

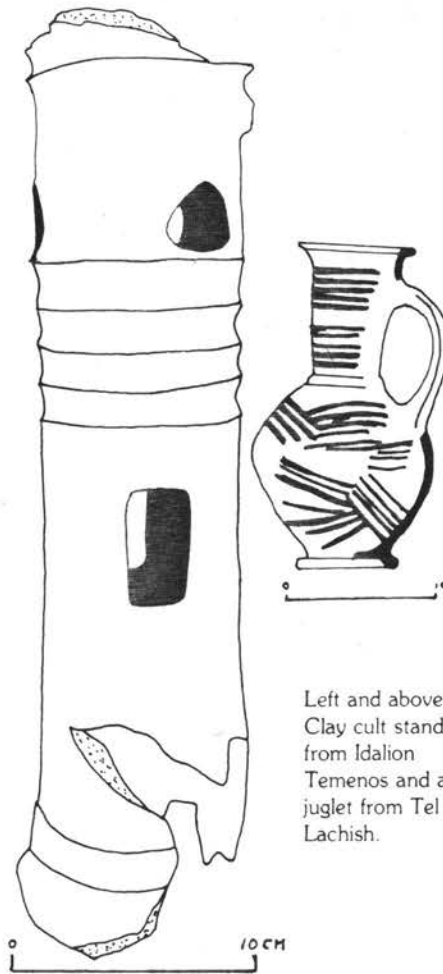
Decoration of Clay Cult Stands

By Linda C. Hulin

When I arrived in Cyprus a year and a half ago, I was impressed by the informality and friendliness of the atmosphere at CAARI. I came to the island in search of parallels to the clay cult stands of Syria-Palestine, the subject of my Ph.D. thesis for the Institute of Archaeology, University of London. Although most of these stands lie firmly within their own local traditions, some exhibit strong foreign influences. I have been able to trace the spread of decorative schemes from Mesopotamia into Syria and Palestine, and to link some of these to population movements and periods of foreign hegemony. A number of stands from sites along the Mediterranean seaboard and coastal plain (e.g., Byblos, Akko, Tel Qasile, Beth Shan) include Aegean elements in their decoration, the inspiration for which has yet to be determined. Although clay cult stands are relatively rare in Cyprus, some display marked similarities to examples from the Asiatic mainland.

CAARI's growing library, including not only works on Cypriot archaeology, but also major journals covering Near Eastern scholarship, was valuable to my research, and fostered a growing interest in the history of the island itself. With this in mind, I began, in the autumn of last year, a study of Base Ring I and II jugs and juglets ("bilbils"). Concentrating upon geographical distribution versus variations in decorative schemes, I am already able to identify very definite regional preferences for certain pattern combinations.

Finally, at CAARI, I have been able to meet not only Cypriot scholars, but archaeologists returning from excavations all over the Near East, and in this way keep in touch with the latest developments throughout the region.



Left and above:
Clay cult stand
from Idalion
Temenos and a
juglet from Tel
Lachish.

DAMASCUS

Appeal to Rescue Khabur Antiquities

By Afif Bahnassi

The government of the Syrian Arab Republic plans to build a dam on the Middle Khabur River south of Hassakeh. When the dam is finished in 1988 it will create behind it a lake 35 kilometers long and 5 kilometers wide, at a height of 300 meters. The lake will submerge about 30 archaeological sites of varying importance.

A preliminary field survey of the Khabur region shows that the archaeological sites along the Middle Khabur cover the periods between the Halaf culture of the fifth millennium B.C. and the medieval Arab-Islamic culture. It is quite probable that further archaeological investigations will bring forth evidence of the Neolithic and other periods.

Archaeologists, epigraphists, philologists, anthropologists and others see in the proposed dam an occasion to focus on this essential part of the "Jezirah." It was an active center in the economy of the "Fertile Crescent" under Akkad, Assur, and Babylon (third to second millennia B.C.). Later it became a Neo-Assyrian province during the first millennium B.C., after having been part of an Aramaean kingdom since the end of the second millennium B.C. During the Greco-Roman occupation, the region played a crucial strategic role in the conflict between East and West. During the Islamic period, the "Syrian Jezirah" (the Khabur basin) became a region of prosperity, as well as an area of decisive confrontation between the Arabs, the Byzantines, and others.

The sites which will be submerged by the waters of the lake are not necessarily visible ruins or monuments which need extensive consolidation or preservation. In most cases they are promising tells situated along the banks of the Khabur.

The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums would provide the institutions agreeing to participate in the international campaign the same assistance which is usually granted to the more than 30 foreign archaeological expeditions currently excavating in Syria. In addition, the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums is working with the highest levels of the government to issue a decree similar to that issued for the international Euphrates Dam project in the 70's, which granted the participants the opportunity to retain some of the materials discovered.

Institutions wishing to take part in this rescue campaign should contact Dr. Afif Bahnassi, Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Damascus, Syria, to obtain more details.

Construction of the dam is expected to begin in the second half of 1984 and is scheduled to be completed in 1987. Excavations should take place during this period. Dr. Afif Bahnassi is Director of the Department of Antiquities of Syria.—Ed.