

**A MIDDLE BRONZE I RITUAL DEPOSIT FROM THE 'AMUQ PLAIN:
NOTE ON THE DATING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE METAL
ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURINES FROM TELL JUDAIDAH**

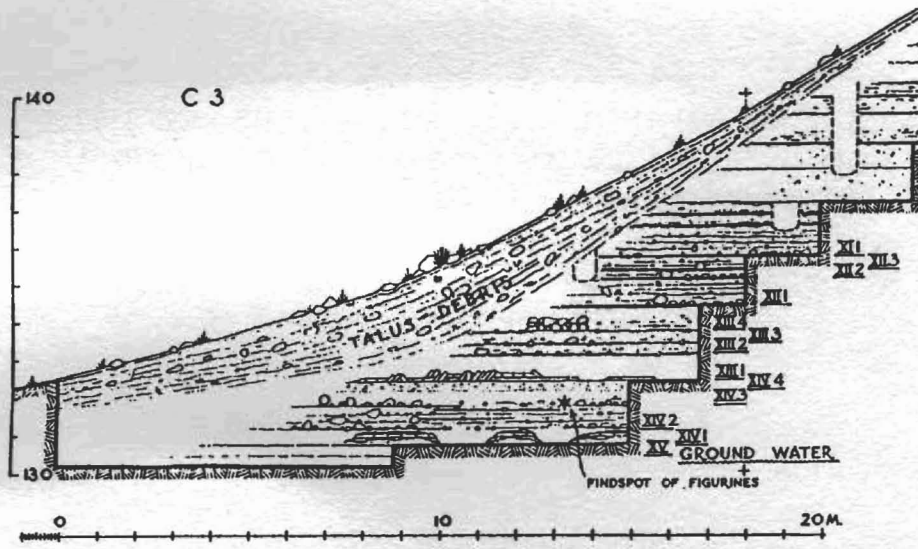
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1. INTRODUCTION

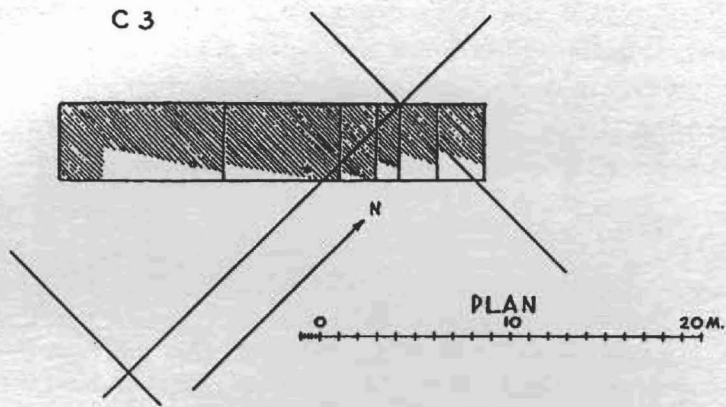
One of the most important results of the excavations of the Syro-Hittite Expedition in the thirties at Tell Judaidah, in the plain of the Lower Orontes River, was the recovery in 1935 of a long stratigraphical sequence in the sondage JK3 and in part also in the step trench TT20, which, together with more limited sequences from Chatal Hüyük and Tell Ta'ynat, furnished the basis for the study of the Early Bronze Age cultural phases in the 'Amuq Valley.¹ Thus, only limited criticism has been made on it, also because of the lack for many years of comparable sequences in Northern Inner Syria.

An outstanding find from Tell Judaidah was represented by a cache of bronze figurines which were attributed by the excavators to the fill overlying

¹ The high publication standard set in the final report on the remains until the end of the Early Bronze Age, where the Braidwoods proposed a periodization which in its basic lines is still valid for Northern Inner Syria after fifty years from the end of the excavations, made such a report a reference work. R.J. Braidwood - L.S. Braidwood, *Excavations in the Plain of Antioch I. The Earlier Assemblages. Phases A-J* (OIP 61), Chicago 1960. The periodization of Tell Judaidah, for which see R.C. Haines, *Excavations in the Plain of Antioch II. The Structural Remains of the Later Phases. Chatal Hüyük, Tell al-Judaidah, and Tell Ta'ynat* (OIP 95), Chicago 1971, p. 1-2, is as following for the periods relevant to the present paper: Judaidah XII-IX correspond to 'Amuq Periods G-J, Early Bronze I-IVB (ca. 3000-2000 B.C.), Judaidah VIII to 'Amuq Period K, Middle Bronze I (ca. 2000-1800 B.C.) and Judaidah VII to 'Amuq Period L, Middle Bronze II (ca. 1800-1600 B.C.).



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Fig. 1. Step trench TT20 at Tell Judaidah (Braidwood - Braidwood, OIP 61, fig. 5);
1) Lower part of the north-western section; 2) Plan of the lower part (note the
star marking the real findspot of the figurines)

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floor XIV3 in trench TT20 (Fig. 1),² dating from Early Bronze I, 'Amuq Period G (ca. 3000-2800 B.C.). However, similar figurines are completely foreign to the cultural horizon of the Early Bronze I in Syria.³ As it will be attempted to show here, several iconographical and technical details of the figurines indicate a much later dating for them. Doubts about the high dating have been already expressed by some scholars, but never demonstrated in any detail.⁴

Recently, a regional project has been restarted by the Oriental Institute in the 'Amuq Valley, having as one of the main goals the study of metallurgical activities:⁵ while modern analyses are being carried out on artifacts from old and renewed excavations, the dating of these figurines has been reasserted to 'Amuq Period G,⁶ a dating also accepted by several

² Braidwood - Braidwood, OIP 61, p. 262, 296.

³ In Northern Inner Syria such period is termed Early Bronze I-II; see S. Mazzoni, *The Early Bronze Age Pottery Tradition in North-Western Central Syria*: M. al-Maqdissi - V. Matoian - C. Nicolle (eds.), *La céramique de l'âge du Bronze en Syrie, un point sur la question*, Damas in press. For a synthesis of the cultural relations in the Syro-Mesopotamian area during Early Bronze I, see N. Marchetti, *Cronologia relativa e significato delle culture del Bronzo Antico I in Alta Mesopotamia, Siria e Anatolia*: CMAO, VII (1997), p. 237-285.

⁴ O. Negbi, *Dating Some Groups of Canaanite Bronze Figurines*: PEQ, 100 (1968), p. 55, note 95; ead., *Canaanite Gods in Metal. An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines*, Tel Aviv 1976, p. 15, 67, 120 (proposing 'Amuq Periods I or J); H. Seeden, *The Standing Armed Figurines in the Levant* (Prähistorische Bronzefunde I.1), München 1980, p. 8, pl. 139 (proposing 'Amuq Periods H, I or J); P.R.S. Moorey - S. Fleming, *Problems in the Study of Anthropomorphic Metal Statuary from Syro-Palestine before 330 B.C. (with a Check-list and Analyses of Examples in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)*: "Levant", 16 (1984), p. 68 (proposing an attribution in general to the Early Bronze Age); A. Spycket, *La statuaire du Proche-Orient ancien* (Handbuch der Orientalistik 7.1.2B2), Leiden-Köln 1981, p. 283-285 (proposing the XX-XIX centuries); see also N. Marchetti: CMAO, VII (1997), note 194 for some preliminary considerations on the chronology of the Judaidah figurines.

⁵ K.A. Yener - T.J. Wilkinson - S. Branting - E.S. Friedman - J.D. Lyon - C.D. Reichel, *The Oriental Institute Amuq Valley Projects, 1995*: "Anatolica", 22 (1996), p. 55-57; K.A. Yener, *Amuq Plain/Hatay Survey*: AJA, 101 (1997), p. 234-235.

⁶ Yener et alii: "Anatolica", 22 (1996), p. 55, note 8; K.A. Yener, *Between the Tigris-Euphrates and the Mediterranean Sea: Excavations and Survey in the Plain of Antioch: The Oriental Institute Amuq Valley Regional Projects, Turkey*: P. Matthiae (ed.), *Acts of the 1st International Congress on the*

authorities in the field.⁷

2. THE STRATIGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE METAL FIGURINES FROM JUDAIDAH

A first consideration concerns the nature of the findspot: since the figurines were found together, they seem to represent a sort of deposit or hoard, possibly contained in a sack,⁸ rather than belonging to the fill of XIV3. In this case, it is reasonable to assume that such deposit was laid in a pit dug from above stratum XIV3. An examination of the stratigraphy⁹ makes it possible to surmise that, apart from the layer of debris XIV4 (dated from 'Amuq Period H, Early Bronze III), the presumable pit could have been dug from one of the overlying strata (Fig. 1: 1).¹⁰ Steps XIII-X and their various floors were all attributed to the Second Mixed Range ('Amuq Periods I-J, Early Bronze IVA-B), because of the scarcely representative pottery samples.¹¹ Richard Haines, in his

Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Rome 18th-23rd May 1998, Rome in press.

⁷ J. Mellaart, *The Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages in the Near East and Anatolia*, Beirut 1966, p. 62-63, fig. 24; M. Frangipane, *Early Developments of Metallurgy in the Near East: M. Liverani - A. Palmieri - R. Peroni (eds.), Studi di paleontologia in onore di Salvatore M. Puglisi*, Roma 1985, p. 224, fig. 6.1.

⁸ Braidwood - Braidwood, OIP 61, p. 305 speak of traces of cloth on some of the figurines, which may either belong to a sack or to garments worn by them.

⁹ See Braidwood - Braidwood, OIP 61, fig. 5 for the section of TT20 (the perspective view of fig. 6 is too schematic to be of use here); the star indicating the position of the figurines is placed in the section just for ease of reference, since the cache was found in the middle of the trench and not near or in the section (see Fig. 1: 2): this would make the hypothesis of the presence of an unrecorded pit, advanced below, possible.

¹⁰ In such case, the pit was not recognized during the excavations; Seeden, *Figurines*, p. 8, note 28, cites evidence (which however cannot be checked in any way) concerning the unreliable registration method used for the context of the figurines. In fact, the tunneling excavation method suspected by Seeden is excluded by the pictures taken during the excavation of TT20 (Braidwood - Braidwood, OIP 61, pls. 3-4A).

¹¹ See Braidwood - Braidwood, OIP 61, p. 5, 10, and the catalogue at p. 571-593; floor XIII2 probably dates from 'Amuq Period I, Early Bronze IVA (*ibid.*, p. 396).

discussion of the architecture of the later periods, excluded trench TT20 not only because it yielded no significant structural remains, but also because it is stratigraphically unreliable.¹² In the published section there are pits up to 2,5 m deep: if the pit of the figurines was of similar depth, it could have been dug from a step XII layer. An alternative solution is that, since the occupational strata are cut to the south-east by the erosion slope, the pit was dug directly starting from the ancient slope (later covered by washed materials): in this case it would not be necessary to find for the pit an associated floor. However it may be, no conclusion of any certainty can be gained from the examination of the stratigraphical evidence.

3. TYPOLOGY, CHARACTERISTICS AND TECHNIQUE OF THE FIGURINES

Six figurines were retrieved in the cache (Fig. 2), three male (denominated A-C) and three female (denominated D-F), all naked (with sexual attributes illustrated in detail and with a deep vertical groove on the back) and with a squared sprue under their feet for insertion in a base; male figurines are proportionately larger than the female ones.¹³ The females hold their crossed arms to the breasts and have an elaborate hairstyle, represented by a notched band holding flat hair with horizontal grooves, flaring towards the bottom in figurines D-E or folded upwards on F. The bearded male figurines only wear a conical cap and a large belt (figurines B and C also have a torque around the neck), while their forearms are bent upwards to hold weapons, a spear and a mace. The belts of B and C are simple and present only the buckle in the middle, while that of figurine A also has a linear design. Notwithstanding these slight differences, from the iconographical point of view only two main types are present, one male and one female. However, if style is considered, it is evident that male figurines B and C and females D and E are products of the same workshop, as the flat rendering of the body and of the facial features show. Figurines A and F constitute a distinct pair, because of their smaller dimensions, in addition to stylistic (rounded modelling and detailed execution of the eyes) and technical peculiarities (the sprue is perpendicular and not parallel to the feet).

¹² Haines, OIP 95, p. 26, note 3.

¹³ Braidwood - Braidwood, OIP 61, p. 300-313, figs. 240-245, pls. 56-64; Seeden, *Figurines*, p. 7-10, pls. 1-2.3-3A; Negbi, *Gods*, p. 15, 67, 120, 148 nos. 71-73, p. 180 nos. 1550-1552, pls. 10, 40, 61.

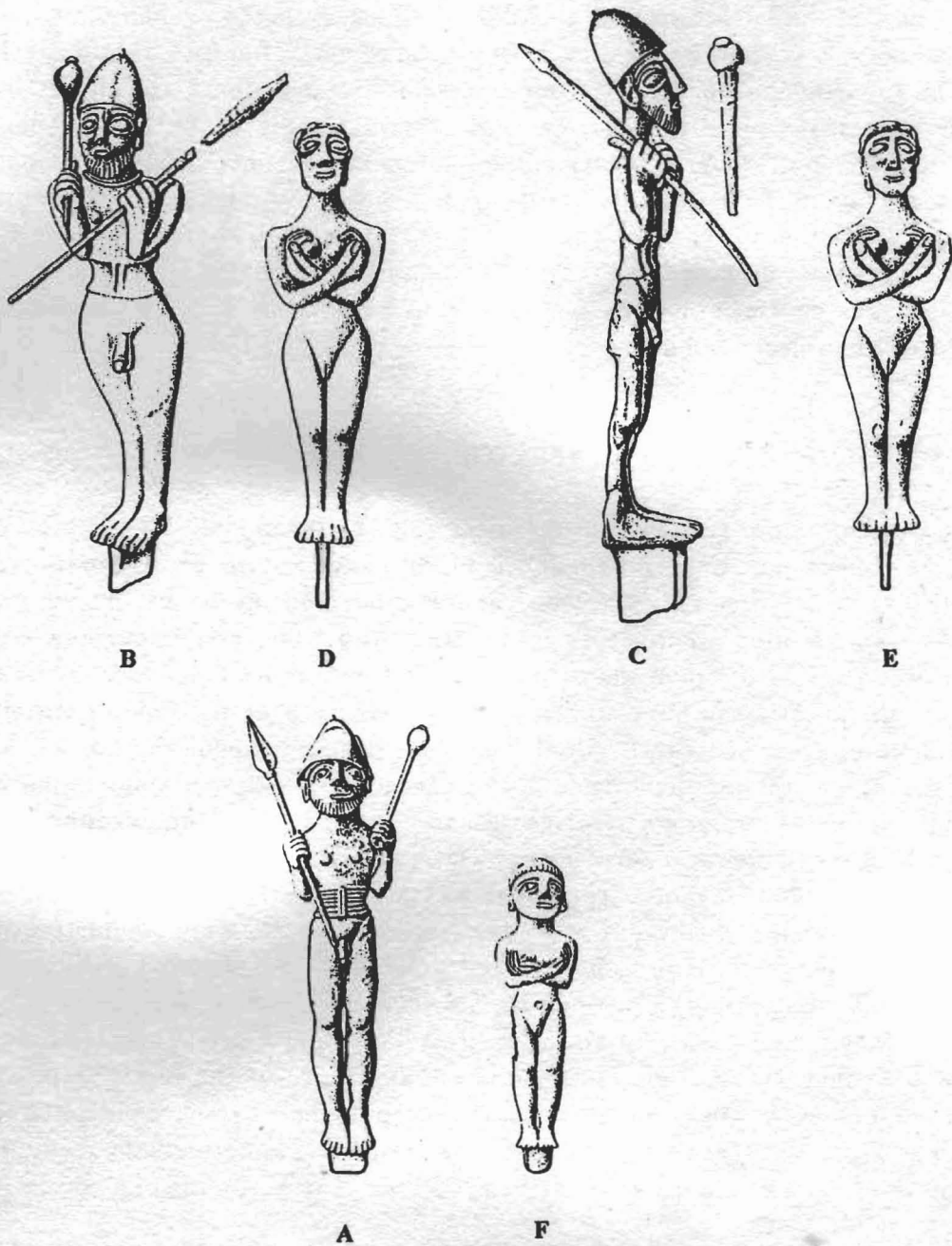


Fig. 2. The bronze figurines from Tell Judaidah (scale 1:3); A) Seeden, *Figurines*, pl. 2.3; B) *ibid.*, pl. 1.1; C) *ibid.*, pl. 1.2; D) *ibid.*, pl. 1.2A; E) *ibid.*, pl. 1.1A; F) *ibid.*, pl. 2.3A

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From the technical point of view the Judaidah figurines are made of tin bronze, which, although reported for other 'Amuq G artifacts on the basis of spectrographic analyses conducted in the fourties,¹⁴ seems foreign to the technological horizon of Syria at such an early date, as the Early Bronze I materials from Hassek Hüyük indicate.¹⁵ Further, there is no evidence in Syria during this period for the lost-wax technique in which the figurines were cast.¹⁶ In Mesopotamia, which at the time possessed a more advanced technological background, tin bronze and the lost-wax technique began to be well attested to since the Early Dynastic I-II Periods (ca. 2900-2600 B.C.),¹⁷ so slightly later than the beginning of 'Amuq G. On the other hand, the great majority of the Middle Bronze Age standing metal figurines from Syria and the Levant are made with the lost-wax technique, having the tangs under their feet for insertion in a base.¹⁸

4. STANDING METAL FIGURINES FROM THE LEVANT AND MESOPOTAMIA AND OTHER ICONOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS

The closest comparisons with the Judaidah figurines are with the bronze standing figurines from the Levant, which are dated, at the earliest, from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. The best example is the so-called Lebanese Mountain figures,¹⁹ mostly coming from the antiquity market and of

¹⁴ Braidwood - Braidwood, OIP 61, p. 38 and p. 298-299, 314-315, fig. 239; Yener *et alii*: "Anatolica", 22 (1996), p. 55-57 (also citing crucible ascribed to Period G, in which were recovered traces of tin); Yener: AJA, 101 (1997), p. 234.

¹⁵ In fact, metal objects from Hassek contain no tin: see S. Schmitt-Strecker - F. Begemann - E. Pernicka, *Untersuchungen zur Metallurgie der Späten Uruk- und Frühen Bronzezeit am Oberen Euphrat - Résumé*: R.B. Wartke (ed.), *Handwerk und Technologie im Alten Orient. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Technik im Altertum. Internationale Tagung Berlin 12.-15. März 1991*, Mainz 1994, p. 97-98.

¹⁶ In general, for the techniques and the percentages of attestations of arsenic and tin bronzes during the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, see Frangipane: *Studi di paletnologia*, p. 216-220, figs. 1-4.

¹⁷ P.R.S. Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries. The Archaeological Evidence*, Oxford 1994, p. 253, 298 and 271.

¹⁸ Seeden, *Figurines*, pls. 3-27.

¹⁹ Seeden, *Figurines*, p. 10-15, pls. A-C, 3-9; in the excellent study of Helga Seeden the date attributed to the Jezzin figures (and hence to the Lebanese

which only the Jezzin group (Fig. 3: 1-2) has few associated materials.²⁰ These consist of pins and a torque²¹ of types which date from Middle Bronze IA (ca. 2000-1900 B.C.) at Ugarit and Byblos.²² Male figurines in this group share with the Judaidah ones the posture and naturalistic modelling, in addition to some traits like the beards and the belts, although the long hair on the back and the kilt are different. On the other hand North Syrian figurines, probably dating from Middle Bronze I (ca. 2000-1800 B.C.), mostly belong to the same naked type with belt of Judaidah, though they are stylistically much more schematical.²³ The figurines of these two groups, the Lebanese Mountain figures and the North Syrian ones, were often found in couples, a male and a smaller female, and, in the second group, even represented as such in the same figurine. In the Lebanese group the majority of the ten females seem dressed, while they are mostly naked in the North Syrian figurines; though the Jezzin females never have their arms crossed as in the case of the specimens from Judaidah, some of them have one hand holding the opposite breast and the other arm on the abdomen, which can be considered a variant of the Judaidah posture, although in a few cases the crossed arms to the breasts are actually

Mountain group) is ca. 2000 B.C. (in *Figurines*, pl. 139 they are however apparently dated to the end of the third millennium B.C.), while that of the North Syrian ones is "very end of the third or the beginning of the second millennium B.C." (*ibid.*, p. 15). As it will be argued here, they all belong to a coherent cultural horizon, namely the first half of the Middle Bronze Age.

²⁰ H. Seyrig, *Antiquités syriennes 54. Statuettes trouvées dans les montagnes du Liban: "Syria"*, 30 (1953), p. 24-50, pls. IX-XI for the Jezzin pieces and other figurines from Lebanon.

²¹ Seyrig: "Syria", 30 (1953), p. 38, 50, pl. XII.1-3; Seeden, *Figurines*, pl. 5.

²² C. Schaeffer, *Ugaritica II. Nouvelles études relatives aux découvertes de Ras Shamra* (Mission de Ras Shamra V), Paris 1949, p. 49-55, figs. 18-19, 22-23, "Ugarit Moyen 1"; Id., *Stratigraphie comparée et chronologie de l'Asie Occidentale (III^e et II^e millénaire). Syrie, Palestine, Asie Mineure, Chypre, Perse et Caucase*, Oxford 1948, pls. V: L, VIII: K, M, XII-XIII, XV, XVI-XVII, figs. 58-59, 66-67; for Byblos, see, e.g., the discussion of the Montet Jar (O. Tufnell - W. Ward, *Relations between Byblos, Egypt and Mesopotamia at the End of the Third Millennium B.C. A Study of the Montet Jar: "Syria"*, 43 [1966], p. 208-210, 217-220, figs. 8, 10), where however the dating adopted is too high (see note 38 below). In general, see H. Klein, *Untersuchung zur Typologie bronzezeitlicher Nadeln in Mesopotamien und Syrien* (Schriften zur Vorderasiatischen Archäologie 4), Saarbrücken 1992, p. 93-96, Typ 1.10A1a, pl. 104.

²³ Seeden, *Figurines*, p. 15-23, pls. A, 10-14.

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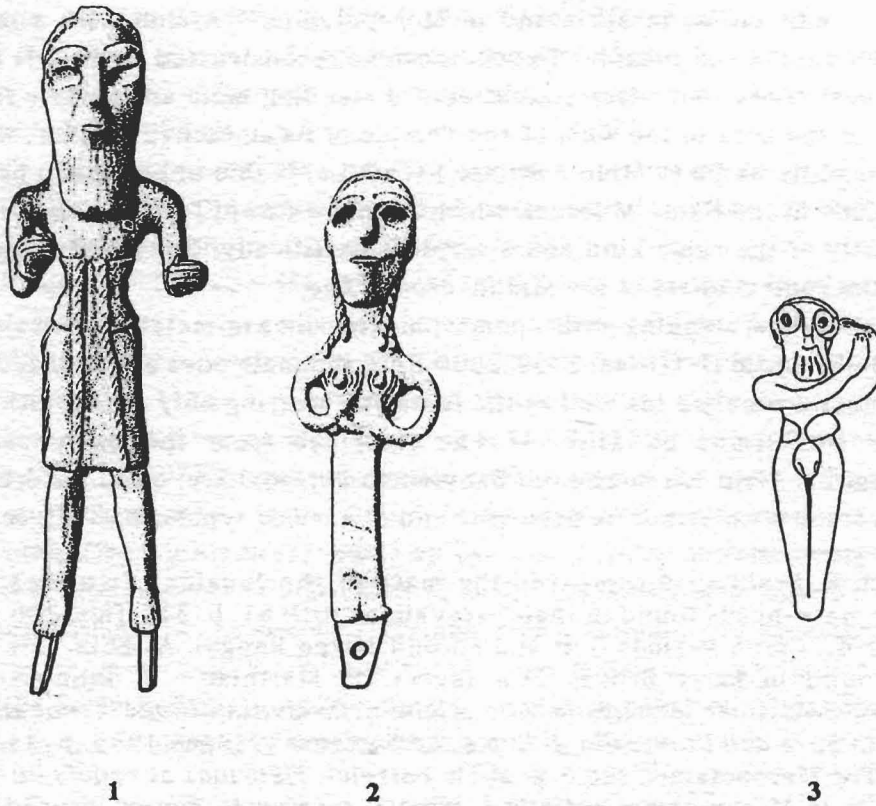


Fig. 3. Two copper figurines from Jezzin and a clay figurine from Selimiyah (scale 1:3); 1) Seeden, *Figurines*, pl. 6.11; 2) *ibid.*, pl. 6.10A; 3) Louvre AO12983, drawing by Simona Pellegrini

attested to.²⁴

The mace with pear-shaped head of the Judaidah specimens seems an archaic feature, since it is not frequently attested to after the end of the third

²⁴ For the first variant see Seyrig: "Syria", 30 (1953), p. 42, pls. X: 1, 3, XI: 4 and Seeden, *Figurines*, pls. 6: 11A (from Jezzin), 7: 14A; Negbi, *Gods*, p. 70, no. 1553, fig. 86 and no. 1563, pl. 42, p. 78-79, no. 1594, fig. 91 and no. 1598, fig. 92, the latter two from Byblos; see also M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos. Tome II. 1933-1938* (Études et documents d'archéologie III), Paris 1950-1958, pl. LXIII.9469 from the Middle Bronze II deposit η in the *Champ des Offrandes* at Byblos. For the second variant, with crossed arms, see Negbi, *Gods*, p. 74, no. 1571, fig. 89, from Byblos and p. 70, no. 1561, pl. 41.

millennium B.C., either in Syria and in Mesopotamia.²⁵ A club with a mace-head of the kind of the Judaidah figurines can be reconstructed in the left hand of the largest of the two silver statuettes of a standing male and female found at Ugarit, in the area to the west of the Temple of Ba'al, cached in a jar, which Schaeffer rightly dated to Middle Bronze I (Tav. I,a).²⁶ One unpublished bronze male figurine in the Hama Museum, which is naked except for the belt, holds a mace exactly of the same kind and a scepter. Stylistically, this figurine can be dated to the central phase of the Middle Bronze Age.²⁷

In Mesopotamia, standing anthropomorphic figurines in metal are attested to since Early Dynastic II-III (ca. 2750-2300 B.C.); the male ones are bearded and most of them are naked (as well as the females), wearing only a belt, although they can sometimes be kilted.²⁸ The figurines from the early second millennium B.C. (Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian Periods) are, quite differently, always dressed with elaborate garments and of various typologies.²⁹ In central

²⁵ In fact, R. Braidwood compared the mace of the Judaidah figurines with actual mace-heads found in their excavations (OIP 61, p. 313, figs. 250, 295, 377: 3-4, 'Amuq Periods G, H and Second Mixed Range). At Ebla, this type was found in Early Bronze IVA layers (P. Matthiae - F. Pinnock - G. Scandone Matthiae [eds.], *Ebla. Alle origini della civiltà urbana. Trent'anni di scavi in Siria dell'Università di Roma "La Sapienza"*, Milano 1995, p. 343, no. 138). For Mesopotamia, see e. g. M.Th. Barrelet, *Figurines et reliefs en terre cuite de la Mésopotamie antique I. Potiers, termes de métier, procédés de fabrication et production* (BAH LXXXV), Paris 1968, pl. XIII.143-145 for some Ur III clay plaques from Tello showing gods holding maces; see also J. Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs* (BaF 4), Mainz 1982, figs. 21b-c, 63a, 89a for Akkadian and Lagash II stone reliefs where such a mace-head is depicted; D. Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals II. Akkadian - Post Akkadian - Ur III Periods*, London 1982, p. 34, type a, for some Akkadian mace-heads of this kind.

²⁶ Schaeffer, *Ugaritica II*, p. 71-80, fig. 31, pls. XVII-XIX; Seeden, *Figurines*, p. 21-22, pl. 18. Negbi, *Gods*, p. 11, 63, 121, 147, 177, figs. 16, 124, 135. Seeden prefers a date towards the end of the Early Bronze Age, but Negbi supports Schaeffer's arguments.

²⁷ I wish to thank Abd er-Razak Zaqqouq, Director of the Hama Museum, for having kindly shown this figurine to me.

²⁸ E. Braun-Holzinger, *Figurliche Bronzen aus Mesopotamien* (Prähistorische Bronzefunde I.4), München 1984, pls. 5: 33-35, 6: 37-39, 41-42, 7: 44, 8: 43, 10: 50, 11: 51-52, 12: 53, 14: 58-60.

²⁹ Braun-Holzinger, *Prähistorische Bronzefunde I.4*, p. 43-54, pls. 34-39. A. Moortgat, *Die Kunst des Alten Mesopotamiens. Die klassische Kunst Vorderasiens*, Köln 1967, p. 94, pl. 218 observes the similarity between the

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Anatolia, the tombs of Alaca Hüyük, Horoztepe, Hasanoğlan yielded standing metal figurines of naked females from the end of the third millennium B.C., which, however, represent a group with limited contacts with Syro-Mesopotamian productions.³⁰

Some other iconographic comparisons may be drawn from choroplastic productions. In the Old Syrian Period standing male figurines are well attested to in the Archaic phase, corresponding to Middle Bronze I: a characteristic Middle Bronze IB type (ca. 1900-1800 B.C.) corresponds precisely to the Judaidah figurines, being bearded and naked except for the belt closed on the front;³¹ the only difference is that it holds a small four-legged animal or a vessel (Fig. 3: 3), and not weapons (actually, the only kind of weapon represented in Old Syrian clay figurines is the duckbill axe, only attested to in seated figurines).³² Generally speaking, spears are not apt to be represented in clay figurines modelled in the round. In a few moulded plaques from Mari the king, identified by his dress, holds an axe and a spear, thus showing that this iconographic type was still attested to at the beginning of Middle Bronze II.³³ The headdresses of the female figurines from Judaidah, and especially that of fig. 2: F, seem archaic, since they recall those of female clay figurines either from the Early Bronze IV, particularly from Harran and Tell Selenkahiyah, but also from the beginning of Middle Bronze I from Mari.³⁴

gold plated face of the kneeling statue from Larsa, representing the king, and contemporary gilded metal figurines from the Levant.

³⁰ B. Kulaçoğlu, *Gods and Goddesses. Museum of Anatolian Civilizations*, Ankara 1992, nos. 97-104, p. 83-90, 189-190.

³¹ N. Marchetti, *La coroplastica di Ebla nell'Età del Bronzo Medio. Studio cronologico e tipologico delle produzioni fittili paleosiriane nella Siria interna* (Materiali e Studi Archeologici di Ebla V), Roma in press, § 2.3.2.3 and chap. III, *passim*; L. Badre, *Les figurines anthropomorphes en terre cuite à l'âge du Bronze en Syrie* (BAH CIII), Paris 1980, pl. X: 1-2, from Selimiyah, near Hama. In Mesopotamia nude male clay figurines are rare, one of the few close comparison for this iconography coming from Tello: Barrelet, BAH LXXXV, pl. XVIII.187.

³² Badre, BAH CIII, pls. VI: 113 (from Hama), X: 8 (from Selimiyah), XVI: 67, 69-70.

³³ Badre, BAH CIII, p. 282, pl. XXIX.70-71.

³⁴ See Badre, BAH CIII, pls. XXXV.4 from Harran, XLII.62-63, 69-72 from Selenkahiyah, XXVI.12-14, XXVII.15-19 from Mari. The Early Bronze IV of the Euphrates corresponds to the Early Bronze IVB of Northern Inner Syria.

5. RITUAL DEPOSITS OF THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE FROM THE LEVANT

The increase in metallurgical activities at the end of the third millennium B.C. can also be deduced by the discovery of several hoards in Northern Mesopotamia.³⁵ However, leaving out of consideration the chronological diversities, the nature of these hoards is very different from the cache of Judaïdah, which represents an intentional and meaningful deposit. In order to understand its purpose, it is necessary to review briefly the evidence from contemporary sites of the Levant.

The ritual burying of metal figurines is well attested to in the Middle Bronze Age sacred areas of the Levant.³⁶ The coastal urban center of Byblos is by far the site where such practice is best documented. The offerings were buried in special jars or sacks within temple buildings or, more rarely, in adjacent courtyards and consisted mostly of metal male figurines (ca. 1700 specimens in total)³⁷ and bronze weapons, but also of tools and ornaments (Tav. 1,b). They were found in the *Enceinte Sacrée*,³⁸ in the *Champ des Offrandes*,³⁹ in the *Bâtiment II*, which is the temple of the Lady of Byblos,⁴⁰ and in the Temple of

³⁵ For a discussion of the evidence, see N. Marchetti, *L'aquila Anzu: nota su alcuni amuleti mesopotamici*: VO, X (1996), p. 105-109, note 9.

³⁶ A general discussion of the evidence is presented in N. Marchetti - L. Nigro, *Cultic Activities in the Sacred Area of Ishtar at Ebla during the Old Syrian Period: the Favissae F.5237 and F.5238*: JCS, in press, § 4; Eid., *The Favissa F.5238 in the Sacred Area of Ishtar and the Transition from the Middle Bronze I to the Middle Bronze II at Ebla: Actes de la 42^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, K.U. Leuven, 3-7 juillet 1995* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta), Leuven in press, § 4. See also Negbi, *Gods*, p. 120-132, 141-142 for a list of some of the main deposits.

³⁷ Some female figurines were however also present and they were probably often part of couples; for a catalogue of the Byblos figurines see Seeden, *Figurines*, p. 36-39 and p. 39-91, pls. F-J, 28-93.

³⁸ Four deposits of the jar type belong to phases 4-5 of the area: M. Saghieh, *Byblos in the Third Millennium B.C. A Reconstruction of the Stratigraphy and a Study of the Cultural Connections*, Warminster 1983, p. 35, 39, fig. 11; see Dunand, *Byblos II*, p. 616-619, nos. 13600-13657 and nos. 13664-13725, p. 724-726, nos. 14750-14758 and nos. 14759-14763, pls. LXXXI and LXXXII.2.

³⁹ The twenty-three deposits (α-σ) were all, but five, placed inside jars (Dunand, *Byblos II*, p. 271-272, pls. LIII-LXXX).

⁴⁰ Four jar deposits were found under the floor of the southern *cella*, see P. Montet, *Byblos et l'Égypte. Quatre campagnes des fouilles à Gebeil 1921-1922-1923-1924* (BAH XI), Paris 1928-1929, p. 111-125, nos. 394-609, pls. LX-

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the Obelisks, which contained the richest deposits.⁴¹ All these deposits, mostly dating between Middle Bronze IA and IIA, do not seem to have an economic significance, but rather be offerings of individuals in relation to the standardized rites performed in the various sacred areas.⁴²

At Nahariya on the northern coast of Palestine, a sacred complex comprised of a shrine and a platform was discovered. Offerings of pottery and food, ornaments, tools and metal female figurines were found scattered in the courtyard.⁴³ The rites performed are comparable with the communal rites in open spaces attested to at Ebla (for which see note 36 above), but also with those of Byblos (in fact, at Nahariya some figurines were not dispersed but

LXXI (Montet Jar, "a"), M. Dunand, *Fouilles de Byblos. Tome I. 1926-1932* (BAH XXIV), Paris 1937-1939, p. 145-156, nos. 2285-2308, 2309-2321, 2132-2284 ("b-d"). Deposit "a" dates from Middle Bronze IA (see also Schaeffer, *Stratigraphie*, p. 57-60, pl. XVIII), while the date of "b-d" seems between the middle of the XIX and the middle of the XVIII century, Middle Bronze IB-IIA (J.N. Tubb, *The MB IIA Period in Palestine: Its Relationship with Syria and Its Origin: "Levant"*, 15 [1983], p. 49-50). Another two deposits were retrieved in a nearby brick structure, see Dunand, *Byblos I*, p. 83-84, 137-141, nos. 2000-2063, 2064-2070, pls. LVII-LXIII.

⁴¹ See Dunand, *Byblos II*, p. 272-273, 480-481, 640-641, 644-652, 693-948, nos. 14433-14501 (a), 14560-14607 (e), 14840-15120 (b), 15121-15567 (f), 15835-15846, 15889-15978 (c), 15979-16185 (d), 16186-16192, 16694-16748 (g), 17261-17272, 17691-17762 (h), pls. XCVI-CXL. U. Finkbeiner, *Untersuchungen zur Stratigraphie des Obeliskentempels in Byblos. Versuch einer methodischen Auswertung*: BaM, 12 (1981), p. 65-67 has ascribed deposits "a" and "h" to the earlier building phases (corresponding to Middle Bronze IA); according to Dunand (*Byblos II*, p. 953-954), deposit "f" would be older than the others.

⁴² Negbi and Moskowitz (*The "Foundation Deposits" or "Offering Deposits" of Byblos*: BASOR, 184 [1966], p. 23) think that they represent the temple treasury. Because of the great number of metal objects, some of which unfinished, other scholars suppose that they were offerings of metal artisans (Schaeffer, *Stratigraphie*, p. 61; Dunand, *Byblos II*, p. 394 speaks of gilds).

⁴³ M. Dothan, *The Excavations at Nahariya. Preliminary Report (Seasons 1954/55)*: IEJ, 6 (1956), p. 15-23, figs. 1, 3-5, pls. 3-5; I. Ben-Dor, *A Middle Bronze-Age Temple at Nahariya*: QDAP, 14 (1950), p. 1-41. The temple has various phases, but the main bulk of materials dates from Middle Bronze II-III (ca. 1800-1550 B.C.; see also M. Dothan, *Sanctuaries along the Coast of Canaan in the MB Period: Nahariya*: A. Biran [ed.], *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times. Proceedings of the Colloquium in Honor of the Centennial of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Jerusalem, 14-16 March 1977*, Jerusalem 1981, p. 75-76).

cached in two buried jugs). At Megiddo several important changes took place during the Middle Bronze Age in the layout of the sacred area BB through strata XIII A-XI, but the general scheme of temple and altar was maintained until stratum X when the "tower-temple" was built. In strata XII-XI, offerings of types similar to the sites cited above, including metal female figurines, were placed in rooms of the precinct, while in strata X-IX they were placed around the temple.⁴⁴

As it has already been stated (§ 4), some sets of figurines can be closely compared to the Judaidah specimens, also because many of them formed couples, with the male standing figurine larger than the female one.⁴⁵ However, apart from the Byblos specimens and the couple cached in a jar near the sacred area of the Acropolis at Ugarit, for almost all of them an archaeological context is lacking. The Jezzin lot is reported to have been found in a cave of the Lebanese mountains, while another couple was found in a lake near Homs.⁴⁶

6. THE DATING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIGURINES FROM TELL JUDAIDAH

Summing up the elements discussed thus far, while in Mesopotamia standing naked metal figurines are attested to already in the second quarter of the third millennium B.C., in Syria they seem to appear only since the very beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, when they are fully comparable to the Judaidah specimens, both for iconography and for technique, representing a coherent and original regional production. No elements, neither stratigraphical, stylistical nor technical, support a date for the Judaidah figurines from the third millennium B.C.: these most probably belong to the first half of Middle Bronze

⁴⁴ C. Epstein, *An Interpretation of the Megiddo Sacred Area During Middle Bronze II*: IEJ, 15 (1965), p. 210-213; A. Kempinski, *Megiddo. A City-State and Royal Centre in North Israel* (Materialien zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie 40), München 1989, p. 45-46, 58-59, plans 2-5 and p. 178-181, fig. 47; G. Loud, *Megiddo II. Seasons of 1935-1939* (OIP 62), Chicago 1948, pls. 233-234. Strata XIII A-XII date from Middle Bronze I (ca. 2000-1800 B.C.) and span the transition to the Middle Bronze II (ca. 1800-1650 B.C.), strata XI-X date from Middle Bronze II-III (ca. 1800-1550 B.C.).

⁴⁵ See Negbi, *Gods*, p. 106-112 about couples of metal figurines.

⁴⁶ Seeden, *Figurines*, p. 25, nos. 76-77S, pl. 19; 76-77S. See Seyrig: "Syria", 30 (1953), p. 47-48 for some general considerations about the figurines from the mountains of Lebanon.

IA (ca. 2000-1900 B.C.), being closely related to the Lebanese and North-Syrian groups. Although it is necessary to have more materials from controlled archaeological excavations and although figurines are not homogeneously distributed through time and space, it seems that, within the unitary cultural framework of the Syro-Palestinian area during the Middle Bronze Age, there were at least two main regions of production, which accounts for the different iconographies and distributive patterns within contexts, namely North Syria (with the North Syrian and Orontes groups) and the Levantine Coast (with the various specimens from Byblos and Nahariya). The origins of these traditions are documented by the specimens dating from the very beginning of the Middle Bronze Age coming from Tell Judaidah, Ugarit and the Lebanese Mountains.

The Judaidah figurines are usually interpreted as deities,⁴⁷ following an established interpretative pattern for this class of materials,⁴⁸ although it must be stated that no clearcut evidence supports this interpretation at such an early period for the figurines examined above. Paolo Matthiae has acutely observed the merging of divine and human features in Old Syrian statuary, either in stone and in metal, in relation to the Old Syrian cult of royal ancestors.⁴⁹ It cannot be excluded that metal standing figurines also present an additional meaning hinting at such sphere.⁵⁰ The practice of ritual deposits in jars or in *favissae* in the Levant seems related to offerings of individuals within a communal rite, most often in association with fertility cults and,

⁴⁷ For such hypothesis, see e. g. Braidwood - Braidwood, OIP 61, p. 517; Mellaart, *Ages*, p. 62-63.

⁴⁸ The two main treatments of the subject basically adopt the same view: Negbi, *Gods, passim*; Seeden, *Figurines*, p. 148-155. See also Seyrig: "Syria", 30 (1953), p. 42-43.

⁴⁹ P. Matthiae, *A Class of Old Syrian Bronze Statuettes and the Sanctuary B2 at Ebla*: P. Matthiae - M.N. Van Loon - H. Weiss (eds.), *Resurrecting the Past. A Joint Tribute to Adnan Bounni* (Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul 67), Istanbul-Leiden 1990, p. 346-348.

⁵⁰ For this perspective see also Moorey - Fleming: "Levant", 16 (1984), p. 78-80; although a too simple description of urban vs. rural cults is criticized (*ibid.*, p. 80-81), the importance of the retrieval contexts for any interpretation is rightly stressed (*ibid.*, p. 76-77). However, these scholars also see (*ibid.*, p. 77-78) a cultural contrast between the coastal and the inner regions of the Levant (metal male figurines in sanctuaries vs. clay female figurines in houses), which in fact does not seem to have existed in these terms, at least for the Middle Bronze Age.

generally speaking, to open spaces within the sacred areas. The existing evidence seems to support the hypothesis that the burying of metal standing couples took place also outside sacred areas and indeed outside the urban centers. The two Judaidah pairs would hint not only at the divine couple giving wealth to the land, represented by the Weather-God and the Fertility Goddess, but also, at a different level, at the deceased king and a symbolic figure connected with the cult of the Goddess, which were both probably felt as an essential part of the correct relationship with the divine world.