) or near the head of the deceased (see p. 38). One of the duckbill axes is unique in that the socket is closed with two bronze knobs on either side, indicating that the axe was never meant to be used, and was placed in the grave to indicate the high rank of the deceased (see p. 40). This agrees with the conclusions of Graham Philip who associates armaments with social status and endows them with symbolic significance. In Constructed Grave

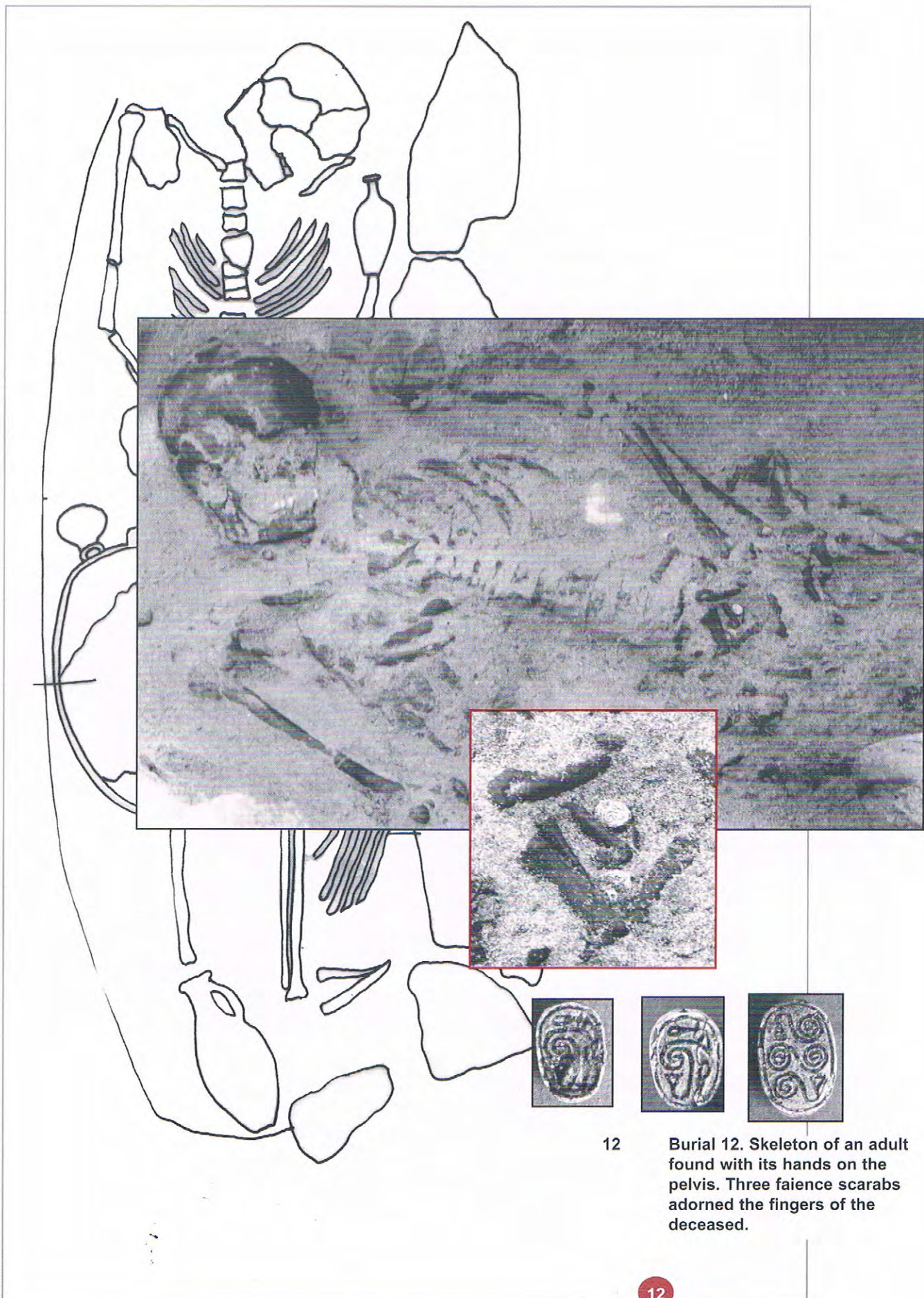
12, the extended supine skeleton of an adult was found with its hands on its pelvis. Three faience scarabs were recovered from this grave (fig. 12); they would have been threaded onto rings that once adorned the fingers of the deceased. The scarabs were identified by John Taylor of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities of the British Museum. Two of these scarabs are identical except in the smallest details, as though, having been made in the same mould, they had been lightly retouched by hand. They bear a motif of plants, connected by a spiral, as well as a *nefer* sign and a *sa* sign.

The third scarab bears a motif known from the Middle Kingdom, which consists of a double spiral flanked by other spirals which end in the form of plants. Another warrior grave was discovered, also



10 An axehead with the blade under the head from burial 12 (see also p. 38).

11 A duckbill axe with seventeen silver studs arranged in a circle discovered in burial 27 during the 2003 season.



12

Burial 12. Skeleton of an adult found with its hands on the pelvis. Three faience scarabs adorned the fingers of the deceased.

with a fenestrated axe lying level with the shoulder of the skeleton. In this case even the wooden handle was exceptionally well preserved. Warrior burials from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age have been found in Lebanon at Tell Arqa, in Palestine at Gesher, Tel Rehov and Kabri and in Syria at Baghuz and Ras Shamra. They are generally considered to be an indication of the emergence at this time of a warrior aristocracy of Amorite origin.

At Sidon, the earliest burials are the most elaborately constructed (in terms of the amount of labour involved) and are those associated with metal objects as well as with the richest offerings in terms of quality and quantity. This meticulous, individualized method of burial at the beginning of the second millennium evolved to a new way of treating the dead culminating with the appearance of multiple burials at the end of the Middle Bronze Age.

The evidence of the pottery exhibits some elements that derive from third millennium traditions, in particular the neckless jar with a spout and a horizontal incision on the shoulder. However, new elements include the introduction of a new type of painted pottery known as Levantine Painted Ware, with a motif of horizontal bands and concentric circles, the closed forms so far being attested only at Sidon.

PHASE 2 is dated to the second half of the nineteenth century BC, (see also p. 56) Middle Bronze I or II A, contemporary with the end of the XII

Egyptian dynasty. This phase is distinguished by the presence of inhumations in 'constructed' graves as well as the appearance of infant burials in jars (fig. 13-14).

The pottery continues to include elements derived from earlier traditions, in particular from the incised hole-mouth jars similar to the Montet jar in technique of manufacture, the body being hand made and the rim wheel-made, with an incised band at its junction with the body (see p. 56). The pottery also displays the use of red slip. Levantine Painted Ware continues to be attested, only now with a simple decoration of horizontal or vertical lines; this decoration is also found on open vessels, such as an inverted bowl found near the opening of a funerary jar (burial 24). Open vessels with this type of decoration are very rarely found in Palestine. Another important discovery from this phase consists of an assemblage that includes a Minoan cup.



13 Jar burial 24 with an inverted miniature bowl found near the funerary jar.

The discovery at Sidon of a Minoan cup with a vertical loop handle bears witness to trade relations between the Levantine coast and the Aegean world (see p. 20). The ware is very fine and of a high quality remarkable for its rich polychrome decoration (in white, red and blue) and spiral

motifs. The cup was discovered inverted over a deposit of sheep bones (see p. 25) and, together with a plate and two jugs, had been placed on a floor covered in lime plaster about four centimetres thick. The discovery is important because it is until today the earliest known Minoan import on the Levantine coast (see p. 23). This type of cup is uncommon, and the only two Minoan imports found in the Lebanon until now, from Byblos and the Kharji tombs in Beirut – both more recent than that at Sidon – were found in contexts whose uncertain dating is still the subject of much discussion.

To judge by its shape and its decoration, this cup, according to Alexander MacGillivray, (see p. 20) is the product of a Cretan workshop at Phaistos, one of the great centres of southern Crete, which commanded the vast Messara Plain. This cup, which is dated to Middle Minoan II A – between 1850/1800 and 1725 – and would have been contempo-

rary with the reigns of Amenemhet III and IV towards the end of the XII dynasty in Egypt, is comparable to the Minoan material from Kahun Haraga in Egypt, whose provenance has also been ascribed to the Messara Plain. MacGillivray suggests that one should view this material from Phaistos as a sign of the influence of the Messara Plain during the reign of Amenemhet III, an influence that declined before the end of the XIII dynasty around 1700, and was replaced by the hegemony of Knossos.

Minoan products, particularly the pottery, were so greatly appreciated in the Levant that they were imitated. Three sherds were found at Sidon, of local manufacture with bands painted in black and red. Two of these sherds are also decorated with fish, their outlines incised and their bodies painted. One of the fish is shown plunging, its dorsal fin discernible. Its head is missing. This type of decoration, combining bichrome decoration with the motif of the incised fish resembles that of the 'vase with the dolphins' found at el-Lisht in the Nile valley. The el-Lisht vase, whose inspiration is Levantine, is dated to about 1750–1700 BC and depicts plunging dolphins, a Minoan theme. These two discoveries, one at el-Lisht and the other at Sidon, illustrate the complexity of iconographic transmission as well as exemplifying the evolution of a motif as it is transmitted from one culture to another.



14 Jar burial 24 being excavated.

PHASE 3 (see also p. 56) is dated to the end of Middle Bronze I/II A contemporary with the XIII dynasty in Egypt, around 1780–1740 BC. This phase is distinguished by the presence of jar burials of infants three to four years old as well as by burials of adults in the bare sand or on a thin layer of lime plaster. Levantine Painted Ware disappears completely and is replaced by decoration in red slip only. The grave goods in these burials consists principally of pottery and beads. Only one scarab, dated to the XIII dynasty, was found in this phase.

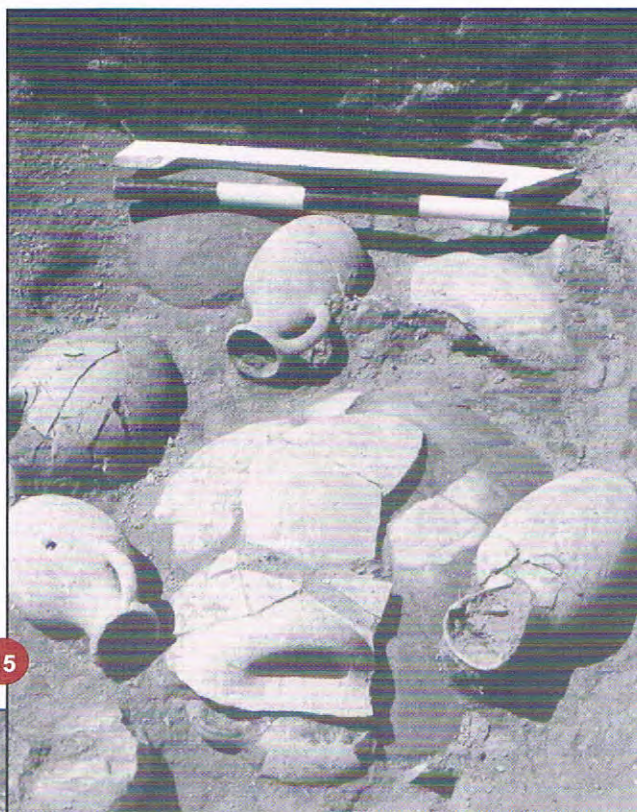
PHASE 4 (see also p. 56) is an intermediate period between the end of MBI /IIA and the beginning of MBII /IIB; there is great diversity in the burials. Only one infant jar burial was found, near a peb-

ble floor, accompanied by an animal figurine and a gaming piece. Another jar burial, of an adolescent of around thirteen years, contained a socketed arrowhead.

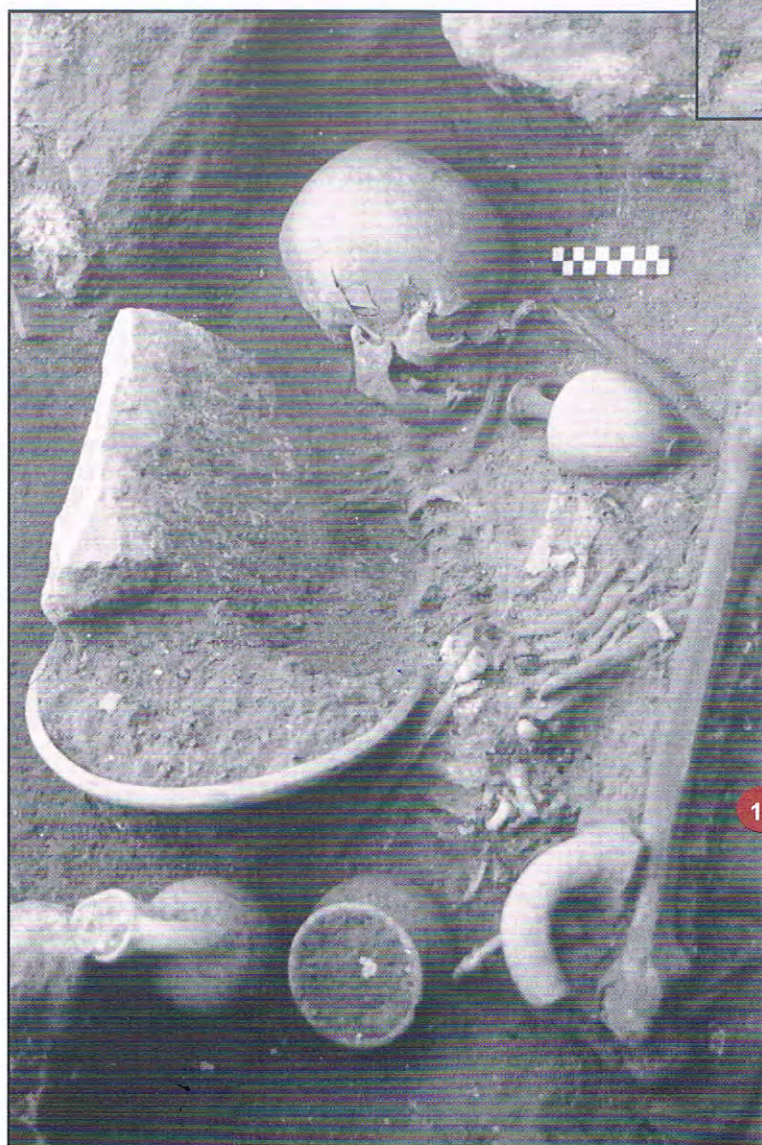
PHASE 5 (see also p. 56) belongs to the MBII/ III-MB IIB/IIC

period. Great diversity is found in the burials.

Three scarabs were found in another jar, two of them, like the two already mentioned from constructed grave 12, identical except in minute details, as though they had been made in the same mould (see p. 10). The only constructed grave contained the bones of an infant fifteen months old accompanied by a few adult bones.



15



16

A knife had been placed on a deposit of animal bones. This knife, with a curved blade, is exceptionally well preserved. The end of the handle is in the shape of an animal hoof (see p. 50). Considering how finely the metal was worked, the knife would not have been used as a weapon, but rather as a votive object.

The presence of cutmarks on some of the animal bones in this last grave suggests that butchering had taken place before they were deposited. The bones placed in these graves are probably food offerings rather than the remains of funeral repasts. The end of the five phases coincides with the end of the Middle Bronze Age.

15 Jar burial 29, Sidon's phase 4, uncovered in 2003.

16 Burial 32, Sidon's phase 3 uncovered in 2003.

THE LATE BRONZE AGE

The Middle Bronze Age provided examples of relations between Sidon and Crete. It is at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, however, that Aegean imports become more numerous, with a large number

of Mycenaean sherds bearing decoration of various types: simple linear decoration, representations of shells, whorl-shell decoration, wavy lines representing octopuses in schematized form, spirals and palmettes; the sherds include fragments of conical rhytons and stirrup vessels. Several terracotta figurines were also found, including the head of a Mycenaean *psi* figurine as well as animal figurines.

One of the main discoveries of the 2002 season of excavation was a building of which only one underground room, a sort of basement room commonly called “the sunken room” remains. (fig. 17-18). Later trenches followed the lines of the walls of the building, which were apparently robbed out in the mediaeval period when the ramparts and the castle were built. Of the ancient walls themselves, only the ashlar masonry of one part of the west wall is preserved. The room measures 4.60 m x 5.70 m and is 3.70 m below the surface. The floor consists of large paving stones oriented E-W. A few narrow paving stones laid N-W were found among the large ones. This building was destroyed by a fierce conflagration. Evidence of this conflagration is present to about 1.08 m above the level of the paving stones, which are covered in a thick layer of clay fired in the conflagration. The building had wooden beams, which were found in a good state having been carbonized,

some were found to be more than 1.05 m long (see p. 62). According to calibrated C-14 dating the trees from which these beams were cut around $\pm$ 1390-1120 BC.

This Late Bronze Age building provides evidence of the appearance of technical innovations that are also found in Syria in the same period. One is the use of the dovetail clamp, which is also attested in the architecture at the site of Ugarit in the Late Bronze Age. The finds from the floor of the building consist mainly of very fragmentary pottery. Most of the vessels are local undecorated ware in general use, sometimes enlivened with red and black bands; fragments of Mycenaean ware were also found. A bone spindle whorl with incised decoration was found on the floor as was a faience scarab. The base of the scarab bears an inscription with the name of an almost unknown pharaoh, Djed-kheper-re, who reigned during the Second Intermediate Period. The presence of four *uraei*, looking outwards, away from the inscribed royal name, should also be noted. Henri Charles Loffet, researcher at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, who studied this scarab, puts forward the hypothesis that rather than representing an obscure pharaoh, this scarab could be attributed to



17 The “sunken room” from the Late Bronze Age. an Egyptian merchant, trading with Sidon at this time and simply having the same prenomen as

being excavated.

the enigmatic pharaoh of the Second Intermediate Period.

The fact that the royal name was not inscribed within a cartouche also favours this hypothesis. As things stand at present, there are still uncertainties in the interpretation of this building, which is still

and will require further investigation.

THE IRON AGE

There was regular trade between itinerant Phoenician merchants and an Aegean clientele in the first millennium BC. Greek merchants also visited Phoenicia, which accounts for the many finds of Euboean pottery types. The skyphos with pendant circles, of the subprotogeometric style from Euboea or the northern Cyclades, (fig. 19) like

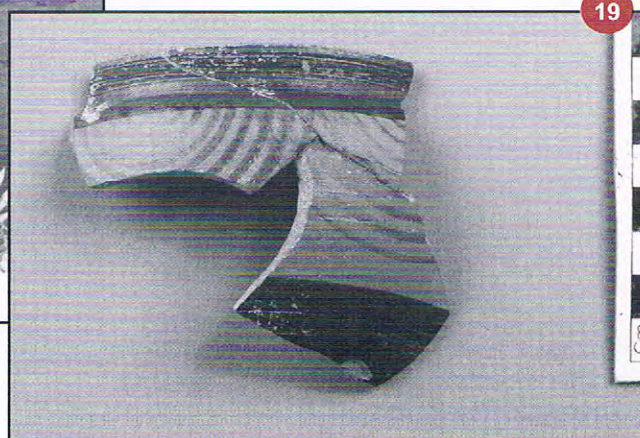
the earlier Minoan cup mentioned above, is not just an object of trade, but suggests special relations in the form of gifts or offerings. This skyphos, a vessel used for eating and drinking, is one of the earliest exports of Greek pottery to the eastern Mediterranean in the first millennium BC.

At Sidon, the Iron Age is represented by a large amount of pottery types as well as terracotta figurines and faience objects. Two Phoenician inscriptions scratched on sherds were found (see p. 70). An assemblage securely dated by the imported Attic pottery it contained was also found during the 2000 season. In 2003 domestic installations with a series of plaster floors and a posthole were uncovered (fig. 20-21). Further excavations will allow us to establish a stratigraphical sequence for the 5th-4th century at Sidon.

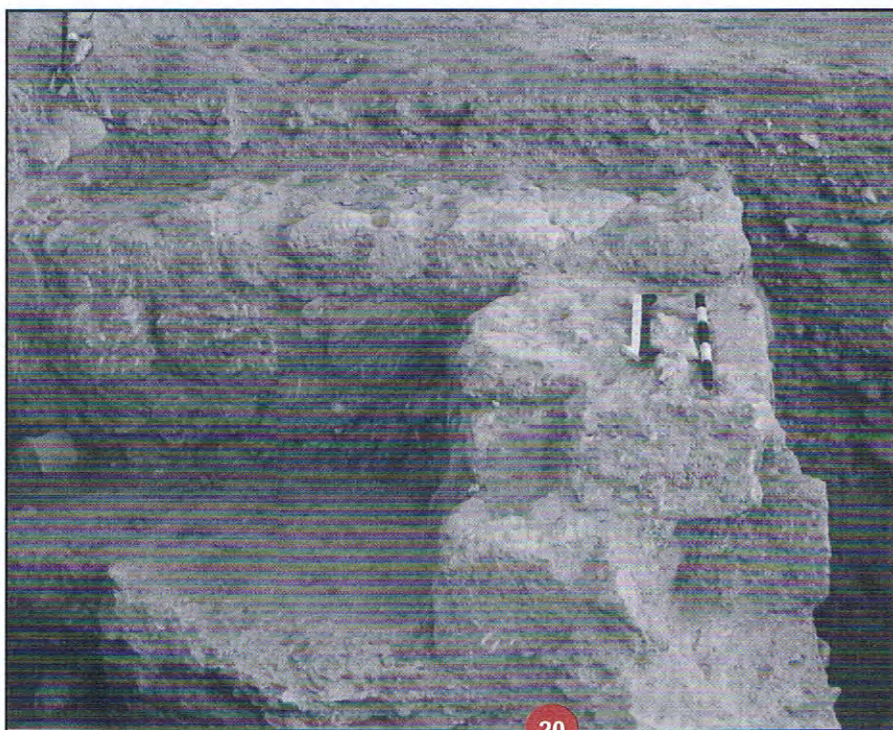


18 A view of the "sunken room floor."

The Iron Age levels, the discussion of which follows, were systematically excavated, during the 2003 season. New evidence has already emerged



19 A skyphos from the Iron Age levels.



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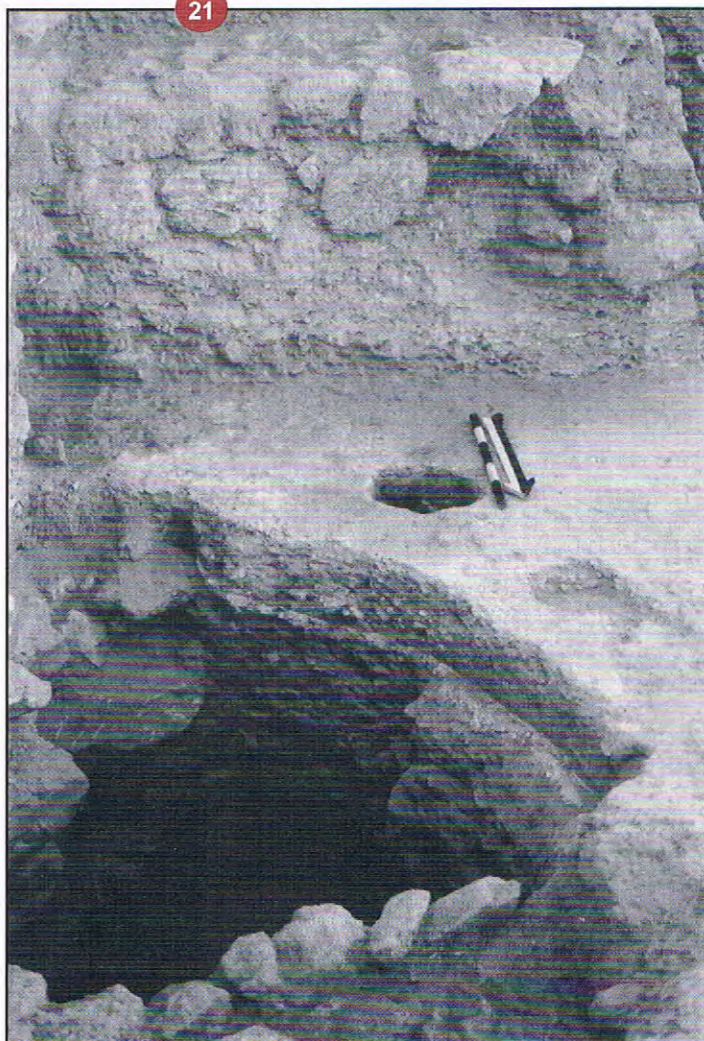
CONCLUSION

The excavations at Sidon are of great interest for more than one reason: the archaeological complexity and richness of each stage of the development of the city is at last being revealed for the first time by benchmarks whose existence had until now only been suspected.

This excavation is, after Beirut, only the second systematic urban excavation in Lebanon. The possibilities here, unlike those at Beirut, are limitless. This project is the only one of its kind in that the excavation is taking place on land expropriated by the state for the sole purpose of archaeological research. This means that part of the ancient city could be incorpo-

rated into the urban landscape at the centre of the mediaeval city. It would to some extent be possible to see parts of Canaanite and Phoenician Sidon. The principal objective of our work, however, has been the establishment, for the first time, of a stratigraphical sequence and the provision of reference material dating from the beginning of the third millennium to the end of the second millennium, with some material from the first millennium. This sequence has a number of individual characteristics, but is distinguished by a continuous development and a gradual evolution. The locally made pottery shows the original character and the true rhythm in the

character and the true rhythm in the



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20-21 Iron Age installations from the 5th-4th century BC.

development of southern Lebanon. The Minoan, Mycenaean and Euboean imports underline the importance of the sea and Mediterranean contacts to Sidon throughout its history, and provide evidence that clarifies the nature of these

exchanges: namely their ceremonial aspect, as in the case of the Minoan cup and the Euboean skyphos, and their more commercial aspect linked to trade as in the case of the Mycenaean pottery. These are just a few of the elements that will contribute to the development of our knowledge of Sidon and that will lay the foundations for a chronological sequence for the Lebanon.

This article discusses five years of excavation (1998, 2000-2003). The continuation of this work will make it possible to clarify many matters relating to the typology and the dating of material found in neighbouring countries. The material found at Sidon attests above all to affinities and contacts with Palestine, and less frequently with Syria, but what is most important is that it is truly an intermediary between these two cultures.

One of the main objectives of the programme of excavation undertaken since 1998 was to elucidate the stratigraphy of Sidon in the third millennium BC. This objective has been attained, and the publication is in preparation. The objective now is to greatly extend the third millennium levels so as to reveal the plan of the ancient city and better understand the general organization of the habitat. Work towards this objective in fact began in the 2002 season. Continuing excavation of the Middle Bronze Age levels should lead to a refinement of the dating of the types of graves that have been briefly described above as well as to elucidate the stratigraphy of Sidon in the second millennium BC. The excavation of the Late Bronze Age building, securely dated by C-14 analysis, will be completed and the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age levels will be explored more widely.

The scientific potential of the excavations is

exceptional. In short, and without any doubt, everything remains to be done at Sidon.

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