THE SMITH AND THE KING OF EBLA. TELL EL-YAHUDIYEH WARE, METALLIC WARES AND THE CERAMIC CHRONOLOGY OF MIDDLE BRONZE SYRIA

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1. PREMISE

In the vast pottery horizon of Middle Bronze Syria a distinguished group of specialized wares, that of the so-called "metallic wares", is a realm of material culture apparently suitable for studying interregional relationships, and, at larger and more hazardous extent, for establishing chronological correlations. With the aim of interregional synchronism, this field of investigation seems at least as promising as that of metallurgy. Weapons, ornaments, vessels and other exchanged metal items, being luxury goods with a relatively large distribution but a quite conservative typology (due to the technological processes necessary to produce them), clearly illustrate cultural relations. Metal, however, is not so time resistant as pottery, and a very few bronze/silver and gold objects were preserved in stratified archaeological contexts to be exploited for setting chronological interconnections. From the other hand, for the sake of chronology, metals often have a too long life, due to their symbolic and intrinsic value, to be considered diagnostic indicators (see the "broad" fenestrated axes mentioned below). For all these reasons, ceramics imitating metals instead represent a favourable piece of evidence for studying diachronically typological transformations, regional distribution, cultural links and chronological interconnections.

In this perspective, the site of Tell Mardikh, ancient Ebla, offers a vivid picture with thousands of ceramic fragments and vessels processed in up to now thirty-eight years of excavations. The pottery horizon of Mardikh III (MBA) is divided into two main periods (Mardikh IIIA, MB I, 2000-1800 BC, and Mardikh III B, MB II, 1800-1600 BC), each further subdivided into two phases on stratigraphic grounds. This large and reliably dated amount of pottery gives a unique opportunity for studying such specialised ceramic productions, also illustrating their development and distribution.

Hereby a preliminary revue of metallic wares in inland Syria is proposed (Fig. 1), in order to recommend their systematic identification and study, which will surely reveal more connections between Syria-Palestine and the neighbouring regions.

2. THE SMITH OF THE KING OF EBLA

The present study takes the clue offered by an unusual retrieval, which occurred during the 20th season of excavation at Tell Mardikh in 1984. On the southwestern flank of the Acropolis a burial was discovered, in which the dead man was accompanied by two couples of stone moulds (Fig. 2), for producing a fenestrated axe of the "broad-type", with a distinguished central triple ridge between the two eyes (Fig. 3). The fact that two axes of a similar type (Fig. 4) were found in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats, an Eblaite king buried during the second half of the 18th century BC, and that the burial was located in what can be considered an industrial quarter on

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1 Rome University "La Sapienza"
2 The last report on progressing excavations is Matthiae 2000 (see also for Ebla in the Middle Bronze Age Matthiae 1977a; 1997b).
3 Absolute dates are given here according to Middle Chronology, taken as a pure conventional reference system. The Ebla contribution to absolute chronology will be discussed by the present author in a following issue (some general indication are anticipated by Nigro 2002; and Pinnock 2001).
4 This periodization initially proposed by Matthiae (1977, 44-51), was confirmed by the excavations in the Sacred Area of Ishtar (Matthiae 1993; 1997; Marchetti/Nigro 1997; 1999; Nigro 2002; Nigro in press, Pinnock 2001)
5 Pincock 1988, 6.
6 TML 84.G.30a-b, TML 84.G.31a-b, Matthiae/Pincock/Scandone Mattheae (eds.) 1995, 439, n. 309; Festuccia 2000, 422-423, figs. 5-6.
7 Pincock 2000a, 600, fig. 8.
Fig. 1 Distribution of Metallic Wares in Syria-Palestine during the Middle Bronze Age
the southern side of the MB palatial compound, suggests that the buried person was in some ways related to the palace administration. At a first glance, it seemed that the dead man was a smith, and the moulds and a square stone table included in the burial were his metalworking tools. For these simple reasons we can call him "the smith of the king".

According to stratigraphy, burial D.3712 was ascribed to Mardikh IIIB1 (MB IIA, 1800–1700 BC), that is fully consistent with the date of the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats, where two broad fenestrated axes with triple ridge where found. The absolute dating of the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats is based – apart from many other indications summed up by Paolo Matthiae, Gabriella Scandone Matthiae, Frances Pinnock, and myself – upon the Egyptian mace with the inscribed name of Pharaoh Harnekheryotef Hotepibra, who reigned between 1770 and

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8 The MB royal palace was located on top of the Acropolis (Palace E); the Palace of the royal heir, the prince, was in the adjacent lower town, on the western flank of the Acropolis. The industrial quarter was on the southern flank of the Acropolis, where it already was in the Early Bronze Age (a comprehensive study of the urban plan of Ebla during the Middle Bronze Age is offered by Matthiae 1991: 1997b; see also Pincock 2001).
9 Matthiae 1979, 178; Matthiae 1980c.
10 Matthiae 1979, 178.
12 Pincock 2000a, 595–596, note 11.
13 Nigro 2002.
1760 BC. The Eblaite king was thus buried after 1770 BC, not later than 1700 BC, and the smith was apparently active during the decades preceding the date of his burial. Although the axes of the Lord of the Goats do not exactly correspond with the moulds of Burial D.3712, the buried smith may be the one who made them, as well as other relevant metal fittings retrieved in the tomb: the spear-heads found in the rear wall of the Hypogeum Q.78.C, the figurines decorating the king’s throne (in the shape of goats, which gave the name to the tomb), as well as the silver carinated bowl (Fig. 5), which bears the inscription ša Immaya, apparently revealing the name of the king himself.

The smith burial also included six pottery vessels (Fig. 6), among which there was a Tell el-Yahudiyyeh Ware juglet (Fig. 7). The latter vase suggested that he was a foreigner, since up to now, it is the only one of this kind found at Ebla. This interpretation may be corroborated by the fact that the moulds were added to the burial, otherwise it would have been more reasonable to leave them to his heirs, since this job was usually transmitted from fathers to sons. However, other explanations may be brought forth. For instance, considering the symbolic use of fenestrated axes, one may surmise that the type with central ridges was produced in a few specimens especially for the king’s use, so that the moulds themselves were (roughly in the time span 2100–1900 BC). On the same problem see also Pinnoch 2000a, 594–596, note 11.

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**Fig. 5** The silver carinated bowl TM.78.Q.497, found in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats, which bears an Egyptianizing decoration (an applied handle ending with two hands), and a cuneiform inscription indicating the name of its owner, Immaya, possibly the Eblaite king buried into the tomb.

**Fig. 6** Metallic bottles buried within a jar as pottery funerary equipment of the smith burial.
at the metallurgic activity of the dead. A Black Burnished Ware bottle\(^{23}\) clearly had been inspired by a silver prototype. In this perspective, also the Tell el-Yahudiye juglet may be more correctly considered a metallic imitation, inserted in the funerary assemblage not only for its function of oil-bottle, but as replica of a metal jug.\(^{23}\)

Was it by chance? Or the metallic “character” of this pottery was recognized by ancient Elbaeites and symbolically exploited in the smith burial? Seemingly, metal imitations in pottery were credited of a symbolic value analogous to that of real metallic vessels, especially in tombs, where an economic reason suggested to replace the original metal vessels with less expensive replicas. The ceramic assemblage of the burial of the “smith of the King”, thus, offers the cue for re-evaluating those ceramic wares, which explicitly imitate metals.

3. METALLICWARESMIDDBRONZEAGESYRIA

At Ebla and in Inner Syria, Metallic Wares are set apart both from the point of view of technological features (clay, fabrics, firing, surface treatment), of shapes, and, of course, of their functions. Pottery vessels imitating metallic prototypes are mainly, if not exclusively, attested in specialised contexts, such as palaces, tombs, or religious areas. From the one hand, they had an utilisation very similar to that of their metallic counterparts, but on the other, since their economic value was significantly lower, they had a quite larger distribution and a shorter life, thus offering more punctual references for setting chronological interconnections among archaeological sites and cultural areas.

The study of ceramic materials retrieved in the Royal Tombs, palaces and sacred cisterns at Ebla\(^{24}\) – among many interesting observations, which I can-

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505, n. 470), where a group of inlaid personages illustrate on one side the ritual banquet of the dead king in the netherworld, and, on the other, the divinised king in shape of a bull, between the royal heir and his wife in a frontal naked view. This symbolic representation of the Eblaite kingship is delimited by two seated baboons, flanked by a warrior carrying an axe of the same type of the very specimens placed in the Tomb (and of the moulds retrieved in the smith burial; MATTHIAE 1980c, 60, fig. 14). This allows to include also these weapons among the funerary furnishings, to which a special symbolic function was attributed in the netherworld banquet.

\(^{22}\) MATTHIAE 1980c, 62.

\(^{23}\) MATTHIAE 1979, 173; note 77; MATTHIAE 1980c.

\(^{24}\) PINNOCK 1979.

\(^{23}\) BAPPI GUARDATA 1988, 3.

\(^{23}\) The metallic inspiration of Tell el-Yahudiye is illustrated by a bronze specimen published by K. Koschel (1996).

\(^{23}\) The ceramic assemblage of the Middle Bronze Age Royal Tombs at Ebla, preliminarily published by P. MATTHIAE (1979, 153-160, 165-173) has been the subject of the PhD Thesis of the present author, with the title “I corredi vascolari degli Ipogeai Reali di Ebla e la cronologia ceramica della Siria interna nel Bronzo Medio”, due to appear in the series Materiali e Studi Archeologici di Ebla; the pottery from the Northern Palace at Ebla is going to appear in the same series in a volume by Frances Pinnock; the ceramic inventories of the jarasses discovered in the Sacred Area of Ishtar are preliminarily published in MARCHETTI/NIGRO 1997; MARCHETTI/NIGRO 1999.
not deal with here—allowed to single out the commonest Metallic Wares of Inner Syria, which, when conveniently classified, may provide at least as interesting results as the renown Syro-Palestinian Painted Wares, which many scholars have tried to exploit for cultural or chronological interconnections, with problematic outcomes.27

Four major Metallic Wares can be identified in Syria during the Middle Bronze Age (Fig. 1), with the maximum attestation during the central part of this period (MB IB and MB II A, roughly corresponding to the 19th and 18th century BC). They are: 1. Black Burnished Ware, or, more precisely, Dark Faced Burnished Ware (the colour varies from black to dark grey or brown); 2. Red Burnished Ware; 3. “Syrian” Tell el-Yahudiye h Ware; 4. Orange Burnished Ware. In the last century of the Middle Bronze Age metallic shapes are imitated also in Simple Ware, and these specialised productions are gradually dismissed. A distinct ware, however, appears in this final stage of the MBA horizon, the so-called White Slip Ware (to be distinguished from the homonymous and more famous Cypriote production).

Black Burnished Ware and Red Burnished Ware are those with the wider and longer attestations. It is well known that the colour difference of the surface of vessels belonging to these two wares mainly depends on oxygenation during firing (under oxidising, for a shining red surface, or reducing, for a dark surface, conditions). However, their colour marks a cultural differentiation (as it was deliberately determined by potters), and allows us to distinguish two related but distinguished ceramic traditions. Spatial and chronological overlapping of these wares is possible, but the overall picture shows a clear differentiation in their distribution (Fig. 1). Black Burnished Ware is mainly attested in Inner Syria, in an area which extends from the region of Harran and Gaziantep in Southeastern Anatolia, to the Middle Euphrates Valley (Tell Bīa), the Aleppo Region, the Ebla and Hama plateau, the Orontes Valley, the region of Qatna, the Plain of Ṣūkk, and southwards Damascus and the Hauran, always inland. Red Burnished Ware is, instead, the typical metallic production of the coast, being attested from Ugarit to Ashkelon, with an outstanding prevalence in Lebanon. Towards the end of Middle Bronze II, Black Burnished Ware finds its way also to Palestine, where it gradually substitutes Red Burnished Ware in piriform and cylindrical juglets (also open shapes did exist in both production, but they are not systematically recorded by archaeologists as

Fig. 8 Black Burnished Ware most common bowls during Middle Bronze IB–II A (1900–1700 BC)

27 Methodological doubts were raised by the debate on “pots and people”, as well as on the correct and clear distinction of the numerous painted wares attested in Syria-Palestine during the Middle Bronze Age (Nigro 1999, 287–289); see also Tine BAGH in this volume.
3.1. Black-Burnished Ware

The origins of Black Burnished Ware are deeply rooted in the metallic tradition of Early Bronze Age pottery of Inner Syria (it is sufficient here to recall the type of the so-called Syrian bottle). However, when compared with its forerunner, which was named metallic for the physical characteristics of the clay after firing, Middle Bronze Age Black Burnished Ware turns up completely different, since its fabrics are often fragile, and only the outer highly burnished slip imitates a metal, possibly silver.

Black Burnished Ware vessels are coated with a thick dark slip (Munsell 10YR 4/1-3/1, Dark Grey), and refined by means of circular (in the case of open shapes) and vertical (in the case of closed shapes) burnishing. The inventory of shapes is limited, including simple bowls with in-turned rim and ring-base (Fig. 8:1, 3, 5), common at Ebba, sharply carinated bowls (Fig. 8:2, 4), bottles with triple groove at the bottom of the neck (Fig. 9), and juglets with inner-stepped rim (Fig. 10).

The latter type has a wide diffusion also during Middle Bronze II, with several transformations, gradually assuming a piriform shape and penetrating into Palestine, where towards the end of the period it is replaced with the cylindrical juglet. Due to their similarity Black Burnished Ware piriform juglets are often confused with Tell el-Yahudiyyeh Ware juglets in archaeological publications. However, they should be carefully distinguished, since the spatial and

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29 Kühne 1976, 33-35.

30 For example two specimens retrieved in the Facissa F.5238 at Ebba (Marchetti/Nigro 1997, fig. 7:30-31; Marchetti/Nigro 1999, fig. 7:18-19) exhibit a shape similar to that of the silver bowl found in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats (fig. 5).

31 Marchetti/Nigro 1997, 18, fig. 7:26-28; Marchetti/Nigro 1999, fig. 7:20-21.

32 Marchetti/Nigro 1999, fig. 7:18-19.

33 The type is exemplary illustrated by a bottle found in Tomb Lat el-Mishrifeh, ancient Qatna (Du Mesnil du Buisson 1927a, 16, fig. 48, pl. XII: 86) and by a specimen retrieved in the Tomb of the Princess at Ebba (Matthewaei 1979, fig. I:15), which is, however, made of a whitish ware. Another one was found in the Facissa F.5327 (Marchetti/Nigro 1997, fig. 6:12), and several in the Hama graves (Fugmann 1958, pl. X, ns. 5B683, 5B185, 5B697, 5B382, 6A302), as well as in tombs near the site of Osmaniyeh, presently in the Louvre (AO 12360, AO 12362).

34 The Inner Stepped Rim Juglet is a distinguished type attested during MB IB in Inner Syria, especially in funerary contexts. BBW inner-stepped rim juglets are found at Ebba and Hama in tombs (Fugmann 1958, pl. X, n. 5B167). By contrast with the coast, where it was a very common shape, in the Syrian inland the number of Inner Stepped Rim Juglets is limited, since they were container for a precious stuff (an oil or a perfume). The diffusion of this vessel in Palestine took place with some decades of delay in respect of Syria; Palestinian specimens are characterised by the disk bottom (Ilan 1991). Several specimens were also found on the coast (Gueguès 1938, 54, fig. 79, Louvre, AO, 11012 from Ruweide).
chronological distribution of such containers is only partially correspondent. Black Burnished Ware juglets are more standardised in dimensions and shape than Tell el-Yahudiyeh Ware ones, thus hinting at a mass production for trading a popular ointment or a drug. Tell el-Yahudiyeh Ware vessels, conversely, may have been exchanged also for their own aesthetic value (as many askoi and modelled jugs testify to), with, for instance, a ritual destination, to be used for funerary or votive libations.

At Ebla, Black Burnished Ware inner stepped-rim bottles and juglets have been retrieved almost exclusively in tombs or burials. This should depend on their content, possibly a precious stuff (a drug, an ointment, a perfume) or a ritual beverage (wine) or liquid for libations (in the case of juglets). Black Burnished Ware open shapes, such as bowls or platters, are also found in ritual or religious contexts, sometimes with food offerings or personal ornaments inside.

A few examples may be put forward for illustrating the potentiality of the study of this ware. A BBW piriform juglet found in Grave III at Hama, on the basis of comparative stratigraphy is dated to MB IB, and a very similar specimen retrieved in a stratified built tomb at Tell es-Sultan, belonging to the end of Period IVA (end of MB I, around 1825-1800 BC). Another enlightening example is offered by a bowl with two long bar-handles around the rim, ring base, and highly burnished brownish slip, found in Facissa F.5238 at Ebla (Fig. 11). This piece of evidence is especially suitable for Syro-Palestinian ceramic interconnection, because it finds close parallels in several Palestinian sites, such as Tell el-Mutesellim (level XII; Fig. 12), Ras el-'Ain, Tell es-Sultan (tomb Group I). At Ras el-'Ain this type of bowl was found in locus 7195 of Palace I. Its dating fits very well the chronology of the lower layer of Facissa F.5238 at Ebla (around 1850-1825 BC). A MB I deep bowl with rim knobs, retrieved in Facissa F.5327, finds a comparison in a tomb of 'Ain Samiyah. This shape is also a metallic imitation.

At the end of the 18th century, Black Burnished

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Fig. 11 Burnished bowl with bar-handles imitating a metallic prototype found in Facissa F.5238 at Ebla; Mardikh IIIA2, Middle Bronze IB, c. 1850-1825 BC

Fig. 12 Burnished bowl with bar-handles imitating a metallic prototype found in Tomb 3162 at Tell el-Mutesellim, ancient Megiddo; Palestine Archaeological Museum (Rockefeller Museum), Jerusalem

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35 FUGMANN 1958, pl. X, n. 5B167.
37 MARCETTI/NIKO 1997: 18, fig. 7.29.
38 From T.3162: LOUD 1948, pls. 15: 15, 116: 18. This tomb was ascribed to level XIV, however, as suggested by K.M.

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KENYON (1958; 1969, 26-29), it is highly probable that it was sunk into level XIV from level XII.

39 BECK 1975, 54-56, fig. 4:17; BECK 1985, 192, fig. 5.1.
40 DEVER 1975, fig. 3-4.
Ware rapidly disappears, as a result of the process of standardization in pottery production, and possibly of a change of the firing techniques. Metallic shapes, however, continue to be replicated, even though without the attention to outer aspect of vessels. Piriform juglets, carinated bowls and miniature metallic vessels are then produced only in the Simple Ware, often with plain undecorated surface.

3.2. Red Burnished Ware

The second major Syrian metallic ware is Red Burnished Ware,\(^41\) which is preponderantly attested on the coast and in Palestine during Middle Bronze IB–IIA (1900–1700 BC). From the technological point of view, Red Burnished Ware is characterized by a highly polished surface, where, as a difference in respect to Black Burnished Ware, the marks of the tool used on the fast wheel for burnishing are not visible, because the vessel was probably polished with the hand or a piece of leather. The outer slip was applied with liquid clay rich in iron, and vessels were fired under oxidising conditions, in order to obtain the distinguished shining red (Munsell 2.5YR.5/6–5/8 Red) of their surface (imitating copper and bronze).

The metallic descent of this ware is demonstrated not only by its outer lustrous colour, but also by its typological inventory, which includes carinated bowls, trefoil-mouth jugs (like a specimen found in the burial in Area G at Ebla; Fig. 13)\(^42\) and pitchers, inner stepped rim bottles and juglets, globular juglets (Fig. 14). In respect to Black Burnished Ware, Red Burnished Ware shows a significantly wider range of shapes. The characteristic surface treatment aimed at imitating bronze is often applied on non-metallic shapes, such as in-turned rim bowls and platters, dippers (Fig. 15), or simple jars. This enlargement of the original metallic repertoire testifies to the popularity of this production, which especially in certain funerary assemblages covers the entire corpus of vessels. The most common open form is the Gublite bowl,\(^43\) with the classic metallic prototypes by W.F. Albright (ALBRIGHT 1933, 69; ALBRIGHT 1964, 46; GERSTEINBLITZ 1983, 79, fig. 29:2–3) after the silver and bronze specimens found in the Montet Jar at Byblos (MONTET 1929, pl. LXX.605), which date back from the first two centuries of the 2nd millennium BC (TUFNELL/WARD 1966, 214; PORADA 1966, 254; TUBB 1983, 49–50).

\(^{41}\) I prefer this denomination instead of “Red-Slip”, which may be erroneously confused with the well known production of the Iron Age, and “Red Polished Ware”, which fits the evidence, but may be confused with a distinguished ware of Early Bronze Age (ÉSÈ 1991, 111).

\(^{42}\) BAFFI GUGLIELMI 1988, 4, fig. 3:22.

\(^{43}\) This name was given to a carinated bowl clearly inspired to
(Fig. 16) or the high subtype (Fig. 17; here illustrated by a bronze specimen found in Kanesh/Kültepe karum 1b), which might be used for a chronological assessment after a very careful typological seriation, due to its persistence through MB I and II. Among closed shapes, the trefoil-mouth juglet reaches its maximum popularity during MB IB (1900–1800 BC), while the inner-stepped rim bottle or piriform juglet with ring base have their maximum diffusion during MB II A (1800–1700 BC). The spherical juglet, with double-strand arched handle, is also largely attested in tombs of the latter phase (always in number of two or three specimens).

During MB IB and II A (1900–1700 BC) Red Burnished Ware is a specialised production, with its own clay, fabrics, and preparation technique. Conversely, in the last phase of Middle Bronze Age (II B, 1700–1550 BC), the red burnished slip, being a very common surface treatment, is applied also on many Simple Ware vessels (made of non-specialised plain fabrics). This development, together with the increase of non-metallic types, makes almost impossible to distinguish the original metal imitating Red Burnished Ware from Red Slip Ware, its more popular and simplified successor (very often without burnishing). The former, in fact, drastically diminishes in attestations and disappears. This allows, especially in Palestine, the contemporary diffusion of Black Burnished Ware, which inherits the role of metallic ware in that region (the diagnostic type is, in this case, the cylindrical juglet).

3.3. Syrian Tell el-Yahudiyeh Ware

Another ceramic production characterized by the black/grey/dark brown\textsuperscript{43} polished white-incised or punctured surface is also attested in inner Syria during Middle Bronze IB–II A (1900–1700 BC). This distinguished ware, which was given the name of Tell el-Yahudiyeh Ware, has a wide distribution in the Levant, Egypt, Nubia, Cyprus, so that has been aptly proposed to use it for studying chronological interconnections. Favourite shape of this production is the piriform juglet, although other forms are attested to, including cylindrical juglets, carinated bowls, and askoi. Due to the large diffusion of Black Burnished Ware in Syria, and to the fact – as already stated –

\textsuperscript{43} This also was obtained under reducing oxygen conditions during firing; the regularity of this process was inconstant in respect of Black Burnished Ware, so that the variety of surface colours of Syrian Tell el-Yahudiyeh vessels is higher.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Gugues} 1937: 63–64; figs. 23a, 24; 1938: 30, fig. 47, 59–60, fig. 93 g–h; \textit{Saidah} 1994, fig. 15: 7–8. See also the specimens painted in the style of North Syrian-Cilician Painted Ware found in the Royal Tombs at Ebla: \textit{Matthiae} 1989.
that the latter shares a large part of its typological inventory with Tell el-Yahudiyyeh Ware, they have been very often confused in the archaeological record (and publications). Perhaps, this also depends on the clear metallic inspiration of both wares. They show, indeed, a very similar surface treatment, except for the incised and/or punctured white decoration of the Tell el-Yahudiyyeh Ware. However, in spite of their partial typological, functional, spatial and chronological overlapping, for the sake of cultural and chronological interconnections, they should be carefully distinguished. A study of Tell el-Yahudiyyeh Ware in Syria has not yet been systematically carried out, even though the attestations of this production are not sporadic. While the Tell el-Yahudiyyeh juglets retrieved on the coast and in the Plain of ‘Akkar, clearly belong to the main Syro-Egyptian group, the existence of a Syrian Tell el-Yahudiyyeh Ware is suggested by various finds in the South (Damascus, Hauran, Jebel el-`Arab). Tell el-Yahudiyyeh vessels found in Tell Sakka, and in tombs in the region of Suweida suggest to add a local group of Southern Inner Syria to the classification proposed by M. Bietak.⁴⁶ Although these important materials still wait to be studied and properly classified, one should include into this group also specimens found in tombs in the regions of Julan, often illicitly excavated and sold on the antique market in Jerusalem (Fig. 18).⁴⁷ The latter region was presumably the centre of production of Syrian Tell el-Yahudiyyeh Ware, at least judging from the numerous attestations and the typological variety of tombs assemblages discovered. It seems, thus, noteworthy that a potter’s workshop with Tell el-Yahudiyyeh Ware was found in “Affula,” just on the other side of the Jordan. Some finds in eastern Upper Galilee, should be related with the Southern Syrian production too. If this region is included in the number of producing areas, one should also ask where was produced the content of the Tell el-Yahudiyyeh juglets, which was a special oil, or a perfume, an ointment or a drug (opium?). All of these precious stuff may have been successfully cultivated in the Hauran-Jul'an region, which is extremely fertile due to the properties of its volcanic soil. It is favourable for the cultivation of grapes, so that it seems also possible to hypothesize that the content of the Syrian Tell el-Yahudiyyeh Ware was a special kind of wine. This would also better explain the frequent presence of such jugs in tombs, as wine was a basic element for funerary banquet and libations. The argument is not decisive, however, because also ointments were commonly added to tomb fittings, and olive trees were successfully cultivated in the Hauran-Jul'an too.

3.4. Orange Burnished Ware

The fourth metallic production attested in Inner Syria during MB IB can be called Orange Burnished Ware. It is indeed characterised by the employ of an alluvial clay, rich in iron and well sieved, which results in a very homogeneous texture in section, and in an orange colour (Munsell 2.5YR6/6-6/8 Light Red), after firing under oxidation conditions (greenish grey in reducing conditions). Firing is at a high temperature (more than 900º), and the surface treatment is a very distinct one (see below). Its typological inventory comprises almost exclusively jugs and juglets of a peculiar shape, with biconic or piriform body, pronounced shoulders and a small arched double-strand handle applied over them, at the bottom of the neck. The technique used for producing these vessels is a peculiar one. Jugs were made of two parts separately on the fast wheel (the bottom and the shoulder with the neck), and joined with the help of a wooden comb, with which the joint at the maximum diameter (the shoulders edge) was concealed and regularized. Then the vessel was heavily burnished horizontally on the neck, radially on the shoulders, and vertically on the bottom. This operation was made

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⁴⁶ Bietak 1985, passim.
⁴⁷ This is the case, for example, of the vessels nowadays in the Collections of the Bible Land Museum: Seipel (ed.) 1997, 46-48, ns. 57, 59 (note that the jug n. 60 is not a Tell el-

Yahudiyyeh one, and is not, as stated in that catalogue, from an unknown site, but illicitly excavated in the Jericho necropolis).

⁴⁸ Zevulun 1990.
with a wooden stick. Jugs, thus, acquired a smoothed surface, without having been coated with a slip, as a difference in respect of Red Burnished Ware. The metallic inspiration is evident even in the method used for building these jugs, which possibly imitates that employed for vessels made of copper or bronze hammered foils. The function of such jugs is unknown, even though wine or beer seem their most probable content, being inserted into tombs as elements of the banquet service.

Five outstanding specimens of this production were discovered in the Royal Tombs of Ebla. A big jug was found in the Tomb of the Princess (TM.78.QIA.63. Fig. 19), which illustrates the earliest slenderer version of this shape (small ring-base, and relatively small neck and mouth), dating from the last quarter of Mardikh IIIA (MB IB, 1825–1800 BC). Two were found in the Tomb of the Cisterns (TM.79.QIB.1 and TM.79.QIB.10. Fig. 20), being slightly later in date. They show disk- and ring-base with a slightly larger diameter, and a larger body in respect of the jug found in the Tomb of the Princess,

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The study of the pottery assemblage of the Hypogeum Q.79.B demonstrated that it hosted two burials of different chronology, one dating from the end of Mardikh IIIB (1650–1600 BC), and an earlier one, unfortunately very badly preserved – due to the fact that the Tomb of the Cisterns was violated during the Hittite sack of Ebla –, dating approximately from the period of the Tomb of the Princess (end of Mardikh IIIA/very beginning of Mardikh IIIB, 1800–1775 BC).
However, the surface treatment is exactly the same of TM.78.QIA.63. A third couple of jugs was found in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats (TM.78.QIB.31, TM.78.QIB.63, Fig. 21). The most evident morphological features of the biggest specimen in respect of previous ones are the width of the flaring rim, the presence of an omphalos at the middle of the ring-base (which is another metallic citation), and the slenderer double-strand handle.\(^\text{26}\)

The fact that two couples of Orange Burnished

\(^{26}\) Matthiae 1979, 159, fig. 0:2. The earlier specimens have in fact less pronounced shoulders and a larger neck.
War jugs were found both in the Tomb of the Cisterns (Hypogeum Q.79.B) and in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats suggests that a couple was also originally deposited in the Tomb of the Princess, and that a small jug, like TM.78.Q1B.31, was lost when the tomb was flooded and the wall separating it from the other Royal Hypogea collapsed. In any case, this datum points to the existence of a standard service in MB IB–IIA ceramic funerary assemblages of upper classes in Inner Syria, composed of two OBW jugs, as it is also confirmed by the retrieval of another couple of such jugs in a built up tomb at Tell Nebi Mend, ancient Qadesh.\footnote{\textit{Pezard 1931}, pl. XXI.}

The two specimens of Tell Nebi Mend belong to the same typological class exemplified by TM.78.Q1B.63, even though they exhibit a greenish-grey outer colour (Fig. 22), due to different firing conditions. The shape is, anyway, exactly the same known from Ebla, as well as the distinguished outer burnishing.\footnote{\textit{It is perhaps interesting to note that in the same tomb a bronze duckbill axe was found.}}

The strict similarities between the Ebla and the Tell Nebi Mend jugs point to the provenience from the same potter’s workshop in the Ebla – Qatna region. This hypothesis is corroborated by the Orange Burnished Ware painted pitcher (Fig. 23) and globular juglet\footnote{\textit{Du Mesnil du Buisson 1927b}, fig. 49, pl. IX.2; nowadays in the Musée du Louvre. A further specimen of an Orange Burnished Ware globular juglet was found in Tell ‘Arqa and is now in the American University Museum of Beirut.} found in Tomb I at el-Mishrifeh/ancient Qatna.\footnote{AO. 9538.} Although the shapes of these vessels are completely different from the Ebla and Tell Nebi Mend jugs, their fabric, firing, and surface treatment allow to ascribe them to Orange Burnished Ware.

The typological variety of Orange Burnished Ware, which sometimes exceeds the limits of metallic imitations, is further demonstrated by a rather unique jug of the Collection Tabet, preserved in the Louvre.\footnote{\textit{AO. 9538.}} It illustrates how metallic productions were interrelated. This is a juglet of Orange Burnished Ware,\footnote{\textit{Du Mesnil du Buisson 1927b}, fig. 49, pl. IX.2; nowadays in the Musée du Louvre.} which bears the same white punctured decoration of Tell el-Yahudiyeh juglets (Fig. 24). It is self-evident that the colour depends on the oxygenation during firing, so that this can be positively described as a Syrian Tell el-Yahudiyeh Ware juglet, technically realized like Orange Burnished Ware juglets. In the Jericho necropolis the same type belongs to Tomb Groups I–II,\footnote{\textit{Kenyon 1965}, 283, fig. 136:1–2.} being ascribable to Period IVa–b, i.e. the very beginning of MB II of Palestine (1800–1775 BC). In Inner Syria and on the coast, Orange Burnished Ware is in fact largely attested especially during Middle Bronze IIA, thus covering the entire central phase of Middle Bronze Age (1850–1700 BC).

The inventory of Orange Burnished Ware vessels found in the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats at Ebla includes a kurnos (Fig. 25), with a bird-shaped pouring vase and four slightly carinated bowls applied on a hollow ring,\footnote{\textit{This cultic vessel was found at Ebla asl in Temple B (Matthiae/Pinnock/Scandone Matthiae 1995, 496, n. 444); interesting comparisons are known from the Necropolis of Jericho (Kenyon 1960, tomb B3.85, fig. 162; Kenyon/Holland 1983, 442, fig. 188:5); this specimen, now in the Archaeological Museum of Amman, has a snake on top of the bird.).} which one may again suggest to con-
sider a replica of a metallic cultic furnishing. However, since no evidence is available to support this interpretation, it may be surmised that even if kernoi were a typical ceramic shape, potters wanted to give them a metallic look by means of surface treatments used for metallic wares.

3.5. Syrian White Slip Ware

During the last decades of Middle Bronze Age, with a sharp increase in the final period (Alalakh VI/Hama G, 1600–1550 BC), a new extremely fine metallic production appears, characterised by the pureness of clay, the outer whitish, sometimes pinkish, slip, carefully smoothed. Favourite shapes are usually the bowl with pronounced shoulders and high flaring rim (Fig. 26), but also hemispherical bowls with out-grooved rim, small jugs, again with pronounced horizontal shoulders, cylindrical neck and ring base (Fig. 27), and big pilgrim flasks, as shown by an outstanding specimen found in Pavissa P.5213 of the Sacred Area of Ishtar. This production was called “Palace Ware” at Ebla, because it was mainly found in the Northern and Western Palaces, respectively the building devot-

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59 The bird may be identified with the dove, sacred to Ishtar, as recently suggested by Frances Pincock (2000b).

60 The final phase of the Middle Bronze Age in Northern Inner Syria is represented by Mardikh III-B2, which is suddenly interrupted by the destruction attributed to the Hittite king Murshili (around 1600 BC, conventionally following Middle Chronology), and Hama G, which illustrates the transitional horizon MB II–LB I, as well as Alalakh VI.

61 This cistern was filled in with objects (otive and ritual furnishings) resulting from the destruction of the nearby Temple P2 by the Hittites.
ed to royal reception and banquets, and the Palace of the Heir Prince, but should be more properly called Syrian White Slip Ware. The metallic origin of Syrian White Slip Ware is shown by the almost exclusive use of ring bases and profiled rims, by the presence of the ridge at the bottom of the neck – which is a ceramic reproduction of the fusion ridge on metal vessels –, and by the outer careful smoothed whitish slip. This surface finishing, which gave the vessels a shining ivory colour (Munsell 2.5Y8/2, Pale Yellow), was probably aimed at imitating silver. As a difference in respect of the other metallic wares so far discussed, Syrian White Slip Ware is barely attested to in funerary contexts, being instead a favourite palatial production. White Slip Ware vessels represented the most valuable part of the table service, being used as chalices, dishes and wine jugs.

4. Final Remark

This very quick and schematic survey was aimed at indicating a favourable field of research – that of Metallic Wares –, which seems to be quite interesting for establishing trans-regional interconnections, if not chronological assessments, and which – I think – deserves the attention of the archaeologists working in the Levant. The long-debated Tell el-Yahudiyeh Ware should be re-evaluated as one among other specialised metal imitating productions, also taking into account its Syrian branch. The systematic study of such wares, if presumably is not able to provide many absolute chronological references, can however add a further tessera in the overall mosaic of Middle Bronze Age pottery, thus contributing to the archaeological periodization of Syria-Palestine.
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