Lione du Piêd

THE EARLY IRON AGE IN THE NORTHERN LEVANT: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE POTTERY ASSEMBLAGES FROM RAS EL-BASSIT AND RAS IBN HANI

Introduction

Recent excavations have revealed that most northern Levantine sites[1] were reoccupied directly after the destruction of their Late Bronze Age (hereafter LBA) levels (Fig.1). In general, the succeeding Early Iron Age (hereafter EIA) settlements were more modest in character and often less densely occupied. Although imports are rare during this period, there is some evidence for continuing contact between Cyprus and the Levant (see for example, Bounni et al. 1981; Badre 1983; Dothan and Zukerman 2004; Gilboa 2005; Bell 2005; and Sherratt 1998).

In the northern Levant, at present, the preserved material evidence consists almost exclusively of pottery. At first glance, the situation at such sites as Ras Ibn Hani, Tarsus and now also Tell Ta'yinat,[2] seems more or less comparable with the picture that has emerged elsewhere in the Levant and Cyprus: large amounts of Aegean-style pottery[3] appear directly after the destructions at the end of the LBA. However, although there are some general resemblances, there are also distinct local or regional differences.

To illustrate these regional differences, aspects of the EIA pottery assemblages from Ras el-Bassit[4] and Ras Ibn Hani[5] will be presented in this paper. I will stress the importance of looking more closely at the local or regional level for continuities and changes, as well as for the possible meaning of differences and similarities in these pottery repertoires.[6] Using this approach, I hope to shed more light on the

[1] Prominent exceptions include Ugarit, Alalakh, Emar and Tell Arqa.

[2] See Swift (1958) for the Aegean-style pottery found thus far in the Amuq. The pottery from the recently launched excavations at Tell Ta'yinat has not yet been published (see Janeway in this issue).

[3] This pottery is often labelled Mycenaean IIIC or Wheelmade III. For a discussion of the terminology, see Kling (1991).

[4] I would like to thank J.Y. Perreault for his permission to study the pottery from Ras el-Bassit and to present some of the results in this article.

[5] I would like to thank A. Bounni and J. and E. Lagarce for the possibility of studying the material from Ras Ibn Hani within the context of the Syrian-French Expedition, and for their permission to present some of these results in this article.

[6] The local pottery from Ras el-Bassit, Ras Ibn Hani and Tell Kazel (Area I) are

possible nature of these two sites during the EIA, and their broader regional, inter-regional, and overseas interactions.

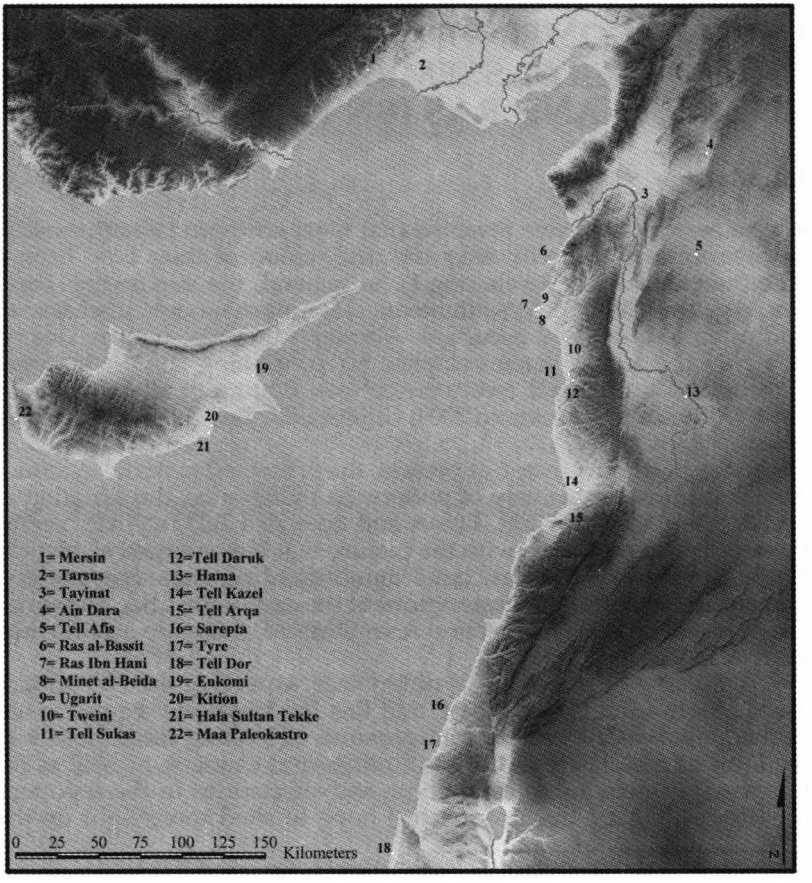

Fig. 1. Map of LBA and EIA sites.

Early Iron Age Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani

Both Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani exhibit continuous habitation between the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. At Ras el-Bassit, modest architectural remains show a quick reoccupation of the site after the destruction of its LBA buildings: a few small rooms, a hearth and silos provide evidence of the earliest Iron I settlement. The stratigraphy of the first Iron I levels has been obscured because of large-scale rebuilding activities in later periods, and the fact that most of the

the subject of my PhD thesis, and therefore the results presented here are preliminary.

associated pottery was found in later deposits (Courbin 1986 and 1990). Often, it was difficult to separate the LBA levels from the Early Iron I levels.[7] Consequently, in this paper, these levels will be referred to as Transitional LBA/Iron I levels.

The architecture and associated finds at Ras Ibn Hani are more intact and comprehensible. They consist of small houses separated by streets built directly over the remains of the Southern Palace (Bounni et al. 1979; 1981). Three distinct architectural phases were distinguished. The first phase was dated by the excavators to ca. 1200–1150 BCE, the second phase to 1150–1050 BCE, and the third phase to 1050–950 BCE (Bounni et al. 1981: 260–70). In the Northern Palace, evidence for the EIA is less well preserved, but traces of blocked doors and small walls on top of the LBA walls, as well as concentrations of EIA pottery (personal communication J. Lagarce), also suggest a quick reoccupation.

The Early Iron Age Pottery: Evidence of Continuity and Change[8]

In the Transitional LBA/Iron I levels at Ras el-Bassit, the locally made pottery appears to remain largely the same as in the preceding LBA levels. In the Iron I period, distinct changes in the local pottery fabrics and technology can be noted (Courbin 1993a: 48).[9] In particular, a new wheel-thrown local ware emerges that exhibits a hard-fired fabric generally with a thick blue-grey core, suggesting that the pottery was fired in a reducing atmosphere. There are also indications that the pottery attained its hard-fired state under relatively low temperatures. In contrast to the gritty LBA pottery, the EIA pottery is dense in appearance, and contains smaller concentrations of inclusions. A very small amount occurs in the earliest Iron I levels, suggesting that its introduction was a gradual process, appearing first along side LBA wares, and then gradually replacing them during the early phases of the Iron I period. This distinctive potting tradition continues, albeit with some change, until the end of the Iron Age. Two kraters of 11th/ early 10th century BCE date provide examples of vessels produced with this fabric (Figs. 2a–b).

The Early Iron Age Cooking Wares at Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani

However, this new EIA fabric was not used in the production of cooking pots. A portion of the LBA cooking pots were handmade, with

[7] Personal communication from F. Braemer, who is responsible for final publication of the stratigraphy, and to whom I am grateful for permission to cite these preliminary results.

[8] Petrographic analysis and geological interpretation are currently being conducted by P. de Paepe (University of Ghent). Consequently, the fabric descriptions presented here are based primarily on more general macro- and microscopic analyses.

[9] The preliminary results of XRD and microscopic analyses, undertaken respectively by B. de Leeuw (University of Amsterdam) and L. Jacobs (University of Leyden), appear to support this view.

a burnished surface. They range in colour from dark brown to black, probably the result of production in a reducing atmosphere. Some of the LBA cooking pots exhibit the more typical Levantine shape, were not fired in a reducing atmosphere, and appear to have been wheel-made or wheel-finished. It is uncertain at present if these were produced locally as well.

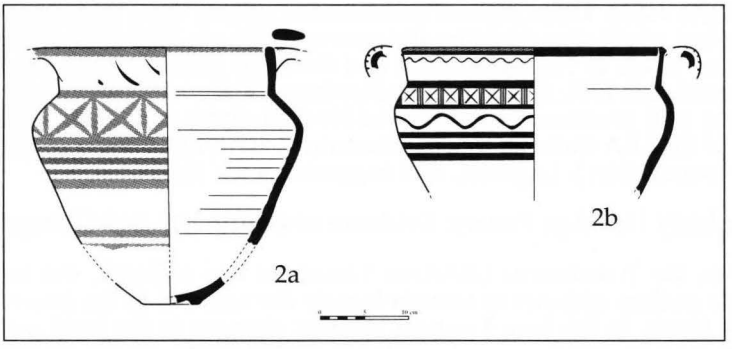

Fig. 2. 11th/early 10th Century BCE Kraters from Ras el-Bassit.

In the Transitional LBA/Iron I and Early Iron I levels, the LBA burnished cooking pot tradition continues, but it occurs sometimes in combination with another cooking pot fabric that contains talc, which creates a soft 'soapy' material highly resistant to thermal shock. Like the burnished vessels of the LBA, these talc cooking pots are often handmade, although some show traces of wheel-finish or manufacture as well. However, the use of talc as a tempering agent was not new to EIA Ras el-Bassit. Some of the black burnished vessels of the Transitional LBA/Iron I phase also contained small amounts of talc. The *in situ* discovery of two cooking-pots in a fireplace in one of the earliest Iron I phases (see Courbin 1986: 190 and fig. 13), one made of talc (Fig. 3a) and the other of the burnished type (Fig. 3b), confirms that both vessel types were in use together at the very beginning of the EIA. Interestingly, both vessels show traces of combined handmade and wheel-finish manufacture.

At Ras Ibn Hani, there is no clear break in the local fabric from the LBA to the EIA, but there are significant changes in some vessel shapes in Phase I (see further below), and there is a complete break from the LBA cooking pot tradition. As at Ras el-Bassit, the EIA cooking pots are characterized by the dominant presence of talc, and they have been called cooking pots 'à la stéatite' (Bounni et al. 1979: 253–56). Two large cauldrons from LBA Ugarit provide evidence that at least the potters of Ugarit were familiar with the suitability of using talc as a tempering agent (Bounni et al. 1979: 254–55; Caubet 1992: 127). At Ras Ibn Hani, the new cooking pots replace the LBA types completely. They are introduced in the earliest occupation level after the destruction of the LBA settlement, and are restricted to the Iron I period. As in the LBA,

they were handmade (Bounni and Lagarce 1998: 79) and accounted for all of the cooking wares from this period, with the exception of one possible import, whose shape can be compared to an Early Iron I example from Tell Kazel (see Capet 2003: 104 and fig. 38b).

The range of cooking pot shapes at Ras Ibn Hani is very narrow, especially when compared to Ras el-Bassit. The rim stances are more or less vertical, with an unthickened or slightly thickened lip, a straight body and a rounded base (Figs. 4a–c). Over time the rim becomes more inverted in stance and eventually develops into the holemouth form that is the hallmark of the Iron II period (Bounni et al. 1979: 255). Some of the cooking pots at Ras Ibn Hani have multiple-ridged, flattened handles, and there are examples of bases and/or lids with mat impressions. As at Ras el-Bassit, some of the Iron II cooking pots contain a small amount of talc temper as well.

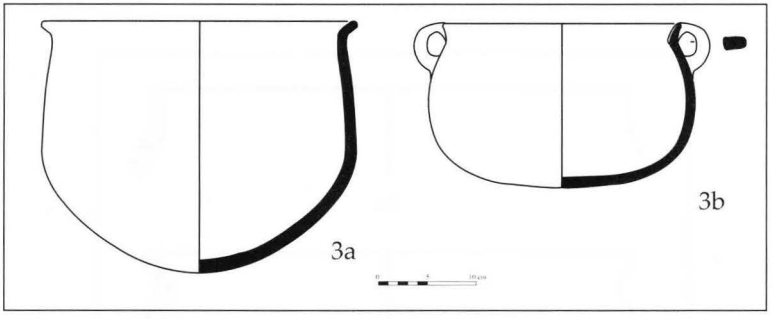

Fig. 3. Early Iron I Cooking Pots from Ras el-Bassit.

Few of the cooking pots at Ras el-Bassit exhibit similar shapes to those found at Ras Ibn Hani (Fig. 4d), but there are also a wider variety of forms represented, both of the burnished and talc-tempered vessel types. The Iron I burnished cooking pots generally have relatively high-necked simple rims, although slightly flared or inverted rims also occur (Figs. 5a–b). Some of the vessels show traces of handles attached at the rim, and they may have been equipped with lids. A few examples of a LBA bowl-shaped cooking pot type appear in the Transitional LBA/Iron I phase as well. The talc-tempered vessels at Ras el-Bassit range in form from flared simple rims (Fig. 3a) to thickened incurved rims, or simple, folded rims (Figs. 5c–d). At both Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani, the talc-tempered vessels generally are not decorated; one of the exceptions is a vessel from Ras el-Bassit, which has an inverted rim and fingernail impressions under the rim (Fig. 5e), a possible forerunner to the holemouth cooking pots of the Iron II period, when bands of fingernail impressions were popular.

Talc-tempered cooking pots have a very limited distribution. In addition to Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani, a few examples have been found at Tell Sukas and Tell Daruk (Buhl 1983: 26–29, fig. IX and pl. VII, nos. 96–101). This limited distribution might be linked to the so-called 'Greenstone Mountains' in the vicinity of Ras el-Bassit and Ras

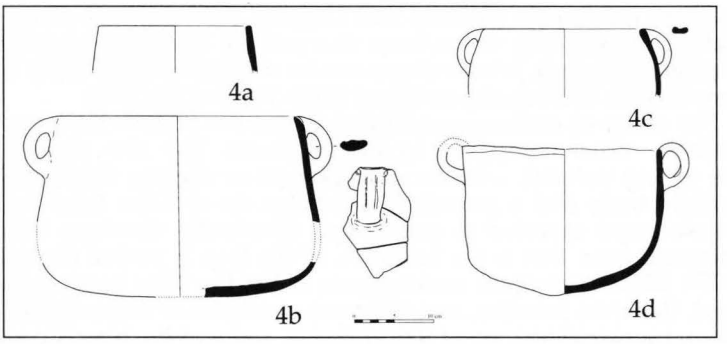

Fig. 4. Early Iron Age Cooking Pots from Ras Ibn Hani (4a–4c) and Ras el-Bassit (4d).

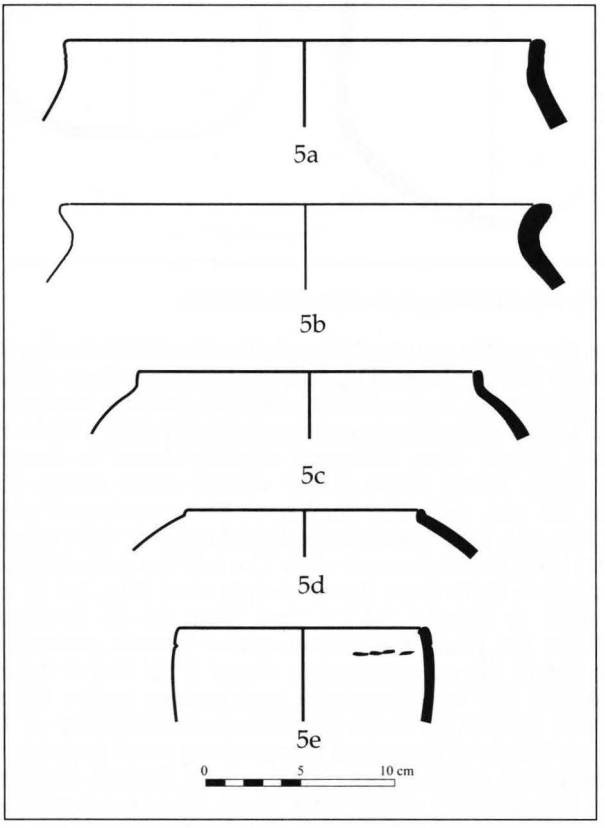

Fig. 5. LBA/EIA burnished (5a–5b) and talc Cooking Pots (5c–5e) from Ras el-Bassit.

Ibn Hani, where talc can be found (personal communication, P. de Paepe). The examples found at Sukas and Daruk are probably the product of exchange. Some vessels found in the LBA levels at Porsuk (specifically Level V; Dupré 1983: 169–72, pls. 32–35) and in the later Iron I at Tell Afis (Mazzoni 1998: 168, fig. 20, nos. 7 and 8), though of different fabric and date, are reminiscent of shapes from Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani.

A number of large, bowl-shaped, vertical-rimmed, burnished cooking pots from Ras el-Bassit closely resemble wheel-made burnished cooking pots found at LBA Ugarit (Monchambert 2004: figs. 86–87, nos. 1220–1225; for bowl-shaped types, see figs. 87–89). Good parallels of the straight-rimmed type (see Fig. 5a) can be found in the Handmade Burnished Ware repertoire from Cyprus, for example at Kition, Hala Sultan Tekke, and Enkomi (Pilides 1994: fig. 46 and 48). Interestingly, some of the Ras el-Bassit examples fit well with the so-called Cypriot Monochrome Ware, as distinguished by Pilides. This is especially true of the examples he describes as "possible cooking pots" (1994: figs. 46 and 48; see also Karageorghis 1985: 434, and his remark that "some of them belonged to shapes not unlike the ordinary cooking pots…"). Most of the Cypriot material can be dated to just before or directly after the LBA destructions around 1200 BCE, although some examples still occur at Kition in the 11th century. The burnished cooking pot (Fig. 3b) and some of the talc-tempered vessels are also similar in shape to examples from Ugarit (Monchambert 2004: fig. 90, nos. 1243–1245). Finally, it is interesting to note that most of the EIA pottery from highland central Anatolia is handmade and burnished as well (Genz 2005: 76; for comparison, see also the evidence from Gordion in Henrickson 1994).

In summary, the talc-tempered cooking pots at Ras Ibn Hani and Ras el-Bassit clearly represent a local phenomenon. At Ras el-Bassit, the shapes, surface finish and fabric can possibly be traced back to the LBA. Although it is possible that some of the burnished vessels in the LBA levels belong to the so-called Handmade Burnished Ware tradition, the burnished cooking vessels from the LBA and Transitional LBA/Iron I levels at Ras el-Bassit appear to be related to broader regional LBA traditions and the Monochrome Ware tradition of Cyprus. It remains unclear, however, whether this burnished tradition continued as an Iron Age potting tradition, although, as we have seen, there are indications that burnished cooking vessels continued to be used in the Early Iron I period. The more or less contemporary appearance of talc-tempered fabrics at both Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani indicates close contact between these two EIA settlements. The slightly earlier appearance of talc-tempered vessels at Ras el-Bassit might suggest that potters at this site were the first to introduce this new cooking pot fabric to the region, although as we have seen, potters at Ugarit were apparently already aware of its suitability for the production of pottery in the LBA.

The Non-Cooking Iron I Assemblage at Ras el-Bassit

The Iron I assemblages from Ras Ibn Hani and Ras el-Bassit indicate differences in the function and development of these sites. The amount of pottery that can be dated with certainty to the Iron I period at Ras el-Bassit is much smaller than at Ras Ibn Hani. Some contact with Cyprus can be inferred from the possible Monochrome Ware cooking pots at Ras el-Bassit (see above), and the few fragments possibly identifiable as Proto White Painted or White Painted I or II ware found largely in later Iron Age contexts, including a possible White Painted I kalathos fragment (Fig. 6a).[10] At present, no Aegean-style imitations or imports have been found in the Iron I levels at Ras el-Bassit, except for a possible Levantine import with bichrome semi-circle decoration.[11]

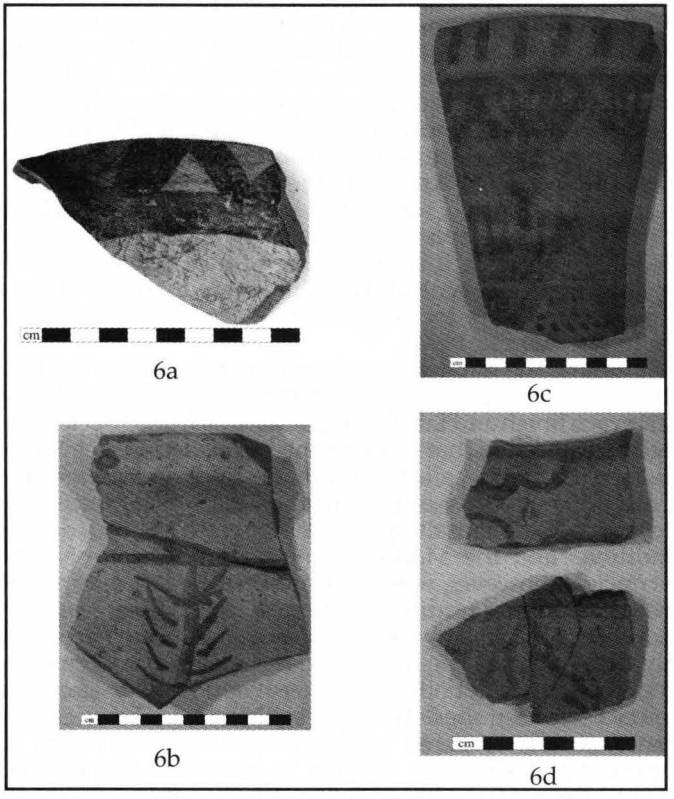

Fig. 6. Painted Iron I pottery from Ras el-Bassit.

[10] The shape resembles kalathoi from Cyprus, but no close parallels were found for the decoration (see for example Yon 1971: nos.137–140).

[11] There is also a very small vessel fragment that is similar to carinated bowls from Ras Ibn Hani.

Several fragments of local Iron I fabric belong to large storage or transport vessels (Fig. 6b), and were covered with a thick white slip and dark brown painted decoration. Similar fragments, but without a white slip, were found as well. In general, the painted pottery is decorated with a brown paint. Two fragments of a large krater had a white slip and were decorated with red painted dots and triangles (Fig. 6c; see also Courbin 1986: fig. 14), reminiscent of EIA pottery from Tille Höyük in Turkey (Blaylock 1999: fig. 1), Hama (Riis and Buhl 1990: 186, fig. 85, nos. 674–676), Tyre (Bikai 1978, pl. XLI: 18), and Tell Kazel (Capet 2003, fig. 43k, and 44a). Non-stratified fragments from Ras Ibn Hani exhibit the same decoration, while a number of white-slipped sherds from the LBA levels at Ugarit are also decorated with dots (Monchambert 2004: 219, fig. 98, nos. 1302–1306). Several fragments of Levantine Monochrome and Bichrome pottery, mainly reflecting a Phoenician style, can be dated to the Iron I period as well (Fig. 6d). The rims of a few transport jars of possible Iron I date seem to be of general Levantine manufacture. Most of the local Iron I wares consist of simple bowls and cooking vessels, while the painted fragments belong primarily to closed vessel forms.

The Non-Cooking Iron I Assemblage at Ras Ibn Hani

Although there is no clear change in fabric with the transition to the EIA, a remarkable change occurs in the range of forms. Almost all of the EIA pottery at Ras Ibn Hani associated with drinking and serving, including cups, deep bowls and kraters, are Aegean in style. Some of these vessel forms, such as the carinated bowl and the skyphos (see Monchambert 1996: 45–46; and Yon et al. 2000: 486–88, where these vessels are interpreted as local or of Cypriot origin), appear to have been introduced at Ugarit at the very end of its existence. At the same time, it is also clear that local regional forms account for a substantial portion of the EIA pottery assemblage. The Iron I pottery continues to be produced on a wheel.

Several previous reports on Ras Ibn Hani have already described the general development of the pottery repertoire from the Early Iron I levels (Bounni et al. 1979; 1981; Lagarce and Lagarce 1988; Badre 1983). Consequently, I will only briefly summarize the pottery from the first and second phases, and I will not discuss the third phase at all, which marks the appearance of the Phoenician Bichrome black and red painted tradition and, at the end of this phase, the first appearance of red slipped pottery.

The Aegean-Style Pottery

The Aegean-style pottery at Ras Ibn Hani is made of a local pinkish clay and usually contains dense quantities of inclusions. The pottery is unslipped and decorated with a matte monochrome paint, usually red, although a small number were decorated with a brown paint. Although the fabrics of some brown-painted vessels also appear to be local, they were generally made of a slightly paler fabric, and appeared to have been fired at a higher temperature (personal

communication, P. de Paepe), suggesting the possibility of a non-local source of origin (perhaps Cyprus). In most cases, no attempt was made to conceal the coarse grits on the surface, and the decoration often was applied loosely by hand. However, some fragments exhibited a much finer quality, with a nicely smoothed surface and carefully applied painted decorations that appear to imitate Mycenaean proto-types more closely, especially in the way the different shades of colour are applied. Unfortunately, these examples were found mainly in later fills and pits.

The dominant Aegean-style forms in Phases I and II consisted of bell-shaped bowls and kraters (Figs. 7a–f), carinated bowls (Fig. 7g), and other serving vessels, including closed forms (Figs. 8a–b) and jugs with flared rims. Spirals and horizontal bands comprised the most common motifs in Phase I, while in Phase II, wavy lines appear to have replaced spirals as the preferred decorative motif (Fig. 8c–d). Undecorated vessels, some made of a bright orange clay fabric, were found in both phases.

The carinated bowl with horizontal strap handles, usually decorated with horizontal bands and concentric circles on the inside (Fig. 7g), occurred frequently in Phase I. In Phase II, these vessels were gradually replaced by convex bowls (Fig. 8e; see Bounni et al. 1981: 266; Badre 1983: 208). Phase II also produced fragments of lipless bowls, at least one of the one-handled type (Fig. 8f). The distribution of these one-handled bowls appears to be restricted primarily to the eastern Aegean; they occur only rarely in Cyprus (e.g., Maa-Palaeokastro; Kling 1988: 328–29, no. 574) and the Levant (e.g., Tarsus; Goldman 1956, no. 1264).

Other EIA forms at Ras Ibn Hani associated with the Aegean-style repertoire include feeding bottles and small spouted jugs, a spouted bowl, and knobs of stirrup jars. One vessel, a cylindrical jug with a white-slipped surface and complex pattern of red and black paint (Fig. 9a), although of local or regional manufacture, is reminiscent of Philistine Bichrome Ware (see Lagarce and Lagarce 1988: 153–54). A second vessel made of the local fabric, a strainer-spouted jug with bichrome decoration (Fig. 9b), also has parallels from the southern Levant and Cyprus (Dothan 1982; Lagarce and Lagarce 1988: 154). One possible southern Levantine Philistine Bichrome import was made of an orange fabric with a white slip and semi-circle painted decoration; similar examples have also been found at Tarsus (see Goldman 1956: 208).

In general, the Aegean-style pottery at Ras Ibn Hani closely resembles similar material found on Cyprus, and follows Cypriot fashions, such as use of the wavy line decoration (Bounni et al. 1981: 260; Lagarce and Lagarce 1988: 147). However, it should also be noted that this motif occurs in the LBA as well, for example on amphoroid kraters at Ugarit (Monchambert 2004: fig. 94, no. 1280). There are also general similarities with the Aegean-style pottery repertoire at Cilician sites such as Tarsus (Goldman 1956) and Soli Höyük (Yağci 2003).

Levantine Forms in the Ras Ibn Hani Assemblage

Phases I and II also produced pottery common to the Levant. Many LBA decorative motifs continued to be used in the EIA, including net-patterns, bichrome bands, and hatched triangles (Lagarce and Lagarce 1988: 147). Although some forms, such as the popular amphoroid kraters and bichrome plates (Figs. 9c and e), overlap with the Aegean-style material, most of the Levantine forms consisted of storage and transport vessel types, and included jars, pithoi, one- and two-handled pilgrim flasks (Fig. 9d), and jugs. Their fabric sometimes closely resembles that of the Aegean-style pottery, although a wide variety of fabrics, probably the product of numerous Levantine workshops, do occur. In Phase I, most of the amphoroid kraters are white-slipped and bichrome or monochrome painted (Figs. 10a–b). During Phase II, bell-shaped kraters are completely replaced by amphoroid kraters, which were now no longer white-slipped. As with the white-slipped kraters before them, these amphoroid kraters are painted mainly in bichrome, with crosshatches, panels, and triangular motifs in the Levantine tradition (Figs. 10c and 11a), as well as wavy lines. Parallels occur at Ras el-Bassit, Tarsus and Tell Kazel, or the Levantine coast in general, but also inland at Hama, and somewhat less frequently at Tell Afis. One monochrome painted krater (Fig. 11b) is similar to an example from Tarsus (Goldman 1956: pl. 391, no. 1352), while its decoration is reminiscent of a krater from LBA Ugarit. Undecorated kraters also occur in Phases I and II (Fig. 11c).[12]

The only close parallels to the white-slipped kraters appear at Tell Kazel (Lagarce and Lagarce 1988: 154–55; Badre et al. 1994: 304; Capet and Gubel 2000: 438–39, figs. 13–14; Capet 2003: 112), while their fabric suggests a similar provenance as well. At Ras Ibn Hani, most of the examples show traces of burnishing. This type of decoration appears at the very beginning of the Iron Age, mainly on kraters.[13] A few fragments of yet another white-slipped burnished pottery with bichrome decoration, again in the form of kraters, were found at Ras Ibn Hani (see Lagarce and Lagarce 1988: fig. 27c). However, it is unclear whether this tradition was a contemporary of the white-slipped pottery of the EIA, or a forerunner that corresponded to similar material found at LBA Ugarit (Caubet 1992: 127), Kition-Bamboula on Cyprus, and in Anatolia (see below).

The source of white-slipped pottery has been linked to Cyprus, 'Philistine' sites in the southern Levant, Egypt and even Anatolia (Lagarce and Lagarce 1988: 155), where it occurs in small quantities in the LBA Hittite repertoire (Genz 2005: 76). The thin, gritty, white-slipped (and often burnished) carinated and convex bowls from Ras Ibn Hani (Fig. 12a) are paralleled at Porsuk (Dupré 1983: pl. 44, nos. 4–6), where white-slipped pottery first appears in Level V, and

[12] The illustrated example may not be of local origin, as its fabric differs from other examples of this vessel type (personal communication, P. de Paepe).

[13] The cylindrical juglet in Fig. 9a also has a white slip, but was made of a slightly different fabric. The vessel nevertheless probably belongs to the same productive tradition as the white-slipped kraters.

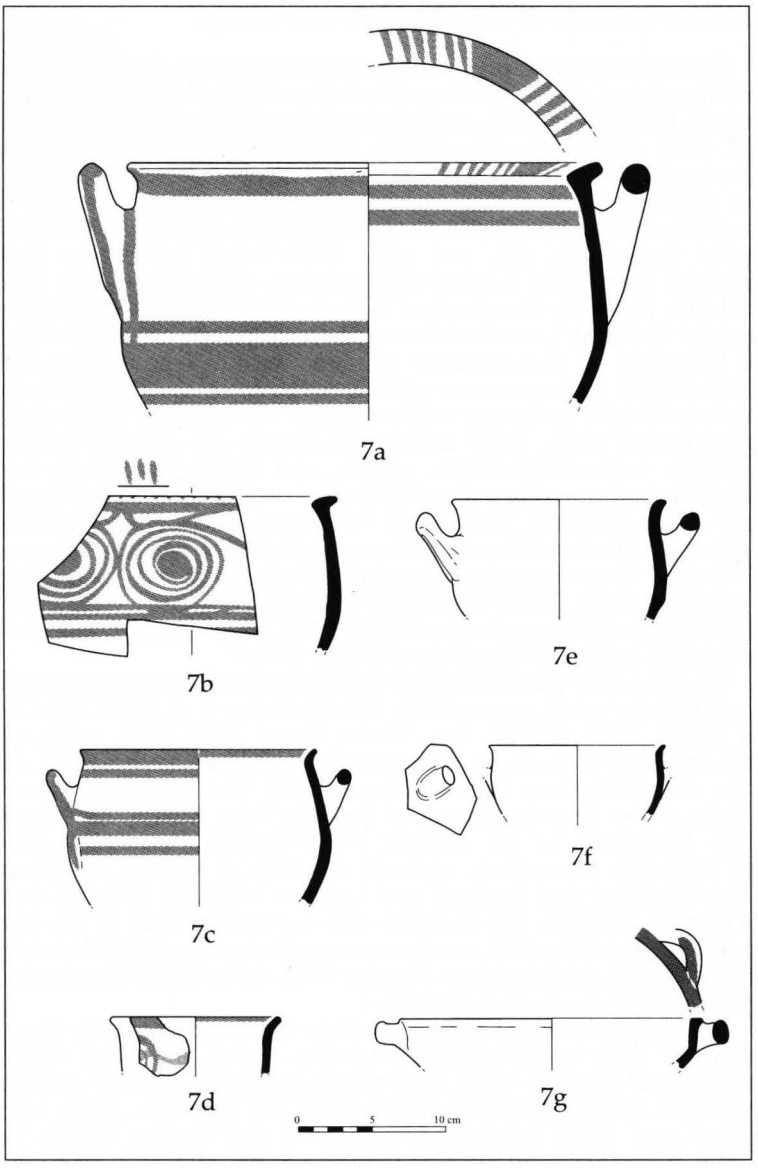

Fig. 7. EIA Aegean-style Bowls and Kraters from Ras Ibn Hani.

then increases in quantity in Levels IV and III. Some of the white-slipped pottery from Ras el-Bassit, although monochrome painted, might strengthen the idea of a northern tradition. In addition, the connection with the LBA white-slipped Cypriot tradition seems less than convincing, especially since the examples are not close in shape, technique, or decoration; in Philistia even non-slipped amphoroid kraters occur rarely in the EIA.

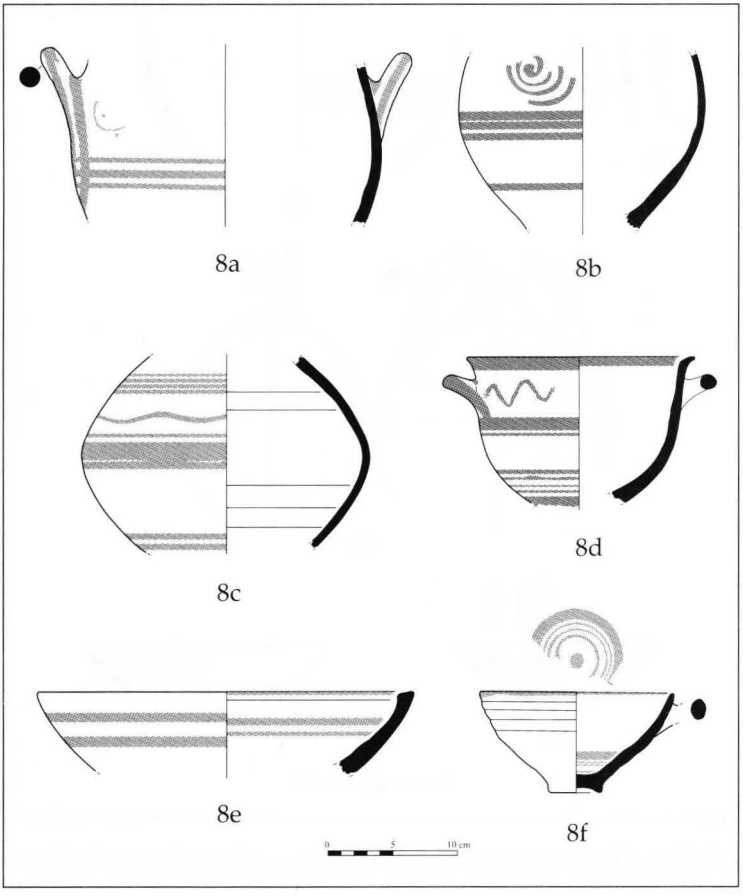

Fig. 8. EIA Aegean-style Pottery from Ras Ibn Hani.

The pottery of Phases I and II also preserve derivatives of the LBA Canaanite storage jar, both short- and long-rimmed types (Fig. 12b; Bounni et al. 1979: fig. 26). Their bases are not thickened, as with the LBA type, and several different manufacturing techniques were used, often even on the same vessel. A more slender type became common in Phase II (Figs. 12c–d). The large variety of fabrics and forming

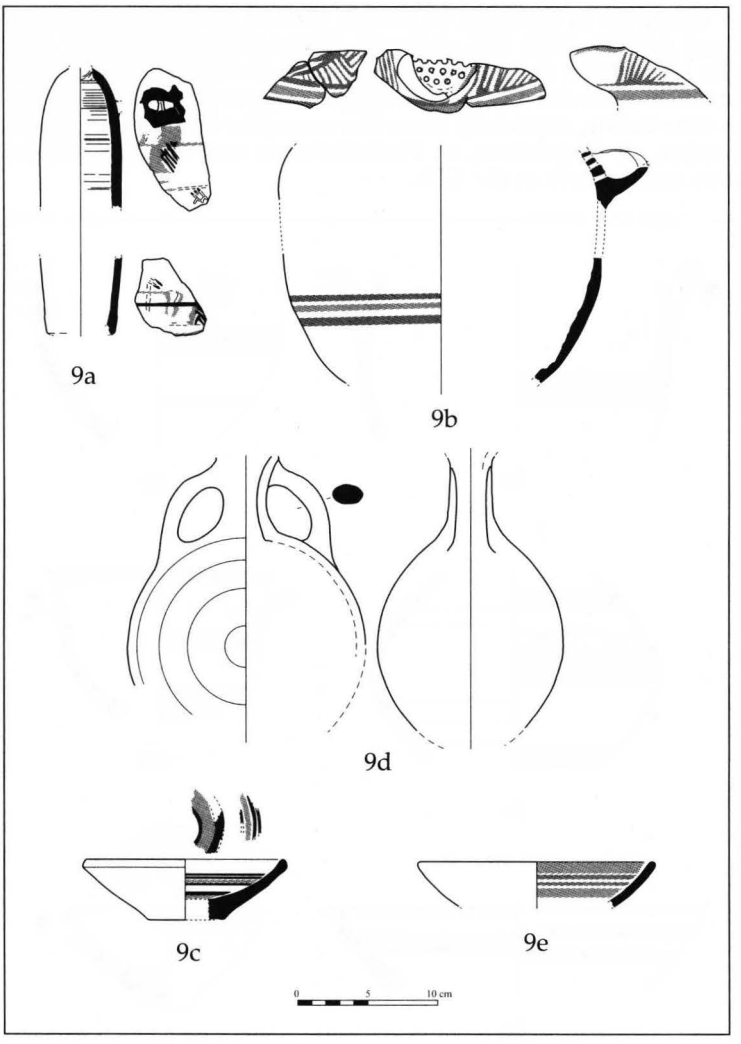

Fig. 9. Cypro-Philistine (9a), Aegean-style (9b) and Levantine (9c–9e) forms from Ras Ibn Hani.

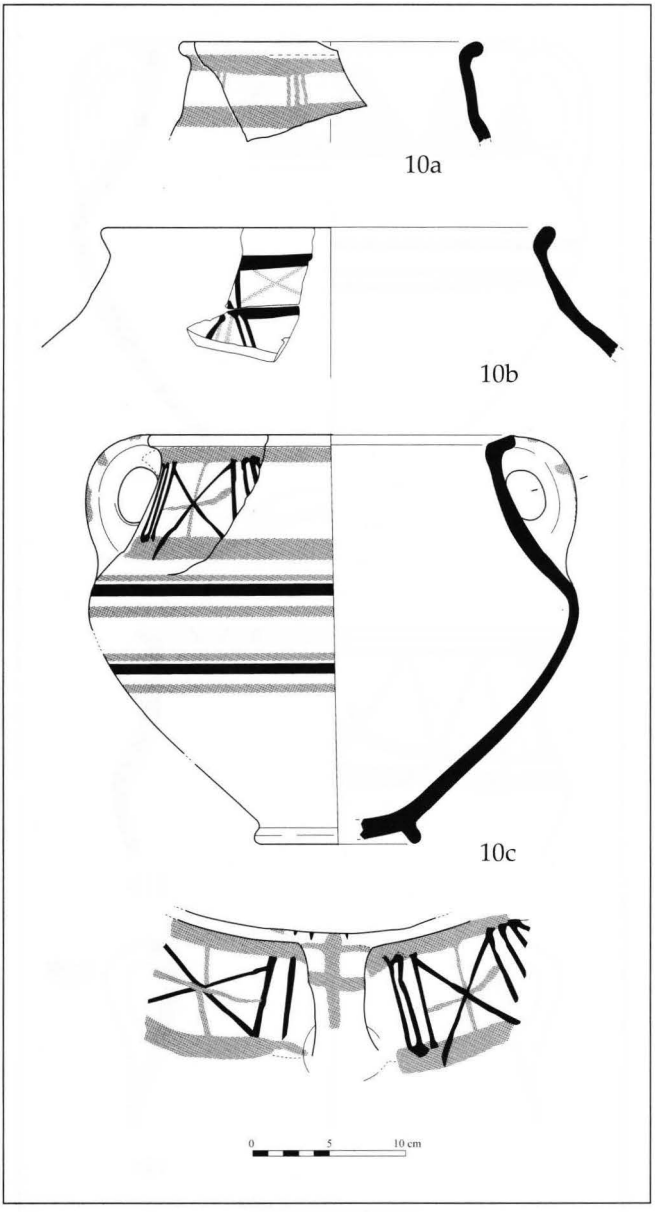

Fig. 10. White-slipped (10a–10b) and non-slipped bichrome painted (10c) amphoroid kraters from Ras Ibn Hani.

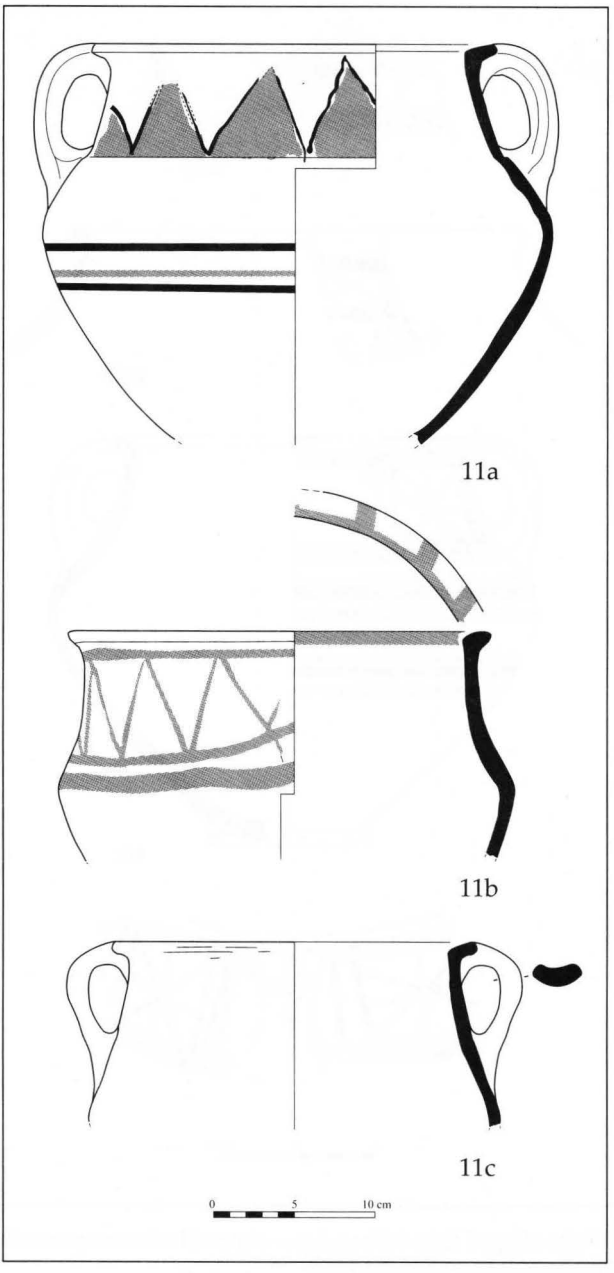

Fig. 11. Iron I amphoroid kraters from Ras Ibn Hani.

techniques point to imports from elsewhere in the Levant, such as Tell Kazel, but possibly also Cyprus. The heterogeneity of the fabrics is in sharp contrast to the homogeneity of the storage jar fabrics from the Iron II period. Some LBA vessels might even have been reused, or were still being produced in the Iron I period, as appears to have been the case at Tell Kazel (Capet and Gubel 2000: 439).

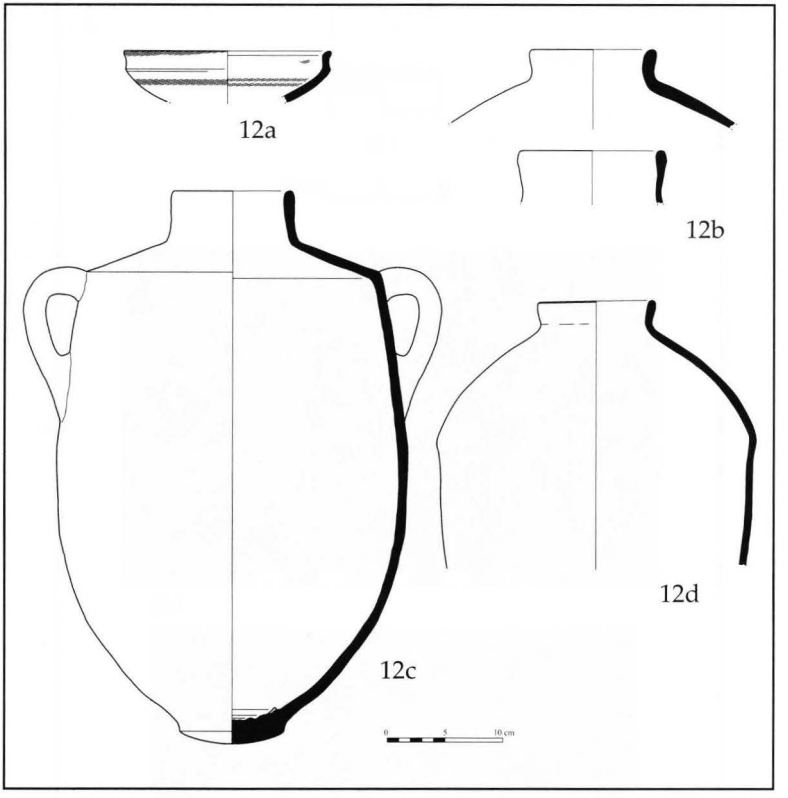

Fig. 12. Carinated bowl (12a) and Storage Jars (12b–d) from Ras Ibn Hani.

Cypriot Imports in the Ras Ibn Hani Assemblage

In addition to the few possible imported Aegean wares, the EIA levels at Ras Ibn Hani also produced Cypriot shapes and fabrics. Some vessels of clearly Cypriot manufacture exhibited Aegean-style forms (Fig. 13a), while others reflected Cypriot profiles (Figs. 13 b–e). The variety of Cypriot fabrics would appear to indicate contacts with different Cypriot sites. There is a slight increase of Cypriot imports in Phase II, which corresponds well with the adaptation of Cypriot styles in the local wares during this phase. The associated finds suggest

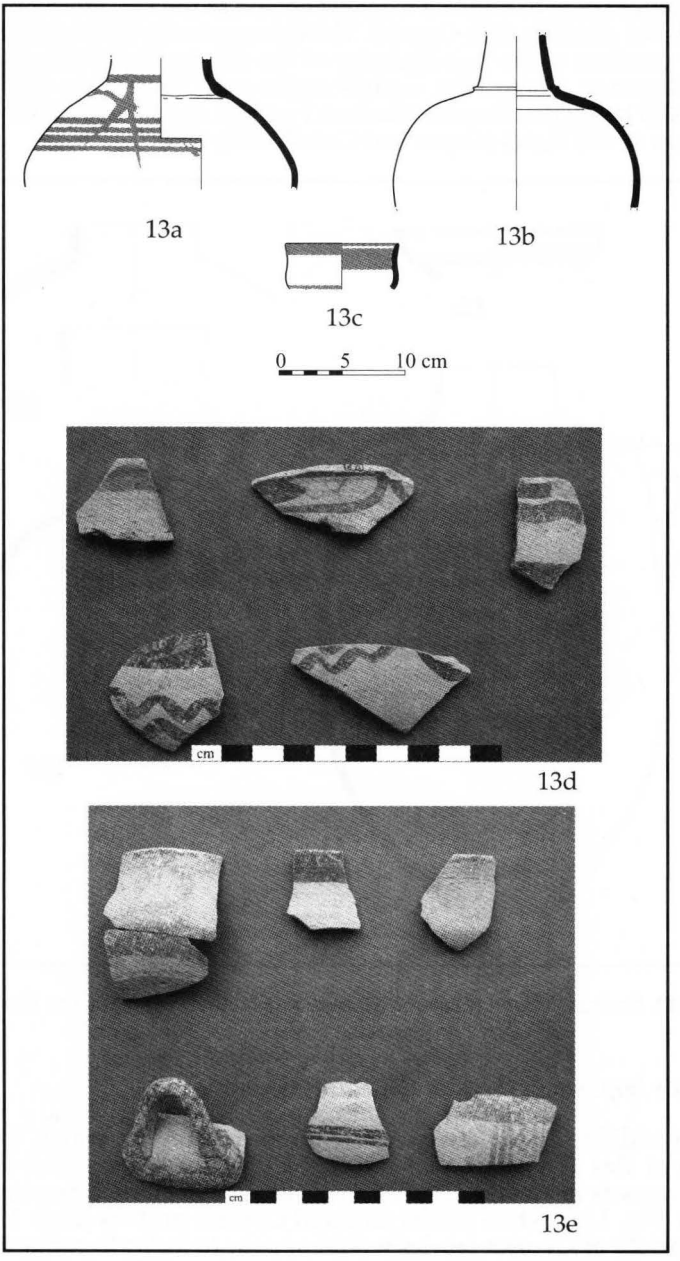

Fig. 13. Cypriot Imports in the Ras Ibn Hani Assemblage, including Aegean-style forms.

that these should be placed in either the Proto White Painted or the beginning of the White Painted I phases.

The Nature of the EIA Settlements at Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani

Although there are similarities, as I have demonstrated in this paper, the EIA assemblages from Ras Ibn Hani and Ras el-Bassit also exhibit significant differences. At Ras el-Bassit, some LBA shapes and fabrics continued into the Early Iron I period, while new types, such as the talc-tempered cooking pots and fabrics with dense blue-grey cores were introduced gradually. Meanwhile, at Ras Ibn Hani, a clear break occurred in the production of both the cooking and table wares, the latter exhibiting an almost complete morphological transformation, though no evident change in fabric. Continuity is reflected in the storage and transport vessel categories, while in the later Iron I period, Levantine shapes and decorative styles, such as bichrome plates, increasingly reappear.

As others have noted (cf. Lagarce and Lagarce 1988: 146; Badre 1983: 206), trade contact with Cyprus clearly continued in the Iron I, although the number of imports was much smaller (Bounni and Lagarce 1998: 53, 86–87). In particular, close contacts can be inferred from the adaptation of new Cypriot trends in the locally produced Aegean-style pottery. At the same time, no undisputed northern Levantine EIA imports have been found on Cyprus. Close relations are also evident between the northern and central Levant, and to a lesser extent with the southern Levant and Anatolia.

However, the Ras el-Bassit pottery assemblage shows little evidence of direct or continuing contact with Cyprus. Although there are Cypriot parallels for some cooking pots, specifically the so-called Monochrome Ware, the examples from Ras el-Bassit are better explained as a development from LBA traditions.[14] Consequently, Ras el-Bassit does not appear to have been an active port of trade in the Iron I period, as it was later in the Iron II. It nevertheless was in contact with the Syrian interior, including sites such as Afis, and probably also with Cilicia and highland Anatolia. Ras el-Bassit's role as a key outpost for the kingdom of Ugarit ended with Ugarit's destruction at the end of the LBA, and in the EIA it became a small village of little international importance. A slight increase in the number of imports in the 10th century, particularly from Cyprus and the Aegean, may point to its re-emergence as an important trading centre in the Iron II period. It is interesting to note, for example, that Ras el-Bassit has produced some of the earliest Euboean imports found thus far in the Near East (for the Proto-Geometric imports, see Courbin 1993b; Perreault 1993), and that they occur in this early period.

Ras Ibn Hani was more densely settled than Ras el-Bassit in the EIA, and appears to have been more actively involved in trade during this period. Its pottery assemblage points to active contact and interaction

[14] Interestingly, some of the Monochrome shapes found on Cyprus are considered possible imitations of Handmade Burnished Wares (see Pilides 1994: 81).

with sites in the immediate vicinity, as well as throughout the rest of the Levant, Cyprus and possibly also Anatolia. Ras Ibn Hani, therefore, appears to have maintained its role as an important port in the region. If the ceramic evidence accurately reflects the ethnic composition of its population, one might suggest a multicultural coexistence comprised of peoples from the Levant, the Aegean, Cyprus, and Anatolia (for this view, see Lagarce and Lagarce 1988: 148–49). Unfortunately, very little non-ceramic evidence has been found at Ras Ibn Hani to support this proposition. The existing evidence includes a fibula (Bounni et al. 1981: 268 and fig. 34; Badre 1983: 208 and fig. 3), a mould for amulets (Bounni et al. 1979: 255 and fig. 31), and Aegean-style unbaked loom weights from a pit (personal communication, J. Lagarce). Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that new groups or individual migrants did settle along the Levantine coast during this period, as suggested by the appearance of Handmade Burnished Wares at Tell Kazel, and possibly at Ras el-Bassit and Ras Ibn Hani as well.

However, such hypothetical settlement activity by itself does not account satisfactorily for the large amount of locally made Cypro-Aegean inspired table wares—specifically drinking vessels—that have been found at Ras Ibn Hani. It is not the goal of this paper to discuss the possible source(s) of origin for this distinctive pottery (also found in large quantities on Cyprus and elsewhere in the Levant, especially in the south), or whether it can be associated ethnically with the Sea Peoples. Rather, I wish to emphasize the local or regional character of this distinctive pottery, in particular as it occurs in the northern Levant, and more specifically at Ras Ibn Hani.

Although at first glance there might appear to be striking similarities between the pottery assemblages found throughout the region, there are also important regional differences (cf. Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 45–46; Killebrew 1998: 391; Gilboa 2005). In general, the range of shapes in Cypriot assemblages is larger than it is in Levantine assemblages, but there are also marked differences from region to region and from site to site within the Levant. For example, popular shapes in the southern Levant, such as the strainer-spouted and cylindrical jugs (Dothan 1982: 132–68), and the cooking jug (Killebrew 2000: 242–43), are almost entirely absent from sites in the northern Levant.[15] Conversely, the amphoroid krater occurs infrequently at southern Levantine sites yet appears common in the north. In addition, the range of decorative styles and motifs preserved in the Ras Ibn Hani assemblage is very limited, especially when compared to the southern Levant, and Cyprus. These morphological and stylistic differences also extend to choice of raw materials and manufacturing technology, and strongly suggest that individual potters and their communities developed local styles reflecting the complex mix of social, economic, and cultural choices that uniquely defined the experience of each region (cf. Killebrew 1998; Dothan and Zukerman 2004; and Gilboa 2005). Monocausal explanations, such as

[15] Examples of the cooking jug have been found at Tarsus, and now also at Tell Ta'yinat (see Janeway, this issue), and two possible fragments were recovered from later pits at Ras Ibn Hani.

those that attribute its distribution to trade, general fashion (Caubet 1992: 130), or import substitution (Sherratt 1998), do not satisfactorily account for this complexity. The local context, therefore, is crucial if we are to accurately understand the significance of the widespread occurrence of locally produced Aegean-style pottery at Ras Ibn Hani and elsewhere in the Levant.[16]

In contrast to southern Levantine assemblages, where there is a notable functional difference between the LBA Mycenaean imports (mainly closed forms) and the EIA Aegean-style pottery (mostly open forms) (Dothan and Zukerman 2004: 45), a large portion of the Mycenaean imports at LBA Ugarit consisted of open vessels, such as skyphoi, amphoroid kraters, and other serving vessels (Bell 2005: 82–83; van Wijngaarden 2002: 109). They therefore share a functional similarity with the drinking sets (bell-shaped bowls and kraters) and table wares (carinated bowls and jugs) that dominate the EIA assemblage at Ras Ibn Hani (Bounni and Lagarce 1998: figs. 152–57). A few of the local imitations of Mycenaean pottery at Ugarit, for example the carinated bowl (see Monchambert 1996: 45–46), have close parallels at Ras Ibn Hani as well. Thus, with some caution, (since only a limited range of the Mycenaean repertoire has been found at Ras Ibn Hani), we may infer that the two assemblages served a common functional purpose.[17]

As we have seen, the EIA assemblage from Ras Ibn Hani appears to reflect a multicultural population, as at Ugarit before it (Yon 1992: 113–117; Bell 2005: 46–48). Moreover, since there is clear evidence that a large portion of the resident population was indigenous to the region, as evidenced by the continuing use of local LBA fabrics and forms, there is no pressing need to attribute the appearance of Aegean-style pottery to large-scale immigration. A number of theories have been proposed for the 'disappearance' of Ugarit's inhabitants after its destruction, including suggestions that they fled to the mountainous interior (Yon 1992: 119–20), and to Enkomi on Cyprus (Courtois 1975: 35), a view that is supported by the evidence for continuing contact between Cyprus and Ras Ibn Hani reflected in the EIA pottery assemblage.

Texts from LBA Ugarit emphasize the elite status of the mercantile class, and it seems reasonable to assume that this group engaged in the consumption of 'value-added' products, such as Mycenaean pottery, as a way of expressing their elevated social and economic status within Bronze Age Ugaritic society (cf. Sherratt 1998: 295–98). If so, it is tempting to infer that a similar mechanism was operative

[16] I have dealt with regional and intra-regional contacts in more detail in my dissertation, and in a forthcoming paper, in particular the differences and similarities between Early Iron Age repertoires in the Levant and Cyprus, and the explanations for these differences, including their cultural, social and economic aspects.

[17] However, it is also important to note that Mycenaean imports account for less than one percent of the LBA assemblage at Ugarit (Yon et al. 2000: 2–3), while at Ras Ibn Hani the Aegean-style pottery accounts for as much as 50 to 60 percent of the EIA assemblage from Phases I and II.

in the EIA, and that it was this class of 'independent' merchants that used Aegean-style pottery to affirm their 'new' group identity and legitimize their status as traders, while displaying a cosmopolitan way of life. In any case, the dominance of vessels associated with communal drinking and feasting, in both Aegean and Levantine styles, suggests the continuation (and transformation) of longstanding social habits, as well as the need to legitimize the establishment of a new social reality.

University of Amsterdam

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