Gold jewellery as a marker of cultural interaction in Middle Bronze Age Qaṭna

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Abstract

In 2009 and 2010, the Syrian-German mission excavated the richly furnished Tomb VII at Qaṭna which yielded an inventory dating to the Middle Bronze Age IIA-IIB. The inventory comprised a large assemblage of gold jewellery including pendants, rings, toggle pins and long bands. While some of these jewellery items represent types already known from Syria and the Northern Levant, other types from Tomb VII have previously been attested only in the Southern Levant. Hence, the jewellery assemblage from Tomb VII is composed of types referring to both the Syrian/Northern Levantine and the Southern Levantine region. In this study, a selection of the gold jewellery from Tomb VII will be discussed against the background of similar items from other sites in the Syro-Levantine region. This approach aims at embedding the assemblage from Tomb VII into its wider cultural context which will ultimately illuminate how the interregional relations between the Syro-Levantine states are reflected in the material culture of the ruling class of Middle Bronze Age Qaṭna.

Keywords

Syria, Levant, Qaṭna, Middle Bronze Age, gold, jewellery, elite material culture

1. Introduction

In the first half of the second millennium BC, the political situation in the Syro-Levantine region was characterised by the existence of several regional states ruled by dynasties with Amorite names.[1] Particularly powerful were the kingdoms of Yamkhad, Mari and Qaṭna, whose political influence and economic strength probably derived from their position at important trading routes.[2] The ruling families of these states maintained close diplomatic relations, as evidenced by the palace archives of Mari. These document royal journeys into other kingdoms[3], interdynastic marriages[4] and gift exchange[5]. Thus, the textual evidence from Mari clearly shows a network of Near Eastern states in which interregional relations played a fundamental role. In this context, the ruling families made use of gold objects, such as jewellery, vessels or weapons, which were presented as gifts to other kings or queens.[6] Interdynastic marriages, on the other hand, often involved gold jewellery as part of bridal dowries.[7] Accordingly, the textual sources from Mari indicate that gold objects played a crucial role in the interaction of the sociopolitical elites.

In recent years, interregional relations between the Middle Bronze Age states in the Syro-Levantine region have been studied almost exclusively on the basis of cuneiform texts. In contrast, there have been only few attempts to investigate how these interactions are reflected in the elite's material culture of this period.[8] The present paper aims at addressing this issue using the example of the gold jewellery assemblage from Tomb VII at Qaṭna, which dates to the Middle Bronze Age IIA-IIB (see below). In illustrating the geographical distribution of typologically comparable items from other sites, the assemblage from Tomb VII will be embedded into its wider cultural and geographical context.

2. The archaeological context of Tomb VII

After the discovery of the Late Bronze Age Royal Hypogeum of Qaṭna in 2002, the Syrian-German archaeological mission found a second richly furnished hypogeum below the Royal Palace of Qaṭna. Being the seventh rock-cut chamber tomb found in this area, it was named 'Tomb VII'.[9] It was accessible from a small antechamber connected to the northwestern wing of the building. Thus, Tomb VII is, besides the Royal Hypogeum, the second chamber tomb in use during the existence of the Royal Palace of Qaṭna from the Middle Bronze Age IIA on.[10] Judging from its accessibility from the palace's rooms and its rich furnishing it is highly probable that Tomb VII served, like the Royal Hypogeum, as a burial place for members of the royal family of Qaṭna. However, unlike the Royal Hypogeum, which dates to the Late Bronze Age IIA, the inventory from Tomb VII can be dated mainly to the Middle Bronze Age IIA-IIB. This is demonstrated by both ^{14}C-analyses and studies of pottery and small finds retrieved from Tomb VII.[11] Accordingly, the inventory represents the material culture of

[1] Klengel 1992, p. 43.

[2] Klengel 2000, p. 240. The interregional commercial ties between Syria and the neighbouring regions can be considered as a source of power and legitimacy, see: Morandi Bonacossi 2014, pp. 429-430. For a short account on archaeological evidence of interregional relations during the Middle Bronze Age, see: Charaf 2014, pp. 443-445 (Northern Levant); Cohen 2014, p. 462 (Southern Levant).

[3] For king Zimri-Lim's journey through Syria, see: Villard 1986; Charpin, Ziegler 2003, p. 215.

[4] E.g. Charpin 2008.

[5] Limet 1986; Lerouxel 2002.

[6] E.g. A.1259, see: Arkhipov 2012, pp. 368-369; M.5291+M.11367, see: Arkhipov 2012, pp. 366-367; cf. also Puljiz in press a.

[7] E.g. ARM 25 484/M.11372, see: Arkhipov 2012, p. 192; ARM 22 322, see: Kupper 1983, pp. 494-499; cf. also Puljiz in press a.

[8] E.g. Benzel 2008; Nigro 2009; Pinnock 2012. Feldman 2018 conducted an art-historical study of various objects from the Syro-Levantine region with regard to the existence of a possible 'northern network'.

[9] Pfälzner, Dohmann-Pfälzner 2011, p. 64.

[10] Pfälzner, Dohmann-Pfälzner 2011, pp. 71-72; Pfälzner 2014, pp. 142-143. For a dissenting view on the date of the construction of the Royal Palace of Qaṭna, see: Morandi Bonacossi 2007, pp. 230-236; al-Maqdissi 2003, pp. 1510-1513.

[11] However, note that Tomb VII was accessible until the Late Bronze Age IIA (Pfälzner, Dohmann-Pfälzner 2011, pp. 133-134; Pfälzner 2014, pp. 143-144). For the dating of the gold inventory, see: Puljiz in press a.

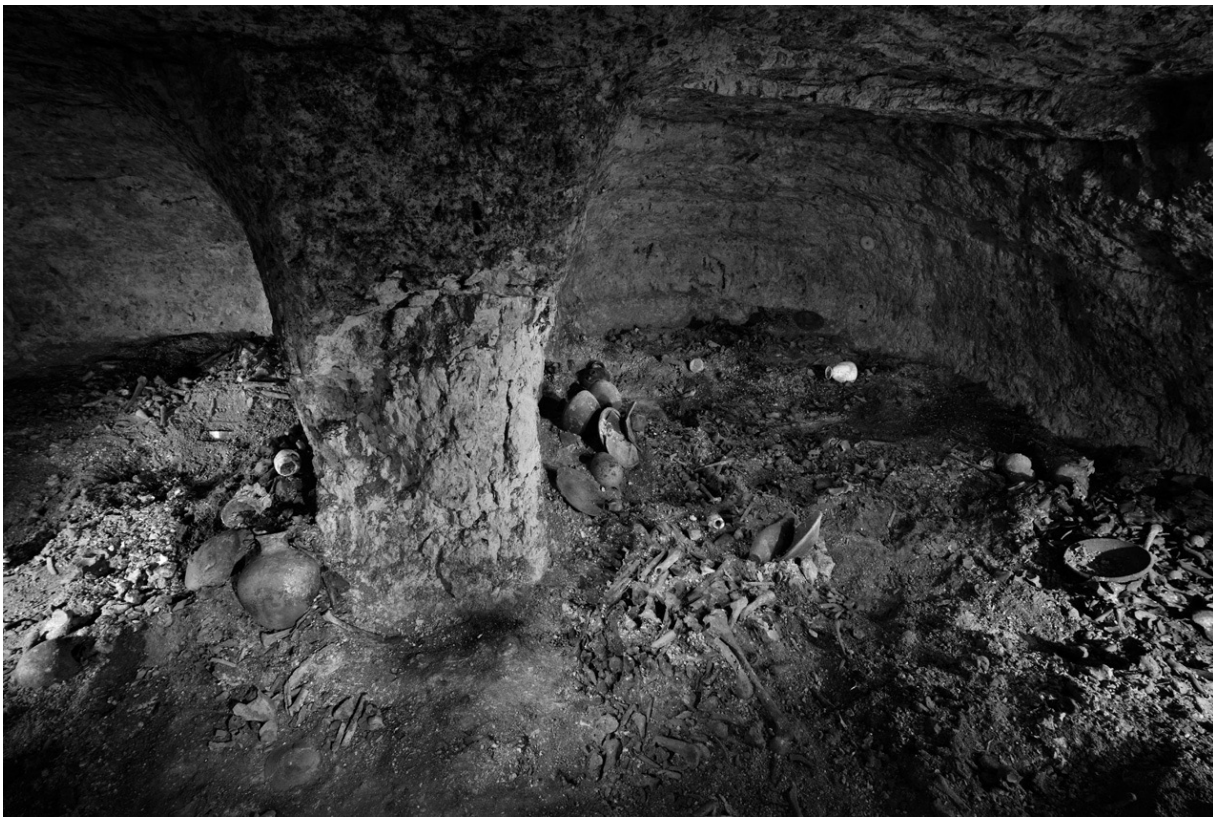

Figure 1
View into the two chambers of Tomb VII, Qaṭna (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: M. Steinmetz)

the ruling class of Qaṭna at the peak of its political power in the first half of the second millennium BC.

Tomb VII consists of two small chambers separated by a short wall which was carved out of the rock (fig. 1). The careful excavation of the hypogeum allowed for the identification of decayed wooden boxes in which human remains and a large number of objects had been deposited. Preliminary anthropological analyses indicate a minimal number of 70 human individuals.[12] Since the majority of the human remains were disarticulated, it can be assumed that the tomb was not used as a primary but as a secondary burial place.[13]

3. Gold jewellery from Tomb VII

Tomb VII yielded a rich inventory with over 1000 small finds, among which approx. 350 gold objects of different types and functions. With very few exceptions, the gold objects were not found in direct association with a specific burial. Contrarily, most gold objects had been deposited in wooden boxes which contained predominantly disarticulated human remains.[14] Consequently, it is not possible to assess the personal equipment of the human individuals from Tomb VII. Hence, the archaeological record does not allow for gender- or age-related studies with regard to the furnishing with gold jewellery. The lack of connection between burials and grave goods is best illustrated by a hoard of gold

[12] Witzel, Flohr, Degenhardt, pp. 102-103.

[13] It should also be noted that each wooden box contained the remains of several human individuals as well as small finds. These were deposited in a space-saving way in the wooden boxes. Therefore, it is highly probable that they did not serve as coffins for the dead but as transport boxes from their primary burial place to Tomb VII (Pfälzner, Dohmann-Pfälzner 2011, pp. 135-136; Pfälzner 2012, pp. 215-216).

[14] Puljiz in press a.

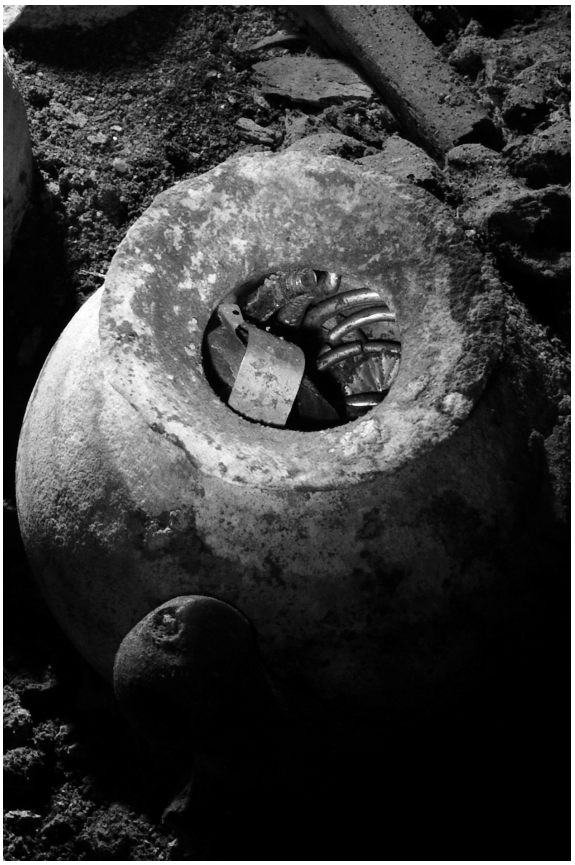

Figure 2
A hoard of gold jewellery deposited in an alabaster vessel in Tomb VII (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/ photo: M. Steinmetz)

objects crammed into an alabaster vessel which was then placed in one of the wooden boxes (fig. 2).[15] Although it can be assumed that the objects contained in the alabaster vessel were once associated with specific individuals, no indications of such a connection are traceable in the archaeological record of Tomb VII.

The vast majority of the gold objects were probably used as body adornment. Gold beads, of which approx. 150 specimens were found, are particularly numerous.[16] Moreover, the inventory contained several pierced discs, which show radial decorations, and a large number of rectangular or elliptical bands made of gold sheet. Both the bands and the discs are characterised by an imprecise and careless execution. Additionally, the decorations of some gold sheet discs from Tomb VII are unfinished. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that these bands and discs were used exclusively as funerary adornment.[17] Many decorations attested on the specimens from Tomb VII have no direct parallels at other sites. In combination with the fact that some pieces are unfinished, this indicates that the gold sheet objects were produced locally.[18]

Apart from these objects, the inventory from Tomb VII also comprises very carefully executed items, among which there are gold pendants, a considerable number of rings, toggle pins, a gold-plated obsidian beaker of Egyptian origin and a duck-bill axe with gold-plated mounting.[19] Some of these objects have no parallels at other sites. Other objects represent both chronologically and geographically widely distributed types, which are insignificant for a comparative study of gold jewellery. The latter include e.g. simple rings of solid gold without any decorations. However, Tomb VII also contained gold objects which, in terms of geography, show more specific distributional patterns. In the following, a selection of these items will be presented in order to illustrate the interregional links visible in the gold jewellery from Tomb VII.

3.1 A leaf-shaped pendant

Tomb VII contained seven pendants which consist completely or partially of gold. Among these, there is one specimen that is made of thin gold sheet. It

[15] Pfälzner, Dohmann-Pfälzner 2011, pp. 91-93; Puljiz in press a.

[16] The detailed study of the bead assemblages from Qaṭna, including the gold beads from Tomb VII, will be presented in Puljiz in press b.

[17] Puljiz in press a. Bands and discs of gold or silver sheet are known from funerary contexts throughout the Near East, e.g. from Chalcolithic burials at Byblos (Dunand 1973, pp. 319-320), from the Early Dynastic cemeteries at Ur (Woolley 1934, pl. 139, pl. 145-146, pl. 148) and Kish (Mackay 1929, pp. 178-179), as well as from Middle Bronze Age burials at Kültepe (Özgüç 1986, pl. H nos. 5-17, pl. 63) and Megiddo (Loud 1948, pl. 227 no. 2)

[18] Puljiz in press a.

[19] Puljiz in press a. For the Egyptian obsidian beaker with gold plating, see: Pfälzner, Dohmann-Pfälzner 2011, pp. 127-129; Ahrens 2011, pp. 129-130.

consists of two roughly leaf-shaped pieces which are connected by twirled gold wire (fig. 3). A small gold wire spiral protrudes from the point of each leaf. The leaves' surfaces feature a punched decoration consisting of one central boss surrounded by smaller dots. Interestingly, an almost identical gold sheet pendant with punched decorations was found at Late Bronze Age Tarsus.[20] Further leaf-shaped pendants with one or two central bosses are known from Southern Levantine sites, such as Tell el-Ajjul[21], Lachish[22] and the Yavneh-Yam anchorage[23]. Apart from the example from Qaṭna, pendants of this type seem unattested at other sites of Inner Syria or the Northern Levant. Hence, the pendant from Tomb VII represents a link between the specimens from the Southern Levant and the pendant from Cilicia, which previously seemed to occur in isolation.

Figure 3
A leaf-shaped pendant from Tomb VII, height 35.7 mm, length 29.3 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: I. Nakai)

3.2 Rings

More than 30 gold rings of different sizes and functions were discovered in Tomb VII. Two cylinder seal rings are of particular importance as they represent a jewellery type otherwise rarely attested.[24] The first example from Tomb VII consists of an oval gold shank with pointed ends which were inserted into the holes of a gold-mounted lapis lazuli cylinder seal (fig. 4).[25] The pointed ends of the ring shank were then covered by carefully coiled gold wire. Having an inner diameter of 4.7 cm, it is probably a bracelet. A stylistically closely comparable gold bracelet was found in a Level X tomb at Megiddo.[26] The only difference to the specimen from Tomb VII is that it is mounted with an undecorated bead instead of a seal.

Figure 4
Cylinder seal bracelet from Tomb VII, max. outer diam. 55 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: J. Gergovich)

The second cylinder seal ring from Tomb VII is, judging from its inner diameter of 1.8 cm, a finger ring (fig. 5). It is composed of a gold shank with open ends between which two cylinder seals were mounted. At the time of the ring's discovery only one seal remained in place (fig. 6), while the other was found detached in close proximity. The seals, which consist of a dark grey gemstone, were origi-

[20] Goldman 1956, fig. 434 no. 7.

[21] Hoard 1312, see: Petrie 1934, pl. XX no. 144.

[22] The Lachish pendant was found in the Fosse Temple, see: Tufnell, Inge, Harding 1940, pl. XXVI no. 8.

[23] Golani, Galili 2015, p. 18 fig. 2b.

[24] Cf. Arkhipov, Puljiz 2016.

[25] A study of the seal images from Qaṭna will be presented in a separate monograph by H. Dohmann.

[26] Loud 1948, pl. 226 no. 2.

Figure 5
Double cylinder seal ring from Tomb VII, max. outer diam. 23 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/ photo: J. Gergovich)

Figure 6
Detail of the double cylinder seal ring from Tomb VII showing the spot where the second seal was originally mounted (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/ photo: J. Gergovich)

nally arranged one next to the other.[27] Consequently, if the seals were rolled the impression of one seal would always have covered the impression of the other. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that the seals had a purely decorative purpose.

Apart from the abovementioned specimens, there are only two other rings from tombs at Ebla[28] and Gezer[29] with a cylinder seal and an uncarved cylinder bead, respectively. A third ring of this kind is part of the so-called *Trésor du Liban* which was acquired in the 1920s from the antiquities market.[30] A common feature of these specimens is their small size suggesting a use as finger rings. However, in contrast to the double-seal ring from Tomb VII, the examples from Ebla, Gezer and the *Trésor du Liban* feature only one seal. Given the rare occurrence of cylinder seal rings in archaeological contexts, it is all the more important to note that rings of this kind are mentioned in at least three administrative texts from the Middle Bronze Age palace archives at Mari.[31] According to these, a bracelet with one seal and finger rings with one, two or even three cylinder seals were used as gifts, presented to kings and queens of other Syrian states.[32]

Besides the cylinder seal rings, eleven rings with gold plating from Tomb VII ought to be mentioned. They are composed of a wooden or bronze core, which was carefully covered by gold sheet (figs. 7-8). While the wooden cores have completely decayed, leaving the respective rings hollow on the inside, the corroded bronze cores remained in place. The use of cores of other materials probably served the purpose of reducing the amount of gold needed. The gold-plated rings have open ends which are decorated with precisely engraved, parallel grooves. Most specimens are rather small with inner diameters of approx. 4 cm or less suggesting a use as bracelets for children. Five gold-plated, hollow bracelets included in the *Trésor du Liban* closely resemble the rings from Tomb VII.[33] A further comparison is offered by a silver-plated anklet with a bronze core that was found in a Middle Bronze Age tomb at Sidon.[34] Although lacking gold or silver plating, it is noteworthy that stylistically comparable, solid bronze rings with grooves at each

27 See footnote 25.

28 Matthiae 1980, fig. 8.

29 Macalister 1912, pl. XXXI no. 2.

30 Chéhab 1937, p. 11 fig. 2.

31 Arkhipov 2012, p. 386; Arkhipov, Puljiz 2016.

32 M.5291+M.11367, see Arkhipov 2012, p. 367; A.1259, see: Arkhipov 2012, pp. 368-369. Cf. also Arkhipov, Puljiz 2016 and Puljiz in press a.

33 Chéhab 1937, pl. V no. 5.

34 Doumet-Serhal, Kopetzky 2012, p. 42.

Figure 7
Gold-plated ring with incised ends and bronze core from Tomb VII, max. outer diam. 52.9 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: J. Gergovich)

Figure 8
Hollow ring of gold sheet with incised ends from Tomb VII, max. outer diam. 48.8 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: J. Gergovich)

Figure 9
Hollow ring of gold sheet with incised surface from Tomb VII, max. outer diam. 112.5 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: J. Gergovich)

Figure 10
Solid gold ring with incised ends from Tomb VII, max. outer diam. 64.3 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: C. Seitz)

end are attested in Middle Bronze Age contexts at Byblos[35] and Mari[36]. From this, it may be concluded that the abovementioned rings from Tomb VII represent a jewellery type restricted to Middle Bronze Age Syria and the Northern Levant.

The inventory from Tomb VII also contained one gold ring whose entire surface is furnished with carefully incised grooves (fig. 9). Being hollow on the inside, it most probably had a wooden core which decayed over time. The ring was bent violently so that it could be deposited in the aforementioned alabaster vessel. Its inner diameter of 10.4 cm suggests that it could have been used as bracelet, anklet or even as a torque. While the ring has no direct parallels in the Syro-Levantine region, its surface rendering is reminiscent of twisted gold bracelets and torques which are a common feature in Northern Levantine and western Inner Syrian jewellery assemblages of the Middle Bronze Age.[37]

[35] Open bronze rings with grooved ends were part of the so-called *Jarre Montet*, see: Montet 1929, pl. LXX no. 598; Tufnell, Ward 1966, fig. 9 nos. 225-226, 228. Further examples were found in hoards deposited in the area of the Temple of the Obelisks, see: Dunand 1950, pl. LXXXII nos. 18352-18353.

[36] Tomb 943, see: Jean-Marie 1999, pl. 200 nos. 2-3.

[37] Philip 2015, p. 134.

Two solid gold rings from Tomb VII with incised grooves at each end represent a widely distributed jewellery type (fig. 10). A closely comparable ring with grooves was found in a Level X grave at Megiddo.[38] Rings of this kind were also discovered in tombs and hoards dated to the late Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age at Tell el-Ajjul.[39] Further parallels come from Middle Bronze Age contexts at Byblos[40] and Kültepe[41]. Hence, it appears that this ring type is restricted to the Middle Bronze Age in the Northern Levant, western Inner Syria and Anatolia, while it continues to the Late Bronze Age in the Southern Levant.

3.3 Toggle pins

Tomb VII yielded eight gold toggle pins which can, on typological grounds, be divided into two groups. The pins of the first group have oblate spherical heads which consist of one grooved or fluted bead.[42] The latter, which are made of gold or sintered quartz, respectively, were fixed to the shank by means of a small gold rivet. In one case, the head is not preserved. The slender shanks of the pins may be straight or curved. Each pin has a narrow eyelet that is located in the upper half or the upper third section of the shank (fig. 11). One specimen of the first group features a small gold ring that was attached to its eyelet (fig. 12). The zone between the head and the eyelet of each pin is decorated with horizontal incisions, while one to three incised zigzag lines are visible below the eyelet. Closely comparable toggle pins, most of which consist of bronze, were discovered at many sites in the Northern Levant and Inner Syria, such as Hama[43], Ugarit[44] and Alalakh[45]. A further comparison was found in the Eastern Palace of Qaṭna.[46] Interestingly, pins of this type are also part of the *Trésor du Liban*.[47] The southernmost parallels to this type of toggle pins come from Middle Bronze Age contexts at sites in Upper

Figure 11
Gold toggle pin with oblate spherical head from Tomb VII, max. length 95.3 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: J. Gergovich)

Figure 12
Gold toggle pin from Tomb VII with oblate spherical head and ring attached to the eyelet, max. length 93.5 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: K. Wita)

[38] Tomb 3060, see: Loud 1948, pl. 226 no. 3.

[39] Tomb 447, see: Petrie 1934, pl. XIX-XX nos. 155-158; cenotaph 1450, see: Petrie 1932, pl. II; hoard 1299, see: Petrie 1934, pl. XII (bottom left); hoard 1313, see: Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, p. 177 fig. 81 (bottom left).

[40] Dunand 1937, pl. LXXII nos. 2540, 2542-2544.

[41] Kulakoğlu, Kangal 2011, p. 313 no. 361.

[42] These gold toggle pins represent variations of H. Klein's type I 12 A 6 b, see Klein 1992, p. 110, pl. 17. Cf. the discussion in Puljiz in press a.

[43] Fugmann 1958, pl. X no. 13.

[44] Schaeffer 1962, p. 308 fig. 6 no. 18.194.

[45] Woolley 1955, pl. LXXIII no. P4.

[46] Iamoni 2012, p. 358 fig. 9 (right).

[47] Chéhab 1937, pl. V nos. 25-26.

Figure 13
Headless gold toggle pin from Tomb VII, max. length 40.4 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: C. Seitz)

Galilee,[48] such as Hazor[49], Safed[50] and Tel Sasa[51], and from Middle Bronze Age tombs at Rishon le-Zion[52] in the coastal plain of modern Israel.

The second group of gold toggle pins found in Tomb VII includes two specimens. These differ formally from the pins of the first group as they lack a head (fig. 13). Instead, their top is very slightly convex-shaped. The eyelet of each pin is located in the upper third section of the rather compact shank. Both pins show incisions in the zone above the eyelet and one zigzag line below it. As can be concluded from the evidence from other sites published so far, typologically comparable toggle pins seem unattested in the Northern Levant or Inner Syria. However, similar pins of this type were found at Tell el-Ajjul[53], Amman[54] and Megiddo[55]. From this, it may deduced that headless toggle pins with incised upper body are a Southern Levantine type. Thus, it becomes clear that two different traditions of toggle pins are represented in the inventory of Tomb VII. While one tradition is associated mainly with the Northern Levantine and Inner Syrian regions, the other seems to be rooted in the Southern Levant.

[48] Two typologically comparable bronze toggle pins from Jericho (Schaeffer 1948, fig. 119 no. 1) and Tell el-Dabʿa (Philip 2006, pp. 95, 97, fig. 46 no. 4) represent isolated finds.

[49] Yadin et Al. 1958, pl. CXVIII no. 21.

[50] Damati, Stepansky 1996, p. 17*, fig. 18 nos. 1-6.

[51] Ben-Arieh 2004, p. 15*, fig. 14 no. 1.

[52] Kan-Cipor - Meron, Shalev 2018, fig. 7.1.

[53] Tomb 1416, see: Tufnell 1962, p. 20 fig. 8; tomb 331, see: Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, pl. 73; hoard 1299, see: Petrie 1934, pl. XIII-XIV nos. 19 and 24.

[54] Hennessy 1966, pl. XXXV A.

[55] Loud 1948, pl. 223 nos. 72-73. Note that pin no. 72 has a twisted upper shank instead of horizontal incisions.

3.4 Bands with wire loops

Among the gold objects contained in Tomb VII there are approx. 90 rectangular and elliptical bands. The majority of these has either pierced or unpierced ends. Only two gold sheet bands from Tomb VII feature carefully executed wire loops on their ends. Each loop has two spiral-shaped ends. The bands differ with regard to their outline: while one specimen has straight sides (fig. 14), the other has a wavy outline (fig. 15). Being more than 40 cm long, both bands are of considerable length. Consequently, they might have been used as headdresses or as girdles for children. However, as one band was found crammed into the already mentioned alabaster vessel and the other specimen was deposited along with the remains of multiple human individuals in one of the wooden boxes their functions cannot be derived from the archaeological context.

Figure 14
Straight-sided band of gold sheet with wire loops from Tomb VII, max. length 458.3 mm (Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: J. Gergovich)

One gold band with spiral wire loops included in the *Trésor du Liban* closely resembles the straight-sided specimen from Tomb VII.[56] Fragments of further straight-sided gold bands with spiral wire loops were found in tombs at Tell el-Ajjul[57], Lachish[58] and

[56] Chéhab 1937, pl. III no. 24.

[57] Tomb 1203, see: Petrie 1934, pl. XV-XVI no. 42.

[58] Tomb 4004, see: Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, pl. 101.

Figure 15
Wavy band of gold sheet with wire loops from Tomb VII, max. length 423.3 mm
(Qaṭna Project, University of Tübingen/photo: J. Gergovich)

Gezer.[59] Thus, apart from the two specimens from Qaṭna, bands with spiral wire loops seem to occur only in the Southern Levant.

4 Conclusion

The Middle Bronze Age inventory of Tomb VII at Qaṭna includes a large number of gold jewellery. Some jewellery types from Tomb VII, such as the leaf-shaped pendant and the solid gold rings with grooved ends, are distributed over a wide area in the Syro-Levantine region and even Anatolia. Particularly noteworthy are the cylinder seal rings from Tomb VII which not only have archaeological comparisons at Ebla, Megiddo and Gezer but also textual parallels in the palace archives of Mari. Thus, the specimens from Tomb VII form a geographical link between the pieces from northwestern Inner Syria, Eastern Syria and the Southern Levant. Administrative texts from Mari clearly show that cylinder seal/bead rings were used in the context of diplomatic gift exchange. Thus, the distribution of this jewellery type across the Syro-Levantine region might be taken as an indicator for a culturally interacting network into which the ruling class of Middle Bronze Age Qaṭna was integrated.

Other jewellery types from Tomb VII show more restricted distributional patterns. The latter applies to the gold-plated rings which occur mostly at Northern Levantine sites, such as Sidon and Byblos, and are not attested at all in the Southern Levant. Similarly, comparisons to the toggle pins with oblate spherical heads from Tomb VII are attested mostly at Northern Levantine/Inner Syrian sites, e.g. Hama, Ugarit and Alalakh. Toggle pins of this kind also appear in Upper Galilee and the coastal plain of modern Israel, however to a lesser extent.

On the other hand, headless toggle pins and long bands with spiral wire loops were, apart from the pieces from Tomb VII, discovered exclusively at Southern Levantine sites, among which Tell el-Ajjul, Lachish, Gezer, Megiddo and Amman. It is possible that the last-mentioned jewellery items

[59] Cave tomb 28 II, see: Macalister 1912, pl. XXXI no. 1.

were brought to Qaṭna from the South as commercial commodities or diplomatic gifts. Likewise, it cannot be ruled out that they were locally produced following imported concepts or ideas. In any case, the composition of the assemblage from Tomb VII displays the interaction between the Syrian/Northern Levantine and the Southern Levantine cultural spheres.

In conclusion, the present study has shown that the jewellery assemblage from Tomb VII allows for the detection of cultural interactions between social elites of the Middle Bronze Age, which thus far had been studied mostly on the basis of textual sources. The assemblage from Tomb VII comprises three groups of jewellery types. According to their parallels, these refer to either the Northern Levant and Syria, or the Southern Levant or the whole Syro-Levantine region. This indicates three layers of cultural interaction with differing geographical extents in which Middle Bronze Age Qaṭna appears to have participated. The distinctive composition of the jewellery assemblage from Tomb VII with links to both Syrian/Northern Levantine and Southern Levantine sites suggests that Middle Bronze Age Qaṭna functioned as an interface between these regions. Hence, the gold jewellery from Tomb VII archaeologically exemplifies the interconnected network of Syro-Levantine states in which Qaṭna served as a node between Inner Syria and the Southern Levant. This corresponds to historical sources which indicate that Qaṭna's sphere of influence during the Middle Bronze Age extended as far as Southern Syria and perhaps even included Hazor in the Upper Galilee region.[60]

[60] Van Koppen 2015, pp. 88 and footnote 24.

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