# **Plaster from Hazor**

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# Introduction:

This chapter reviews painted plaster fragments excavated at Hazor. These excavations have yielded much evidence of undecorated plaster (lime and mud) as a building material in the construction of monumental architecture. Yadin reported painted, multi-colored plaster adorning the inner walls of the “Northern Temple” (do you mean the Area H – orthostat Temple?) though the fragments discovered were never fully published (Yadin 1972: 103; Mazar 1992: 166; Zuckerman 2012: 15). Until now, the paintings of the northern temple stood out as the unique case at the site. The newly discovered fragments now add to the small, but slowly growing corpus of Levantine wall paintings from the second millennium BCE.

Between 1990 and 2019, the renewed excavations at Hazor collected an assemblage of over 150 plaster fragments in Areas A and M; of these, 35 are white and the rest painted. The plaster fragments are associated with three monumental buildings: the Middle Bronze Age Palace Complex (Ben-Tor et al. 2017: 20–33), the Late Bronze Age Ceremonial Precinct— Building 7050 (Ben-Tor et al. 2017: 70–141), and the Late Bronze Age Administrative Palace in Area M (this volume). The thick unstratified fill inside casemate M68 yielded yet another group of fragments. The paint on most of these suggests monochromatic walls, mainly white or red. However, 16 fragments are decorated with geometric or floral designs. The limited size of the assemblage hinders any attempt at a full reconstruction of the artistic plan at the site. In what follows, however, I will present a general scheme of the wall paintings at the site, discussing the fragments according to the context in which they were found. When relevant, I will also note possible iconographic identifications with select parallels from the Egyptian, Aegean, and Syrian repertoire, thereby situating Hazor’s wall paintings within that of the second millennium tradition of wall painting as a whole. Finally, I will provide a catalogue of the assemblage.

**Group 1: The Middle Bronze Age Palace Complex** **in Area A**

One fragment came from floor 8828 (Locus 8818) of level XVI of the MB palace in Area A. The fill above wall 5310 (Loci 80007, 80026, and 80034) yielded several more fragments that may be attributable to the MB layer, though an intrusive nature of an LB date cannot be dismissed. The additional fragments will therefore be discussed with Group 2 below.

The piece from Locus 8828 (fig. 1) is 10 mm thick and composed of two layers of chalky plaster. It is decorated in brownish red pigment. A line, at least 7 mm wide, can be seen at one end of the fragment, and a dotted area at the other. Visible between these two areas are ten thin, uneven, and curved brushstrokes ca. 1 mm thick and 1.5–5.5 mm apart from each other. This single piece is clearly not enough to reconstruct a decorative scheme, but considering the early date of the deposit, the free nature of the brushstrokes, and the dots at one end, the painting recalls the landscapes depicted in the earlier MB II miniature painting from Tel Kabri (Niemeier and Niemeier 2002; Cline et al. 2011; Goshen 2020). Otherwise, the design may represent reeds, such as those in the miniature paintings found at Akrotiri (Doumas 1992: 64–65) or Qatna, albeit on a smaller scale (von Rüden 2011: Tafel 29, 54).

The LB II buildings of Area A led the excavators to a small window into the MB palace and some loci with intrusive finds deposited by later activities. If the fragment does indeed come from the MB level, then we can assume that key areas of the MB palace were adorned with wall paintings and that the artistic tradition continued for hundreds of years into the LB. The single fragment on the floor may hint at an elaborate composition rather than red monochrome. Because we cannot associate any other use of pigment with this phase, we can merely imagine a predominantly red scheme like the one known from the debris in Rooms 12 and 13 of Level VII at the palace in Alalakh (Wooley 1955: 230-231; Niemeier and Niemeier 2000: 784-789). The current state of research is too preliminary to allow us to reconstruct the location and nature of the decoration at the building in a conclusive manner. Moreover, we cannot overlook the possibility that this is an intrusive fragment from a later phase.

**Group 2: Late Bronze Age II, Area A, Building 7050**

In Area A, aside from the MB find, excavators have retrieved plaster fragments from Building 7050. These come mainly from destruction layers or residual contexts such as mudbrick collapses or later fills. Since there was no substantial construction over Building 7050 in subsequent periods (Sandhaus 2013: fig. 69; Ben-Tor 2020, 174), its walls have been preserved to a considerable height. As a broad distribution of the building’s debris is to be expected in the case of collapsing walls, the excavators assume—and I would agree—that all the fragments derive from its destruction debris. The spots where the fragments were discovered allow us to divide them into four main clusters (fig. 2) and make some observations regarding the nature of the building’s decoration.

**Cluster 1:** This cluster was collected in fill deposits in the area immediately east of the main entrance into the monumental building (Loci 8601, 8571, 8580, 9194, and 9167), where the excavators recovered about 30 plaster fragments. These are either white or painted red and have a compact white matrix with some organic material voids that are visible in a macroscopic examination. Based on the fragments’ distribution, I would suggest the existence of a monochrome red decoration on the rear wall of the main entrance into the palace or on the west wall of the Eastern Courtyard (Wall 5199).

To this cluster we can add the eleven additional fragments, mentioned above, which were uncovered in fill layers above the entrance hall (Loci 80007, 80026, 80034). While most of the pieces match those of the main cluster group in terms of color (red) and plaster composition, several have unique features and are worth noting. In Locus 80034, three fragments have a porous plaster matrix and uneven surface distinct from the generally compact quality of the plaster of Group 2. It is possible that they come from an instillation or an artifact and not from the building’s walls. Another fragment from Locus 80034 is comprised of dark brown plaster, possibly mud-plaster, and probably belongs to a foundation layer. One fragment from Locus 80034 has a compact matrix and a smooth white surface marked by a single short red brush stroke (fig. 3), perhaps unintentional or part of a preparation layer. The smooth surface of yet another fragment bent at a 90˚ angle (fig. 4). This is typical of plaster pieces that come from the join of a wall with a ceiling or floor (e.g. Yasur Landau *et al.* 2012: fig. 12; Jungfleisch 2018). Finally, Locus 80026 yielded one fragment covered in red pigment over a reserved white area (fig. 5). The line connecting the red and white plains is curved, thereby suggesting that it is not a simple straight border but rather an undulating line, possibly deriving from an irregular artistic pattern, the nature of which is unclear.

**Cluster 2:** The fragments in this cluster come from the layers lying above the eastern end of the eastern courtyard—some from immediately before the building’s entrance, others from the northeast quarter of the court (Loci 1173, 1224, 1262, 8852, and L. 1136, 7076, 8506). Loci 1224 and 1262 include about fifteen fragments of white plaster with macroscopically visible voids from vegetal temper. No visible pigment is detectable. Locus 8582 yielded eight fragments painted red. A single plaster fragment was uncovered in Locus 1173 (fig. 6). The white plaster of this fragment was painted over with blue pigment; afterwards the blue area was separated from the white one with a drawn line. Similar fragments are known from the blue composition group at Tell Kabri (Clin *et al.* 2011: 250-253; Goshen 2020: 206). This color scheme is common in the eastern Mediterranean (Brysbaert 2008: 134-139), while the order of pigment application is similar to that noted at Kabri, i.e., blue pigment over white plaster followed by a black line (Linn et al. 2017; Linn 2020).

This group of fragments from the area before the entrance includes pieces with white, red, and blue surfaces marked by a linear black stroke. All the fragments may come from a single multichromatic wall painting or from several different patterns that adorned the building’s walls. The residual and fragmentary condition of the loci, however, warrants a cautious approach to any further reconstruction.

To these fragments, we may add those from the corner of the court. One of these is painted white (Locus 7076). Another, from Locus 1136, is made of mud plaster and contains large voids from organic material and large calcareous aggregates (fig. 7). Its entire surface is covered with blue pigment of no specific shape. Although mud plaster is uncommon in the painted plaster assemblage at Hazor, it is compatible with contemporaneous wall paintings found in the southern Levant, such as those at Tel Aphek (Beck and Kochavi 1985:32), Lachish (Ussishkin 2004: 245), and Megiddo (Loud 1948: 29).

Finally, a linear decoration adorns a fragment found in Locus 8506. Composed of a white compact matrix, its smooth surface is tinted bluish-grey and painted with two parallel brownish-red lines (fig. 8). One of these is circa 1.2 cm wide, while the other is only partly preserved. The pigment is eroded, and it is unclear whether the lines are straight or slightly curved. The eclectic nature of this group of fragments is another reminder of the caution demanded by any reconstruction. Still it suggests that at least some of the walls closest to the building’s entrance area were decorated with painted plaster and designs that went beyond a white or red surface.

**Cluster 3:** The third cluster was discovered in the north courtyard, where some fragments were found closer to the south temple (Loci 3762, 3767, 3955, and 7150) and others further west (Loci 7170, 7447, 7769, 7802, and 8582). These fragments could be associated with the collapse of walls 2162 and 4013. I assume they once adorned the inner faces of the walls, thus the inner rooms of Building 7050. As in previous clusters, so here, the nature of the deposit does not permit a conclusive reconstruction of their original location. Most fragments were painted red (Loci 3762, 3767, 7802, and 8582), while some were white (Loci 7150 and 7170). Two had decorative patterns (Loci 3955 and 7769) and will be discussed below.

A fragment from Locus 3955 is painted yellow and orange, with three undulating black lines running diagonally across it (fig. 9). The thickness of the black lines varies as does the spacing between them. As in the other cases, so here, the fragment is singular and too small to help us definitively reconstruct the composition from which it is derived. This composition may have belonged to a type commonly used to create the effect of marble or have been a painted decorative border. Marbling or the imitation of painted stone is known from Mari (Parrot 1958a: pl. XXXI; 1958b: pl. XV), Alalakh (Wooley 1955: 92), Kabri (Niemeir and Neimeier 2002; Goshen 2020), Rhodes (Marketou 2014: 183-184), and the Aegean (e.g. Evans 1921: 355-356; 1928: 893-894; Marinatos 1974: 22; Doumas 1992: 50-51; Furumark 1941: fig. 55, FS33-4). A decorative border band compatible with this composition can be found in the scenes of leaping bulls in Knossos (Evans 1930: 213, fig. 144) or the decorative patterns of the floor at Pylos (Egan 2015; 2016). However, one can carefully point out that it is also compatible with the hair of one of the athletes in the bull-leaping scene in Knossos (Evans 1930: pl. XXI) or in Tell el Dab’a (Bietak *et al*. 2007: 105-107 cat. A42). But such an identification is unlikely as no distinct figurative wall paintings have yet been found at this site or in the southern Levant. Unfortunately, we would need more fragments to resolve this question.

Another fragment of lime plaster (Locus 7769) contains two red parallel curved lines ca. 8 mm thick painted across its polished white surface (fig. 10). I assume the lines were once part of a monochromatic spiral. Such spirals on painted plaster are found throughout the eastern Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age. The closest parallel in time and space may be the one found in Room N of the palace at Qatna (von Rüden *et al*. 2011: pl. 11). The basalt basin found in the same building in Hazor was likewise adorned with spirals (Bonfil 2011: 63). Spirals will be further discussed with the fragments of Group 3.

**Cluster 4:** The final cluster is from the core of Building 7050 (Loci 1698, 1699, and 1869). These fragments were all painted red save one, which is white. Of the red ones, one (Locus 1699) is painted dark red with a thin line of reserved white at its edge (fig. 11). In style and technique it is similar to the piece found in Locus 80026 (fig. 5). Here, too, we can propose that the space was decorated with red adornments.

Besides the four clusters, some additional fragments were found in the area around Building 7050 and the Southern Temple. Fragments found to the south of the building (Loci 1857, 7395, and 7535) were all painted red. To the north of the building, in Locus 9594, the excavators retrieved a single fragment of lime plaster painted blue and red over a reserved white area (fig. 12). The blue band at the center of the fragment is ca. 10 mm wide and slightly curved. The inner edge of the curve is bordered with a reserved white area while the outer edge is delineated in red pigment. Due to the small dimensions of the fragments, it is unclear whether the red pigment belongs to a second parallel band of color or is part of a red background.

**Painted fragments from Building 7050: Discussion**

Fragments of painted plaster were found in and around Building 7050, and together they provide an image of a decorated building. A conservative reconstruction of its artistic plan includes red painted walls at the building’s entrance, possibly in its eastern court, in some rooms to the north, and at its core. In addition to red, we note the use of reserved white, blue, yellow, orange, and black pigment. The few fragments decorated with an artistic design suggest a décor more elaborate than a mere red surface. Most of the more elaborately adorned fragments were found around the center of the structure, towards the north, and may derive from a unit in that area. Even so, the exact origin of the design and its nature are elusive. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that future excavations in Area A will uncover many more fragments. The design of the building, which is in line with a Syrian counterpart (Ben-Tor 2006; Bonfil and Zarzecki-Peleg 2007; Zuckerman 2010; Ben-Tor *et al.* 2017), prompts us to propose that the building in Hazor was similarly decorated.

If compared to previously known South Levantine Late Bronze wall paintings, most fragments from Building 7050 stand out and seem part of a different tradition. Examples from Lachish and Aphek (Ussishkin 2004: 245; Beck and Kochavi 1985: 32) include straight, colorful, horizontal bands painted on mud plaster. In terms of technique, these are in line with most contemporaneous Egyptian wall paintings, which is not surprising due to the Egyptian influence documented at both buildings (Ussishkin 2004: 261, 266; Gadot 2010). When situating the paintings within the Eastern Mediterranean corpus, no single source of inspiration for the paintings in Building 7050 comes to mind. The patterns may have parallels in Late Bronze Aegean, Syrian, and even Egyptian wall paintings as well as in earlier works. An elusive source of influence also characterizes the monumental building in Area M. This is not surprising, considering Hazor’s special position as a player in the commercial and diplomatic networks of the Eastern Mediterranean in the period between the Syrian kingdoms and Egyptian rule (Ben-Tor et al. 2017).

**Group 3: Late Bronze Administrative Palace in Area M**

In Area M, five fragments were retrieved from the entrance hall of the monumental building Locus @@@ (fig. 13). These include the most elaborate design uncovered thus far at Hazor or the Southern Levant. The plaster is compact, with little inclusions, and is ca. 15 mm thick. The pigments used are brownish red, black, and reserved white. The nature of the plaster, the pigments, and their application clearly indicate that the pieces were once part of the same masterfully executed composition even though today none of their edges conform.

Fragment no. 1: A white plaster fragment decorated with five curved lines of similar orientation and alternating in color from the center out: black, red, red, black, red. The black lines are ca. 2 mm thick, while the red lines are only 1 mm thick. The five lines do not run perfectly parallel to one another; instead the inner black line meets the adjacent red line near the edge of the fragment. Next to the outermost red line, separated by a reserved white strip, is a red triangle with slightly curved faces. The triangle is followed by another white strip and a 2-mm black line but curving in a direction opposite to that of the other lines. The inner diameter of the inner black curve is 15 mm, while the inner diameter of the outermost red line is 50 mm.

The painted design on the first fragment is most likely part of a larger spiral. Parts of at least two, ca. 4-cm-wide spirals are preserved in this fragment, and the triangular space between them contains a motif. The spirals are not identical as one has an outer red line while the other is drawn with a single black line that curves in a contrary direction and has no outer red line. The arrangement of the lines on this fragment does not disclose what type of spirals were used in this design. One cannot dismiss the possibility of a running, S-shaped, C-shaped, or quadruple spiral.

Spirals are a common motif on wall and ceiling paintings in both Egyptian and Aegean art of the Bronze Age (Laffineur 1998). Since spirals appear early in Minoan painting and continue into the Mycenaean era (Immerwahr 1990: 99, 142-143; Furumark 1941: figs. 59-60, 62-63), they are regarded as a hallmark of Aegean art and can be seen on the walls of the palace at Knossos (Evans 1921: 369-374; 1930: 30-31), at Akrotiri (Doumas 1992: fig. 94), and later in the Aegean world in Pylos and Knossos (Lang 1969, 154; pl. 88; Shanks 2007, pl. 19, 3. 6). The spread of the spiral motif beyond the Aegean in the Late Bronze Age is often regarded as evidence of Aegean influence (Crowley 1989; and Feldman 2006). However, spirals were also common in other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean, and the growing corpus presents an intricate picture of interconnections beyond the direct influence of Aegean art on the East.

Spirals are known in Syrian paintings from at least as early as the painted podium from Mari, which is dated to the 18th century BCE (Parrot 1958b: pl. XV; Muller 2018: table 1). A Late Bronze example of running red spirals can be found in the fragments of the wall paintings in Room N at the palace at Qatna (von Rüden et al. 2011: pl. 11). In addition, fragments of painted plaster depicting spirals are known from Hattuša (Jungfleisch 2017, fig. 15). During the New Kingdom in Egypt, spirals were more commonly used in Egyptian wall paintings, as, for example, in the designs of the painted ceilings in Malate (Winlock 1912: 186, pl. 22: Lacarove and Winkels 2018: figs. 5, 7) or in the 18th-20th dynasty tombs at the necropolis in Thebes (Dorman 1991: pl. 27-28; Raven 2007: figs. 13, 29-33). The spiral motif was not restricted to wall paintings but was also used frequently in other media, from pottery and metal to ivory ornaments throughout the Eastern Mediterranean (Feldman 2006; Morgan 2010). Two basalt basins at Hazor are decorated with running spirals: the first is the aforementioned basin in Building 7050, the other was found in Area H (Bonfil 2011: 63; Yadin *et al*. 1961: CCLXXXI).

Finally, we should note that spirals are also associated with the depictions of griffins in the artistic traditions of the Aegean and Syria. Usually spirals adorn their necks and wings, as in the reconstructions from Tell el-Dab’a (Bietak and Palyvou 2000; Morgan 2010) based on examples in Knossos (Evans 1930:416: Immerwahr 1990: 136-137), Thera (Doumas 1992: 32, 1122, 128), and later representations such as those at Pylos (Lang 1969: 111-114). Most famous in the southern Levant is a 13th-century BCE ivory plaque from Megiddo that depicts a griffin with spiral decorations on its wings (Loud 1939, pl. 9 32–33). The griffin is known from most Near Eastern wall paintings cited at Kabri, Alalakh, Tel el-Dab’a. This is not to say that the spirals at Hazor are derived from a depiction of a griffin, only that the griffin was a common motif in Late Bronze Age artistic schemes.

Fragment no. 2: A white plaster fragment decorated with a thick (1.8 cm) black band. One edge of the band is slightly curved while the other is straight. A thin reserved white line separates the straight edge from an acute red triangular shape. One face of the triangle is accentuated by a black outline. Two red spots on either side of the fragment hint at a pattern beyond the fragment.

This piece, most probably part of the same layout as the other fragments, is a section in which several round motifs border each other. The curved line of the black section may indicate a circular motif that followed the curved edge of the black band. In most examples of spirals listed above, a colorful frame and space fillers (such as the red triangle in Fragment no. 1) appear alongside the spirals.

Fragment no. 3: A white plaster fragment decorated with a curved line (1 mm thick) over which three and a half small red triangles (2 mm) project towards the inner side of the curve. A thin reserved white strip encircles the red pattern and is followed by a ca. 1.5-mm-thick black line and a red surface. The inner diameter of the circle created by the red curved line is ca. 12 mm.

Fragment no. 4: Like the previous fragment, this white plaster fragment is decorated with a red curved line with four small triangles, followed by a white strip (1 mm), a black strip (1.5 mm), and finally a white surface, and part of another black line that curves away from the general direction of the design, possibly a hint of a contiguous circle.

Fragment no. 5: The pigment on this fragment is eroded. On it are two and a half triangles that were probably connected by a red line that is no longer clearly visible. A white strip separates the triangles from a black band, whose edges curve in opposite directions. Noticeable in the center is a red mark, a dot over the narrowest point of the black band.

Fragments nos. 3-5 most likely represent a floral motif created by the negative white space between the red triangles. Were we to reconstruct the closed design, the diameter of each circular motif would be ca. 12 mm and encircled by reserved white followed by a thicker black line. The entire composition would be set between larger red motifs such as the red triangle in Fragment no. 2. No exact parallel to a floral motif constructed out of triangles has been found. However, a floral design, mainly of rosettes, often appears in tandem with spirals either at their center, as part of the pattern in the spaces between the spirals, or as an additional alternating band of decoration (Immerwahr 1990: 144; Raven 2007).

Unfortunately, the impossibility of clearly identifying the spiral design and the ubiquity of the motif in eastern Mediterranean art prevents us from knowing whether the fragments derive from a frieze, a pattern covering an entire surface, or a figurative motif such as that of a griffin.

**Group 4: Area M, Casemate 68**

The final group of fragments was found in the deliberate fill in casemate M68 of the Solomonic wall. This group includes over 45 heavily damaged fragments (Loci 5115 and 5118); some are missing their upper layer, others have become stuck to each other. The group consists of white or red painted surfaces, with no trace of designs. The plaster consists of one or two thin layers of painted plaster attached to coarser layers of lime plaster with a few vegetal inclusions. Several layers of paint on the surface testify to the recurrent painting of the walls from which the fragments derive. Since no painted plaster is associated with Iron Age buildings, the excavators assume that the M68 fragments must be associated with the Late Bronze monuments at the site.

# **Chronological considerations:**

The Middle Bronze fragment was found on the floor of Level XIV and belongs to MB II. It is is thus similar in date to the Kabri and Alalakh Level VII paintings of the 18th or early 17th century BCE (Koehl 2013: 174-175; Cline et al. 2011: 254-257).

As the two main Late Bronze Age assemblages were found in the destruction layers and residual deposits, the date of their production cannot be ascertained. Nonetheless we can safely assume that they still adorned the walls of the buildings at the time of their destruction. For this reason, we can only safely assign a *terminus ante quem*. The destruction of Building 7050 is dated to the mid 13th century BCE (Ben-Tor *et al.* 2017: 2). No date can be offered on stylistic or technical grounds.

The use of painted plaster in the Eastern Mediterranean flourished in the Late Bronze Age. Broadly speaking, the LB paintings demonstrate continuity and development in the first half of the second millennium BCE. In Syria, the Qatna paintings have been dated to the 16th or 14th century BCE, thus in the Late Bronze Age, (von Rüden 2011 vs. 60-62; Pfälzner 2013: 201). Other examples are known from the palace at Alalakh Level IV (Wooley 1955:92; Brysbeart 2008: 98). Monumental buildings—both palace and temples—of the 14th and 13th centuries in Hattuša likewise contain evidence of painted plaster adorning the architecture (Neve 1993: 639; 1999: 50; 2001: 29). Monumental buildings, palaces, and cult centers in Mycenaeans polities such as Pylos, Mycenae, and Thebes were also elaborately decorated (Immerwahr 1990). In Egypt, the wall paintings at Tel el-Dab’a have been dated to the early Thomasite period, most likely to the early reign of Thutmose III in the 15th century BCE (Bietak 2007: 38; 2013: 198). At the same time, the appearance of Aegean motifs becomes more frequent in the decoration of New Kingdom tombs and probably remained in use throughout the Ramesside period (Bietak 2013: 197-8). Thus, at the time of the use and destruction of Building 7050, many monumental buildings across the Eastern Mediterranean were adorned with wall paintings.

In addition, as already noted, several buildings in the southern Levant have yielded evidence of the use of painted plaster at the same time or later than at Hazor. Painted mud-plaster with linear decoration was found in the remnants of the collapsed second floor of the governor’s house (Building 1104) at Tel Aphek. This destruction is dated to the 13th century BCE (Beck and Kochavi 1985: 32; Gadot 2010: 61). Additionally, mud-plaster with painted linear designs has been noted at the acropolis temple at Lachish, whose destruction is dated to Level VI or the 12th century (Ussishkin 2004: 245-6, 266). Finally, Levels VIII-VIIa of Building 2041 in Megiddo, which date to the late 13th-12th century BCE, have yielded some painted plaster, whose character is unclear from the publication (Loud 1948: 29; Tofollo *et al.* 2014: 241). Furthermore, painted decoration was not limited to a single type of building as it has been found in a temple, a palace, and an Egyptian post. Beside the single fragment from Locus 1136, the painted plaster at Hazor differs both technically and stylistically from these other cases, but is in line with the tendency to adorn the walls of public buildings in this period.

# **Summary and conclusions:**

The painted fragments from Hazor offer us a glimpse of the long painting tradition at the site—from the Middle Bronze to the destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Age. Other sites in the Southern Levant have yielded painted plaster from either the Middle Bronze Age, as in the case of Kabri, or from the Late Bronze Age, as in the case of Lachish, Megiddo, and Aphek. No site has painted plaster dating to both periods. In terms of the Late Bronze Age, the extent of painted plaster’s use in Hazor has no parallels at any other site in the southern Levant. From a technical perspective too, the plaster fragments in Hazor seem to stand out from the local landscape. Those of other South Levantine paintings indicate deeper Egyptian influence. Future study of the technical aspects of the plaster’s manufacture as well as the painting materials and techniques used at Hazor will further elaborate on this distinction.

The context within which the paintings were found in the Late Bronze levels at the site further adds to the already known splendor of Hazor’s monuments. The distribution of fragments around Building 7050 demonstrates that several spaces in various sections of the building were painted red. The fragment from Locus 80034, which is bent at an angle, demonstrates that more than one surface in the room was painted. In addition, several fragments attest to an artistic composition adorning the walls of at least one room in the northern area of the building but possibly more of it. In Area M, a spiral motif adorned at least one space of the administrative palace. Also, as reported by Yadin, the northern temple was decorated with wall paintings, though their nature is not fully understood. Thus, at least three public buildings with different functions were decorated with painted plaster.

By far the most predominant pigment used at Hazor was red. In most cases, it covered the entire surface of the fragment and probably the entire wall. Decorative motifs are found on only 16 fragments, and the patterns identified are all geometric and nonfigurative. The parallels to figurative motifs such as human hair or griffins are speculative at best. The most common and clearest motif is the spiral, as suggested in the fragments from both Areas M and A. This motif is attested in the design of objects in Late Bronze eastern Mediterranean wall paintings, including those from Hazor.

Overall, the evidence is too fragmentary to allow the paintings be placed within a single artistic tradition; the context, technique, and style are closely affiliated with examples from Syria, but are also compatible with Anatolian, Aegean, and even some Egyptian works. The difficulty of associating the paintings and motifs with a single source is perhaps key to understanding them. We can appreciate the paintings from Hazor for adding to the artistic koiné of the time. Hazor was the largest urban center in Canaan from Middle Bronze II to the late Late Bronze Age. Material and textual evidence clearly indicate its innate connections to northern cultures as well as its special ties to the ruling court in Egypt. Hazor was therefore extensively connected to international political and economic networks. It is therefore not surprising to find evidence of lavish wall decorations within its monumental buildings that were in line with those of neighboring powers. Indeed, though the findings are fragmentary they offer us another glimpse of the intricate interconnections of the Late Bronze Age.

# **List of figures:**

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Figure 2: A schematic plan of Building 7050 indicating find spots and clusters (plan after Ruhama Bonfil, Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University Jerusalem Ben-Tor *et al.* 2017, Plan 4.4)

Figure 3: Painted fragment from Locus L.80034 of cluster 1, Ceremonial Precinct in Area A, Building 7050

Figure 4: Painted fragment from Locus L.80034 of cluster 1, Ceremonial Precinct in Area A, Building 7050

Figure 5: Painted fragment from Locus L.80026 of cluster 1, Ceremonial Precinct in Area A, Building 7050

Figure 6: Painted fragment from Locus L.1173 of cluster 2, Ceremonial Precinct in Area A, Building 7050

Figure 7: Painted fragment from Locus L.1136 of cluster 2, Ceremonial Precinct in Area A, Building 7050

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Figure 9: Painted fragment from Locus L.3955 of cluster 3, Ceremonial Precinct in Area A, Building 7050

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Figure 12: Painted fragment from Locus L.9594 of cluster 4, Ceremonial Precinct in Area A, Building 7050

Figure 13: Five painted fragments from L., Administrative Palace in Area M

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