

3. Red Lustrous Wheelmade Ware – part of the Late Bronze Age emporium in the eastern Mediterranean

3.1 Historical Background

During the LBA (c.1600-1000BC) “trade” flourished across the eastern Mediterranean. During this period goods were exchanged by several mechanisms including gift exchange, payment of tribute, official exchange of goods organised by or on behalf of the state and the activities of individual merchants (Bass, 1991; Knapp, 1991; Snodgrass, 1991; Cline, 1994, 41, 85-86; Karageorghis, 2002, 27, 34; Eriksson, 2007), all of which may be described as trade. The extent to which independent trading took place is the subject of much debate (Knapp, 1991; Sherratt & Sherratt, 1991; Bleiberg, 1996, 3-28; Knapp, 1998). This was a time of relative peace and prosperity in a region dominated by the great powers of Egypt, the Hittites and the Minoan/Mycenaean civilisation of Greece and the Aegean. As Catling has observed this was a “... period of intermittent high prosperity, relative ease of movement and the existence of societies with large appetites for goods and raw materials” (Catling, 1991).

In Egypt, the expulsion of the Hyksos rulers in the Nile Delta and the reunification of the country under the 18th Dynasty pharaohs were followed by an expansion of the Egyptian empire to its greatest extent under Thutmose III (c.1479-1425BC) (Kuhrt, 1995 185; Eriksson, 2007). Thutmose conducted

many campaigns in Syria-Palestine during his long reign and extended Egyptian influence up the coast of the Levant into northern Palestine and parts of Syria (Cline, 1994, 48; Kuhrt, 1995, 193; Bryan, 2000). His campaigning increased the flow of goods, in particular luxury goods, from Syria-Palestine, into Egypt (Bryan, 2000). The payment of tribute and the spoils of war account for much of this flow, but Thutmosis also established safe routes for supplying his army in the field, and his garrisons and administrative centres in southern Syria and Palestine made the movement of goods safer and easier (Merrillees, 1968, 195-199; Bryan, 2000; Merrillees, 2003; Eriksson, 2007). Later pharaohs struggled to maintain the gains made by Thutmosis III and many of the city states in the northern part of Syria-Palestine came under the influence or control of the Hittites later in the period (Merrillees, 1968, 200-201; Bryan, 2000; van Dijk, 2000; Yon, 2003; Eriksson, 2007). Conflict with the Hittite Empire was inevitable and culminated in the Battle of Qadesh c.1275/4BC. This resulted in a stalemate, with both sides claiming victory, and a peace treaty was finally signed by Rameses II and Hattušili III in about 1258BC (Cline, 1994, 48; van Dijk, 2000; Seeher, 2002, 164-165).

Egypt during the LBA provided a ready market for exotic, foreign goods. Following the expulsion of the Hyksos and the establishment of the 18th Dynasty, external expansion brought new resources into the whole country (Bryan, 2000). High status individuals were buried with rich grave goods which included precious metal objects and other luxury goods in abundance, and extensive building projects and the wealth accumulated by temples witness to

the ample resources available during this period (Kuhrt, 1995, 185; Bryan, 2000; van Dijk, 2000).

The Hittites established themselves on the central Anatolian plateau during the early part of the 17th century BC. The first king in Hattuša took the name Hattušili I (c.1650-1620BC) and built an empire covering central Anatolia and northern Syria (Kuhrt, 1995, 225, 229-231; Bryce, 2002, xi; Seeher, 2002, 161). His successor (Muršili I) expanded this empire as far as Babylon (Kuhrt, 1995, 230; Seeher, 2002, 162). Chaos after the death of Muršili I in about 1590BC was followed by decades during which Hittite power rose and fell, their territory expanded and contracted and the capital, Hattuša, was burned to the ground several times as a result of enemy action (Seeher, 2002, 162-163). When Šuppiluliuma I came to the throne (c.1344BC) he set about re-establishing Hittite power (Kuhrt, 1995, 252-254; Seeher, 2002, 164-165). This included subduing the great power of Mitanni (in south-east Turkey, northern Syria and Iraq) and expanding in Syria to the northern borders of Egyptian territory (Cline, 1994, 48; Kuhrt, 1995, 252-254; Bryce, 2002, 8-9; Seeher, 2002, 164-165). Such was the status of the Hittite kings that they could correspond on an equal footing with the rulers of Egypt, Mitanni, Babylon and Assyria (Bryce, 2002, 9). Following a period of poor harvests, enemy attacks and conflict over the succession during the last quarter of the 13th century BC, Hattuša was abandoned and then completely destroyed in about 1180BC, bringing the Hittite empire to an end (Kuhrt, 1995, 265-266; Bryce, 2002, xi, 9; Seeher, 2002, 168-170).

During the whole of this period the Hittite economy was essentially agricultural with some textile production, mining and metallurgy also apparent (Bryce, 2002, 87). Tribute from vassal states brought foreign goods into the country but the focus of Hittite trade seems to have been to maintain essential supplies (Bryce, 2002, 87). These essential supplies would have included tin for the making of bronze (essential for the manufacture of weapons) and grain. The latter is the most frequently mentioned import in documentary sources (Bryce, 2002, 88, 94-95). There is also some textual evidence for the “import” of expertise in the form of doctors, scribes and experts in divination and ritual – at least as visiting experts on a temporary basis (Bryce, 2002, 94). Most Hittite trading activities were carried out through intermediaries to the extent that transport of essential grain supplies in times of famine was organised through Ugarit (Bryce, 2002, 95-96). Their landlocked position and lack of effective sea transport probably contributed to this situation (Bryce, 2002, 95-97). Despite trading relationships with Cyprus, Egypt, Syro-Palestinian states, Babylon, Assyria and Mitanni it seems that they never established trade links with the Mycenaean/Minoan civilisation of the Aegean (Todd, 2001; Bryce, 2002, 93-94). There is almost no evidence in the archaeological record for the import of goods from the Aegean and not one Mycenaean sherd has been excavated from the site of Boğazköy (Hattuša) (Cline, 1994; 68ff; Todd, 2001; Kozal, 2003; Kozal, 2007). It is possible that, for at least part of the LBA, the Hittites tried to enforce a trading embargo on the Aegean states (Knapp, 1991; Cline, 1994, 41-42, 68ff; Castleden, 2005, 201ff; Eriksson, 2007). This may have resulted from the close ties between the Aegean states and western Turkey with whom the Hittites were often at war (Castleden, 2005, 192, 194).

In the Aegean, the Minoan civilisation of Crete was already well established at the beginning of the LBA. From the beginning of the New Palace (or Neopalatial) Period onwards (Middle Minoan (MM) III – Late Minoan (LM) IA; for discussion on relative and absolute chronologies see Appendix 1), Minoan civilisation begins to show a high level of organisation with administration centred on palaces which controlled the surrounding areas (Fitton, 2002, 133-135; Younger & Rehak, 2008a, 150-152; Younger & Rehak, 2008b, 173-177). By LMIA Minoan influence, particularly in arts and crafts, had spread into the Cyclades, radically altering the culture of these islands (Betancourt, 2008, 216-217; Davis, 2008, 186-198, 200-205; Younger & Rehak, 2008a, 140-141). Minoan influence also extended to coastal Asia Minor and even into mainland Greece, where the emerging Mycenaean civilisation developed cultural ties with Crete (Fitton, 2002, 164; Betancourt, 2008, 216-217; Davis, 2008, 198-199; Wright, 2008, 252).

The archaeological record also shows Minoan expertise in arts and crafts of many kinds which provided material goods and expertise for trade and exchange (Fitton, 2002, 146ff; Younger & Rehak, 2008a, 154ff; Betancourt, 2008, 216-219). Although Crete was highly urbanised (Younger & Rehak, 2008a, 141; (Younger & Rehak, 2008b, 178), agriculture was also important and appears to have been centrally administered with some products processed and stored on an industrial scale (Younger & Rehak, 2008a, 145-146, 148; Younger & Rehak, 2008b, 173ff). They established far reaching trade links with both east and west Mediterranean areas and (assuming that the 'Keftiu' mentioned in Egyptian and other writings are Cretans) maintained contact with

many areas of the eastern Mediterranean (Fitton, 2002, 164; Betancourt, 2008, 216ff). These wide-ranging contacts were maintained by the sea-faring prowess demonstrated by the Minoans (Fitton, 2002, 164ff.)

At the end of LMIB many sites on Crete were destroyed by fire although the cause of this destruction is not clear and both war and natural disasters have been suggested (Warren, 1975, 104-105; Younger & Rehak, 2008a, 140-141). During LMII the Mycenaeans may have conquered Crete by force or gained power by exploiting the vacuum created by the collapse of the palace system, although it is not entirely clear what political changes accompanied the observed changes in material culture (Fitton, 2002, 30; Castleden, 2005, 191; (Preston, 2008, 310ff). Despite its loss of prestige and power Crete continued to display a lively culture and engage in international trade until the final abandonment and/or destruction of many sites by the end of LMIIIB (Fitton, 2002, 193; Preston, 2008, 310ff).

Mycenaean society developed on the Greek mainland and during Middle Helladic (MH) III/Late Helladic (LH) I (see Appendix 1 for dating discussion) the population of mainland Greece increased dramatically (Wright, 2008, 241-242). An increasing diversity of burial practices and the foundation of the fortified settlements such as Mycenae, Argos and Pylos indicates a new development in culture (Wright, 2008, 241-242), although this development has its roots in the MHII period and was not uniform across the whole of Greece (Wright, 2008, 242). During LHII Mycenaean civilisation became increasingly wealthy and organised culminating in the system of centralized 'palaces' controlling their

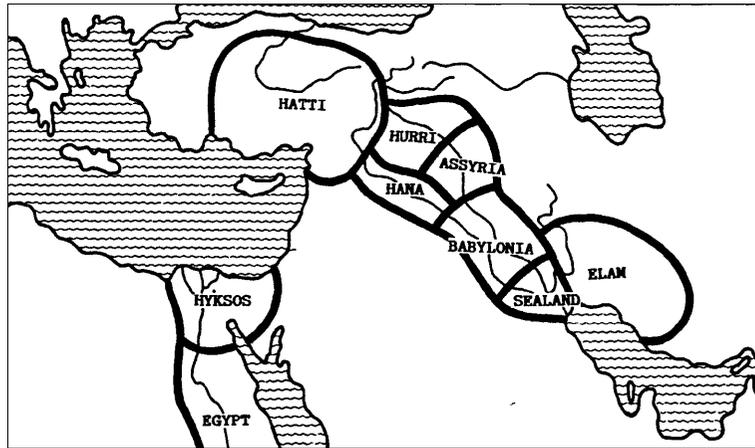
surrounding areas by LHIIIA (Wright, 2008, 244ff). During the LH/LM period their contact with the Minoans resulted in an absorption of many of the technological, artistic and administrative skills of the Minoans (Wright, 2008, 251-252), although much of this may have been a rather superficial adoption of externals rather than a real change of culture (Sherratt, 2001). During LHIII the Mycenaeans became the major force in trade and diplomacy between the Aegean and areas to the east (Cline, 1994, 10; Castleden, 2005, 195; Mee, 2008, 362ff, 381-382; Shelmerdine & Bennet, 2008, 289ff). Both Minoan and Mycenaean societies were highly hierarchical with kings ruling their territories through a system of lower officials, and much production and distribution of goods under the control of the state (Shelmerdine & Bennet, 2008, 289ff).

The island of Cyprus has often been equated with the *Ališaya* mentioned in ancient texts, although this equation is not universally accepted and continues to provoke much discussion (Artzy *et al.*, 1976; Goren *et al.*, 2003; Goren *et al.*, 2004). If Cyprus is *Alašiya* then it occupies a rather distinctive place in the LBA eastern Mediterranean by remaining an independent, wealthy, sovereign state throughout the period. This is despite claims by Šuppiluliuma I that the Hittites had defeated *Ališaya* and imposed tribute as well as indications that tribute may have been paid to Egypt under Thutmosis III (Karageorghis, 1982, 67-68; Karageorghis, 2002, 15, 34; Eriksson, 2007). The LBA began with a period of unrest, but despite this the Late Cypriot (LC) I (for dating discussion see appendix 1) period was a time of economic and cultural growth which saw the emergence of new urban centres particularly in coastal areas (Karageorghis, 1982, 62; Karageorghis, 2002, 11; Steel, 2004, 153-154). During the same

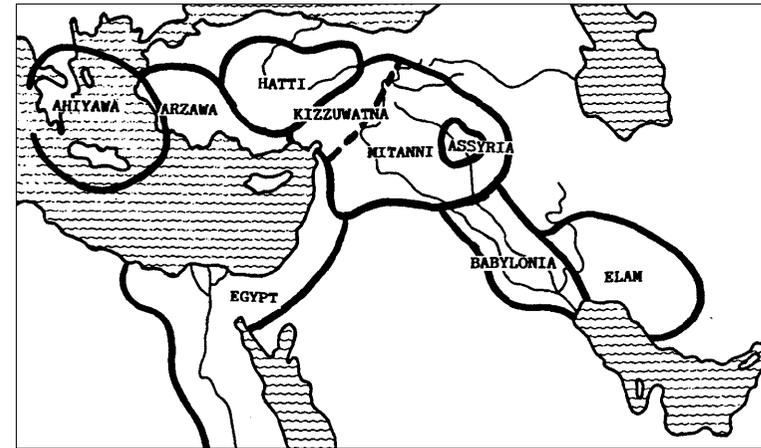
period a “homogeneity in material production” (Karageorghis, 2002, 25), particularly in pottery styles and metalwork, also emerged over the whole island and economic growth was considerable (Cadogan, 1993; Karageorghis, 1982, 62; Karageorghis, 2002, 25; Steel, 2004, 158-161). The island’s wealth seems to have sprung largely from trade in copper and other goods over a wide area of the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean (Cadogan, 1993; Karageorghis, 2002, 11; Steel, 2004, 158-161). Both the archaeological record and documentary evidence show that Cyprus maintained both diplomatic and commercial contacts with all the major powers in the region throughout the LBA (Karageorghis, 1982, 67-68; Karageorghis, 2002, 11-25, 27-47, 68ff; Eriksson, 2007). During the LCII period the wealthy consumers of places like Kalavassos and Enkomi could afford to bury their dead with a spectacular array of rich goods including imported luxury items from the Aegean, Egypt and Anatolia (South, 1995; Karageorghis, 2002, 38-40).

In the eastern Mediterranean of the LBA, the kingdom of Ugarit on the north Syrian coast also played an important part in trade (Yon, 1997; Yon, 2003; Yon, 2006, 21). The territory of Ugarit was a landscape of villages and small towns surrounded by the agricultural land which was the basis of its economy (Kuhrt, 1995, 302; Yon, 2006, 9-12). This centred on the city of Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra) and its port at Minet el-Beida (Kuhrt, 1995, 301; Yon, 1997; Yon, 2006, 7, 9). Ugarit was established during the Neolithic period and was already a substantial town in the third millennium BC (Contenson, 1992; Yon, 2006, 7, 9, 15f). At different times during the LBA it formed alliances with Egypt and later came under Hittite rule as a vassal state (Merrillees, 1968, 201; Kuhrt, 1995,

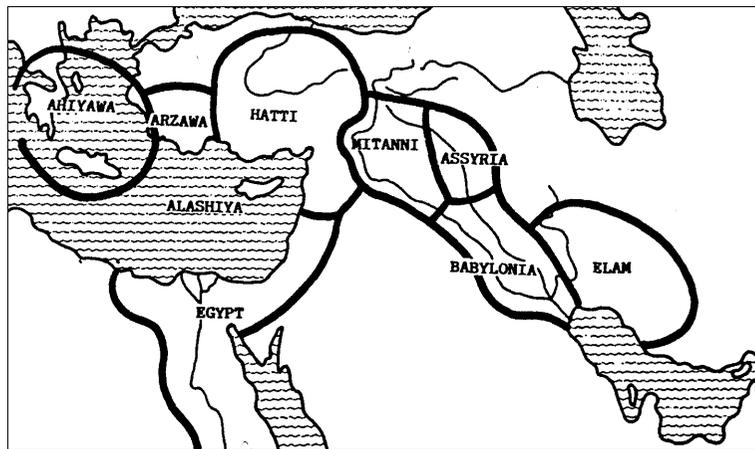
305-307; Akkermans & Schwartz, 2003, 336; Yon, 2003, Yon, 2006, 20-21). Excavations at Ugarit have revealed vast archives of clay tablets in several languages and scripts which reveal the complex and cosmopolitan nature of this area and its key place in the trade of the eastern Mediterranean (Helzer, 1989; Kuhrt, 1995, 303; Akkermans & Schwartz, 2003, 338; Yon, 2003, 18-21, 36, 43-44, 71-76, 87-88, 94, 106, 111). Ugarit had ample natural resources and many specialist craftsmen and was in a position to control trade moving by land and sea across a significant area (Kuhrt, 1995, 302-303; Akkermans & Schwartz, 2003, 339; Yon, 2003, Yon, 2006, 12-14, 82-83, 96-97, 101). Texts show that many merchants were based in Ugarit, including communities of foreign merchants based in the city in order to conduct their business (Merrillees, 1968, 190; Kuhrt, 1995, 302; Yon, 2003, Yon, 2006, 43-45, 54, 72, 88, 100). The wealth generated by trade, both in goods produced locally and commodities from across the Mediterranean and beyond, is attested by the rich finds excavated from the city of Ugarit and its port (Kuhrt, 1995, 301-303; Yon, 1997; Akkermans & Schwartz, 2003, 339-341; Yon, 2003; Yon, 2006, 123ff). This wealthy and influential state was only one of a cluster of such city states in the Levant. However, because of extensive excavation and the existence of its archives, more is known about Ugarit in this period than other cities such as Byblos and Emar (Kuhrt, 1995, 300-314, Yon, 2003). The changing political situation across the eastern Mediterranean over the course of the LBA is shown in figure 3.1.



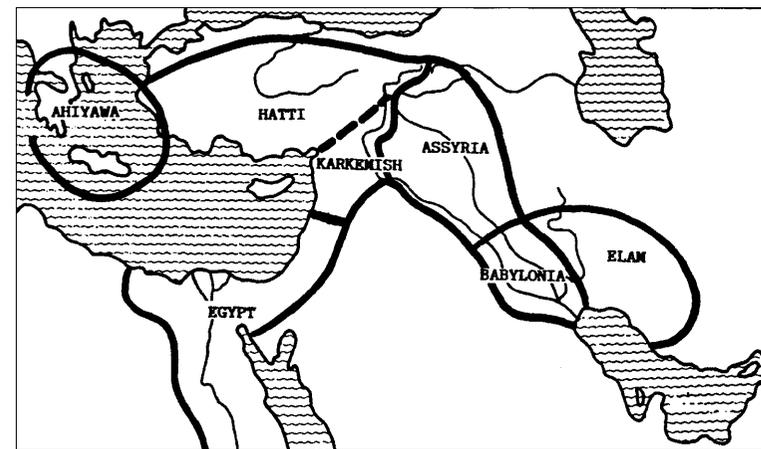
c. 1600 BC



c. 1450 BC



c. 1350 BC



c. 1220 BC

Figure 3.1: Maps showing the changes in political systems during the Late Bronze Age, after Liverani, 2001, page xi, Maps. Some areas are labelled with ancient names – Ahiyawa is the Mycenaean sphere of influence, Hatti is the Hittite Empire

3.2 Trade

The movement of goods across the eastern Mediterranean during the LBA was extensive and involved a wide variety of materials (Bass, 1991; Knapp, 1991; Cline, 1994, *eg.* 9-10). Archaeological evidence is usually in the form of items produced in one place but found in another (Catling, 1991) although the discovery of shipwrecks from the LBA has given us a remarkable snapshot of 'goods in transit' (Bass, 1987; Bass, 1991; Cadogan, 1993; Pulak, 1997). Archaeology can only record items which survive in the burial environment: trade in organic goods which decay easily or raw materials which would have been reworked immediately cannot be detected (Knapp, 1991). However, for the LBA there is not only the evidence from shipwrecks (Bass, 1987; Bass, 1991; Haldane, 1993; Pulak, 1997) but also documentary evidence for the movement of goods (Knapp, 1991). The Amarna letters from Egypt, Hittite archives from Boğazköy, clay tablets from Ugarit and even tomb paintings and public inscriptions are among the sources of information available to us (Knapp, 1991; Cline, 1994, *eg.* 9-10).

The flow of goods across the region included basic commodities like grain, oil, wine, copper and tin for making bronze, and timber. There is also evidence for the movement of many items which were not basic necessities, some of which were exotic, luxury goods. These included ivory; ostrich eggs; semi-precious stones; perfumed oils; textiles; leather goods like shoes and horse bridles; gold and silver (both finished items and raw metal); glass (glass items and 'raw' glass); wine; honey; resins; dyes; herbs, spices and aromatics; drugs; fruit;

nuts; olives; furniture; horses; slaves; minerals (eg. malachite for making Egyptian eye paint); salt; vessels made of faience, stone, pottery and metal which were traded either for their own sake or for their contents. (Merrillees, 1962; Merrillees, 1963; Merrillees, 1968; Shelmerdine, 1985; Bass, 1987; Russell, 1989; Bass, 1991; Knapp, 1991; Cadogan, 1993; Haldane, 1993; Hankey, 1993; Negbi & Negbi, 1993; Cline, 1994, 95-97; Eriksson, 1995; Koschel, 1996; Paszthory, 1996; Fletcher, 1998, 14-24; Manniche, 1999, 10-31; Serpico & White, 2000a; Bourriau *et al.*, 2001; Eriksson, 2001; Fischer 2001; Todd, 2001; Karageorghis, 2002, 11-17, 27-47 62-65, 67-68; Kozal, 2003; Palmer, 2003; Yon, 2003; Eriksson, 2007; Mielke, 2007). Also included were some goods from outside the Mediterranean such as amber from the Baltic and ebony from tropical Africa (Bass, 1987; Pulak, 1997). There is some evidence that services supplied by physicians, scribes, diviners, artists and skilled craftsmen were exchanged between the Hittite, Egyptian, Aegean, Ugaritic and Babylonian courts (Cline, 1994, 27; Bryce, 2002, 94, 170-173).

The movement of goods is often attributed to trade in the commercial sense but there were many mechanisms by which goods were moved around the eastern Mediterranean world in the LBA. It is not possible to tell from the presence of imported goods in the archaeological record how they arrived at their destination. Gift exchange between rulers was a common phenomenon and is recorded in the Amarna letters, Hittite archives, tablets from Ugarit and related texts from outside the immediate area (eg. Mesopotamia, Mari, Mitanni) (Bass, 1991; Knapp, 1991; Snodgrass, 1991; Cline, 1994, 41, 85-86; Bleiberg, 1996, 90-114; Karageorghis, 2002, 27, 34; Eriksson, 2007). Many valuable items

passed between rulers in this way, and even substantial amounts of basic supplies may have moved about the Mediterranean as 'gifts', for example the grain sent to the Hittites from Egypt towards the end of the LBA to avert starvation (Bryce, 2002, 94-95, 255-256). The extensive dowries which accompanied marriages between the royal houses of friendly nations also contributed to the movement of goods (Knapp, 1991; Bryce, 2002, 94).

Plunder taken during time of war increased the wealth and stimulated the economies of the larger powers such as Egypt and the Hittite Empire as well as introducing exotic, foreign goods, sometimes in significantly large quantities (Merrillees, 1968; Bryan, 2000). The payment of tribute is another mechanism by which goods moved around the eastern Mediterranean. Both the Egyptians and the Hittites collected tribute from vassal states in the Levant and elsewhere, possibly including Cyprus (Karageorghis, 1982, 67; Bryan, 2000, 242; Bryce, 2002, 85, 238). Although this is not trade in a commercial sense, vassal states and other nations paying tribute to the major powers would have expected, in return for their loyalty, a degree of protection from external threats and other privileges such as the protection of their merchants in friendly territory or life-saving supplies in times of famine (Knapp, 1991; Kuhrt, 1995, 307-309; Liverani, 2001, 160-165; Karageorghis, 2002, 15; Yon, 2003).

Trade in the sense of exchange of goods was also an important part of the picture. The records from Ugarit in particular give us a picture of the city as a trading emporium where merchants from many nations congregated to do business (Knapp, 1991; Yon, 2003). Some of these merchants were employed

by rulers to carry out state-controlled trade. One queen is recorded as having her own merchant (Knapp, 1991; Cline, 1994, 85). Frequently these merchants also carried out diplomatic or military functions in addition to their commercial duties (Knapp, 1991; Cline, 1994, 85). Other merchants may have been free traders employed by rulers to carry out particular commissions (Cline, 1994, 85). There were also merchants who acted on their own behalf and trade between individuals is recorded in the Ugarit archives (Knapp, 1991; Cline, 1994, 85; Yon, 2003). From Ugarit there is documentary evidence for communities of foreign merchants given permission to settle and trade in the area (Knapp, 1991; Kuhrt, 1995, 302-303; Yon, 2003). Exactly how much of the movement of goods is due to which mechanism is almost impossible to determine. What is clear is that all these systems co-existed and that some trade at least was influenced by market forces, for example the fashion for imported Aegean pottery on Cyprus during LCII period (Knapp, 1991; Cline, 1994, 85-87; Karageorghis, 2002, 43-44, 65; Yon, 2003).

In the eastern Mediterranean during the LBA much international trade was carried on ships. Most researchers in this field have suggested that ships would, as far as possible, have travelled within sight of land, only leaving coastal waters when absolutely necessary. The prevailing currents and wind patterns in the eastern Mediterranean suggest that an anti-clockwise direction would have been taken by most shipping, starting for example in Egypt, travelling up the coast of the Levant, to Cyprus and ports on the Anatolian coast, then westwards to western Anatolia, Rhodes and the Aegean, returning from Crete directly to the Egyptian coast west of the Nile delta (Merrillees, 1968,

187-189; Bass, 1987; Bass, 1991; McGrail, 1991; Cline, 1994, 91-93). There is also evidence in the archaeological record that these trade routes extended as far as the central Mediterranean including Sardinia, Sicily and mainland Italy (Cline, 1994, 91-94; Karageorghis, 2002, 36-38). It is also possible that, during the summer months, southerly winds blowing off the African coast would have allowed vessels to do the journey in reverse (McGrail, 1991; Cline, 1994, 91). These trips, whether state or privately sponsored, would have allowed merchants to both acquire and exchange goods at all ports en route, making their ships equivalent to a floating bazaar stocked with commodities from all over the eastern Mediterranean. The discovery of the Ulu Burun shipwreck off the coast of southern Turkey has revealed what such a vessel might have carried. The cargo included items from Africa, the Levant and Cyprus representing nine or ten different cultures (Pulak, 1997). The cargo also included commodities such as copper ingots which would rarely be visible in the archaeological record. The Ulu Burun finds illustrate the large volume of goods which could be traded at this time: the cargo included ten tons of copper and a ton of pistacia resin. The ship was also carrying a very rich collection of other goods including tin, ivory, blue glass ingots, tortoise shells, ostrich egg shells, murex shells, spices and foodstuffs, gold and silver items and Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery (Bass, 1987; Mills & White, 1989; Bass, 1991; Haldane, 1993; Pulak, 1997; Karageorghis, 2002, 30-34).

There has been much discussion about which nations dominated shipping at this time. The Levant, Cyprus and the Aegean have all been suggested as major providers of sea-going transport while the Egyptians provided a degree of

protection and policing (Merrillees, 1968, 190-201; Bass, 1987; Bass, 1991; Cline, 1994, 91-93; Karageorghis, 2002, 11; Yon, 2003; Eriksson, 2007). There is little concrete evidence to support any of the arguments presented although it is clear that, for example, the Hittites relied heavily on Levantine shipping for transport of grain (Bryce, 2002, 95-96). There has also been much discussion on the role of various nations in trade between different areas of the Mediterranean. Cyprus has been suggested as the main intermediary between the Aegean and the Levant and Egypt. At the same time there is evidence that the Levantine ports, Ugarit in particular, played a large part in the shipment of goods from one area to another and may have played a similar intermediary role (Merrillees, 1968, 190-201; Bass, 1987; Bass, 1991; Cline, 1994, 91-93; Karageorghis, 2002, 11; Yon, 2003; Eriksson, 2007).

Overland transport was also used within and between Egypt, the Levant and Anatolia, and well-defined trade routes connected with nations further to the east and south (Bergoffen, 1991; Kuhrt, 1995, 303; Yon, 2003). All trading expeditions were dangerous and, apart from the physical dangers associated with sea or land travel in hostile environments, merchants had to contend with pirates and brigands and unfriendly states demanding huge payments for passage. Many of the official documents of the time relating to trade deal with issues like the safe passage of merchants or compensation for goods and/or lives lost (Knapp, 1991; Bryce, 2002, 88-90). Despite the dangers it is clear that trade around the eastern Mediterranean flourished during the LBA and must have brought benefits which outweighed its perilous nature.

3.3 Red Lustrous Wheelmade ware – part of the LBA emporium

RLWm ware was obviously a part of this trade across the eastern Mediterranean given its wide distribution and single source. As with many commodities it was regarded as a prestige item in some areas like Cyprus, where it is found in the graves of the rich (eg. South & Steel, 2007), but was less valuable in others like Egypt where it was the preserve of the professional classes rather than royalty or nobility (Merrillees, 1968, 171; Eriksson, 1993, 145). The changes in distribution of the ware with time reflect some of the changing diplomatic relationships and the shifting balance of power during its 300 year production. For example RLWm ware is rare in Egypt after the reign of Thutmose III and disappears completely after the reign of Amenhotep III during the time when Egypt's power in the Levant was being curtailed by the expansion of the Hittite Empire (Eriksson, 1993, 98, 149-151; Eriksson, 2007). This may have resulted in restricted access to the markets of the Levant, in particular Ugarit, which may in turn have cut off the supply of imports from the source of RLWm ware. In addition imports of RLWm ware into the Hittite heartland started to rise with the accession of Šuppiluliuma I, the architect of Hittite expansion into the Levant (Eriksson, 1993, 98, 149-151; Eriksson, 2007), although it is becoming clear that it was present in Turkey before this time (Mielke, 2007).

The situation is quite complex and the lack of a definite source for RLWm ware makes interpretation of the archaeological evidence more difficult. The wide distribution of this ware indicates that, wherever it originated, that place was

connected by trade to most of the eastern Mediterranean, with the exception of non-Hittite Anatolia. The similar lack of evidence for what exactly the vessels contained adds to the problem of placing it in its context. Were spindle bottles and pilgrim flasks the equivalent of distinctive containers for a 'branded' product like the coca-cola bottle or marmite jar today? What were the arm-shaped vessels for? Was the commodity a perfumed oil? There is extensive evidence from Egypt and the Aegean for the manufacture of perfumed oils (Fletcher, 1998; Knapp, 1991; Manniche, 1999; Shelmerdine, 1985), but neither of these areas is considered to be the source of RLWm ware. Cyprus was certainly a producer of olive oil in large quantities (South, 1995, Hadjisavvas, 2003) but there is no conclusive evidence that perfumed oils were manufactured there.

As Vassos Karageorghis wrote in 2001 in a paper primarily dealing with Cypriot Bichrome Wheel-made Ware, "If, with the new millennium, we are entering an era of technological methods for the resolution of archaeological problems, we need to have NAA and other types of analyses carried out for many of the other 'foreign' wares found in Cyprus ... Such an analytical programme is urgently needed, for example, for Red Lustrous Wheel-made ware, especially the earliest specimens, and this ware should be compared with the Red Polished pottery of Anatolia and Egypt, in order to detect its affinities, if any." (Karageorghis, 2001, 153). With so many questions still relating to the place of RLWm ware and its source in the LBA eastern Mediterranean this study of organic residues is part of that continuing analytical programme.