

FOUR BROAD FENESTRATED AXES IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM:
SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON A SYMBOLIC WEAPON
BETWEEN THE 3RD AND THE 2ND MILLENNIUM BC

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This paper illustrates four bronze Levantine fenestrated axes dating back from the Early Bronze IVB (2200-2000/1950 BC) to the Middle Bronze I (2000/1950-1800 BC) preserved in the collection of the British Museum.¹ The study gets underway from some recent discoveries ('Enot Shumi, Sana'eye, al-Nasim) and takes the opportunity to re-analyze the corpus of Levantine fenestrated axes, to update it by defining some diagnostic and chronological characteristics, and to highlight the symbolic value of these weapons in the divine, rulership and ritual realms.

Keywords: fenestrated axes; Southern Levant; Early Bronze Age IVB; Middle Bronze Age; British Museum

Metal axes spread over the Levant during Early Bronze Age (3400-2000/1950 BC) and Middle Bronze Age (2000/1950-1550 BC) exhibit a progressive and diachronic changes in manufacture techniques, shape, and function, as it is shown by their different contexts of recovery, namely foundation deposits, votive offerings, funerary equipment, and hoards.

1. EARLY AND MIDDLE BRONZE AGE AXES IN SOUTHERN LEVANT

Axe is a bipartite weapon, composed by a long wooden haft² and the metal blade, generally held with two hands and suitable for hand-to-hand fight.³ The blade is parallel to the haft.⁴ This, even though scarcely preserved, could be straight, or slightly curved and thicker where the hands would have to hold it, as it is depicted in Beni Hasan paintings.⁵

The two distinguishing elements are the blade and the tang, on the base of their shape Early Bronze Age axes in Southern Levant can be classified in four main types, such as: simple, crescentic, fenestrated (§ 1.1.), and "anchor-like".

Beyond these types, in the Near East during the Early Bronze Age, the socket (notched) axe makes its appearance, but up today it seems to have spread over the Southern Levant in Middle Bronze IIA (1800-1700 BC).

¹ Thanks are due to the British Museum for allowing me access to the axe-heads and for allowing me to photograph them.

² Hauslaiter - D'Andrea - Zur 2018, 420.

³ Montanari 2020, 75-84.

⁴ Coghlan 1954, 601.

⁵ Newberry 1893, pl. 31:67.

1.1. *Fenestrated Axes*

Fenestrated axes are identified by a crescentic blade, a flattened rectangular section, a socket, and two openings or fenestrations.⁶ The creation of a socketed tang technologically marks the passage from the crescentic to the fenestrated type.⁷ These axes were made by casting in double-mould, and after refined by hammering and annealing.⁸

Fenestrated axes are classified in two main types: broad, or “eye” type, and elongated, or “duck-bill” type.⁹ The former begins to appear at the late 3rd/early 2nd millennium BC, slightly earlier in respect of the latter, and it is characterized by a major development in width, as the name suggests, with larger fenestrations.¹⁰ From the 19th century BC, after a short period of coexistence¹¹ of both types, only the “duck-bill” one was widespread,¹² being a hallmark of the Middle Bronze Age IIA (1800-1700 BC), at the end of which it was supplanted by the socket axe.¹³

Due to its shape and technical characteristics, it has been suggested that the “eye” fenestrated type should have had only a limited use as a real weapon and, instead, an extended and prolonged use as a prestige object and status item, and that had eminently a ritual-ceremonial character.¹⁴ In support of this interpretation are the large fenestrations and the thin thickness, both features that do not show a high mechanical resistance, the one required for a battle axe.¹⁵

Otherwise, the duck-bill axe, with its elongated body and small fenestrations, exhibits more massive and resistant characteristics.¹⁶ Such a functional specialization can be useful in understanding the coexistence of the two types for the period between the end of the 3rd millennium BC and the first centuries of the 2nd millennium BC. Moreover, the broad fenestrated axe because of its shape conveyed an archaic fashion, usually connected to symbolic uses.

Fenestrated axes since the end of the Early Bronze Age appear to be a multifold symbolic weapons, for divinity, ceremony and kingship, as it is testified by some artworks of the ancient Near East.¹⁷ Divine representations with fenestrated axes after the end of the

⁶ Philip 1989, 49.

⁷ Nigro 2003a, 11. Issues about the origin and the relation of the fenestrated one with crescentic (Palumbo 2001, 255) and “anchor” specimens are debated (Hillen 1953, 211; Tubb 1982, 10; Miron 1992, 52, 56).

⁸ A pair of soapstone moulds (Nigro 2003b, 348-349, fig. 3) from the Tomb D.3721 at Ebla (1800-1600 BC) clearly illustrate the lost wax technique that should have been employed to make the Middle Bronze Age Syrian weapons. The production of such axes still during the Middle Bronze II confirms a prolongation of the broad type in the Syrian region, compared to the Southern Levant (Rossoni 1995).

⁹ These two definitions were coined for the first time by Hillen (1953, 211). See also Philip 1989, 52; Tubb 2007, 531. The two types are comparable to types B3 and B4 of Maxwell-Hyslop’s typology (1949, 119-121, pl. 37:6-7), to H4.A and H4.B of Gernez’s typology (Gernez 2007, 190-200).

¹⁰ Petrie 1917, 10. Broad fenestrated axes correspond to Philip’s Type 2 (Philip 1989, 51-53) and to Gernez’s type H.4.A (Gernez 2007, 191-194).

¹¹ Oren 1971, 111-113.

¹² Miron 1992, 66; Nigro 2003a, 42.

¹³ Matthiae 1995a, 425; Tubb 2007, 532.

¹⁴ Matthiae 1980, 60-62.

¹⁵ Oren 1971, 111.

¹⁶ Yadin 1963, 60.

¹⁷ Nigro 2003a, 41; Yaser-Landau 2015.

3rd millennium BC are: a clay mold found in the Beth Shean Valley (Late Bronze Age);¹⁸ an ivory inlay found in the palace treasury at Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo (13th century BC);¹⁹ a New Kingdom stele of Reshef;²⁰ a stele of Bar-Hadad from Breidj (9th century BC).²¹

The ritual and ceremonial use of fenestrated axes is illustrated by the representation on a seal from Kültepe,²² and by the ivory talisman²³ from the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats at Ebla (1750-1700 BC), where in a ritual or symbolic scene a personage bears a fenestrated axe.²⁴ Moreover, in the same tomb, three fenestrated axes, two of the wide type and one of the long type, were also found.²⁵ The copper and bronze figurines with spearheads and fenestrated axes from Byblos complete the picture.²⁶

Particularly indicative of the correlation between rulership figures and fenestrated axes are two artworks from Ebla²⁷: a bone inlay found in the throne room of the Northern Palace,²⁸ representing a royal figure with an ovoid tiara and a large, fringed cloak holding a ceremonial fenestrated axe, and a fragment of a basaltic statue, probably contemporary to the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats, depicting the torso of a royal figure with a long fenestrated axe against the chest.²⁹

2. FENESTRATED AXES IN SOUTHERN LEVANT BETWEEN EARLY BRONZE AGE IV AND MIDDLE BRONZE AGE I

In Southern Levant among the “eye” type group there are some distinguishing specimens, they are dating back to the Early Bronze Age IVB (2200-2000/1950 BC) and Middle Bronze Age I (2000/1950-1800 BC), and are defined as archaic broad type (D-shaped).³⁰

They were cast into two separate parts and then joined in correspondence of the openings, at least at the beginning of their production,³¹ and are characterized by a crescentic blade, two large fenestrations, often encircled by eyelets, a socketed haft, a length that generally does not exceed 10 cm, and a width between 8 and 14 cm, mainly found in funerary and votive contexts.

¹⁸ Cornelius 2004, pl. 5.13.

¹⁹ Loud 1939, pl. 22:125; Nigro 1995, 154-155.

²⁰ Wilson 1954, fig. 28:b; Maran 2015, fig. 8; Oriental Institute of Chicago no. E10569.

²¹ Dunand 1939; Albright 1942, fig. 1; Cornelius 1994, fig. 31c; Bonnet 2007, no. 1.

²² Porada 1966, 246-247, fig. c.

²³ Matthiae 1995b, 182-183, fig. 150.

²⁴ This scene, connected with the passage into the Beyond, could document an effective ritual use of the fenestrated axe (Matthiae 1980, 60).

²⁵ Matthiae 1980, 53; Nigro 2003b, 245-247; 2018, 440.

²⁶ Dunand 1950-1958, ns. 8780, 9145, 17782; Negbi 1976, 17, fig. 21.

²⁷ Pinnock 2012, 98.

²⁸ Matthiae 1995b, 174, fig. 154. It was found in the throne room of the Palace (Matthiae - Pinnock - Scandone Matthiae edd. 1995, 397, n. 246; Peyronel 2016, 11, fig. 11). Moreover, a wooden inlay, TM.74.G.1000 (Matthiae 1995b, 109, fig. 40), depicts a king dressed in a robe with small wisps of wool that bears a simple axe as a staff of command.

²⁹ TM.75.G.728, Matthiae 1980, 60-61, fig. 13.

³⁰ Palumbo 1990, 110; Nigro 2003a, 12-15; Tubb 2007, 532.

³¹ Nigro 2003a, 13.

Archaic broad fenestrated axes were found at Tell es-Sultan/ancient Jericho, Ma'abarot, Tell Sougha, 'Ein Sa'ad, Tell Mastaba, Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo (Tomb 84C), Tell el-Balatah/ancient Shechem, and Sana'iye³² (fig. 1).

The fenestrated axe from Jericho³³ (fig. 1:1) is made of arsenical copper and it represents one of the earliest specimens,³⁴ since it seems to have been casted in two parts,³⁵ the blade and socket, immediately after combined together at the mid of the fenestrations where the junction ridge is recognizable. It was recovered in a hoard of arsenical copper items by E. Sellin and C. Watzinger in a bend-combed lug-handle jar,³⁶ hidden under the floor of an Early Bronze IVB house.³⁷ Moreover, the squared profile of the blade recalls the specimen from Amarna in Syria, confirming its early date in the Early Bronze IVB.³⁸

The fenestrated axe from Ma'abarot (fig. 1:2) was found in Tomb 4, an Early Bronze IVB shaft-tomb,³⁹ consisting of a roughly round shaft and an oval chamber, where, next to the entrance, the archaic broad fenestrated axe was found.⁴⁰

The fragmentary axes from Tell Sougha (fig. 1:6), 'Ein Sa'ad (fig. 1:4), and Tell Mastaba (Beth Shan; fig. 1:7) even if the circumstances of the discovery are less detailed, can be dated between 2100 and 1900 BC.⁴¹

The archaic broad axe from Megiddo⁴² (fig. 1:5), found in Middle Bronze Age I Tomb 84C,⁴³ shows the same ridge of that from Jericho, disguised by the decoration of fenestrations.⁴⁴ In this case, the copper rivet used to fix the wooden handle is still preserved.

The archaic broad fenestrated axe from Tell el-Balatah/ancient Shechem⁴⁵ (fig. 1:9), dating back to Middle Bronze Age I (2000-1900 BC),⁴⁶ was recovered in a votive depot in the Migdol Temple.

To these already known specimens can be added another archaic broad fenestrated axe, made of tin-bronze, found at Sana'iye (Saudi Arabia; fig. 1:3), together with a ribbed

³² A Levantine broad fenestrated axe, dated to the Middle Bronze I, but according to its features more probably dating back to the Early Bronze Age IVB is in the collection of the *Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York* ([metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/30001169?rpp=60&pg=1&gallerynos=403&ft=*&pos=3](https://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/30001169?rpp=60&pg=1&gallerynos=403&ft=*&pos=3); Muscarella 1988, 386, n. 510).

³³ Sellin - Watzinger 1913, 117, pl. 105:16; Nigro 2003a, 10-13, figs. 3, 5.

³⁴ Nigro 2003a, 12.

³⁵ Philip 1988, 197.

³⁶ Sellin - Watzinger 1913, 116-119, figs. 104-105, pl. 22:2a.

³⁷ Sellin - Watzinger 1913, 25, figs. 4a-4b, 6c, 10-11, pls. 4a, 6a, plans I, III; Nigro 2016, fig. 16; Montanari 2019, 138.

³⁸ Tubb 1982, 9-10.

³⁹ Gophna 1968, 268-269; 1969, 174-177, fig. 2; Nigro 2003a, 15.

⁴⁰ Gophna 1969, fig. 3; D'Andrea 2014, vol. 2, 30.

⁴¹ Respectively: Gernez 2012, 104, pl. 1:1; Miron 1992, 53, pl. 15:225-226; Tzori 1962, 153. The axe from Tell Mastaba was probably found in a tomb of the cemetery in the Valley of Beth Shan (Oren 1973, 41; Palumbo 1990, 110).

⁴² Guy 1938, pl. 163:8. The date of Tomb 84C is debated, also due to the lack of a pottery set. Greenhut (1995, 31) encompassed Tomb 84C in its typology of the Early Bronze Age IV, otherwise Nigro (2003a, 13, fig. 6) preferred a Middle Bronze IA date.

⁴³ As it concerns a possible to the date to the Early Bronze IV see: Richard 2006, 127; Greenhut 1995, 31.

⁴⁴ Nigro 2003a, 13.

⁴⁵ Watzinger 1933, pl. XXV:54; Nigro 2003a, 13, fig. 7.

⁴⁶ Nigro 2003a, 13.

dagger, in secondary deposition, nearby a grave complex,⁴⁷ and presumably dating to the Early Bronze Age IVB - Middle Bronze Age I (2200-1800 BC).

Byblos is an outstanding case, as there a conspicuous number of broad fenestrated axes was recovered in the deposits of the *Champ des Offrandes* and in the Obelisks Temple.⁴⁸ Some of them are decorated, embossed, incised and also made of gold.⁴⁹ Here, it is worth mentioning the archaic broad fenestrated axe found in the *Dépôt η* at Byblos (fig. 1:8), dating back to the Middle Bronze Age I.⁵⁰ This axe exhibits large fenestrations and the central ridge in between them.⁵¹

Moreover, broad fenestrated axes were collected at Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo (Temple 4040), Tell Sougha, 'Enot Shuni, and Tayma (fig. 2).

The fenestrated axe from Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo (fig. 2:1) was in a (re)foundation deposit⁵² of the Early Bronze Age IVB in Temple 4040,⁵³ and can be interpreted as a sort of 'transitional' specimen, because of the blade developing in length, but it still preserves large and oblique fenestrations.

The weapon from Tell Sougha (fig. 2:2) is a small specimen, without decoration around the wide fenestration, with a plain blade and a round socket. It is dated between 2100 and 1900 BC.⁵⁴

The two axes from 'Enot Shuni are of broad type dating back to the end of the Early Bronze Age IVB - initial phase of the Middle Bronze Age,⁵⁵ but they differ according to the metal and manufacturing. The one from Tomb 79⁵⁶ (fig. 2:3) is made of bronze by casting and annealing. The other one, from Tomb 59⁵⁷ (fig. 3), is made of silver and bears an incised decoration around fenestrations, and a central embossed decoration on both faces, depicting a ram and a greyhound, identical to the gold ceremonial specimen from the Temple of the Obelisks of Byblos.⁵⁸ The silver specimen represents up to today the only known axe made of precious metal in the Early Bronze Age IVB - Middle Bronze Age I Southern Levant, except for the cases from Byblos.

⁴⁷ Hauslaiter - D'Andrea - Zur 2018, 416.

⁴⁸ Dunand 1950-1958 pls. LXIII:9472; LXXVIII:10823; CXIX:14434; CXX:14436, 14438-14439; CXXXIII:16710; CXXXIV:16708; CXXXVII:16709-16711; Nigro 2003a, figs. 11-16, 19; Pinnock 2012, 88-89.

⁴⁹ Thalmann 2008, 74-75.

⁵⁰ Dunand 1950-1958, 286, pl. LXIII:9472; Thalmann 2008, fig. 9.

⁵¹ Another fenestrated axe was recovered in 1954 in the Tomb - Silos 7 at Amrit (Dunand - Saliby - Khirichian 1954, 197). Its date to the end of the Early Bronze IV seems quite correct, even though there are some overlapping depositions with fenestrated axes in their equipment, the more recent of which dates back to the Middle Bronze Age. Authors distinguished the first one from the others precisely for its characteristic broadness. Unfortunately, it was fragmentary preserved.

⁵² Kempinski 1989b, 41.

⁵³ Loud 1948, 84, pl. 182:3; Finkelstein - Ussishkin 2000, 68-73.

⁵⁴ Gernez 2012, 104-105, pl. 1:2.

⁵⁵ As it concerns the date of the cemetery, in general, and Tombs 59 and 79, in particular, see: Caspi *et al.* 2009, 2835; Peilstöcker 2008, 2040.

⁵⁶ Caspi *et al.* 2009, fig. 1:a.

⁵⁷ Caspi *et al.* 2009, fig. 1:b.

⁵⁸ Dunand 1950-1958, pl. CXXXVII:16711; Pinnock 2012, 87-88.

A broad fenestrated axe completely preserved was found in a tomb at al-Nasim (Tayma; Saudi Arabia; fig. 2:4). It is a copper alloy weapon with circular fenestrations and cylindrical haft, and it can be dated to the Middle Bronze Age I (2000/1950-1800 BC).⁵⁹

2.1. *The four fenestrated axes in the British Museum*

The axes at issue were originally in private collections and subsequently they were acquired by the British Museum. Two, BM nos. 126983 and 126985, were in the collection of Canon William Greenwell,⁶⁰ purchased by John Pierpont Morgan and donated to the British Museum in 1909; one, BM n. 116633, was bought by the Museum from Sir Leonard Woolley in 1924, and the last, BM n. 136754, was in the collection of Sir Henry Wellcome,⁶¹ donated to the Museum in 1964.

The axe BM n. 126983 (fig. 4) in the registry of the Museum appears to be from Beirut⁶² and has wide fenestrations with ridged circles all around them, a hammered and thinned blade, an almond-shaped socket, a median rib. According to these morphological features, it can be ascribed to the archaic broad type of the Early Bronze IVB and the beginning of the Middle Bronze I. The socket is still bearing traces of wood of the original haft. Externally, there are traces of a warped textile (maybe linen) along the entire butt and on only one side.⁶³

The axe BM n. 126985 (fig. 5) is from Sidon⁶⁴ and is thin, with large, encircled fenestrations and thinned blade. Inside the almond-shaped socket some casting residues are still visible. This axe already shows a beginning of lengthening in the blade that makes it similar to the broad specimens, and no longer archaic, of the end of the Early Bronze IVB and the beginning of the Middle Bronze I.

The axe BM n. 116633 (fig. 6) is said from Byblos⁶⁵ and has a massive body and thickness, the blade does not seem to have been hammered and thinned. Fenestrations bear a ridge all around and in between them on the blade, on both sides. According to the round fenestrations and the bulged ridges around them this axe from Byblos can be compared to some broad fenestrated axes dating to the Middle Bronze Age I, as it is in the case of numbers 2133 (*Dépôt* 2132) and 8821 (*Dépôt* ε) from Byblos⁶⁶ itself, and from al-Nasim (Tayma). Moreover, the socket has an almond shape, similarly to the axe BM n. 126983.

⁵⁹ Hauslaiter 2015, 75, fig. 4; Hauslaiter - D'Andrea - Zur 2018, 419-421, figs. 5-6. As it concerns chronology of Saudi Arabian axes see: Hauslaiter 2015, 75; Luciani ed. 2016, 25-26; Hauslaiter - D'Andrea - Zur 2018, 424, 426.

⁶⁰ Graves 2005; Murray 2005. Rev William Greenwell (1820-1918) was born at Greenwell Ford in County Durham, rose to be a minor canon and Librarian of Durham Cathedral. He excavated over 300 burial mounds mostly in the north of England, objects from which were sold to the British Museum in 1879. Also amassed a collection of other antiquities, largely prehistoric, which were sold variously to other collectors (and the BM) but most notably to John Pierpont Morgan, who donated them to the BM in 1908 (registered in the BM as WG numbers in 1909).

⁶¹ Turner 1980; James 1994; Arnold - Olsen eds. 2003; Larson 2009.

⁶² https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1937-0505-20.

⁶³ R. Chapman (personnel communication), even though the context of recovery is unknown, suggests an original funerary context, datum that can fit with textile residues, because the weapon could be enveloped in a cloth, alone or with the deceased (Shamir 1992, 4; 2012, 205; Ben-Dov - Gorski 2009, 80-85).

⁶⁴ https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1937-0505-21.

⁶⁵ https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1924-0513-3.

⁶⁶ Respectively: Dunand 1937-1939, pl. LXV:2133; 1950-1958, pl. XL:8821.

The axe BM n. 136754 (fig. 7),⁶⁷ is of unknown provenance. It has a cylindrical socket in between fenestrations, a feature observed in the already cited n. 8821 from Byblos, and also in some other Gublite specimens made of precious metal.⁶⁸ This characteristic, together with the elongated blade, allows to date it to the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age I.

2.2. Catalogue of the fenestrated axes in the British Museum

N. 126983 (fig. 4): class: fenestrated axe; type: archaic broad type; site: Beirut; metal: alloyed copper; length: 8.65 cm; width: 13.8 cm; thickness: blade 0.5 cm; socket 0.3 cm; weight: 247 g; conservation state: good; conservation place: *British Museum*, London, BM/Big number: 126983; Reg. number: 1937,0505.20; Additional ID: WG.842; date: EB IVB - MB I (2200-1800 BC); reference: Greenwell 1890, 45; Petrie 1917, 9-10, pl. VI:168; Watkins 1981, 148-149, fig. 10:20.

N. 126985 (fig. 5): class: fenestrated axe; type: broad; site: Sidon; metal: alloyed copper; length: 6.5 cm; width: 10.25 cm; thickness: blade 0.15 cm; socket 0.1 cm; weight: 56 g; conservation place: *British Museum*, London, BM/Big number: 126985; Reg. number: 19370505.21; Additional ID: WG.843; G57/LEV/6; date: EB IVB - MB I (2200-1800 BC); reference: Watkins 1981, 147, fig. 10:21.

N. 116633 (fig. 6): class: fenestrated axe; type: broad type; site: Byblos; metal: alloyed copper; length: 8.65 cm; width: 11 cm; thickness: blade 0.4 cm; socket 0.2 cm; weight: 206 g; conservation state: good; conservation place: *British Museum*, London, BM/Big number: 116633; Reg. number: 1924,0513.3; G57/LEV/6; date: MB I (2000/1950-1800 BC).

N. 136754 (fig. 7): class: fenestrated axe; type: broad type; metal: alloyed copper; length: 8.1 cm; width: 10.85; conservation state: good; conservation place: *British Museum*, London, BM/Big number: 136754; Reg. number: 1964,1202.1; Add. ID: F.9208; G57/LEV/6; date: MB I (2000/1950-1800 BC).

	Jericho	Ma' abarot	Tell Sougha	‘ Ein Sa’ ad	Tell Mastaba	Megiddo (Tomb 84C)	Shechem	Sana’ iye	Byblos (Dépôt η)	Megiddo (Temple 4040)	‘ Enot Shuni	Tayma	Beirut BM 126983	Sidon BM 126985	Byblos BM 116633	BM 136754
EB IVB (2200-2000/1950 BC)	x	x		x	x					x						
EB IVB - MB I (2200-1800 BC)			x					x			x		x	x		
MB I (2000/1950-1800 BC)						x	x		x			x			x	x

Tab. 1 - Chronological table of archaic broad fenestrated axes and broad fenestrated axes mentioned.

⁶⁷ https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1964-1202-1.

⁶⁸ Cf. Dunand 1950-1958, n. 16708.

3. BROAD FENESTRATED AXES AS SYMBOLIC WEAPONS BETWEEN 3RD AND 2ND MILLENNIUM BC

Fenestrated axes represent an outcome of the Levantine metallurgical tradition, which found its first formulation in the northern region, and which then reaches distant places and time, from Tayma to Vapheios.⁶⁹

Archaic broad fenestrated axes spread over Southern Levant during the Early Bronze Age IVB (2200-2000/1950 BC) and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age I (2000/1950-1800), in parallel with the so-called Syrian “anchor” type,⁷⁰ and announce the diffusion of the “eye” type.

Fenestrated axes between the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BC stand out as a mighty icon of power, of gods as well as of rulers.⁷¹ The earliest so-called archaic and broad fenestrated types are known from few attestations. This suggests their symbolic use in ritual contexts. They show a noticeable differentiation possibly due to the specific tradition or rite for which they had been produced.

Conversely, the elongated fenestrated axe and the socket type show a more standardized production⁷² and clearly belong to the ordinary weaponry of the warrior class in Middle Bronze Age II Levant.⁷³

Finding contexts seem to point in the same direction. Archaic and broad fenestrated axes were found not only in tombs but also in deposits and votive deposits in temples. When found in tombs, this broad axes apparently indicated the social rank of the deceased (royal?), as it is beautifully exemplified by the case of the Tomb of the Lord of Goats at Ebla.

Since the mid of the 2nd millennium BC fenestrated axes became markedly an attribute of god and goddess representations. These weapons in quality of divine attribute, as it is shown by the stele of Reshef,⁷⁴ of Bar-Hadad,⁷⁵ by some glyptic representations dating back between 8th and 7th century BC, a seal from Tyre,⁷⁶ a scarab from Kition,⁷⁷ and a seal in the Hamburg Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe,⁷⁸ continue to appear until the Iron Age⁷⁹ and beyond in the Phoenician iconography.

⁶⁹ Yaser-Landau 2015.

⁷⁰ Tubb 1982, 4; Montanari 2020, 82-84.

⁷¹ Nigro 2003a, 42; Pinnock 2012, 98.

⁷² Oren 1971, 133.

⁷³ Oren 1971, 131; Palumbo 1986; 1990, 109; Philip 1995, 140, 145, 151, 153; Nigro 1999, 16; Thalmann 2000, 50-53; Antonetti 2003; 2005, 6, 20; Doumet-Serhal 2004, 175; Gernez 2014-2015, 47-49; Doumet-Serhal - Griffiths 2007-2008, 202; Doumet-Serhal - Kopetzky 2011-2012, 9-10; Cohen 2012, 309.

⁷⁴ Maran 2015, fig. 8.

⁷⁵ Dunand 1939.

⁷⁶ Culican 1968, 61.

⁷⁷ Clerc *et al.* 1976, n. 505; Gubel 1980, pl. II:3-4.

⁷⁸ Gubel 1980, pl. I.

⁷⁹ Gubel 1980, 6-9; Yasur-Landau 2015, 146.

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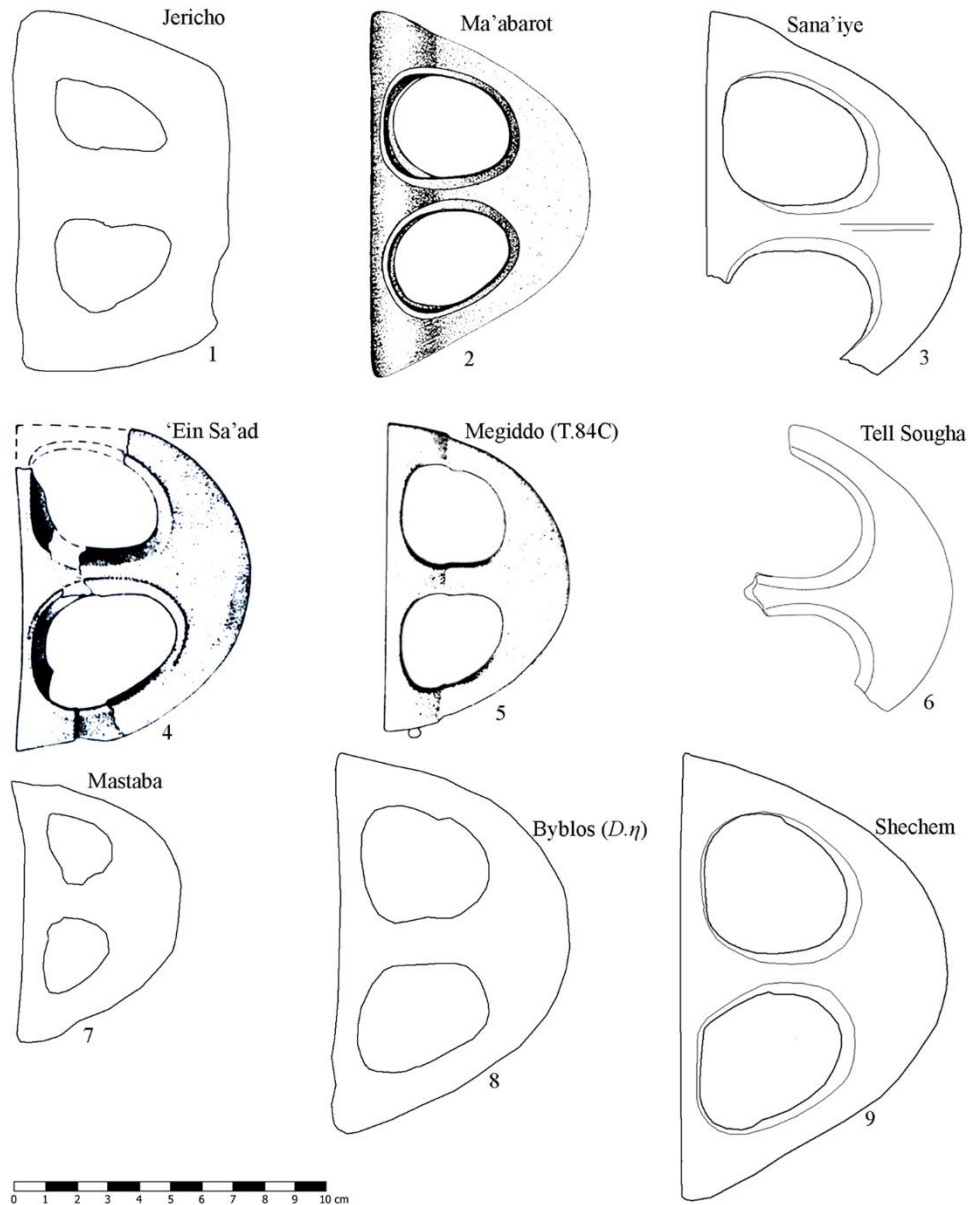


Fig. 1 - Archaic broad fenestrated axes in Southern Levant and Arabia between Early Bronze Age IVB and Middle Bronze Age I (after: 1, Sellin - Watzinger 1913, pl. 105:16; 2, Gophna 1969, fig. 2; 3, Hauslaiter - D'Andrea - Zur 2018, fig. 2; 4, Miron 1992, pl. 15:225; 5, Guy 1938, pl. 163:8; 6, Gernez 2012, pl. 1:1; 7, Tzori 1962, 153; 8, Dunand 1950-1958, pl. LXIII:9472; 9, Watzinger 1933, pl. XXV:54).

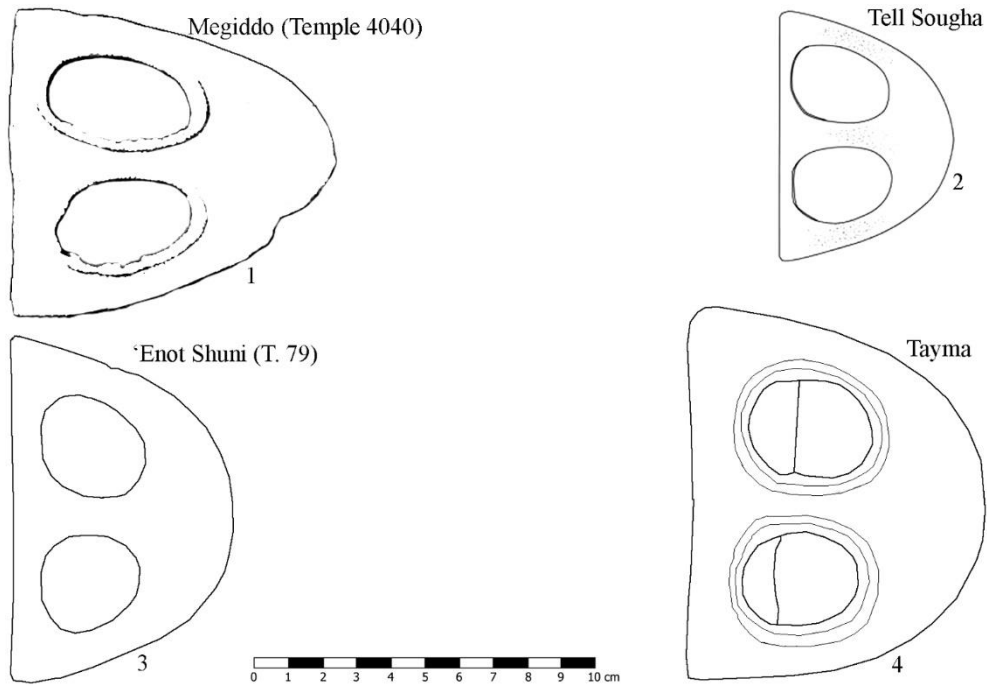


Fig. 2 - Broad fenestrated axes in Southern Levant and Arabia between Early Bronze Age IVB and Middle Bronze Age I (after: 1, Loud 1948, pl. 182:3; 2, Gernez 2012, pl. 1:2; 3, Caspi *et al.* 2009, fig. 1:a; 4, Hauslaiter - D'Andrea - Zur 2018, figs. 5-6).



Fig. 3 - The broad silver fenestrated axe from Tomb 59 of 'Enot Shuni, Early Bronze Age IVB - Middle Bronze Age I (after Caspi *et al.* 2009, fig. 6).

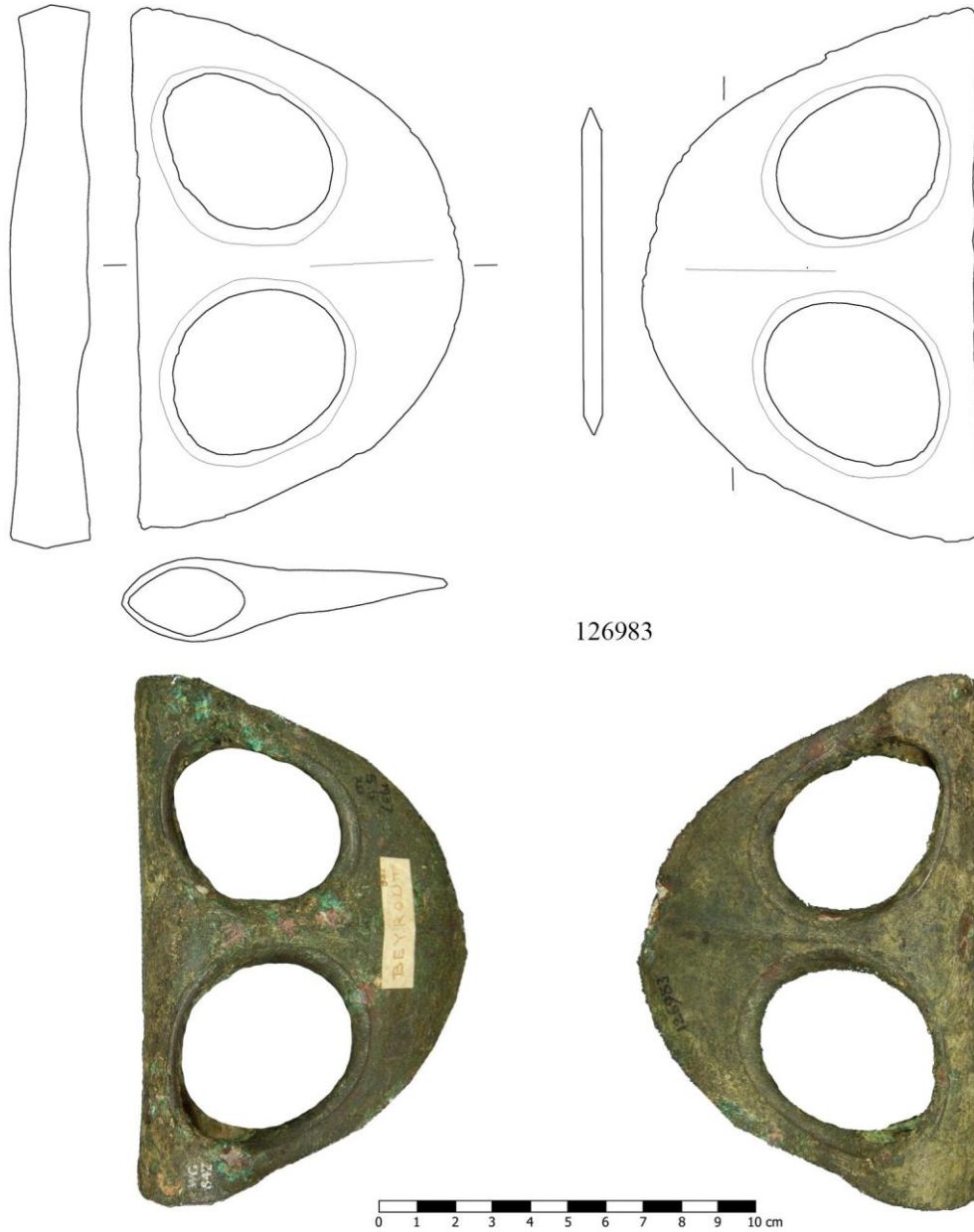


Fig. 4 - The broad fenestrated axe from Beirut, Early Bronze Age IVB - Middle Bronze Age I, 2200-1800 BC, (British Museum n. 126983).

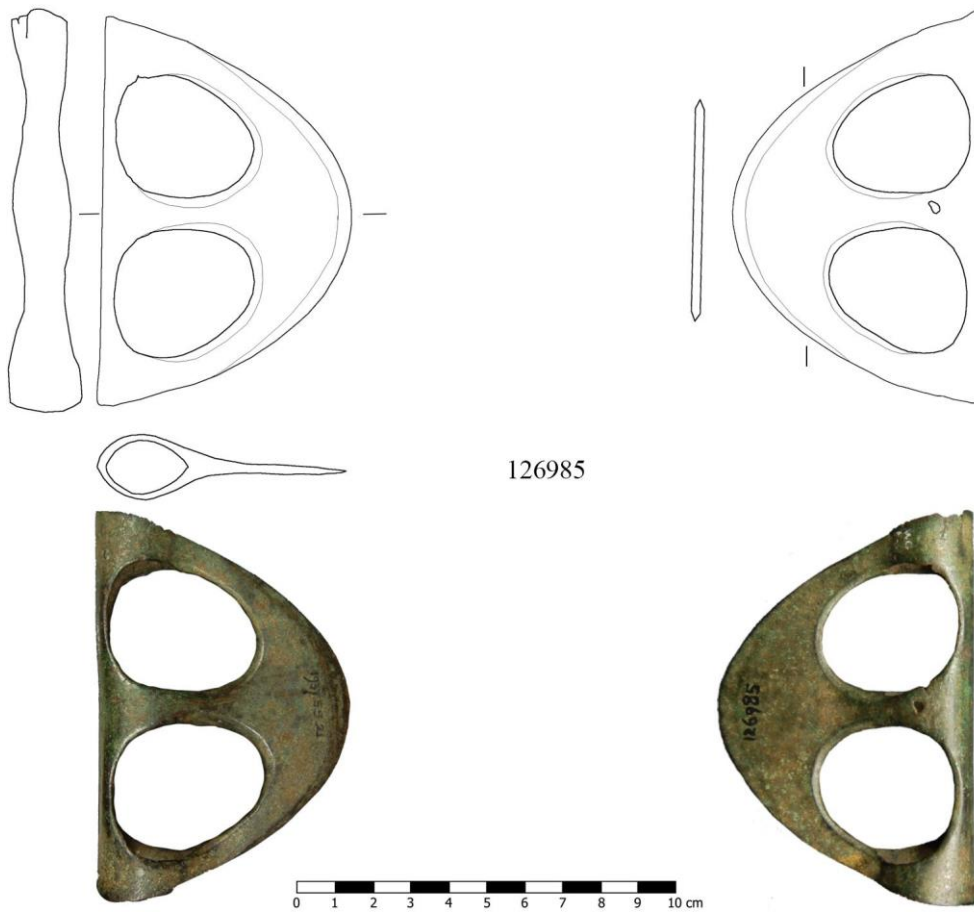


Fig. 5 - The broad fenestrated axe from Sidon, Early Bronze Age IVB - Middle Bronze Age I, 2200-1800 BC, (British Museum n. 126985).

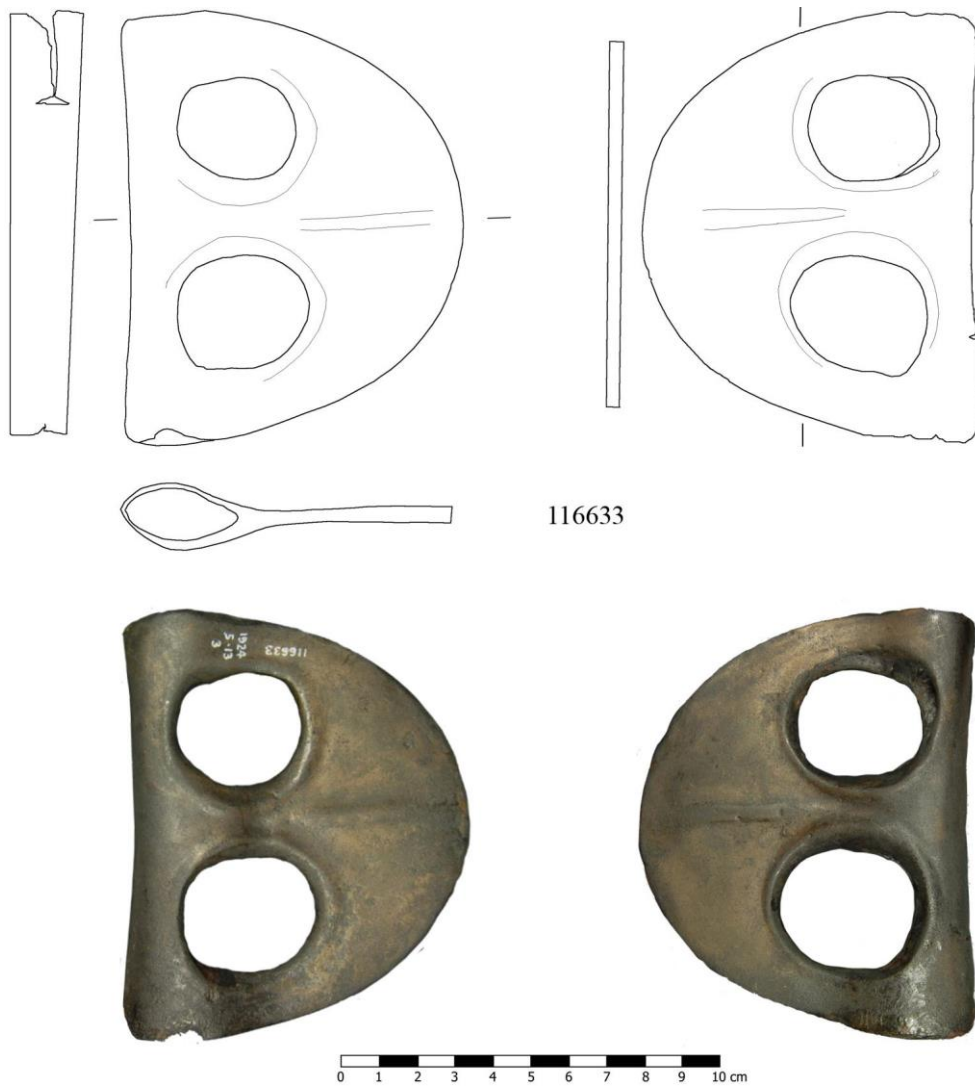


Fig. 6 - The broad fenestrated axe from Byblos, Middle Bronze Age I, 2000/1950-1800 BC (British Museum n. 116633).



Fig. 7 - The broad fenestrated axe of unknown provenance, Middle Bronze Age I, 2000/1950-1800 BC (British Museum n. 136754).