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Middle Assyrian Pottery from Polish Excavations on the Site of Tell Rijim (Iraq) : preliminary Study

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MIDDLE ASSYRIAN POTTERY FROM POLISH EXCAVATIONS ON THE SITE OF TELL RIJIM (IRAQ). PRELIMINARY STUDY

Polish excavations at the site of Tell Rijim were part of the Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project, also called the Saddam Dam Basin Salvage Project, conducted in northern Iraq in the 1980s, in connection with the construction of a dam at the locality of Eski Mosul on the Tigris. Explorations, directed by Piotr Bieliński, were carried out in 1984–1985 by a team from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw. Both interim and final reports were published from this work.

Tell Rijim, also called Tell Rijim Omar Dalle, lays approximately 25 km to the northwest of Eski-Mosul, on the western bank of the Tigris (Fig. 1). It constituted part of the "Raffan microregion" between the Tigris on one side and Jebel Butmah on the other. The site, which covered about 2.5 ha in area, was situated on a flat natural hill rising about 28 m above the water level of the river. The hill extended alongside the riverbank; it was of oval shape, 250 m long and about 100 m wide. The western part of the mound was higher than the eastern one; only this part of the site was excavated.

Three seasons of excavations were carried out: in the fall of 1984 and in the spring and fall of 1985. A stratigraphic trench (C) was dug on the northern slope and the remaining trenches were situated in the central part of the tell (Fig. 2). Altogether an area of 620 m² was investigated. The digging was encumbered by several factors, most importantly by erosion of cultural layers during intervals in site occupation. This resulted in, for example, the destruction of mud brick walls. Returning settlement saw new foundations being laid on the same level as older ones, sometimes even lower, especially on the slope. The stratigraphy was disturbed even further by burials of later date, dug 1.5–2 m deep into the shallow-lying cultural layers (trenches D, E, F, partly B). These factors had direct impact on the provenancing of finds, pottery included.

The presence of a Middle Assyrian layer had been signaled in interim reports. Following the first season of work, P. Bieliński believed that the earlier of the two "Assyrian" layers identified in trench A could be dated "by pottery to the end of the Middle Assyrian or the very beginnings of the Neo-Assyrian Period." In the next

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3 For a description of the microregion, see: R. KOLINSKI, Tell Rijim..., 1–2.

4 A survey, described as "somewhat unsystematic", was carried out in the eastern part of the site — R. KOLINSKI, Tell Rijim..., X.

5 P. BIELIŃSKI, Tell Rijim and Tell Raffaan 1985..., 280.

6 R. KOLINSKI, Tell Rijim..., X-XI.

7 Moreover, difficulties in recognizing undisturbed contexts during the exploration repeatedly caused the finds to be mixed with objects from other contexts, such as the burials themselves, cf. R. KOLINSKI, Tell Rijim..., XI.

8 P. BIELIŃSKI, Tell Raffaan and Tell Rijim – First Season..., 276.
report, the earlier of the two recognized Assyrian layers was assigned also to the “beginning of the Neo-Assyrian or the turn of the Middle- and Neo-Assyrian Period.” A “Middle Assyrian” attribution appeared also in field notes as a working designation of specific features and sherds. In his publication of Middle Bronze Age levels, R. Koliński proposed a site stratigraphy in which “layer 8” represented occupation in the Middle Assyrian Period, dated to 1300–1200 BC. Table 2 collates the presence of particular layers in the trenches; the Middle Assyrian layer was observed in trenches A, A 1, B, G, D, E. These provisional determinations have now been verified following a study of the architectural remains and pottery for publication of the Neo-Assyrian layers of the site. Legible architectural complexes from the earlier period of Assyrian occupation on Tell Rijim have been distinguished and examples of Middle Assyrian pottery have been identified. It is worth noting at this point that Middle Assyrian remains were observed in the Raffan microregion also outside of Tell Rijim, at the site of Tell Sa‘ud excavated by Iraqi archaeologists. A brief interim report from these excavations exists, but the pottery from Tell Sa‘ud remains unpublished.

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1 P. Bielinski, Tell Rijim and Tell Raffaan 1985..., 287.
2 R. Koliński, Tell Rijim..., XI, table 1. Determining the stratigraphy of the site was difficult, because trench C, in which later burials had not interfered with the deposition sequence, contained layers only from the fourth, third and second millennium BC. For later layers, the stratigraphical sequence had to be read from much more poorly preserved records in trenches A, A 1, B, E, F, cf. R. Koliński, Tell Rijim..., XI–XII.
3 R. Koliński, Tell Rijim..., XII, table 2. See also: A. Green, The Nineteenth Countryside..., 97–99 on Tell Rijim, especially the comparison of layers from particular sectors and their dating on page 98.
4 Publication prepared by the present author.
For the purposes of this article it will suffice to summarize in general the architectural data, the full publication of which is pending. Middle Assyrian occupation of the tell was observed practically only in trenches A, A 1 in the form of severely damaged and scattered architectural remains. A pit in trench F should also be assigned a Middle Assyrian date. In trench A 1 (Figs. 3, 4) the most important remains are two parallel walls, W 11 (top of stone substructure at 26.93–26.97 m) and W 12 (26.84–26.94 m) oriented SW-NE. Nothing but the stone foundations have survived, although in the case of wall W 12 some vestiges of bricks could be observed by the southern edge of trench A 1.
(preserved top of the structure at 27.06 m). The latter wall ran through the brick part of the so-called north-south wall from the Middle Bronze Age.\(^{14}\) In turn, wall W 11 was sealed by a pavement from layer 9, which was found to be Neo-Assyrian. Other remains from the Middle Assyrian Period included sections of stone pavement found in different parts of the trench A, A 1. Walls W 11 and W 12 presented a different alignment than the earlier Middle Bronze wall and the walls from layers dated to the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) millennium BC.\(^{15}\) Taking this into consideration and the fact that walls W 11 and W 12 were cut into Middle Bronze wall and were situated below the level of Neo-Assyrian walls, the most probable interpretation is that layer 8 very likely represents the Middle Assyrian Period. The presence of ceramic forms that can be assigned to the Middle Assyrian Period only strengthens this hypothesis.

Walls W 11 and W 12 extended further to the south, into the unexplored part of the site. The salvage character of the research and the limited time available excluded further exploration of Middle Assyrian levels in this part of the tell. It would have also given a more extensive assemblage of Middle Assyrian pottery, perhaps from undisturbed contexts. For the same reasons the size and character of the settlement from this period cannot be established.

**The pottery**\(^ {17}\)

Koliński’s publication of the work at Tell Rijim gives a count of about 58000 sherds. About 8500 were diagnostic pieces and of these 2100 were recorded.\(^ {16}\) Part of the ceramic material left in Mosul for later recording was lost during the Gulf War in 1990. Koliński characterized this set as "mainly of Ninevite 5 and Neo-Assyrian dates,"\(^ {17}\) but it is more than likely that Middle Assyrian material was also represented. It means that the material for study is hardly complete, limiting research possibilities and end results.

Moreover, for reasons described above, most of the pottery comes from disturbed contexts; hence the material is mixed and not easily assignable to specific periods of occupation of the site. Not the least, the author had access only to drawings and descriptions of the pottery, being able to examine personally only a limited group of pottery sherds kept temporarily in Warsaw.

The following presentation is restricted for the most part to forms from the few good contexts, supplemented by forms attributable to Middle Assyrian ceramics based on parallels from other sites. Special emphasis has been placed on examples of vessels with debatable, but probable Middle Assyrian dating.

In the case of these debatable fragments, ware and temper could be of importance in identification and dating, but were not for a couple of reasons. One had to do with the documentation standards during excavations on Tell Rijim, the other was more general in nature and concerns Middle Assyrian ceramics as a whole. Koliński’s publication leaves no doubt that the matrix composition descriptions made during excavations were partly incorrect. This "put into doubt the results of the matrix composition descriptions."\(^ {21}\) For example, part of the substances identified in the field as mineral inclusions turned out in fact to be part of the clay matrix.\(^ {20}\) Consequently, determinations included in field descriptions need to be treated with caution, especially with regard to the mineral temper.

Plant temper which predominates in Middle Assyrian pottery and occurs in as much as 90% of the ware on some sites (pottery from Tell Sheikh Hamad, Tell Bdeir and 'Tell Sabi Abyad)\(^ {22}\) is not exclusive in this period. Mineral temper is also present, although much less frequent. According to S. Anastasio, the predominance of either the mineral or the plant temper group is an important chronological marker, because the share of mineral temper becomes more frequent in the Neo-Assyrian ceramics but

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14 On this wall, see: **R. Koliński, Tell Rijim...,** 12, 20–22.
15 Cf. **R. Koliński, Tell Rijim...,** figs. 18, 19.
16 Cf. **P. Biełinski, Preliminary Report...,** 26, fig. 6.
17 The author would like to thank Andrzej Reiche from the Ancient Art Department of the National Museum in Warsaw for reading an early draft of this article and for his very useful comments, as well as making available to the author a manuscript of an article on Mitannian and Middle Assyrian pottery from the site of Nemrik.
19 **R. Koliński, Tell Rijim...,** X.
21 R. Koliński, **Tell Rijim...,** 26, note 27. Similar observation, see: S. Anastasio, *Das Obere Habur-Tal in der Zeit zwischen dem 13. und 9. Jh. v. Chr. D e r K e r a m i k e s P r o j e k t e s P r o s p e c t a r e c h e o l o g i c u m d u H a u s-Khabour o c c i d e n t a l (Syri e d u N.E.),* Firenze 2007, 116.
as he notes himself, plant temper is present through the end of the Neo-Assyrian Period. Therefore, establishing the presence of plant temper does not determine attribution of a given fragment to the group of Middle Assyrian ceramics. Moreover, Anastasio points out that data on organic versus mineral temper is of importance in the case of material from excavations, homogeneous and with clear stratigraphy. The usefulness of such data diminishes in the case of material from field surveys, especially from sites with both Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian occupation. The pottery from Tell Rijim can be treated as another case of diminished importance of the data on temper. Occupation from both the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian Periods was recorded on the site and most of the material was found to come from disturbed layers.

Moreover, the Middle Bronze Age ceramic assemblage from Tell Rijim is characterized mainly by fabrics with equal proportions of mineral and organic temper. But there are also a few (paste 3, 7, 8, 14), where plant temper predominates. Indeed, according to table 8 which gives a count of the frequency of particular fabrics (only for rim fragments), it appears to be the second most frequent group (179 examples; group of fabrics with equal proportion of mineral and organic temper – 223 examples). In effect, since many of the forms attributable to the Middle Assyrian Period came from tags with mixed content (including Middle Bronze Age ceramics), identification based on (plant) temper encounters increased difficulty.

### Vessel forms

A limited number of vessel forms and strong standardization of the shape are usually considered among the main characteristics of Middle Assyrian ceramics. Ever since P. Pfälzner’s publication, certain types, that is, Standard Carinated Bowls and Cups as well as Standard Bottles, have been accepted as typical forms of the so-called Middle Assyrian administrative pottery.
Tell Rijim produced a small number of carinated bowls (RI 1078/69, RI 224/15, RI 3330/148, RI 928A/64, RI 105/6, RI 404/229, Figs. 5:1–6; RI 4949/279, Fig. 6:1), the shape of which recalls the Middle Assyrian Standard Carinated Bowls from Tell Sheikh Hamad. Other parallels come from Khirbet esh-Sheneh, Tell Barri, Tell Taban, Ashur or Tell al-Naml. One should note, however, the bowl from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, dated to the Neo-Assyrian Period, which recalls the shape of the Tell Rijim bowls.

For a piece of smaller diameter (RI 4954/279, diam. 10 cm, Fig. 6:2), counterparts can be found in the Middle Assyrian Standard Carinated Cups published by Pfälzner (examples from Tell Sheikh Hamad), also known from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, Tell Sabi Abyad, Tell Barri, Tell Taban, the Agig region and many others.

Pfälzner’s variant of the Middle Assyrian carinated bowl, “Schale mit zwei eingeritzten Linien im oberen Wändungsabschnitt,”63 has also been recorded at Tell Rijim (bowls RI 8062/414, RI 8450/455, RI 1678/90, Fig. 6:3,4), where it is distinguished by a horizontal incision at the rim and just above the carination, as well as rather straight walls between the carination and the rim. These bowls were considered by S. Anastasios as one of the most telling forms, next to Standard Bowls and Bottles, for the Middle Assyrian Period, especially as they are entirely absent as a type from Mitannian on one hand and Neo-Assyrian on the other. The best parallel for the Tell Rijim vessels can be found among the bowls from Tell Barri.64 A. D’Agostino discusses aspects of appearance, production and dating of such bowls, and cites parallels from Tell Brak, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta,65 Tell Mohammed Arab, Tell Sheikh Hamad, Giricano and Üçtepe.66 The same form is represented most probably by bowls from Tell Taban, Tell Aqab and the Polish excavations on Nemrik.67 Tell Barri has also produced bowls with rounded body between the carination and the rim and just above the carination, as well as rather straight walls between the carination and the rim. These bowls were considered by S. Anastasios as one of the most telling forms, next to Standard Bowls and Bottles, for the Middle Assyrian Period, especially as they are entirely absent as a type from Mitannian on one hand and Neo-Assyrian on the other. The best parallel for the Tell Rijim vessels can be found among the bowls from Tell Barri.64 A. D’Agostino discusses aspects of appearance, production and dating of such bowls, and cites parallels from Tell Brak, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta,65 Tell Mohammed Arab, Tell Sheikh Hamad, Giricano and Üçtepe.66 The same form is represented most probably by bowls from Tell Taban, Tell Aqab and the Polish excavations on Nemrik.67 Tell Barri has also produced bowls with rounded body between the carination and the rim and just above the carination, as well as rather straight walls between the carination and the rim. These bowls were considered by S. Anastasios as one of the most telling forms, next to Standard Bowls and Bottles, for the Middle Assyrian Period, especially as they are entirely absent as a type from Mitannian on one hand and Neo-Assyrian on the other. The best parallel for the Tell Rijim vessels can be found among the bowls from Tell Barri.64 A. D’Agostino discusses aspects of appearance, production and dating of such bowls, and cites parallels from Tell Brak, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta,65 Tell Mohammed Arab, Tell Sheikh Hamad, Giricano and Üçtepe.66 The same form is represented most probably by bowls from Tell Taban, Tell Aqab and the Polish excavations on Nemrik.67 Tell Barri has also produced bowls with rounded body between the carination...
Ryc. 5. Ceramika z Tell Rijim – misy.

rim, classified by D’Agostino in the type discussed above, having parallels in Neo-Assyrian material, that is, finds from Ashur from graves dated to the late 9th – early 8th c. BC; according to D'Agostino, this is proof of the continuation of the variant in the Neo-Assyrian Period. It is worth noting that Tell Rijim has also produced vessels of this kind (Ri 3155/140).

Other examples of open forms are more debatable and their dating to the Middle Assyrian Period cannot be taken as certain.

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48 A. D’AGOSTINO, Alcune osservazioni..., 14
A single example of a shallow carinated bowl with flaring rim, which narrows down slightly (Ri 7263/373, Fig. 6:5), features mineral temper (mixed with organic in small quantities) and slip. The dating based on parallels is debatable, as similar forms were present in both Middle and Neo-Assyrian ceramics. In the first millennium BC, this type occurred in the pottery from Niniveh, Ashur, Nimrud, Tell Rimah, and Tell Ahmar. The form, however, appeared already in Middle Assyrian ceramics from, for example, Tell Sheikh Hamad, Tell Rimah, and Ashur. It was even noted among Mitannian forms (Tell Rimah).

This is important, considering that the sherd in question came from pit 3, trench F, which also produced a beaker Ri 7263/373 (see below). Both forms are known from the Middle Assyrian ceramic repertoire; taken in conjunction with the stratigraphic position of pit 3 (top level of pit 3 measured at 26.81 m), it means that the pit and the pottery in it was very likely of Middle Assyrian date.

Bowl Ri 232/16 (Fig. 6:6) has a straight, almost conical shape and sharply thickened lip on the inside and outside of the rim. The lip is bevelled outside with a small groove just under the top edge. A similar example comes from a Middle Assyrian layer at Tell Sheikh Hamad, but the form was still recognizable. It is a shouldered beaker with globular body, narrowing toward a nipple base. Some of the nipple bases recorded from Rijim (see below) could have belonged to beakers of this type. The S-curved neck widens gently at the top, turning probably into a slightly flaring rim with simple unaccentuated lip. The form is attested for Middle Assyrian to Post-Assyrian Periods. The Rijim vessel falls into the type described by Pfälzner as ausladende Becher, which has been recorded for all the others were recorded from Tell Taban and Tell Sabi Abyad. Bowls with thickened rim were also found in Middle Assyrian layers at Tell Rimah. The sherd from Tell Rijim appears to be particularly close to one of the Rimah pieces which has a similar groove beneath the rim edge. Bowls with a beveled and thickened rim, albeit in a slightly different way, were known from the Old Babylonian Period: examples originate from Tell Rijim itself as well as from Tell Taban, for example. Even so, the similarity between bowls from Rijim and the vessel from Tell Rimah makes a Middle Assyrian date more than likely.

Only two of the vessels in the recorded material with possible Middle Assyrian date can be assigned to the beakers group. Vessel Ri 7263/373 (Fig. 7:1) is missing the rim, but the form was still recognizable. It is a shouldered beaker with globular body, narrowing toward a nipple base. Of the nipple bases recorded from Rijim (see below) could have belonged to beakers of this type. The S-curved neck widens gently at the top, turning probably into a slightly flaring rim with simple unaccentuated lip. The form is attested for Middle Assyrian to Post-Assyrian Periods. The Rijim vessel falls into the type described by Pfälzner as ausladende Becher, which has been recorded for all the others were recorded from Tell Taban and Tell Sabi Abyad. Bowls with thickened rim were also found in Middle Assyrian layers at Tell Rimah. The sherd from Tell Rijim appears to be particularly close to one of the Rimah pieces which has a similar groove beneath the rim edge. Bowls with a beveled and thickened rim, albeit in a slightly different way, were known from the Old Babylonian Period: examples originate from Tell Rijim itself as well as from Tell Taban, for example. Even so, the similarity between bowls from Rijim and the vessel from Tell Rimah makes a Middle Assyrian date more than likely.

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50 It may very well be self-slip in this case, see: R. KOLINSKI, Tell Rijim..., 28. See also a similar remark by S. ANASTASIO of the pottery from B. Lyonnet’s survey – S. ANASTASIO, Das Obere Habur-Tal..., 114. This information could not be verified because, as explained above, the author had only the descriptions and drawings of the pottery to work on.
51 S. LUMSDEN, Neo-Assyrian Pottery from Niniveh, (in:) A. Hausleiter, A. Reiche (eds.), Iron Age Pottery..., 5, fig. 4:2 (7th c. BC).
53 J. OATES, Late Assyrian Pottery from Fort Shalmaneser, “Iraq” 21, 1959, pl. XXXVI:31. Shallow carinated bowls, with ring-base and pointed rim were also described by A. Hausleiter among the forms found at Nimrud and dated to the (8th–7th) c. BC – A. Hausleiter, Neo-Assyrian Pottery from Kalhu/Nimrud with Special Reference to the Polish Excavations in the “Central Building” (1974–76), (in:) A. Hausleiter, A. Reiche (eds.), Iron Age Pottery..., 28–29, with other references.
54 C. POSTGATE, D. OATES, J. OATES, The Excavations at Tell Al Rimah: The Pottery, Iraq Archaeological Reports 4, Warminster 1997, pl. 55:491, although this vessel is deeper and the walls below the carination slightly bulging; fine grit was used as temper and the vessel was also burnished inside (end of 9th/beginning of 8th c. BC).
56 P. PFÄLZNER, Mittanische..., pl. 7:1a (“Stufe I” 13th c. BC).
58 C. BRUGER, Keramik..., pl. 18.1 (“Schicht IIb4”).
60 C. PFÄLZNER, Mittanische..., pl. 102:a, slightly rounded body; idem, The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions..., 250–251, 253, pl. XXVIII:324 (Middle Assyrian IIc).
61 Tell Taban – K. OHNUMA, H. NUMOTO, Excavations at Tell Taban..., fig. 7:19; Tell Sabi Abyad – P.M.M.G. AKKERMANS, I. ROSSMEISL, Excavations at Tell Sabi Abyad..., fig. 10:40.
64 R. KOLINSKI, Tell Rijim..., pl. 18:b, form M 29.
65 H. NUMOTO, Excavations at Tell Taban..., fig. 15:46.
67 P. PFÄLZNER, Mittanische..., 135.
Middle Assyrian pottery from Polish excavations on the site of Tell Rijim (Iraq). Preliminary study


Middle Assyrian phases (Middle Assyrian I–III). Middle Assyrian parallels come from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, Tell Sheikh Hamad, Tell Taban, Tell Barri and others. Interestingly, examples of "goblets with tall neck, bulbous body and button or small flat base" recorded in the so-called House of Puzuruma at Terqa are very similar to the vessel from Rijim, demonstrating that the form was common in the Middle Euphrates region already earlier on (the

13 C. Schmidt, Die Keramik..., 76, pl. 3h:24,25 ("Bauphase 1," Middle Assyrian).
14 P. Paizner, Mittanische..., pl. 114a and especially f; idem, The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions..., 253 – "common type of Middle Assyrian Fine Chaff Ware", pl. XXXVIII:318 (probably bases and lower bodies of nos. 320–321 on the same plate).
15 K. Ohnuma, H. Numoto, Excavations at Tell Taban..., fig. 8:22.

16 A. D’Agostino, La ceramica del pozzo..., fig. 2:37; idem, Pottery Production..., fig. 1:32,40 (nipple base).
house is dated to 1750–1650 BC). Parallels from the Neo-Assyrian Period are equally numerous. They have been noted at Qasrij Cliff and Khirbet Khatuniyeh; outside the Edi Mosul region, this form is evidenced at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, Ashur and Nimrud. It continued to be present in Post-Assyrian times as indicated by a vessel from Khirbet Khatuniyeh, level 3. The beaker from Tell Rijim should be dated to the Middle Assyrian Period, because it comes from the same pit 3 as bowl Ri 7267 (see above). Both forms are known from the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian Period, but the stratigraphic position of pit 3 and the ware represented by the two vessels could indicate a date in the 2nd millennium BC.

The second vessel from this group, a small shouldered beaker (Ri 600/56, Fig. 7:2) with slightly indicated shoulders and vertical, simple rim (a large part of which has been preserved) finds parallels in Neo-Assyrian material from Nimrud and Tell Sheikh Hassan, but the form was present already in the Middle Assyrian ceramic repertoire. In the case of this vessel, the find context at Rijim does not help in resolving the dating issue. It can be dated to Middle Assyrian as well as Neo-Assyrian and the second possibility is indeed more likely, considering that the temper is mineral (lime) exclusively.

Examples of vessels classified by P. Pfälzner as “Standard Bottles” are also known from Tell Rijim. One of them is rim Ri 2156/110 (Fig. 7:3). The shoulders of the vessel narrow toward the rim which is heavily thickened on the outside. Similar forms come from Tell Sheikh Hamad, Tell Barri, Tell Sabi Abyad. Neo-Assyrian examples are less numerous (Karat-Tukulti-Ninurta and Lower Khabur survey work). According to Pfälzner rims like the one from Rijim, that is, elongated and rounded, were characteristic of Middle Assyrian I (Middle Jezirah II B) and later again Middle Assyrian III (Middle Jezirah III). The vessel from Tell Rijim is most like the Middle Assyrian parallels in form and should be assigned to this period.

Other examples of bottles have also parallels in the Middle Assyrian material from other sites: fragment Ri 1128/20 (Fig. 7:4) in material from Tell Sheikh Hamad and Tell Barri and rim Ri 1557/85 (Fig. 7:5) in material from Tell Ajaja, Tell Mohammed Arab, Tell Sabi Abyad and Tell Brak.

From Tell Rijim comes another vessel that could be dated to the Middle Assyrian Period. This jar rim belongs to the type called sometimes “jars with folded rims”. They are large straight-walled containers with thickened S-profile rims which are often flared. Beside the much

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81 P. PFÄLZNER, Mittanische..., pl. 85:6; idem, The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions..., pl. XXV:259.
82 A. D’AGOSTINO, La cerámica del pozo..., fig. 2:40.
83 K. DÜSTERMAAT, The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions...,
84 P. PFÄLZNER, Mittanische..., pl. 85:6; idem, The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions..., pl. IV.30: b, IV.85:d.
85 C. SCHMIDT, Die Keramik..., pl. 3b:24,25 – “Bauphase I,” Middle Assyrian, but form 24 occurs also in “Bauphasen 3–5,” form 25 (base) also in “Bauphasen 3, 4,” therefore, they can be dated to Late Assyrian through Post-Assyrian Period.
86 A. HALLER, Die Graber...: pls. 3t, 5c,d,dl.
87 A. HAUSLEITER, Neo-Assyrian Pottery...: 33, fig. 15:a,b – described as jars with conical neck, (80th–7th c. BC).
88 Cfr. note no. 73. See also: J. CURTIS, Excavations at Qasrij Cliff and Khirbet Qasrij..., 48 on beakers from Khirbet Qasrij and their dating.
89 J. OATES, Late Assyrian Pottery...: pl. XXXVII:72 (late 7th/early 6th c. BC).
90 E. SCHNEIDER, Die eisenzeitliche Keramik von Tell Sheikh Hassan (Syrien), (in:) A. Hausleiter, A. Reiche (eds.), Iron Age Pottery...: pl. 15:11, here with handle, classified as the “Krog” type, dated to Iron Age II–III.
91 P. PFÄLZNER, The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions..., 256, pl. XXXI:365 (example from Tell Bderi). See also: K. DÜSTERMAAT, The Pots and Potters of Assyria..., fig. IV.18:fg (Tell Sabi Abyad) and C. REGER, Keramik..., pl. 55:17b (Ashur, “Schicht IIb”).
92 P. PFÄLZNER, Mittanische..., pl. 85:6; idem, The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions..., pl. XXV:259.
93 A. D’AGOSTINO, La cerámica del pozo..., fig. 2:40.
95 C. SCHMIDT, Die Keramik..., pl. 3b:9 – “Flasche, Bauphase 1” (Middle Assyrian), but occurring through “Bauphase 5” (Post-Assyrian); idem, Die Keramik..., 65.
97 P. PFÄLZNER, The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions..., 252–253.
98 P. PFÄLZNER, Mittanische..., pl. 87:d.
99 A. D’AGOSTINO, Pottery Production..., fig. 2:2.
101 P. PFÄLZNER, The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions..., 253.
more numerous examples of the form dated to the Neo-Assyrian Period, Tell Rijim also produced sherd Ri 497/54 (Fig. 7:7), for which parallels can be found in the Middle Assyrian material in Tell Bderi, Tell Sheikh Hamad, and Tell Taban.\footnote{R. Koliński, *Tell Rijim...,* 42, Parallels for the form D 40 cited in the publication indicate its date between the 17th and 12th c. BC.}

Jar Ri 3153/140 (Fig. 7:6) poses another question for debate. Koliński published it as an illustration of his type D 40.\footnote{R. Koliński, *Tell Rijim...,* 42, 135, pl. 32:d.} Without questioning the validity of distinguishing this type of jars and attributing other fragments to it, it seems advisable to reconsider the dating of sherd Ri 3153. Next to other parallels Koliński cites a vessel from Tell Aqab with possible Middle Assyrian dating.\footnote{R. Koliński, *Tell Rijim...,* 42, 135, pl. 32:d.} The vessel from Tell Aqab is similar to the example from Rijim because of the groove at the junction of the neck and shoulders.

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\*P. Pfälzner, *Mittanische...,* pl. 156:e ("eingezogene Flaschen").


\*K. Ohnuma, H. Numoto, *Excavations at Tell Taban...,* Fig. 9:38.
There are more parallels in the Middle Assyrian material. The Rijim sherd resembles, for example, a jar from Tell Sheikh Hamad, especially with regard to the inside hollowing of the walls of the neck and a groove on the neck.\(^\text{77}\) One should note, however, the shorter neck of the Sheikh Hamad vessel and the slightly different rim. A similar form, apparently without the groove (although this may be due to the size of the surviving sherd) was noted from Tell Barri.\(^\text{49}\) Grooves at the neck to shoulder interface appear to be a common feature on vessels from layers 3–5 at Tell Sabi Abyad.\(^\text{79}\) In the light of these parallels, it seems possible to suggest a Middle Assyrian date for the sherd Ri 3153/140. Moreover, other fragments from tag 140 could be assigned a Middle Assyrian date: Ri 3133, Ri 3134 (see below) and Ri 3155 (Middle- or possibly even Neo-Assyrian in this case).

Reservations to the pottery presentation voiced above in the introduction are particularly valid with regard to the bases. In cases of mixed pottery assemblages, it is extremely difficult to assign the simple flat bases to particular periods, even on the basis of their fabric. Mistakes can be made in two ways: by attributing to the Middle Assyrian Period material that does not belong or by failing to assign material that actually belongs. The same can be said of some other types of bases, although to a lesser degree. The nipple and button bases, on the other hand, were in turn collected and documented with extra care (A. Reiche pers. comm.), because they were distinctive.\(^\text{100}\) Thus they constituted a sizable group in the recorded and drawn assemblage and are extremely likely to be "over-represented"; the actual proportions between the flat, ring and nipple/button bases in the ceramic material from 'Icll Rijim may have been completely different in reality. The only certain example of a flat base from Middle Assyrian times is a slightly concave base of a small carinated bowl (Ri 928A/64).\(^\text{101}\) It could be dated securely because the vessel was preserved complete. Concave bottoms appear to be a common feature on vessels from other Middle Assyrian sites: Tell Sheikh Hamad, Tell Bderi, Tell Mohammed Arab, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta,\(^\text{142}\) Tell Brak,\(^\text{99}\) Tell Taban\(^\text{99}\) and Tell Fekheriye.\(^\text{143}\)

Disc bases can be distinguished in the flat bases group. Their dating is more problematic. Rijim produced a number of bases of this kind, including some from tags where some of the sherds could be dated to the Middle Assyrian Period, for example Ri 526/56, Ri 553/56, Ri 1079/69 (Fig. 8:1–3). The type appeared in the publication of pottery from the Middle Bronze Age. R. Kolinski described his form 39 as "...flat bottom... The turning of walls into bottom modeled externally to resemble a ring base."\(^\text{106}\) Rightly he cited parallels not only from the 2nd millennium BC, but also from Ashur of the Neo-Assyrian Period.\(^\text{107}\) Kolinski then concluded that the form is to be dated "from the 18th c. BC until the Neo-Assyrian Period."\(^\text{108}\) Assemblages from the 2nd millennium BC contain numerous examples of bases of this kind (Middle Assyrian – 'Tell Taban, Khirbet esh-Shenef),\(^\text{109}\) equally so as Neo-Assyrian assemblages, e.g. Qasrij Cliff,\(^\text{110}\) Khirbet Qasrij,\(^\text{111}\) Khirbet Karhasan.\(^\text{112}\) Ashur.\(^\text{113}\)

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\(^{77}\) P. Pfälzner, *Mittanische...*, pl. 93:b ("Stufe I").

\(^{78}\) A. D’Agostino, *La ceramica del posto...*, fig. 2:45. See also page 18 on inside hollowing of walls of the necks of Middle Assyrian jars.


\(^{80}\) A somewhat similar situation was described by S. Anastasio with regard to Tell Barri, see: S. Anastasio, *Das Obere Habur-Tal...*, 136.

\(^{81}\) In Pfälzner’s publication this form (type 82:2) is described as "Flachboden mit spitzen Ecken," see: P. Pfälzner, *Mittanische...*, pl. 61:a on page 69.


\(^{86}\) R. Kolinski, *Tell Rijim...*, 53–54; to this type belong 6 items.

\(^{87}\) R. Kolinski cited one example from Ashur, see: A. Haller, *Die Gräber...*, pl. IV:at:3. This is a mistake for it should be "at:3".

\(^{88}\) R. Kolinski, *Tell Rijim...*, 54.


\(^{90}\) J. Curtis, *Excavations at Qasrij Cliff and Khirbet Qasrij...*, fig. 10:45 (8th c. BC).


\(^{92}\) A. Green, *The Ninevite Countryside...*, fig. 8:14.

Middle Assyrian pottery from Polish excavations on the site of Tell Rijim (Iraq). Preliminary study

Tell Knedig,14 Tell Abu Hafur East,15 Shiukh Fawqani.16 Bases of this type from Rijim could be dated therefore quite broadly from the Old Babylonian through the end of the 7th c. BC. Some of them assuredly could be of Middle Assyrian date, but the contexts from which they derive preclude an unquestioned attribution to this time.

Similarly as in the case of flat bases, the only surely Middle Assyrian ring base belongs to a completely preserved bowl Ri 3330/148 (Fig. 5:5). The underside of the base has slight thickenings that are concentric and look like small rings. This kind of finishing of the base does not find parallels in the known ceramic material from the Middle Assyrian period.

For reasons explained above, nipple bases (like button bases) constitute a numerous group among Assyrian pottery bases from Tell Rijim. Some differentiation among them has been noted, from barely marked nib/ nipple (Ri 244/20, Ri 1937/103, Fig. 8:4,5), through a more distinct nipple (Ri 10/1, Ri 1090/69, Ri 1470/79, Ri 2249/113, Ri 2271/113, Ri 1428/78, Fig. 8:6-10, Fig. 9:1), to nipples separated from the body by a slight constriction (Ri 2260/113, Fig. 9:2). Two bases: Ri 1615/86 (Fig. 9:3) and Ri 12/1 (Fig. 9:4), stand on the borderline between nipple and button forms.

Button bases usually have a marked constriction between the nib and the body walls. The nib itself could be slightly pointed at the bottom (Ri 346/48, Ri 9/1, Ri 2099/108, Ri 1169/16, Ri 3134/140, Ri 242/20, Fig. 9:5-10); it could also be rounded (Ri 4112/232, Ri 3134/140, Ri 2094/108, Fig. 10:1-3). One example shows an elongated button, clearly distinguished from the lower body of the vessel (Ri 271/29, Fig. 10:4); one other example has an elongated button, slightly narrowing toward the tip, with a ridge at the base (Ri 2301/114, Fig. 10:5); finally, two buttons are shaped in an entirely different manner with a hollow on the underside (Ri 1616/86, Fig. 10:6, and Ri 6781/339).

The ambiguity of the terms "nipple" and "button" bases has been raised already. Button bases, according to Henrickson and Cooper, had a "pronounced, shaped, circular nib" or "button", while nipple bases had a "less pronounced, less extended nib." The borderline between pronounced and less pronounced is naturally not distinct and largely intuitive; hence definitions of this kind cannot resolve questions of ambiguous designations in various archaeological publications. The division into nipple and button bases proposed here is based on the above definitions with full awareness of the fact that it could be put into doubt.

Nipple/button bases appeared already on Mitannian shouldered beakers. Very often they are also found on the so-called Middle Assyrian administrative pottery. Numerous Middle Assyrian examples come from Ashur, Tell Taban, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, Tell Sabi Abyad. They were also common in Neo-Assyrian ceramics, having been recorded at a large number of sites including Nimrud, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, Tell Abu Dahir, and Ashur, in layers 8–7–3 from Khirbet Kharuniyeh, dated from Middle Assyrian (?) through Post-Assyrian Period, Qasrij Cliff, Khirbet Qasrij and tell Yamniyeh.

It is difficult to date with certainty bases of the nipple and button type from Tell Rijim. Ri 1169/16 (Fig. 9:8), 242/20 (Fig. 9:10), 244/20 (Fig. 8:4), 271/29 (Fig. 10:4), 346/48 (Fig. 9:5), 2094/108 (Fig. 10:3), 2099/108 (Fig. 9:7), Ri 4112/232 (Fig. 10:1) and base of beaker Ri 7263/373 (Fig. 7:1) can be considered as Middle Assyrian owing to a discovery context. Ri 2301/114 (Fig. 10:5) also finds good parallels in Middle Assyrian material (Tell Taban, Tell Sheikh Hamad).

The next problematic group is constituted by the solid foot bases. These bases are fairly thick and small in diameter (2.8–3.2 cm) and probably belonged to beakers or goblets. Examples from Rijim (Ri 2700/129, Ri 2701/129, Ri 6306/330, Fig. 10:8–10) recall bases of the so-called Kassite Goblets from the 2nd millennium BC. The form seems to have been continued in the early 1st millennium BC, as suggested by parallels from Tell Yamniyeh and Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta.

117 Base Ri 6781/339 was to fragmentate to be shown.
119 Tell Sheikh Hamad – P. PFÄLZNER, Mitannische..., pls. 97-η,η,κ, 114:α.,β.
120 A. HALLER, Die Gräber..., pl. 2:af,ag,ah,ao,aq.
121 K. OHNUMA, H. NUMOTO, M. SHIMBO, Excavations at Tell Taban..., figs. 7:12–16, 8:26–32.
122 C. SCHMIDT, Die Keramik..., pl. 3b:24,25 – "Bauphas 1, no. 24 occurs also in "Bauphasen 3–5", no. 25 in "Bauphasen 3, 4" thus Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian Periods.
123 P.M.M.G. AKKERMAN, J. ROSSMEISL, Excavations at Tell Sabi Abyad..., figs. 9:18,19,22, 11:44.
124 J. OATES, Late Assyrian Pottery..., pl. XXXVI:40–42 (7th–6th c. BC).
125 C. SCHMIDT, Die Keramik..., pl. 4:16 ("Bauphas 2", pl. 5b:35–37 ("Bauphas 3"), pl. 6b:29,32 ("Bauphas 4" thus Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian Periods).
126 A. GREEN, The Ninevite Countryside..., fig. 5:23.
127 A. HALLER, Die Gräber..., pls. 2:ba,bc,bp,bq,bs, 3a, 5:ε,d,f;
128 A. HAUSELEITER, Gravez..., figs. 5:8,9, 6:1,2, 7:10 (end of 9th/beginning of 8th c. BC).
129 J. CURTIS, A. GREEN, Excavations at Khirbet Qhatuniyeh..., fig. 29:37, level 8–7 – "Middle Assyrian" (see also page 87); fig. 32:78, level 5; fig. 51:271–274, level 4; fig. 58:380, level 3.
130 J. CURTIS, Excavations at Qasrij Cliff and Khirbet Qasrij..., fig. 10:42 (8th c. BC).
133 Tell Taban – K. OHNUMA, H. NUMOTO, M. SHIMBO, Excavations at Tell Taban..., fig. 8:30; Tell Sheikh Hamad – P. PFÄLZNER, Mitannische..., pl. 130:ε.
Two other examples of similar bases (Ri 1635/86, Ri 4947/279) were published by R. Koliński as his form S 43. They are distinguished by a slightly concave bottom. Koliński cited among other references (Billa, Brak, Nuzi, Rimah) a parallel of Middle Assyrian date from Ashur and concluded with dating form S 43 to the 18th-12th c. BC. The context of fragment Ri 4947 (i.e. tag 279) encompassed material from a layer dug arbitrarily "to the top" of a Middle Bronze Age wall, hence it could also be of Middle Bronze Age date. However, since this context also produced forms referring to Middle Assyrian carinated bowls and cups (Ri 4949, Fig. 6:1, and Ri 4954, Fig. 6:2) and since a fragment of Middle Assyrian wall (W 12/A 1) was discovered on the top of the Middle Bronze Age structure, it is tenable to consider a Middle Assyrian date for the base Ri 4947/279. Middle Assyrian parallels for bases with concave bottom can be found, for example, in Tell Taban, Tell Barri and Tell Aqab. Pfälzner considered them typical of beakers of Younger Khabur Ware. Indeed, he described them in slightly different fashion as "ring bases...
sometimes so small that they can be designated as flat knob bases with concave bottom." The issue of whether the other solid foot bases from Tell Rijim (i.e. Ri 2700/129, Ri 2701/129, Ri 6306/330) could be dated to the Middle Assyrian Period or should rather be considered a continuation of 2nd millennium BC forms in the Neo-Assyrian Period remains debatable, especially as the tags from which these sherds derive contained mixed material. It should be remarked that the second fragment attributed by Koliński to his type S 43, Ri 1635/86 (Fig. 10:7), does not quite fit the description of the type. Moreover, it also finds parallels in Middle Assyrian material (Tell Taban) and should most probably be dated to Middle Assyrian Period.

**Dating**

Most of the parallels cited for the Middle Assyrian forms from Tell Rijim are dated to the 12th c. BC. Standing in support of the dating are examples from Tell Sheikh Hamad dated to Middle Assyrian IIa and IIb (1200–

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140 P. Pfälzner, *The Late Bronze Ceramic Traditions...*, 243, pl. VIII:85.


The presence of forms like the Standard Bowls and Cups and Standard Bottles, as well as a few others confirms this beyond any doubt. On the other hand, the debatable examples demonstrate the difficulties of dating specific fragments coming from mixed contexts, especially from sites with both Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian occupation. The Rijim pottery complements to some extent the general picture of Middle Assyrian ceramics from the Eski Mosul region. About 20 sites have been found to contain layers from the Middle Assyrian Period, but knowledge of Middle Assyrian ceramics is still very limited. Assemblages published so far are limited to the pottery from Tell Mohammed Arab, Khirbet Hatara and a study of pottery from Nemrik, which is in print. Tell Rijim is the fourth site from the Eski Mosul region to produce data in published form also on the Middle Assyrian ceramics from the heartland of Assyria.

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MIDDLE ASSYRIAN POTTERY FROM POLISH EXCAVATIONS ON THE SITE OF TELL RIJIM (IRAQ), PRELIMINARY STUDY

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CERAMIKA Z OKRESU ŚRODKOWOASYRYJSKIEGO Z POLSKICH WYKOPALISK NA STANOWISKU TELL RIJIM (IRAK), OPCRAWOWANIE WSTĘPNE

Prowadzone w latach 1984-1985, pod kierownictwem prof. P. Bielnickiego, polskie wykopaliska na stanowisku Tell Rijim były częścią projektu Eski Mosul Dam Salvage Project, zwanej inaczej Saddam Dam Basin Salvage Project, prowadzonego w latach 80. XX wieku w północnym Iraku, w związku z budową tamy na Tygrysie.

Tell Rijim, leżący ok. 25 km na północny zachód od Eski Mosul, na zachodnim brzegu Tygrysu, stanowił część obszaru nazwanego "mikroregionem Raffan" (Ryc. 1). Stanowisko o powierzchni ok. 2.5 ha znajdowało się na...
plastikim naturalnym wzgórzu, wyniesionym ok. 28 m ponad poziom rzeki (Ryc. 2). Lączny obszar przebadany w wyniku trzech sezonów badań wykopalskich to około 620 m². Prace były utrudnione z powodu znacznego zniszczenia warstw kulturowych, spowodowanego ciosą stanowiska w okresach przerw osadniczych, a także z po­

Pucharek Ri 7263 (Ryc. 7:1), mimo że uszkodzo­

ny (nie zachował się wylew), przypomina naczynia środko­

i nowoassyryjskie. Zabytek ten pochodzi z tego samego kontekstu co misa Ri 7267, co sprawia, że bardziej prawdopodobne jest datowanie go na okres środkowoassyryjski. Tej pewności brak w przypadku kolejnego pucharek (Ryc. 7:2), dla którego analogie znaleźć można wśród naczyń datowa­

nych zarówno na okres środkowo-, jak i nowoassyryjski.

Bardzo typową formą dla okresu środkowoassyryjskiego, poza misami karynowanymi, są pozbawione sztych flasze z pogrubionymi wylewami. Wśród naczyń pocho­

dzących z Tell Rijim znajduje się kilka przykładów tej for­

my (Ryc. 7:3–5).

Datowanie dwóch kolejnych dzbanów jest bardziej dyskusyjne. Analogie dla wylewu dzbana Ri 497/54 (Ryc. 7:7) można znaleźć zarówno wśród naczyń z okresu środ­

kowo-, jak i nowoassyryjskiego. Dzban Ri 3135/140 (Ryc. 7:6) został ujęty w opracowaniu ceramiki z Tell Rijim ze środko­

kiego okresu epoki brązu. Jednak na podstawie analogii można go datować na okres środkowoassyryjski.

Trudności w jednoznacznym przypisaniu fragmento­

w naczyń, zwłaszcza z niepewnych kontekstów, do okre­

su środkowoassyryjskiego objawiają się w pełni w przypadku denek (Ryc. 8–10). Nawet przy opracowywaniu bardzo charakterystycznych form, tzw. denek guzkowych, nie zawsze możliwe jest przypisanie konkretnego fragmentu do okresu środkowoassyryjskiego, ponieważ występują one także w okresie nowoassyryjskim. Stopni naczyń (Ryc. 10:8–10), na podstawie analogii ze stanowisk z pół­

nocnej Mezopotamii, można prawdopodobnie datować na okres środkowoassyryjski. Dotyczy to także tych przykładów (Ryc. 10:7), które w wcześniej publikacji wyni­

ków badań na stanowisku zaliczono do ceramiki ze środko­

kiego okresu epoki brązu.

Bardziej precyzyjne określenie chronologii cerami­

ki z Tell Rijim jest trudne, choć większość form znajduje odpowiedniki na innych stanowiskach, datowanych na XII w. n.e. Może to sugerować konieczność zmiany proponowa­

nego dorad datowania (XIII w. n.e.) osadnictwaassyryj­

skiego w Tell Rijim. Ograniczony obszar, na jakim odsło­

nictwo pozostawions�tego w Tell Rijim, zbyt mały do ustalenia datowaniu, ilustrują z ko­

lej problemy z chronologicznym przyporządkowaniem znalezisk pochodzących z niepewnych kontekstów, zwłaszcza na stanowiskach o długiej historii zasiedlenia, jak w przypadku Tell Rijim.