MARC LEBEAU
(editor - éditeur)

ABOUT SUBARTU
STUDIES DEVOTED TO UPPER MESOPOTAMIA

À PROPOS DE SUBARTU
ÉTUDES CONSCRÉES À LA HAUTE MÉSOPOTAMIE

Vol. 1 - Landscape, Archaeology, Settlement
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Ebla and the Ceramic Provinces of Northern Syria
in the Middle Bronze Age: Relationships and Interconnections
with the Pottery Horizons of Upper Mesopotamia*

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Introduction

The Middle Bronze Age pottery horizon of Northern Inner Syria is being increasingly cleared by the excavations conducted by P. Matthiae at Tell Mardikh, ancient Ebla (Matthiae 1993a; 1993b; 1994; 1995a; 1995b). Recent excavations in Area P have provided a comprehensive amount of ceramic materials, which allow to definitively establish the pottery sequence during the whole MBA in the region. A series of superimposed contexts have in fact furnished a ceramic sequence firmly based upon stratigraphy (Nigro in press).

Due to the scarcity and the accidentality of findings, no fully comparable stratified sequence is yet available from the Euphrates valley and the Balikh and Khabur basins, although several sites have given important assemblages. It is probably for this reason that scholars have focused their interest mainly on painted productions, since a comparative study of achrome pottery is still hampered by the lack of detailed typologies and of physico-chemical analyses. The greatest difficulty is not the scantiness of MB ceramic materials, but the paucity of stratigraphic sequences to which ceramic materials could be firmly anchored.

The discussion of the MB pottery of Ebla is beyond the goal of this paper, however this sequence represents a reliable reference point in order to compare ceramic evidence from many sites of Northern Syria and to build up a coherent inter-site stratigraphic seriation. Thus, a brief sketch will be traced here, highlighting the general developments of shapes and wares, which present comparable features with the contemporary assemblages from the Euphrates valley and the Balikh and Khabur basins.

Chronological Development of Wares
and Pottery Types at Ebla and in Northern Inner Syria

The Middle Bronze Age at Ebla has been divided into two main archaeological and stratigraphic periods (Mardikh IIIA and Mardikh IIIB), which define respectively the material culture horizons of MB I (2000-1800 B.C.) and MB II (1800-1600 B.C.) (see Table 1). Each period has been further subdivided into two phases on the grounds of stratigraphy and associated pottery (Nigro in press, tab. 1). The resulting sequence has found several confirmations in a comparative analysis of the ceramic materials from numerous Eblaitic contexts1 and from Hama H.2 In this site the last phase of MB is not represented, while a comparable stratified MB IIIB ceramic repertoire is furnished by Alalakh VII. A correspondence between the end of Mardikh IIIB and Alalakh VII may be surmised, since both sites were destroyed by the Old-Hittite kings around 1600 B.C.3 The final MB pottery horizon of Northern Inner Syria is thus displayed by the integrated inventories of Ebla and Alalakh, during the time span when both sites were under the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Yamkhad. The pottery sequence of Ebla, compared with those from Hama and Alalakh, fully represents that of Northern Inner Syria during the entire Middle Bronze Age. Since the ceramic evidence available from Upper Mesopotamia and the Euphrates valley does not offer so far a

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1 I wish to deeply thank Marc Lebeau, who has invited me to participate to this collaborative work, and my friend Nicolet Marchetti, who has discussed with me many topics of this paper, giving a lot of important suggestions.

2 Several MB sequences have been obtained during thirty years of excavations: in the private houses of Areas A and B, in the area of Temple N, on the Acropolis in Palace E and in Temple D, Area P, with a complete seriation, in the Northern Lower Town. See Matthiae 1989a, 207-220; 1995, and Nigro in press a for a comprehensive synthesis.

3 Both sites show a very similar development during MB IA-MB II A, since the Hama sequence lacks the latest MB layers excavated areas (Ingholt 1940, 66; contra Bourke 1993, 189-192; on this widely debated topic see also Nigro in press).

A slightly lower absolute dating (1575 B.C.) has been proposed by M. Heinz (Heinz 1992, 210).
detailed phasing for the same period, the ceramic assemblages will be compared considering the broader chronological subdivision into MB I and II.4

The Middle Bronze I horizon (2000-1800 B.C.) of Northern Inner Syria

Simple Ware

The shapes which characterize the initial MB pottery horizon of Northern Inner Syria are the slightly carinated bowl (Matthiae et al. 1995, 451, ns. 347-348; Suleiman - Grisenko 1987, pl. I:17-20, 22), the large bowl with outward expanded rim and high carination (Fugmann 1958, fig. 109, 3C130: Suleiman - Grisenko 1987, pl. I:38-39; Matthiae 1989a, fig. 44-9; Niger in press, fig. 1:5), and the bowl imitating a metallic prototype (the so-called Gublite bowl), with sharp carination, base-ring and short out-turned rim (Matthiae 1989a, fig. 43-9-10; Matthiae et al. 1995, 451, no. 349),5 which, however, reaches its largest diffusion toward the end of this phase (1950-1900 B.C.). Another characteristic MB shape, which makes its first appearance in Mardikh IIIA1 (Archaic Palace II), is the large krater with carinated body, and outward horizontally expanded rim, which often presents combed bands on the shoulders (Suleiman - Grisenko, pl. I:50, 54; Matthiae et al. 1995, 493, no. 443).6

In the second phase (MB IB), a distinctive type is attested to, the so-called collared bowl, a small carinated vessels with short vertical grooved rim (Niger in press, fig. 2:2-5). It gradually becomes, together with the Gublite bowl, a hallmark of central MB, undergoing a progressive transformation of the shape until 1700 B.C. (Marchetti - Niger in press b, fig. 4:12-13). Another common MB IB vessel is the bowl with high carination and everted rim, which has a similar chronological extension until the end of MB IIA (ibid., fig. 4:1-11). Both types are distinctive of the ceramic province of Northern Inner Syria.

Closed shapes usually have convex bottom, a striking distinctive feature in respect of plain cut bases of EB tradition. In consequence of this, cylindrical potstands make their appearance in MB I assemblage (Marchetti - Niger in press a, fig. 8:40). Small jars present an ovoid body, a pronounced neck and doubled either swollen everted rim (Matthiae et al. 1995, 452, ns. 350-351). Medium size jars have almost globular body and swollen, outward expanded or squared rim (Matthiae et al. 1995, 452, no. 352; Niger in press, fig. 1:18-19), with a short neck, or a large mouth with corrugated or grooved short vertical rim (Matthiae et al. 1995, 453, no. 354), descending from the triple grooved rim jar of EB IV.7 The latter types are all made of a very coarse buff ware, with sandy and straw inclusions appearing on the surface.

In MB IB the ovoid jar with double everted rim prevails, being one of the commonest types (Suleiman - Grisenko 1987, pl. II:60-71, Niger in press, fig. 2:18-21). It was a container for liquids (Baffi 1994). The whitish fabrics popular in MB IA are gradually superseded by pale brown and reddish wares, with sandy and calcium carbonate tempers.

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4 Only for MB II, when the distinction of two different phases is possible, also on the Euphrates (MB IIA "Mar Period" and MB IIB "Khana Period"). More precise datings are proposed by Bucciellati (1988).

5 Bowls imitating metallic prototypes are largely attested to in MB I contexts of Syria-Palestine (Gerstenblith 1983, 79-80, figs. 29-30). W.F. Albright singled out this type among the specimens found in the Royal Tombs of Byblos (Montet 1929, ns. 906-907); R. Amiran identified it as a hallmark of MB IIA (i.e. Syrian MB I) in the Levant (Amiran 1970, pl. 25). The shape is also widely diffused in Inner Syria (Niger in press, fig. 1:14-15); at Ebla it appears in the last phase of the Archaic Palace (III) and in the Intermediate Palace, which is likely from the time span c. 1900-1800 B.C.

6 Combed decoration frequently appears on MB Simple Ware vessels. It is distinguished from the scabbled decoration of EB IV for the use of a combed tool, which produces horizontal straight or wavy bands. T.A. Holland and T. McClellan have called it "Combed Ware" (Holland 1980: Culican - McClellan 1983-84, 44, fig. 5:D), although these vessels do not differ from Simple Ware ones except for decoration. Thus, it seems more appropriate to consider combed decoration a peculiar surface treatment of Simple Ware vessels, which was spread over Northern Syria during Middle Bronze, probably descending from similar decorative patterns of EB IV (see, for instance, Mazzoni 1994, fig. 8:3). The adoption of a combed tool differentiates MB combed vessels from simple incised or scabbled EB IV decorations. As far as decorative patterns are concerned, wavy bands gradually disappear in favour of multiple horizontal bands.

7 This vestigial type is also attested to in Anasrī; compare Marchetti - Niger in press a, fig. 6: 41-43 and Suleiman - Grisenco 1987, pl. III:137-142.
Decorated stands, in shape of an upside down flaring pot (Fugmann 1958, fig. 117, 3A979, 3B81, 2C946) are absent in Ebla, but present at Hama and in the Euphrates valley.

Kitchen Ware

Small pots are generally globular, with a short everted rim (Marchetti - Nigro in press b, fig. 6:7). Medium size pots present a slightly carinated body, sometimes with ledge handles (Matthiae et al. 1995, 450, ns. 344-346); the outer surface of these vessels presents a heavy buff slip and it is usually grooved or combed in order to resist heating variations (Ibid., fig. 6:8). This feature also occurs on plates, which have hammer-like rim and always exhibit a thick greenish-red burnished slip (Matthiae 1989a, fig. 49:5). Incense burners, made of Kitchen Ware, have flaring fenestrated pedestal with rope-like ridges ornating the high shaft (Marchetti - Nigro in press a, fig. 6:16).

Preservation Ware

The majority of types are still in the tradition of the EB IV. Jars without neck with horizontal rim (Nigro in press, fig. 1:26; Marchetti - Nigro in press a, fig. 6:53) continue in the tradition of EB IV holemouth jars. Jars with outward expanded rim present a shallow ridge at the middle of the short oblique neck (Marchetti - Nigro in press a, fig. 6:50; Suleiman - Gritsenko 1987, pl. I:53). The type with high flaring neck and grooved rim (Marchetti - Nigro in press a, fig. 6:51) may be related to the oil-jars of EB IV (Mazzoni 1986), while that with vertical swollen rim, slightly grooved (Nigro in press, fig. 1:24-25), probably descends from the triple grooved rim jar (Matthiae et al. 1995, 376, ns. 205-206). The secondary type with emphasized upper edge in the rim (Nigro in press, fig. 1:16-17; Suleiman - Gritsenko 1987, pl. I:54a) represents a MB I hallmark in Northern Inner Syria and Upper Mesopotamia.4

Large containers for liquids, such as square basins at Ebla (Matthiae et al. 1995, 447, no. 337) and large stands at Hama (Fugmann 1958, fig. 110, 3C800), are usually made of coarse, porous Preservation Ware.

Black Burnished Ware

This production is characterized by a heavy black or grey slip, highly burnished, which is probably intended to imitate metallic prototypes. At Ebla it is somewhat rare in domestic contexts, but frequent in burials and palaces. It is spread over from the Levantine coast to the Euphrates valley, but its attestations increase consistently in Inner Syria, indicating that this region was its homeland. It must be carefully distinguished from the grey ware attested to in Mesopotamia, which has a longer diffusion and less specialized forms and functions. BBW may be considered a production parallel to the coastal and Palestinian Red-slip Ware, since it shares with the latter a large number of types, e.g., the piriform juglet with inner stepped rim and the sharply carinated (or Cilbete) bowl. The range of types is in fact limited to small bottles or juglets (Ingholt 1940, pl. XVI:4), sharply carinated bowls and in-turned rim bowls with ring-base (Marchetti - Nigro in press b, fig. 7:18-21), testifying to the metallic inspiration of the repertoire. The stratified ceramic materials from Ebla seem to indicate that this production was largely spread during MB IB, gradually disappearing in Marihkh IIIB1 (MB IIA).

At Alalah, where this production was identified by for the first time (Wooley 1955: 314), both the inturned rim bowl (Ibid., pl. 109, Type 6 and 9) and the double everted rim bottle (Ibid., pl. 122, Type 137) are attested in levels IX-VIII, with a progressive reduction of attestations in level VII. The popularity of this production in the Ebla/Aleppo province is also demonstrated by the findings of Tell Akhterine (Van der Meer 1951-52, 196, fig. 21:1, 4-5), and of the River Quweiq survey (Matthies ed. 1981, fig. 227), while the large use in burial equipment is testified to by the vessels from the tombs of the road to Salamiyeh, near Hama, and of Ebla itself (Baffi Guarda 1988, figs. 3:9, 6:13).

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4 See the specimens from Tell Brak: R.J. Matthews, communication to the 4th RAI, Berlin 1994.

5 I wish to deeply thank Dr. Abd-er-razak Zaqqazq, Director of the Museum of Hama, who has allowed me to take visions of these materials.
Painted Ware

Materials from Ebla point to a continuity of painted tradition from EB IVB to MB I. Two painted wares may be distinguished in the Eblaitic assemblage: a common painted ware, simply decorated by horizontal bands and cross hatched triangles, and a fine painted ware, already known as North-Syrian/Cilician Painted Ware, which was actually produced in Northern Inner Syria, presumably by a workshop in Ebla or Aleppo, characterized by a distinct decorative pattern which includes figured metopae with stylized crouching rams (Matthiae 1985b). Both productions are independent either from Levantine Painted Ware (Tubb 1983, 54-55), either from proper Khabur Ware (see below), although, at a large extent, both testify to the revival of painted wares, which took place during the central phase of Middle Bronze (MB IB-IIA) and continued until Late Bronze, especially in the coastal ceramic provinces. The commonest types of Common Painted Ware are the trefoil-mouth pitcher with twisted handle, the globular juglet with shoulder handle, and, rather rarely, the carinated bowl (Suleiman - Grissenko 1987, pl. I:23-24). It is noteworthy the fact that no painted jars of this production are known from Northern Inner Syria, thus marking a basic difference with Khabur Ware, where the medium and small size jar is one of the most represented types. Some rare specimens of Khabur Ware jars have been retrieved in Ebla, thus testifying for the large diffusion, also beyond the Euphrates, of this Upper Mesopotamian production (Mazzoni 1988, fig. 2, nos. 19-20).

At Ebla, the prevalence of painted vessels in funerary equipment, and, by contrast, their seldom occurrence in domestic contexts, testify to the specialized function borne by this production. Drinking and pouring vessels were in fact part of the table service for the funerary banquet and, for this reason, they were required pieces in burial equipment (Baffi Guardata 1994).

The MB I Pottery Horizon of the Euphrates Valley: Comparative and Distinguishing Features

While the initial phase of Middle Bronze, illustrated at Ebla by assemblages from Archaic Palace, appears in sites of Upper Euphrates valley as a direct development of the last phase of EB IVB (see below Jerablos Tahani, Tell Halawa, Tell Habuaas Kebira, etc.), the central phase of MB I (c. 1950-1850 B.C.) is still difficult to identify, apart from some scantly attestations in Tell Haddi and Tell Kabir (near Tell Banat) and, in Middle Euphrates valley, at Mari and in the nearby necropoles of es-Susa and Baghuz (see below).

As far as the upper Syrian course of the Euphrates River is concerned, a few ceramic evidence is available for MB IA. Excavations in Karkemish furnished scantly MB IA ceramic materials, however the initial and final phases of Middle Bronze may be identified among recorded pottery.11 This is the case of some MB IA slightly carinated and Gublite bowls from KCO7 (Woolley 1952, pls. 58b:1, 5-6; 59a, 5, 7).

Recent excavations at Jerablos Tahani have brought to light some ceramic materials ascribable to the very beginning of MB I - parts of the EB IVB pottery assemblage of Tomb 302 - which foreshadow the successive developments of the Upper Euphratian ceramic horizon. A MB IA dating may in fact be suggested for a double everted rim small jar, a double everted rim bottle and for a globular jar with horizontally expanded rim and shallow ridge at the middle of the neck (Feltenburg et al. 1995, 17-19, fig. 28:7-9).

MB IA pottery was found by C.L. Woolley at Tell Kara Hassan, including an in-turned rim bowl, a bottle and a small jars with emphasized upper edge and biconical body (Woolley 1914, pl. XIXb:1-3). The necropolis plundered by villagers at Tell Amarna also belongs to the initial MB IA pottery horizon of the Upper Euphrates, as upright walls carinated bowls (ibid., 91-92, pl. XXIII:1), slightly carinated bowls and so-called Gublite bowls (ibid., pl. XXIII:6, 8, 20), together with double everted rim jars (ibid., pl. XXII:14-17) and proto-collared bowls (ibid., pl. XXIII:16, 18) testify to. Close relationships with

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10 E.g. horizontal bands are the commonest decorative pattern of EB IV painted jars (Mazzoni 1994, figs. 4-5). A painted pitcher from level H5 at Hama (3H197, Fugmann 1958, fig. 109), dated to MB IA, is strictly similar to its EB IV forerunners attested to at Ebla (Mazzoni 1994, fig. 6:1, 3).

11 Some flaring neck shoulderless bowls of the very end of Middle Bronze Age were found in the fortifications (Woolley 1921, pl. 1c:2).
northern and western ceramic provinces are shown by pottery from the sites of River Sajar,\textsuperscript{12} such as some vessels from the ceramic assemblages of three tombs excavated by Woolley at Tell Hamman,\textsuperscript{13} where a Gublite-like carinated bowl (\textit{Ibid.}, pl. XXII:7) was found.\textsuperscript{14} The pottery horizon of this region displays many interconnections with that of the Ebla/Aleppo ceramic province, as many comparisons with the materials from Ebla, Ansari, Tell Rifa\textsuperscript{at}, Tell Akhterine, Tell Hallane (Mathers ed. 1981, figs. 224-227) and Umm el-Marra\textsuperscript{16} demonstrate.

Tell Qara Quzaq

Tell Qara Quzaq has provided a large amount of MB stratified materials (Olávarri 1992; 1993a; 1993b; 1994a), though not always in a clear stratigraphic location (Olávarri 1994b, 17-21). The bulk of the pottery from level II is in fact ascribable to MB II (Yaldés Pereiro 1994, 43-44), nevertheless, some diagnostic MB I shapes may be identified (\textit{Ibid.}, figs. 1:1; 1:6-7, 3:4-6; 7:1), indicating that a limited MB I occupation there existed in the site.\textsuperscript{17} On the basis of this MB IB ceramic evidence, and considering that the site underwent a sudden decline after Hammurabi's conquest of Mari (c. 1760 B.C.), or, more significantly for this area, after the expansion of the Kingdom of Yamkhad (around 1800 B.C.), one may suggest that the two main architectural and stratigraphic phases distinguished within level II, roughly correspond to MB IB and IIA of Northern Inner Syria. Moreover, since, on the contrary, no MB I ceramic materials are attested in the nearby site of el-Qatar, the latter may be considered a stronghold of the sovereigns of Yamkhad only from around 1800 B.C. (McClellan 1993, 191), which superseded Qara Quzaq and perhaps Jurin al-Kebir.\textsuperscript{18}

Tell Kabir (Tell Banai)

A stratigraphic sequence spanning from EB IV down in MB I has been recently worked out at Tell Kabir, in the nearby of Tell Banani (Porter 1995, 125-126). While four pits, which had cut the destruction layer of Building One (level 8), yielded final EB IVB pottery comparable that of Mari with IIB (\textit{Ibid.}, 139-142, figs. 9-10), ceramic materials from the overlying private houses (Building Two) of level 6, clearly illustrate the Euphratian initial MB I pottery horizon (\textit{Ibid.}, 149-152, figs. 15-20, pl. 20d). Among Simple Ware shapes, slightly carinated bowls are present (\textit{Ibid.}, figs. 18:1, 19:3, 20:6), also recalling the central phase of MB I, when Gublite bowls begin to appear (compare fig. 18:2 with Nigro in press, fig. 1:12-13); proto-collared bowls (\textit{Ibid.}, fig. 16:1), collared bowls (\textit{Ibid.}, figs. 16:2, 20:1, 20:3), bowls with high carination (\textit{Ibid.}, figs. 18:3, 19:2, 19:4), jars with vertical grooved rim (\textit{Ibid.}, figs. 15:2, 17:1-2), which find precise comparisons with Ebla (Marchetti - Nigro in press a, fig. 5:41), are typical hallmarks of MB I. Fenestraed (\textit{Ibid.}, fig. 15:1) and cylindrical (\textit{Ibid.}, fig. 17:7) stands and a large neckless jars with spout and two applied lions' figurines also belong to the same horizon. Two globular jars show the double everted rim typical of the central phase of MB I, and may be compared with later specimens from Tell Haddi (Dornemann 1992, fig. 3:22). The pedestal appears on carinated bowls (Porter 1995, fig. 18:4), as well as on everted rim jars. It is a typical Upper Euphratian morphological trait.\textsuperscript{19}

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\textsuperscript{12} Excavations in the site of Tellbeshar will probably furnish further information on this area during MB (Kepinski-Lecomte 1995).

\textsuperscript{13} Actually the vast majority of the published vessels is dated to EB IVB (Woolley 1914, pl. XXII).

\textsuperscript{14} The type is also known from Kültepe karum II (Toker - Öztürk 1992, 67, 194, no. 45).

\textsuperscript{15} The survey of River Queqiq region furnished very scanty MB I materials, the most significant of which are some sherds from Tell Rifa\textsuperscript{at} (Mathers 1978, figs. 8:14; 9:43, 44-46).

\textsuperscript{16} Ceramic materials from Umm el-Marra are difficult to be assessed in a coherent chronological sequence. The following published sherds may be confidently assigned to a MB IB horizon: Tefnin 1979, figs. 8:1, 3-4, 7-8, 11, 14, 14:1-2, 15:3, while the rest must be dated to MB II.

\textsuperscript{17} This datum is corroborated by the ceramic materials retrieved by C.L. Woolley at the beginning of the century (Woolley 1914, 93, pl. XXVb).

\textsuperscript{18} I wish to thank Prof. Jesper Eidem, who has allowed me to take vision of some MB IIA sherds from Jurin el-Kebir.

\textsuperscript{19} It also descends from EB IVB tradition. See, for instance, specimens from Tell Halawa (Orthmann 1981, fig. 49:1).
Tell Sweyhat

This is another important site of the region during the transition to MBA. In Areas I, III and IV is attested to a transitional EB IVB - MB I pottery horizon (Holland 1977, 36-37), which shows significant interconnections with that of Ebla/Aleppo ceramic province, though in a overall east-oriented repertoire (Mazzoni 1985, 568). Among the earliest diagnostic types, slightly carinated bowls (Holland 1976, fig. 9:1-3, 8, 9), proto-collared bowls (*ibid.*, fig. 9:21-22), and small jars with double everted rim (*ibid.*, fig. 11:7-12), still devoid of combed decorations, are attested to, representing the very beginning of MBA in the Upper Euphrates province.

Tell Halawa

That the transition from EB IVB to MB I was indeed a flourishing period for Upper Euphrates, is once more demonstrated by the wealthy transitional pottery assemblage from Tell Halawa, which shares the vast majority of types with Tell Sweyhat. Strata 2c and 2b furnish a good deal of initial MB I ceramic materials (*Ortmann 1981, 26-31). The earlier stratum (2c) is still deeply rooted in the EB tradition, while stratum 2b is fully comparable with Mardikh IIIA1 (*ibid.*, 29).

The pottery assemblage from Tell A includes proto-collared bowls (Meyer 1989, 27, figs. 10:7-11), jars with high flaring neck and double everted rim (Meyer 1981, pl. 48:17, 22, 24; 67:84-88), trefoil-mouth small and large pitchers, of a popular MB I type. Other diagnostic initial MB I shapes are the hole-mouth jar with horizontally expanded rim (*ibid.*, pl. 44:8), the slightly carinated bowl (*ibid.*, pl. 45:10, 12) and the jar with short vertical grooved rim (*ibid.*, pl. 45:21). Ovoid jars with simple everted rim present combed bands on the shoulders and show a slender body, typical of the Euphratian horizon (*ibid.*, pl. 49:6). Local distinguishing features are the jars with trumpet pedestal, again recalling a classic Euphratian EB IVB type, which is not attested to in the Ebla/Aleppo province, and the absence of the proper collared bowl, to which only some small globular or biconical jars with short flaring rim and, sometimes, grooved upper body (*ibid.*, pl. 49:3-4), may be compared.

A transitional assemblage of end EB IVB/beginning MB I ceramic materials is also provided by Tomb H-119, where slightly carinated bowls descending from upright walls bowls (*ibid.*, pl. 64), bowls with high carination and everted rim (*ibid.*, pl. 65) and also a metallic ware bottle with inner stepped rim (*ibid.*, pl. 66:82) have been found.

Tell Hadidi - Azu

A stratigraphic sequence of MB strata was established in Areas B, H, G and P at Tell Hadidi (Dornemann 1979, 132-141, figs. 20:38-51, 21-23); especially Area BII has provided a sound reliable ceramic seriation dating to the beginning of MBA (Dornemann 1984, fig. 2). Early shapes, still in EB IVB tradition, have been identified (*ibid.*, 69, fig. 20), such as slightly carinated bowls (Dornemann 1979, fig. 15:18-27; 1992, fig. 15:5) and bowls with in-turned swollen rim (Dornemann 1992, fig. 20:1-2), goblets (*ibid.*, fig. 20:4-7), or neck-less jars (*ibid.*, fig. 20:23-24). A sort of proto-collared bowl is also attested to (*ibid.*, fig. 20:22), hinting at close relationships with the Ebla/Aleppo ceramic province. Some vessels from 1972 Tomb may be ascribed to an incipient MB IA production, such as the jar with double everted rim (Dornemann 1979, fig. 14:1), with ring-base, a distinguishing feature in respect of the comparable types from Ebla (Nigro in press, fig. 1-9), and the bowl with high carination (Dornemann 1979, fig. 12:11). R. Dornemann has already pointed out the similarity between deep bowls and kraters of Mardikh IIIA and Hadidi MB IIA (*Dornemann 1992, 82, fig. 20:20-21) and has considered the earlier assemblage from Tell Hadidi parallel to that of Tell Halawa lev. 2c-b. However, morphological traits...
regarded by Dornemann as chronological indicators of an earlier MB phase, such as ribbed rims of kraters or deep bowls (ibid., fig. 19:1-3), do not occur in other sites, being thus ascribable to local developments (Ibid., 84), as well as the asserted trend towards a thin and refined ware from MB I to II, does not represent a general tendency, since MB II productions, from a broader point of view, exhibit a standardization of types and wares, which become increasingly coarser. Interconnections with the south-western provinces are also indicated by the attestation of grey burnished ware, a production comparable with MB IB Black Burnished Ware of Northern Inner Syria (Dornemann 1988, 38-39).

Tell Habuba Kabira

Excavations on the tell of Habuba Kabira have revealed several transitional EB IVB-MB IA strata. Scanty ceramic materials ascribable to the very beginning of MB IA were found, including jars with ledge rims and ridge on the neck of a popular MB I type (Heinrich et al. 1969, 55-59, fig. 18:a-b). The final EB IVB horizon also comprised double everted rim jars (Heinrich et al. 1970, 45-51, fig. 12:a-b), Syrian bottles (Ibid., fig. 12:d) and a vase with an applied lion figurine (Ibid., fig. 11), which foreshadows common MB I shapes and productions.

Tell Mumbaqat

A representative group of MB IB ceramic vessels comes from the excavations in squares 26/35 NW H4.1-H5 in Tell Mumbaqat (Heinrich et al. 1974, 30-34, figs. 45-47). Among the most representative shapes of this pottery assemblage, large and deep bowls with outward expanded rim present upper ribbed rim, a characteristic of the Euphrates province in MB I, paralleled in Tell Hadikli (Dornemann 1992, figs. 16:4-6, 20:20-21); jars with horizontally expanded rim and ridge at the middle of the short neck (Heinrich et al. 1974, fig. 46) may be compared with MB I specimens from Mardikh (Matthiae 1989a, fig. 48). A date late in MB I seems the most suitable for pottery from Square 2733, stratum II (Ortman - Kühne 1974, 75-77, fig. 20-22), while other ceramic materials (Ibid., 94-95, fig. 40-41) probably illustrate a slightly later horizon.

Tell Biya - Tuttul

The collective tomb discovered beneath the Jungen Palast of Tell Biya (Strommenger 1991, 11-15; Einwag 1993, 33-38) provided MB I ceramic materials found in a clear stratigraphic location, since this underground structure had cut an EB IVB silo (Einwag 1993, 46-49, figs. 10-11) and was sealed by the floor of the building itself. It is conceivable that the collective grave was in use for a long time, since the pottery retrieved spans from MB IB to MB IIA. Several MB IA vestigial types may be also identified: the slightly carinated bowl (Ibid., fig. 4:12-14), descending from vertical rim carinated bowl of EB IVB (compare with Ibid., fig. 10:13-19, from the underlying silo), the large bowl with outward expanded rim (Ibid., fig. 5:1-6, Nigro in press fig. 1:5), the krater (large neck-less jar) with horizontally expanded rim (Ibid., fig. 5:7-18), and the proto-collared bowl (fig. 6:21-22, 27-31). Two peculiar MB IB types are the bottle made of fine ware (Ibid., fig. 7) and the in-turned rim bowl, made of a grey-black highly slipped and burnished ware (Ibid., fig. 4:26-29), close to the Black Burnished Ware of the Ebla/Aleppo province (see above). Other shapes indicate a MB IIA dating, such as the jars with outward expanded rim (Ibid., fig. 8:1-9), eventually with a shallow ridge at the middle of the neck (Ibid., fig. 8:10); the latter rim shape, with rounded top and double margin, is a diagnostic final MB II type. The same MB IIA dating is hinted at by a Khabur Ware small painted jar and a painted sherd showing a cross-hatched painted decoration (Ibid., 44-45, fig. 9:1-2).

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24 Although the later utilization of the Jungen Palast is dated, on the grounds of the epigraphic evidence found in it (Mager 1990; but see also Otto 1992; Einwag 1993, 40), to the second half of the XVIIIth century (Mager follows a low chronology; the attribution to the time of Shamshi-Adad I indicates a dating around 1800 B.C., according to the timetable adopted in this paper), this is only a terminus ante quem for the dating of its foundation, which must be occurred between 2000 and 1800 B.C., presumably during the second half of the XXth century. The large collective grave found beneath the floor of the palace does not necessarily belong to the final phase of utilization of the building, as the ceramic evidence suggests.

25 Specimens with sharp carination may be compared with a type known from earliest MB levels of Ansari (Suleiman - Gritsenko 1987, pl. 1:17-18).
Tell Ashara - Tergy

J.N. Tubb has proposed to raise up to MB IB the dating of the ceramic assemblage from Tell Ashara on the grounds of several comparisons with the materials from the necropolis of Baghuz (Tubb 1980, 62-63). However, since the latter does not provide stratified evidence and the presence of duck-bill axes in various tombs (Z123 and Z209) cannot be considered a definitive proof of a MB I dating,26 his proposal is difficult to be confirmed. From a comparative analysis of the Baghuz assemblages (see below), it may be surmised that a the necropolis was in use during a time span ranging from 1900 until 1750 B.C., and the similarities with Tell Ashara might be explained with a partial overlapping of the two ceramic repertoires. Nevertheless, pottery from area SG4 may be confidently ascribed to a transitional MB I-MB II A phase (Kelly-Buccellati - Shelby 1977, 11), as it is suggested by the presence of slightly carinated bowls and inturned rim bowls (ibid., figs. 7-8), while ceramic materials from areas SG3 and SG2 surely belong to MB III B (see below).

Tell Hariri - Mari

A precise chronological setting of the ceramic materials found in Mari Palaces is hampered by the fact that the palace of Zimri-Lim, founded in MB I, was used until Hammurabi's conquest, when its original equipment had already been dispersed. Ceramic materials from Zimri-Lim's Palace must thus be ascribed to the first half of the XVIIIth century B.C., i.e. to the beginning of the MB IIA (Dornemann 1992, 80), while, to have an idea of the preceding period one must rely on the pottery from recent excavations in Areas A and E (Beyer 1983).

The transition from EB IVB to MB IA is illustrated by ceramic materials found in Tombs IXQSO-SE.76 and IVR2-SE.77 (Lebeau 1984; 1990). The former was convincingly dated to the very end of XXIst century,27 while the latter provided various transitional MB IA types, such as slightly carinated bowls (Lebeau 1990, 376, pl. 1.5-6), double everted rim jars (ibid., pl. III:4.7), upright grooved rim jars (ibid., pl. III:13-14), round everted rim jars (ibid., pl. III:19, 22-23).

MB I ceramic materials were retrieved in Area A, where this period is represented by layer 3 (Beyer 1983, 58). Even though the archaeologists ascribed this layer to the XIXth century B.C., many initial MB types are present, which may even suggest a slightly higher dating. These are the slightly carinated bowl (Lebeau 1983, fig. 4:1-3), the carinated bowl with upright grooved walls (ibid., fig. 4:6-7), directly descending by a similar EB IVB type, the double and triple everted rim jar (ibid., fig. 5:1-3), and the neckless jar with swollen rim (ibid., fig. 5:11), derived from EB IV hole-mouth jars. While all these diagnostic types find reasonable comparisons at MB I Ebla (Nigro in press, fig. 1), some shapes, such as the large bowls with horizontal expanded rim represent local profiles.28 Some MB I specimens may be also identified among the vessels from the Palace of Zimri-Lim published by Parrot.29 This is the case of bowl no. 926 (Parrot 1959, 127-128, fig. 89), which may be compared with the MB IB collared bowl of Northern Inner Syria.

Baghuz

The necropolis of Baghuz provided a large amount of pottery dating from MB I (Mesnil du Buisson 1948, 39-51). The earlier types, dating to the very beginning of the period, are ovoid jars with triple grooved everted rim (ibid., pl. LXIX), which recall "Akkaadian" date specimens from Tell Brak (Mallowan 1937, fig. 15:13). Small biconical jars with short everted rim and grooved shoulder (ibid., pl. LXXIV: Z181, Z122, Z278, Z140, Z152, Z137, Z190, Z133) represent a distinct MB IB type also attested to in silos 13 and 17 at Hama (Fugmann 1958, fig. 110; Nigro in press, fig. 2:1). Large jars with double everted rim and ovoid body show a flaring neck with a ridge at the bottom (ibid., pl. LXX). Inner stepped rim bottles were also found (ibid., pl. LXXVI:Z263, Z280, G7; LXXVII:Z289) testifying to a MB IB

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26 This bronze weapon is attested to at Ebla in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats, dated to MB IIA (1750-1700 B.C.); see Matthiae 1980 and Matthiae et al. 1995, 423, no. 293 for a detailed chronological discussion: anyway, the quoted specimens provide only a terminus post quem.

27 The diagnostic type attested to in this tomb is the bowl with high carination and round-everted rim (Lebeau 1984, fig. p. 221, ns. 1-5), roughly corresponding to the triple grooved rim bowl of EB IVB in Northern Inner Syria (Mazzoni 1985, fig. 1:29).

28 Compare, for instance, with materials from the Silosanlage of Tell Biya (Ehwag 1993, figs. 10-11).

29 These are, of course, vestigial vessels.

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dating for the tombs. The initial MB setting of the assemblages is also suggested by some miniature jars and cups with high pedestal (ibid., pl. LXVII:Z191, Z304; LXXVIII), which find striking comparisons in MB IA layers of the Archaic Palace at Ebla. Jars with horizontally expanded rim and squat profile (ibid., pl. LXXIII) constitute a second group, presumably slightly later in date. Among open shapes, the most representative types are the so-called Gublite bowl (ibid., pl. LVX:Z172), the collared bowl (ibid., pl. LXXIX:Z220, Z234, Z148), the slightly carinated bowl (ibid., pl. LXXIX:Z132, Z142, Z238, Z172), sometimes with trumpet pedestal (ibid., pl. LXXIX:Z73, Z12, Z237). Incense burners, presumably related to funerary practices, were also found, of the simple type with high pedestal and in-turned rim (ibid., pl. LVXX:Z74, LVXVII:Z203). Fine grey ware in-turned rim bowls (ibid., pl. LXXXIX:Z248) may be compared with the BBW specimens of Northern Inner Syrian. Another popular Euphrates type is the bowl with high carination and vertical grooved rim (ibid., pl. LXXX), also known from MB IB layers of Tell Hadidi (Dornemann 1992, 81, fig. 15:7) and Mari (Parrot 1959, fig. 89:924-925). This may be considered the type corresponding to the high carinated bowl of Northern Inner Syria (Marchetti - Nigro in press b, fig. 4:1-11). Conversely, cylindrical shapes (Mesnul du Buisson 1948, pl. LXXVII:Z74, Z96, Z309; LXXVIII:Z132) and goblets with low carination (ibid., pl. LXXVII:Z137, Z257, Z102, Z126, Z251, Z251, Z132, Z178) testify to the strong influence of Lower Mesopotamia on the Middle Euphrates ceramic province. The eastern orientation of the Middle Euphrates horizon is further on demonstrated by painted pottery. Very scantly Khabur Ware vessels have been found in Mari, where, on the contrary, a black on lattice production is present, also known from Lower Mesopotamia (Van Ess 1988, pl. 6:66; Hrouda 1989, fig. 6). However, the commonly painted production, is that showing a simple band decoration of the upper part of the vessels made of bitumen (Mesnul du Buisson 1948, pl. LXXXVII:Z222), sometimes associated with potter's marks (ibid., 48-51, fig. 10, pls. LXXXI-LXXXIII).30

The Ceramic Provinces of Euphrates Valley in the Middle Bronze I

Ceramic materials so far described permit to distinguish at least two kindred ceramic provinces in the Euphrates valley. The Upper Euphrates province is characterized by strong interconnections with the pottery horizon of the Ebla/Aleppo province, especially for the sites on the right bank of the river, directly communicating with the areas of Rivers Sajur, Quweiq and with the Plain of Jabbul. Many diagnostic shapes, such as the slightly carinated bowls, the collared bowls, the double everted rim jars, the jars with large mouth, horizontally expanded rim and carination and the inner stepped rim bottle of metallic ware, are shared by both ceramic provinces. However, close relationships may be recognized also with the sites of the left bank and of the upper Balikh, as the assemblage from Hammam et-Turkman VII testify to. The Middle Euphrates province, comprising the sites from Deir ez-Zor (from Tell Mohasan to Mari), shows a stronger dependence from Lower Mesopotamia, clearly visible in technological features (such as the use of fluvial sands as tempers), in painted productions or in typological traits, such as cylindrical vessels and goblets with low carination.31 The pottery assemblage of Haradum (Kepinski-Lecomte 1992, 179-362) has not been included in this study, since it has been considered almost completely belonging to the Mesopotamian horizon.32

The MB I Pottery Horizon of the Balikh and Khabur Basins: Comparative and Distinguishing Features

Two slightly different ceramic provinces may be distinguished in this region, albeit within a largely shared material culture horizon. The first is the Balikh valley, the pottery horizon of which presents many interconnections with the communicating southern Anatolian region (district of Urfa), the second is the Khabur basin. The latter may be further subdivided into three ceramic areas. The central area represents the proper Khabur horizon, while the western and the eastern ones gravitate respectively towards the Balikh

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30 Mesnul du Buisson assumed that these marks depended on the functions of the vessels and not on potter's manufacture (Mesnul du Buisson 1948, 49-50).

31 On the large diffusion of this type in Mesopotamia see, for instance, Van Ess 1988, pls. 8, ns. 78-80; 34, no. 199; Kepinski-Lecomte 1992, figs. 87-89.

32 Some rare shapes recalling western types may be identified, such as the double everted rim jar (Kepinski-Lecomte 1992, fig. 64), although the whole pottery assemblage from the site is fully representative of the Mesopotamian ceramic production during the second quarter of the Ilind Millennium B.C.

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valley and north-western Assyria. Very scanty materials are available dating to MB I, so that only a tentative account is possible.

Balikh Valley - Tell Hammam et-Turkman.

In the Balikh valley Tell Hammam et-Turkman provides the largest stratigraphic sequence for the whole MBA. Few data may be added to those from Mallowan's soundings at Tell Jidle (stratum 3) in 1938 (Mallowan 1946, 146-154). Hence, the ceramic sequence of this province must be based upon the stratigraphic sequence of Tell Hammam et-Turkman. Some ceramic materials from Hammam VI west "late" clearly belong to an initial MB I horizon, as it is demonstrated by the presence of slightly carinated bowls (Van Loon 1988, pl. 117:6-14) and of various types strikingly similar to that from the Archaic Palace II at Ebla. Nevertheless the bulk of the pottery from this stratum has been correctly ascribed to EB IVB (ibid., 381-383). Thus, the archaeological period spanning the entire MBA is Hammam Period VII, which has been subdivided in five main strata (ibid., 83-88, 412-415, tab. 94). Hammam VII:1 and VII:2 represent MB I, a figure also confirmed by recent excavations on the western summit of the tell (Meijer 1995, 75-76). This initial MB phase is characterized by large bowls with carination beneath the expanded rim (Hammam VII:1-2; Van Loon 1988, pl. 127:50-51), double everted rim jars (ibid., pls. 55:5; 57:19; 140:181, 184; 186-187) and neck-less jars with double or triple grooved rim (ibid., pls. 55:3; 130:34; 132:107; 139:162; 139:175; 140:177), which are a typical MB I hallmark also in Northern Inner Syria. Another diagnostic type is the double everted rim jar with protruding upper ledge of the rim (ibid., pl. 130:85-89; 139:163, 168-169).

MB I kraters are characterized by the ovoid shape and the limited external expansion of the rim (ibid., pl. 133:113) in respect of later types.

Preservation jars with swollen double ribbed rim prevail (ibid., pl. 134:115), of a type exactly corresponding to the Eblaite one (Negro in press, fig. 1:16-17).

The stratified assemblage is integrated by materials from burials B5, B6; B1, B8, which can be confidently ascribed to MB I. In particular, the attestation in burial B5 (MB IB) of a small trefoil-mouth juglet and of a double everted rim bottle made of grey-black burnished ware testify to the specific destination of both types (Van Loon 1988, pl. 56:9-10), also known from Northern Inner Syria (Negro in press, 25).

Khabur Basin.

The stratified pottery sequence established by Mallowan at Chagar Bazar still provides the better reference point for a thorough analysis of pottery development in the Khabur basin. Nevertheless, new evidence furnished by the excavations at Tell Leilan, Tell Bara and Tell Mohammed Diyab, can supply more detailed data, though limited to short-life phases.

Western Khabur

Very scanty materials are so far available from this area. MB strata were probably excavated by the German expedition at Tell Halaf, although they were not fully recognized and recorded. A slightly carinated bowl, published in the final reports (Hrouda 1962, pl. 58:78), may testify to the initial MB assemblage of the western Khabur basin.

Chagar Bazar

On the grounds of "architectural" stratigraphy of Area BD, Mallowan dated to MBA level 1, which was subdivided in five phases and roughly dated to 1900-1550 B.C. (Mallowan 1937, 95; 1947, 82-84). A possible dating of these phases, according to comparative data and to the epigraphic evidence available (Gadd 1937; 1940; Lorett 1969), may be the following:

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33 Compare Negro in press, fig. 1:3-12.
34 A comparable situation may be observed in Tell Jidle, stratum 5, which Mallowan ascribed to the "Sargonic Period", but which presents many incipient MB types, such as the double everted rim jar (Mallowan 1946, fig. 12:2) and the inner stepped rim bottle made of Black-Burnished Ware (ibid., fig. 12:16).
35 Some materials from burial B8 may also date to MB IB (Van Loon 1988, pl. 58:26-27).
36 A complete MB sequence has been worked out at the site (Area G), where Period 5 represents MB II (Pecorella 1994; Pecorella - Salvini 1985, fig. 4).

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A) early phase - 1850-1780 B.C.
B) early intermediate phase - 1780-1700 B.C.\(^{17}\)
C) intermediate phase - 1700-1650 B.C.
D) late phase - 1650-1550 B.C.
E) latest phase - 1550-1350 B.C.

Few achrome vessels were published by Mallowan illustrating the ceramic assemblage of each phase (Mallowan 1937, 107, figs. 15-20), since his interest was mostly captured by a distinct painted production, which he called "Khabur Ware" (Mallowan 1937, 103, figs. 21-24), the first attestations of which were in "early level 1". Thus, the Chagar Bazar sample does not display a complete typology of vessels and wares. It can hardly be utilized to draw out the ceramic horizon of the Khabur area during MB I. Only few published vessels may be ascribed to the latter period: a triple ribbed rim bottle, told to be Sargonic in date, may actually represent an early MB type (ibid. fig. 15:13); a similar dating may be also proposed for the proto-collared bowl from G3 (Mallowan 1936, fig. 17:3),\(^{18}\) or for the Gublite-like carinated bowls (ibid. fig. 17:1-2), with local trumpet pedestal.

Tell Brak

Few MB I materials were retrieved by the excavations in Tell Brak. The main sequences are those of areas FS and SS, displaying a continuous occupation from post-Akkadian Hurrian kingdom period down to 1800 B.C.; early layers in area SS provided "Cappadocian/Isin-Larsa" ceramics (Oates - Oates 1994, 171). Ceramic materials of this phase are attested to on the northern ridge of the mound and in the northern lower town (ibid., fig. 9).

Tell Leilan - Shubat Enlil

The still largely unpublished MB ceramic assemblage from Tell Leilan, primarily dates to MB IB-IIA, corresponding to Leilan Period I (Weiss et al. 1990, 555). Though the majority of the published pottery belongs to MB IIA (see below), MB IB ceramic materials, especially dating to the very end of this phase and spanning also the transition to the following period (i.e. the reign of Shamshi-Adad I), were also retrieved. Early MB IB ceramic materials come from Operation 4, where earlier phases of Period I were identified, anecdotally the extensive fortification activities which took place in the site with the reign of Shamshi-Adad (ibid., 555). They may in fact be compared with Chagar Bazar "early level 1" (A) and thus date to the second half of the XIXth century B.C. (MB IB). Khabur Ware jars have only simple band decoration (ibid., fig. 27:1-2), without triangles or oblique motives in the frieze, as in the following phase (MB IIA).

Tell Mohammed Diyab - Azemkhol

Recent excavations in Tell Mohammed Diyab have provided a stratified MB pottery assemblage ascribed by the excavators to Period 5, corresponding to the entire MBA (Bachelot 1990; Faivre 1992, 58-59; Castel et al. 1993, 11). Materials from this phase has been recovered both on the Acropolis and in the Lower Town. They have been rightly compared with those of the "early intermediate phase I" (B) and "intermediate phase I" (C) of Chagar Bazar (Faivre 1992, 68), that means that they can be confidently dated to MB IIA (XVIIIth century B.C.). No MB I are thus available, although some sherds can be attributed to this period. A MB I chronology may be proposed for two slightly carinated bowls and two upright walls carinated bowls (ibid., figs. 19:5-6; 20:3-4).

\(^{17}\) According to C.L. Schaeffer, no chronological differences there existed between phases A and B (Schaeffer 1948, 84-91); for a comprehensive summary see Curtis 1982, 82-85.

\(^{18}\) Fig. 17:3 may be compared with similar specimen grooved on the shoulders found in Tell Haddi (Dornemann 1992, fig. 16:9, 11) and Hama (Pugmann 1958, fig. 110).
The Middle Bronze II pottery horizon of Northern Inner Syria (1800-1600 B.C.)

A significant change in the pottery assemblage of Ebla and Harna (between H3 and H2) occurs around 1800 B.C., involving technological and typological features of pottery. A general standardization of the ceramic production is shown by coarser wares and fast produced vessels, hinting at a larger diffusion of mass production probably to be related with socio-economic changes.

Simple Ware

Classic shapes, such as collared bowls and double everted rim jars, continue to be very popular, but new types appear, such as the bowls with in-turned rim and the carinated bowl with high flaring neck, descending from the collared bowl. The in-turned rim bowl gradually becomes the prevailing type, superseding the bowl with high carination. Collared bowls usually show a higher grooved neck and a slenderer body, foreshadowing the flaring neck of MB IIB types. Jars with large mouth and horizontally expanded rim are now characterized by the roughly rounded body, and by the upper convexity of the rim, which is frequently ribbed. New types of simple everted rim jars are attested to, with ovoid and globular body, and distinct cylindrical neck. In MB IIB a protruding ridge always marks the bottom of the neck. Another popular MB IIB shape is the deep bowl with slightly carinated profile and swollen rim (Matthiae 1989a, figs. 50:6-7, 51:10-11).

Kitchen Ware

Hammer-like rims are no longer attested to among plates and bowls, being substituted by inturned rims, similar to those of Simple Ware, so that this feature really becomes a clear hallmark of a cultural and chronological change. Large and deep plates appear, characterized by a squatted everted rim, and a small groove below the rim. Incense-burners of the shaft type usually have a simple rim, sometimes rilled on the outer side. Cooking pots may arduously be distinguished by those of the preceding period, since the prevailing type is still the globular pot with simple short everted rim. More indicative differences are shown in the ware, which is normally coarser than that used in MB I, with big calcium carbonate inclusions.

Preservation Ware

The most striking typological development of this period is the almost complete disappearance of the hole-mouth jar and the dramatic diminution of the attestations of the neck-less jar. The prevailing type is now the jar with horizontally expanded rim, frequently rounded on the top, and with a distinct ridge at the middle, a series of ridges at the bottom of the large neck, and rope-like applied decorations on the edge of the pronounced shoulders (Matthiae 1989a, fig. 32:4).

Painted Ware

Middle Bronze II registers several transformations of the painted productions, especially as regards common painted pottery, while luxury productions seem to diminish in number and diffusion. The Northern Inner Syrian Common painted Ware has a large diffusion, accompanied by a wide standardization of the decorative motives. Since at the same time attestations of North-Syrian/Cilician painted Ware decrease, one may surmise a gradual standardization also of painted productions. A certain influence of eastern painted wares, especially Khabur Ware, is evident especially during MB II A, when horizontal bands on the neck and local originating cross-hatched triangles become the most usual decorative patterns. Interconnections with eastern productions may be thus assumed, which presumably favoured the affirmation of the latter motives among others in Northern Inner Syria (Mazzoni 1988, fig. 4). Favourite shapes are the trefoil-mouth pitcher with twisted handle and the globular juglet with shoulder handle, which usually presents more complex decorations, also including tent motives, oblique bands and parallel strokes. During MB IIB figurative themes make anew their appearance, perhaps depending on closer relationships with the coastal milieu, throughout the Lower Orontes Valley; especially bird’s motives are very popular, as Alalakh VII (Heinz 1992, pl. X) and Mardikh III B2 (Mazzoni 1988, no. 29) attestations testify to.

The MB II Pottery Horizon of the Euphrates Valley:
Comparative and Distinguishing Features

MB II ceramic materials available from stratified contexts of the sites of Upper and Middle Euphrates are - if possible - less numerous than those of MB I.

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In respect of Northern Inner Syria, a significant shift of occupied sites characterizes the transition to MB II. The vast majority of sites continuously occupied from EB IVB to MB I are abandoned in MB II, a fact presumably to be related with the loose of the political independence for many sites, and the subdivision under the sovereignty of the kings of Yamkhad, Karkemish and Mari.

El-Qitar - Til-Abnu

Ceramic materials from el-Qitar can hardly be dated earlier than 1750 B.C. and mostly represent the final MB horizon of the Upper Euphrates province. Although a clear difference with the western assemblage is shown by carinated bowls (Culican - McClellan 1983-84, 46), several MB IIB diagnostic types may be recognized, such as the closed bowl with high flaring neck (Ibid., fig. 4:M-N), or the jars with horizontally expanded rim and incised and combed decoration (Ibid., fig. 5). Upper ribbed rims, up-curved expanded rims and incised decorations (Ibid., fig. 6:C-D) are peculiar traits of the local assemblage referable to a late MB horizon. The in-turned rim bowl of grey-black burnished ware (Ibid., 55-56, fig. 6:B) testify to the longer duration of this production in the Euphrates valley, a datum also corroborated by evidence from Tell Hadidi (Dornemann 1988, 38-39). The ceramic assemblage of El-Qitar exhibits many similarities with that of the nearby area of Jabbul Plain and especially with materials from Tell Abu Danné level VI (Tefnin 1980).

Tell Hadidi - Azu

Materials from areas B (stratum D), F, D on the Acropolis, G and P (III, V) on the city walls (Dornemann 1979, 144) constitute a complete pottery assemblage. It shows the occurrence during MB II of a progressive differentiation in respect of the western ceramic province. For instance, popular Euphratian shapes, such as burnished-neck jars (Dornemann 1992, fig. 3:17; Parrot 1959, fig. 80, ns. 908, 874) are not attested to in the contemporary assemblage of Northern Inner Syria and also among common Simple Ware vessels important differences are shown. In-turned rim bowl are scanty (Dornemann 1979, fig. 23:9; 1992, fig. 3:5) and do not dominate the sample as in Northern Inner Syria, so that can not be considered a precise hallmark of MB II. Preservation jars of this period may be easily recognized for the emphasis of the swollen expanded rim and for the protruding ridge at the bottom of the neck (Dornemann 1979, fig. 23:33; 1992, fig. 5:1-6, 8) or for the upper grooved rim (Ibid., fig. 5:10-11). Besides a group of MB IIA materials, MB IIB diagnostic shapes are also attested to. The most representative type is the globular jar with large flaring neck, marked at the bottom by a ridge (Ibid., 139, fig. 23:4, 43-46). It may be compared with the necked vessels which characterize the final MB horizon of Mardikh (Nigro in press, fig. 6:3-4). Thus, two different phases may be distinguished in the MB II pottery assemblage of Tell Hadidi. A first group of materials from B-IV-BIE, including double everted rim jars and globular expanded rim jars (Dornemann 1992, figs. 4-5), dates to MB IIA, while a second group, constituted by materials found in B-XV (Dornemann 1979, figs. 22-23), dates to MB IIB. Some specimens belonging to the latter phase, among which is a jar with band rim (Ibid., fig. 22:6), which is a diagnostic late Old-Babylonian type (Van Ess 1988, pls. 23-24, ns. 149-150), suggest a re-orientation of the Euphrates valley towards Mesopotamia after Hammurabi’s conquest of Mari and during the Khana period.

Tell Habuba Kabira

Upper strata in Tell Habuba Kabira have furnished a homogeneous pottery assemblage dating to MB II (Heinrich et al. 1971, 21-25, figs. 9-11).

Tell Ashara - Tarqa

The pottery assemblage from Tell Ashara mostly represents the final MB ceramic horizon of the Middle Euphrates valley. Pottery materials ascribable to MB IIB were found in areas SG4, SG3 and SG2. The late dating of the assemblage is above all demonstrated by the large number of necked vessels among which shouldered bowls with high flaring neck of fine yellowish ware prevail (Kelly-Buccellati - Shelby 1977, pl. II, figs. 14, 18-20 and especially 21). They correspond to those from Northern Inner Syria, thus indicating the large diffusion and wide representativity of this MB IIB shape. Close to Mesopotamian late Old-Babylonian shapes are the deep bowls with grooved expanded rim and small dish- or ring-base (Ibid., fig. 10) and the deep goblets with low carinated body decorated by combed and indented horizontal bands.
(ibid., figs. 6, 16). These types suggest a strong interconnection with the Lower Euphrates and Babylonian ceramic province during the last phase of Middle Bronze (Rouault 1993, 11).

A local painted production, which also found several comparisons to the south, is pottery decorated with bitumen bands and motives (ibid., figs. 4-5, 12, 15, pl. IV:16, 18), also popular in Mari, due to the natural availability of this material. Actually, the painted patterns seem to suggest an identification function rather than a decorative purpose.

Tell Hariri - Mari

The Palace of Zimri-Lim provided a complete pottery assemblage representative of the initial phase of MB IIA, unfortunately only partially published (Parrot 1959, 114-145). The palatial equipment has been enlarged with ceramic materials from recent excavations in Areas A and E (Lebeau 1983; 1987). The Simple Ware assemblage includes carinated and in-turned rim bowls (Parrot 1959, fig. 89; Lebeau 1983, fig. 2:3, 2:5-8), the latter testifying to a MB IIA dating, small jars with high neck and bottles (Parrot 1959, fig. 88). Of particular interest is a inner stepped rim bottle of Black Burnished Ware (Lebeau 1983, fig. 3:4), a production which in the Euphrates valley lasts longer than in Northern Inner Syria. Relationships with the western pottery horizon are shown by jugs 898, 859 (Parrot 1959, fig. 83), which find striking comparisons at Ebla (Mathiae et al. 1995, 495, ns. 441-442). Conversely, Mesopotamian influence is exhibited by cylindrical vessels, with distinct outward expanded rim and flat base (Parrot 1959, fig. 85), a morphological trend which also affects double everted rim jars, which have a slenderer profile in respect of their western counterparts (ibid., fig. 87), and by band rim jars (Lebeau 1987, pl. IV:19), which recall Old-Babylonian types (Van Ess 1988, pl. 23-24).

As far as painted pottery is concerned, bottles with black painted decoration (Parrot 1959, fig. 90, pl. XXXV:724, 766, 785, 786), recall the Lower Mesopotamian tradition and find no comparisons either with Khabur Ware, nor with Northern Inner Syrian painted wares. Nevertheless, a large jar testifies to the presence of Khabur Ware in Mari (ibid., fig. 92c, pl. XXXXI:1584). Interconnections with the western productions are suggested by the jar with double everted rim and simple red-painted bands at the bottom of the neck (ibid., 134, pl. XXXVI:1590). The globular jar attributed by Parrot to Khabur Ware (ibid., 134-135, pl. XXXVI:1590 bis), more likely belongs to an Euphratian production, characterized by the vertical wavy lines painted decoration.

The Ceramic Provinces of the Euphrates Valley During MB II

Scanty data available impede to draw out all the distinctive features of the ceramic horizon of the Upper Euphrates province during this period, the only best sequence being that of Tell Hadidi (Dornemann 1979, 139-141). Apart from a basic pottery typology, at the level of broad functional classes, only a few diagnostic types, such as the closed bowl with high flaring neck or the double everted rim jar, may be identified common to the Euphrates valley and to the Northern Inner Syrian provinces. In MB II Euphrates valley appears much more east-oriented than in the preceding period, and, at the same time, it is more difficult to distinguish the Upper and Middle ceramic provinces, due to the scarcity of data and for a certain homologation of local productions. Especially during the last century of the Middle Bronze, in the so-called Khana Period, the Euphrates valley from El-Qitar to Mari seems to constitute a cultural unity, strongly linked with Mesopotamia (Buccellati 1988, 46). The diminution of the cultural interchanges towards West during MB IIB can be connected with the collapse of the reign of Mari and with the gradual transformation of the Euphrates in a border line, between Yarmukh and the principalities of Upper Mesopotamia.
The MB II Pottery Horizon of the Balikh and Khabur Basins: Comparative and Distinguishing Features

Balikh Valley - Tell Hammam et-Turman

The appearance of the in-turned rim bowl in Hammam VII:3 (Van Loon 1988, pl. 124: 25-26) marks the transition to MB IIA. Conversely, another MB IIB diagnostic shape, the bowl with flaring rim and pronounced shoulders, is largely attested to in Hammam VII:5 (ibid., pls. 127:58-59; 128:60, 64, 138:159). It shows the typical ridge at the bottom of the neck.

Large carinated bowls from Hammam VII:4 (ibid., pl. 125:32) may be compared with typical MB IIB shapes of Ebla (Matthiae 1989a, fig. 51:10-11), as well as large and deep kraters, with horizontal ledge rim and vertical grooved shoulders (Van Loon 1988, pls. 129:83; 138:154).

Painted vessels are extremely rare (ibid., pl. 129:83), probably testifying to the low socio-economic status of the contexts excavated, rather than a lower diffusion of painted wares in the Balikh valley. Only two small painted sherds from Hammam VII:4-5 may be ascribed to Khabur Ware (ibid., pl. 142: 214-215).

Among Preservation Ware shapes, jars with everted top-rounded rim and shallow ridge on the neck represent the commonest type (ibid., pls. 134:122-123, 135, 136:135-137); sometimes the rim is ribbed on the top (ibid., pl. 136:138-143). Double everted rim jars of Hammam VII:4-5 (MB IIB) present a pronounced flaring neck (ibid., pl. 140:188-189), differing from swollen rim jars, which, by contrast, gradually show more restricted mouths (ibid., pl. 141:202).

Two cylindrical potstands are published (ibid., 142:210-211), which correspond to coarse ware small specimens know from MB II Ebba (Marchetti - Negro in press b, fig. 5:4).

The ceramic assemblage from burials B3 and B4 testify to their MB IIIB dating (Van Loon 1988, pl. 59:29-30). In the second burial the bowl with flaring neck (ibid., pl. 60:33) is associated with a high jar with horizontally expanded ledge rim (ibid., pl. 60:32).

Notwithstanding the large number types shared by the Ebba/Aleppo and the Balikh valley provinces, a clear difference between the two assemblages is shown by the absence in the latter of the bowl with high degenerated carination (Negro in press, fig. 5:6-9), a feature also appearing in the neighbouring Euphrates area.

Khabur Basin

Western Khabur

Notwithstanding the scarcity of data, some hints on the MB II assemblage of this ceramic area may be obtained by materials from Tell Fekheiriyeh. In the latter site, MB deposits were reached only in Sounding IX, level 6, albeit in a mixed stratigraphic situation (McEwan at al. 1958, 24-25, pls. 35:108, 111-112, 115; 36-37; Hrouda 1961, 222-223, fig. 16). The site, together with Tell Halaf, belongs to the western ceramic area of the Khabur basin.

Chagar Bazar

MB IIA is the better represented phase in Chagar Bazar, to which belong Mallowan's "early phase 1" (A) and "early intermediate phase 1" (B). These phases are represented by vessels from the palace of the local ruler, during the reign of Shamsi-Adad and his immediate successors (Curtis 1982, 82). Some diagnostic Khabur shapes may be identified, such as the sharply carinated bowl (Mallowan 1937, fig. 16:5), the goblet with low carination (ibid., fig. 19:3; Mallowan 1936, fig. 14:13), and the jar with large mouth and globular body (Mallowan 1937, fig. 20:21-24).

Conversely, MB IIB is represented by Mallowan's "intermediate phase" (C) and "late phase" (D), to which minor buildings overlying the palace belong. Few vessels of unpainted ware are published ascribed to this period. Two characteristic bowls with high flaring rim (ibid., fig. 17:4-5) from Area TD are diagnostic hallmarks of final MB. To the same phase (D) belong some jars with distinct neck (ibid., fig. 14:5, 10). General typological traits may thus be usefully compared with western counterparts.

Khabur Ware painted vessels from level 1 furnish one of the largest assemblages for this production, in the period of its maximum diffusion (MB II), and will be treated separately below.
Tell Brak

The earliest levels of Area HH private houses (10-8) provided MB IIA materials, ascribed to the Old-Babylonian horizon, together with those from Area AL (a pit) and Area TW fortifications (Oates - Oates 1994, 172).

Recent excavations conducted by R. Matthews in Area HN provided in situ MB II ceramic materials, including several Khabur Ware necked jars (Matthews et al. 1994, 189-190, 194, fig. 15:2; Matthews 1995, 98-99, fig. 21), the classic carinated goblet (ibid., fig. 21:5), high flaring rim painted bowls (Ibid., fig. 21:6-9), which, together with a goats figured krater (Ibid., fig. 21:10), display the MB II phase of the Khabur Ware (see below). Preservation jars, with expanded rim and ridge at the bottom of the neck, exhibit the common applied rope-like coil and the combed and incised shoulder decoration (ibid., fig. 21:11-13). The last MB phase in the site is illustrated by materials from the Late Old-Babylonian Shrine in HH 8.

Tell Leilan - Shubat Ennil

Published materials do not allow a comprehensive treatment of the MB assemblage of this key-site, however, some points may be outlined. The MB II A sequence on the acropolis is represented by Temples B.E. I-II and "X", while MB II B (= Leilan Period 0) is represented by levels 12-1 in Operation 1, the latter mostly including discarded materials from pits (Weiss 1991, 3). As far as Lower Town is concerned, MB II B ceramic materials come from levels 4-1 of the Period 0 Palace (Operation 3, 57F02), and from levels 2-1 and 6-1 respectively in Operations 2 and 4. Apart from the numerous attestations of Khabur Ware painted vessels (Weiss et al. 1990, figs. 15:2, 5, 6-7; 27:1-2), quite normal during the flourishing period of this production, peculiar shapes of Leilan Period I (MB IIA) seem to be the jars with large mouth and horizontally expanded rim, which show a ribbed band on the shoulder corresponding to the combed band of Northern Inner Syrian specimens (Ibid., fig. 15:10), and horizontally outward expanded rim kraters, with ring-base, (Ibid., figs. 15:8; 21:5; 27:4). Necked jars, with slightly flaring neck and expanded rim, are the commonest type, especially for Khabur Ware. They are a diagnostic MB II type. Plates and bowls frequently have a horizontal rim (Ibid., figs. 15:2-3; 21:2; 4; 27:3. 11). Carinated bowls present upright walls and out-swollen rims (Ibid., fig. 21:4; 27:5). A pale yellow ware is attested to, which roughly corresponds to fine wares of Northern Inner Syria, such as miniature ware and metallic ware (Ibid., fig. 27:5; Nigro in press, fig. 2:17). Cooking pots have, like elsewhere in this period, a globular shape and a round everted rim (Weiss et al., fig. 15:9). The evidence so far exposed points to a close interconnection with the eastern pottery horizon of Assyria.

Tell Mohammed Diyab - Azamkhul

The bulk of the pottery materials from Tell Mohammed Diyab Phase 5 belongs to MB II, as it is primarily demonstrated by the wide corpus of Khabur Ware vessels retrieved. Large jars with horizontally expanded rim and painted band decoration (Faiivre 1992, figs. 7:4-5, 8.3-18), sometimes with hatched triangles (Ibid., fig. 10:1-10), are a common type. Sometimes a ridge marks the bottom of the high neck (Ibid., fig. 9:1-2), a feature announcing the final MB II necked type. Among open shapes, the krater with horizontally expanded rim is characterized by a ribbed carination (Ibid., fig. 11), which may be considered a distinctive feature of the eastern Khabur ceramic area. On the contrary, the goblet with low carination and grooved or incised body, in some cases also painted (Ibid., fig. 14:9-10), is ascribable to the southern Mesopotamian tradition, notwithstanding the wide diffusion of the type. Moreover, Babylonian interconnections (Ayoub 1982, 105, type 48) are shown by cylindrical jars with high flaring neck (Faiivre 1992, fig. 24:18-24). Bowls with high carination (Ibid., fig. 21) represent one of the commonest Simple Ware open forms, an interesting figure if compared with the rarity of this shape in the contemporary Euphrates valley pottery horizon. Miniature Ware vessels are attested to in Tell Mohammed Diyab, thus confirming the large diffusion of this production. The classic Khabur type is a squatted simple rim bottle (Ibid., fig. 26:2), but also carinated bowls appear (Ibid., fig. 26:4, 7-10). Cooking Ware shapes do not differ so much from their parallels in the Euphrates Valley or Northern Inner Syrian provinces, due to

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43 See on recent discoveries Nicolle - Sauvage 1995.
44 It also occurs on small specimens (Faiivre 1992, fig. 25:13-16).
45 See, for instance, Hamlin 1974, fig. 1:12; Van Ess 1988, pls. 8. 34; Mallowan 1936, fig. 14:13; 1937, fig. 19:3; 1946, figs. 6:9, 11:11.
their basically utilitarian function. MB II pots have almost globular profile and short everted rim (Ibid., figs. 12:1-4, 13).

Some MB IIB forms may be identified, such as the bowls with high flaring neck (Ibid., fig. 24:15-17), hinting a continuous occupation of the site until LB.

Khabur Ware: Distinguishing and Comparative Features between Painted Wares

Problems arising from the numerous studies on Khabur Ware are manifold and remain still open. Although recent discoveries have permitted to distinguish various painted productions of the Levant and Inner Syria, sometimes thought to be related with Khabur Ware, a preliminary distinction of the specific features of each production is necessary to distinguish similarities and differences. Thus, the term Khabur Ware is here strictly referred to that production spread over the Khabur Basin and Upper Mesopotamia (namely Assyria), the main traits of which have been precisely pointed out by B. Hrouda (1957; 1975; 1989) and D.L. Stein (1984).

During Middle Bronze IB-IIB (1900-1600 B.C.) painted productions of Syria-Palestine and Upper Mesopotamia underwent a renewed flow. Common traits may be recognized in patterns of decorations, which, however, are so schematic and ordinary (horizontal bands or hatched triangles or oblique lines filling continuous friezes), that cannot be considered reliable indicators of a unique shared tradition. Actually, when more detailed analyses are carried on, several distinguishing features become evident. Three main areas may be identified where painted wares originated: the northern Levantine coast, the Aleppo/Ebla-Amuq province, and proper Assyria, including also the eastern Khabur basin. As stated above, luxury painted productions (e.g. the so-called North Syrian/Cilician Painted Ware) must be distinguished from common painted wares, which have a larger diffusion and adopted less canonical patterns of decoration. This is especially true during MB IB, while during MB II Khabur Ware reaches the largest popularity, particularly in Upper Mesopotamia. It became a "specialized" painted ware, which achieved a highly standardized production and a wide diffusion. During MB II, Khabur Ware spread beyond the limits of its ceramic homeland (see note 44; Hamlin 1974; Mazzoni 1988). This phenomenon may be related with the standardization of the ceramic production, also displayed by technological changes in pottery manufacture, such as the usual employ of sandy tempers, which took place in MB II.

Several interacting factors may be identified prompting Khabur Ware to this popularity: 1) its very simple decorative patterns, which easily found counterparts in other painted productions and could be easily transmitted; 2) its diffusion over a wide range of pottery shapes, namely among very popular

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4 M.E.L. Mallowan was the first to identify this distinguished painted production at Chagar Bazar (Mallowan 1936; 1937: 102-104, figs. 21-24), though it had already been found by E. Speiser at Tell Billa (Speiser 1933-4). Since that time, every site of Upper Mesopotamia where MB II layers were excavated has provided Khabur Ware vessels. The first to carry out a monograph study of it was B. Hrouda (Hrouda 1957, 1975), who fixed the period and the geographic distribution of Khabur Ware. Successively, the un-necessary association of Khabur Ware with ethnic and political elements dominated the studies, until C. Hamlin proposed a new social interpretation (Hamlin 1971; 1974), starting from the analysis of the painted inventory of Dinkha Tepe IV. A regeneration of the ethno-political interpretation was put forward by H. Kramer, which also hypothesized a direct relationship between this production and the political affirmation of Assyria around 1800 B.C. A further step towards a less "covenominous" explanation is due to D. Panayre (1986), while D.L. Stein (1984), has proposed a finer chronological seriation for this production. Apart from the interpretations of the hypothetical relationships between this pottery and any ethnic group, the historical reliance of which is not existing, another important branch of the studies is that descending from R. Amiran's identification of Khabur Ware in Palestine (Amiran 1970, 113-118). For a long while, almost every MB II painted ware of Northern Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine was considered "Khabur Ware" (Gerritsenil 1983, 59-64), with quite low consideration of the important role played by the many painted productions of the coast of the Levant (Tubb 1983, 54-55). Among these studies, a reversing one, is S. Mazzoni's identification of Khabur Ware at Ebla, which is an excellent basis to distinguish Northern Inner Syrian painted productions either from Levantine painted wares or from locally manufactured Khabur Ware (see Nigro in press, passim). Moreover S. Mazzoni, has pointed out the deep roots of Northern Inner Syrian painted wares into EB IV tradition. Recent excavations in the Khabur Basin and in Assyria have shown that Upper Mesopotamia was the homeland of this distinguished painted production (e.g. Spanos 1950, figs. 11-21), which, however, spread also outside of this region.

5 This trait comprises also the capability to include alien motives (such as squares patterns: Hamlin 1974, fig. 1:12), due to the extremely schematic partition of the body of painted vessels.

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vessels, such as necked jars or goblets with low carination, which are "transprovincial" types; 3) its broad functional destination (depending on the former typological variety), being mainly, but not exclusively, related to consumption activities (Hrouda 1989, 213). For these reasons, it is more difficult to distinguish painted wares of Upper Mesopotamia and Northern Syria during MB II. The high range of cultural exchange between Northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia is thus shown by the parallel development of their ceramic painted productions. Schematized decorative motives circulate over both areas reaching a wide diffusion, albeit the inventory of painted vessels was sharply different. In Northern Syria it included tear-drop pitchers, globular juglets with double handle and carinated bowls, while in Upper Mesopotamia the necked jar was the favourite form, together with the large krater, the footed goblet with low carination, and, at the end of the period, the closed bowl with high flaring neck (Spanos 1989).

This parallel development is, for instance, by the diffusion of the stylized animalistic motives (goats and birds) during the XVIIIth century B.C. (Speiser 1933, 256, pl. LXIX.5), when figured melae appear both in Khubur Ware and in Northern Inner Syrian Common Painted Ware. 49

Coming back to the primary goal of this paper, these manifold interconnections between painted productions have four main outcomes at an explanatory level: 1) they depict spatial and diachronic fluctuating limits between the various ceramic provinces; 2) they suggest that the diffusion of painted wares does not necessarily correspond to ceramic provinces of unpainted ware; that means that a cultural interpretation based upon the distribution and occurrence of the forms is weak and partial, since everywhere unpainted pottery represents the vast majority of the ceramic assemblage; 3) they show that the pottery horizons of the regions taken into account are still far from being known in a detailed and exhaustive way; apart from the typological definition of the assemblages. In fact, the major lack is the enkeymeny of ceramic data within reliable stratigraphic sequences; 4) they indicate that, at a certain degree of socio-economic exchange, painted wares had a wider range of distribution than unpainted pottery, since strict interconnections appear between areas with few relationships at the level of simple achrome wares. The most striking example of the latter case is the diffusion of Khubur Ware in Northern Inner Syria, a ceramic province, which, at the basic level of Simple Ware, shows very few interconnections with the Khubur basin and Assyria (see above).

Thus, as far as painted pottery is concerned, relationships between Upper Mesopotamia, the Euphrates valley and Northern Inner Syria seem closer than they appear taking into account achrome pottery. In a historical perspective, this might be interpreted as an indication of a higher level of exchange between upper classes - the hypothetical users of painted vessels - than between members of lower classes.

The limited diffusion of Khubur Ware in the Euphrates and Balikh valleys has to be stressed, together with the association of this production with other painted wares of local and external origin in both regions. The simultaneous attestation at Mari of Khubur Ware (Parrot 1959, fig. 92), Babylonian painted ware60 (ibid., figs. 90-91), local painted ware ibid., pl. XXXVI:1590) and "Bitumen Ware",51 may be easily explained with the economic and cultural interconnections of this site. That the diffusion of painted wares followed its own networks, depending on particular economical and cultural interchanges is further demonstrated by the fact that small rank sites of the Upper Euphrates valley, such as Tell Hadide, el-Qitar, etc., provided only a few painted sherds. Nevertheless, evidence from first rank centres (like Mari and Tuttul), testifies to the role of permeable border acted by Middle and Upper Euphrates provinces in respect of Northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia. Moreover, while achrome pottery seems to be oriented towards west, especially in the Upper Euphrates province, closer to the Aleppo/Ebla region, painted wares display a reversed figure, being strictly connected to Mesopotamian productions. S. Mazzoni has

48 See, for instance, the closed bowl with high flaring rim (Spanos 1989, pl. 84).
49 Compare Mazzoni 1988, no. 29 with Matthews 1995, fig. 21:10.
50 Waiting for a comprehensive study of this production a definition wider than "Isum-Ware" (Hrouda 1989, 212, fig. 6) seems more appropriate, as painted vessels belonging to this production are known from many sites of Southern Mesopotamia (e.g. Van Ess 1988, pl. 6).
51 The latter is not properly a painted production. With this term, I refer to vessels decorated by vertical lines, circular motives made of bitumen, which could be interpreted also as pottery's marks. However, identical motive occur in various sites (see e.g. the circular motive in Mari, Haghuz, Tenqu, Haradum: Parrot 1959, pl. XXXVI:1592; Wessn der Buisson 1948, pks LXXXI-LXXXIV: Kelly-Buccellati - Shelby 1977, pl. IV, figs. 4-5, 15, 18; Kepinski-Lacombe 1992, figs. 135-140).

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convincingly demonstrated, on the grounds of Eblaite evidence (Mazzoni 1988, figs. 1-4), that proper Khabur Ware reached the ceramic provinces beyond the Euphrates, though in locally manufactured issues.

Relationships and Interconnections Between the Ceramic Provinces of Northern Inner Syria, Upper and Middle Euphrates and Balikh and Khabur Basins

A precise definition of the pottery horizons of these regions is still far from being established, due to the scarcity of available evidence. Nevertheless, a preliminary identification of five ceramic provinces12 during MB I, possibly reduced to four in MB II, may be forwarded. While, to a large extent, the close typological similarity of the pottery horizons examined is evident, peculiarities of each province emerge in respect of technological features, such as surface treatments. Clays and tempers are always local, though their precise mixture indicates a shared ceramic technological tradition. This is the case, for instance, of calcium carbonate inclusions generally employed for Simple Ware. Shoulder decorations on jars are a diagnostic MB hallmark throughout the entire period, although they are different in each province. In the Northern Inner Syrian and in the Upper Euphrates ceramic provinces, combed bands prevail, while in the Khabur basin ribbed bands characterize the profiles of vessels; in Middle Euphrates, grooved and ribbed bands play the same decorative function.

Two different ceramic provinces may be distinguished in the Syrian Euphrates Valley. The Upper Euphrates province from Karkemish to Emar, including Jerablus Tahtani, Tell Shukht Tahtani, Tell Amarna, Tell Hamman, Tell Almar, Tell Qara Qazzag, Tell Jarra el-Kebir, Tell Kabir (Tell Banat), el-Qatar, Sweyhat, Tell Hadidi, Tell Habuba Kabira, Tell Mambqat and Tell Halawa and, presumably, Emar.13 Conversely, we do know very few sites of the Middle Euphrates province, comprising the sites identified by B. Geyer and J.-Y. Monchambert (1987a, 319-325, figs. 9-12), especially Tell Mohasan, north of Deir ez-Zor, Terqa, Mari and the necropoleis of Baghuz and es-Susa (Geyer - Monchambert 1987b, 277-278, figs. 9-10). While the ceramic assemblage of Upper Euphrates shows close relationships with that of the Aleppo/Ebla province, and especially with its north-eastern area (basins of Rivers Sajur, Qwesit, and Plain of Jabbul), the pottery horizon of the Middle Euphrates province is under the influence of Lower Mesopotamia. This is shown by the significant presence of cylindrical vessels, with high neck, made of a highly sieved fluvial sandy ware. These cylindrical shapes are rare in Upper Euphrates and represent a diagnostic feature of the Middle Euphrates pottery horizon. Another difference between the two Euphratian provinces is displayed by painted wares. Khabur Ware is scanty attested to in the Upper province and appears together with local and Babylonian painted wares in Middle Euphrates. The latter ware is completely absent in the north. This difference is much more surprising if one considers the fact that a large part of the Upper Euphratian province was under the hegemony of the kingdom of Mari. Actually, the difference between the two Euphratian assemblages is more evident during MB I, and begins to decrease after the Assyrian conquest of Mari, gradually disappearing during MB II. According to this analysis, when a series of independent Amorite rulers ruled over Northern Inner Syria and the Euphrates valley, cultural links where much more frequent than when the Kings of Yamkhad imposed their hegemony to the whole region (MB II), facing on the Euphrates the reigns of Mari and Karkemish. On the other hand, the same phenomenon of ceramic assimilation between Upper and Middle Euphrates may be interpreted, as stated above, with Mari expansion to the north, at the beginning of the XVIII century, which would have favoured material cultural interconnections. However, it might be also ascribed to a long term development independent from political events.14 The ceramic sequence of Tell Kabir (Tell Banat) has recently provided a fundamental insight through the transition from EB IVB down to MB IB in this region (Porter 1995, 132-143). Another key site, in this perspective, is Tell Hadidi, since its MB I assemblage presents numerous western types and wares, while that of MB II is clearly south-oriented, showing a large number of Mari connections (Dornemann 1992, 85).

12 A synthesis is also hampered by the complexity of data examined. A pottery horizon is a coherent complex of wares and types which share the same ceramic tradition. I have thus introduced another term, ceramic tradition, that means the whole typological and technological features shared by vessels from a single site or a region. Intense similarities between these features may indicate the limits of a ceramic province. The term "ceramic tradition" has a scope and a temporal definition more flexible than "pottery horizon".

13 Emar was an important kingdom also in MB: Durand 1990; Margueron 1990; Geyer 1990, 116-118.

14 The whole region was in fact under numerous local kings, whose policy generally did not affect directly cultural transformations.
A further ceramic province, unfortunately only partially known, is that of Tell Hammam et-Turkman, including Upper Balkih and the region of Urfa. It had strong links with Upper Euphrates and, through it, also with the northern area of the Aleppo/Ebla province, thus testifying to that the great river was a real permeable border.

Materials from Khabur basin are still too scanty to allow a careful distinction of the various ceramic horizons comprised in this province. Few MB sites have been excavated in Syrian Gezira, a figure depending on the crisis which affected this region at the end of the IIIrd millennium, or, possibly due to the continuity of occupation of many MB sites from this period to the following Late Bronze, when a large economic and cultural growth caused important urban transformations, which eventually cancelled earlier structures and layers. Nevertheless, at least three different ceramic areas, within a unique pottery tradition, may be distinguished on the basis of available data.

From north to south and west to east the first ceramic area is that Tell Halaf, Tell Khanafe and Tell Fekehrjiyeh, and of the sites of Wadi Zergan (Tell Emir, Tell Harmal, Tell Abu Rasen, Tell Qabir Kebir, Tell Tamr), almost completely unknown so far, but presumably in close contacts with the northern province of Wadi Djürdji (Birimi Hüyük, Tell Guram, Zibini Hüyük), Kurban Hüyük and with the neighbouring ceramic province of Upper Balkih. 55

The second ceramic area comprised the core of the Khabur basin, including principal sites of Wadi Awedji (Tell Ailun, Tell Dibak, Tell Nabbane, Tell Segar, Tell Beidar), Wadi Khanizir (Tell Mozan, Chagar Bazar), Wadi Jaghjagh (Tell Brak, Tell Barri, Tell Humaydi) and the area between the latter and Wadi Jarra, where three major unexcavated sites (Tell Farfara, Tell Sharisi, Tell Eld) presumably formed a flourishing district (Meijer 1990, 36, fig. 4). The entire area constituted a coherent ceramic county, which extended northwards to southern Tur Abdin, as it is shown by materials from Tell Ailun and Tell Mozan (Moortgat 1959, fgs. 9, 16-19; Bucello - Kelly-Bucellati 1988, 61, fgs. 22, 26), and from the recently excavated site of Uptepe in Turkey (Sevin 1992), and southwards to Middle Khabur, as it is demonstrated by materials from Monchambert’s survey. 56 The limits of this ceramic district are vague, since they may be distinguished only considering the number of types and wares shared by sites. Of course, there exist overlaps and common ceramic features with western and eastern Khabur and Assyria (see e.g. Spanos 1990; Dittmann 1990). The third ceramic area of the Khabur basin, was actually part of the eastern province including the sites of Wadi Jarra and Wadi Rumelan, and reaching the Tigris. The pottery assemblages of Tell Leilan and Tell Mohammed Diyab testify to the strict interconnections of this area with the Assyrian ceramic province, and with the area of Tell Hamukar, Tell Rumelan, Tell Kebir, Tell Hadi. The latter district probably was the real homeland of the Khabur Ware. This distinguished production, thus, only partly originated from the Khabur basin.

Comparative chronology

Data available on MB pottery in Northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia are spread over a large geographic area and a long time span. They must be put in a coherent grid to build up a reliable chronological sequence. To this aim, precisely controlled stratified sequences are needed, such as the Eblaite one, which may provide a solid reference point for comparisons and attributions. I have summarised in Table 1 the evidence so far available, hoping that this synoptic scheme will stimulate the work of stratigraphic research, which is at the basis of every historical archaeological approach.

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55 See Algaes ed. 1990 with many comparisons with the distinctive MB pottery assemblage of Kurban Hüyük Period III (Algaes ed. 1990, figs. 104: a-b; 110: a; 113: f-g; 114; 116: a; 118: k; 120: e; 121-125). In the area of Tell Khuen, some MB sites may be identified: Tell Cleve, Tell Bagha, Tell Khanizir, Tell Dekhiz, Charab Sejar.
56 The MB city-states of this area extended largely beyond the modern Syro-Turkish border.
57 Nine sites with MB occupation have been identified: Tell Guedets, Tell Ziyade, Tell Melebiya, Tell Kneidei, Tell Fleti, Tell Rad-Shaqrah, Tell Bederi, Tell Ta’aban I, Tell Mashaqua (Monchambert 1983, 2, 5-7).
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<td>Tel Bani</td>
<td>Chagar</td>
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<td>1800</td>
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<td>Tel Balawat</td>
<td>Bazar</td>
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<td>Tell Hatay 4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Table 1: Middle Bronze chronological sequence.
Bibliography


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- Fig. 2: Selection of ceramic diagnostic types from Northern Inner Syria (Ebla and Harna) (after Nigro in press).
- Fig. 3: MB I diagnostic types from the Upper Euphrates ceramic province (after Dornemann 1992 and Orthmann 1981).
- Fig. 4: MB I diagnostic types from the Upper Balikh ceramic province (after Van Loon 1988).
- Fig. 5: MB II diagnostic types from the eastern Khabur ceramic province, with some MB I vestigial types (ns. 9-11) (after Faivre 1992 and Weiss et al. 1990).

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- Fig. 6: MB II diagnostic types from Middle and Upper Euphrates ceramic provinces (after Kelly-Buccellati - Shelby 1977 and Dornemann 1992).