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Volume 2

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## Foreword to the 10<sup>th</sup> ICAANE Proceedings

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The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East was held from 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2016 in Vienna, hosted and organized by the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology (OREA) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. More than 800 participants from 38 different countries found their way to Vienna to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ICAANE with a wide range of 8 scientific sections, 28 workshops and round tables, a huge poster exhibition and a special section about ‘Cultural Heritage under Threat’.

The topics in focus of this ICAANE covered traditional, as well as new fields, in relation to state-of-the-art approaches and methodologies. The general themes of transformation and migration, cultural landscapes, religion and rituals, environmental shifts, contextualized images, as well as economies and societies, are currently promising fields in archaeology and these proceedings give new insights into former Near Eastern societies. These general questions are obviously challenging topics in present times, too, a fact that is leading us archaeologists into a dialectic discourse of past and present social phenomena. This additional impact within our scientific community and beyond is underlining the ongoing fascination and power of Near Eastern archaeology. The first volume includes papers of the sections ‘Transformation and Migration’, ‘Archaeology of Religion and Ritual’, ‘Images in Context’ as well as ‘Islamic Archaeology’. The second volume is dedicated to the sections ‘Prehistoric and Historical Landscapes and Settlement Patterns’, ‘Economy and Society’, and is completed by ‘Excavation Reports and Summaries’. A number of presented posters are integrated in the theme relevant chapters too. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the editors of these sections, namely Teresa Bürge, Mattia Guidetti, Felix Höflmayer, Marta Luciani, Vera Müller, Markus Ritter, Roderick Salisbury and Christoph Schwall.

Altogether 28 workshops focussing on special research questions and themes demonstrated the ongoing dynamic and new inputs in Near Eastern archaeology. The engaged discussions of internationally high-ranked experts with young scholars was essential for the success and open atmosphere of the 10<sup>th</sup> ICAANE in Vienna. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the workshop organisers, who are also acting as editors for the separate workshop volumes, published as internationally peer-reviewed books in the OREA series of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, of which some are already in print, accepted or in preparation at the moment. The conference was delighted to have two keynotes given by Mehmet Özdoğan and Timothy Harrison; both pointed to the current political conflicts and related massive destruction of cultural heritage from different perspectives. In facing the current conflicts and continuing damage of cultural monuments in regions of the Near East, we are confronted with situations going far beyond the usual scientific challenges. Although we have to observe highly frustrating ongoing destructions and can hardly influence the general political situation, the archaeological

community is responsible for supporting, re-evaluating and advancing ongoing essential strategies in digital preservation of the cultural heritage and other current activities in that field.

Therefore, we decided to organize a Special Section within the 10<sup>th</sup> ICAANE about *Cultural Heritage under Threat*, where well-known experts and political authorities discussed the current challenges and future perspectives in a very fruitful and open atmosphere.

This special section was organized with the great support of Harald Stranzl, the Austrian Ambassador at UNESCO for the Austrian Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs. The discussions and contributions were accomplished by signing the ‘Vienna Statement’ (s. below) by a total of 34 authorities for antiquities in Near Eastern countries, European institutions and stakeholders. My sincere thanks are expressed to Karin Bartl and her engagement in organizing this special section.

The 10<sup>th</sup> ICAANE aside its impact on international archaeology, can additionally be seen as a powerful boost for the archaeological endeavours in Austria and for our local scientific community, not at least visible in the fruitful cooperation of several archaeological institutions acting committedly in our Local Organising Committee: the Historical-Cultural Faculty and the Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies (University of Vienna), the Egyptian and Near Eastern Collection of the Kunsthistorische Museum, the Austrian Archaeological Institute, members of the Austrian Academy of Sciences as well as the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology. My sincere thanks go to Manfred Bietak, Vera Müller, Hermann Hunger, Bert Fregner, Regina Hölzl, Claudia Theune-Vogt, Michael Doneus, Markus Ritter, Christiana Köhler, Marta Luciani, Sabine Ladstätter, Karin Kopetzky and Angela Schwab for their engagement in the local committee and making this conference real. I extend sincere thanks for financial support to several Austrian and international institutions, which are The Austrian Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, the University of Vienna, the City of Vienna, the Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF), the Institute for Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP), the Austrian Orient Society/Hammer Purgstall Society and the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

The OREA institute took over the honourable duty hosting this conference with lots of effort and energy, all our institutes’ members, students and scientists were involved in some parts and the OREA team together was making this conference running. Particular thanks and recognition also go to Angela Schwab, Ulrike Schuh and Christine de Vree. Finally, I thank the ICAANE Scientific Committee and the Harrassowitz Publishing House.

Prof. Dr. Barbara Horejs

Director of the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology  
Austrian Academy of Sciences

**PREHISTORIC AND HISTORICAL  
LANDSCAPES & SETTLEMENT PATTERNS**

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**edited by R. Salisbury**



# The Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project: Preliminary Results from the Analysis of the Second Millennium BC Pottery

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*Costanza Coppini*<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The ‘Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project’ covers a vast survey area in northern Iraqi Kurdistan, thus broadening and integrating data concerning settlement pattern and dynamics, and material culture that are known from adjacent regions, i.e. north-eastern Syria and south-eastern Turkey. In this frame, the ceramic material from the archaeological survey offers information and new hints concerning the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC occupation of the area, focusing on the Middle and Late Bronze Age ceramic material, illustrating 1) the main diagnostic types in each period, and 2) their distribution in the settlements, with the final aim of pinpointing morphological characteristics of the Middle and Late Bronze Age ceramic assemblages from the region.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, archaeological research in Iraqi Kurdistan has resumed, and a new flourishing of field research has been witnessed since 2012 (Kopanias *et al.* 2015; Nováček 2008; van Ess *et al.* 2012). The northern part of Iraqi Kurdistan, which administratively corresponds to the governorates of Dohuk and Erbil is the field of operation of four research projects – the Erbil Plain Archaeological Project (EPAS), the Upper Greater Zab Archaeological Reconnaissance (UGZAR), the Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project (LoNAP), and the Eastern Habur Archaeological Project (EHAS).<sup>2</sup> Together, these constitute the Assyrian Landscape Research Group. Among them, the LoNAP area (Fig. 1) is situated in the governorates of Ninawa and Dohuk, and territorially delimited by the plain of Dohuk and the Zagros foothills to the north, by the Jebel Maqloub, bordered by the Tigris Valley to the west and by the River al-Khazir valley and the Bardarash region to the east (Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015: 11). The project has been led since 2012 by Prof. Daniele Morandi Bonacossi (Italian Archaeological Mission to Assyria, University of Udine) and is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach to settlement patterns, land use, and material culture, and based on a regional archaeological surface survey combined with an open-area archaeological excavation and the geoarchaeological and bioar-

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2 They are respectively directed by: Jason Ur (Harvard University), Rafal Koliński (University of Poznan), Daniele Morandi Bonacossi (University of Udine), and Peter Pfälzner (University of Tübingen).

chaeological study of the paleo-environment (Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015: 11–12; Gavagnin *et al.* 2016).

The survey area covers approximately 3000km<sup>2</sup> and is investigated following two methodologies; a systematic analysis and interpretation of cartographic sources and aerial and satellite imagery, followed by extensive and intensive surface survey (Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015: 13). With the support of these methods, the number of identified sites amounts to more than 830, among which 440 are defined as habitation sites (Morandi Bonacossi, in press), classified on the base of various parameters (Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015: 14). The general aim of the project is to understand the formation and transformation of the natural and cultural landscape of northern Mesopotamia (Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015: 11), in a diachronic perspective, i.e. from prehistoric times to the Islamic period. Part of this general aim is the study of the region's material culture, especially focusing on pottery, which is used as a means of dating and to estimate the size of each site and the pattern of occupation (Casana and Wilkinson 2005: 26; Stein and Wattenmaker 2003: 362). The methodology used in the LoNAP pottery studies consists of collecting diagnostic sherds (rims, bases, decorated body sherds) in all sites, whose surface has been previously subdivided into collection areas (Gavagnin *et al.* 2016: 119). The collected sherds are then processed at the expedition house (washing and numbering), and are chronologically determined to date the occupation of each settlement. This is the most important step, since it provides the relative distribution of each period in each settlement and the distribution of each period within the LoNAP survey area. The chronological determination of each sherd is accomplished with the aid of two main 'tools': 1) the Working Ceramic Typology, originally developed by for the Tell al-Hawa survey (Ball *et al.* 1989) and further developed by Wilkinson and Tucker (1995) and Ur (2010); 2) if shapes are unknown from the Ceramic Working Typology, comparisons are sought among ceramic material from other sites in neighbouring regions. The use of the Ceramic Working Typology is shared with the other projects of the Assyrian Landscape Research Group, allowing for a unified method that will enable a standardization of pottery classification and facilitate comparisons between each project's results (Gavagnin *et al.* 2016: 121; Pfälzner and Sconzo 2015: 108). Within LoNAP, we refer to Northern Jazira and Syrian Jazira, and the Upper Tigris Valley. A further step in pottery processing is the description of pottery physical and morphological attributes, i.e. fabric, surface colour, metric measurements, and vessel shape. These attributes are determined using the LoNAP pottery database and with the support of the Ceramic Working Typology concerning morphological attributes (Gavagnin *et al.* 2016: 122).

Analyses of the LoNAP ceramic sherd assemblage (Fig. 2) have indicated that the most represented period is the Islamic era (3645 sherds), followed by the Neo-Assyrian period (2958 sherds). The less represented periods are the prehistoric periods (Early Pottery Neolithic to Northern Ubaid, 860 sherds) and the Late Chalcolithic (1256 sherds). The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC are well-represented (respectively 2012 and 4727 sherds). This last period, the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, is the focus of the present paper. The ceramic material dated to this period have been collected during two survey



campaigns (2012 and 2013) and the excavation of one small test-trench in Gir-e Gomel during the 2013 campaign. The entire pottery assemblage has been reviewed during the 2015 study season by the author, while the pottery from the test-trench has been processed during the same study season by members of the LoNAP team. The material is here presented in a preliminary state, in anticipation of a more exhaustive and complete publication, with special attention to diagnostic 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium shapes and problematics involving both pottery and chronological determination.

When focusing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, it is necessary to specify that it is subdivided into two main phases, the Middle Bronze Age (hereafter MBA) and Late Bronze Age (LBA). These chronological determinations correspond in terms of political history to the rule of the Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia, the rule of the Lims at Mari, and the rule of the First Dynasty of Babylon. These three powers, linked to an Amorite component, alternated during the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1595 BC).<sup>3</sup> The subsequent period, the LBA, is characterized by the emergence of large territorial states, *i.e.* the Mitannian Kingdom and the Middle Assyrian state (15<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century BC). It is evident that the alternation of different political powers has not to be linked to the material culture *stricto sensu*, although we have exceptions concerning the LBA in Northern Mesopotamia. We refer in this regard to the Middle-Assyrian pottery, which is a material evidence of the presence of the Middle-Assyrian government (Postgate 2010: 21), tightly related to the finding of administrative texts, product of a Middle-Assyrian bureaucracy system (Duistermaat 2008: 411; Pfälzner 1995: 259; Postgate 2010: 27). In any case, we do not tend to associate pots with people, but we use in the terminological definitions that recall the alternation of the above mentioned political powers. Concerning pottery dating to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium, we define it as MBA pottery, with internal subdivision into MBA I, MBA IIA, and MBA IIB. Concerning the second part of the investigated period, we will use terms that are borrowed from the political history of the region, *i.e.* Mitannian – LBA I and Middle-Assyrian period – LBA II. The choice of this denomination for the second part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC is due to the nature of the historical facts in which the region under study was involved.

Although ceramic material from a surface survey is not adequate for detailed, fine chronology, it is unquestionable that it can give hints about a broader, ‘rough’ chronology. Therefore, we present here the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium material from the LoNAP surface survey and from the test-trench from Gir-e Gomel, although in a preliminary form, to give a chronological subdivision of ceramic material from the north-eastern part of Greater Mesopotamia, through comparisons with sites in the broader geographic area, and give a reference through the presentation of material from the excavation. A further important point that we are going to discuss is the issue about the identification of MBA and LBA pottery among surface survey material, which

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3 We decide to refer in this text to Middle Chronology dating, since we deal mostly with survey material and we do not have samples for absolute dating from the test-trench.

has been extensively debated (Wilkinson and Tucker 1995: 97–99). Lastly, we have more issues and indices about it also concerning material published in the frame of new survey projects (Pfälzner and Sconzo 2015: 113). Especially significant is the distinction among LBA ceramic material into the so-called Mitannian and Middle-Assyrian period. We will show that LBA ceramic assemblages can be undoubtedly distinguished as belonging to the Mitannian period ceramic tradition or to the Middle Assyrian ceramic tradition, although this point has remained unsolved from other survey publications.<sup>4</sup>

The whole corpus of the LoNAP 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium ceramic material from the surface survey consists of 4,727 sherds, while the material from Gir-e Gomel amounts to 1801 specimens. Among survey material, the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, subdivided into MBA and LBA, is represented by a total of 468 sites (Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015).

## 2. The Middle Bronze Age

According to the analysis conducted during the LoNAP surface survey (Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015: 24), the MBA landscape is characterized by a florescence of settlements, with the presence of small- and medium-sized sites. They are mostly located in the Navkur Plain, but other settlements are located along the Zagros Piedmont, close to water sources. MBA sites do not show a high settled surface and are mostly located along the Gomel River and east of the Al-Khazir River and another relevant cluster of MBA settlements is located in the area around the site of Jerahi-yeh, which is one of the major settlements in the LoNAP area. A cluster of sites occurs around Gir-e Gomel, which is the largest inhabited settlement in this period. The ceramic assemblage amounts to 2684 sherds, among which the so-called Khabur Ware dominates (Fig. 3). This typical MBA ware is characterized by a black, brown, or dark red painting on the vessel surface and it is typical of the MBA ceramic assemblages from the Khabur basin and the Sinjar region<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 3j). Khabur

4 “... The two periods are considered in tandem because they are almost impossible to differentiate in survey due to pervasive continuities in their most common ceramic types ...” (Algaze *et al.* 2012: 31); “... The continuity in common wares between the periods of Mitanni and Middle-Assyrian political control of the eastern basin render their distinction from surface materials problematic, despite recent advances in ceramic chronology ...” (Ur 2010: 161).

5 The origin, distribution and dating of the Khabur Ware has been long debated and remains so. The very first definition of this category of pottery as a proper ware was made by Max Mallowan (Mallowan 1937: 103). Recent studies concern an attempted reconstruction of its origins (Oguchi 2001) and distribution (Oguchi 1997), trying to understand if the area of largest distribution, i.e. the Khabur Triangle, coincides with the area of origin. Nevertheless, the problem appears to remain unsolved, since new evidence from above mentioned surveys and excavations in Northern Iraq prove a wide distribution of Khabur Ware.

Ware is thus easily-recognizable and offers a high degree of comparisons with specimens from sites in neighbouring regions. Among the LoNAP material, it is possible to isolate diagnostic shapes for this period, on the basis of their occurrence in the various MBA occupied settlements. Among open shapes, the most diagnostic type is the bowl with convex or carinated wall and painted strokes on the rim (Fig. 3a–b), which is a typical MBA IIB shape. It is corroborated by comparisons from the site of Tell Brak (Oates *et al.* 1997: fig. 190.210–214), all from Area HH, levels 8 to 5; Tell Barri (Baccelli and Manuelli 2008: pl. 2.3, 5, 10), from Area G.A–D 1–6, Phase II; Tell Leilan (Frane 1996: fig. 38.1). Among closed shapes, two types are very diagnostic: the large storage jars with painted decoration on the rim and on the upper part of the body (Fig. 3h–j), which can be paralleled to evidence from Tell Brak Area HH, levels 8 (Oates *et al.* 1997: fig. 202.481); Tell Leilan (Frane 1996: fig. 64.2). The second most attested closed shapes type is the jar with long neck, decorated with painted bands. This is a widely-spread type, spanning the entire MBA: this is shown by its occurrence at Tell Brak, Area HH, level 8 to 4 (Oates *et al.* 1997: fig. 193.303, 305, 310–312), Tell Barri, Phase II (Baccelli and Manuelli 2008: pl. 5.6–7), Tell Leilan (Frane 1996: figs. 83.1, 87.2; Pulhan 2000: fig. 15.2–3), Tell Rijim (Koliński 2000: pl. 25.A, B), Chagar Bazar (McMahon *et al.* 2009: pl. 48). A diagnostic type, important for chronological purposes, is the shouldered beaker (Fig. 3d–f), which can be typologically characterized by a short or a slightly longer neck, and is generally decorated with painted bands (Coppini 2012). Parallels are traced at Tell Brak, HH level 8 to 5 (Oates *et al.* 1997: fig. 195.350–356), Tell Barri Phase II (Baccelli and Manuelli 2008: pl. 4.14–16), Tell Leilan (Frane 1996: fig. 55.1–2; Pulhan 2000: fig. 3.3–4, fig. 4.1), Tell Rimah (Postgate *et al.* 1997: pl. 75), Tell Chagar Bazar (McMahon *et al.* 2009: pl. 46).

Another diagnostic ceramic cluster of the Middle Bronze Age is represented by Burnished Grey Ware (Fig. 4), characterized by a grey/greyish fabric with fine vegetal and mineral inclusions; its diagnostic shape is the carinated bowl with ridges on the upper parts of the walls (Fig. 4a–c, e). Grey Ware is widely expanded as well in the Khabur Basin and in Northern Iraq, as it shown by parallels found at Tell Brak, Area HH level 10 and 6 (Oates *et al.* 1997: fig. 179.176–178), Tell Leilan (Frane 1996: fig. 45), Tell Chagar Bazar (McMahon *et al.* 2009: pl. 29.13–16).

Once the Khabur Ware and Grey Ware are analysed, which are optimal ceramic fossil-guides for the period, it is necessary to pinpoint that there is a body of material that does not belong to the aforementioned ceramic categories, and that we call here Common Ware (Fig. 5). It is nevertheless possible to date and classify it as belonging to the MBA ceramic horizon, as isolated types have been identified as diagnostic for the MBA on the basis of comparison with stratified material. We refer to the following diagnostic types: among open shapes, a very distinctive diagnostic type is the shallow bowl with inward bevelled and thickened rim (Fig. 5a). This type is very distinctive in Northern Iraq, as shown by parallels from Tell al-Rimah (Postgate *et al.* 1997: pl. 47 and 48), Tell Rijim (Koliński 2000: pl. 19.c), and Kurd Qaburstan (Schwartz 2016: fig. 16.12). Others include bowls with convex

walls and outside thickened, squared rim (Fig. 5b), carinated bowls with sinuous carination (Fig. 5b; for comparisons, see Schwartz 2016: fig. 16.5), large storage jars with ridges on the upper part of the body (Fig. 5f), and channel bases (Fig. 5g–h).

### 3. The Late Bronze Age

While the MBA does not present problems in terms of unity of the period regarding chronological periodization of material culture, even if there are some nuances of changes in the ceramic material, the periodization of LBA is rather an issue. In fact, on the basis of pottery reconnaissance, we tend to divide this span of time into two distinct chronological periods, the Mitannian and Middle-Assyrian period.<sup>6</sup> This is despite previous assertions that “... the continuity in common wares between the periods of Mitanni and Middle-Assyrian political control of the eastern basin render their distinction from surface materials problematic, despite recent advances in ceramic chronology ...” (Ur 2010: 161). The aim of distinguishing the two ceramic traditions can be accomplished also thanks to the deeper knowledge and more exhaustive information that is now available from excavations and pottery studies. In fact, the Mitannian period is considered the most problematic phase of the LBA, in the ambit of survey material the “... most intriguing, albeit most elusive ...” (Ball *et al.* 2003: 15). It is intriguing indeed, but it should not be defined as elusive.

In terms of settlements pattern, during the first phase of the LBA, i.e. the Mitanni period, the inhabited sites in the LoNAP area amount to 122 settlements, thus witnessing a decrease compared to the MBA. They are sparsely distributed in the Navkur Plain, in an irregular pattern, very dispersed and located mainly along the Gomel River and the eastern part of the plain, east of the al-Khazir River. A relatively regular distribution pattern is attested at the Piedmont, where large sites like Jerahi-yeh and Gir Kerkh are located.

The ceramic assemblage for this period consists of 687 specimens. The problematic aspect of the reconnaissance of Mittani-period pottery mainly involves undecorated specimens, except for Burnished Grey Ware. Besides this difficulty concerning Mitannian pottery, there is the presence of ceramic wares and types that are undoubtedly dated to this period. We refer to Nuzi Ware, which occurs in the shapes of straight-side beakers, characterized by a geometric decoration (Fig. 6a, b); Red-Edged bowls, which occur in the shape of flat bowls with a red painted and burnished stripe on the rim (Fig. 7a, b); and Khabur Ware, which represents moreover a

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<sup>6</sup> This subdivision gets back to the historical periodization, made on the base of written and archaeological sources. Particularly concerning the Middle-Assyrian period, written sources are substantial, especially from important urban centres. For overview on them and a detailed analysis of the Assyrian provincial system, see Llop 2012.

*trait d'union* with the MBA ceramic horizon (Fig. 9a–d). Burnished Grey Ware follows the same carinated bowls as Common Ware (Fig. 10a, b), while Khabur Ware specimens can be differentiated for example through the shape of large storage jars (Fig. 9b) and straight-side beakers (Fig. 9c, d).

Turning to the problem of undecorated specimens, diagnostic types can be isolated using comparisons from stratified material. Among open shapes, carinated bowls with straight or vertical walls above the carination are the most commonly attested, and are characterized by a chaff-inclusions fabric and a carefully smoothed, or even burnished, surface (Fig. 8a–c, f): parallels are observed with Tell Brak HH level 3 (Oates *et al.* 1997: fig. 188.163), Tell Bderi Südhang level 3, Nordhang level 5 and 2b (Pfälzner 1995: Taf. 9.b; Taf. 10.a, b), Tell Barri, Area G stratum 23 (Coppini 2008b: fig. 3.f), Nemrik (Reiche 2014: pl. 2.9; pl. 3.1), Tell Rimah Level A2 (Postgate *et al.* 1997: pl. 33.96–98), and Kurd Qaburstan (Schwartz 2016: fig. 8.8). Among closed shapes, very indicative is the presence of large storage jars with outside-thickened squared rims, characterized by a chaff fabric (Fig. 8g and f). They are usually associated to the occurrence of the mentioned carinated bowls, and are attested at various sites: Tell Brak, HH level 2 (Oates *et al.* 1997: pl. 212.614–615); Tell Bderi, Nordhang level 4 (Pfälzner 1995: Taf. 28.a); Tell Barri (Coppini 2008a: fig. 6.c, d); Nemrik (Reiche 2014: pl. 10.3); Kurd Qaburstan (Schwartz 2016: fig. 8.14–15). Piecrust pot stands represent another important diagnostic type for the period (Fig. 8h–i). It must be stressed that piecrusts have also been found in Northern Iraq and in Iraqi Kurdistan in MBA-stratified contexts; however, based on findings from stratified contexts in the Upper Khabur basin and at other Northern-Iraqi sites, we decided to attribute them to the Mitannian period. Comparisons are known from Tell Brak HH level 2 (Oates *et al.* 1997: fig. 215.666–669), Nemrik (Reiche 2014: pl. 5.8–9), Tell Rimah (Postgate *et al.* 1997: pl. 94).

The ceramic horizon of the Mitanni period is then followed by a high standardization in the ceramic production during the Middle-Assyrian period, which can be traced and recognized even in surface survey material. The settlements increase to 314 sites – as already asserted by Morandi Bonacossi (2015), the number of settlements recognized in other survey projects shows the importance of our area for the establishment and development of the Assyrian territorial system.

The spectrum of shapes mirrors the well-known Middle-Assyrian diagnostic types (Fig. 11o): sharp-carinated standard bowls (Fig. 11a–c), standard bottles (Fig. 11d–e), large storage jars with squared rim (Fig. 11f–h), and nipple bases belonging to goblets (Fig. 11k–n). Similar ceramic assemblages can be found in important Middle-Assyrian settlements and seats of rulers, such as Tell Sheikh Hamad (Pfälzner 1995: Taf. 69 and 85), Tell Fekheriye (Bonatz *et al.* 2008: Abb. 19), Tell Barri (D'Agostino 2014: fig. 2), and Tell Sabi Abyad (Duistermaat 2008: fig. IV.16, 30, 39, 79), as witnessed by written sources that allow a reliable chronology of the period. It is important to pinpoint that the same Middle-Assyrian ceramic assemblage has been found at Qasr Shemamok (Masetti-Rouault and Calini 2016: figs. 8–9).

#### 4. The Gir-e Gomel ceramic assemblage

The 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium ceramic assemblage that occurs from the surface survey is mirrored by the assemblage found in the excavation of the test trench at Gir-e Gomel. The site lies in the Navkur Plain, on the left bank of the Gomel River, a tributary of the Al-Khazir River (Fig. 1). The site has been identified with the Assyrian Gammagara (Reade and Anderson 2013: 74) and the Gaugamela of the Alexander the Great battle (Fales and del Fabbro 2014: 78; Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015: 12), according to Sir Aurel Stein. The tell shows a consistent third and second millennium occupation, and probably more ancient periods, as witnessed by a white-stone stamp seal from the Ubaid period, now in the Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago (Morandi Bonacossi and Iamoni 2015: 12). The area of the artificial mound measures 16ha, but it is assumed that it must have been larger, since the western part of the tell has been eroded by the river and left place to an exposed 40m high section. Its size allows classification as the largest and probably the most important settlement in the Navkur Plain. The settled area consists of a lower city and a citadel. The LoNAP team carried out a test-trench in 2013 in Operation 2, in the middle of the River Gomel Basin, and in Operation 1, located in the lower city, on the western side of the hill, which will be discussed in the following part of this paper. The site provides evidence of long occupation spanning from the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium (as witnessed by a grave) to the Parthian period, and even to the Islamic time. The most attested period in the stratigraphic sequence at Gir-e Gomel is the Middle Bronze Age, while the Mitannian and Middle-Assyrian periods are attested at ca. 2–3%.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium stratigraphic sequence, traced in an area of  $8 \times 8\text{m}^2$ , is characterized by a series of deposits, with the presence of architectural features, and has been subdivided on the base of stratigraphic considerations into Phase VIII and Phase VII. In Phase VIII, which is dated to the MBA, barrel-vaulted graves are the most relevant feature. They are built with baked bricks and consist of one or two chambers. Their stratigraphic and architectural evaluation is difficult, due to their poor state of preservation and the erosion of this part of the tell. Despite this, it is possible to trace parallels for these structures. They represent a wide-spread grave type, which can be found in other MBA Northern-Mesopotamian sites such as those at Tell Barri (Valentini 2003), Tell Arbid (Koliński 2012: 542), Tell Mohammed Diy-ab (Bachelot and Castel 1992: 97–99), Tell Chagar Bazar (Mallowan 1937: 121–122, 127, fig. 8), and Assur (Hockmann 2010: 43, 89). The LBA sequence does not present evidence for architectural structures.

Concerning the MBA ceramic assemblage, it can be subdivided into Khabur Ware, Common Ware, and Grey Ware, while a very small percentage of Cooking Ware is attested as well. Common Ware is characterized by the presence of shallow bowls and carinated bowls with sinuous walls (Fig. 12c). The shallow bowl type is particularly relevant as a diagnostic type (Fig. 12a), as it is peculiar to the MBA II, as comparisons from the Tell Leilan Qarni-Lim palace (Pulhan 2000: fig. 20:3) and Tell al-Rimah (Postgate *et al.* 1997: pls. 47, 48) show. Shouldered beakers, with or



without necks, represent another important diagnostic type. Among them, particularly relevant are the types with ridges on the shoulder (Fig. 12f–g, k–m), which can be compared to specimens from Tell Chagar Bazar (McMahon *et al.* 2009: pl. 37), MBA II. From the grave inventory, the small Khabur Ware shouldered beakers (Fig. 12h–i) show similarities to specimens from Tell Arbid Area P (Koliński 2013: fig. 4). As already shown in the frame of survey material, Grey Ware occurs at Gir-e Gomel, and in considerable percentage. It is noteworthy that the fabric is much finer than on survey specimens, namely with finer vegetal and mineral inclusions, and the surface is very carefully burnished (Fig. 13a–c).

The Mitannian period ceramic assemblage does not differ from the survey assemblage, although here we find more Common Ware than Khabur or Grey Ware. In the shapes spectrum, we isolated bowls, characterized by high carination (Fig. 14a, b), and those with straight wall above the carination (Fig. 14c) as diagnostic shapes. They find comparisons with specimens from Tell Barri Area G, stratum 24 (Coppini 2008b: fig. 3e–g), dated to the LBA Ia; and Mitannian levels at Tell Bderi and Tell Brak. Grey (Fig. 14a, b) and Khabur Ware (Fig. 15a) still occur.

The Middle-Assyrian settlement on the tell is confirmed by the finding of standard, official Middle-Assyrian pottery, for example carinated bowls (Fig. 16a–d) and bottles (Fig. 16e, f). Noteworthy is the presence of clay objects, which have a circular section and one pointed end (Fig. 18a, b). Based on comparisons, these have been interpreted as terracotta nails, which were often used in palaces, or at least in important and representative buildings. As we know from Tell al-Rimah, they were used in temples such as those at site A, level 2, and site C, level 4 (Postgate *et al.* 1997: pl. 25e).

## 5. Conclusions

The picture emerging from the preliminary analysis of the LoNAP 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium ceramic gives hints concerning many aspects. First, the difficulties of survey methods and settlements and pottery reconnaissance arise in the wide presence of 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium-dated settlements and related pottery. In the LoNAP survey, 468 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium sites were recognized, far more than the numbers identified in adjacent regions by previous survey projects (Algaze *et al.* 2012; Wilkinson and Tucker 1995). This is because MBA and LBA pottery can now be more easily recognized, thanks to the increasing number of excavations that have taken place in the last decades. This leads to the second point, which deals with ceramic reconnaissance. Concerning the MBA ceramic assemblage, Khabur Ware and Grey Ware have always been considered as the only diagnostic pottery for this period. From the LoNAP material, both from survey and from the Gir-e Gomel excavation, it is evident that even Common Ware diagnostic types can be isolated (see plates and shouldered beakers). Concerning the LBA, the reconnaissance and distinction of Mitanni and Middle-Assyrian pottery is widely demonstrated. Each of them has

its own ceramic tradition, as shown by the occurrence of well-defined diagnostic types, such as carinated bowls and jars with squared rim. However, we would prefer to refer to a LBA I ceramic tradition, instead of speaking of a Mitanni ceramic tradition, since it has not been proved yet that it is strictly connected to the Mitanni element. Meanwhile, the opposite can be asserted concerning the Middle-Assyrian period. This confirms the spreading of LBA I/Mitannian pottery to the east of the core territory of the Mitannian Kingdom, which has been proven to have been the Upper Khabur basin.

From results concerning 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium Gir-e Gomel, it is evident that the site held a certain importance in the MBA and LBA, besides what we know of the Hellenistic Gaugamela and Assyrian Gammagara. The occurrence of barrel-vault graves, the very well-made pottery, and the presence of wall cones all speak of the importance of the site, which is confirmed also by its size in comparison to other sites in the same area.

The MBA and LBA ceramic assemblage from the surface survey and from Gir-e Gomel supports the assertion of the importance of the Navkur Plain and the Zagros Piedmont during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, thus attributing to this area of the Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project a crucial role in the succession of territorial powers and resource exploitation. Though they are preliminary, our results from this analysis of the ceramic assemblages undoubtedly pinpoint the unity in terms of material culture of this area of Iraqi Kurdistan to the western Northern-Iraqi settlements and to the Syrian Jezirah settlements. Although excavation results from this area are still preliminary and not fully published, it is possible to trace some parallels with sites such as Kurd Qaburstan (Schwartz 2016) for the MBA and the LBA, and for Qasr Shemamok (Masetti Rouault and Calini 2016) and Tell Baqrta and Nader (Kopanias *et al.* 2013: 27 and 38) for the LBA. It is now crucial, as a further step, to clarify the modalities of connection between these regions, and the role that the Navkur Plain and region of the Zagros Piedmont played in-between them and the region further south, *i.e.* the Erbil Plain.

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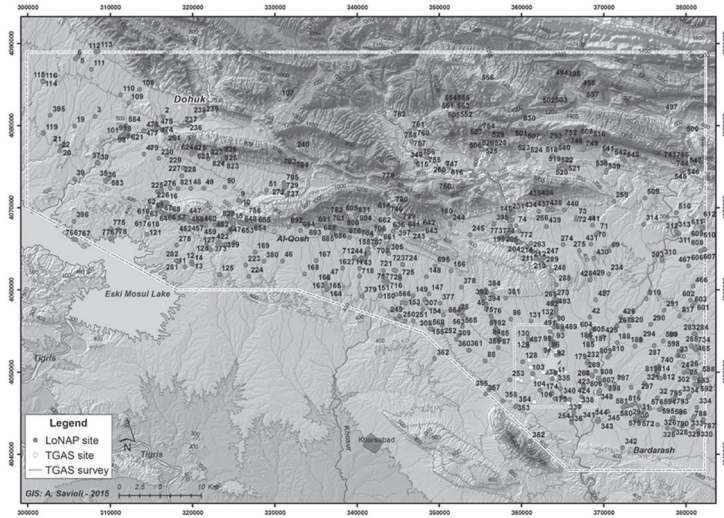


Fig. 1 Map showing the LoNAP area and the sites: the star-symbol indicates Gir-e Gommel (Map by A. Savioli; © LoNAP Archives)

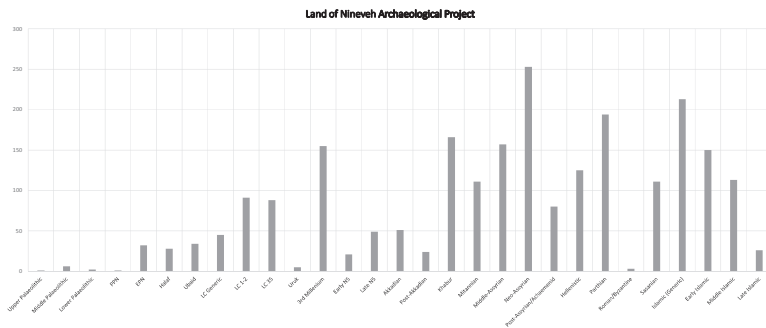


Fig. 2 Histogram illustrating the number of sherds per each LoNAP period

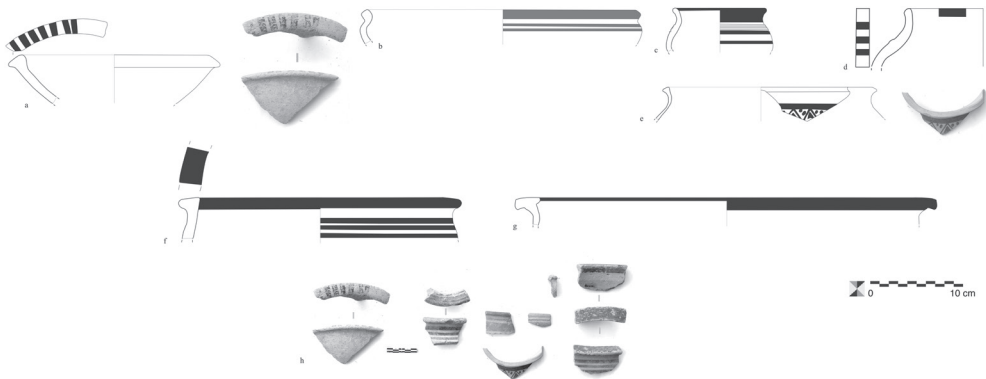


Fig. 3 Middle Bronze Age Khabor Ware from the LoNAP area (© LoNAP Archives)

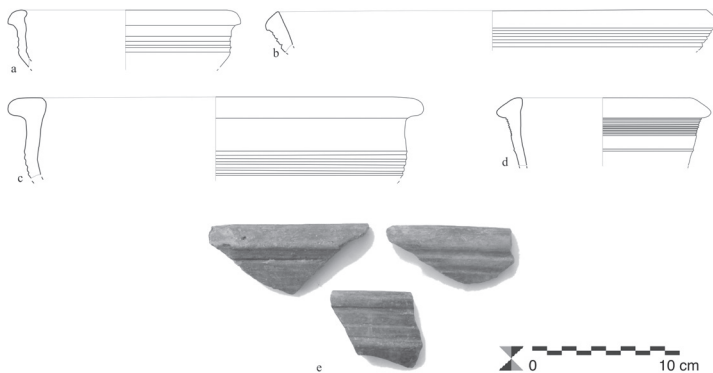


Fig. 4 Middle Bronze Age Grey Ware from the LoNAP area (© LoNAP Archives)

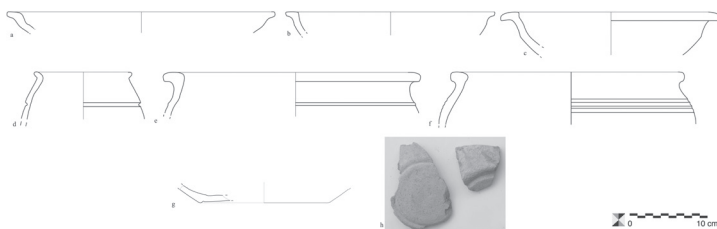


Fig. 5 Middle Bronze Age Common Ware from the LoNAP area (© LoNAP Archives)

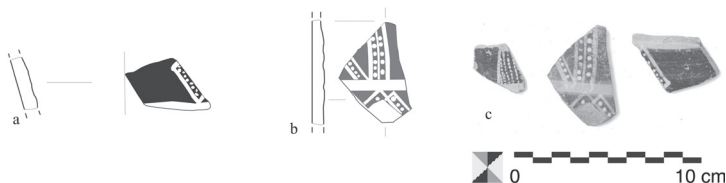


Fig. 6 Mitanni period: Nuzi Ware from the LoNAP area (© LoNAP Archives)

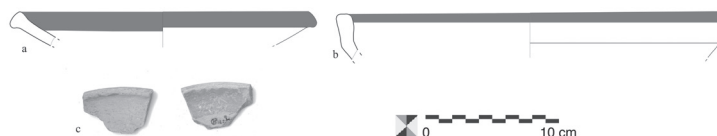


Fig. 7 Mitanni period: Red-Edged bowls from the LoNAP area (© LoNAP Archives)



Fig. 8 Mitanni period: Common Ware from the LoNAP area (© LoNAP Archives)

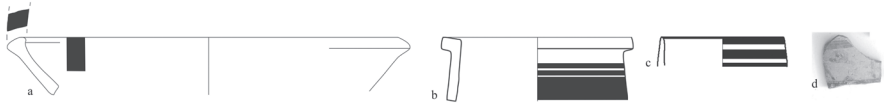


Fig. 9 Mitanni period: Khabor Ware from the LoNAP area (© LoNAP Archives)

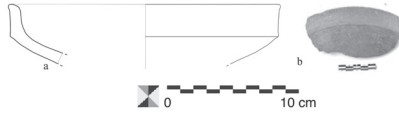


Fig. 10 Mitanni period: Grey Ware from the LoNAP area (© LoNAP Archives)

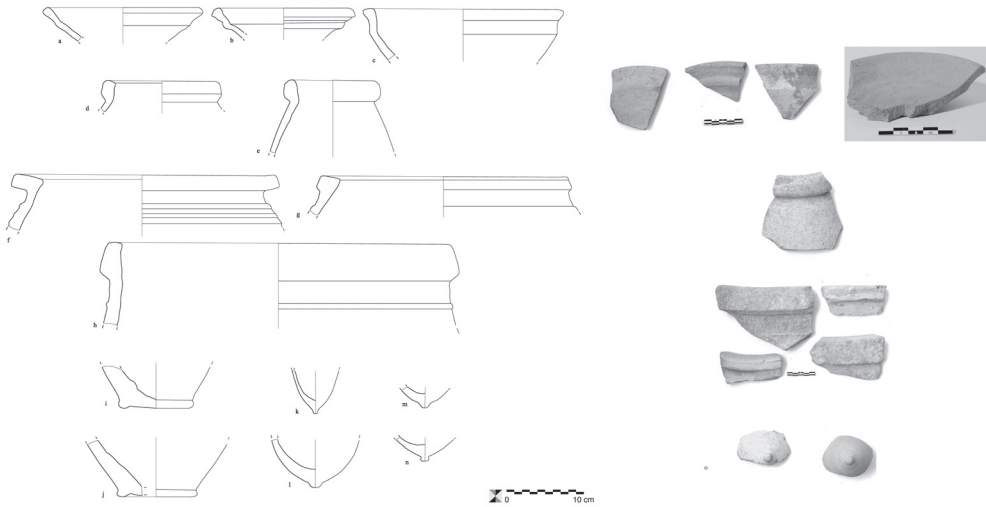


Fig. 11 Middle-Assyrian pottery from the LoNAP area (© LoNAP Archives)

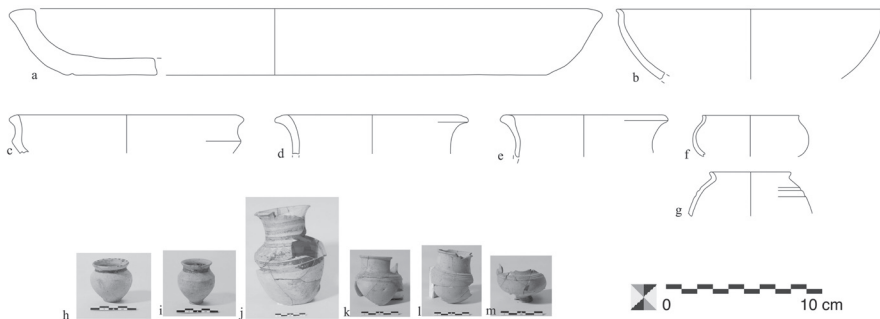


Fig. 12 Middle Bronze Age pottery Gir-e Gomel, Operation 1 (© LoNAP Archives)

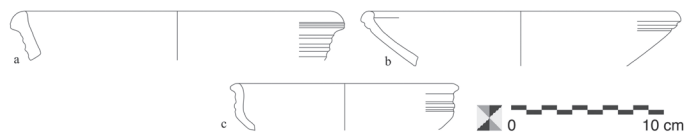


Fig. 13 Middle Bronze Age Grey Ware from Gir-e Gommel, Operation 1 (© LoNAP Archives)

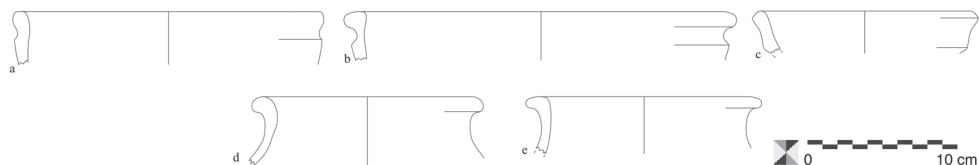


Fig. 14 Mitanni period: Common Ware from Gir-e Gommel, Operation 1 (© LoNAP Archives)



Fig. 15 Mitanni period: Grey Ware from Gir-e Gommel, Operation 1 (© LoNAP Archives)



Fig. 16 Mitanni period: Khabur Ware from Gir-e Gommel, Operation 1 (© LoNAP Archives)

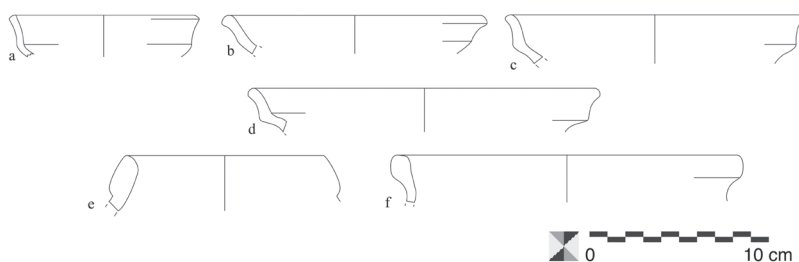


Fig. 17 Middle-Assyrian pottery from Gir-e Gommel, Operation 1 (© LoNAP Archives)

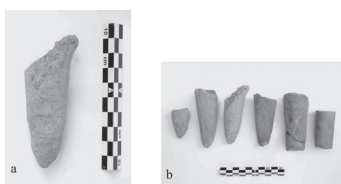


Fig. 18 Middle-Assyrian terracotta nails from Gir-e Gommel, Operation 1 (© LoNAP Archives)