

‘BUCKLE UP AND FASTEN THAT BELT!’ METAL BELTS IN THE EARLY AND MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

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Abstract: Among the many finds recovered from Tell el-Dab‘a are five decorated metal sheets, or belts, that were most probably originally sewn onto a piece of leather or textile. Such metal belts are a very special feature attested for the first time in Early Bronze Age Mesopotamia. Their occurrence in the archaeological record is limited to tombs that featured several significant finds, including weapons, in their inventory. The grave goods highlight the importance, status and wealth of the interred deceased. The design of metal belts within the distribution area in the Middle Bronze Age is very similar; the decoration, if any, is composed of differing arrangements of concentric circles of varying sizes. According to some Northern Levantine and Anatolian metal figurines, the belts were worn around the waist and buckled at the front. Metal belts were still worn in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, as attested by statues and actual finds.¹ The following article adds to a number of publications on metal belts,² collecting all known attestations dating up to the end of the Middle Bronze Age. The aim of this paper is to determine their distribution range and elucidate their contexts to mirror networks of people sharing a similar cultural background and ancient trade connections. In addition to the elongated metal belts known from Tell el-Dab‘a, possible parts of belts, such as discs and belt fasteners, are also presented in the scope of this article.

Keywords: *Tell el-Dab‘a, metal belts, Middle Bronze Age*

Elongated metal belts

Early Bronze Age belts

Four sites have produced metal belts assigned to the Early Bronze Age. Similar to many other cases, the Early Dynastic Royal tombs at Ur provide the earliest evidence. Two individuals buried here were each equipped with a belt. The belt in PG/580 was made from leather plated with silver and fastened with a rectangular buckle piece (Fig. 1). A dagger, a cylinder seal and a toiletry set were found attached to it.³ PG/755 contained, among other grave goods, a badly preserved silver belt with a dagger affixed to it.⁴ Therefore, these early examples already establish a link between belts and enclosed administrative and military equipment, especially the dagger.

A simple earth pit in Susa (Tomb 555; Susa IVA) also produced a metal belt (Fig. 2a). Although no remains of a skeleton were found, the pit yielded a mace head, a hook, an axe, an alabaster vessel and something that might have been a shield or a chariot wheel.⁵ The belt is plain; its only decoration consisting of a strip of differing metal attached along the edges where perforations for further attachment to a backing can be observed. The belt fasteners are U-shaped and fixed to the belt with rivets, indicating that they were not movable.

Close to Moza⁶ is a shaft tomb found during construction work. The single interment, dating to EB IV, was provided with four vessels, two dag-

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¹ For belts known from the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, see BOARDMAN 1961–62; MOOREY 1967; STUPKA 1972, 152–154. They were not included in this research as their design and decoration is divergent from the Middle Bronze Age objects.

² E.g. SCHIESTL 2002; 2009; PHILIP 2006; GERSHUNY and AVIAM 2010; ZIFFER 2018.

³ WOOLLEY 1934, 51, pl. 13b.

⁴ WOOLLEY 1934, 156 f., Fig. 35, only indicated on the plan of the tomb and not illustrated further. See also the entry for this tomb on <http://www.ur-online.org>.

⁵ CARTER 1980, 75–77, Fig. 22d.

⁶ Named Qalunyah by D’ANDREA 2013, 138.

⁷ BAHAT 1975, 22, Fig. 5.5.



Fig. 1. Ur, silver-plate leather belt found in PG/580 (after WOOLLEY 1934, pl. 13b)

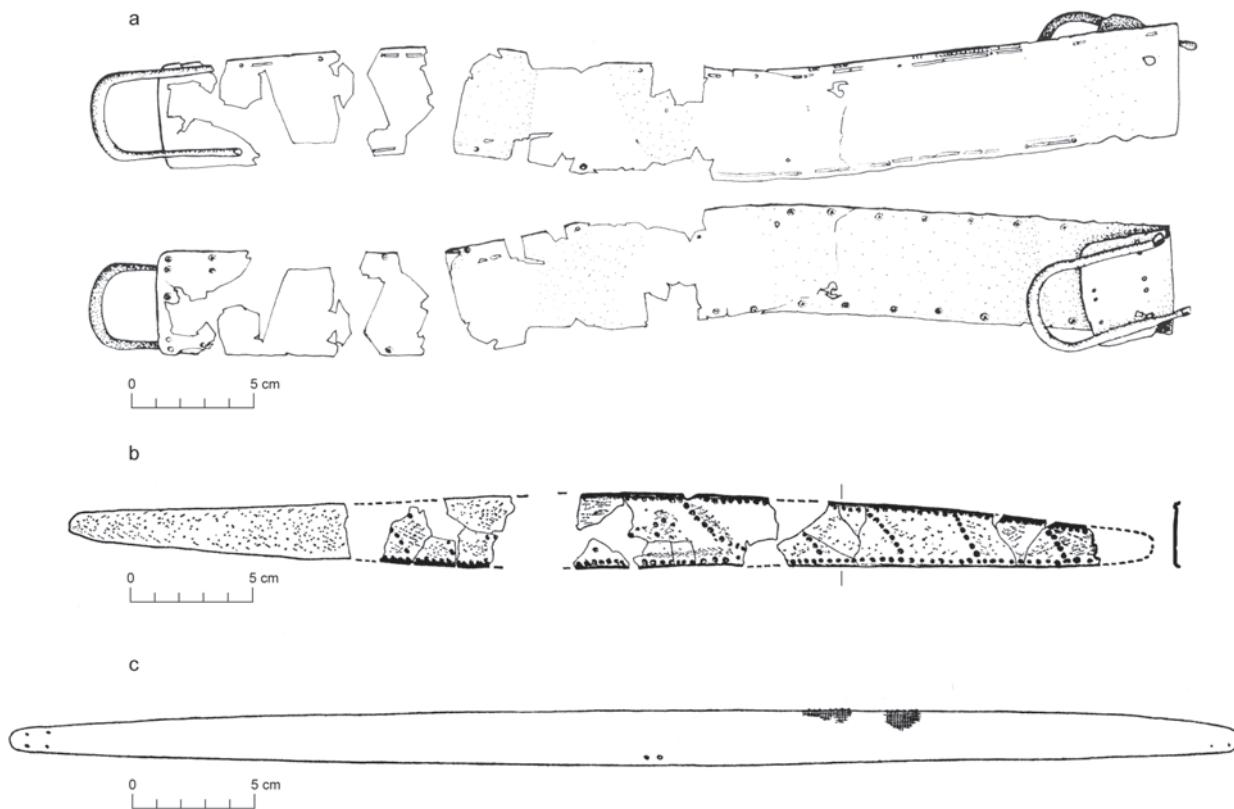


Fig. 2. **a** Susa, tomb 555 (after CARTER 1980, 77, Fig. 22d) **b** Moza, shaft tomb (after BAHAT 1975, 22, Fig. 5.5) **c** Jericho, possible belt from tomb L2 (after KENYON 1965, 84, Fig. 41.8A)

gers, a spearhead and a belt (Fig. 2b).⁷ The belt shows a relatively simple form, narrowing in width towards both ends. It is decorated with an embossed décor along its edges with some additional parallel and diagonal running straps on its surface. It does not seem to be pierced at the ends, and fasteners are non-existent.

The undisturbed tomb L2 in Jericho contained the intact skeleton of an elderly male lying flexed on his right side with the head in the west. He was equipped with weapons, beads, a single jar, and an object that Kenyon identified as a headband (Fig. 2c).⁸ Gernez, however, addresses it as being a belt.⁹ The object has two piercings on one edge in its centre and is also perforated at the ends.

Middle Bronze Age IIA–B belts

The early half of the Middle Bronze Age (IIA–B) yielded a number of additional belts, with some notable developments. Tahsin Özgüç already suggested in 1949 that the belts worn by figurines of gods found in Kültepe-Kanish and Boğazköy (see below) might be thought of as consisting of metal.¹⁰ This suggestion was confirmed in 1969 when an individual equipped with a silver belt was discovered in a Pithos burial at Kültepe (level Ib). The belt itself is decorated with arrangements of concentric circles (Fig. 3). Although the middle part is plain, the rest features a repeated pattern on both of its sides: one group of two concentric circles arranged one atop the other, followed by a single circle, four groups of two concentric circles, again arranged one atop the other, and a further single circle.¹¹ At the ends are belt buckles, each shaped like an arc and with a spring clip. The belt

is pierced along the edges to attach it to a backing made of leather or cloth.

A total of five belts can be identified with certainty from Tell el-Dab'a, all of them deriving from tombs in areas F/I and A/II. Due to their secure archaeological and stratigraphical context, they generally offer a possibility of a chronological seriation, covering the MB IIA and MB IIA–B period.

One of the earliest belts was found in F/I-o/19, tomb 8 (stratum d/2 = H) and was fairly well-preserved. The width of the belt stays nearly the same towards the rounded terminal ends, where the belt fasteners show a triangular form and a spring clip. The belt is decorated with alternating groups of embossed concentric circles, one large and two smaller units in turn (Fig. 4a).¹² It is not pierced along the edges. The tomb's inventory included pottery, spearheads and a duckbill axe, the only one ever discovered at Tell el-Dab'a.¹³

The belt unearthed in F/I-d/23, tomb 1 (also stratum H),¹⁴ is very fragmented, but the decoration pattern is apparent (Fig. 4b). Concentrated in the centre, it consists of two rows of concentric circles slightly deviating in size from each other. Towards the end, two larger concentric circles are placed side by side. The belt tapers slightly towards both terminal ends, and the belt fasteners are triangular with a spring clip.¹⁵ Small perforations are discernible along the edges.¹⁶ The belt was found in a tomb that also contained an axe, a dagger, two spearheads and a knife,¹⁷ along with pottery and a few other items.¹⁸

Another belt derives from A/II-m/15, tomb 9 (stratum G). Three pieces were preserved, one of them still attached to a dagger representing the

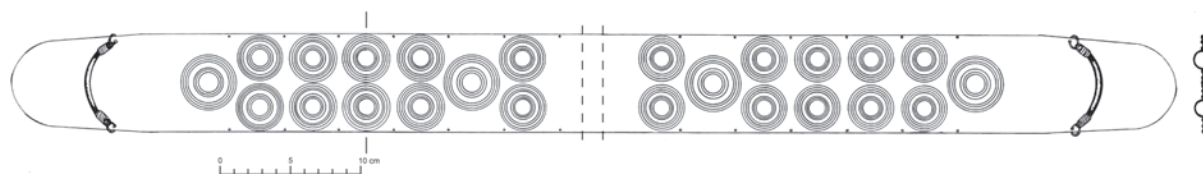


Fig. 3. Kültepe, reconstruction of metal belt from Pithos burial (after EMRE 1971, Fig. 39 between 84 and 85)

⁸ KENYON 1965, 84, Fig. 41.8A, 144–148.

⁹ GERNEZ 2007, 109.

¹⁰ ÖZGÜÇ 1953, 197.

¹¹ EMRE 1971, Fig. 39 between 84 and 85, 144, pl. XVIa–c.

¹² PHILIP 2006, 83 f., Fig. 38.2. See also SCHIESTL 2009, 267–273 for the tomb and its inventory.

¹³ For the rare combination of belt and duckbill axe, see SCHIESTL 2002, 332–335 with Figs. 2–3.

¹⁴ According to DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011–12, 33; PHILIP 2006, 83 places it in stratum c–b/3 = F–G/1.

¹⁵ PHILIP 2006, 83, Fig. 38.1.

¹⁶ DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011–12, 33.

¹⁷ PHILIP 2006, 33 f., 52 f., 67, 74 f.

¹⁸ DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011–12, 33.

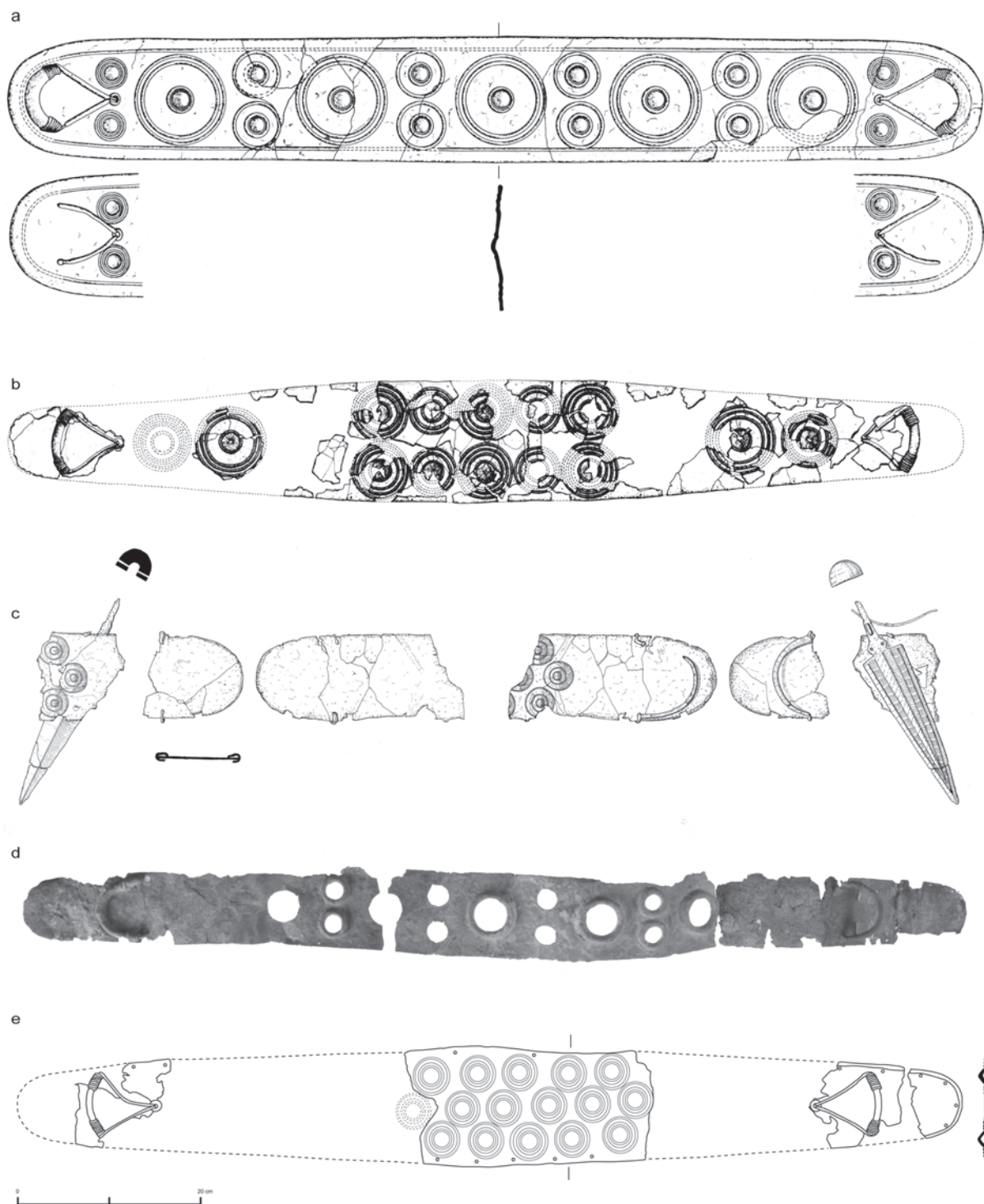


Fig. 4. Metal belts from Tell el-Dab'a: **a** F/I-o/19, tomb 8 (after SCHIESTL 2009, 270, Fig. 190) **b** F/I-d/23, tomb 1 (after PHILIP 2006, Fig. 38 between 84 and 85) **c** A/II-m/15, tomb 9 (after PHILIP 2006, Fig. 38 between 84 and 85) **d** A/II-p/14, tomb 18 (© ÖAI-OREA archive) **e** A/II-l/16, tomb 4 (partly reconstructed after FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008, 151, Fig. 88)

only weapon present in the tomb (Fig. 4c).¹⁹ In addition, some beads and pottery were part of the grave inventory. The belt maintains the same width towards the rounded terminal ends. The belt

fasteners are arc-shaped and appear not to have been equipped with a spring clip. The decoration consists of groups of embossed concentric circles arranged in three slightly shifting rows. This

¹⁹ PHILIP 2006, 84, Fig. 38.3. For the tomb and its contents, see FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008, 129–133.

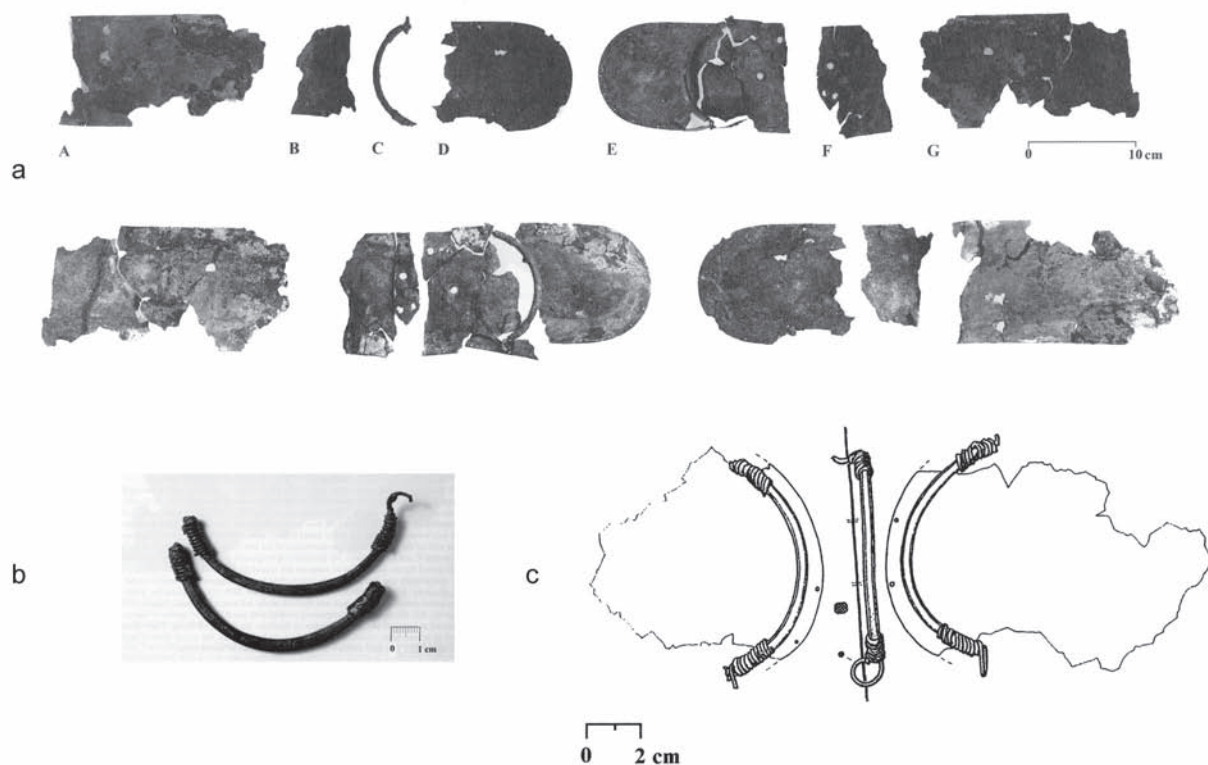


Fig. 5. Metal belts from Rishon le-Zion: **a** tomb F4 (after ZIFFER 2018, 545, Figs. 8.3 and 8.4) **b** tomb B133 (after ZIFFER 2018, 543, Fig. 8.1) **c** tomb C4 (after ZIFFER 2018, 544, Fig. 8.2)

arrangement is comparable to the one from the belt found in A/II-1/16, tomb 4 (see below, Fig. 4e). The belt shows no indication that it was originally perforated along the edges to be able to attach it to a backing.

A further example was recovered in A/II-p/14, tomb 18 (stratum F). Its decoration pattern is different from the other belts as it consists of round perforations with applied metal rings reinforcing the edges (Fig. 4d). Nevertheless, the overall pattern is comparable with the belt found in F/I-o/19, tomb 8 (see above, Fig. 4a), consisting of a single bigger unit alternating with two smaller ones arranged one atop the other. Only the execution of the design differs. The preserved belt fasteners form an arc and are equipped with spring clips. The belt tapers slightly towards both terminal ends and shows piercings along the edges indicating that it once was attached to leather or cloth.²⁰ Together with pottery, the grave contained a dagger and, an exceptional find, a scimitar.²¹

Some pieces of a belt, again decorated with concentric circles, were also collected from A/II-1/16, tomb 4 (stratum F).²² The belt tapers slightly in width towards both terminal ends, where triangular belt fasteners are equipped with a spring clip. Circles arranged in three rows slightly alternating with each other are its preserved decoration (Fig. 4e). The arrangement is not entirely even and parallels the design of the belt found in A/II-m/15, tomb 9 (see above, Fig. 4c). Because of its state of preservation, it is not clear if and how much the pattern originally extended towards the ends. Perforations along the edges indicate that the belt was once sewn onto leather or textile.

One additional tomb from Tell el-Dab'a, F/I-l/20, tomb 20 (stratum b/3-2 = E/3-F) might have contained a belt. Three metal fragments recovered here may have been part of a belt fastener.²³

At least four belts came to light in the cemetery of Rishon le Zion. The one which is best preserved (Fig. 5a) was found in tomb F4 in area F that con-

²⁰ FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008, 180. Briefly mentioned by PHILIP 2006, 84.

²¹ For the grave and its inventory, see FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008, 177-184.

²² PHILIP 2006, 83. For the tomb and its inventory, see FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008, 148-151.

²³ PHILIP 2006, 84-86 with Fig. 39.2-3.

tained multiple burials in up to three phases of interment.²⁴ One of the burials belonging to L769 comprised an axe and a metal belt around the waist of the deceased, to which two daggers were attached.²⁵ Although no particular decorative pattern can be observed, the belt is decorated on one end with perforated circles reinforced at the edges with applied rings. It also features arc-shaped belt buckles and pierced edges for the attachment of a backing of leather or cloth.²⁶ Only the arc-shaped buckles of a belt survived in tomb B133 of area B (Fig. 5b).²⁷ The deceased was additionally provided with a dagger and several vessels.²⁸ Tomb C4 (L47) of area C produced, alongside a knife and some pottery, one belt buckle with small parts of a belt (Fig. 5c).²⁹ Only the remains of the arc-shaped belt buckles and a few pieces of the belt itself were found in tomb B218 in area B (Fig. 6). The latter are pierced and were, therefore, once attached to a backing.³⁰ The grave further comprised a dagger, an axe and some pottery.³¹

Fragments of a belt were also discovered in tomb 42 at Sidon.³² As a rule, single burials are dominant at the site, but this tomb contained the remains of four individuals. The grave goods included two daggers, a socketed spearhead and, interestingly, a torque.³³ The belt is decorated with concentric circles of different sizes (Fig. 7). The



Fig. 6. Metal belt in tomb B218 during excavation (after LEVY and KLETTER 2018, 88, Fig. 2.125)

pattern consists of two rows of concentric circles in the centre, slightly deviating in size, and a larger concentric circle at each end. The belt tapers slightly in width towards both terminal ends, and its buckles are arc-shaped. The backside of the belt is covered with a whitish material that probably once served to affix it to a backing.³⁴ The overall design of the decoration of the belt is comparable to that found in F/I-d/23, tomb 1 at Tell el-Dab'a (see Fig. 4b).³⁵ Remains of what appears to be a very decayed silver belt were also unearthed from the richly furnished tomb 27 (Fig. 8).³⁶ The tomb

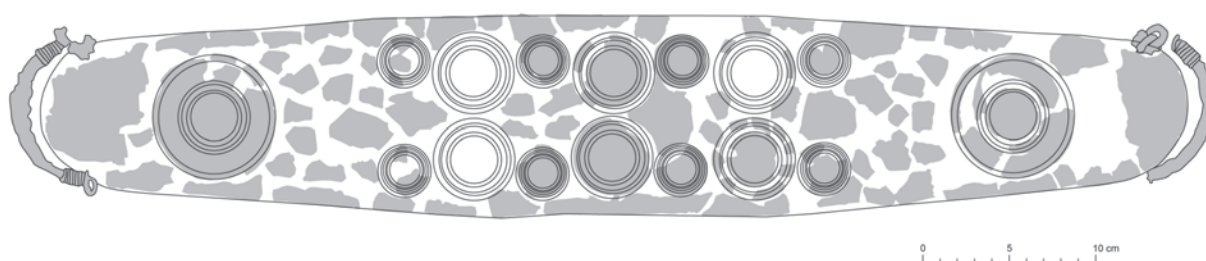


Fig. 7. Sidon, tomb 42, reconstruction of belt with preserved fragments indicated in grey (© Sidon excavation; drawing S. Prell after DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011–12, 32)

²⁴ LEVY and KLETTER 2018, 189–201 for the description of the entire tomb.

²⁵ LEVY and KLETTER 2018, 198–199 with Figs. 3.47–3.48.

²⁶ ZIFFER 2018, 544.

²⁷ ZIFFER 2018, 543.

²⁸ LEVY and KLETTER 2018, 63.

²⁹ ZIFFER 2018, 544. For the tomb, see LEVY and KLETTER 2018, 371.

³⁰ ZIFFER 2018, 543. According to LEVY and KLETTER 2018, 88, some wood and textile survived underneath the belt.

³¹ LEVY and KLETTER 2018, 88, with Figs. 2.125–2.126.

³² According to C. Doumet-Serhal (personal communication), another metal belt, associated with weapons, was found in a MBA tomb excavated at Sidon in July 2019.

³³ DOUMET-SERHAL and GRIFFITH 2007. See the tombs in Ugarit that also contained torques, SCHAEFFER 1949.

³⁴ Meaning the belt would have most probably never been worn by an actual living being, see DOUMET-SERHAL and GRIFFITH 2007, 198.

³⁵ DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011–12, 32–33.

³⁶ DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011–12, 31 with figure; DOUMET-SERHAL 2004, 25, Fig. 15, 26.

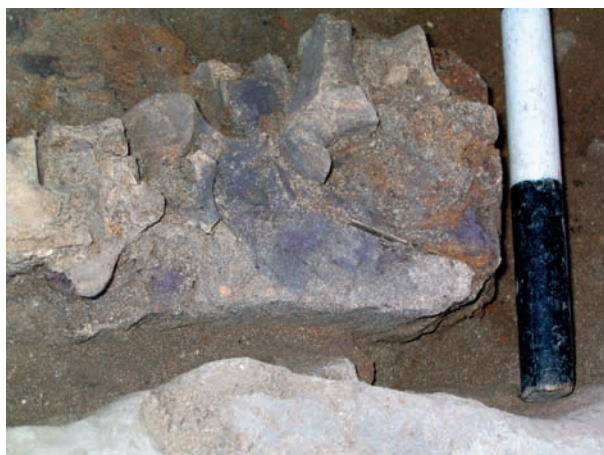


Fig. 8. Sidon, tomb 27, remains of a possible silver belt (discoloured purple) in the pelvic area of the deceased during excavation (© Sidon excavation)

consists of a mudbrick chamber, and the individual within was equipped with a dagger and a duckbill axe, as well as a gold bracelet and other adornments made from silver.

Middle Bronze IIB–C belts

A similar pattern of distribution is discernible for the metal belts uncovered in contexts assigned to the second half of the Middle Bronze Age (IIB–C). One such example was collected from burial cave LVI in Ugarit (Fig. 9a). One terminal end preserved together with many fragments probably belonged to one belt as well as two arc-shaped belt buckles with spring clips.³⁷ The belt was obviously sewn onto leather or cloth as it is pierced alongside the edges and shows faint traces of a decoration in silver.

During emergency excavations in Fassuta, carried out in 1989, two tombs were investigated and documented. Tomb 1, a cist tomb, was partly cut into the rock and contained some pottery, a scarab and several metal artefacts grouped together along

one of the walls.³⁸ Weapons and the remains of one metal belt were discovered (Fig. 9b).³⁹ The belt was undecorated and fastened with triangular-shaped buckles with spring clips. No perforations alongside the edges were detectable.⁴⁰

A shaft tomb was unearthed in Kibbutz Sasa in 1976 that contained the remains of at least 13 individuals. Among the finds were pottery, weapons, toggle pins and two arc-shaped belt buckles made from metal⁴¹ and equipped with spring clips (Fig. 9c).

The deceased interred in tomb J3 at Jericho was also provided with a belt (Fig. 9d) placed beside him.⁴² Grave goods included pottery, a dagger and an axe found together with a belt, and two additional daggers and axes. The decorative pattern of the belt features several groups of concentric circles alternating between a series of one large circle, and three smaller circles flanking each side of a group of two medium-sized units, one atop the other. It is very similar, though not exactly the same, to that found in Tell el-Dab'a, F/I-o/19, tomb 8 (see above, Fig. 4a), but the form of the belt buckles differs. While the Jericho piece is equipped with arc-shaped belt buckles, the Tell el-Dab'a belt has buckles of triangular form.

A plain belt with arc-shaped buckles and spring clips was additionally excavated in tomb 27 located in Jerusalem (Fig. 10). The deceased was further equipped with a dagger and an axe.⁴³

The interred individual in Tell el Fara'h (N), tomb A4, was wearing an undecorated belt (Fig. 11), fastened with triangular belt buckles with spring clips. Perforations along the edges indicate that it was once sewn onto leather or cloth. A dagger and an axe also accompanied the deceased.⁴⁴

Possible belt fragments may also have been recovered from Tell Dan.⁴⁵ Chamber tomb 4663 yielded metal fragments that might have originally belonged to a belt.⁴⁶ The same is true for chamber tomb 1025.⁴⁷

³⁷ SCHAEFFER 1938, 239 f., Fig. 32.V–W.

³⁸ GERSHUNY and AVIAM 2010, 18.

³⁹ GERSHUNY and AVIAM 2010, 35–38 with Fig. 14. The metal objects of this tomb were chemically analysed but unfortunately not the belt, see SHALEV 2010.

⁴⁰ ZIFFER 2018, 548.

⁴¹ BEN-ARIEH 2004, 7*, Fig. 7.

⁴² KENYON 1960, 311–313, Fig. 117.3–4.

⁴³ MILEVSKI et al. 2010, 401, 414, Fig. 7; GREENHUT et al. 2011, 26 f., Fig. 27.

⁴⁴ DE VAUX and STEVE 1947, 432, pl. XX.1.

⁴⁵ ILAN 1995, Tab. on 131, 1996, 214 f., Tab. 4.2.

⁴⁶ ILAN 1996, 172, addresses it as a fragment of a bronze bowl or jug, but on 214 f., Tab. 4.2. it is again mentioned as a possible belt. In addition, no weapons and skeletal remains were found in the tomb.

⁴⁷ ILAN 1996, 214 f., Tab. 4.2. A further possible belt buckle might derive from an Iron Age context, see ZIFFER 2018, 549.

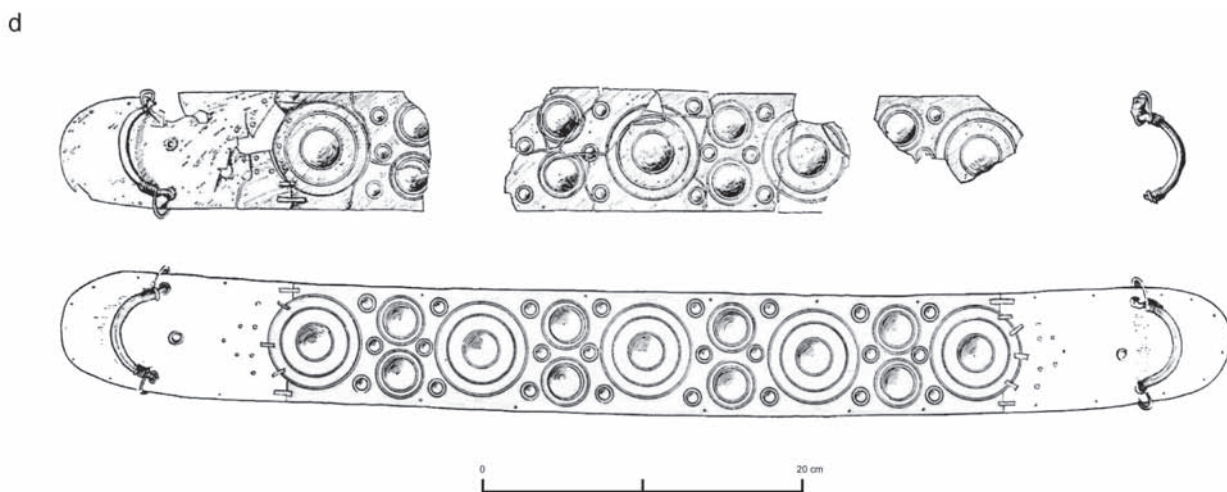
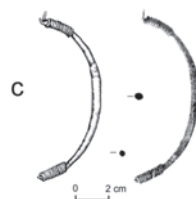
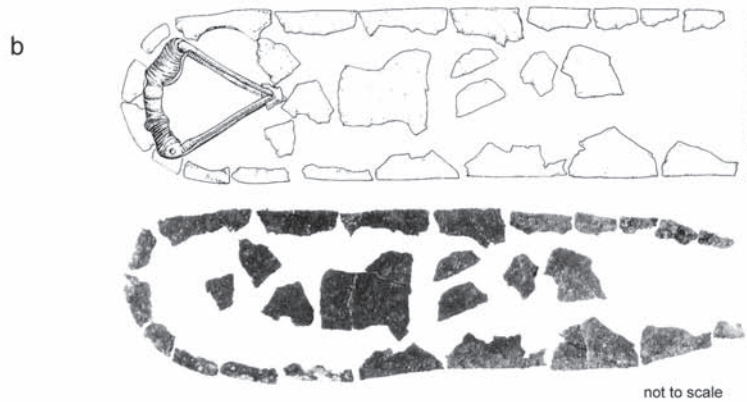
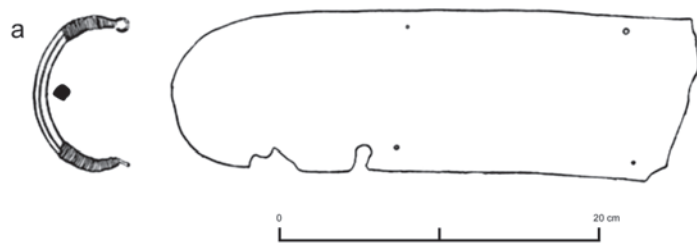


Fig. 9. **a** Ugarit, cave LVI (after SCHAEFFER 1938, 239, Fig. 32.V–W) **b** Fassuta, tomb 1 (after GERSHUNY and AVIAM 2010, 36, Fig. 14; measurements unknown) **c** Sasa, shaft tomb (after BEN-ARIEH 2004, 7*, Fig. 7) **d** Jericho, tomb J3 (after KENYON 1960, 312, Fig. 117.3–4)

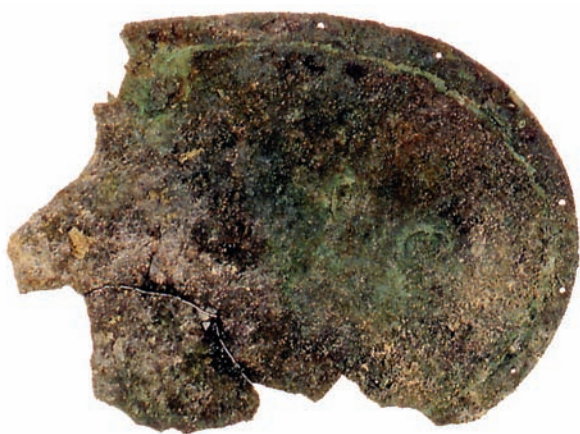


Fig. 10. Jerusalem, tomb 27 (after GREENHUT et al. 2011, 26, Fig. 27)

Another possible belt made from leather may be identified from dark organic remains found in the pelvis region of the deceased buried in burial A, tomb H6 at Jericho.⁴⁸ The individual was placed on a mud-brick platform, around which were three other individuals. As no weapons were found in the tomb, as evidenced for all other cases, the former existence of a belt must be considered as highly speculative.

Middle Cypriot belts

Interestingly, a number of comparable examples of metal belts were discovered in Cyprus. An American mission excavated parts of a necropolis in Dhali/Kafkallia (Idalion) in 1970. A metal belt (Fig. 12a), together with an axe and a dagger was discovered in a shallow pit covered with a stone in tomb G.⁴⁹ The tomb itself was in use for a long period, but the metal items and some pottery deriving from the tomb suggest dating these objects to the Middle Cypriote Period. The belt was found folded, so that a secondary deposit of the items is likely. It does not seem to bear any decoration as far as can be seen and does not show perforations along the edges for sewing onto a fabric. The belt buckles are arc-shaped and each has a spring clip.

Another piece was found in a disturbed tomb at Kazaphani,⁵⁰ excavated in 1971. The belt (Fig. 12b) was folded, 7 cm wide and 18.5 cm long in its folded state. An arc-shaped belt buckle was attached to each end. The metal sheet was pierced at the edges to attach it to a backing made from leather or textile.⁵¹

Possible belt components

Discs as possible belt plaques

Some objects already in the Early Bronze Age can be considered as parts of the decoration of a belt.⁵² Four silver discs found in graves of the A-ceme-

⁴⁸ KENYON 1960, 454; GERNEZ 2017, 156.

⁴⁹ OVERBECK and SWINY 1972, 7 f., Figs. 5–8. The belt has already been mentioned by KARAGEORGHIS 1972, 1011.

⁵⁰ KARAGEORGHIS 1972, 1015, Fig. 13.

⁵¹ The tomb dates to LC I and LC II (PHILIP 1991, 84) but as the belt is comparable with the Middle Bronze Age pieces it was included in this study.

⁵² For three-dimensional representations, see e.g. OPIFICIUS 1961, 69, no. 195, pl. 3 (Old Babylonian) or STROMMINGER and HIRMER 1962, pl. 128 bottom (Ur III).

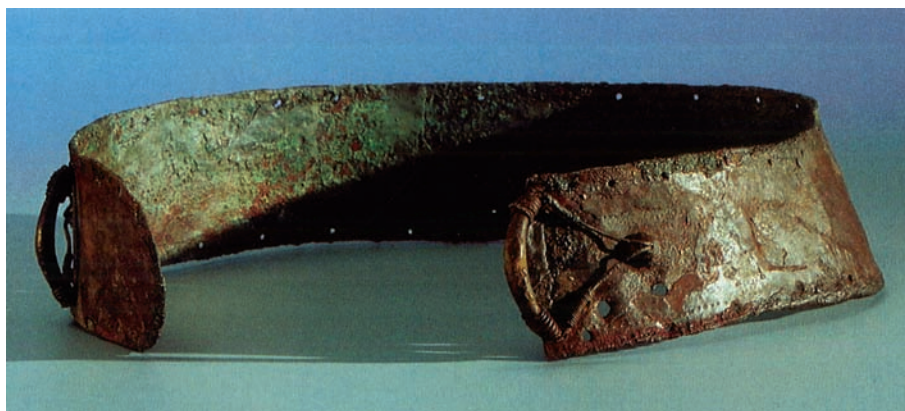


Fig. 11. Tell el Fara'h (N), tomb A4 (after ZIFFER 1990, 102, Fig. 117)

tery at Kish (ED III) show a convex-shaped centre surrounded by embossed concentric circles and radial lines as decoration (Fig. 13a). At least one of them was found lying in the pelvis region of the deceased.⁵³ As they show groups of holes, it is clear that they once were sewn to a backing of leather or textile. Similar pieces were unearthed in burials 42, 51, 68, 120, 121, 128, 135, 141 and 144. They were often discovered in the pelvis region and measure, on average, between 4.4 and 7.9 cm in diameter.⁵⁴ In grave 104, one such silver disc was associated with an axe.⁵⁵

In addition to the belt found at Ur's Royal Cemetery (see above), a silver disc (Fig. 13b) also came to light. Unfortunately found in loose soil, it cannot be attributed to a specific grave.⁵⁶ The disc is decorated with a convex-shaped centre surrounded by embossed concentric circles and radial lines comparable to the items known from Kish.

Two gold discs found in tomb T300 at Mari (ED III, Fig. 13c) might once have been part of the decoration of a belt.⁵⁷ Each is composed of a central boss surrounded by six further embossments. An incised pattern is present along the edges. Another silver disc was discovered in tomb 1082, dating to the reign of Shakkanaku, (Fig. 13d). The central boss is surrounded by three concentric cir-

cles, and the edges are also pierced. The disc was found on the left side of the thorax of the female interred in the tomb.⁵⁸

Further comparable discs are known from the settlement at Uruk (ED).⁵⁹ They are not described here further because they do not derive from tombs and their function is, therefore, highly speculative.

Another early example of discs that might once have formed the decoration of a belt otherwise consisting of leather and/or textile can be identified in the tombs of the so-called "torque bearers" at Ugarit (EB IV–MB IIA).⁶⁰ In one grave in "nécropole III", a round disc came to light (Fig. 13e) in association with weapons. It is decorated with a round, conical element protruding in the centre and surrounded by ornamental rivets.

Tomb 26 of the "Operation H Cemetery" at Qatna produced another metal disc with a slightly differing design (EB IV–MB IIA). It shows an embossed decoration consisting of concentric circles with a convex centre (Fig. 13f). Holes at the edges might have served to attach small seashells found with the disc and/or for sewing it onto textile or leather. The item was the only grave good found in the tomb, which might have belonged to a female.⁶¹

⁵³ MACKAY 1925, 51, pl. IV.20–23.

⁵⁴ MACKAY 1929, 177 f., pl. XLIII.8–9.

⁵⁵ MACKAY 1929, 177.

⁵⁶ WOOLLEY 1934, 545, pl. 219, U.9365.

⁵⁷ JEAN-MARIE 1990, 334, Fig. 1. The discs resemble rosette disc pendants, as discussed by LILYQUIST 1994, 19 f., but are not equipped with a bail and show perforations at the edges; see also the following footnote.

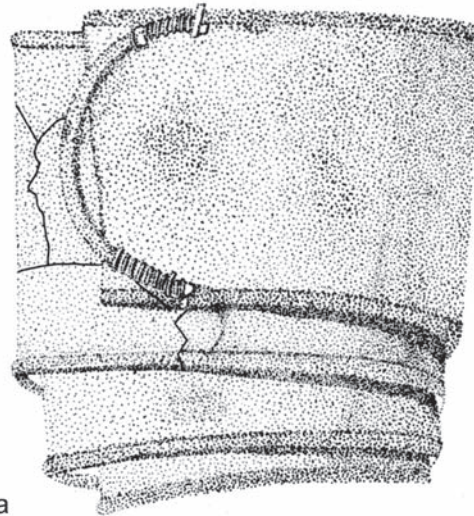
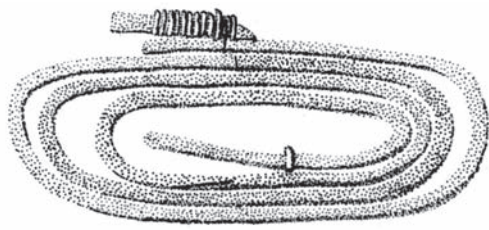
⁵⁸ JEAN-MARIE 1999, 194 f., pl. 242.8. Altogether 33 such discs are known from Mari but were often found in bad

condition, see JEAN-MARIE 1999, 22. Other possible examples from Larsa cited by JEAN-MARIE 1999, 27 and PHILIP 2006, 154, seem more likely to be pendants, as they are equipped with a bail, see HUOT et al. 1978, pl. V.3 after 198.

⁵⁹ VAN ESS and PEDDE 1992, 50, 89, pl. 48.524 and pl. 83.970.

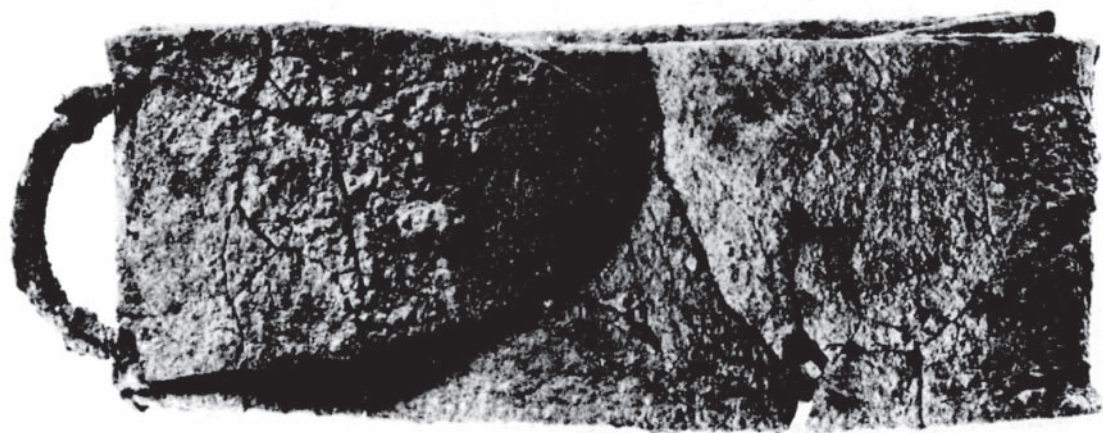
⁶⁰ SCHAEFFER-FORRER 1978, 476, 507, Fig. 8.1.

⁶¹ MORANDI BONACOSI 2011, 23–25.



a

0 5 cm



b

0 5 cm

Fig. 12. **a** Dhali/Kafkallia (after OVERBECK and SWINY 1972, Fig. 5 and 7) **b** Kazaphani (after KARAGEORGHIS 1972, 1015, Fig. 13)

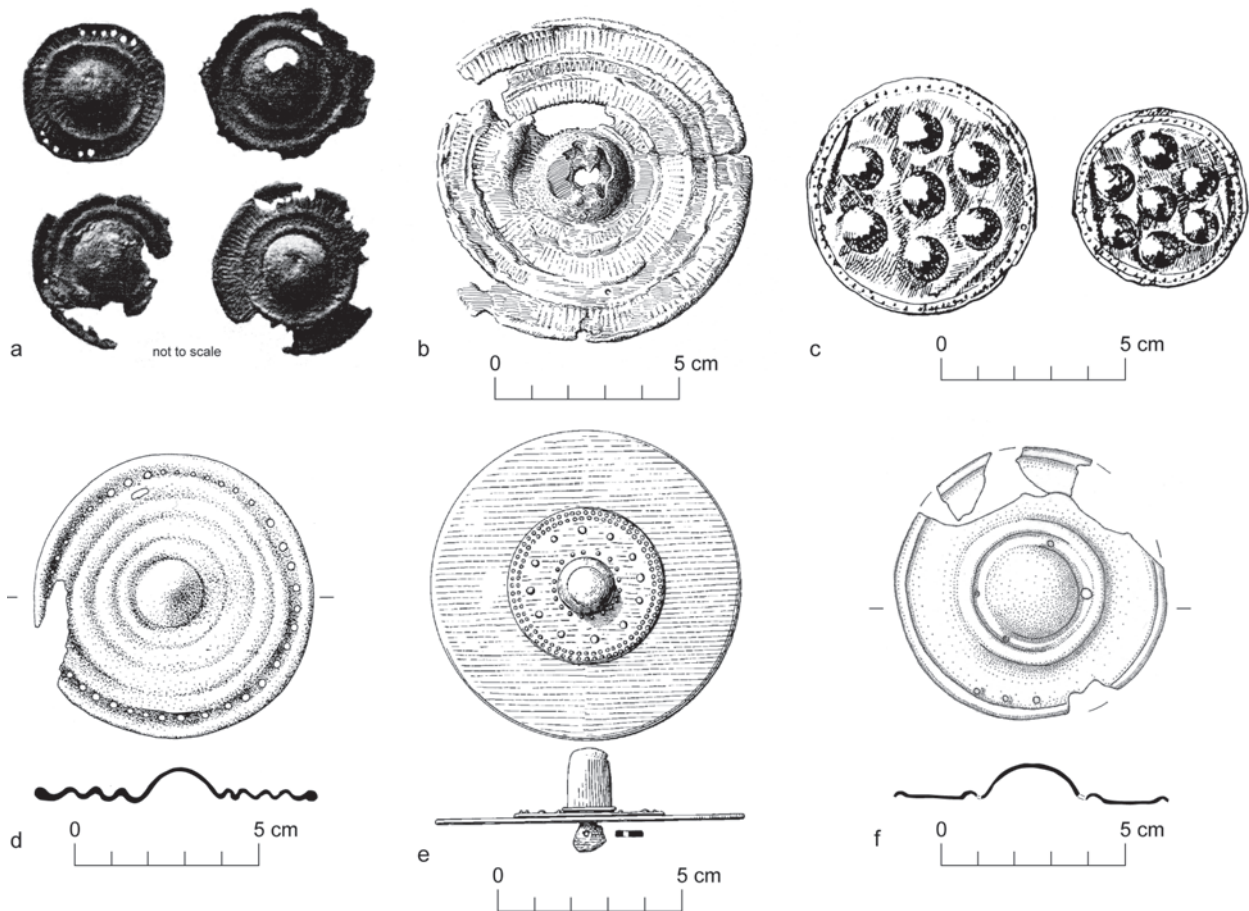


Fig. 13. **a** Kish (after MACKAY 1925, pl. IV, 20–23; measurements unknown) **b** Ur (after WOOLLEY 1934, pl. 219) **c** Mari (after JEAN-MARIE 1990, 334, Fig. 1) **d** Mari (after JEAN-MARIE 1999, pl. 242.8) **e** Ugarit (after SCHAEFFER-FORRER 1978, 507, Fig. 8.1) **f** Qatna (after MORANDI BONACOSSO 2011, 25, Fig. 26)

Two comparable discs were found that are so far unpublished in a tomb in area A10 at Tell Mozan, dating to EB IV.⁶²

Gautier's excavations at Tell et-Tin at the end of the 19th century yielded several tombs containing such weapons as duckbill axes, daggers and spearheads.⁶³ The extramural tombs, dating to MB IIA, contained single or multiple interments.⁶⁴ The special feature of placing the dead individually within pottery vessels which were then positioned in stone cists is worthy of mention. Alongside the weapons, the grave inventory comprised pottery, toggle pins, meat offerings,⁶⁵ and metal discs dec-

orated with concentric circles and pierced at the edges.⁶⁶

Remains of an undecorated disc, which once might very well have been mounted on a belt, were also found at Tell el-Dab'a, area A/I-g/3, tomb 1 (stratum D/3, Fig. 14a).⁶⁷ It can be reconstructed similarly to a better preserved piece deriving from F/I-p/18, tomb 14 (stratum d/2 = H, Fig. 14b).⁶⁸ The edges of both pieces are slightly bent, giving the objects greater depth. The two also have perforations that might have been used to affix them to the actual belt. Both tombs contained weapons as part of the grave inventory.

⁶² But mentioned by MORANDI BONACOSSO 2011, 24.

⁶³ GAUTIER 1895, 456–459.

⁶⁴ GAUTIER 1895, 453.

⁶⁵ GAUTIER 1895, 455.

⁶⁶ GAUTIER 1895, 459, not illustrated; he understood them as shield bosses.

⁶⁷ PRELL and RAHMSTORF 2019. Already suggested by BIETAK 1968, 102. PHILIP 2006, 107, addresses the object as a mirror.

⁶⁸ SCHIESTL 2009, 120, 453, pl. XXII.c.

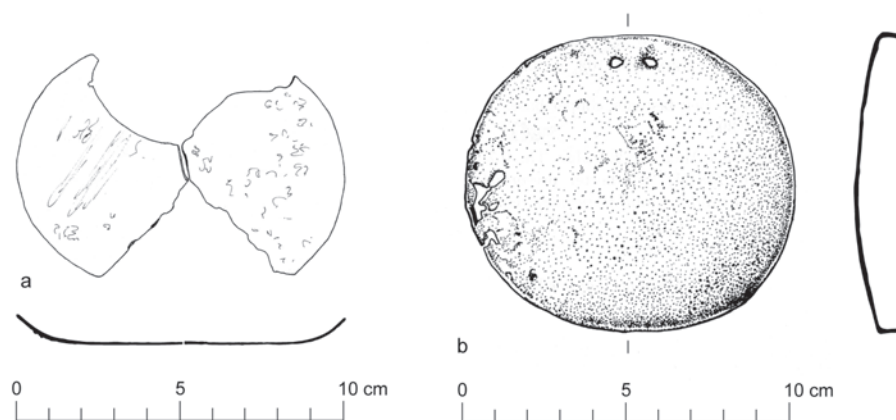


Fig. 14. **a** Tell el-Dab'a, area A/I-g/3, tomb 1 (after PHILIP 2006, 108, Fig. 49) **b** Tell el-Dab'a, area F/I-p/18, tomb 14 (after PHILIP 2006, 85, Fig. 39)

Additional metal discs (Fig. 15a–b) that could be considered parts of a belt are known from the “champs des offrandes” at Byblos.⁶⁹

Further evidence of belts can be noted from Cyprus. Tomb 6 at Ayios Jakovos (Melia) is a rock-cut tomb with dromos that contained 11 skeletons and their burial goods (MC II–III).⁷⁰ A circular metal disc was found with one of the deceased. It is decorated with circular ridges around a central boss and has a pair of holes at the edge (Fig. 15c).⁷¹ According to a sketch of the tomb, the disc was found near the hip of the skeleton.⁷² Another one was discovered near another individual,⁷³ and a fragment of a third with a further burial.⁷⁴ All show the same decoration and all three individuals were additionally equipped with a dagger.⁷⁵

Possible belt fasteners (various designs)

Tell el-Dab'a yielded some objects that might be interpreted as simple belt buckles or fasteners. They are ∞-shaped and are made from metal wire. Four such objects (Fig. 16a) were found in

A/IV-h/7, tomb 4 (stratum F–E/3), together with very much decayed pieces of silver sheet, which might be considered as remains of a belt.⁷⁶ Another similar piece was discovered in area H/VI (Fig. 16b) in layers dating to the early 18th dynasty and is here published for the first time.⁷⁷ One main difference from the earlier pieces is that the metal wire is bent only once and not three times to form the object. This form is so far unique and no comparison of this shape and layout could be found elsewhere so far.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, evidence for possible belt buckles deriving from contexts of the Early and Middle Bronze Age are collected and presented here.

One of the earliest was retrieved from a tomb at Terqa (Tell Ashara),⁷⁹ dating to EB II–IIIA–B. Tomb 1428, excavated in 2008, consists of two stone chambers that were connected with each other. One chamber comprised the double burial of a man and a woman, while the other was filled with grave goods.⁸⁰ The interred male was provided with weapons, as well as a silver ring, with a diameter of 5.2 cm, found near the waist that might have originally formed part of a belt.⁸¹

⁶⁹ DUNAND 1950, 189 f., 338, pl. LVII, nos. 8354–8358, pl. LXIX, nos. 10093–10095. For a statue (no. 7898) from the same site, wearing a belt decorated with a disc, see DUNAND 1950, 154 f., pl. LIV.

⁷⁰ WEINSTEIN BALTHAZAR 1990, 428, Tab. 185.

⁷¹ GJERSTAD et al. 1934, 319, no. 104, pl. LXII.

⁷² GJERSTAD et al. 1934, 316, Fig. 124.

⁷³ GJERSTAD et al. 1934, 320, no. 108, pl. LXII, pl. CXLII, see 316, Fig. 124 for the position.

⁷⁴ GJERSTAD et al. 1934, 320, no. 161, see 316, Fig. 124 for the position.

⁷⁵ GJERSTAD et al. 1934, 321, Tab.

⁷⁶ HEIN 1994, 184, cat. no. 204; PHILIP 2006, 86. For a description of the robbed tomb and further finds, see HEIN 1994, 175–184.

⁷⁷ Inv. no. 9633, square H/VI-u/25, locus 6719.

⁷⁸ Objects showing the ∞-shape are known from Early Bronze Age tombs in Alacahöyük but except for the shape, differ completely in design and layout. However, they are addressed as belt fasteners, see YALÇIN and YALÇIN 2018, 109.

⁷⁹ The author is grateful to Olivier Rouault, who was so kind to share all available information about this item.

⁸⁰ ROUAULT 2009, 658 f.; 2014, 251–253.

⁸¹ TOMCZYK et al. 2011, 435, 438, Fig. 3, 440. According to the authors, the morphology of the bones indicates a warrior; against this assumption SOLTYSIAK 2012.

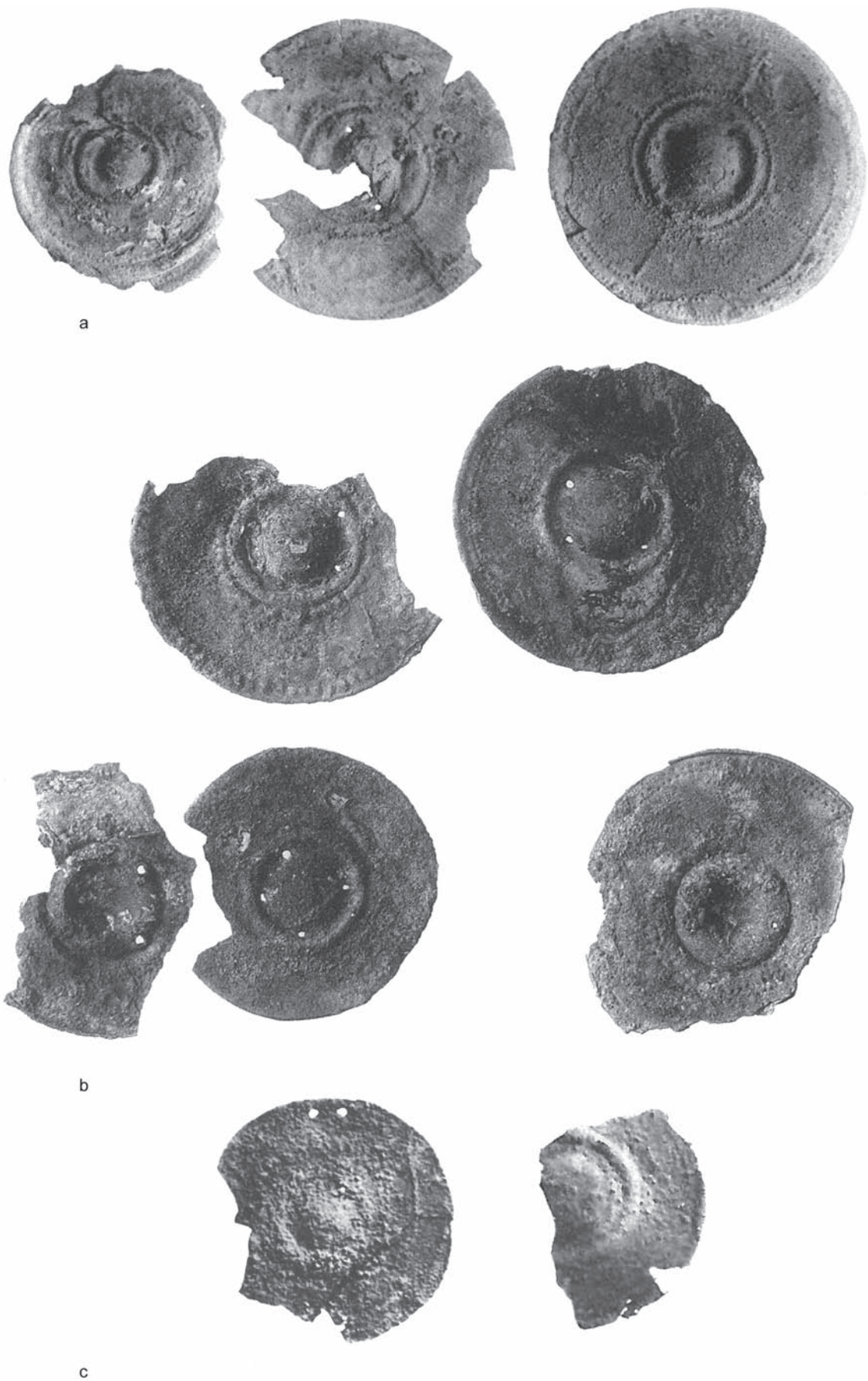


Fig. 15. **a** Byblos, champ des offrandes, depot ξ (after DUNAND 1950, pl. LXIX) **b** Byblos, champ des offrandes, depot β (after DUNAND 1950, pl. LVII) **c** Ayios Jakovos (after GJERSTAD et al. 1934, pl. LXII)

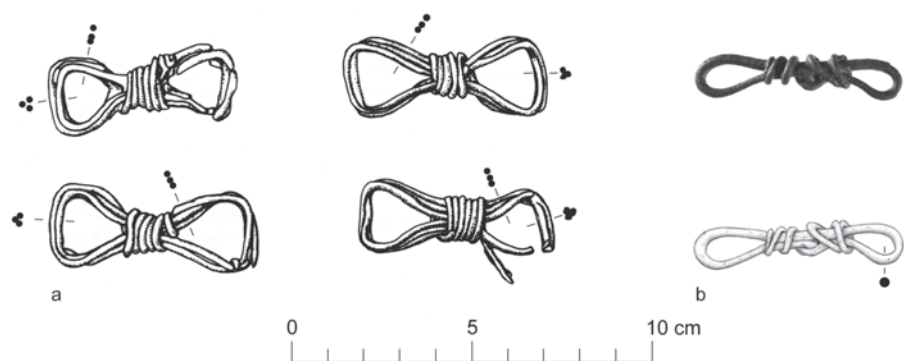


Fig. 16. **a** Tell el-Dab'a, area A/IV-h/7, tomb 4 (after PHILIP 2006, 85, Fig. 39) **b** H/VI-u/25, L6719 (© ÖAI-OREA archive; photo: A. Krause, drawing R. Scheibl)

Another early example of a possible belt buckle was discovered in tomb 1 at Dar Tanha. It features a flat metal ring with a cross-bar (ED III, Fig. 17a). The tomb hosted several individuals, who were also partly equipped with weapons. The belt buckle could not be assigned to a specific burial.⁸²

Other belt buckles comparable though different to the ones attached to metal belts were most probably used to fasten belts of organic material that did not survive. An arc-shaped pair with loop terminals derives from cave 4004 in Lachish (MB IIB-C, Fig. 17b).⁸³

Tomb D9 in Jericho, which housed at least ten individuals, also featured two of such belt fasteners. Arc-shaped, they were found in the lowest layer of grave goods piled up close to the entrance. Near them was one of the two knives found in the tomb (Fig. 17c).⁸⁴ Two similar items also came to light from tomb J14 (Fig. 17d); the chamber contained a single dagger.⁸⁵ Additional belt fasteners were retrieved from tomb 9 of the MB II B-C (Fig. 17e).⁸⁶ It is a chamber tomb that served several individuals as a burial place and was in use for a longer time period. The tomb also contained weapons.⁸⁷

Simple belt buckles were identified within the grave inventory of Tell el-Ajjul (Fig. 17f). Two comparable objects, addressed as brooches by Petrie,⁸⁸ were discovered in tomb 1750 together with some vessels, a dagger and an axe.⁸⁹ Five additional pieces came to light while excavating within the city.⁹⁰

Comparable objects (Fig. 17g) are also attested at Ras Shamra-Ugarit. Some were collected from the temple of Ba'al⁹¹ and/or of a context that cannot be determined further according to the publication (Fig. 17h).⁹²

Two similar objects were excavated from a settlement context at Tell Beit Mirsim (Fig. 17i). One was found in room 4 of the so-called "palace" (MB IIB-C),⁹³ and the other was unearthed from within the settlement.⁹⁴ This site interestingly also yielded a mould for such an object that additionally served to cast adzes and knives.⁹⁵

Again, there is evidence of a belt attachment from Cyprus. An object that might have been an arc-shaped belt fastener with a spring clip was found in a MC II-III tomb at Klavdhia (Fig. 17j).⁹⁶

Other metal objects identified as belt buckles in the literature are very distinctive in appearance

⁸² VANDEN BERGHE 1972, 24 f., 29, Fig. 6.17, pl. XII.1.

⁸³ MOOREY 1969, 98, Figs. 1-2, published by him for the first time and not included in the published inventory of the cave; see TUFFNELL 1958, 281-285. He addresses them as brooches, and it might very well be that those objects are, in fact, not belt buckles but predecessors of the later fibulae, although those become common in the Near East only shortly before 1200 BCE, see STRONACH 1959, 181.

⁸⁴ KENYON 1965, 285, 224, Fig. 103.6-7, addressed by her as belt fasteners.

⁸⁵ KENYON 1965, 322 f., 224, Fig. 103.10-11, addressed by her as belt fasteners.

⁸⁶ GARSTANG 1932, 47, Fig. 10.

⁸⁷ GARSTANG 1932, 43, 46, pl. XXXVII.

⁸⁸ See PHILIP 2006, 154, for a brief discussion. See also fn. 83.

⁸⁹ PETRIE 1934, 9, pl. XXII.237-238, pl. LIX.1750.

⁹⁰ PETRIE 1934, 11, pl. XXXV.554, 556-557; 1952, 15, pl. XVII.207-208.

⁹¹ RS 7419, SCHAEFFER 1936, 133, Fig. 19L.

⁹² RS 6069, SCHAEFFER 1949, 50, Fig. 18.28, appointed to "Ugarit Moyen I", though MOOREY 1969, 97, fn. 8 points out that the date might be slightly later according to the other objects shown in the figure.

⁹³ ALBRIGHT 1938, 37, 55, pl. 42.15 also addresses it as a brooch.

⁹⁴ ALBRIGHT 1938, 55, pl. 42.16.

⁹⁵ ALBRIGHT 1938, 53, pl. 43d.

⁹⁶ MALMGREN 2003, 55, no. 137, pl. 35d; already mentioned by OVERBECK and SWINY 1972, 30, fn. 23.

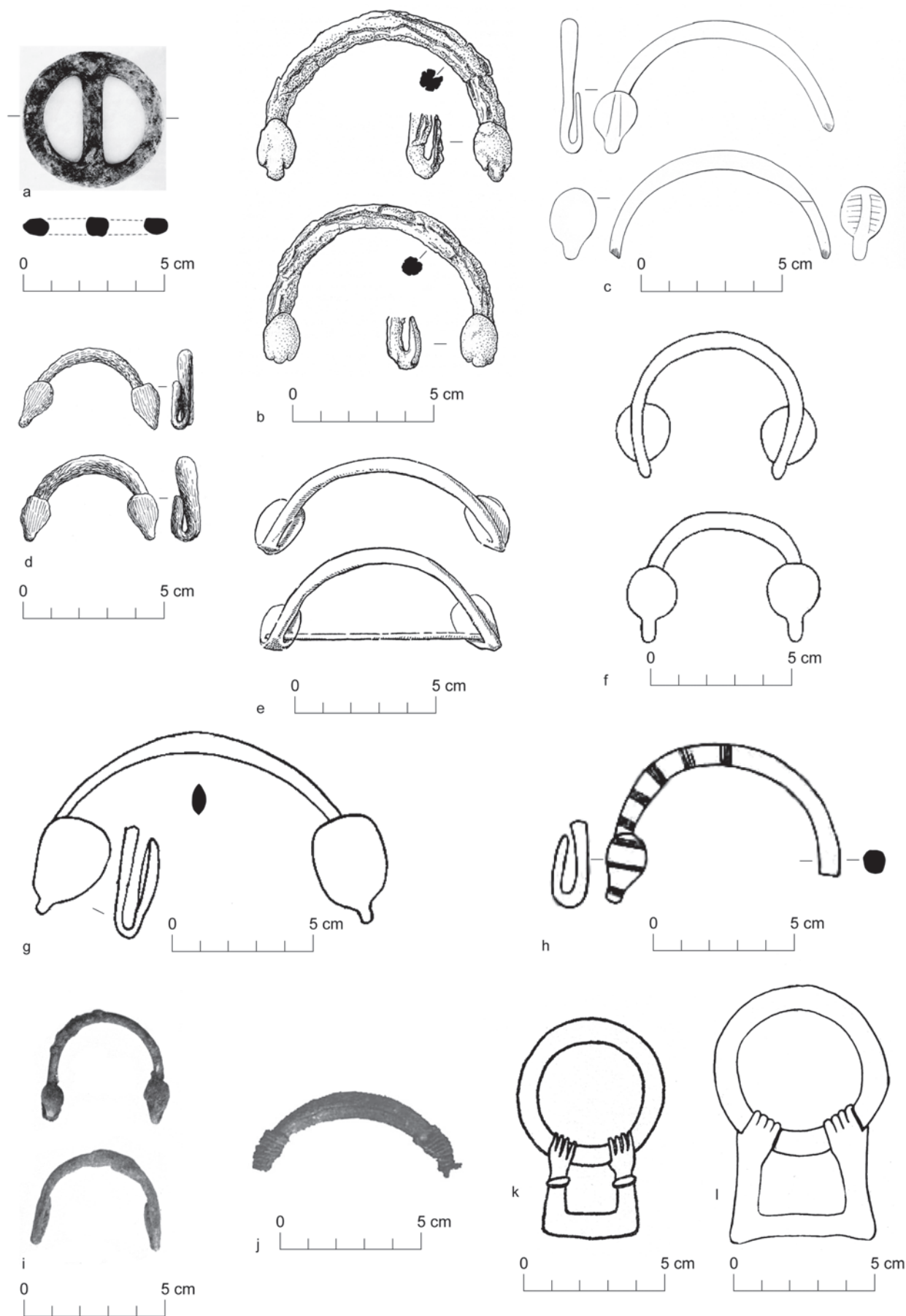


Fig. 17. **a** Dar Tanha (after VANDEN BERGHE 1972, 29, Fig. 6.17 and pl. XII.1) **b** Lachish, cave 4004 (after MOOREY 1969, 98, Fig. 1–2) **c** Jericho, tomb D9 (after KENYON 1965, 224, Fig. 103.6–7) **d** Jericho, tomb J14 (after KENYON 1965, 224, Fig. 103.10–11) **e** Jericho, tomb 9 (after GARSTANG 1932, 47, Fig. 10) **f** Tell el-'Ajjul (after PETRIE 1934, pl. XXII.237–238) **g** Ugarit (after SCHAEFFER 1936, 133, Fig. 19L) **h** Ugarit (after SCHAEFFER 1949, 50, Fig. 18.28) **i** Tell Beit Mirsim (after ALBRIGHT 1938, pl. 42.15) **j** Klavdhia (after MALMGREN 2003, pl. 35d) **k** Susa (after CROUWEL 1972, 50, Fig. 1) **l** Kültepe (after ÖZGÜÇ 1955, 72, Fig. 37a–b)

and consist of a ring grasped by two hands. One example derives from an Old Babylonian grave in the Donjon Cemetery at Susa (Fig. 17k),⁹⁷ and a similar object is known from the excavations at Susa by R. Girshman.⁹⁸ Interestingly, an exact parallel was found further away in an MBA context at Kültepe-Kanish (Fig. 17l) at the waist of a single interment in square O/19.⁹⁹

Other evidence for belts (figurines, glyptic, texts)

The curly-haired hero is represented nude, only wearing a belt, while fighting animals, in the Jemdet-Nasr period.¹⁰⁰ Nude male statuettes cast from metal are known in Mesopotamia from ED II onwards and might very well represent mythical characters, idols or even gods.¹⁰¹ Examples are attested from Tell Asmar, Chafadja¹⁰² and Tell Agrab.¹⁰³ A kneeling calcite statue of a nude male from Umma is also wearing only a belt. Another kneeling statuette with the same attribute carrying a vessel came to light in the Shara Temple at Tell Agrab.¹⁰⁴ A statue from the square temple of Ahu at Tell Asmar is also kneeling.¹⁰⁵ Certain unique characteristics shared by the statues, such as the extreme slenderness of the body and their nudity except for the belt, link them with comparable depictions on contemporary cylinder seals (see below).¹⁰⁶

A similar type, often holding weapons, was quite common in the Levant from the very beginning of the Middle Bronze Age. Negbi, who first worked on this subject, classified them into three types: (1) male warriors in an "Anatolian" pose;¹⁰⁷ (2) male warriors in an "Egyptian" pose; and (3) male warriors in a smiting pose. The groups can be subdivided further and seem to represent different workshops.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, the provenance of many statuettes is unknown, although they were mainly found in modern Syria, with a few

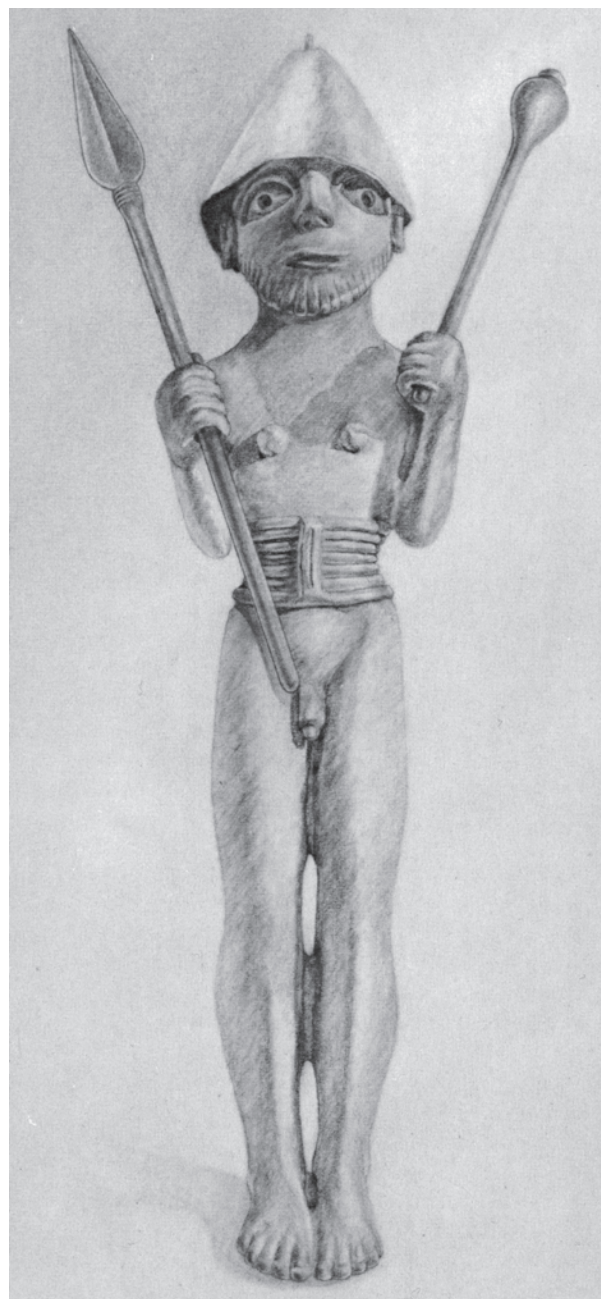


Fig. 18. One of the Tell Judeideh figurines (figurine A) equipped with spear and mace head, wearing a belt closed in the front (after BRAIDWOOD and BRAIDWOOD 1960, 307, Fig. 240)

⁹⁷ CROUWEL 1972, 49 f.

⁹⁸ Louvre Sb 11300, seen by the author in the exhibition, date unknown. There is also another comparable piece without provenance located in the Louvre (AO 18686). For other similar pieces without provenance, see CROUWEL 1972. For this particular type, see also TALLON 1987, 283–285, nos. 1200–1206, 411 for chemical analyses.

⁹⁹ ÖZGÜÇ 1955, 72, Fig. 37a–b, Fig. 93; CROUWEL 1972, 50 f.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. STROMMINGER and HIRMER 1962, pls. 24–25 for a decorated beaker (Jemdet Nasr) or DELOUGAZ and LLOYD 1942, 242, Fig. 189 for a sculpted vase (ED I).

¹⁰¹ SEEDEN 1980, 133–155; for discussion, see BRAUN-HOLZINGER 2013, 28 f.

¹⁰² FRANCFORT 1939, 12, pls. 98–103, 115; 1943, pl. 95.

¹⁰³ FRANCFORT 1943, pls. 55–57; BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1984, 11, pl. 5.

¹⁰⁴ FRANCFORT 1943, pls. 33–34.

¹⁰⁵ FRANCFORT 1943, pl. 91.

¹⁰⁶ FRANCFORT 1939, 12, pls. 26–27.

¹⁰⁷ According to the strong resemblance to the Anatolian lead figurines discussed below, see NEGBI 1976, 8 with fn. 1.

¹⁰⁸ NEGBI 1976, 8–41.

examples from today's Lebanon, Israel and Cyprus. Only those of secure provenance are listed here.¹⁰⁹ Specimens of Negbi's group 1 are of particular interest as those of group 2 are not represented with belts, while those of group 3 are normally depicted clothed, although belts can occur. In addition, the majority of specimens of the latter group most probably date to the Late Bronze Age.¹¹⁰

Some flat cast figurines in an Anatolian pose were retrieved from secure contexts. One MB IIA example collected from Byblos has a dagger stuck in the belt and holds weapons in its hands.¹¹¹ A similar object is known from tomb 5121 at Megiddo, also of the MB IIA.¹¹² Another figurine came to light from a settlement context at Tell Simiriyan (MB IIA).¹¹³ A fine specimen cast of solid silver was unearthed together with a female companion at Ugarit.¹¹⁴ It was discovered in a pottery vessel in the region of the Ba'al temple from niveau II (EB IV–MB IIA).¹¹⁵ The round cast figurines from Tell Judeideh are often considered to represent the earliest tin bronzes ever found (Fig. 18).¹¹⁶ They consist of a group of three male statues with three female companions found together in a cache of stratum XII (Amuq G).¹¹⁷ The secure specimens of the sub-Byblos group derive only from Byblos and were often found in hoards, namely in the so-called "Syrian Temple", the temple of the "champ des offrandes", the "Temple of the Obelisks" and the "Sacred Enclosure".¹¹⁸

In addition, the figurines from Kültepe-Kanish and Boğazköy already introduced have to be men-

tioned, as they are very similar to each other but differ from the figurines described above. Each represents a bearded man wearing a conical cap and a kilt held up by a belt and holding an axe.¹¹⁹ Figurines and moulds of a couple and triads also show the male in similar fashion, holding an axe and wearing a belt that is clearly closed at the front.¹²⁰

The figurines, at least partly, show that the belt had a practical function. As confirmed by many examples, it could be used to attach a weapon, namely a dagger, onto the body of its wearer.¹²¹ The evidence from the tombs discussed also corroborates this, with a number of cases indicating that the dagger, respectively its sheath, might have been affixed directly to the belt. The Syro-Anatolian figurines most probably represent a god, perhaps one of warfare, in the process of accomplish-



Fig. 19. The bull-man and the curly haired hero fighting animals (after BOEHMER 1965, pl. XV.168)

¹⁰⁹ The ones wearing a kilt without clear indication of a belt were excluded here.

¹¹⁰ NEGBI 1976, 29–41. Only some examples from Byblos can be securely dated to the Middle Bronze Age (Syro-Palestinian group), but they all wear kilts which can be combined with a belt, see NEGBI 1976, 41, Tab. 6. See also MARCHETTI 2000 for Anatolian figures wearing a kilt, belt and axe (see also below). The short kilt is scarce at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age and was gradually adopted at the middle of the second millennium to become common in the Late Bronze Age, see SEEDEN 1980, 133 f.

¹¹¹ NEGBI 1976, 146, no. 38; see DUNAND 1950, 72, no. 7150, pl. CLXII. Unfortunately, it is a surface find.

¹¹² LOUD 1948, pl. 233.1; NEGBI 1976, 146, no. 39.

¹¹³ NEGBI 1976, 146, no. 45; SEEDEN 1980, 25 f., no. 78; see BRAIDWOOD 1940, 212–214, pl. XXVI.

¹¹⁴ NEGBI 1976, 147, no. 59; SEEDEN 1980, 21 f., no. 65.

¹¹⁵ SCHAEFFER 1933, 124–126, pl. XVII, 1949, 73 f., Figs. 30–31, pls. XVII–XIX. For the date, see SEEDEN 1980, 23.

¹¹⁶ SEEDEN 1980, 7.

¹¹⁷ NEGBI 1976, 148, nos. 71–73; see BRAIDWOOD and BRAIDWOOD 1960, 300, 303 f., 307–309, Figs. 240–242, pls. 56–60. For a discussion of the problem of the date of these figurines (EB II–III?), see SEEDEN 1980, 7 f. For a detailed discussion, see MARCHETTI 2000, who attributes them according to stylistic and technical consideration to the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age.

¹¹⁸ NEGBI 1976, 150 f., nos. 98–154; SEEDEN 1980, 36–102 for a compilation of all figurines.

¹¹⁹ EMRE 1971, 105, nos. 16–17, 107, no. 24; MARCHETTI 2003, 398, Figs. 14–16.

¹²⁰ MARCHETTI 2003, 399–404. See also SCHROER 2008, 166 f., cat. no. 385.

¹²¹ SEEDEN 1980, 137. See the depiction of a foreigner carrying an axe and a dagger attached to his belt on stela Louvre E 6141 (E 201), PETSCHER 2011, 189, Fig. 39. For similar depictions in Beni Hassan, see NEWBERRY 1893, pls. 16, 47; vol. 2, pl. 15; KANAWATI and EVANS 2016; LASHIEN and MOURAD 2019, pls. 72b–74, 75c–76a. For similar scenes in Meir, see BLACKMAN 1914, pls. 6–7, 23.

ing a specific task.¹²² If portrayed without clothing, the nudity correspondingly stresses their virile power. This aspect is additionally highlighted by the female statuettes accompanying both the nude and clothed figurines.¹²³ Both the life giving and the deadly power of the god is represented within the one and the same medium.

The depiction of a warrior deity wearing a belt on a stela probably dating to the middle of the second millennium BCE supports this representation.¹²⁴ The belt is clearly decorated with concentric circles, similar to those known from Kültepe-Kanish, Tell el-Dab'a, Jericho and Sidon.

The "curly-haired hero" mentioned above is additionally depicted on seals from Akkadian times. He can be nude or clothed and is in both cases often equipped with a belt (Fig. 19).¹²⁵ The bull-man often depicted in scenes of contest with animals can also appear wearing a belt.¹²⁶ The majority of cylinder seals with comparable figures were found in Northern Syria and date to the Middle Bronze Age. The motif becomes scarcer into the Late Bronze Age.¹²⁷

Written sources explicitly mentioning metal belts are rare. Those attested in the Mari archives occur in lists of an administrative nature, dealing with taxes, diplomatic gifts, gifts to the royal family and courtiers, or wages of state officials.¹²⁸ The Ebla texts also note belts as gifts,¹²⁹ the items occurring in palace supply lists¹³⁰ and as offerings to gods.¹³¹ They are normally mentioned to consist of leather, but belts made from or decorated with bronze, silver or gold are attested as well.¹³²

One cannot assume with certainty though that the belt and the weapons accompanying the dead were always worn and carried during the lifetime of an individual. Surviving lists tabulating grave inventories, such as the one for the high official Arrukum, make it obvious that the palace provided textiles, clothing, a gold ingot and a dagger

together with a gilded belt for his funeral.¹³³ This suggests that Arrukum did not own these items during his lifetime, at least not the ones given by the palace to be included in his burial inventory. Gifts for already deceased kings worshipped as illustrious ancestors on the occasion of a funeral of another person are also known to comprise belts.¹³⁴

Conclusion

The earliest evidence of belts in the archaeological repertoire can be established with certainty from the late Early Bronze Age onwards (Fig. 20), though earlier representations of individuals wearing belts are known, as with the depictions of the "curly-haired hero". Elongated metal belts, most probably originally sewn onto a backing of leather or cloth, are scarce and show varying forms, though the belt from tomb 555 at Susa already relegates the shape and general layout of the belts emerging in the Middle Bronze Age. Other Early Bronze Age attestations of belts include possible belt plaques from Ur, Kish, Mari, Tell Mozan, Ugarit and Qatna, and the possible belt fastener in the form of a simple ring from tomb 1428 at Terqa. The latter would be the earliest example if this simple silver ring can really be regarded as being a former part of a belt. Unlike those of the Middle Bronze Age, belts, or respectively the plaques that originally belonged to them, occur in both male and a few female interments (Qatna, Mari) of the Early Bronze Age. Indeed, the general usage of belts for females can be confirmed by various statuettes.¹³⁵ Overall, the Early Bronze Age evidence of belts is more or less confined to Mesopotamia and Northern Syria, except for the possible belts found at Moza and Jericho. These two belts differ very much from the examples known from Ur and Susa. The Jericho example was first identified as a

¹²² SEEDEN 1980, 148.

¹²³ For the association of male and female figurines, see MARCHETTI 2003.

¹²⁴ Louvre Sb 11, see AMIET 1966, 284, Fig. 213, 308 f., Fig. 232c.

¹²⁵ BOEHMER 1965, 15; SCHROER 2008, 270–273, cat. nos. 508–510.

¹²⁶ PORADA 1948, pls. XXV–XXVI. For a discussion of the hero and the bull-man fighting animals, see BRAUN-HOLZINGER 2013, 60–71. For Old Babylonian seals depicting the two, see BRAUN-HOLZINGER 1996, 254–256. This kind of depiction of the bull-man is attested until the first millennium BCE, see CALMEYER 1971, 693.

¹²⁷ Only a few LB examples are known, see SEEDEN 1980, 140.

¹²⁸ ASTOUR 1992, 57.

¹²⁹ ARCHI 2015, 167, 173.

¹³⁰ ARCHI 2015, 202–211.

¹³¹ ARCHI 2015, 576.

¹³² CALMEYER 1971, 721 f. For silver belts, see also KIENAST and WAETZOLD 1990, 45.

¹³³ ARCHI 2002, 181; 2015, 248, 553–556.

¹³⁴ ARCHI 2002, 183.

¹³⁵ DALES 1963, 37–40.



Fig. 20. Distribution of elongated belts, discs and belt fasteners in the Early and Middle Bronze Age (mapping S. Prell)

headband by Kenyon¹³⁶ but, as followed here, was labelled a belt by Gernez.¹³⁷ As the general shape of the Moza belt is similar to the Jericho piece, both reducing in width towards the ends, it remains uncertain whether the two can really be considered as early evidence of belts in the Southern Levant.

Only at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age were elongated metal belts deposited in the Levant with certainty. Their findspots cover a region extending from Tell el-Dab'a in the south up to Kültepe-Kanish in the north, with a few examples deriving from Cyprus as well (Fig. 20). Strangely, except for a very uniquely-shaped belt fastener from an Old Babylonian tomb at Susa, there is no evidence of belts in Upper and Lower Mesopotamia dating to the Middle Bronze Age. Interestingly, the belt fastener from Susa finds a more or less exact comparison from Kültepe-Kanish, demonstrating the connection between Susa and Kültepe at this time, which is not astonishing considering the function of Kültepe as an impor-

tant Assyrian trade centre and colony in the Old Assyrian period.¹³⁸

A total of five belts are known from Tell el-Dab'a that offer the possibility of a chronological seriation, although the latter unfortunately does not deliver particular results.¹³⁹ The earliest belts in Tell el-Dab'a occur in stratum H and no belt is known with certainty after stratum F. The decoration with concentric circles seems to span the entire period of their occurrence and the patterns are comparable but not identical, therefore, it is not possible to distinguish different workshops. They were certainly not items of mass production and every belt was probably produced individually for its owner. This makes it even more striking that the decorative patterns are so similar and seem to hint to a common background of their owners. The patterns of the belt from A/II-m/15, tomb 9 (Fig. 4c) and A/II-l/16, tomb 4 (Fig. 4e) are similar, but due to the bad conservation of both belts could have differed in their final execution. In addition, the arrangement of the pattern of the

¹³⁶ KENYON 1965, 144, 148.

¹³⁷ GERNEZ 2007, 109.

¹³⁸ ÖZGÜÇ 1953; STEIN 2005; KULAKOĞLU 2011; MICHEL 2011; LARSEN 2015 to mention only a few publications.

belt from F/I-o/19, tomb 8 (Fig. 4a), parallels that of A/II-p/14, tomb 18 (Fig. 4d), but not entirely in the execution. Incidentally, the belt from A/II-p/14, tomb 18, with its perforated decoration constitutes a singular piece in the entire distribution area, as belts are otherwise either plain or decorated with diverse patterns of embossed concentric circles.

The decoration with concentric circles is persistent outside Tell el-Dab'a throughout the Middle Bronze Age. Early examples occur at Kültepe-Kanish (Fig. 3) and Sidon (Fig. 7), with a later example attested at Jericho (Fig. 9d). The pattern of the Sidon belt is similar but not exactly the same as that from F/I-d/23, tomb 1, at Tell el-Dab'a.¹⁴⁰ The Jericho belt shows affinities with that from F/I-o/19, tomb 8, at Tell el-Dab'a, but the concentric circles are arranged differently, with the latter lacking the small circles in between the groups.

Unfortunately, neither the shape of metal belts nor the form of belt buckles can provide any criteria for dating. One of the two early examples from Tell el-Dab'a tapers towards its terminal ends (F/I-d/23, tomb 1) but the other (F/I-o/19, tomb 8) does not. Overall, this aspect is not very common, the width of the belt tending to stay the same for most known examples. Regarding their buckle shape, the triangular buckle is observed on the two earliest as well as the latest examples from Tell el-Dab'a. Outside Tell el-Dab'a, this shape is attested in the late Middle Bronze Age tombs at Fassuta and Tell el-Fara'h (N). The arc-shaped belt buckle is otherwise more common, with examples attested throughout the period.

The elongated belts from the Early and Middle Bronze Ages are most often manufactured from copper. Only one of the examples that were chemically analysed consists of tin bronze (Rishon le Zion, tomb C4, see Tab. 1). A few examples in silver are also confirmed (Ur, Kültepe-Kanish, Sidon, possibly Tell-el Dab'a, A/IV-h/7, tomb 4). However, none of silver are attested in contexts post-dating the MB IIA, except for the possible silver belt from Tell el-Dab'a (MB IIA-B).

Three of the belts found at Tell el-Dab'a show perforations along the edges that indicate they were originally sewn onto a backing of leather or

textile. No traces of such a backing were discernible, although the soil conditions at Tell el-Dab'a might have prevented the conservation of such organic material. That two belts did not show signs of such perforations, also true for the belts from Fassuta, Sidon and Kafkallia, might indicate that they were produced exclusively for a funerary context.¹⁴¹ Surviving lists tabulating grave inventory, such as the one for the official Arrukum already mentioned above, make it obvious that the palace provided funerary items.¹⁴² Therefore, the minister did not own or wear those items during his lifetime.

Such textual evidence, alongside the archaeological and artistic material, emphasises that metal belts were very distinct and special markers. Showing the high status of the deceased, they are generally connected to wealthy burials that also included weapons.¹⁴³ As well as acting as a symbol of status, belts incorporated the practical use of holding a dagger,¹⁴⁴ as proven by the examples from Ur, Tell el-Dab'a and Rishon le-Zion. Belts with attached daggers are also depicted as booty on the fragmentary Nasiriyah stela.¹⁴⁵ However, not all tombs containing weapons produced a metal belt or decorated disc. The latter, which shows affinities to the patterns found on the elongated metals belts, seems to be of a "cheaper" belt version. This seems to indicate that the most common type of belt was made entirely from organic material that did not survive. The possible belt fasteners discussed above further support this,¹⁴⁶ as they interestingly frequently derive from tombs with weapons. Additionally, as daggers are often found at the pelvis region of the deceased, one might assume that a leather belt, no longer preserved, must have completed the equipment. As leather is a material that can be painted or dyed, stamped, perforated, engraved or embroidered, these unpreserved leather belts might very well once have been decorated (with concentric circles?) as well.

Whether the belt itself had a further "spiritual" meaning is unclear for the Early and Middle Bronze Ages as indications are scarce.¹⁴⁷ Only in the first millennium BCE are there references to the belt as a carrier of magical traits, transmitted

¹³⁹ Already stated by ZIFFER 2018, 549.

¹⁴⁰ Already noted by DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011–12, 32 f.

¹⁴¹ PHILIP 2006, 153.

¹⁴² ARCHI 2002, 181.

¹⁴³ See GERSHUNY and AVIAM 2010, 37, Tab. 2.

¹⁴⁴ For the belt as military equipment in classical antiquity, see SCHOPPHOFF 2009, 105–110.

¹⁴⁵ McKEON 1970, 229, Fig. 4.

¹⁴⁶ PHILIP 2006, 154.

¹⁴⁷ E.g. GOFF and BUCHANAN 1956, 231.

to the wearer.¹⁴⁸ In the Bible, the belt is often understood as a symbolic bearer of the power of the ruler.¹⁴⁹ It is unknown whether concentric circles, also prominent decorative features of Middle Bronze Age scarabs and furniture inlays, contain a deeper semantic meaning or are to be understood only as elementary decorative patterns.

A relationship between belt and weapons is further emphasised by attestations of figurines equipped with both. In many cases, the belt is the sole garment of these figurines. This might imply a meaning other than one associated with the military and perhaps one related to virile aspects. As Levantine statuettes of known provenance are regularly found in hoards, they might represent offerings from individuals in association with fertility cults; they could also be associated with ancestor worship.¹⁵⁰

The discovery of the first known belts in Mesopotamia seems to indicate that the need to be provided with a belt in the afterlife was native to this region. However, it is somewhat incomprehensible that no example from the Middle Bronze Age has been preserved here. A possible explanation might

be the fragile nature of both metal and leather belts, which might not have been recognised as such during former excavations or might have been unsalvageable. Nevertheless, the stylistic similarities of the elongated metal belts found in the Middle Bronze Age across Tell el-Dab'a to Kültepe-Kanish and also in Cyprus suggest that they were attributed with the same funerary significance. Similarly, their owners, according to grave goods, probably belonged to the elite and evidently followed equivalent conceptions. Their burial goods had to include weapons, and the addition of a belt was also obviously indispensable. These individuals might very well have been tradesmen, as suggested by the owner of A/II-1/12, tomb 5, who was not equipped with a belt but, amongst others, with a dagger and a chisel axe. That his capacity was, however, of an administrative nature, is shown by a scarab inscribed with his name and title, “*3mw*, deputy treasurer”.¹⁵¹ The distribution of belts in Egypt, the Levant and Cyprus, therefore, probably reflects networks of people sharing a similar cultural background and ancient trade connections.



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¹⁴⁸ CALMEYER 1971, 693; STUPKA 1972, 34–40. For the meaning of the belt in different cultures throughout the ages, see LOSCHEK 1993, 54–70.

¹⁴⁹ SCHOPPHOFF 2009, 91. Also GERSHNUNY and AVIAM 2010, 37, understand it as a symbol of rank, maybe even an insignia of command.

¹⁵⁰ MARCHETTI 2000, 131 f.

¹⁵¹ BIETAK 1991, 54. For the title and its occurrence and the distribution of such scarabs, see DESPLANCQUES 2006, 350–354, 408.

Table 1 Elongated metal belts of the Middle Bronze Age

Site	Context	Length	Width	Fastening	Decoration	Material	Publication
<i>Kültepe</i>	Phithos burial	80 cm	7 cm	arc, spring clip	concentric circles	silver (no analysis*)	EMRE 1971, 144, fig. 39, pl. XVI a-c
<i>Tell el-Dab'a</i>	F/I-o/19, tomb 8	80 cm	10.3 cm	triangular, spring clip	concentric circles	copper base (PHILIP 2006, 84)	SCHIESTL 2009, 270, fig. 190
<i>Tell el-Dab'a</i>	F/I-d/23, tomb 1	80 cm (reconstructed)	12.8 cm	triangular, spring clip	concentric circles	copper base (PHILIP 2006, 83)	DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011-12, 33
<i>Tell el-Dab'a</i>	A/II-m/15, tomb 9	46.2 + x cm	10 cm	arc	concentric circles	copper base (PHILIP 2006, 84)	FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008, 132, fig. 72
<i>Tell el-Dab'a</i>	A/II-p/14, tomb 18	c. 80 cm (after restoration)	6.5 cm	arc, spring clip	round perforations	copper base (no analysis*)	FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008, 181, fig. 103a
<i>Tell el-Dab'a</i>	A/II-l/16, tomb 4	c. 80 cm (reconstructed)	10 cm	triangular, spring clip	concentric circles	copper base (no analysis*)	FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2008, 151, fig. 88
<i>Rishon le Zion</i>	tomb F4	c. 15 + x + 5 + y + 13 + z cm (according to photo)	c. 7.4 cm	arc, spring clip	round perforation at the end	copper base (no analysis*)	ZIFFER 2018, 545, figs. 8.3 and 8.4
<i>Rishon le Zion</i>	tomb C4	c. 8.7 + x + 12.5 cm (according to drawing)	x + 8.6 + y cm	arc, spring clip	unknown due to preservation	tin bronze (KAN-CIPOR-MERON and SHALEV 2018, 538)	ZIFFER 2018, 544, fig. 8.2
<i>Rishon le Zion</i>	tomb B133	too fragmented	too fragmented	arc, spring clip	unknown due to preservation	copper base (no analysis*)	ZIFFER 2018, 543, fig. 8.1
<i>Rishon le Zion</i>	tomb B218	too fragmented	too fragmented	arc	unknown due to preservation	copper base (no analysis*)	LEVY and KLEITER 2018, 88, fig. 2.125; ZIFFER 2018, 543
<i>Sidon</i>	Tomb 42	c. 69 cm (reconstructed)	11.5 cm	arc, spring clip	concentric circles	copper base (VERON et al. 2011-12, 70)	DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011-12, 32
<i>Sidon</i>	Tomb 27	too fragmented	too fragmented	unknown	unknown due to preservation	silver (no analysis*)	DOUMET-SERHAL and KOPETZKY 2011-12, 31
<i>Ugarit</i>	cave LVI	c. 33 + x cm (according to drawing)	8.2 cm (according to drawing)	arc, spring clip	traces of decoration in silver	copper base (no analysis*)	SCHAEFFER 1938, 239 f., fig. 32. V-W.
<i>Fassuta</i>	tomb I	unknown	unknown	triangular, spring clip	none	copper base (no analysis*)	GERSHUNY and AVIAM 2010, 35-38 with fig. 14
<i>Sasa</i>	tomb	too fragmented	too fragmented	arc, spring clip	unknown due to preservation	copper base (no analysis*)	BEN-ARIEH 2004, 7*, fig. 7
<i>Jericho</i>	tomb J3	c. 72 cm (reconstructed)	7.2 cm	spring clip	concentric circles	copper base (no analysis*)	KENYON 1960, 311-313, fig. 117.3-4
<i>Jerusalem</i>	tomb 27	unknown	unknown	arc, spring clip	unknown due to preservation	copper base (no analysis*)	GREENHUT et al. 2011, 26 f., fig. 27
<i>Tell el Fara'h (N)</i>	tomb A4	83 cm	6.5 cm	triangle, spring clip	none	copper base (no analysis*)	DE VAUX and STEVE 1947, 432, pl. XX.1
<i>Dhati/Kafkallia</i>	tomb G	72 cm	7 cm	arc, spring clip	none	copper base (no analysis*)	OVERBECK and SWINY 1972, 7 f., figs. 5-8
<i>Kazaphani</i>	tomb	18.5 cm (folded)	7 cm	arc, spring clip	none	copper base (no analysis*)	KARAGEORGHIS 1972, 1015, fig. 13

* to the best of the author's knowledge

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