

On the Northern frontier of the Ebla Kingdom during the Early Bronze Age IVA. The Birecik Valley and the Kingdom of Abarsal in the left bank of the Middle Turkish Euphrates

En la frontera norte del reino de Ebla durante el Bronce Antiguo IVA. El valle de Birecik y el reino de Abarsal en la margen izquierda del Éufrates Medio

In memory of Petr Charvát (1949-2023)
Great erudite, better friend

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Summary

The Early Bronze (EB) Age IVA in the Birecik region, which covers part of the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, north of the modern city of Birecik, on the left bank of the Middle Turkish Euphrates, shows (as most of the EB Age) a likely cluster of sites around the small center of Surtepe Höyük, and with the position of Tilbes Hoyuk as a probable local sanctuary.

This historical period, referred to in ancient Mesopotamian sources, that is equivalent to the end of the Early Dynastic (ED) and beginning of the Akkad Empire in Northern Mesopotamia. It was also the time of Ebla (northern Syria), an expansionist power, destroyed in the 23rd century BC. Mardikh IIB1 is the period of the archives (2400-2300 BC), the apparent greatest phase of splendor of that kingdom, during the 3rd millennium BC. The oldest pact cited in a text from Ebla, focuses on Abarsal, later a vassal state and still no located on the archaeological records. Recently, the Abarsal city-state has been searched by north of Carchemish.

We put these facts in relation to similar events that occurred during the EB IVA in archaeological sites in the area between the Balikh and the left bank of the Middle Euphrates, with which Birecik seems to have some type of cultural link. The relationship of the North Syrian kingdom of Ebla to the Birecik valley area in EB IVA may offer an important clue about the presence of the kingdom of Abarum/Abarsal in the area.

Key words: Early Bronze Age IVA, Ebla, Abarsal, Akkad Empire. Birecik

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Resumen

El Bronce Antiguo IVA en la región de Birecik, que cubre parte de la segunda mitad del tercer milenio a. C., al norte de la moderna ciudad de Birecik, en la margen izquierda del Éufrates medio turco, muestra (como durante la mayor parte del Bronce Antiguo) una agrupación de asentamientos alrededor del pequeño centro de Surtepe Höyük, mientras Tilbes Hoyuk debía ser un santuario local.

Este periodo histórico en las antiguas fuentes mesopotámicas es el equivalente al final del Dinástico Arcaico y el inicio del Imperio de Akkad en el norte de Mesopotamia. Fue también la época de Ebla (norte de Siria), un poder expansionista destruido en el siglo XXIII a. C. Mardikh IIB1 es el periodo de los archivos (2400-2300 a. C.), la aparente fase de mayor esplendor del reino en el tercer milenio. El acuerdo más antiguo citado en un texto de Ebla tiene su foco en Abarsal, posteriormente un estado vasallo, todavía no localizado arqueológicamente. Recientemente, la ciudad-estado de Abarsal ha sido buscada al norte de Carchemish.

Relacionamos estos datos en relación con eventos similares que ocurrieron durante el Bronce Antiguo IVA en los yacimientos arqueológicos del área entre el Balikh y la margen izquierda del Éufrates medio, con el cual Birecik parece haber tenido algún tipo de lazo cultural. La relación del reino de Ebla del norte de Siria con el valle de Birecik durante el Bronce Antiguo IVA puede ofrecer una importante clave acerca de la presencia del reino de Abarum/Abarsal en la región.

Palabras clave: Bronce Antiguo IVA, Ebla, Abarsal, Imperio de Akkad, Birecik

НА СЕВЕРНОЙ ГРАНИЦЕ КОРОЛЕВСТВА ЭБЛА ВО ВРЕМЯ РАННЕЙ БРОНЗОВОЙ ИВА. ДОЛИНА БИРЕЧИК И КОРОЛЕВСТВО АБАРСАЛ НА ЛЕВОБЕРЕЖЬЕ СРЕДНЕТУРЕЦКОГО ЕВФРАТА

Краткое содержание

Ранний бронзовый (ЕВ) век IVA, охватывающий часть второй половины III тысячелетия до н. э., в районе Биреджика, к северу от современного города Биреджик, на левом берегу среднетурецкого Евфрата (как показывает большинство ЕВ Age) вероятное скопление памятников вокруг небольшого центра Суртепе-Хойюк, а также положение Тильбес-Хойюка как вероятного местного святилища в этот период. Это исторический период, упомянутый в древних месопотамских источниках, который эквивалентен концу Раннединастической (ЭД) и началу Аккадской империи в Северной Месопотамии. Это было также время Эблы (северная Сирия), экспансионистской державы, разрушенной в 23 веке до нашей эры. Мардик IIB1 — это период архивов (2400–2300 гг. до н.э.), кажущаяся величайшая фаза расцвета этого царства, в 3-м тысячелетии до н.э. Кроме того, самый старый договор, цитируемый в тексте из Эблы, посвящен Абарсалу, который позже стал вассальным государством и до сих пор не упоминается в археологических записях. Недавно город-государство Абарсал к северу от Каркемиша подвергся обыску.

Мы сопоставляем эти факты с аналогичными событиями, произошедшими во время ЕВ IVA на археологических памятниках в районе между Балихом и левым берегом среднего Евфрата, с которыми Биреджик, по-видимому, имеет некоторую культурную связь. Отношения северосирийского королевства Эбла с долиной в ЕВ IVA могут дать важную подсказку о присутствии королевства Абарум/Абарсал в этом районе.

Ключевые слова: век ранней бронзы IVA. Эбла. Абарсал. Аккадская империя. Биреджик

1. Introduction

Archaeological levels during the Early Bronze Age, which covers mostly of III millennium BC, in the Birecik region, north of the modern city of Birecik, on the left bank of the Middle Turkish Euphrates show a likely cluster of sites around the small center of Surtepe Hoyuk, and with the position of Tilbes Hoyuk as a probable local sanctuary during this period.

In this period there are relations, and subsequent political control, and then wars and destruction in many places. It could well be a cyclical pattern and

have happened before in the Birecik area. We have been able to distinguish two periods of population disruption in most of the places mentioned during the III millennium BC, mainly at the end of the local EB Ib and at some point in the Mid-Late EB (perhaps at the end of the EB III). However, we see two different patterns. While EB II seems a period of abandonment of almost all the places mentioned in our study on place, except Tilbes Höyük, there are no signs of destruction in the sites. On the other hand, at the end of the EB III there was a period of (ritual?) destruction in buildings (witnessed in Tilbes) in addition to violence during the end of

the EB IVA, with an increase in burials in the area. Subsequently, there was a continuity of settlement in Tilbes Höyük, but not at Tilvez, although the nature of the use of both places seemed to partially change with new reconstruction and appearance of other buildings.

We put these facts in relation to similar events that occurred during the EB IVA in archaeological sites in the area between the Balikh and the left bank of the middle Euphrates, with which Birecik seems to have some type of cultural link. The relationship of the North Syrian kingdom of Ebla to the valley area in EB IVA may offer an important clue about the presence of the kingdom of Abarum/Abarsal in the area.

2. The second urbanization in Northern Mesopotamia

The second half of the 3rd millennium is the historical period, referred to in ancient Mesopotamian sources, that is equivalent to the end of the Early Dynastic (ED) and the beginning of the Akkad Empire in Northern Mesopotamia. The period of second urbanization not only coincides with Early Dynastic III of southern Mesopotamia, but is even specified at the beginning of it in ED IIIA (2400 BC), which coincides with the expansion of the kingdom of Ebla on the modern-day Turkish Upper Middle Euphrates. The period of second urbanization in the Middle Syro-Turkish Euphrates coincides in archaeological terms with the expansion of the caliciform culture in ceramic technology. It is also a period in which metallurgy and commercial relations based on the transit and exchange of metals flourished. In addition, specialists and artists in different areas of manual arts (ceramics, seals) emerged.

This is a phase of great urban expansion throughout northern Mesopotamia. On the other hand, it constitutes a period that, according to written documentation, coincides with the appearance of important fortified city-states in northern Syria and the Turkish Euphrates area. A possible cause due to endogenous growth (Mazzoni, 1991: 165) is one of

the models suggested for the great second urbanization in northern Syria and Mesopotamia during the period. The concept of city-state is inherent to the region of the Middle and Upper Euphrates, as the writings of the time suggest (v.gr. the Ebla archives), but these also have interstate relations.

The area adjacent to the Birecik-Carchemish region is the region of the Syrian Tishrin Dam, which had at its ends two places, Carchemish and Emar, which were identified as important centers in the Preclassical History of the region. The Great Royal Road from Persian times that crossed Carchemish, Emar, among others, and reached Ebla.

Although there are no cities as large as in the hinterland, but this area of the Middle Euphrates is very fertile from an agricultural point of view. Its relationship with the Euphrates is demonstrated by being a transit region, and current annual flow imbalances of the river itself. The water route has been a key for long-distance commercial exchanges during millennia (Margueron, 1989). The construction of reservoirs on the Syrian and Turkish Euphrates at the end of the 20th century led to an increase in archaeological rescue projects in the area; but after completing the reservoirs, a threat of gradual flooding occurred since 2000. The 3rd millennium BC was one of the periods initially apparently most favored in its archaeological exposure during the rescue work. A well-coordinated river communication is assumed during the 3rd millennium in Northern Mesopotamia. Due to likely territorial frictions, a multitude of alternative paths were developed.

Today, and despite the conflicts, it is characterized by a transit zone for eastern Anatolia, and also access to the center of Anatolia, with trade routes in force today, and a cultural and social bond with the north of Syria and the Aleppo and Balikh area. It seems to be halfway between all of them. To the north there are smooth hills, a source for rocks, with a more steppe climate. It is a link region between the river and the Taurus Mountains.

For some researchers the Middle Euphrates acted as a dividing line between the different ceramic cultures during the second half of the 3rd millennium (Mazzoni, 1985a) and the places located on the left

bank belong to a culture with an eastern orientation (Mazzoni, 1985b). The image is of a great cultural regionalization, based on its ceramics. This regional diversification could seem to have been sudden in nature based on the also apparent increase in the size of the settlements during the period; but the data of urbanization and large population during the Late Chalcolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age could well demonstrate that the area of the middle and northern Euphrates of Syria and Turkey already laid the previous foundations for urbanization and regionalization in the region.

3. Middle Euphrates. the dividing line and the kingdom of Abarum/Abarsal

Ebla was an expansionist power, but destroyed in the 23rd century BC. *Mardikh IIB1* is the period of the archives (2400-2300 BC), the apparent greatest phase of splendor of the kingdom, during the 3rd millennium BC. It is said that towards the end of the 24th century BC, in the epoch immediately before the vizier Ibrum (2322-2302 BC), the city of Ebla entered into a war campaign against Abarsal. Later a treaty was signed with this city, not only a peace but also a commercial contract (Astour, 1988: 147-148). This is the oldest pact cited in a text from Ebla, and later on Abarsal and its region became a vassal state. In return, the treaty spoke of the exchange of merchants and messengers (figure 1a-c).

This Abarsal city has been searched by Italian researchers north of Carchemish (Catagnoti and Bonechi, 1990). Of the archaeological Carchemish of the EBA we only know about the cist tombs, as well as the mention in the texts of Ebla. We have the particular case of Til Barsip that grew rapidly during the EB III, and was destroyed afterward in EB IV, and was identified as Abarsal according to some scholars (Astour, 2002). Tell Ahmar/Til Barsip, placed 20 km south of Karkemish, was an important trade nexus. Another identification by Archi has suggested that Tell Chuera was Abarsal (Archi, 1989: 15-19 and 2021; Bonechi, 1993: 8-10). However, Tell Chuera was abandoned around the

24th century BC (Meyer, 2010), which may be a handicap in the face of this identification from an archaeological point of view. Recently, a new proposal was Tell Bazi-Banat, a site of 40 ha between Emar and Carchemish (Winters, 2018: 157, 165).

The northern border of Hammam-Chuera-Harran is on the Turkish Euphrates, but the Karababa sites have related material, with a different material bulk (Thissen, 1989: 206). Hammam's second burnt level is framed in the EB IV (Thissen, 1989: 197). There were commercial contacts between Ebla and Harran according to the texts (Archi, 1980: 3 ff.; Thiessen, 1989: 307).

Indeed, in ancient Mesopotamia, several cities shared similar names. Place given identifications occur in both the north and the south, which is why there are cities that can be called the same way in ancient Mesopotamia, such as "Ur of the North", or "Ur of the South". According to this logic, there may be two Abarsal, or there may be two Urshu, among other ancient cities.

In Akkadian the word Abar/Eber refers to a place that is "on the other side, beyond [...]". In Persian times, the Achaemenids located northern Syria and the west bank of the Euphrates (the farthest from their point of view) as Abar-Nâri, "beyond the river". Abâru means "lead" (or related to metal). "ú-sal" in Sumerian is "A low, fertile area along a watercourse". "Ura" is a particle that in Sumerian is related to water. The particle sal could well be "the place" in a local semitic dialect; "kisal" means "courtyard" but better "the royal courtyard".

4. Akkad and the city of Urshu on the right bank of the Middle Euphrates

At the end of this phase of urban expansion, around 2300 BC (Sallaberger and Schrakamp, 2015: 302, table 10.1), is when the irruption and conquests of King Sargon or Naram-Sin of Akkad occurred in the territories north of the Euphrates and even his penetration into Anatolia, a phenomenon that was seen decades ago by some researchers as mere propaganda, without concrete facts on the archaeological level (Michalowski, 1985). Southern Mesopotamia of

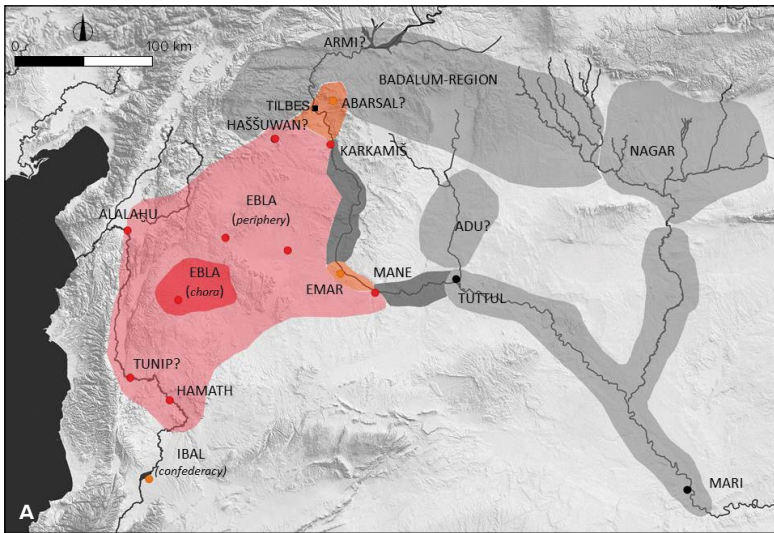


Figure 1. A. The kingdom of Ebla during the reign of Igrīš-ḫalab. Orange-shaded areas, allied states. Grey-shaded areas, independent or hostile polities (Edwards, 2019: 311 fig. 15). **B.** Ebla, aerial photo. **C.** Ebla, plan of the site (Barlemi74 2015, Wikimedia)

Figura 1. A. El reino de Ebla durante el reinado de Igrīš-ḫalab. En naranja, estados aliados. En gris, regiones independientes o enemigas (Edwards, 2019: 311 fig. 15). **B.** Foto aérea de Ebla. **C.** Ebla, plano del sitio (Barlemi74 2015, Wikimedia)

that period was unified, and yet in northern Syria and southeastern Turkey arose a series of kingdoms that were not yet controlled under the power of Akkad (figure 2a-b).

There were violent destructions at the end of the 3rd millennium. It is a rare occurrence in the ancient history of northern Mesopotamia and has attempted to be linked to a series of important environmental changes that occurred around the 23rd century BC, with an increase in arid conditions and

other series of ecological phenomena that included enormous floods and volcanic eruptions. Such phenomenology coincided in time with the collapse of the Akkadian Empire. According to H. Weiss et al. (2003) the entire Jezireh was abandoned for 300 years, between 2200 and 1900 BC.

In that regard, we have the case of Titriş Höyük, which is located in the Tavuk Çay, a tributary of the Euphrates in Turkey. During its flourishing period, Titriş Höyük consisted of a wall, which presaged the



Figure 2. A. Expansion of the Akkadian Empire during Naram-Sin to the borders of the kingdom of Ebla (based on map of Sémhur 2015, Wikimedia). B. Toponyms of the kingdom of Ebla and neighboring regions, Abaru and Ursa'um to the north (Astour, 1988: 154)

Figura 2. A. Expansión del Imperio Acadio durante Naram-Sin a las fronteras del reino de Ebla (a partir del mapa de Sémhur 2015, Wikimedia). B. Topónimos del reino de Ebla y regiones vecinas, Abaru y Ursa'um al norte (Astour, 1988: 154)

existence of external threats. But at the local levels of the late Early Bronze Age, which we could date as earliest around the 24th century and as most recent before the end of the 22nd century, there is evidence of a violent conflict; the excavators of the site prefer to place it in the most recent phase of this occupation (Matney et al., 2012). A group of close to twenty male young adults, including three women, two children and a newborn, were found during archaeological excavations, with their bones disarticulated and placed under

the floor of a house, in a whitewashed structure, B98.97 (Algaze et al., 2001: 69-70); Skulls, with traces of trauma, were arranged surrounding a pile of long bones. The evidence of this “burial” at Titriş Höyük contrasts with the usual family crypts under houses of the period in the city. The researchers who conducted the analysis believe that those buried at B98.97 are the product of a massacre during the time (Erdal, 2010).

After a comparison of the mitochondrial DNA sequences from the usual burials and those from the

lime-plastered installation, it was noted that the occupants of the peculiar burial of B98.87 were not related to other people from the rest of the graves in the city. They were interpreted as likely foreign soldiers defeated in hostilities that may have taken place before the city was abandoned at the local Late Early Bronze Age (Matney et al., 2012). But another interesting aspect was also revealed: there was no clear genetic difference between the occupants of both groups of graves (Matney et al., 2012). Researchers came to think in the first instance that the burial of Titris was due to the disorders that occurred in the Mesopotamian universe after the end of the Akkadian Empire (Erdal, 2010).

After the conquests of Akkad, a major crisis occurred throughout the northern region of Mesopotamia at the end of the EB IV. After the fall of Ebla, the Middle Syro-Turkish Euphrates area was destabilized. Urshu is the probable place where the elite of Ebla went after its destruction after Mardikh IIBr. Urshu could be on the right bank of the Middle Euphrates, and correspond with the territory of the later Roman Seleucid city of Urima, with a toponym close to that of the now submerged Horum Höyük, opposite Tilbes Höyük. During late antiquity there was a dipolis on both banks formed by Zeugma-Apamea and which has been considered as the biblical Thapsacus (Gawlikowski, 1996).

5. The evidence of Tilbes Höyük on EB IVA

The Spanish Archaeological Mission in Turkey conducted salvage excavations at Urfa (left bank of the river). The Tilbes Project began its salvage work in Urfa in 1996. Tilbes Höyük was the focal site for this Project to re-cover remains of five adjoining sites on the left bank of the Euphrates River, north of the Birecik valley. Three of these sites, including most of Tilbes, were flooded in summer 2000 under the reservoir of the Birecik Dam. The other sites are from the north Apamea acropole/Tilmusa, Tilöbur, Tilvez, and Surtepe, the largest of those. The main focus of our Project are the cultures of the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age (figure 3a-c).

For this study on EB IVA we will concentrate our attention on materials from the Tilbes and Tilvez/Meteler höyüks, for having offered period-associated architecture, in addition to good primary stratigraphic contexts and seals concerning the Mid-Late 3rd millennium BC. To date, at Surtepe Höyük it is only clear that there were EB IV pits. According to the public servants from the Birecik Ministry of Agriculture, they say that the best arable land in the region has always been around Surtepe and Tilvez.

The main evidence for an occupation of the EB IVA at Tilbes Höyük came from three excavation areas: A2A6, AE 1-5 and E4aE3E8. There is no prolonged hiatus of occupation between Tilbes' EB III and EB IVA, especially at A2A6, but a reorganization of the architecture is evident at E4aE3E8. As we remarked in previous studies on the EB I and EB II sanctuaries, the filling of the buildings seemed deliberate and with a ritual pattern in those structures sealed during the first half of the third millennium (Gil Fuensanta, Mederos and Muminov, 2019: 56-58, fig. 4-5). It is true, however, that during the excavations carried out in late July 1999 on the Tilbes Höyük "Burned Building" of EB III date, some heavy stone balls or fragments of the same appeared (for example inventory 9564/9906 of locus 8586). The appearance of anchors on a lime-plastered podium, from EB IVA, close to the old burned sanctuary of EB III and precursors, is an important piece of information that further supports the theory that Tilbes Höyük played at least one function as a local-regional sanctuary for much of the 3rd millennium BC (figure 4a-b).

This excavation area, together with E4aE3E8, presents the highest concentration of broken terracotta female figurines. But in Tilbes we almost always find the heads of the figurines, a detail absent in other places downstream (Surtepe, Qara Quzaq). A statuette top that appeared in sector W of A2A6 presents some stylistic relationship with heads found in the destruction level of the Royal Palace G of Ebla (Peyronel, 2013: fig. 4.2.1). On the other hand, it is interesting that such figurines appear in the Birecik Valley from the EB IV, since until then all the iconography of representations that we had in Tilbes Höyük was limited to clay horns (Gil Fuensanta,

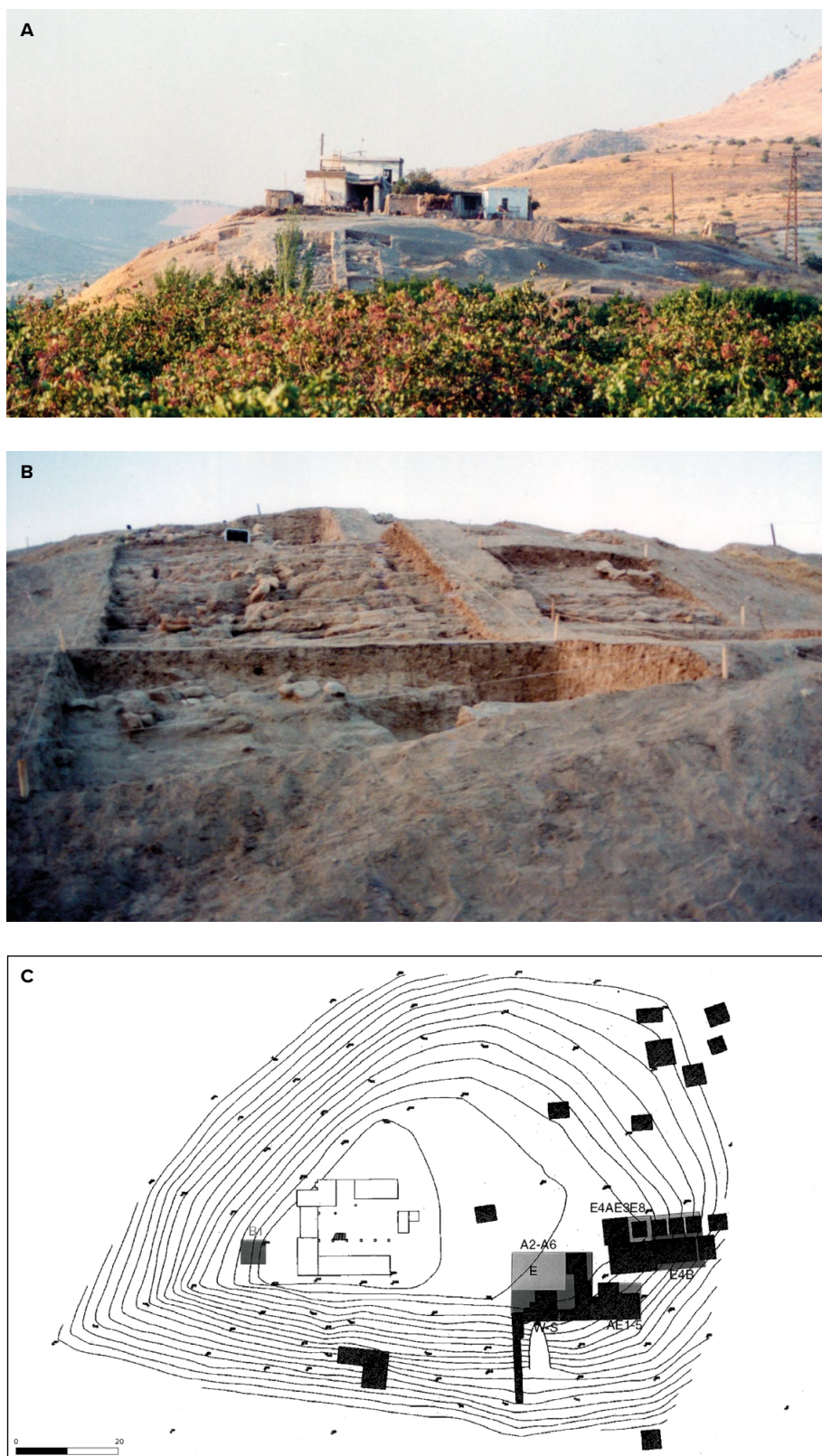


Figure 3. A. View of the höyük of Tilbes, 1997 Season. B. Tilbes Höyük, General view of Squares E4AE3E8 and E4BE7E2E10. C. Topography of Tilbes Höyük, 1999 Season, with Squares E4AE3E8, E4BE7E2 E10 and A2A6

Figura 3. A. Vista del höyük de Tilbes, campaña de 1997. B. Tilbes Höyük, vista general de los cortes E4AE3E8 y E4BE7E2E10. C. Topografía de Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1999, con los cortes E4AE3E8, E4BE7E2 E10 y A2A6



Figure 4. Tilbes Höyük, 1997 Season, Square E4AE3E8, EB IVA Building Area, stone anchors

Figura 4. Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1997, corte E4AE3E8, edificio monumental del Bronce Antiguo IVA, anclas de piedra

Mederos and Muminov, 2019: 60, fig. 8a-b), associated with the area of the sanctuaries. Since the EB I-III phases in E4aE3E8 excavation area and its surroundings (AE1-5), the anthropomorphization of representations increased. The burial of figurines in Tilbes had to obey to other reasons than being a mere entombment place, due to the large number of living spaces. Possibly these burials were due to a matter of local deference (figure 5a-b).

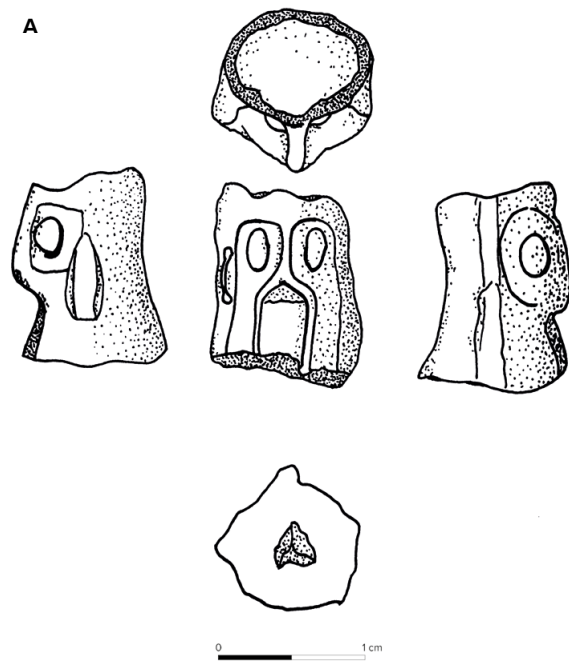


Figure 5. A. Tilbes Höyük, 1997 Season, Head of anthropomorphic figure, Square A2A6, locus 6007, EB IVA Phase. B. Tilbes Höyük, 1997 Season, Head of anthropomorphic figure, Square E4AE3E8, EB IVA Phase

Figura 5. A. Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1997, cabeza de una figura antropomorfa, corte A2A6, locus 6007, Bronce Antiguo IVA. B. Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1997, cabeza de una figura antropomorfa, corte E4AE3E8, Bronce Antiguo IVA

A2A6 during EB IV yielded a multi-roomed structure, which appeared in use a long time, and with reconstructions over such a long period. The walls of A2A6 in EB IV were elaborated with local stone, in addition to a complementary use of mudbrick and mudhif in the edifice area. There are walls exceeding a width of meter and 50 cm in some sectors. At a later date, in late classical antiquity, the höyük of Tilbes was eroded by floods of the river, destroying part of

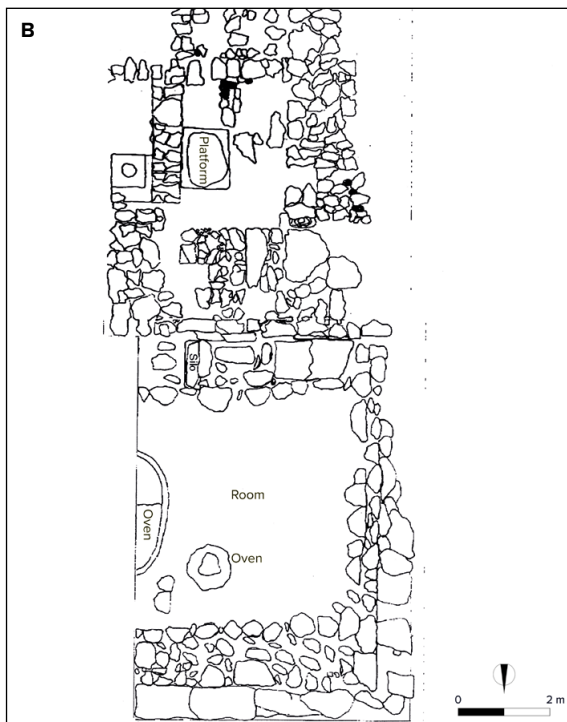


Figure 6. A-B. Tilbes Höyük, 1997 Season, Square A2A6, large “Multi-roomed” building, with two ovens, EB IVA Phase. C. Tilbes Höyük, 1997 Season, Square E4AE3E8, Alley and large building, EB IVA Phase

Figura 6. A-B. Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1997, corte A2A6, gran edificio con varias habitaciones y dos hornos, Bronce Antiguo IVA. C. Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1997, corte E4AE3E8, corredor y gran edificio, Bronce Antiguo IVA

it, and leaving this building near the Western boundary of the settlement (figure 6a-c).

There was a development of rural temples in Syria of the 3rd millennium, but they were short-lived (see Tell Raqa’i). In this case, the existence in Tilbes for more than a millennium would imply a centralized locality, forming part of a larger administrative center in which that site would be a likely place of passage for the period. There were podiums in Tilbes, near the older EB sanctuaries position. Also clay figurines were found nearby, in areas to the west and north of the previous sanctuaries area. They could be a phenomenon indicative of popular religious practices and legitimation of grain stores based on cult activities (Schwartz, 2000: 179).

The EB IV shows continuity of use in the buildings, but there is an apparent gap in use (a fill?) between the EB III and the EB IVA in this area of A2A6. However, this hiatus is not contemplated in E4aE3E8, where previous buildings are reused as foundations. These EB IV buildings located on the southern slope of the mound had partly disturbed the burned EB III building (Gil Fuensanta et al., 2002: 136; Gil Fuensanta, Mederos

and Muminov, 2019: 58–61 fig. 7a-b). The constructions of the EB IV in some cases presented two-meter-high stone walls. Mudbrick seems not utilized in its construction. And those edifices were used for a long period (Gil Fuensanta, 2007: 149), in line with that described for the building in A2A6 for the same period.

In sector AE1-5 there were also EB IV buildings that use the foundations of previous EB III structures (Gil Fuensanta et al., 2002: 135). And on the other hand, there was an interest in maintaining the constructions throughout the extended period of habitation, despite continuous changes and additions to some walls over time.

The area of E4aE3E8 shows corridors between various buildings, in the style of existing architecture of the period. However, A2A6 did not show such alleys, resembling more the packed multi-roomed architecture typical of Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia in the earlier Prehistory. Hence, this structure is interpreted as a single multi-roomed building in this sector of the EB IV settlement, which by then already had an important castle appearance, with its artificial terraces.

In short, we observe two contiguous moments, without an apparent hiatus in the EB IV of Tilbes Höyük, as attested by the continuity in A2A6 of new constructions of buildings and walls, distinguishing a long occupation during the period, and which we could call EB IVA and EB IVB phases; there were no excessive changes in material culture. And even laboratory analyzes of human remains argue for a ritual continuity in sector E4aE3E8 of the place.

The site during the phase increased the built space, as well as differs from the previous sanctuary of the EB III on Tilbes Höyük. As we said before, there are preserved stone walls with a height of more than one and a half meters and various sectors. In zone E4aE3E8, the stones and sizes in use were smaller than those of the constructions in A2A6. We have not found an extensive use of Tilbes Höyük (or Tilvez/Meteler) as specific sites of silos or circular architecture during the EB IVA. There are Middle Bronze (MB) II silos built directly on the buildings in both areas, as well as a series of tombs that could date back to the same MB period.

Both sectors of the excavation have a large presence of constructions, throughout the EB IV, a period that does not seem to be affected by the disruption in the settlement observed in the nearby sites of Surtepe and Meteler-Tilvez. The occupation in the höyük of Tilbes was continued throughout the final moments of the 3rd millennium. Besides a presumed particular ritual function linked to the site, also during that period of occupation, the buildings were located at a higher level compared to the river bank in Tilvez/Meteler.

6. EB IVA Burials

There is not a large amount of evidence about adult burial cists in A2A6 and E4aE3E8 during the EB IVA phase, but pot children entombments do appear, as well as burials of infants or unborn children without grave goods. LafUAM analyzes reveal a ritualized funeral practice, and especially in those burials coming from the area that was occupied in the past by the “Burned Building” of EB III date. There are ceramics and figurines in A2A6 that demonstrate some type of ritual or ceremonial significance. They remind us of the abundant appearance of Late EB terracotta figurines from other regions (Meijer, 1995: fig. 3) (figure 7a-b).

The excavated Tilbes tombs never show trauma on the human remains in any period of those excavated, and therefore even less so in the burials assigned to the middle/late fraction of the 3rd millennium BC. During the EB there are no elements that reveal the presence of figures linked to martial activities (v.gr. absence of spears in the tombs of the different phases of the 3rd millennium).

On the other hand, the höyük of Tilvez/Meteler did not show typical entombments, but rather the product of a severe beating on an adult individual, of unknown sex, in operation 1. That individual had three antemortem fractures in the right arm that did not cause the death (García Millán, 2019: 103, 106, 105 fig. 5), with also a longitudinal (unusual, and unnatural) femoral fracture perimortem, close to the time of death. He/she was not crushed by any wall. Falling walls have never caused

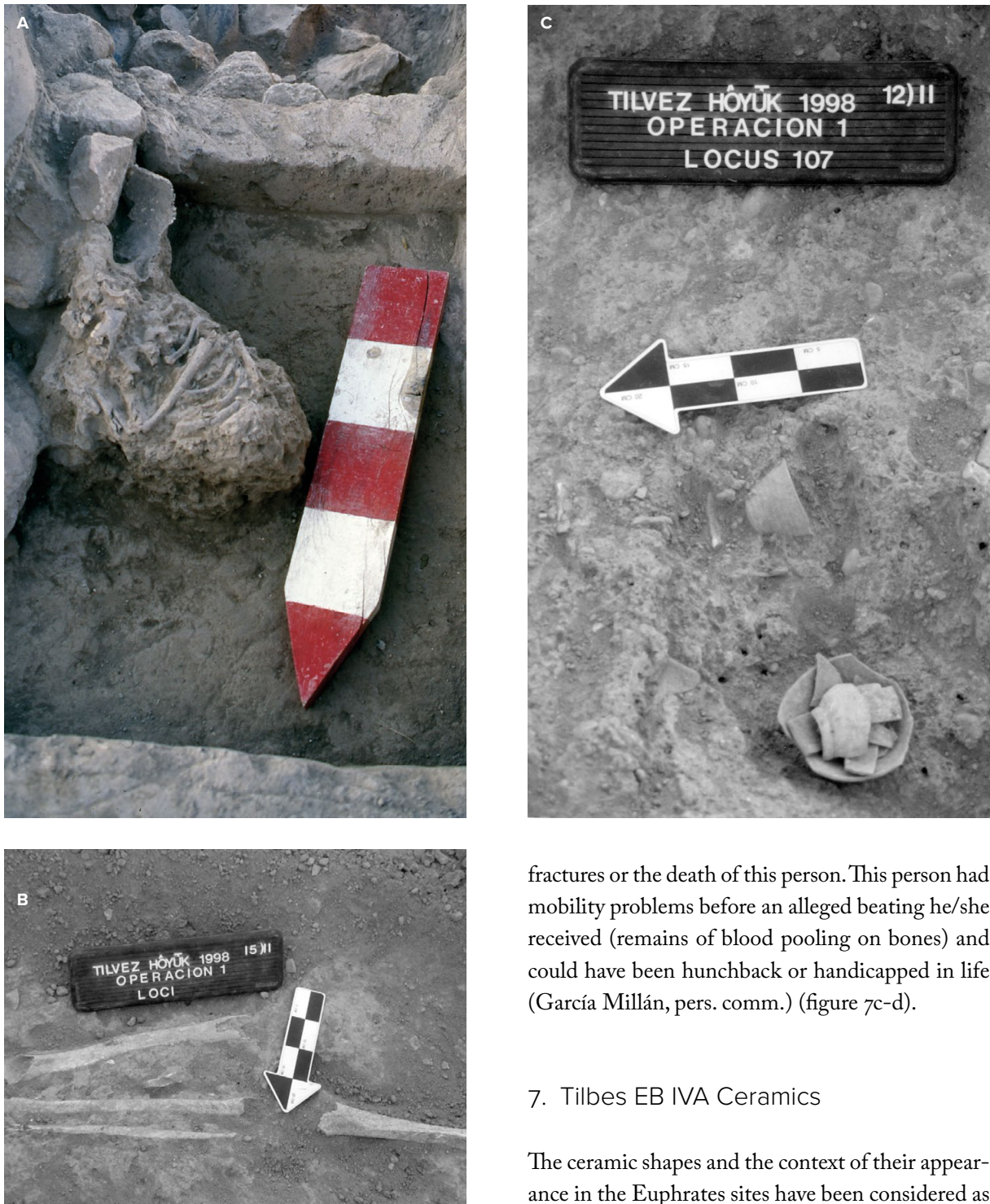


Figure 7. A. Tilbes Höyük, Square E4AE3E8, child burial. B. Tilvez Höyük, 1998 Season, Operation 1, burial of an adult who suffered a likely and severe beating, EB IVA Phase. C. Tilvez Höyük, 1998 Season, Operation 1, Pottery associated with the burial of an adult, EB IVA Phase

Figura 7. A. Tilbes Höyük, corte E4AE3E8, enterramiento infantil. B. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1998, corte 1, enterramiento de un adulto que sufrió una probable y severa paliza, Bronce Antiguo IVA. C. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1998, corte 1, cerámica asociada con el enterramiento de un adulto, Bronce Antiguo IVA

fractures or the death of this person. This person had mobility problems before an alleged beating he/she received (remains of blood pooling on bones) and could have been hunchback or handicapped in life (García Millán, pers. comm.) (figure 7c-d).

7. Tilbes EB IVA Ceramics

The ceramic shapes and the context of their appearance in the Euphrates sites have been considered as markers that facilitate chronological relationships for this period (Porter, 1999: 312). It is believed that the corrugated beaker appears to replace painting and burnishing in the Euphrates (Porter, 1999: 315). According to scholars on the region, this area of Carchemish-Birecik has the specific features of a distinctive ceramic province during the 3rd millennium BC (Engin, 2007).

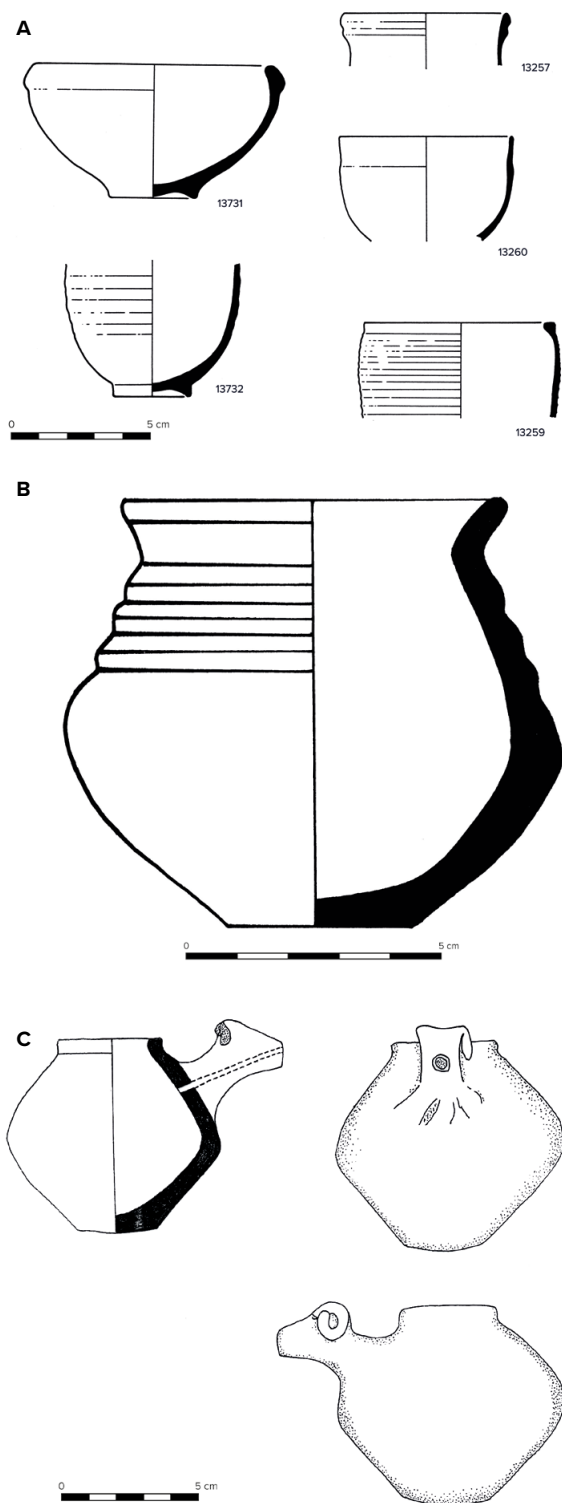


Figure 8. A. Tilbes Höyük, 1996 Season, Square A2A6, caliciform goblet-type ware, EB IVA Phase. B. Tilbes Höyük, 1999 Season, Square A2A6, cup-type ware, EB VIA Phase. C. Tilbes Höyük, 1999 Season, Square A2A6, locus 6627, rhyton, EB IVA Phase

Figura 8. A. Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1996, corte A2A6, cerámica caliciforme, Bronce Antiguo IVA. B. Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1999, corte A2A6, cerámica caliciforme, Bronce Antiguo VIA. C. Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1999, corte A2A6, locus 6627, rhyton, Bronce Antiguo IVA

Regarding the Birecik Valley, it seems that we are in a region of predominance of plain simple ware. But in Tilbes Höyük, during the long sequence of the EB IV (phases A and B), there was a presence of a large number of chaff faced storage vessels which coexisted with the plain simple storage jars.

As for the EB IVA ceramics, a very marked standardization of shapes and pastes is produced in the höyük of Tilbes, in the style of other places of the valley or in northern Mesopotamia, where predominate open bowls with band rims, corrugated goblets and vessels with rims, displaying colors that vary between light red and light yellow according to Munsell's book of color. We see the presence in the same excavation area of plenty of small wares, along with large jugs. There were yielded fragments of gray Syrian bottles and corrugated cups, the so-called "Hama" goblets, typical of the EB IV. The pottery is largely grit tempered and wheel made; the jugs do not appear to have been all hand-made, and some were manufactured with the use of a slow-wheel. The caliciform ware is characterized by the use of high temperatures during the pottery cooking (figure 8).

A good part of the ceramic bulk from the EB IV, in its phase A, as obtained in A2A6, fits into the general picture of the pottery distribution during the Mid-Late Third millennium of the Middle Euphrates, the so-called Plain simple ware, and with the caliciform culture, whose first expansion may be in part due to the rise of the kingdom of Ebla during the period in question (Mazzoni, 1985a-b). There are subtle changes in its distribution in the A2A6 excavation area over such a long period, which suggests some type of different use or supply. The ceramic materials found during the 1997 campaign in E4aE3E8 in the building remains from EB IVA and B support what was obtained later with the dig on sector A2A6.

There is also a mass production of ceramics both in the areas of E4aE3E8 and A2A6, evident by the large number of partially preserved ceramic vessels and fragments, deposited in the large structure of A2A6 or near the old area occupied by the previous sanctuaries of the EB I-III.

The pottery of A2A6 is mostly of two types. There stands out a good amount of ceramics from the caliciform tradition, with its open bowls and bowls, but

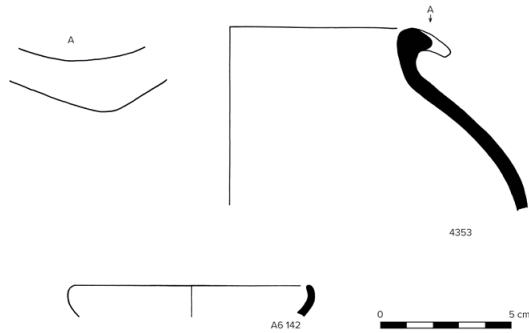


Figure 9. Tilbes Höyük, 1997 Season, Square A2A6, local Anatolian chaff faced pottery

Figura 9. Tilbes Höyük, campaña de 1997, corte A2A6, cerámica local anatólica con desgrasante de cascarilla de cereal

typical from the EB IVA, with its parallels in Tell Mardikh Palazzo G (Mazzoni, 1991: fig. 6, 1-19). Other ceramics are typical of the Anatolian burnished chaff-faced jars tradition from the same period, and have a regional production (Seva Roman, pers. comm.); it was a kind of ceramic convention not only present in Karababa or Carchemish, but that also reached the Balikh (figure 9).

The yielded data in the sites on the left bank north of Birecik do not seem to offer great ceramic homogeneity based solely on the plain simple tradition of pottery. There coexists a convention of polished chaff faced storage vessels in the case of Tilbes; on the other hand, Tilvez/Meteler shows ceramic shapes that are not present in the EB IVA and EB IVB phases of Tilbes, which points to changes in the cultural incidence in the area. Some scholars stresses the presence of the chaff-faced storage vessels in the region due to trade or independent development (Thissen, 1989: 206).

Oylum Höyük near Kilis, in the hinterland of the right bank of the Euphrates River, and not far from the Syrian-Turkish border provided a bulk of EB III-IV (Özgen, 1989-1990, fig. 1-2), whose various types of the grooved cups, goblets and Syrian goblets, are reminiscent of those of Tilbes. Some of the bowl shapes from Tilbes Höyük have parallels in the Balikh materials, as demonstrated by Tell Hammam west D (Curvers, 1989: pl., II, p. 11).

Hama beakers like those discovered at A2A6 have a very abundant expansion along the Middle Euphrates during the Mid-Late Third millennium.

This is demonstrated by Umm el Marra, Jerablus Tahtani, Tell Ahmar, Tell Banat or Tell Bi'a among others. In the hinterland of the right bank of the Euphrates they appear in the Tilbeshar IIIC phase, the end of which is dated to around 2300 BC (Kepinski, 2007: 154 ff., fig. 10.5).

It is conspicuous, in other places in the Carchemish-Birecik region, that the "Hama beaker" in plain simple ware is usually associated with burials (Porter, 1999: 314). It is true that its appearance in Tilbes Höyük's E4aE3E8 during the EB IV follows this pattern since there was in close relation with burials nearby.

Several of the fragments of band painted small jars have reminiscences in other places of the region (Porter, 1999: fig. 4). But in Tilbes Höyük these types are not very abundant in A2A6. Red banded burnished jars appear on both the west and left banks of the Euphrates (Thissen, 1989: 205). And which probably belong to a northern tradition (Mazzoni, 1985a), perhaps with Tell Hadidi as a producing center (Thissen, 1989: 205).

There was a presence of metallic ware in Tilvez and Tilbes Höyük, as well as in the pits and surface of Surtepe. Metallic pottery appears during the ED of Mesopotamia in phase II, but not north of the Birecik Valley. The parallels with Tell Hammam et Turkmann VI west dates extend to the end of the 3rd millennium BC (Curvers, 1989: 107), that is, EB IV. On this kind of ware, the decorations are almost absent, with the exception of the small band painted jars (Curvers, 1989: 112, pl. 10.6273). In the last levels there was no present metallic ware (Thissen, 1989: 197). Even they were present at Kazane Höyük (Wattenmaker, 1998), not far from the old town of modern Urfa, finding ourselves in the region of influence of Mesopotamia, as demonstrated by the sounding in Harran (Prag, 1970). It responds to the concept of dimorphic society (Bunnens, 1999: 165), urban populations and pastoralists living on the same sites.

8. Tilvez Höyük-Meteler's evidence on EB IVA

We chose to concentrate our first digging activities before the completion of the dam in the northern side of the mound of Tilvez Höyük, located in

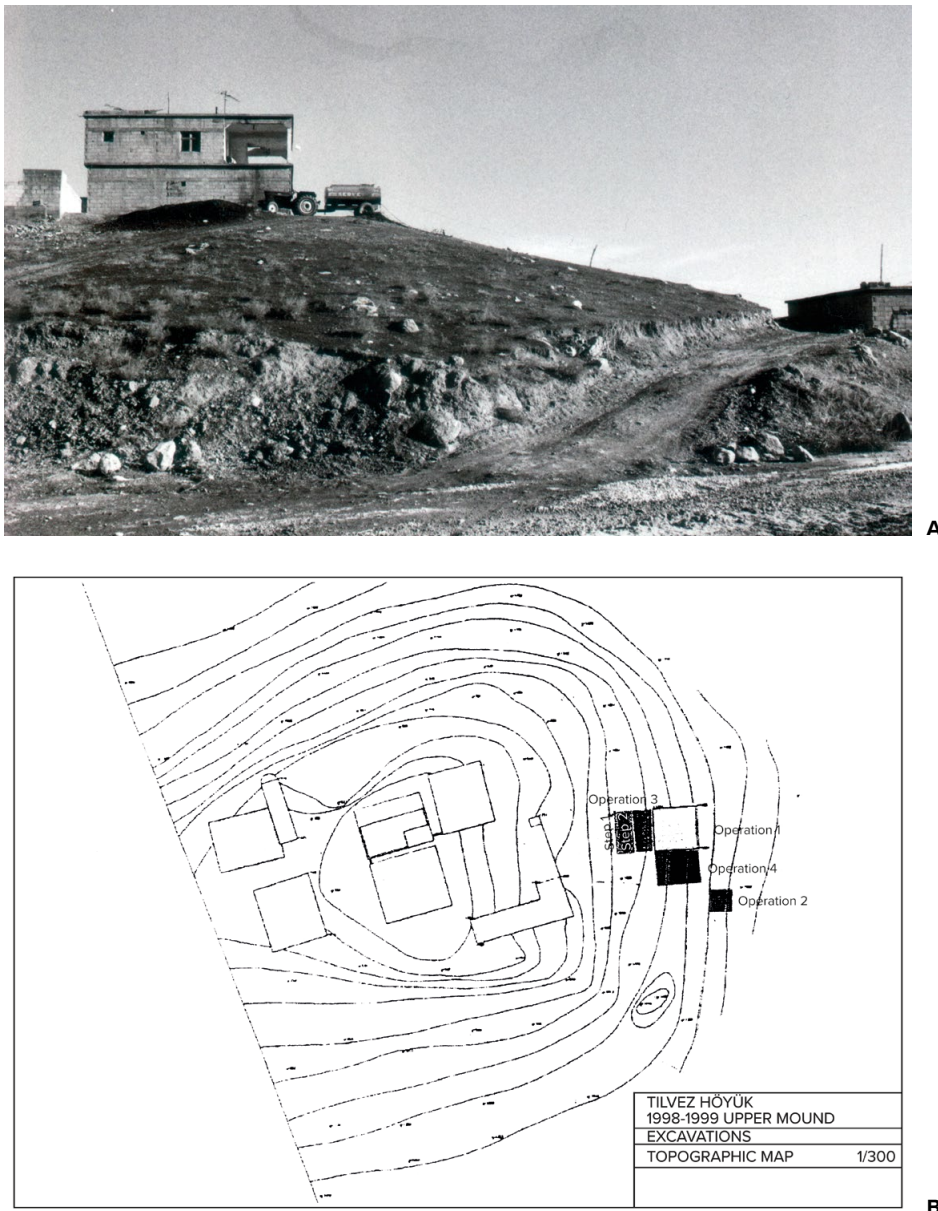


Figure 10. A. Tilvez Höyük, view of the höyük with modern homes. B. Tilvez Höyük, 1998-1999 Seasons, Topographic plan with operations 1-4

Figura 10. A. Tilvez Höyük, vista del höyük con casas modernas. B. Tilvez Höyük, campañas de 1998-1999, plano topográfico con los cortes 1-4

the current abandoned town of Eski Meteler; this choice was due to the fact that it was the area of the place with the least modern constructions during the 20th century. After the year 2000, when the reservoir was completed, we devoted more time to survey and excavate in the höyük, which led us to determine the presence of an Early Bronze I settlement in the south-central part of Tilvez. On the other hand, there is a continuity of EB IV type sherdage between Surtepe and Tilvez, both located close

to each other. However, the ceramics of Meteler or Surtepe and Tilbes do not equal, despite the matching metallurgy (H. Özbal, pers. comm.); we suggest it is due to different functions of each place. And even the Tilbes Höyük periods are not reflected in the stratigraphy of the other two sites, which despite their size, have a much greater temporal limitation (figure 10a-b).

It was not discovered in any of the archaeological excavations or surveys on Tilvez Höyük a

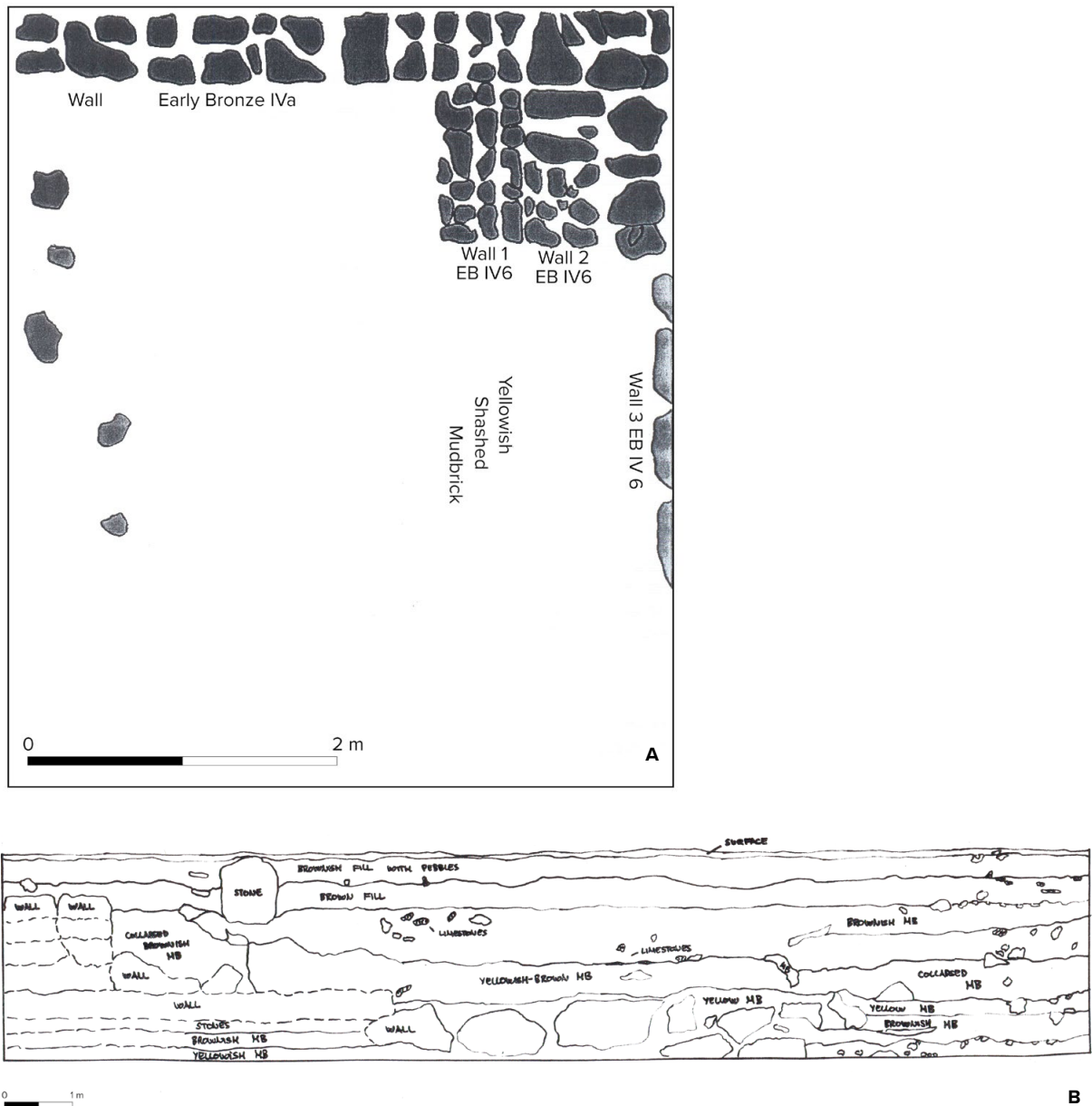


Figure 11. A. Tilvez Höyük, 1998 Season, Operation 1, plan of the structures. B. Tilvez Höyük, 1998 Season, Operation 1, Stratigraphy, East section

Figura 11. A. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1998, corte 1, plano de las estructuras. B. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1998, corte 1, estratigrafía, sección Este

single fragment that attested the presence of material previous to Mardikh IIB1 phase types, that is the earlier caliciform tradition of Ebla, what falls into its EB III-EB IVA1 phase (Vacca, 2016: fig. 7), therefore the presence of the cultural influence of the Ebla ceramic tradition appears to be since the Mardikh IIB1 phase, which corresponds to our EB IVA of the Birecik valley; a demonstration that the written sources of the period can have a semblance of authenticity, given that on such EB III

period of Tell Mardikh/Ebla, this city already had its Royal Palace G in existence (Vacca, 2016: 272, 279), but not yet reached its influence on the Birecik Valley area (figure 11a-b).

The EB destroyed buildings (and not because of fire) observed in Tilvez Höyük do not evidence ante quem EB IVA ceramics, such as bowls with tripods or champagne cups or horizontal reserved slip, proper of the “Burned Building” of Tilbes EB III or that of phase II of Gre Virike, further

down the river, south of the modern city of Birecik (Ökse, 2001: 268 ff.), a period in which the plain simple ware appears within its local stratigraphy, and which we could place as the time of the beginning of the EB III culture for the Birecik valley. Therefore we do not presuppose a contemporary destruction of both places (Tilbes and Tilvez/Meteler), in addition to a different function of both settlements.

Parallel, but not identical, phenomena of ceramic cultural influences from the caliciform tradition to those of Tilbes Höyük can be deduced from the other types of Meteler/Tilvez Höyük, where predominated other shapes based on metallic wares or small goblets with painted bands, the so-called Syrian bottles. It was discovered a mass of ceramic fragments and almost complete vessels, in addition to a few burnished chaff faced wares associated with burials, in the vicinity of Tilvez Höyük.

The Tilvez metallic ware had a predominantly gray or light yellow/red color and was fired at high temperatures, and with a very fine and dense grit paste. It would fall within the category of “Euphrates ware related to metallic ware” (Engin, 2007: 273-274). The fineness of the pots as well as a great standardization reveals that we are facing a pottery production proper of the EB IVA than typical of a regional EB III phase.

Within the ceramic bulk, predominates the small wares and include suitable caliciform shapes, such as open bowls and goblets (Welton and Cooper, 2014), typical of the EB IVA, with plenty parallels in Tell Mardikh Palazzo G (Mazzoni, 1991: fig. 6, 1-19) (figure 12a-b).

The Euphrates painted banded ware, which according to a group of scholars, is part of the “Syrian bottles”, and is usually dated to the ED II and IIIA-B (Schachner and Schachner, 1995: 85 ff.), during the EB III-IV, and has a wide dispersal that reaches northern Mesopotamia and has far as Kültepe in central Anatolia (Schachner and Schachner, 1995: 86). It is a type of jug, very fine, and associated with luxury or imported ceramics, in various cases. Our specimen from Tilvez Höyük resembles the later “Syrian bottle” types of the EB IVA, and therefore we could tentatively date it to Mardikh IIB1, Kurban Höyük IV and specifically to the ED IIIB of Mesopotamia.

The corrugated bowls of Kurban Hoyuk IV belong to the same convention of caliciform and plain simple ware, but not all types from Tilbes or Tilvez are specifically presented (Algaze, 1990: pl. 53), demonstrating that Karababa and the Birecik Valley belong to two different ceramic zones during the EB IVA.

A few very rare fragments of polished red ceramic were found, but they are diverse after the burnished chaff-faced typical of the EB IV cooking pots typical of the Birecik valley area. They remind us more in connection with the central-western tradition of Anatolia from the 3rd millennium BC. In Kurban Höyük period V, a chaff tempered jug of this type, with triangular handle, was already present and which the excavators saw in accordance with the previous and later tradition of cooking pot ware in the area (Algaze, 1990: vol. 1, 288-289; vol. 2, pl. 52c)

There is a large presence of small containers, jugs or bottles in Tilvez. Regarding it, Tilvez Höyük differs in relation with other places of the valley (Engin, 2007: 273), including Tilbes Höyük, where there was a more varied ceramic bulk for such phase. There were not Hama Beakers in Tilvez. We did not find any fragments of burnished cooking pot ware with a triangular rim after the excavated contexts of Tilvez between the years 1998-2000. Fragments of burnished wide plates and trays were found, but only in a sector of the excavation far from the open operation areas of the höyük, in the burials discovered during the dam construction. These are the only examples of handmade pottery found in the EB IV of the site. All the plain simple ware of the place was produced on wheel and fired at high temperatures in ovens.

9. An impression of a cylinder seal in the Ebla-palace style at Tilvez/Meteler and the city of Abarum/Abarsal

According to our colleague P. Charvát, the first state to have been interested in securing a secure foothold in the vicinity of Tilbes was the early Syrian kingdom of Ebla during the Royal Palace-G phase, EB IVA, c. 2450-2350 BC (Mattiae, 1997: 1;

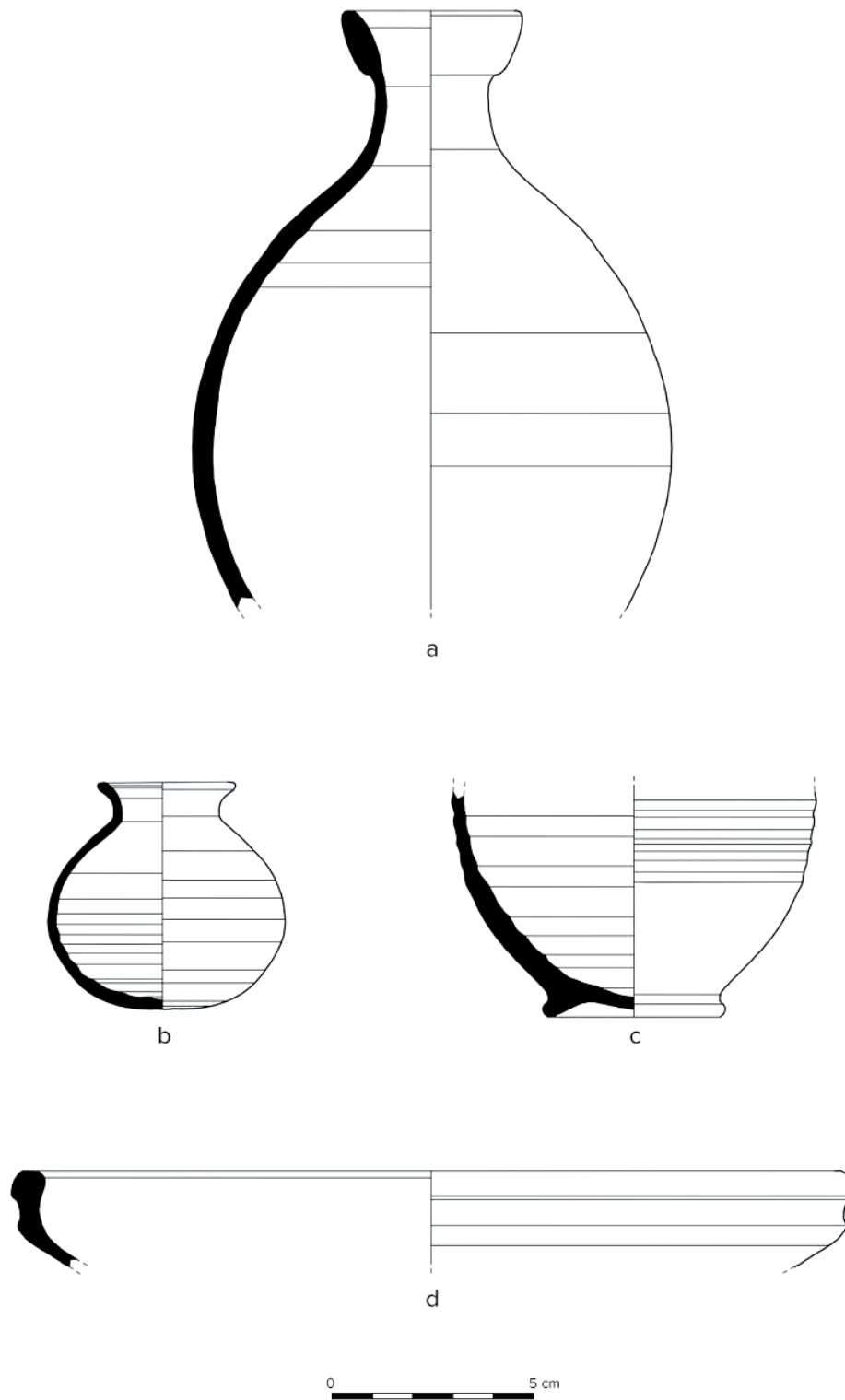


Figure 12. A. Tilvez Höyük, 1999 Season, Operation 3, locus 506, ceramics, EB IVA Phase. B. Tilvez Höyük, 1999 Season, Operation 3, locus 504, ceramics, EB IVA Phase. C. Tilvez Höyük, 1999 Season, Operation 4, locus 631, ceramics, EB IVA Phase. D. Tilvez Höyük, 1999 Season, Operation 4, locus 600, ceramics, EB IVA Phase (digitalization C.A. Pardo Barrionuevo)

Figura 12. A. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1999, corte 3, locus 506, cerámica, Bronce Antiguo IVA. B. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1999, corte 3, locus 504, cerámica, Bronce Antiguo IVA. C. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1999, corte 4, locus 631, cerámica, Bronce Antiguo IVA. D. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1999, corte 4, locus 600, cerámica, Bronce Antiguo IVA (digitalización C.A. Pardo Barrionuevo)

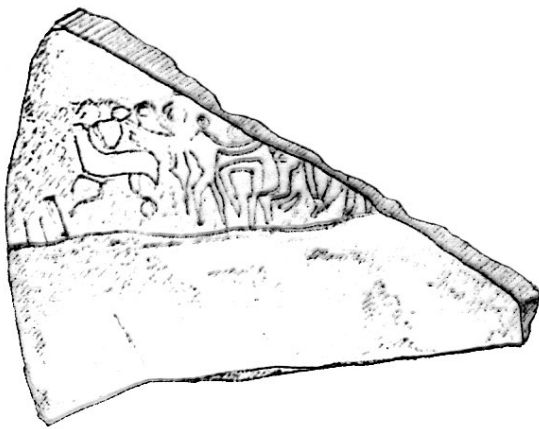
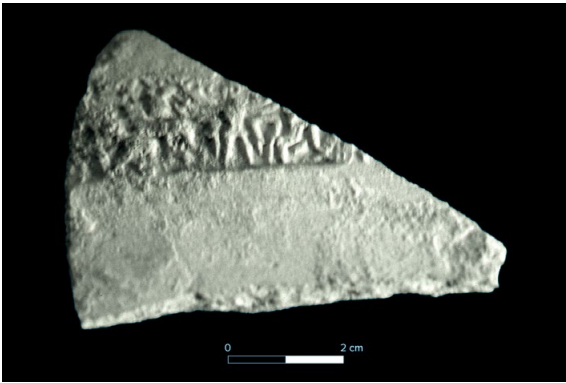


Figure 13. Tilvez Höyük, 1998 Season, Operation 1, locus 103, impression of a cylinder seal in Ebla royal palace style

Figura 13. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1998, corte 1, locus 103, impresión de un sello cilindro con estilo del palacio real de Ebla

Mazzoni, 1999: 611), although a lower date for its end has been proposed, c. 2250 BC (Reade, 2001: 12). At that time, the site of Ab(a)rum, likely to have been situated not far from Tilbes, is referred to in the Ebla documents and also known from later texts. It belonged to the northernmost parts of the realms of the Ebla kings (Astour, 1988: 154, map).

The find of a storage-jar fragment bearing an impression of a cylinder seal in the Ebla royal palace style at Tilvez/Meteler bears out this association (Charvát and Gil Fuensanta, 2001: no. 3; parallels: Mazzoni, 1992: 25-26, 53, 103-104 and 241, pl. IV, XI, XXXIII, dating to Syrian EB IVA; Matthews, 1997: 136-137, 145, 171-173, 183 and 190, 118-120 and no. 180-238 and 491, date: 24th to 23rd century BC). It makes Tilvez a candidate for a “demesne holding” of the kings of Ebla (on Ebla-palace storage jars with impressions of figurative seals, Mazzoni, 1992: 25, 66). We know that such economic establishments, directed and managed

by officials bearing the lugal title (Pomponio, 1984; Archi, 1987: 40-42; 1993: 467), formed an integral part of the royal holdings of Eblaite kings (Astour, 1988: 148; Mazzoni, 1999: 614-615; on storage jars and their use at Ebla, Archi, 1999: 152-157) (figure 13a-b).

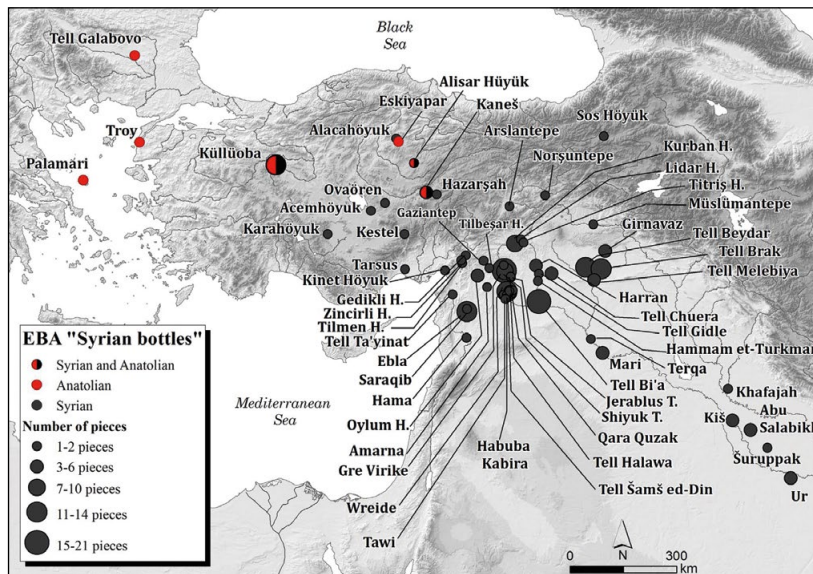
In the same place as the aforementioned cylindrical seal impression described, there were associated caliciform culture small goblets from the late Early Bronze Age IVA, as a Syrian bottle (Massa, 2016: 231-232, 491 fig. 7.45; Massa and Palmisano, 2018: 75-76 fig. 8; Alp, 2018: 75 fig. 3), closer to examples from Tell Chuera (Kühne, 1976: fig. 72) or Ur (Kühne 1976: fig. C9) than the Anatolian vessels (Alp, 2018: 73, table 1) (figure 14a-d).

This specimen resembles the Type 1 described and associated with EME 4/EJZ3 (Sconzo, 2014: 224), according to the chronology in use by ARCANE (Early Mesopotamian and Early Jezireh), and which matches what is proposed here for the period of employ of Tilvez Höyük. We emphasize that the appearance of these bottles in a similar context of Shyukh Tahtani that was interpreted as a storage room or “perfume room” (Sconzo, 2014: 221, note 31). In that case we would be facing a type of dispersion in these places on the northern left bank of Birecik, at the beginning of the second half of the 3rd millennium BC.

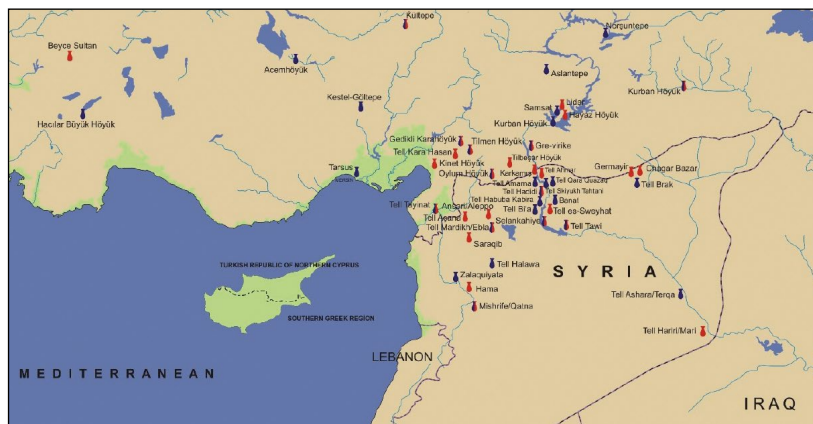
We do not know how long the Ebla rule lasted over Tilvez Höyük and its area, but we think that at least two generations were served by three viziers, Arrulum, Ibrium and his son, Ibbi-Zikir. There is an apparent participation of Ibrium in the campaign over the Abarsal area, and subsequent “passage to the orbit of Ebla” by it and the last years of Arrulum’s period of influence occurred. After this, there was a “hiatus” in Tilvez Höyük. On the other hand, the seal of Tilvez Höyük would be inscribed by its style in the Royal Palace G of Ebla (2400-2350 BC), possibly during the period in office of Ibrium, which could be inscribed in EB IVA.

10. Conclusions

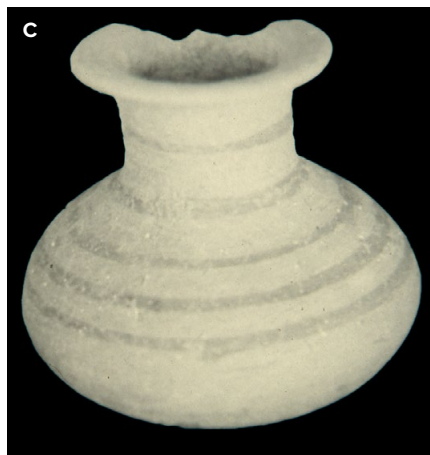
At the present time, we cannot specify that there was an intermediate or transition phase between EB III and EB IVA in these deposits north of the



A



B



C



D

Figure 14. A. Syrian and Anatolian bottles during the EBA (Massa and Palmisano, 2018: 76 fig. 8). B. Syrian bottles, distribution map. Blue: pointed and oval bases. Red: flat and ring bases (Alp, 2018: 75 fig. 3). C. Tilvez Höyük, 1998 Season, Operation 1, locus 115, Syrian bottle, EB IVA. D. Varieties in the EBA "Syrian" bottles from Upper Mesopotamia and Anatolia: a. Tell Chuera. b. Ur. c. Alişar Höyük. d. Kültepe. e. Galabovo. f. Troy. g. Mari. h. Küllioba. i. Troy. j. Küçükhöyük. k. Demircihöyük-Sarıket. l. Tell Amarna. m. Küllioba. n. Eskişar. o. Acemhöyük. p. Tell Chuera. q. Kinet Höyük. r. Troy. s. Küllioba (Massa, 2016: 491 fig. 7.45)

Figura 14. A. Botellas sirias y anatólicas del Bronce Antiguo (Massa y Palmisano, 2018: 76 fig. 8). B. Botellas sirias, mapa de distribución. En azul: con bases apuntadas u ovales. En rojo: bases planas o anilladas (Alp, 2018: 75 fig. 3). C. Tilvez Höyük, campaña de 1998, corte 1, locus 115, botella siria. D. Variabilidad de las botellas "sirias" del Bronce Antiguo en la Alta Mesopotamia y Anatolia: a. Tell Chuera. b. Ur. c. Alişar Höyük. d. Kültepe. e. Galabovo. f. Troy. g. Mari. h. Küllioba. i. Troy. j. Küçükhöyük. k. Demircihöyük-Sarıket. l. Tell Amarna. m. Küllioba. n. Eskişar. o. Acemhöyük. p. Tell Chuera. q. Kinet Höyük. r. Troy. s. Küllioba (Massa, 2016: 491 fig. 7.45)

Birecik Valley. There are two moments of disruption in the north of the Birecik subregion in the Mid-Late EBA. One of them at the end of the EB III, which is specified in the ritual closure of the burned sanctuary of Tilbes Höyük (Gil Fuensanta, Mederos and Muminov, 2019: 58-61 fig. 7a-b), and which does not offer human remains of killed people in the conflagration. And what if it corresponds to a subsequent development and change of orientation in buildings both in Tilvez/Meteler and in Tilbes? Perhaps the ritual burning of the EB III sanctuary at the end of 25 century BC is due to the apparition on Tilbes of a more centralized religion connected with the political sphere of the kingdom of Ebla. Ceramics in the “goblet” Ebla tradition, were abundant in Tilbes EB IVA, and they give a clue in this regard, in addition to the disappearance of the religious element of the “fertility horn” so abundant in Tilbes Höyük, at least since the EB Ib. However, the idea of fertile rebirth is maintained in Tilbes Höyük, and in the burials of unborn infants of EB IVA-IVB and MB I-II, in the area near the ancient sanctuary. This period could correspond with an increase in the population of Surtepe-Tilvez Höyük/Meteler. It could be linked to the presence of Ebla in the political-administrative scheme of the area, with the advent of the Palazzo G of Ebla (Mardikh IIB1).

However, a second “conflagration” (disruption?) period, which we place in local EB IVA, coincides with the destruction in Tilvez/Meteler. On the floor of an EB IVA building, the remains, skull and long bones, of a (male?) individual who suffered from some pathology that caused bodily deformities were found scattered; however, such person was likely cruelly beaten and had bled to death (García Millán, pers. comm.). We know such fate thanks to the remains analyzed at LaFUAM (UAM Forensic Laboratory). And that we date during the Palazzo G of Ebla therefore, thus it happens sometime circa 2300 BC (and after 2350 BC). We put this in relation to similar events that occurred not only in Ebla, but also with those of the nearby Titriş Höyük, upriver in the Bozova subregion (Urfa), where the human remains of part of the population are also desecrated, as well as Hammam et Turkmann, and

other sites. Can we see the hand of Sargon or Naram Sin of Akkad in the events that led to the destruction of the EB IVA levels in Tilvez Höyük?

However, this period does not represent a population hiatus in Tilbes Höyük during the EBA IVB, although it does involve reorganization of some buildings, but not abandonment of others. Neither Surtepe nor Tilvez seem to have dealt with EB IVB in this period. Perhaps Tilbes Höyük persistence in use is connected with a ritual function. There are elements of administration in Tilbes Höyük, but those are more “spectacular” (in the sense of linked to an administrative center) and continued in their different periods of occupation at Surtepe. The area of the left bank north of the modern city of Birecik is very rich in agricultural resources, as well as a natural passage, through the narrowness of the Euphrates just where the höyük of Tilbes rised. It would explain the increase in population in certain periods coinciding with the historical stages of greatest urban expansion, which also coincide with cycles of important external centralizing powers.

The aggressive beating of an inhabitant of Tilvez/Meteler during the EB IVA, together with the large appearance of burials from the EB IV period in its vicinity, as well as the use of the bastions in the northern sector of Surtepe in the EB IV, based on monumentality and defense, reveals great hostility menacing these two places, which does not match the apparent ritual (and peaceful) character of the Early Bronze occupation in Tilbes Höyük, supported by the absence of violence or destruction there.

According to a few scholars, the Middle Euphrates acted as a dividing line between the different ceramic cultures or political spheres during the second half of the 3rd millennium (Mazzoni, 1985a) and the places located on the left bank belong to a culture with an eastern orientation (Mazzoni, 1985b).

The case of the northern left bank on the Birecik valley is similar to that of Titriş Höyük where there were two likely and different ethnic groups; at the Birecik Valley, perhaps lived populations of the North Mesopotamian type, but apparently not related to each other. The Birecik area is characterized as a meeting point of Euphrates and Anatolian cultural traditions during the second half of the 3rd millennium. At

first one could think of such presence due to commercial exchange, but the occurrence of two different burial forms reveal the possible existence of both populations with diverse cultural traditions in the area.

The possibility of different ethnic groups in the northern Birecik area during the period is revealed, judging by differences in burial types (Cooper, 2007). Grave shafts are widespread in the Middle Turkish Euphrates area, not only geographically but also temporally. We suggest the similar case of Lidar Höyük (Hauptmann, 1983). It has been suggested that they were Anatolian or “Hurrian” populations due to the north orientation of cist tombs (Cooper, 2007: 67; Carter and Parker, 1995: 113) and a Semitic ascription to the grave shaft users is thought, quite abundant and in prevail on the Euphrates Valley during the EB IV (Cooper, 2007: 67). This applies to a Semitic interpretation of place names in the area.

Also, a few suggestions, derived after the ceramic technology, about the presence of two ceramic cultures on these sites. Archaeometric analyzes carried out during 1996–1997 in the Archaeometry laboratory of the University of Alicante support this thesis of a close relationship, due to the importation of some ceramics from the northwestern vicinity of Syria, so the area of the kingdom of Ebla (Seva Roman, pers. comm.), and which contrasts with the evidence coming from the later phases of the IVB, or the same Anatolian-type chaff faced ceramics of the period that were made locally (Seva Roman, pers. comm.).

The previous division of ceramic zones, during the period, according to the right and left banks of the Euphrates, based on political spheres (Mazzoni, 1985b) or on different ethnicities or tribes (Carter and Parker, 1995), may not be incompatible with the function specific to settlements — due to a certain temporal distinction in the domain or political influence over the valley —, and is consistent with the data from the places north of the Birecik valley that are part of the Tilbes project. The ceramic types present on Tilbes do not correspond to those of Tilvez or Surtepe due to the different functions of each site. They also serve as a temporal and ethnic marker. The extensive occupation in terms of time of Tilbes is due to some ritual and multiethnic function that freed it from socio-political events

that destroyed or represented a hiatus of occupation at some point during the EB IV for other sites of the Birecik valley, presumably the phase EB IVB, which appears absent on those (Surtepe and Tilvez). On the other hand, the higher elevation, like a castle, of Tilbes Höyük, saved the site of the floods at the EB IVB, because the drastic periodic rise in the water level of the Euphrates, which also explains the lack of fossilization in the materials from those contexts at this site.

The interstate treaty between Ebla and Abarum/Abarsal may indicate the political and economic situation of Tilbes up to about the first half of the 23rd century BC (Astour, 1988: 147–148). Abarsal has to open her harbor to Ebla, put at her disposal means of riverine transport (boats), provide Eblaean messengers and officers with food, and remain loyal to the sovereign kingdom. Abarsal also has to give shelter to the traveling merchants of Ebla. Its residents were also obliged to pay taxes, notably one ox and one ram along with one mina and two shekels of silver annually (figure 15a).

For our colleague Petr Charvát, this phase of Tilbes Höyük as a possible part of the realms of Ebla or as component of a local polity whose centers were tributary ended with the extinction of the administrative functions of the Syrian capital, conquered and devastated by the invading army of Sargon, 2324–2285 BC (Sallaberger and Schrakamp, 2015: 302 table 10.1), 2360–2290 BC (Matthiae and Marchetti, 2013: 460; Boneti and Bonechi, 2020: 39), before Naram Sin (Archi and Biga, 2003: 30; Edwards, 2019: 135), Naram Sin of Agade (Frayne, 1993: 132–135, E2.1.4.24: 136, E2.1.4.27, and 166–167, E2.1.4.2005) or some later ruler. Research also argues for a terminal date of the earlier Ebla kingdom at around 2250 BC (Matthiae, 1980: 53–54; Mazzoni 1999: 608–611; Reade, 2001: 12–13; Archi and Biga, 2003: 12).

The authors of this study see such above exposed evidence to consider a presumed location of the ancient kingdom of Abarum/Abarsal on the left bank of the Birecik valley, Middle Turkish Euphrates. At that time, the site of Ab(a)rum, likely to have been situated not far from Tilbes, is referred to in the Ebla documents and also known from later texts. It belonged to the northernmost parts of the realms

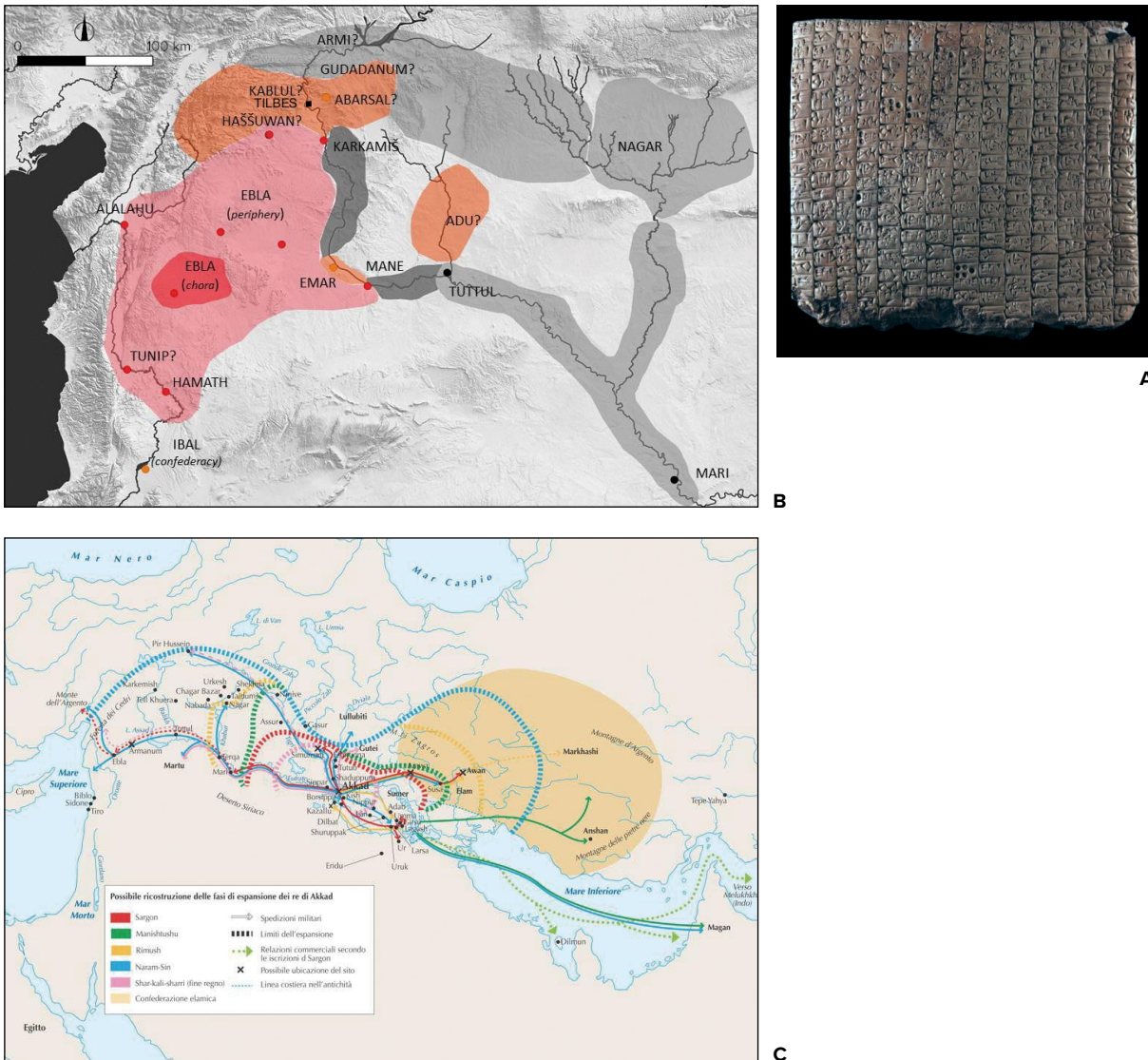


Figure 15. A. The treaty of Ebla with Abarsal, TM.75.G.2420=ARET XIII 5, Archive L.2769, Ebla Royal Palace G. B. The kingdom of Ebla during the reign of Išar-damu and Ibrum as first vizier. Orange-shaded areas, allied states. Grey-shaded areas, independent or hostile polities (Edwards, 2019: 313 fig. 17). C. Phases of expansion of the Akkad Empire (Milano, 2012)

Figura 15. A. El tratado de Ebla con Abarsal, TM.75.G.2420=ARET XIII 5, Archivo L.2769, Palacio Real G de Ebla. B. El reino de Ebla durante el reinado de Išar-damu e Ibrum como primer vizir. En naranja, estados aliados. En gris, regiones independientes o enemigas (Edwards, 2019: 313 fig. 17). C. Fases de expansión del Imperio de Akkad (Milano, 2012)

of the Ebla kings (Astour, 1988: 154, map). The find of a storage-jar fragment bearing an impression of a cylinder seal in the Ebla-palace style at Tilvez/Meteler bears out this association (Charvát and Gil Fuensanta, 2001: no. 3). The seal of Tilvez Höyük would be inscribed by its style in the Royal Palace G of Ebla (2400-2350 BC), possibly during the vizier Ibrum in the reign of Išar-damu, which could be inscribed in EB IVA. We know that such

economic establishments, directed and managed by officials bearing the lugal title (Pomponio, 1984; Archi, 1987: 40-42; Archi, 1993: 467), formed an integral part of the royal holdings of Eblaite kings (Astour, 1988: 148; Mazzoni, 1999: 614-615). The seal-impressed vessels functioned as emblems of the state, used to transport goods headed to Ebla (Mazzoni, 1992 and 2003; Matthews, 1996; Flander, 2000; *contra*, Graff, 2012) (figure 15b).

The texts always speak of “external violence” when they do not give the impression of moderate violence and we tend to believe that the attacks came from outside, according to written sources. At Tilvez Höyük there seems to be a gap in settlement after EB IVA and that is, just somewhere around 2250 BC when Naram Sin’s or another king’s troops conquered Ebla (Gil Fuensanta, Charvát and Bucak, 2001: 4). The extinction of the colonial center no doubt had repercussions in its former domain as well, the northernmost parts of the realms of the Ebla kings, on the left bank of the Birecik valley, Middle Turkish Euphrates (figure 15c).

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