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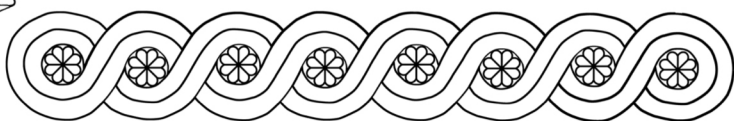
Volume 2

Field Reports

Islamic archaeology



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Foreword to the Section “Field Reports”

Nicolò Marchetti, Francesca Cavaliere, Claudia D’Orazio, Gabriele Giacosa
and Eleonora Mariani

Field reports generally represent the largest relative share of papers at the ICAANE. Reassessments of old excavations fall in this category as well. In Bologna, 95 papers were presented in four parallel sessions and 49 of them are published here. They have been simply arranged according to the alphabetic order of first authors (with the exception of course of the keynote paper, opening this section). They attest to a diversity of agencies, methods, perspectives and urgencies which represent a singular asset of our field.

While new digital architectures of knowledge are about to deeply transform the ways of our scientific dissemination, these reports do supply in the meanwhile loads of new information on near eastern sites, as well as on neighbouring areas, which are all too often insufficiently considered in our discussions.

Field Reports

The Lebanon Mountain Range in the Middle Bronze Age: The Case of Qornet ed-Deir, Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve

Metoda Peršin¹

Abstract

The towering mountains hugging the Lebanese coast, known as the Lebanon mountain range, were important throughout history for their resources, especially timber, which was exported to Egypt and Mesopotamia at least since the Bronze Age. Archaeologically however, little is known about this geographical area, with only a handful of archaeological sites known to date. Qornet ed-Deir, located in the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve, is one of such sites and has been excavated in recent years. The site features multi-period occupation remains ranging from the Middle Bronze Age to the Medieval period. In this paper, the Middle Bronze Age period remains in the Lebanon Mountain Range are discussed, with a focus on the newly excavated remains at Qornet ed-Deir, which sheds new light on the role of the mountains in the Middle Bronze Age, and highlights the interconnectivity of this area with both the Lebanon coast and the Beqaa valley.

Introduction

The majority of the known Middle Bronze Age sites in Lebanon are located either on the coast or inland in the Beqaa valley (Fig. 1). In between these two geographic regions, the Lebanon mountain range stretches through the whole country in parallel to the Mediterranean Sea, reaching an altitude of over 3000 m above sea level in its northern part and therefore forms an imposing barrier to communication between the coast and the Beqaa Valley. This mountain range has been prized for its abundant resources throughout history, especially timber, which was exported from the third millennium BC onwards (Genz 2013: 303) and was also used in local construction. Archaeologically, however, the Bronze Age Lebanese mountains are relatively unexplored with only a handful of excavated sites dating to this period, namely Yanouh, ej-Jouzé and Qornet ed-Deir. These three sites are located in the northern part of the Lebanon mountain range and are located relatively close to each other.

Yanouh (Tell Kharayeb), is situated at an altitude of about 1100 m a.s.l. (Monchambert *et al.* 2008: 35). The soundings conducted at the site offer an insight into the Early and Middle Bronze Ages. Remains discovered at the site include stone walls, floors and a tomb dated to the Early Bronze Age III (Monchambert *et al.* 2008: 51-55). The Middle Bronze Age findings point to a presence of a possible necropolis since five burials were documented in a relatively small area within one of the soundings. The deceased were accompanied by few ceramic vessels, and in one case by a bronze fenestrated axe, which led the excavators to interpret this burial as a warrior burial. These burials are dated to the Middle Bronze Age I

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(Monchambert *et al.* 2008: 56). The site of ej-Jouzé yielded a low amount of ceramic material, broadly dated to the Bronze Age, excavated in a small sounding (Nacouzi *et al.* 2018: 81).

This scarce information shows how little is known about the Lebanese mountains from an archaeological point of view. The material excavated at Qornet ed-Deir therefore adds new information to understanding the use of the mountainous area in the Middle Bronze Age in Lebanon and adds to the knowledge about the Middle Bronze Age in Lebanon in general.

Qornet ed-Deir

The site of Qornet ed-Deir is situated in the Lebanon mountain range at an altitude of about 1400 m. It is located approximately 50 km north-east of Beirut in the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve. The site is located on a rocky outcrop and partially overlooks the so-called Roman stairs, believed to have been part of the route leading from the coast to the Beqaa Valley (Fig. 2). The route likely started at Tabarja or Maameltein on the coast, possibly passed Mcheti where the preserved part of the Roman stairs starts, then continued upwards to Qornet ed-Deir, to Afqa and then crossed the Lebanon mountain range to the Beqaa Valley (Breton 1980: 34).

The site was identified recently, after which four excavation seasons were conducted. The first excavation season took place in 2017 under the directorship of Claude Doumet-Serhal (British Museum) and Bettina Fischer-Genz (Orient Institute Beirut) (Fischer-Genz *et al.* 2018), followed by two campaigns in summers of 2018 and 2019 (Peršin, Fischer-Genz and Doumet-Serhal forthcoming). The last season took place in 2020 and was directed by Claude Doumet-Serhal, Bettina Fischer-Genz and the author of this paper.

Archaeological remains at Qornet ed-Deir are located in two areas. The first one is located at the base of the rocky outcrop, whereas the second area is located directly on top of it. The latter is the main area of occupation and archaeological remains here cover approximately 2800 m². The archaeological remains can be divided into three main phases, the earliest of which dates to the Middle Bronze Age, followed by Roman and Byzantine occupation periods, and the most recent substantial occupation can be dated to the Medieval period. Occasional finds dating to the Ottoman period were identified as well, but these are likely attributed to sporadic, non-permanent occupation or possibly shepherds.

In the Roman and Byzantine periods, a large complex was constructed on the top of the rocky outcrop, taking advantage of the rocky nature of the terrain by abutting the buildings to the protruding visible bedrock, integrating the latter into the constructed structures themselves. The occupational nature of these buildings is not yet confirmed with any certainty. However, several well-preserved features point to an artisanal role of at least some of the rooms located within this complex. In addition to the above-mentioned building complex, two tombs can be attributed to the Roman and Byzantine periods. One of them is a rock-cut tomb, located in a prominent position in the center of the site and overlooking the fields below the rocky outcrop. Such rock-cut tombs are known in Lebanon, such as the examples recorded in Hosn Niha in the Beqaa Valley, which were cut in a similar fashion, and located in a prominent position overlooking the Niha valley (Newson 2015: 365). The second tomb is a built chamber collective tomb, containing remains of at least 16 individuals and is, intriguingly, located inside a building. The presence of both tombs within the occupation area

of the site is an indication of a complex settlement dynamic that is still to be fully understood (Peršin, Fischer-Genz and Doumet-Serhal forthcoming).

During the Crusader period, between the early 12th and the late 13th centuries, the preserved construction appears to have extended to cover the majority of the site and is often characterized by large header and stretcher construction, often built on top of Byzantine structures, preserving their ground plans. The function of the Medieval buildings remains an open question at the moment (McPhillips forthcoming).

The Middle Bronze Age

The Middle Bronze Age remains at the site are so far not abundant. This is partially due to the fact that only a small area in which the Middle Bronze Age remains are located has been excavated so far (Fig. 3 – red rectangle). Secondly, the massive architecture of the later periods affected the preservation of any previous remains. In some areas, the archaeological layers are shallow, especially where the Roman and Byzantine construction partially integrates the natural bedrock into its architecture. Consequently, no Middle Bronze Age architecture was excavated so far. Many burnt lumps of clay with well visible impressions of wood were found in the Middle Bronze Age levels, however it is not possible to say with certainty if they were part of architecture that would have used wood and clay instead of stone. Stone is abundantly available in the entire area in and around the site, thus one would expect stone construction to be used in the Middle Bronze Age. As no remains have been uncovered yet, further excavations are needed to resolve the question of the construction techniques.

Numerous Middle Bronze Age layers were excavated within the area shown in the red box in Fig. 3, however with the lack of architecture, it is difficult to determine their exact function. These layers were all sloping from their highest point to the west, towards a lower point in the east, courtesy of the sloping bedrock located directly below these layers (see Fig. 3 for site topography). Initially, it was thought that the Middle Bronze Age remains discovered within the red square shown in Fig. 3 could have been residual material, or refuse, from a Middle Bronze Age occupation area located in a higher area to the west of the main site. However, investigation of the highest area on the site (Fig. 3 – green circle) yielded no traces of occupation during any of the site's occupation periods. Therefore, it was possible to confirm that the Middle Bronze Age occupation was indeed based on the sloped ground of the site.

This is also supported by a partially preserved fireplace found on such a slope. Its remaining part consisted of a stone outline and a clay lining (Fig. 4). In its center a small amount of ash and a rather well-preserved charred log were found. This fireplace is one of the rare Middle Bronze Age features preserved at the site. In addition to the fireplace, a Middle Bronze Age clay installation, not yet fully excavated, is located at the eastern edge of the excavated area. It consists of a thick clay layer and forms a possible bench with a partially restorable storage jar found lying on top of it. This bench is in contrast to the above-mentioned fireplace the only Middle Bronze Age feature located on a horizontal surface.

Despite the lack of architectural remains and the small number of preserved Middle Bronze Age features, many finds dating to the Middle Bronze Age were excavated at the site. The majority of these finds are represented by ceramic material. Over 7000 ceramic sherds dating to the Middle Bronze Age were found at the site so far. The preservation of pottery is poor which translates to the large amount of small and fragmented sherds. The majority of these sherds come from the 24 m² large area in which the Middle Bronze Age

levels were reached (Fig. 3). Nonetheless, in this relatively small area, over 500 diagnostic pieces were found. The ceramic material studied so far can be dated to the Middle Bronze Age I or the latest to the transition of Middle Bronze Age I to II in the terms of the northern chronologies.

The distribution of different types of vessels shows the prevalence of storage jars, followed by cooking vessels (Fig. 5). Other types of ceramics are presented in very small numbers. Storage jars show a high degree of standardization as only a few different rim types are attested. The vast majority of rims are short rims folded on the outside (Fig. 7: 1, 2) that have comparisons in the Royal tombs in Byblos (Tufnell 1969: fig. 6: 56), at Tell el-Burak (Badreshany and Kamlah 2010-11: fig. 8: 6, 8, 11, 12), at Tell Fadous-Kfarabida (Peršin 2017: pl. 19: 3-10), in Sidon (Doumet-Serhal 2004: fig. 39: S/1872), at Tell Arqa in Phase M (Thalmann *et al.* 2006: pl. 104: 5) and in Kamid el-Loz (Catanzariti 2010-11: fig. 7: 4, 5), or short folded rims with a double thickening on the outside (Fig. 7: 3-6) that have comparisons at Tell Arqa Phase N (Thalmann *et al.* 2006: pl. 91: 19), in Kamid el-Loz (Catanzariti 2010-11: fig. 8: 1, 6), in the Baalbek material (Genz 2008: pl. 6: 5), at Tell el-Ghassil Niveau Niveau XI (Doumet-Serhal 1996: pl. 6: 13), Niveau X (Doumet-Serhal 1996: pl. 16: 14) and Niveau IX (Doumet-Serhal 1996: pl. 26: 6). Another frequent type are jars with elongated folded rims with a marked ridge below (Fig. 7: 7-10). These have parallels in Sidon (Doumet-Serhal 2004: fig. 53: S/1853), at Tell Arqa Phase N (Thalmann *et al.* 2006: pl. 91: 18) and Tell Fadous-Kfarabida (Peršin 2018: pl. 3:5).

Among the cooking pots found at the site, the majority are globular shapes with gutter rims (Fig. 6: 1, 3). Occasionally a handle is preserved attached to the rim (Fig. 6: 2, 4). Parallels for this type of vessels come from the Royal tombs in Byblos (Tufnell 1969: fig. 7: 58), Tell el-Burak (Badreshany and Kamlah 2010-11: fig. 13: 1-7) and Tell Fadous-Kfarabida (Peršin 2017: pl. 13: 8, 9, pl. 14: 1-9). The other type present at the site are straight-walled cooking pots (Fig. 6: 5-8). Straight-walled cooking pots generally have large flat bases, although no bases are attested at Qornet ed-Deir. Rims however, show some variety and may be everted, upturned or incurved. These vessels are always handmade and often bear ledge handles and holes pierced at intervals above the handles. Examples with incurved upper walls are known from Baalbek (Genz 2008: pl. 1: 6) and Kamid el-Loz (Catanzariti 2010-11: fig. 6: 7, 9). Straight-walled cooking pots are generally absent from the coast and the only three examples are known from Tell Fadous-Kfarabida (Genz 2010-11: 117).

In addition to the ceramic assemblage, a substantial number of animal bones were recovered from the Middle Bronze Age layers. Their preliminary analysis showed that the diet of the Middle Bronze Age occupants of the site consisted mostly of goats and sheep, and as all parts of the skeletons were found at the site, it seems that the animals were slaughtered locally. The presence of neonatal remains shows that lambing took place on-site and indicates that the site was occupied during a good portion of the calendar year. Hunting did not play a major role at the site, as indicated by the lack of wild animal bones, despite the fact that the environment is suitable for such species. Remarkable is the presence of sea bream bones that furthermore corroborate connections of the site with the coast (Mardini and Fischer-Genz 2022). The bone evidence suggests that the occupants of the site were to some extent connected to the coast, but also appear to have been self-sustainable, relying on their own herds for meat production. Furthermore, preliminary palaeobotanical analysis shows the

lack of olive pits, as well as cereal remains in the samples. It seems therefore that prepared cereal-based foods were brought to the site (Malleison forthcoming).

Discussion

Since a very small number of Middle Bronze Age sites have been discovered or explored so far in the Lebanon mountain range, the site of Qornet ed-Deir in the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve offers a new opportunity for a better understanding of the Middle Bronze Age in this geographic region. Despite the lack of architecture and the presence of limited features in the Middle Bronze Age levels at the site, the finds suggest that certain human activities took place at the site in this period.

Analysis of the ceramic material shows that the majority of the vessels are of closed types, followed by cooking vessels, whereas serving vessels are not abundant. This picture may be explained in several ways. If dealing with a domestic context, one would expect the amounts of different groups to be more evenly distributed. As the Middle Bronze Age ceramics come from a rather small area at the site, other spaces with different ceramic types and consequently different functions may still be waiting to be excavated at the site. On the other hand, the site may have not had a domestic function. Based on the current ceramic analysis this seems like a plausible explanation. This may be supported by prevalence of jars in the ceramic corpus and their types that show certain standardization. These types of jars are very convenient, not only for storing, but also for transportation. It is therefore possible that the large number of jars were used for a production, storage and transportation of a specific commodity. Preliminary palaeobotanical results show lack of cereal remains in samples (Malleison forthcoming), and the altitude of the site with 1400 m a.s.l. is not optimal for the growth of olive trees, therefore the olive oil production may be excluded as well. This is furthermore supported by the absence of olive pits in samples (Malleison forthcoming). The question to what kind of commodity was stored in these jars remains open for the time being. Given the altitude of the site and the surrounding forested area, tree products, such as resin come to mind. Whatever the commodities in questions might have been, the site's practical location next to the so-called Roman stairs offers a convenient way for the transportation of goods through the communication routes that connected coast with the Beqaa valley. The connections of the site with both the coast and the Beqaa valley in the Middle Bronze Age are supported both by the pottery and animal bone analysis. The ceramic corpus shows affinities with the inland based on the presence of the straight-walled cooking pots which are typically present in the Beqaa valley. The gutter rim cooking pots, on the other hand, point to connections with the coast, which is further supported by the presence of a few sea bream bones in the Middle Bronze Age contexts (Mardini and Fischer-Genz 2022).

Conclusion

The present paper offers a glimpse into the function of the site in the Middle Bronze Age, as well as the role of the Lebanon mountain range in the Middle Bronze Age. Questions about the exact duration and type of occupation of the site in the Middle Bronze Age remain to be answered. The present evidence indicates at least a longer seasonal use of the site, if not a permanent occupation. Furthermore, the ceramic material shows that the slopes of Mount Lebanon were not prized only for the timber that grew on them, but that other tree products might have been just as important. Additionally, the Qornet ed-Deir assemblage adds new

data about the integration of mountainous sites into a coast-inland communication. The results presented in this paper show the potential of a small site and its ability to provide us with rich information to fill the gaps in our understanding of the Middle Bronze Age and more specifically the Lebanon mountain range.

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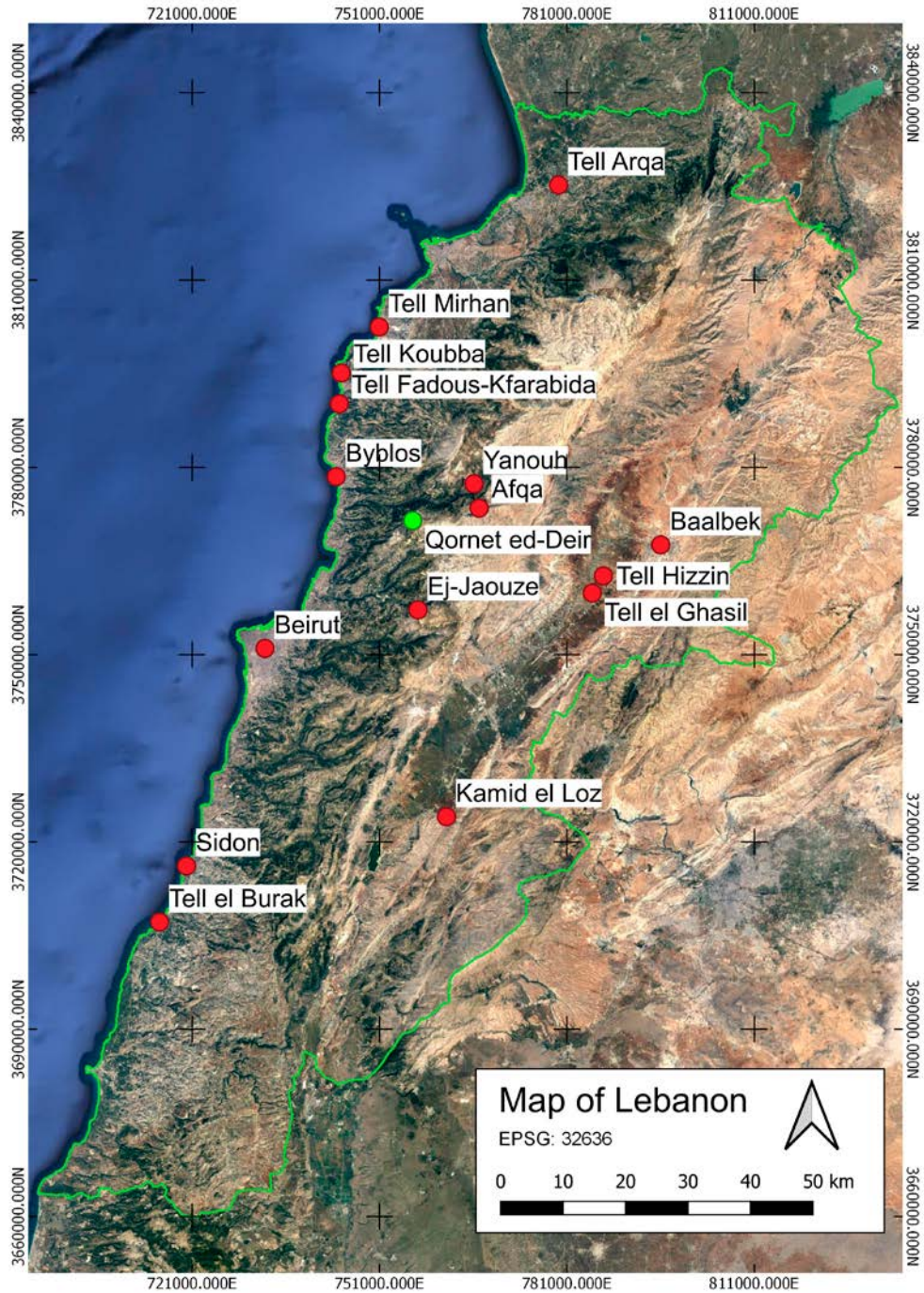


Fig. 1: Location of Qornet ed-Deir in the Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve and distribution of other major Middle Bronze Age sites in Lebanon

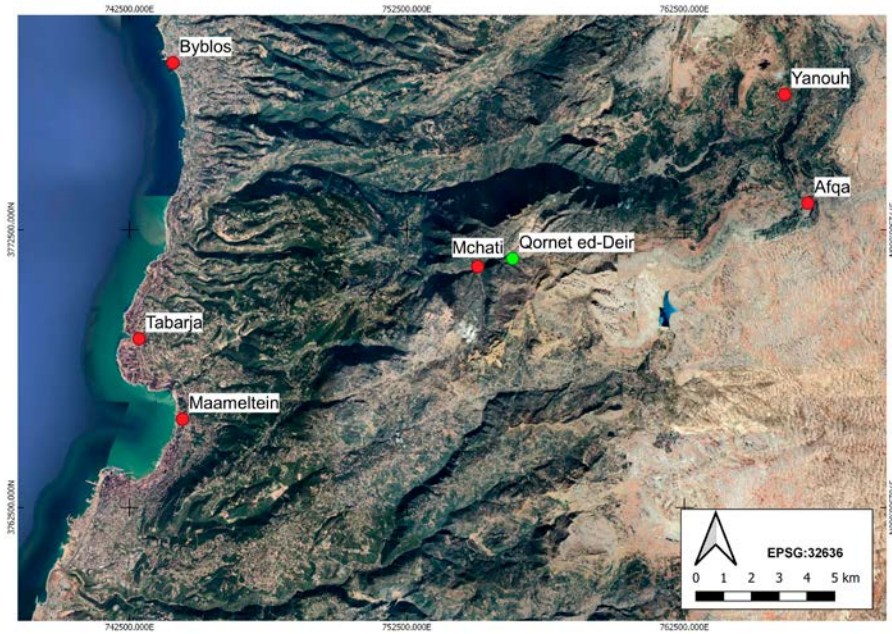


Fig. 2: Map showing localities that were part of the Roman route that led from the coast to the Beqaa valley

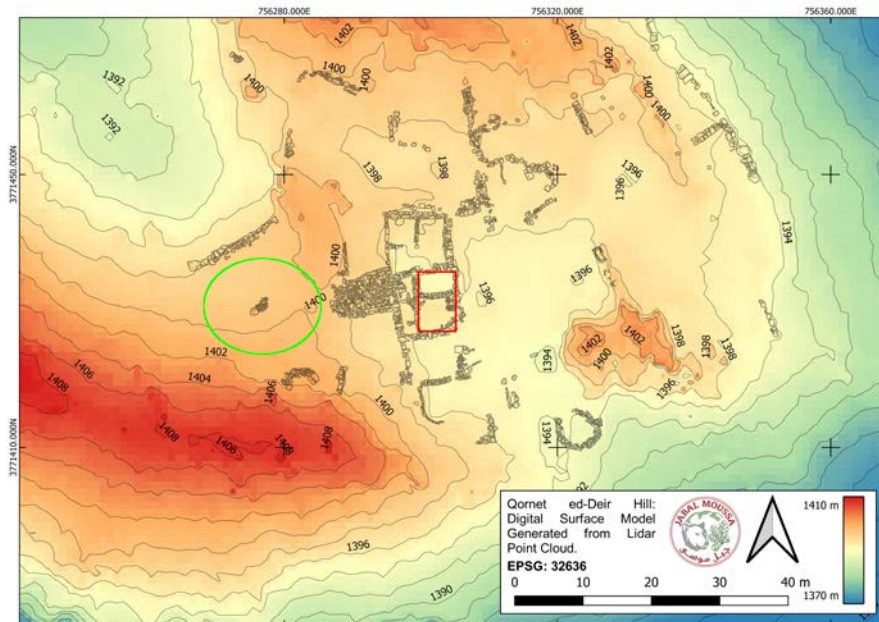


Fig. 3: Red rectangle marks the area at Qornet ed-Deir in which the Middle Bronze Age layers were reached and the green circle marks the highest excavated area at the site



Fig. 4: Remains of a Middle Bronze Age fireplace

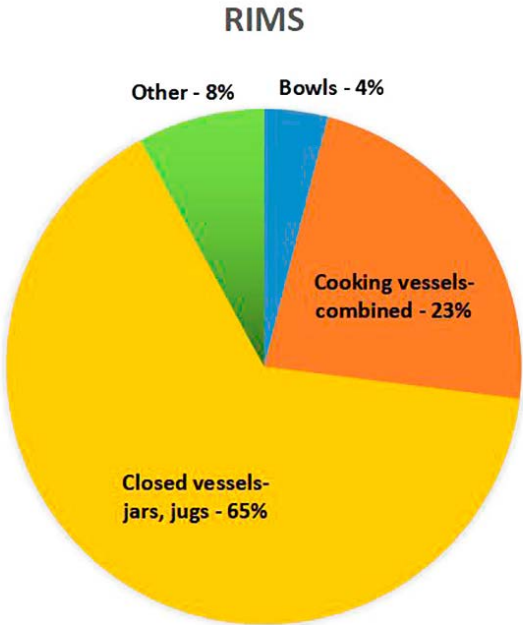


Fig. 5: Distribution of the Middle Bronze Age ceramic types at Qornet ed-Deir

Fig.	Reg.no.	Type	Description
6:1	QED18.2/6.120.1	Globular jar with gutter rim	Light brown clay (7.5 YR 6/4) with dark grey core (10 YR 4/1). Many subrounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, calcite+grey grits, up to 3 mm). Manufacturing technique unclear. Medium well fired. Out.: light reddish-brown (5 YR 6/4) and black (5 YR 2.5/1). Ins.: reddish-yellow (7.5 YR 6/6) and dark grey (10 YR 4/1).
6:2	QED18.2/6.133.2	Globular jar with gutter rim	Light red clay (2.5 YR 6/6) with many fine subrounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, grey, black+red grits, up to 4 mm). Wheelmade. Medium well fired. Ins.: reddish-yellow (7.5 YR 7/6), wheelmarks visible. Out.: reddish-yellow (7.5 YR 7/6, 5 YR 6/6).
6:3	QED18.2/6.250.8	Globular jar with gutter rim	Pink clay (7.5 YR 7/4). Many rounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, calcite+grey grits, up to 3 mm). Probably wheelmade. Well fired. Out.+ins.: pink (7.5 YR 7/4).
6:4	QED18.2/6.127.1	Globular jar with gutter rim	Uneven. One side: dark reddish-grey (5 YR 4/2), one side: light brown inside (7.5 YR 6/4) and red inside (2.5 YR 5/6). Many subrounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, calcite, black+grey grits, up to 4 mm). Manufacturing technique unclear. Medium well fired. Out.: reddish brown (5 YR 5/4) and brown (7.5 YR 5/2). Ins.: brown (7.5 YR 5/2) and light reddish-brown (5 YR 6/4).
6:5	QED19.2/6.354.2	Straight walled cooking pot	Black clay (5YR 2.5/1) with some subangular to angular inclusions (limestone and grey grits, up to 3 mm). Handmade. Well fired. Out.: light red (2.5YR 7/6) and dark reddish-grey (2.5YR 4/1). Ins.: light grey (10YR 7/2) and very pale brown (10YR 7/3).
6:6	QED19.2/6.306.8	Straight walled cooking pot	Red clay (2.5 YR 5/6) with black core (5 YR 2.5/1). Small amount of subangular to angular inclusions (limestone, red, grey+black grits, up to 3 mm). Handmade. Very well fired. Out.: red (2.5 YR 5/6), uneven. Ins.: light reddish-brown (5 YR 6/4).
6:7	QED17.2/3.44.1	Straight walled cooking pot	Light reddish-brown clay (5 YR 6/4) with very dark grey clay (5 YR 3/1). Medium amount of subrounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, calcite, red+grey grits, up to 2 mm+some vegetal inclusions). Very well fired. Manufacturing technique unclear. Out.: light red (2.5 YR 6/6) and brown (7.5 YR 5/2). Ins.: dark grey (7.5 YR 4/1) and light reddish-brown (5 YR 6/4).
6:8	QED18.2/6.281.1	Straight walled cooking pot	Reddish-black clay (2.5 YR 2.5/1) with some subangular inclusions (limestone, calcite, red+grey grits, up to 2 mm). Handmade. Very well fired. Out.: light reddish-brown (2.5 YR 6/3) and dark reddish-grey (2.5 YR 3/1). Ins.: pink (7.5 YR 7/3) and very dark grey (Gley 1 3/1).

Table 1: Information on the Middle Bronze Age cooking pots presented in Fig. 6

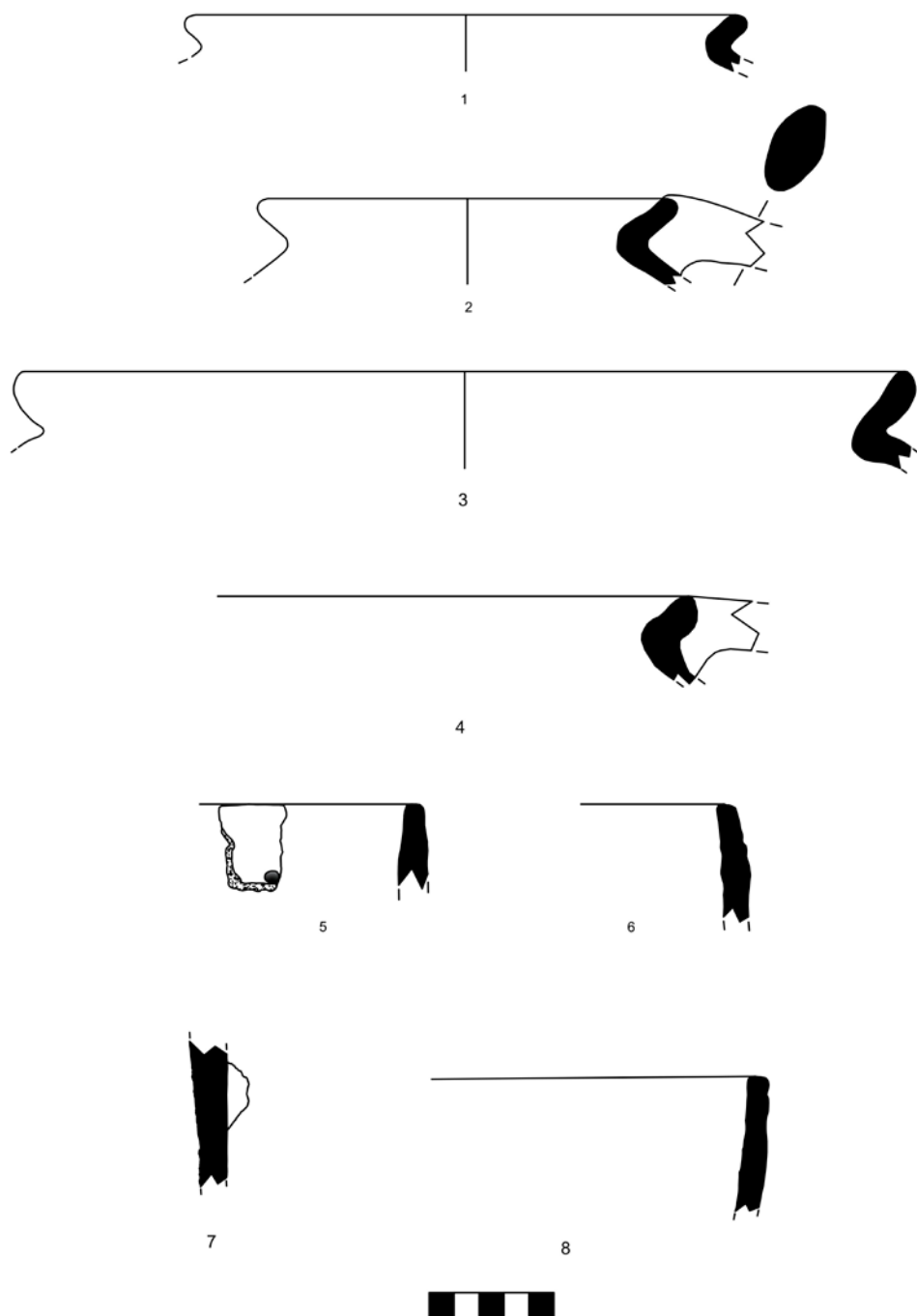


Fig. 6: Selected Middle Bronze Age cooking pots from Qornet ed-Deir

Fig.	Reg.no.	Type	Description
7:1	QED17.2/2.16.2+7	Jar	Reddish-yellow clay (5 YR 6/6) with many subrounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, grey+red grits, up to 4 mm). Probably wheelmade. Well fired. Out.+ins.: reddish-yellow (7.5 YR 7/6).
7:2	QED19.2.6.396.5	Jar	Light red clay (2.5 YR 6/8) with light brown core (7.5 YR 6/3). Medium amount of subangular inclusions (limestone, calcite+grey grits, up to 2 mm). Manufacturing technique unclear. Very well fired. Ins.+out.: light red (2.5 YR 6/8).
7:3	QED18.2/6.148.2	Jar	Red clay (10 R 5/6) with many rounded to angular inclusions (limestone, grey+black grits, up to 4 mm). Manufacturing technique unclear. Very well fired. Out.+ins.: reddish-yellow (5 YR 6/6).
7:4	QED18.2/6.229.2	Jar	Light red clay (2.5 YR 6/6) with light brownish-grey core (10 YR 6/2). Many rounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, red+grey grits, up to 3 mm). Probably wheelmade. Very well fired. Out.+ins.: light red (2.5 YR 6/4), wheelmarks visible.
7:5	QED19.2/7.194.1	Jar	Light red clay outside (2.5 YR 6/8) and pale brown inside (10 YR 6/3). Many subrounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, red+grey grits, up to 3 mm). Manufacturing technique unclear. Very well fired. Out.+ins.: reddish-yellow (5 YR 6/6).
7:6	QED19.2/7.194.3	Jar	Red clay outside (2.5 YR 5/6) and light brown inside (7.5 YR 6/3). Many subrounded to subangular inclusions (limestone+grey grits, up to 2 mm). Manufacturing technique unclear. Very well fired. Out.: reddish-yellow (5 YR 6/6). Ins.: reddish-yellow (5 YR 6/8).
7:7	QED19.2/6.603.2	Jar	Reddish-yellow clay (7.5 YR 6/6) with many subrounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, grey+black grits, up to 2 mm). Very well fired. Wheelmade. Out.+ins.: reddish-yellow (7.5 YR 6/6). Ins.: wheelmarks visible.
7:8	QED19.2/7.217.5	Jar	Light red clay outside (2.5 YR 6/6) and light brownish-grey inside (10 YR 6/2). Medium amount of subrounded to subangular inclusions (limestone+grey grits, up to 3 mm). Manufacturing technique unclear. Very well fired. Out.: light red (2.5 YR 6/6). Ins.: very pale brown (10 YR 7/3).
7:9	QED18.2/6.250.10	Jar	Red clay (2.5 YR 5/6) with many rounded to subangular inclusions (limestone, grey+black grits, up to 3 mm). Probably wheelmade. Very well fired. Out.: reddish-grey (5 YR 5/2) and light red (2.5 YR 6/8). Ins.: reddish-yellow (7.5 YR 7/6).
7:10	QED17.2/4.79.3	Jar	Red clay (2.5 YR 5/8) with medium amount of subrounded to angular inclusions (limestone, calcite+grey grits, up to 2 mm). Wheelmade. Medium well fired. Out.: light red (2.5 YR 6/6). Ins.: light red (2.5 YR 6/6) and dark reddish-grey (2.5 YR 4/1), wheelmarks visible.

Table 2: Information on the Middle Bronze Age jars presented in Fig. 7

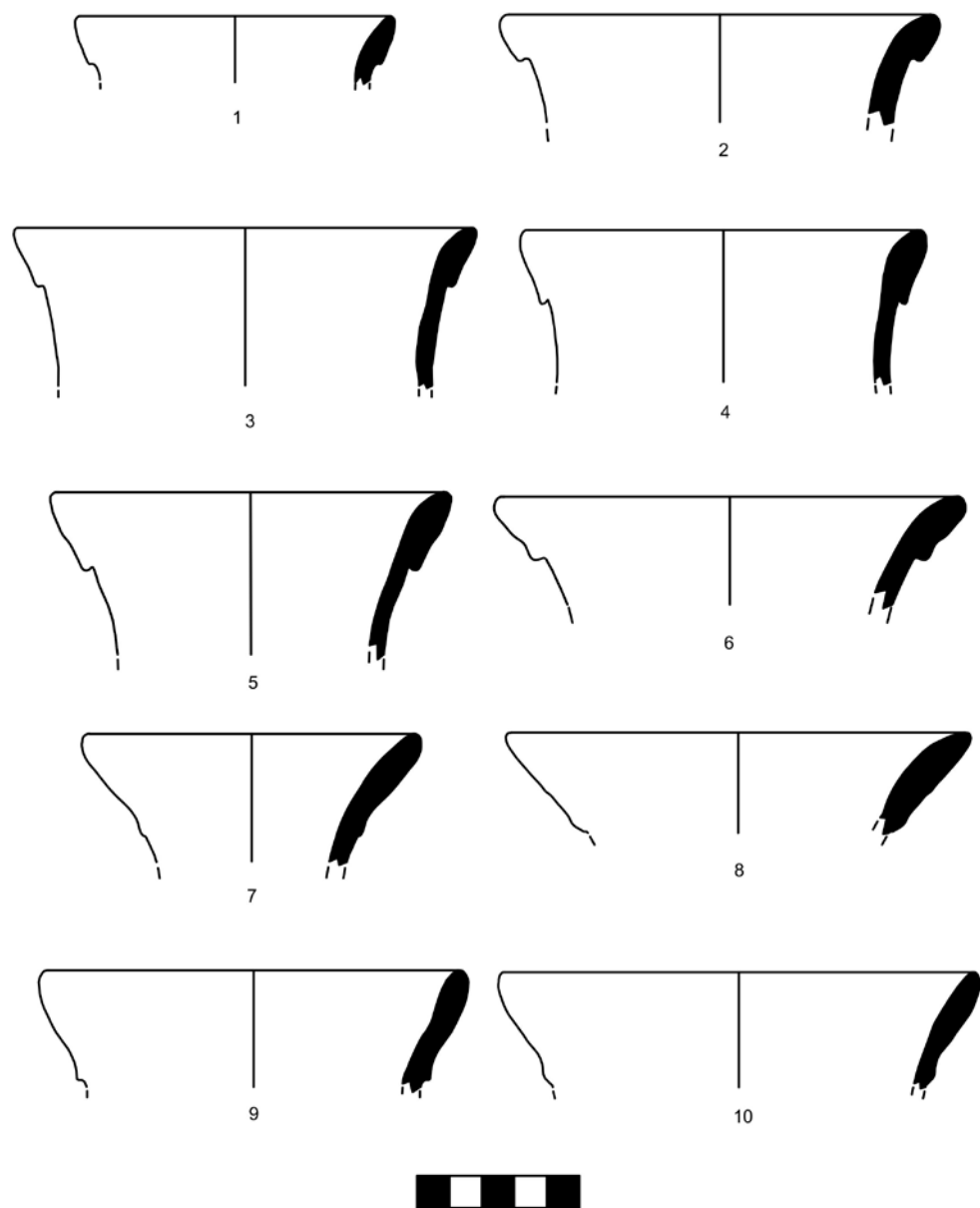


Fig. 7: Selected Middle Bronze Age jars from Qornet ed-Deir