



**HAL**  
open science

**Within small things. Reflections on techno-social  
boundaries between prehistory and recent past during a  
Lebanese fieldwork**

Johnny Baldi

► **To cite this version:**

Johnny Baldi. Within small things. Reflections on techno-social boundaries between prehistory and recent past during a Lebanese fieldwork. *Frontière×s : revue d'archéologie, histoire et histoire de l'art*, 2020, Matérialiser la frontière, 2020 (3), 10.35562/frontieres.405 . halshs-03088461

**HAL Id: halshs-03088461**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03088461v1>**

Submitted on 1 Jan 2025

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Copyright

# Sommaire du numéro

---

## Passé/présent : approches croisées du matériel archéologique

### WITHIN SMALL THINGS

Reflections on techno-social boundaries between prehistory and recent past during a Lebanese fieldwork

**Johnny Samuele Baldi** ..... 7

### ARCHITECTURE VERNACULAIRE DE TERRE ET ÉVACUATION DES EAUX

Études de cas dans l'intérieur de l'Oman et perspectives ethnoarchéologiques

**Blandine Besnard** ..... 21

## Délimiter l'espace sacré

### S'ISOLER POUR HONORER

L'exemple des sanctuaires de Déméter dans le Péloponnèse

**Manon Sauvage-Cerisier** ..... 43

### MATÉRIALISER LA FRONTIÈRE AUTOUR DE L'EMPEREUR DANS

L'ANTIQUITÉ TARDIVE

**Maxime Emion** ..... 55

### LES PAONS AFFRONTÉS DANS L'ART LOMBARD DES VIII<sup>E</sup>-IX<sup>E</sup> SIÈCLES

Gardiens et médiateurs d'une frontière entre humain et divin

**Raphaël Demès** ..... 67

### LES STATUES DE LIONS DES ÉGLISES ROMANES, DES GARDIENS DE PIERRE

ENTRE ESPACE PROFANE ET ESPACE SACRÉ

L'exemple des sculptures léonines du comté de la Marche (XI<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)

**Sylvain Chardonnet** ..... 75

## Frontières institutionnelles

### À PROPOS DES ESPACES D'ENSEIGNEMENT ET DES SALLES DE CONFÉRENCE

DANS LE MONDE ROMAIN

**Michèle Villetard** ..... 87

### LE BORNAGE DE L'ALPAGE DE LA GRASSAZ À PEISEY

(TARENTEISE, XV<sup>E</sup> SIÈCLE)

Matérialiser les *limites* des communs

**Constance Toppin** ..... 101



# Passé/présent : approches croisées du matériel archéologique



# Within small things

## Reflections on techno-social boundaries between prehistory and recent past during a Lebanese fieldwork

DOI : 10.35562/frontieres.405

**Johnny Samuele Baldi**

Chargé de recherche, CNRS, Archéorient (UMR 5133)

**Abstract.** The village of Qleiaat, in the Mount Lebanon, has recently been the centre of archaeological activities aimed at studying late prehistoric and Early Bronze Age vestiges. But from the very beginning this research has also tried to investigate with purely archaeological means the remains of the recent past of the village, especially the pithoi used in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries for food storage, and the ruins left by violent clashes that took place in Qleiaat at the end of the Lebanese civil war. Through a reflection on the possibility of reconstructing physical frontiers starting from the archaeology of fossil techniques, this paper applies to a recent case-study an approach used until now only for prehistoric material culture. The aim is to recognize the frontier between the militias having clashed in Qleiaat in 1988-1990 on the basis of the chaînes opératoires of the pithoi.

**Keywords:** Chaîne opératoire, Qleiaat, Lebanese civil war, socio-physical boundary

**Résumé.** Le village de Qleiaat, au Mont Liban, a récemment été le centre d'activités archéologiques visant à étudier les vestiges de la fin de la préhistoire et du début de l'Âge du Bronze. Mais dès le début, ces recherches se sont également attaquées, avec des moyens purement archéologiques, aux vestiges du passé récent du village, en particulier aux pithoi utilisés aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles pour le stockage des aliments, ainsi qu'aux ruines laissées par les violents affrontements qui ont eu lieu à Qleiaat à la fin de la guerre civile libanaise. Par une réflexion sur la possibilité de reconstruire les frontières physiques à partir de l'archéologie des techniques fossiles, cet article applique à un cas d'étude récent une approche utilisée jusqu'à présent uniquement pour la culture matérielle préhistorique. L'objectif est de retracer la frontière entre les milices qui se sont affrontées à Qleiaat en 1988-1990 sur la base de l'analyse des chaînes opératoires des pithoi.

**Mots-clés :** Chaîne opératoire, Qleiaat, guerre civile libanaise, frontière socio-physique.

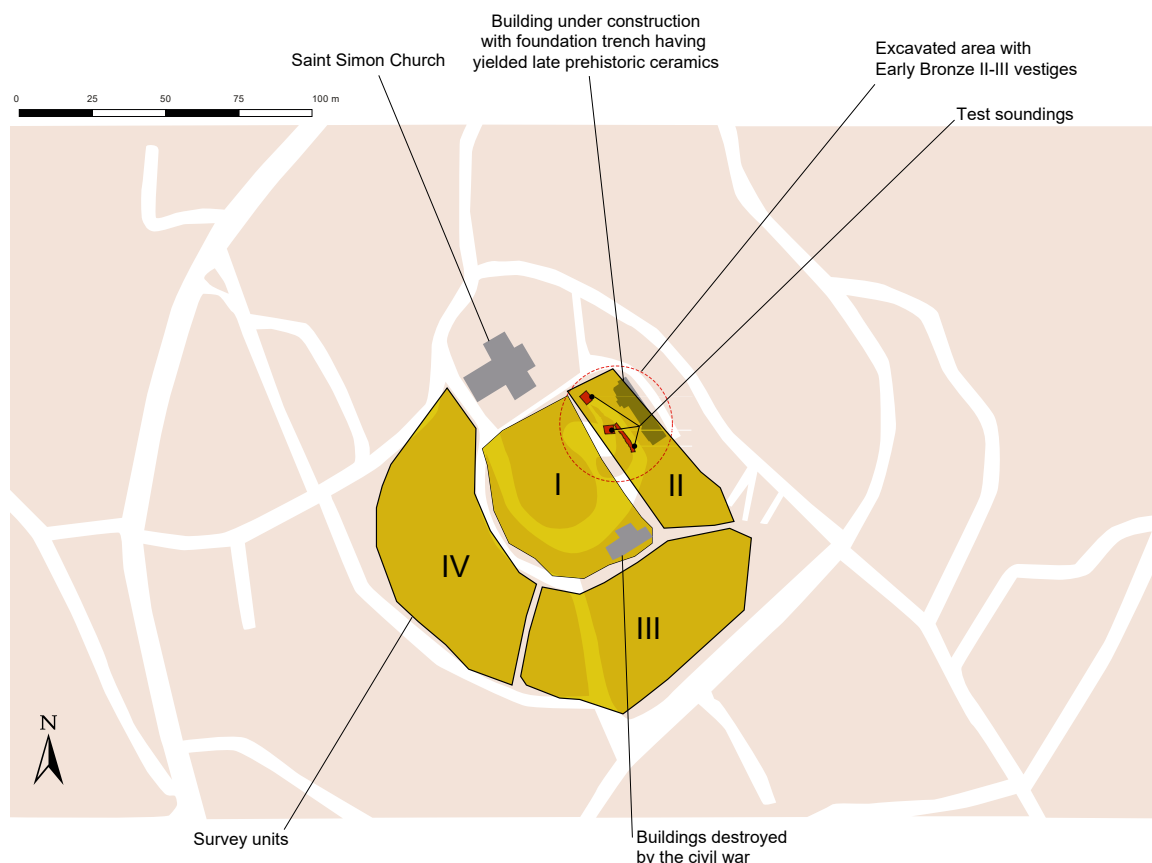
*This article was written in times of a pandemic and confinement, times when increasingly heavy frontiers are weighing down on relations between communities and individuals. Thanks to the person who visited Qleiaat with me for the first time, hoping that borders do not divide what should not be divided.*

## INTRODUCTION. A LEBANESE FIELDWORK

Towards the end of December 2015, at Qleiaat, a densely populated village in the Mount Lebanon (about 1000 m above sea level), the excavation of a long, deep foundation trench during the construction of a multi-storey building brought to light a significant amount of ceramics dating back to the late prehistory (6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC) and to the Early Bronze Age II-III periods (2900-2600 BC). The site was then investigated in 2016 and 2017 by a joint project led by the IFPO (*Institut français du Proche-Orient* – French Institute



of the Near East) and the Museum of Lebanese Prehistory.<sup>1</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> millennium sequence is known from the foundation trench of the building under construction (fig. 1). Its ceramic assemblage is mainly composed of local productions, but also of a non-negligible quantity of pots of allogeneic Mesopotamian traditions. Their early presence in a remote corner of the Lebanese Mountain points out a rather surprising cultural encounter. A few metres away from the building under construction, on the south-eastern slope of the upper mound (fig. 1), three ruined and highly unsafe buildings stand as dreadful recent carcasses, gutted by violent clashes between factions that, during the last phases of the Lebanese civil war, faced each other in Qleiaat. Since the very first survey, recent ruins have been investigated using methods typical of prehistoric research because one fact was patent. For an archaeologist confronted with both prehistoric and recent vestiges, the situation was the same: nothing was known about either of the two events: no one could talk about the first, and no one wanted to talk about the second.



**Figure 1. Qleiaat: map of inhabited districts with the main places mentioned in the text.**  
CAD J.S. Baldi

## Beyond material culture: chaînes opératoires to materialize elusive borders

The presence at Qleiaat of Mesopotamian materials (and probably Mesopotamian immigrants) during the late prehistory triggered a reflection on how to reconstruct, on a material basis, the boundaries between the militias<sup>2</sup> involved in the severe clashes that took place there towards the end of the Lebanese civil war.<sup>3</sup> The attempt to reconstruct cultural frontiers on the basis of their material expressions is the central topic of the archaeological literature about ‘culture contact’. It implies to recognize and understand specific intentional or unintentional ways of envisioning and representing the ‘oneself’ and the ‘other’. The implicit assumption in

1 Fieldwork activities were conducted under the direction of Maya Boustani (Museum of Lebanese Prehistory) and myself (Baldi and Boustani *in press*).

2 Picard 2002; Rolland 2003.

3 Conventionally, it is considered that the Lebanese civil war lasted from 1975 until 1990, including in the definition of “civil war” not only the clashes between the various Lebanese religious factions, with their rapid and unpredictable changes of alliances, but also the intervention of various other states and international institutions (Palestine Liberation Organization, Israel, Syria, United Nations, Arab Ligue, etc. – See Fisk 2001).

such archaeological approaches is that material, frontiers can be recognized, since different material-cultural assemblages represent distinct cultural entities or ‘cultures’.<sup>4</sup> Beyond several recent criticisms pointing to its intrinsic risk of essentialism and culturalism,<sup>5</sup> this strategy is problematic because of its heuristic limits. Indeed, in a scenario such as the late prehistoric Mesopotamian presence in the Mount Lebanon, the distinction between the ‘foreign’ and the ‘local’ ceramic is relatively easy to make because of the very dissimilar exterior appearance of local and foreign pottery.<sup>6</sup> But in the case of the factions that faced each other at the end of the civil war, everything is more complicated. When the notion of ‘foreign’ is not applicable because all the actors in the field, even if sometimes involved in extremely conflictual relationships, share the same cultural basis, social boundaries become undetectable to the analytic approaches of the archaeological discipline. Indeed, a cultural frontier defines distinctions that are not always (or very rarely) clearly apparent. Hence, prehistoric archaeology uses a much less superficial means of distinguishing past social boundaries by relying on concepts and methods specific to the anthropology of techniques in order to analyse the *chaînes opératoires*.<sup>7</sup> The *chaîne opératoire* is defined as the series of gestures and operations leading to the creation of an artefact. The notion of *chaîne opératoire* pertains both to the making and the studying of things, both to the process of transforming a single (or several) raw material(s) into a finished product<sup>8</sup> and to the analytical tool used for reconstructing such a process.<sup>9</sup> Approaching social borders between different groups according to their ways of making artefacts is a means to enhance the heuristic value of material culture.<sup>10</sup> In a scenario such as Qleiaat at the end of the Lebanese civil war, the *chaîne opératoire* approach may be the only archaeological exploratory tool to materialize a cultural frontier between basically identical traditions and, therefore, between the underlying social groups. When there is no material-cultural distinction between different groups virtually producing, using, and discarding the same things in the same way, the *chaîne opératoire* approach avoids an almost total anthropological blindness in archaeology.<sup>11</sup> Rather than searching for the materialization of social boundaries in things (in the fragments of things to which archaeological research applies), the study of *chaînes opératoires* searches for the materialization of boundaries within things, reconstructing relationships between groups of producers according to their traditional technical ways of crafting things.

Basically, at Qleiaat, the scarcity of first-hand documentary sources, as well as the traumatic and fresh nature of archaeologically-relevant events, led me to approach recent war ruins and ceramic pithoi by means that I usually apply to prehistoric phenomena.

## AN ELUSIVE WARTIME FRONTIER

I did not intend to turn archaeological research into sociological or ethno-archaeological fieldwork because there was no chance for it.<sup>12</sup> No direct observation and no interaction with the actors of the end of the civil war were possible. As in the whole Lebanon, the tumultuous post-war reconstruction left very few traces of the past. Beyond recently ravaged buildings, only few old wine and oil millstones and large ceramic pithoi still remain, scattered in the gardens of some houses or at the edge of the church parking lot. Millstones are from the Roman period,<sup>13</sup> while pithoi are recent, even if nothing suggests the slightest relationship between them and the remnants of the civil war. Apart from some rare newspaper articles and oral accounts,<sup>14</sup> the fights that involved Christian Maronite and Orthodox armed groups are an almost undocumented episode of the

4 Green and Perlman 1985; Lightfoot and Martinez 1995; Stark 2015; Aniceto et al. 2017.

5 Jones 1997; Roberts and Vander Linden 2011; McInerney 2014; Hofmann 2016.

6 In particular, 6<sup>th</sup> millennium local pottery is plain or red slipped, while Mesopotamian traditions are often painted. However, beyond esthetic traits, both local and foreign ceramics have been characterized according to their technical aspect, through an analysis of the same type presented below (Baldi 2019a, note 43).

7 The *chaîne opératoire* is a notion enucleated over a century of debates (see Roux 2003, note 1 for a synthesis of the discussions since M. Mauss considerations in the 1920s).

8 Cresswell 1976, p. 12.

9 Roux 2019a; Livingstone-Smith 2007; Gosselain 2019.

10 Baldi 2013; Boëda 2013; Manclossi et al. 2019.

11 The so-called “war archaeology” in the former Yugoslavia, with its excavations of mass graves, is a flagrant example of anthropological blindness. In a context where funerary practices reflect a depersonalising massification, some forensic excavations have tried in vain to identify ethnicity traits of the deceased on the basis of the remains of their bodies, clothing, shoes, objects or personal ornaments. Actually, the ethnicity of the victims has been reconstructed only thanks to their ID cards or, more often, to the testimony of the living (Kaliterna 2006; Baldi 2012, p. 448).

12 Roux 2007; David and Kramer 2001.

13 Qleiaat is located on a major road that, crossing the Mount Lebanon, connects Byblos, on the coast, to Heliopolis-Baalbek in the Beqaa Valley. Despite its location on the mountains, the village was a conspicuous agricultural settlement in Roman and Byzantine times (Baldi and Boustani *in press*).

14 Abuna Youssef Mubarak, the priest of the Maronite parish of Saint Simon, was a child when he was injured in a leg, some owners of the destroyed family homes are still alive: none of them speak openly or willingly about that period.





**Figure 4. Qleiaat: building destroyed during inter-Christian clashes at the end of the Lebanese civil war**

Picture J.S. Baldi



**Figure 5. Qleiaat: war ruins in the upper sector of the village**

Picture J.S. Baldi.





**Figure 6. Qleiaat, upper portion of the village: holes in the walls from impacts of mortar shells**

Picture J.S. Baldi



**Figure 7. Qleiaat, upper portion of the village: mortar shells holes used to fire at the lower part of the village**

Picture J.S. Baldi

final phase of the civil war,<sup>15</sup> especially outside Beirut. At the top of the archaeological mound of Qleiaat and in the destroyed buildings (fig. 2), the material culture of the 1970s and 1980s speaks of a Christian village which, despite the war, gave to food a prominent place in its social practices.

Plates, forks, spoons, tableware, bottles of alcoholic spirituals and boxes of Egyptian laxatives are ubiquitous. The beginning of the fights led to the precipitous departure of the families once living on the upper sector of the hill, quickly replaced by the fighters, as demonstrated by the suitcases abandoned in a hurry, the open wardrobes, the beds that still have their sheets, the overturned books and the cosmetics left in bathroom cabinets.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, perforated walls and staircases, bullets, destroyed masonry, as well as Russian, Italian, French, and Yugoslavian mortar shells indicate how clashes became a lasting battle (fig. 3-5), with militias based in the buildings of the upper portion of the village threatening other fighters in other buildings (fig. 5) and monitoring the port of Beirut far downstream (fig. 6).

Qleiaat is a mountain village: winters are long, snowy, and cold. Many books and furniture have been burnt to warm up the fighters occupying these devastated architectures full of holes. War is a boring occupation, so they drew a lot of graffiti on the walls: obscene pictures, caricatures, prayers, churches, signatures, insults against the enemy and attempts of self-portraits (fig. 7).

The whole material landscape indicates that one of the many bloody and painful communitarian-military borders of the Lebanese civil war traversed Qleiaat during the inter-Christian clashes of 1988-1990. However, the absence of documentary sources makes it impossible to reconstruct how this border worked. The current landscape does not allow to understand who was shooting at whom, and in which direction. The impacts of the bullets do not have any privileged orientation and there are no symbolic traces of the different factions in distinct areas of the village. Everything seems to compose a chaotic picture, in which nothing shows whether the two factions divided the territory according to some affiliation to the neighbourhoods, or the strongholds of each faction were distributed like wildfires inside the village. The current appearance of the village provides a misleading visual contrast between the recently rebuilt structures (namely the large majority of the

<sup>15</sup> Corm 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Baldi 2019b, fig. 5-7.





**Figure 8. Qleiaat, upper portion of the village: view of the harbour of Beirut**  
Picture J.S. Baldi



**Figure 9. Qleiaat, upper portion of the village: war graffiti**  
Picture J.S. Baldi



**Figure 10. Qleiaat: dates of manufacture engraved on wet clay when making the *pithoi***  
Pictures J.S. Baldi



buildings) and the devastated wartime ruins. Nothing of the communitarian border that was the fighting front line for over two years remains in the current configuration of the village.

## Wartime, and how was produced what remains of it

On the other hand, the *pithoi* are now in disuse and are not remnants from the war. As indicated by the dates engraved by the potters (in Latin or Arabic numerals) on some of them, they have been crafted (at least) between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 1980s (fig. 8).

Some of these large terracotta containers, once used to store foodstuffs for peasant families, lay now abandoned or shattered in unoccupied areas amongst recent buildings. Some show clear traces of the fighting, while others have been reused as large flower pots in house gardens (fig. 9).<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 2. Qleiaat: *pithoi* perforated by bullets or reused as decorative vases**

Picture J.S. Baldi

Some *pithoi* have a fairly globular profile with a rounded base, while others have a slightly oval shape with a somewhat pointed base. Some have no decoration, while others have a roped pattern towards the middle of the body. But all share the same dimensions: about 1.2-1.4 m height, about 90-120 cm width, with a mouth diameter of 30-40 cm. Morpho-stylistic features correspond to functional differences: the slightly ovoid-shaped containers with a roped decoration were once partially buried oil jars, while the globular-shaped and undecorated *pithoi* were used to store grains or water (fig. 10).<sup>18</sup>



**Figure 3. Qleiaat: ovoid pithos with roped decoration once used as large oil jar (left) and globular pithos once used to store grains (right)**

Pictures J.S. Baldi

As for manufacturing methods, it is possible to identify two distinct groups of fabrics that share similarly prepared minerally tempered raw materials, with a fairly homogeneous percentage of limestone (around 15-

<sup>17</sup> The presence of fragmentary *pithoi* allowed observations by a magnifying glass, in order to classify ceramic pastes and traces of manufacturing techniques.

<sup>18</sup> A further clue is that many ovoid roped containers still have clear traces of oily substances inside. In addition, many inhabitants offer corroborating testimonies on the functional distinction between *pithoi*.



20%). But the clays used for the two classes of fabrics are unmistakably different: the first one (A) has basaltic inclusions, while the second (B) is characterized by a not negligible presence of chalks. Moreover, all the pastes were fired at medium temperatures,<sup>19</sup> but A pastes (with a homogeneous orange-red colour) under conditions of good oxidation, while B pastes in a partially oxidizing atmosphere (as shown by their dark grey heart). Although a certain amount of basalt is documented in the mountainous hinterland areas of Beirut and Byblos,<sup>20</sup> it is clear that clay sources used for the *pithoi* are not local, as the rare clay outcrops in the vicinity of Qleiaat are characterized by a strong presence of dolomite, which is virtually absent in *pithoi* fabrics. The sharp distinction between A and B fabrics is confirmed by the fact that each type of paste has been used to build *pithoi* according to different manufacturing techniques.<sup>21</sup> On the one hand, A fabrics were used for *pithoi* produced by overlapping 4-5 cm thick rounded spiral coils. Each pithos was made up of two parts, both built by spiral coils, but the upper portion was not coiled until the lower one was dry and solid enough to support its weight; then, the whole roughout was shaped by a paddle and anvil technique. This shaping method caused some distinctive macro-traces: the difference in drying between the upper and lower portion of the containers produced a long horizontal crack at the junction, while the joints of the other coils were almost completely erased by the paddle and anvil technique, which left very regular flapping facets on the outer surface (fig. 11).

On the other hand, *pithoi* in B pastes were shaped by overlapping 5 cm thick flattened ring coils: the exterior surface was simply hand-finished, which left the joints between the coils very visible (fig. 13).

In summary, the *pithoi* were produced by two distinct *chaînes opératoires*:

- Group I *pithoi* in A fabric (with limestone, ferruginous and basaltic inclusions) were manufactured by overlapping spirals of large rounded coils, with the upper portion built only after the drying of the lower part, then shaped by paddle and anvil, and finally fired in oxidizing conditions.
- Group II *pithoi* in B fabric (with limestone and chalky inclusions) were produced by overlapping several rings of large flattened coils and fired in semi-oxidizing conditions.

Each of the two *chaînes opératoires* has been used to craft both roped decorated ovoid-shaped *pithoi* to contain oil and globular *pithoi* to store water or grain.



**Figure 11. Qleiaat: *Pithoi* Group I in A fabric (limestone, iron and basaltic inclusion) shaped by overlapping large spiral coils then regularized by paddle and anvil**

Pictures J.S. Baldi

19 Calcite of limestone inclusions does not seem to be altered by the heat, which means that temperatures did not exceed 900 °C and were most likely slightly over 700 °C (Quinn 2013, p. 91).

20 Since the Early Bronze II-III (early 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE), in the mountains east of Byblos, some ceramic pastes have basaltic inclusions of local origin (Poupet et al. 2018.). At Qleiaat, Early Bronze II-III pottery is similar in terms of manufacturing techniques, morphology, and decorations to the assemblages of the whole of North Lebanon. However, even ancient ceramics have no basaltic pastes, but rather dolomitic clays of local origin.

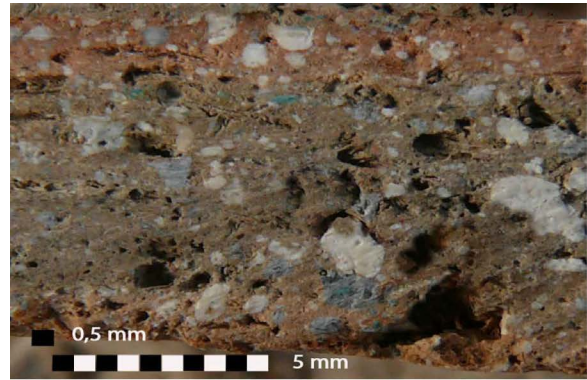
21 In the last twenty years the analysis of macro- and micro-traces to reconstruct manufacturing techniques has started to be used also in the prehistoric Levant (Ali 2005; Baldi 2013, 2017; Roux 2003, 2019b).



Since all the *pithoi* have the same size and were used for the same purposes, the very existence of such different *chaînes opératoires* expresses a clear social distinction between the producers, who respected and transmitted through generations different traditions because they patently belonged to different groups.<sup>22</sup> In itself, this simply translates into technical terms some kind of social difference between the producers and is not necessarily related to the military-communitarian frontier that has divided Qleiaat at the end of the Lebanese civil war.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the clashes between Maronite and Orthodox militias lasted two years in a milieu whose material culture was essentially made of plastics and steel industrial supplies. Instead, some of the *pithoi* date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even the more recent ones, at the time of the civil war, were only leftovers of nearly disappeared crafts and peasant traditions. Therefore, both a chronological and a material discrepancy seems to exist between the social frontier that has long distinguished the producers of the *pithoi* and the border that marked the front line between Christian militias in 1988-1990.

### CHAÎNES OPÉRATOIRES IN SPACE: MATERIALIZING A FRONTIER

However, the study of the synchronic – namely spatial – relations between the *chaînes opératoires* identified for the manufacture of the *pithoi* offers interesting results. This archaeological approach requires specific conditions to be applied to prehistoric or recent material culture. First of all, it makes sense to evaluate spatial interactions between *chaînes opératoires* only if these are relevant to archaeological materials belonging to the same stratigraphic level, or to items that were all simultaneously in use at a given time in the past. Furthermore, the archaeological materials in question must be as much as possible *in situ*, and must not have been subjected to radical displacements having erased or irreversibly disfigured the spatial scheme of their relations. The Qleiaat *pithoi* meet these criteria: they have been progressively neglected since the early 1970s, but regardless of the date of production many of them have continued to be used until the early 1990s; moreover, they are all heavy enough to have remained approximately in the same position until today. Finally, a last critical factor for reading spatial relations between *chaînes opératoires* is that the overlapping of production and distribution networks does not make unintelligible the whole framework of interactions. In fact, *chaînes opératoires* relate to the production of objects by expressing on a technical level some kind of social distinction between their producers (based on family, religion, lineage, ethnic affiliations, economic groups, and so on). But the location where items are found (namely their place of use if they are *in situ*) depends on distribution and exchange networks that have led a given object to be employed in a specific place. The possible configurations between production and distribution networks of any type of item are innumerable and a spatial analysis of the *chaînes opératoires* can only



**Figure 12. Qleiaat: *Pithoi* Group II in B fabric (limestone, sands and chalk inclusions) shaped by overlapping large ring coils**  
Pictures J.S. Baldi

<sup>22</sup> Wenger 1998; Roddick and Stahl 2016; Stark et al. 2008.

<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the study of the *pithoi* had begun in an independent way from the documentation of the war ruins: both are remains of a recent past that can be studied by archaeological means.



provide an ex-post, static image of these relations. In almost all possible configurations between production and distribution networks, this image is so chaotic that it appears indecipherable, because distinct groups of craftspeople producing for all consumers inevitably generate an inextricable series of interweaving between the production phase and the place of use. In other words, regardless of period or social organization, the normal outcome of any situation of significant economic integration between different groups, with craftspeople offering their products to anyone who wants them, is a knotty entanglement of objects manufactured according to different *chaînes opératoires* that are used (and therefore found) next to each other, without any spatial distinction.

Conversely, the only possible pattern generating a clear spatial separation between items manufactured by different producers (i.e. according to different *chaînes opératoires*) is a situation where producers and users belong to the same social group. This means that a spatial frontier between *chaînes opératoires* can be recognized only where the production of a certain item by a certain group is exclusively intended for distribution and use within the same group. This seems to be, precisely, the situation documented in Qleiaat by the spatial distribution of the *chaînes opératoires* of the *pithoi*. Amongst the 24 *pithoi* identified at Qleiaat, all the specimens of Group I (fig. 12) are dispersed in the lower sectors of the village, while all those of Group II (fig. 9) are concentrated in the upper sector of the settlement, without any area in which Groups I and II are mixed (fig. 13). This factual frontier cannot in any way be accidental: it materializes a distinction between groups both in terms of technical-craft traditions and for the integration between their economic networks.

Despite the absence of definite evidence, some data suggests that this frontier may coincide with the border between Christian militias in 1988-1990. In fact, although the recent production of traditional Lebanese ceramics is very little known, the *chaînes opératoires* characterizing Groups I and II are still documented in two centres renowned for their potting traditions, respectively Beit Chabab for Group I<sup>24</sup> and Rashaya al Foukhar for Group II.<sup>25</sup> The first one is a Maronite village, the inhabitants of the second are Orthodox. Furthermore, the presence of basaltic inclusions in the pastes used for *pithoi* of Group I is not surprising for the Mount Lebanon-Metn region, a predominantly Maronite region, where Beit Chabab is located. In parallel, the chalk in the paste of Group II is consistent with the geology of the Southern Beqaa Valley clays, a region with a large Orthodox presence,<sup>26</sup> used in Rashaya al Foukhar.<sup>27</sup> As indicated by dates engraved on some *pithoi*, the oldest of both Groups I and II were made at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the most recent ones date back to the 1980s, when the civil war had already been going on for some time. The spatial distribution of the *chaînes opératoires* would suggest that, long before the inter-Christian clashes at the end of the civil war, a secluded area of the village towards the top of the mound was occupied by Orthodox families, who used *pithoi* produced and distributed within a commercial network of their own religious community. The lower areas of the village may have been occupied by Maronite families, who stored water and grain in *pithoi* made and then sold within the Maronite community. According to this framework, Orthodox militias would have installed themselves in the upper area of the village, previously occupied by families from the same community: a choice that might have been dictated by the possibility of enjoying, initially, some logistic support and, then, by the advantageous position over the rest of the village below. Nothing is proven with certainty in this reconstruction of the facts, but the long inter-Christian battle seems to have been a Maronite siege that, from below, conquered the top of the village. The only reconstructed building on top of the hill is the great Maronite church of Saint Simon. The reason why the war ruins near the church have not yet been demolished and rebuilt could support the reconstruction suggested by the distribution of the *chaînes opératoires*: the owners of these buildings are difficult to find, displaced during the war and no longer residents of Qleiaat.

## WHAT REMAINS OF A FRONTIER

Crafting is far more than making. Craft is indeed about making, without making being necessarily craft.<sup>28</sup> Craft means articulating in a specific skilful manner a peculiar entanglement between people and things, drawing upon materials by cognizing technical gestures and abstracting concepts from this practice. While they make things in a specific way, craftspeople think with and through the materials and tools they use. The-

24 Beit Chabab is a mountain village 24 km north of Beirut, in the Metn district. Concerning its potting traditions, see Amin Barkawi (1963, p. 24) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTFEsQVy5bQ> [March 2020].

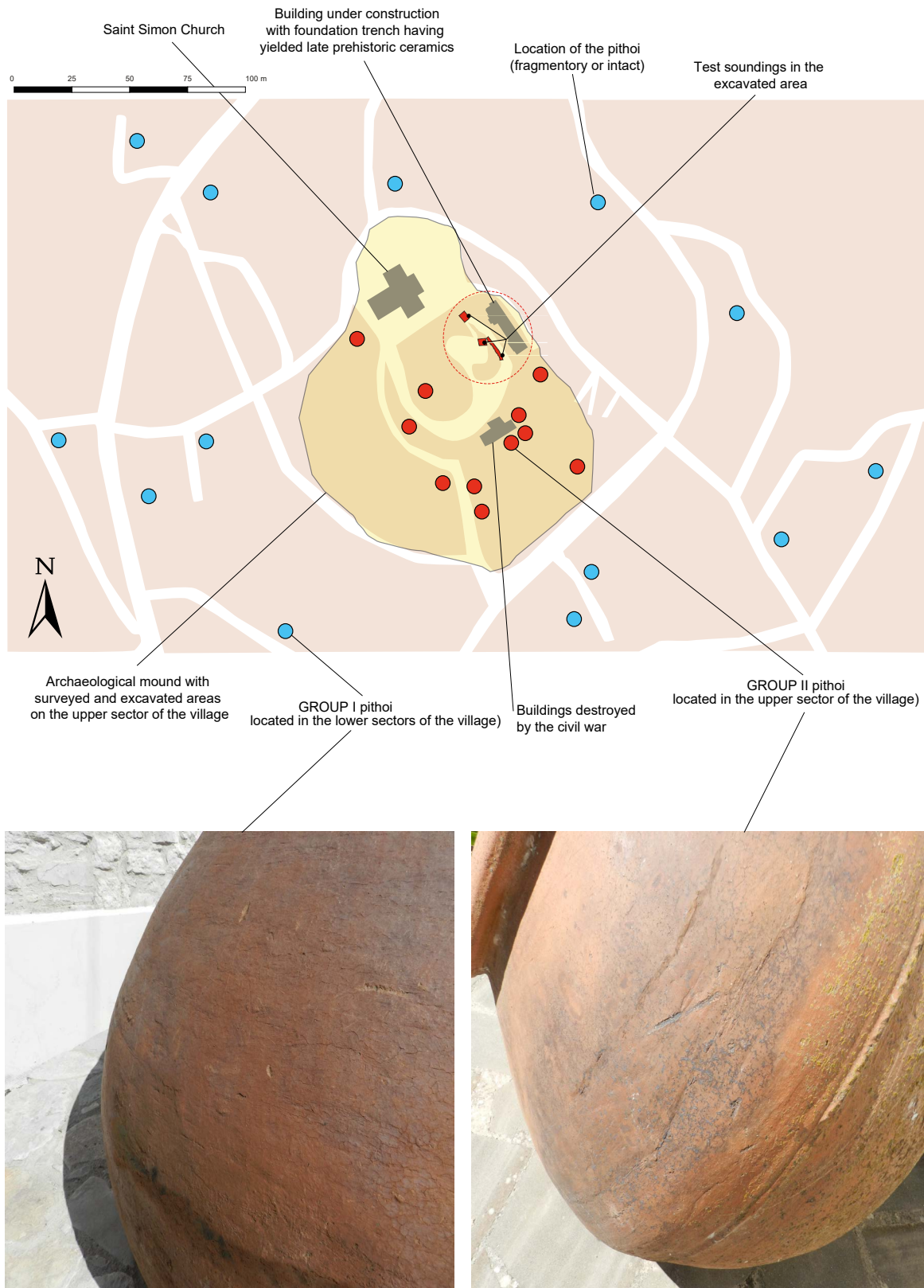
25 Rashaya al Foukhar is located on the western slopes of Mount Hermon, in the district of Hasbaya in southern Lebanon. The local ceramic traditions have influenced even the toponym (*foukhar* is the Arabic word for “ceramics”) and are documented by several authors (Robinson and Smith 1856; Amin Barkawi 1963, p. 11).

26 Davie 2008.

27 El-Khatib et al. 1977; Darwish 2006.

28 On the other hand, making objects is far from uniquely human and does not characterize human behaviour *per se* (Shumaker et al. 2011).





**Figure 13. Qleiaat: map of inhabited districts with the location of Group I and II of *pithoi***  
CAD and pictures J.S. Baldi

refores, the *chaînes opératoires*, namely the specific ways of skilfully handling of materials and tools in order to make things, are not a mere descriptive category, but rather a heuristic device.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, like science and art, crafting is a way of exploring, understanding, and creating: like scientists and artists, craftspeople make a particular claim about material reality and its possible developments. Empirical knowledge is the methodology employed by craftspeople in doing so: a truth claim based on the fact that what they make actually works. This was the case in prehistory for the different modalities of manufacturing local or foreign ceramics, and this is the case for the two *chaînes opératoires* recently used to craft Qleiaat *pithoi*. They are not simply distinct ways of making objects aimed at the same functions: they are material expressions of material mentalities of different groups, namely their peculiar ways of conceiving the relationship with resources and tools needed to make *pithoi*. Moreover, since the social boundary between these producers is also clearly readable through the distribution of their products, this means that the *pithoi* were not only manufactured by different groups, but also intended exclusively for consumption within those same groups. In the absence of first-hand accounts and relying just on analytic means proper to prehistoric archaeology, it is impossible to define with absolute certitude the anthropological nature of these two communities of craft and consumption practice.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the *pithoi* and the war ruins, initially studied independently of each other, seem to be part of the same organizational scheme of the village since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the technical frontier drawn by the spatial distribution of the *chaînes opératoire* of the *pithoi* may match with the front line between Maronite and Orthodox militias in 1988-1990. The composition of the ceramic pastes as well as the shaping techniques used in the manufacture of the *pithoi* offer strong clues in this sense and even suggest that the front line corresponded to the distribution of the two communities within the village long before the outbreak of the inter-Christian clashes.

The social frontier materialized by the *chaînes opératoires* within the *pithoi* and in their spatial distribution may also have been a bloody fighting border and a deep scar that still remains on the body of Qleiaat. But archaeology can only perceive what remains of things and within things, while has no means to dig into what remains deep within the souls.

<sup>29</sup> Baldi in press; Schlanger 1994; Gosselain 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Wenger 1998.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALI N. 2005. *The Development of Pottery Technology from the Late Sixth to the Fifth Millennium B.C. in Northern Jordan. Ethno- and archaeological studies: Abu Hamid as a key site*, BAR International Series 1422, Oxford.
- AMIN BARKAWI F. 1963, *A Survey of Contemporary Lebanese Pottery*, M.Phil thesis, Beirut College for Women, Beyrouth (inédit).
- ANICETO L., DELVOYE A., HERMENAULT L., KHAN B. et TREUILLOT J. (dir.) 2017, *Archéologie de la frontière*, Paris.
- BALDI J.S. 2012, « Nazionalismi e strumentalizzazioni archeologiche: qualche considerazione sulle ossessioni identitarie in protostoria », *Intersezioni, Rivista di Storia delle Idee* XXXII (3), p. 447-462.
- BALDI J.S. 2013, « Ceramic technology at Tell Qarassa North (southern Syria): from “cultures” to “ways of doing” », in L. Bombardieri, A. D’Agostino, G. Guarducci, V. Orsi et S. Valentini (éd.), *SOMA, 2012: Proceedings of the 16th Symposium on Mediterranean Archaeology, Florence, Italy, 13 March 2012*, Oxford, p. 17-24.
- BALDI, J.S. 2017, « La Région de Byblos de la Fin du VI<sup>e</sup> au Début du III<sup>e</sup> Millénaire : Formation d’un Réseau Territorial », *Syria* 94, p. 123-155.
- BALDI J.S. 2019a, « Evolution as a way of intertwining: regional approach and new data on the Halaf-Ubaid Transition in Northern Mesopotamia », *WEST & EAST Supplementa*, Proceedings of the Broadening Horizons 5 Conference (BH5), Udine, p. 71-88.
- BALDI J.S. 2019b, « Picturing concrete matters: an archaeography of Lebanese destroyed family homes », *Routes de l’Orient*, p. 165-182.
- BALDI J.S. à paraître, « Broadening perspectives through the chaîne opératoire approach: scattered epistemological notes on the case-study of Tell Abu Habil (Jordan) », *ARC*.
- BALDI J.S. et BOUSTANI M. à paraître, « Nouvelles découvertes archéologiques en haute montagne : le site de Qleiaat (Kesrouan-mont Liban) », *BAAL*.
- BOËDA E. 2013, *Techno-Logique & Technologie: Une Paléo-Histoire des Objets Lithiques Tranchants*, Paris.
- CORM G. 2003, *Le Liban contemporain : Histoire et société*, Paris.
- CRESSWELL R. 1976, « Techniques et culture, les bases d’un programme de travail », *Techniques et culture* 1, p. 7-59.
- DARWISH T. 2006, *Soil Map of Lebanon*, 1:50 000, Monograph Series n°4, CNRS, Remote Sensing Center, Beyrouth.
- DAVID N. et KRAMER C. 2001, *Ethnoarchaeology in Action*, Cambridge.
- DAVIE M.F. 2008, « Internet et les enjeux de la cartographie des religions au Liban », *Géographie et cultures* 68, p. 81-98.
- EL-KHATIB A., KHAZZAKA K., SAYEGH A.H. et SHERMAN G.D. 1977, *Carte de reconnaissance des minéraux argileux des sols du Liban*, Conseil National de la Recherche Scientifique, Beyrouth.
- FISK R. 2001, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*, Londres.
- GOSSELAIN O. 2019, « Pottery chaînes opératoires as Historical Documents », in T. Spear (éd.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Historiography: Methods and Sources*, Oxford.
- GREEN S.W. et PERLMAN S.M. 1985, *The Archaeology of Frontiers and Boundaries*, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- HOFMANN K.P. 2016, « With vikings into the Identity Trap: When Historiographical Actors Get a Life of Their Own », in W. Pohl and A. Gingrich (éd.), *The Genetic Challenge to Medieval History and Archaeology*, Vienne, p. 91-122, disponible sur : <http://medievalworlds.net/?arp=0x00348d19> [consulté en mars 2020].
- JONES S. 1997, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity. Constructing identities in the past and present*, Londres-New York.





- KALITERNA T. 2006, « Batajnica, masovna grobnica », *Monitor* January 2006, p. 12-39.
- LIGHTFOOT K.G. et MARTINEZ A. 1995, « Frontiers and Boundaries in archaeological perspective », *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24, p. 471-492.
- LIVINGSTONE-SMITH A. 2007, *Chaîne opératoire de la poterie. Références ethnographiques, analyses et reconstitution*, Tervuren.
- MANCLOSSI F., ROSEN A.S. et BOËDA E. 2019, « From Stone to Metal: The Dynamics of Technological Change in the Decline of Chipped Stone Tool Production. A Case Study from the Southern Levant (5<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> Millennia BCE) », *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 26, p. 1-51.
- MCINERNEY J. (éd.) 2014, *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, Chichester.
- PICARD E. 2002, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country: Myths and Realities of the Wars in Lebanon*, Revised Edition, New York.
- POUPET P., BALDI J.S. et HARFOUCHE R. 2018, « Matériaux pour céramiques à l'âge du Bronze, dans la vallée du Nahr Ibrahim (Liban) », *Syria* 95.1, p. 171-196.
- QUINN P.S. 2013, *Ceramic petrography*, Oxford.
- ROBERTS W.B. et VANDER LINDEN M. 2011, « Investigating archaeological cultures: material culture, variability and transmission », in W.B. Roberts et M. Vander Linden (éd.), *Investigating Archaeological Cultures: Material Culture, Variability and Transmission*, New York, p. 1-22.
- ROBINSON E. et SMITH E. 1856, *Later Biblical Researches in Palestine and adjacent regions: A Journal of Travels in the year 1852*, Londres.
- RODDICK A.P. et STAHL A.B. (éd.) 2016, *Knowledge in Motion: Constellations of Learning Across Time and Place*, Tucson.
- ROLLAND J.C. 2003, *Lebanon: Current Issues and Background*, New York.
- ROUX V. 2003, « A Dynamic Systems Framework for Studying Technological Change: Application to the Emergence of the Potter's Wheel in the Southern Levant », *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 10 (1), p. 1-30.
- ROUX V. 2007, « Ethnoarchaeology: a Non Historical Science of Reference Necessary for Interpreting the Past », *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 14 (2), p. 153-178.
- ROUX V. 2019a, *Ceramics and Society: A Technological Approach to Archaeological Assemblages*, Cham, Switzerland.
- ROUX V. 2019b, « The Ghassulian Ceramic Tradition: A Single Chaîne Opératoire Prevalent throughout the Southern Levant », *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 7.1, p. 23-43.
- SCHLANGER N. 1994, « Mindful technology: unleashing the chaîne opératoire for an archaeology of mind », in C. Renfrew et E. Zubrow (éd.), *The ancient mind: Elements of cognitive archaeology*, Cambridge, p. 143-151.
- SHUMAKER R.W., WALKUP K.R., et BECK B.B. 2011, *Animal Tool Behavior: The Use and Manufacture of Tools by Animals*, Baltimore.
- STARK M.T. 2015, *The Archaeology of Social Boundaries*, Smithsonian Series in Archaeological Inquiry, Washington-Londres.
- STARK M.T., BOWSER B. et HORNE L. (éd.) 2008, *Cultural Transmission and Material Culture. Breaking Down Boundaries*, Tucson.
- WENGER E. 1998, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge.

