

# The Hinterland North of Tyre Between the Late Bronze Age and the Roman Period.

## The Examples of Kharayeb, Jemjim, and Tell Qasmiye

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*It is widely accepted that the formation and development of cities and the countryside are parts of the same synchronic process, which should be studied on a regional level and over long periods. The development of urban settlements and that of the countryside are intrinsically linked. Since the 1970s, many scholars dealing with the Near East have ceased to focus exclusively on urban centres and monumental architecture, orienting their investigations towards complex economic systems, including the examination of the inland areas and the small rural settlements. However, despite this reorientation of research, the situation of the Phoenician coastal cities' hinterland is not well known.*

*Starting from this assumption, the Italo-Lebanese 'Kharayeb Archaeological Project' (Italian National Council of Research and the Lebanese University) aims to investigate the mutual relationships between the urban landscape of the great centre of Tyre and the countryside north of the city, considering the landscape as an expression of the communities that contributed to its formation.*

*The discovery of two sites, Tell Qasmiye at the mouth of the Litani River and Jemjim at the entrance of Kharayeb, opens new and important perspective for the knowledge of the Tyrian region.*

**Keywords:** Kharayeb, Litani River, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Hellenistic period, Phoenician hinterland.

The 'Kharayeb Archaeological Project' is a multidisciplinary programme of research organised into different branches: the study of the figurines found in the cult place of Kharayeb, the study of the ancient cult place and quarries, the archaeological survey of the Kharayeb territory, and the project entitled 'Where the Litani River Flows', supported by the Honor Frost Foundation, focusing on the study of the coast, shores, and waters of both the Kharayeb and Adloun municipalities (**fig. 1**).<sup>1</sup>

### **Dedication of Figurines in the Cult Place: the Site Known as *Mathaf* in Kharayeb**

A few kilometres north of Tyre, inland but near the coast, there is an inhabited village called Kharayeb. After the discovery in 1946 of several terracotta figurines in an area at the entrance to the modern village (known as *Juret el-Khawatem* – 'the pit of the rings'), Lebanon's Director of Antiquities, M. Chéhab,

started to excavate that same year, unearthing the ruins of a rectangular building dating back to the Hellenistic period. In front of the building, near a paved courtyard, a *favissa* rich in clay figurines dating from the 7th and the 1st century BC was found.<sup>2</sup> In 1969, the excavation was reopened, and I. Kaoukabani found, together with several figurines dated to the same period, significant architectonic elements, including a lintel with *uraeus* and two Egyptianising statues wearing the *shendit*, a well-known type in this region.<sup>3</sup> While M. Chéhab published an introductory report of those activities, I. Kaoukabani chose the site as the main subject of his PhD thesis at Sorbonne University.

In 2009, the Institute for the Study of the Ancient Mediterranean (ISMA) of the National Research Council (CNR) and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) supported a new research project to resume the study of the figurines stored at the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA) by analysing all the fragments kept in several boxes after the end of the Lebanese civil war. The material was studied from various perspectives: technology, style, iconography, colours, etc. The analysis of the fabrics, already conducted on a macroscopic level, is

now the focus of the project entitled 'Establishment of a Phoenician Pottery Database on the Chemical Composition of Terracotta Using Ion Beam Analysis (IBA) Techniques and Application to the Study of Artisanal Production (Pottery and Coroplastic) from the Kharayeb Archaeological Site in southern Lebanon'.<sup>4</sup> The main goal of the study of the figurines is, however, to reconstruct the life of the people living in the countryside of the Tyrian region between the 7th and 1st century BC. In order to widen the relevance of the project, the study could not be restricted to the materials stored in the museum. Therefore, in 2013, following an agreement between ISMA and the Lebanese University, we started a new project of excavation and survey, which aimed at the reconstruction of the archaeological and historical context of the clay figurines.<sup>5</sup>

These new works have provided significant information about the first phase of frequentation of the area (with pottery dating back to the 9th–8th century BC), about the chronological phases of the main building (built entirely in the Hellenistic period), and about the rites of the first phase, performed using small and miniature plates (**fig. 2: a to c**).<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 1- The region of Kharayeb and the mouth of Litani with indication of the main sites.

## Survey of the Territory of the Municipality of Kharayeb

The Kharayeb project, which at first aimed mainly to reconstruct the life of a Phoenician place of worship, has been enlarged to become a wider interdisciplinary study of the agricultural hinterland of Tyre between the second millennium and the Hellenistic period. When the project started, our information about the countryside was limited to the Hellenistic period, and suggested that the area was poor and isolated at that time. However, new data from the survey in the territory of the municipality of Kharayeb have shown that the situation in antiquity must have been very

different. The region was, in fact, rich in cultivation and well connected to the coast, which is only a few kilometres away. It was in a strategic position, just north of the Litani River, and populated by communities that devoted themselves to agricultural activities, like the community of the site now known as Jemjim.

## The Discovery of a New Site: Jemjim

The area called Jemjim is mentioned in the *Mission de Phénicie* by E. Renan.<sup>7</sup> The scholar states that A. Durighello<sup>8</sup> gave him a stele that had been

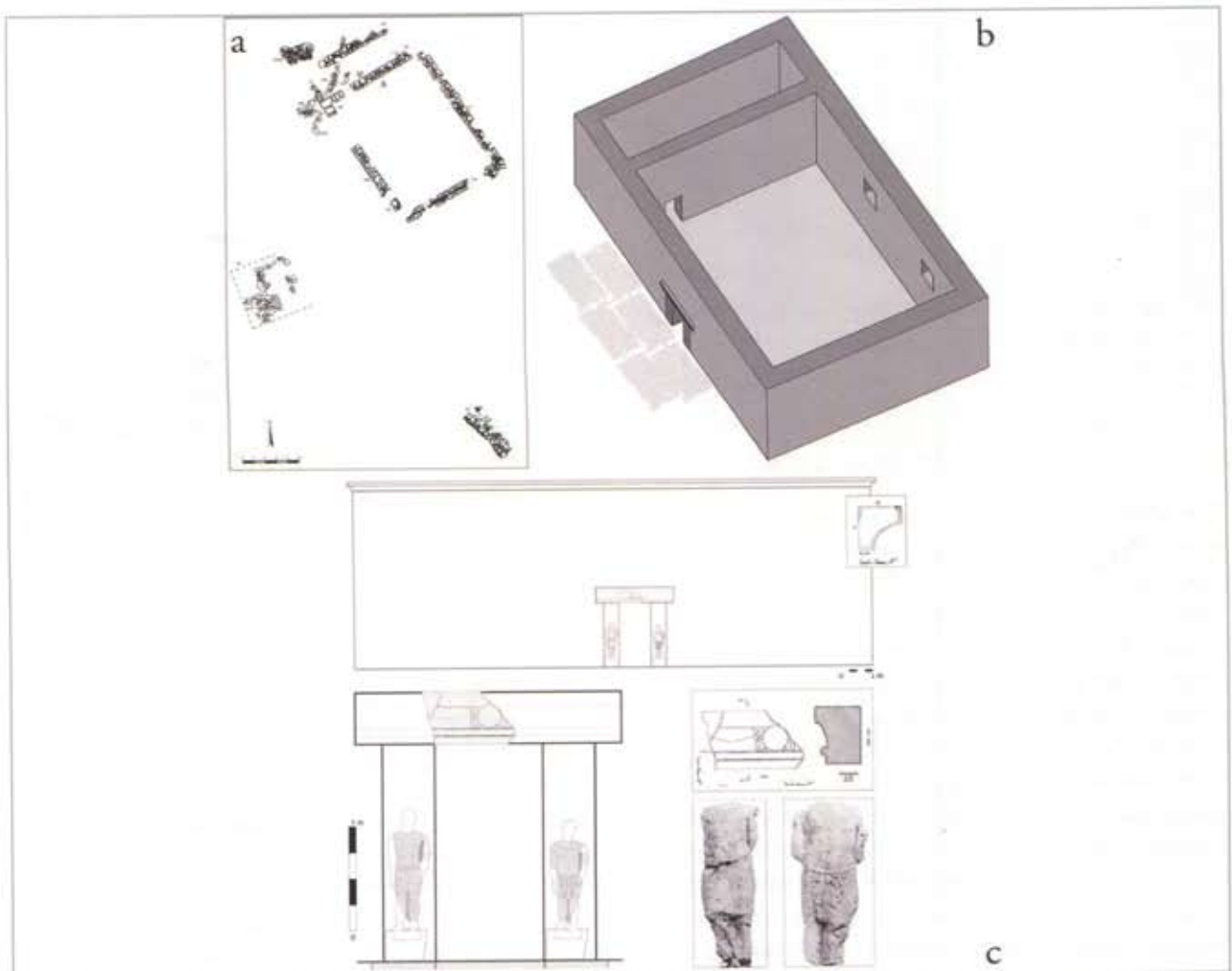


Fig. 2- a) Plan of the Kharayeb cult place (Oggiano et al. 2016, fig. 3); b) 3D reconstruction of the Hellenistic Phase 1; c) 3D reconstruction of the Hellenistic Phase 1 of the entrance to the main building with two statues (Oggiano 2018, fig. 5, 6).

found re-employed in the wall of a house in the village of Djamdjine.<sup>9</sup> The presence of this artefact in the region indicates that this area was inhabited at least since the Persian period – as suggested by the chronology of the stele<sup>10</sup> – if not before (E. Gubel dates the stele to the seventh century;<sup>11</sup> **fig. 3**). These datings correspond to the ancient phase of the *mathaf* cult place.



Fig. 3- Stele from Jemjim, Louvre inv. AO833 (*Méditerranée* 2007, no. cat. 152).

The village that existed in A. Durighello's time – probably a small group of houses – has since disappeared. Traces of the ancient location of the 'village' are to be found at the site known today as Mazraat Jemjim, represented by isolated large stones, pottery from the Mamluk and Ottoman periods and only a few sherds from the Roman period.

Field surveys in the surroundings of Mazraat Jemjim led to the identification of several pieces of archaeological evidence in a hill located at the east of Mazraat Jemjim. The site, a calcareous hill controlling a way of passage from the coast to the villages of Kharayeb and Rzay, shows traces of human occupation from Prehistory (Middle Palaeolithic, as frequently attested in the Kharayeb region) to the Persian period, with significant traces of occupation dating from the Middle Bronze

and Late Bronze/Iron Age I. No Hellenistic or Roman pottery was found at the site, and only a few sherds from the Medieval period indicate a sporadic human presence in the area after the abandonment of the settlement during the Persian period.

This site is extremely important, since it has not been destroyed by modern constructions, even if it has unfortunately been disturbed by looters. This makes the site a unique example of an antique and intact hinterland settlement in the coastal region of southern Lebanon, where it is common to see modern villages and farms built over the ancient tells.

The discovery on the Jemjim site of a complex system to collect liquids in large cisterns cut into the rock and covered with plaster is to be considered of great importance (**fig. 4: a to d**). We excavated one of the cisterns since it had been partially dug by looters. The cistern was filled with waste material in antiquity: in addition to bones of domestic animals such as sheep and goats, *Testudo graeca*, and fish,<sup>12</sup> a remarkable quantity of ceramic material was found in the cistern. This related to various ceramic classes: common ware (dishes – with or without slip – cups, pitchers, amphorae), storage pottery (large *pithoi*, jars for conservation and for transportation), kitchenware, and *tannur*. There were also fine ware and small containers, some of them imported from Cyprus. A limited stratigraphic sequence of layers of deposition has been documented, but the analysis of the pottery shows that it is impossible to identify a real chronological sequence of accumulation. Materials dated to the Middle Bronze Age and Persian period are mixed together in every layer without a chronological order (**fig. 5**).<sup>13</sup>

The precise chronology of the site is still difficult to determine. We can say that it was, at a certain time, a rural settlement located only a few kilometres away from the coast and along a communication road with the hinterland. A terrace wall has been identified in the western slope of the hill, and it is hoped that further investigation will explain the connection between this part of the site and the area of the cisterns (**fig. 6**).

Jars represent the majority of the material discovered on the site. Thanks to a preliminary study by Tatiana Pedrazzi, some initial observations concerning the shape and the chronology of the jars allow a first functional overview of the site (**pl. 1**).

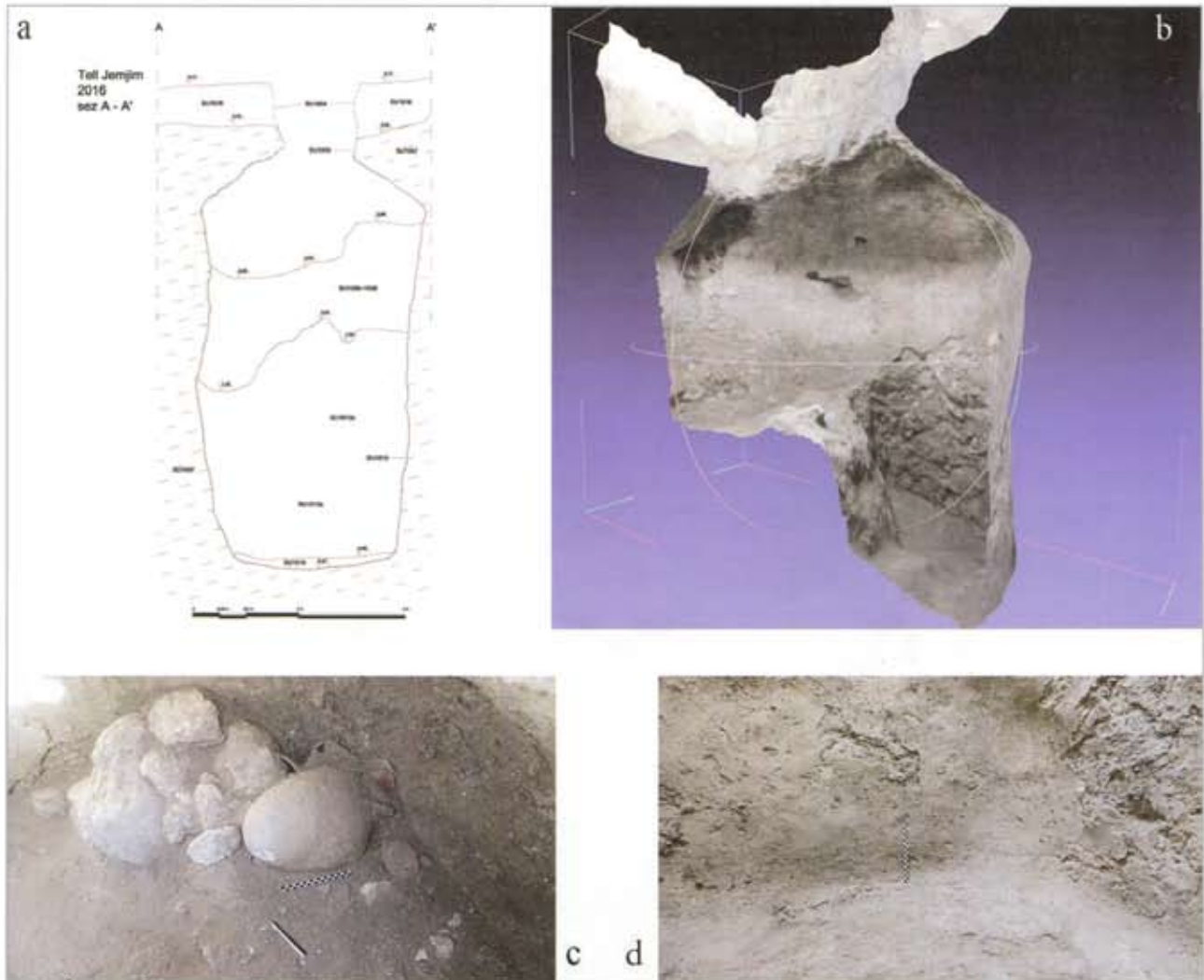


Fig. 4- a) Sect A-A' of the cistern (Plt A, Area 2) of Jemjim (C. Baione); b) 3D photo of the cistern (C. Baione); c) particular of the layer SU 1006=1008 of the filling with an amphora (photo by S. Festuccia); d) particular of the plaster (photo by S. Festuccia).

The types identified until now on the basis of a preliminary typological study seem to cover the period from the Middle Bronze Age to the Persian period. The first and most ancient types of jars identified so far are the MBA storage jars of the so-called Canaanite type, characterised by a cylindrical neck and an everted rim (**pl. 1: f to i**). Two different types of rim correspond to Storage Jar Type 1A and 1B at Tell Burak, not far from Jemjim.<sup>14</sup>

The transitional period between LB and Iron Age I is very well documented. The transitional LB II–Iron I storage jars are characterised by a short, straight

neck, with a thickened, rounded rim. The rim is usually slightly thickened inwards (**pl. 1: l to m**). The best parallels can be recognised in Pedrazzi Type 4-1, represented by a number of storage jars from Tell Kazel. Jars belonging to Type 4-1 are bellied jars with a slightly carinated shoulder and a short, straight neck. The rim shape, in itself, could also belong to the southern Levantine type (Pedrazzi Type 5-5); these jars have a more cylindrical body and the same carination on the shoulder. The examples of Tell Keisan in Northern Galilee date back to the Iron I period.<sup>15</sup>

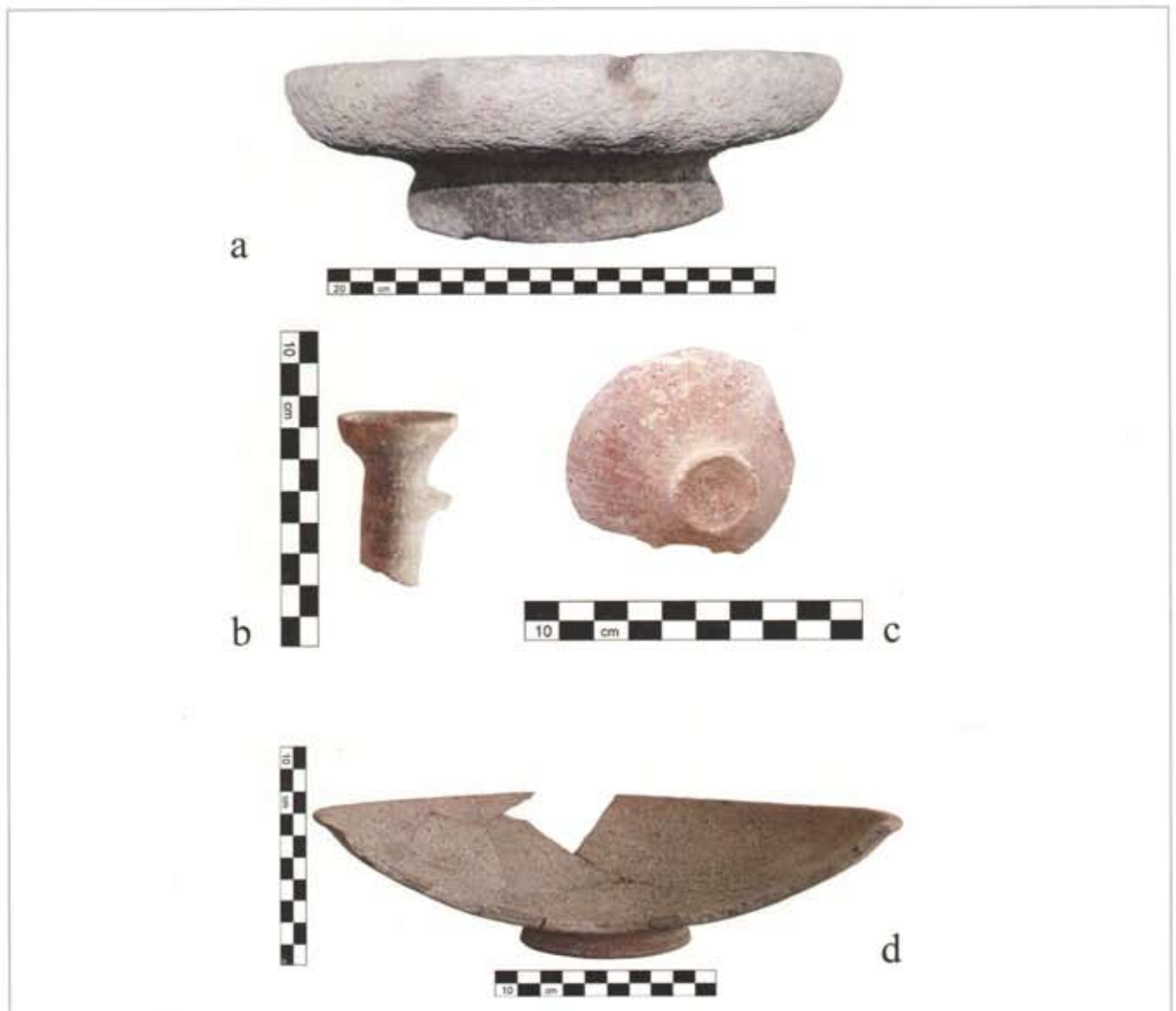


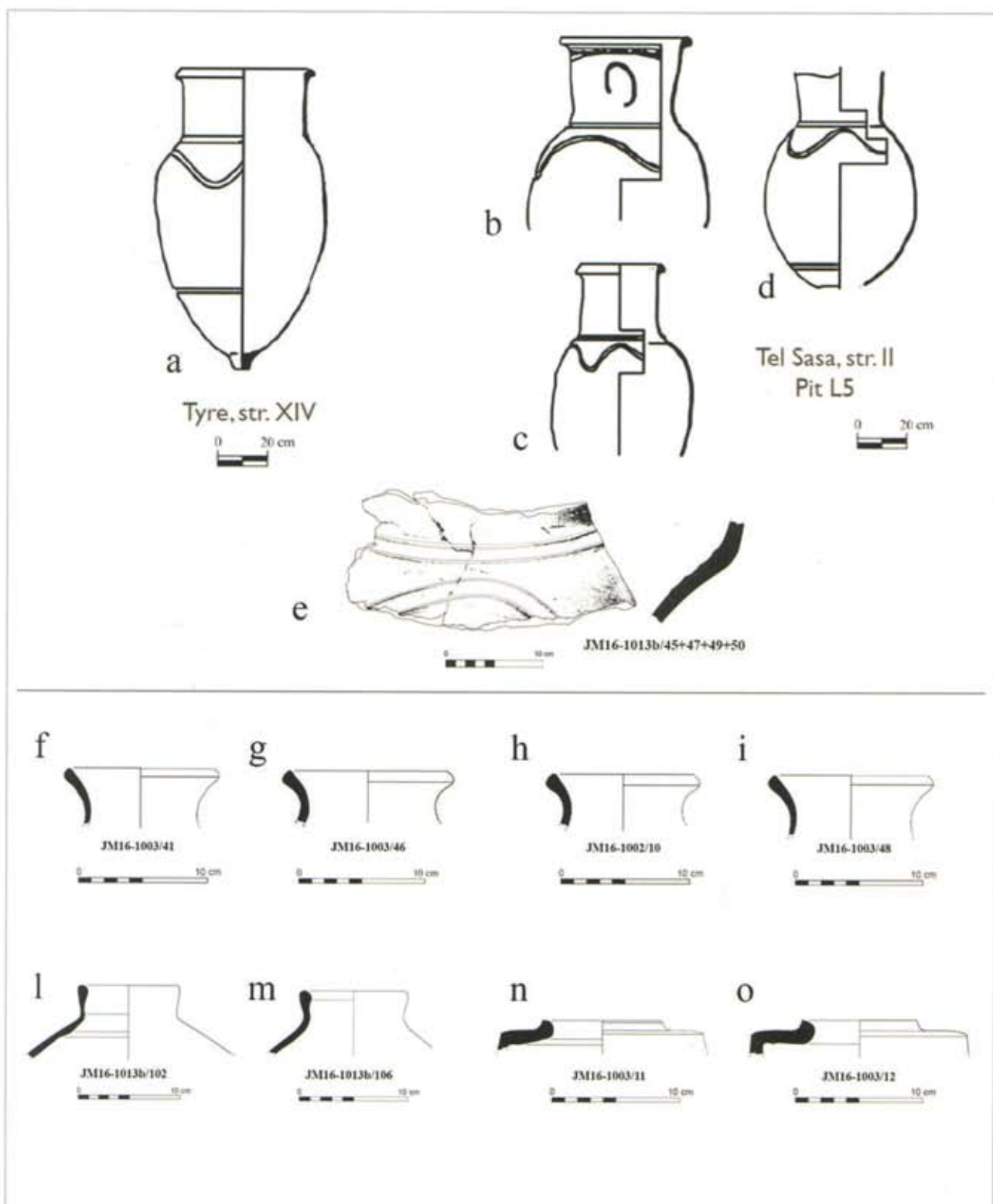
Fig. 5- Material from the site; a) LB basal bowl; b) base-ring jug from Cyprus; pottery from the cistern; c) BM little jug; d) LB plate (photos by S. Festuccia).



Fig. 6- Terrace wall of the western slope (photo by S. Festuccia).

### Connection with the Palestinian Area

A very important part of the Jemjim assemblage is represented by the Iron I *pithoi*. Indeed, materials can be compared with the pottery assemblages from the sites of the Upper Galilee, finally filling a documentary gap in the diffusion of types represented now in the rural hinterland of Tyre. An example is the production of the so-called Tyrian *pithos*,<sup>16</sup> produced during the



Pl. 1- a to d) Iron I 'Tyrian pithoi' from Tyre and Tel Sasa (Pedrazzi 2007, fig. 3.104); e) fragment of 'Tyrian pithos' from Jemjîm; f to i) MB storage jars from Jemjîm; l to m) transitional LB-Iron I storage jars from Jemjîm; n to o) Persian period storage jars from Jemjîm (drawings by R. Yassine).

Iron Age I in the inland of Tyre and in the rural sites of the Upper Galilee (Tyre Str. XIV and Tel Sasa, Horvat 'Avot Har Adir; see **pl. 1: a to d**).<sup>17</sup> The presence of this kind of *pithoi* at Jemjim (**pl. 1: e**) shows the activity of storage and conservation on the site (and probably of regional transportation) of the agricultural products.

During the Late Iron-Persian, the typical SJ types of the Late Iron and Persian period are well documented in the cistern (**pl. 1: n to o**); types are similar to those well attested in other Phoenician sites such as Sarepta<sup>18</sup> and Achziv.<sup>19</sup>

Contact with Northern Galilee was already observed in respect of some coroplastic production of the seventh century from the *mathaf* site.<sup>20</sup>

A connection with Palestine can also be found in the shape of the cisterns. This is probably due to the similar geomorphology of the hills and, depending on the chronological period, perhaps to an analogous cultural context. The landscape of Jemjim calls to mind the words of J. Wampler when he describes the situation of Palestine, 'bell-shaped and cylindrical cisterns were hewn with metallic chisels in the thick layers of Senonian chalk exposed on most hilltops of the Palestinian highlands'.<sup>21</sup>

In order to verify whether Jemjim could be 'truly a place of cisterns',<sup>22</sup> as Tell en-Nasbeh was with its fifty-three cisterns, electrical resistivity tomographies were carried out with the aim of understanding the distribution of the tanks in the subsoil and their possible connections. The map relating to a depth of 2 m reveals, in the northern sector of the investigated area, the presence of high-resistivity anomalies that could be attributable to voids or excavated portions filled with weak materials. The anomalies seem to be bounded by the known tanks (**fig. 7**).<sup>23</sup>

The function of the centre as a productive area seems to be confirmed by a rectangular basin, which emerged after the cleaning of an area close to the excavated cistern and already disturbed by looters. The rectangular basin was excavated by cutting into a previous circular artefact, built from a sort of conglomerate, and with a funnel shape. This shape was intended to collect liquids in a small concave basin cut in the rock and ending in a little hole (**fig. 8**). The site of Jemjim offers an extraordinary opportunity to study these phases in the hinterland of Tyre because

it is one of the few places that are still preserved from the intensive agricultural activity and constructions that are very rapidly changing the aspect of the landscape.



Fig. 7- Electrical resistivity tomographies of the Jemjim area (M. Cozzolino).



Fig. 8- Jemjim: rectangular basin (photo by S. Festuccia).

## From Inland to the Coast

Thanks to the activities carried out so far, it is evident that the inland sites were always oriented towards the coast. A distance of only 8.5 km separates the mouth of the Litani from the metropolitan area of Tyre. Products from Cyprus arrived at the site of Jemjim, while in the Hellenistic period the cult place of the *mathaf* was frequented by people coming from the coastal sites. Indeed, ion beam analysis has shown that the fabric of the group of figurines from the Hellenistic period is closely connected with the samples from Tyre.<sup>24</sup> The



similarity of the clay from Tyre (even if used for pottery of the Iron Age) with that of the Hellenistic production of the figurines from Kharayeb suggests that they were produced in workshops in Tyre and then sold in shops near the cult place. Moreover, it is known that the mould techniques used for the production of the figurines were originally introduced into the area from the large centres of production, such as Alexandria in Egypt. It is probable that artisans working in relation to the religious structures dedicated to the cult of Egyptian gods were present in Tyre, where the existence of a cult of Serapis (inscription dated to the third century BC) is known.<sup>25</sup>

## The Survey Along the Coast at the Mouth of the Litani River

Considering that the interaction between the coast and the centres of the inland was so important to the life of the territory, a project entitled 'Where the Litani River Flows: Coastal Survey in El-Kharayeb, Southern Lebanon' was launched in 2017 by the archaeologists and experts working on Kharayeb.<sup>26</sup> The project is funded by the Honor Frost Foundation, and aims to study the shores and coast of both the Kharayeb and Adloun municipalities and to undertake underwater surveys of this coastal strip. The survey area stretched from the Litani River in Kharayeb along the coast up to the port of Adloun in the north.

To the east, it covered the agricultural plain stretching from the shores and stopped at the edge of the coastal road. This study uses an interdisciplinary approach combining geography, geomorphology, history, and archaeology, environmental and social science, and ethnography.

In the first mission, four sites were identified in Kharayeb, and thirty-three archaeological features. In Adloun, six sites were identified, along with twenty-four features. Some of these sites were completely unknown and are of particular interest. The most spectacular discovery is a site located at the mouth of the Litani River that can be recognised due to a long section observable from an agricultural road that ends at the sandy beach of Kharayeb (**fig. 9**). The total dimensions of the site, named Tell Qasmiye, are not clear yet; its length might not exceed 100 m. As for its height, the average might be 4 m, but the upper parts have been removed for the planting of bananas. Stone, cobbles, ashlar, trampled surfaces, ceramic sherds, and evidence of fire can be seen along the section. We should at least mention the presence of a thick layer of sand, similar to that found in Tyre to which Patricia Bikai refers,<sup>27</sup> which can be interpreted as a phase of abandonment of the site with the formation of a dune. Large ashlar worked with the bossage technique, probably related to a monumental building, can be seen in the section. The ceramic materials found during the cleaning of the section can be dated to both the Persian and Hellenistic periods (5th–4th century BC).

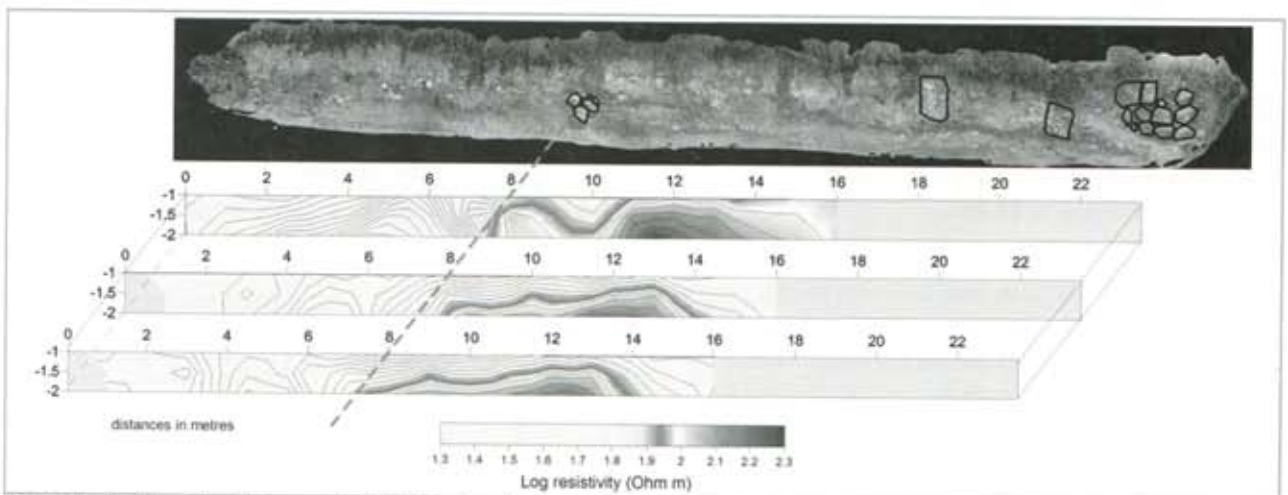


Fig. 9. Mouth of the Litani River: section (C. Baione) and electrical resistivity tomographies of the area in front of the section (M. Cozzolino).

In the free space in front of the tell section in proximity to the mouth of the Litani, three vertical electrical resistivity tomographies showed a different distribution of resistivity in the soil. In particular, high resistivity materials, probably associated with archaeological remains, are highlighted and correspond to the portions of walls found in the section, in the right part of the investigated area. This data has enabled us to estimate the volume of the archaeological building.

The new site is a major discovery that will shed light on the still unknown history of the region of the Litani River. The new site could provide a new argument to the discussion of the localisation of 'Bit-Gi-si-me-ia', a site attested in the Assyrian archive in a text of King Esarhaddon related to the events of 677 BC (Esarhaddon I, II 68–82 and Esarhaddon VI, II 10–49).<sup>28</sup> Even if E. Lipiński<sup>29</sup> and H. Salamé-Sarkis,<sup>30</sup> with different arguments, rejected the identification with Qasmiyyeh/ah (the name of the last part of the Litani River), the proximity of ancient and modern toponyms should be reassessed.

A second significant site in Kharayeb is the Abou el-Aswad bridge, also known as el-Jisr el-Atiq (meaning 'the old bridge'), located on the Abou el-Aswad stream that separates both localities of Kharayeb and Adloun (**fig. 10**). The bridge is 387 m away from the Kharayeb and Adloun coastline. It is a single-arch bridge with a span of 9.8 m. It rises 2.8 m (distance from the stream bed to the underside of the arch). The roadway is 28 m long and 5.2 m wide. The pavement of the bridge has disappeared, as we can observe from old drawings and photographs from the nineteenth century. Only the large voussoirs of the arch have survived. No road or pavement is visible from the Kharayeb side. All the antique masonry and structures were covered by agricultural landfill through the nineteenth century.

The bridge was first described briefly by the biblical scholar E. Robinson in 1838:

We crossed the dry bed of a mountain torrent at 9/3: 4 o'clock, called Abu el-Aswad; on which are the ruins of a bridge with a round arch, now broken down. This may be an ancient work; here too is a ruined Khan.<sup>31</sup>

It was then drawn by the French traveller and painter Montfort in 1837.<sup>32</sup> Later, in 1864 the French traveller Duc de Luynes published a photo of the bridge showing its extent.<sup>33</sup>

From the Adloun side of the bridge, an agricultural road follows the line of the antique road and heads northwards. The Abou el-Aswad Bridge dates from the 3rd century AD according to V. Galliazzo.<sup>34</sup> It is one of only two well-preserved Roman bridges in Lebanon, the other being the Maameltein Bridge, north of Jounieh.<sup>35</sup>

In Adloun, there are three major sites to be reported: the Tell Bou Zei, the Adloun Necropolis – probably from the Roman period – and the industrial and fishing installation south of the modern Adloun port.

Finally, the underwater visual survey and the boat survey covering the shores of both Kharayeb and Adloun complemented the terrestrial and the coastal survey, which extends over a distance of 8 km.

The main objectives for the 2017 season were to identify the areas with underwater archaeological potential, to identify harbour installations and anchorage sites, and to locate and record any submerged reefs which might be potential shipwreck sites. The visual survey identified two zones of archaeological interest in Adloun and one in Kharayeb.



Fig. 10- Abou el-Aswad bridge (3D by C. Baione).

## Notes

- 1- We are grateful to the Director General of Antiquities, Mr Sarkis el-Khoury, who has always been so supportive of the activities of the Kharayeb Archaeological Project. We owe special thanks to Myriam Ziade for her constant help as we carried out our activities and for her enthusiastic support of our scientific enterprise.
- 2- Chéhab 1951–1952; Chéhab 1953–1954.
- 3- Kaoukabani 1973.
- 4- Roumie *et al.* 2019.
- 5- Oggiano 2015a; Oggiano 2015b; Oggiano 2015c; Oggiano 2018; Oggiano 2019.
- 6- Oggiano *et al.* 2016; Oggiano forthcoming.
- 7- Renan 1864, pp. 653–655.
- 8- Alfonse Durighello was the vice consul of France in the city of Sidon when E. Renan undertook his mission in the Sidon and Tyre region.
- 9- 'Djamdjine' is the toponym as it appears in Ernest Renan's *Mission de Phénicie*.
- 10- Stucky 2009. The stele is now at the Louvre (AO833).
- 11- Gubel 2002, pp. 122, 123.
- 12- The bones have been studied by Jacopo De Grossi Mazzorin of the University of Salento.
- 13- An international team is involved in the study of pottery: Giorgos Bouroghiannis (Postdoctoral Research Associate of the National Hellenic Research Foundation Institute of Historical Research, Athens), Barbara Mura (independent researcher), Francisco Nuñez Calvo (Adjunct, Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw), Maha el-Masri Hachem (Lebanese University) and Tatiana Pedrazzi (Institute of Heritage Science – ISPC – CNR).
- 14- Badreshany and Kamlah 2010–2011, pp. 83, 84.
- 15- Briend and Humbert 1980, pl. 60: 2.
- 16- Pedrazzi 2007, Type 21-1.
- 17- Braun 2015.
- 18- Bettles 2003, p. 261.
- 19- Yasur-Landau, Press and Arie 2016, fig. 8.1.
- 20- Oggiano in Oggiano *et al.* 2016, pp. 206–209.
- 21- Callaway 1985, p. 39.
- 22- Wampler 1947, p. 129.
- 23- Electrical resistivity tomographies were carried out by Marilena Cozzolino of the University of Molise.
- 24- Roumie *et al.* 2019.
- 25- Rey-Coquais 2006, pp. 18–20, no. 5; Aliquot 2009, p. 175. The existence of a sanctuary of the Egyptian gods in Tyre in the Hellenistic period bears witness to the devotion to the deities of Alexandria as the protector of the Lagid dynasty. On the relationship of the Kharayeb figurine to the repertoire of Alessandria see Castiglione 2019.
- 26- Members of the 2017 mission: C. Baione, G. Bazzal, N. Carayon, S. Festuccia, B. Mura, G. Pisanu and L. Tirabassi.
- 27- Bikai 1978, p. 6, Stratum XVIII.
- 28- Leichty 2011, pp. 17, 48; Bagg 2007, p. 49; Bagg 2011, p. 99 (no. 335), p. 126 (no. 459), p. 158 (no. 718), p. 319. For the relationship between Assyria and Phoenicia see recently Fales 2017 (in particular p. 240). See also Lehmann 2002, al-Qāsmīya.
- 29- Lipiński 1994, p. 160.
- 30- Salamé-Sarkis 2005, p. 143.
- 31- Robinson 1874, p. 689.
- 32- Dussaud 1920, p. 156, fig. 6.
- 33- Vignes 1864.
- 34- Galliazzo 1995, vol. 2, p. 384.
- 35- This bridge was restored during the 1930s and the 1950s in the twentieth century: Chéhab 1955, p. 53.

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