

The Stratigraphy, Architecture, and Material Culture of Tell Jindiris (Ancient Gindaros): An Exhaustive Archaeological Synthesis

The Geomorphological and Topographical Concept of the "Til"

In the lexicon of Near Eastern archaeology, a "Tell" (or "Til" in various local linguistic permutations, deriving from the Arabic and Hebrew for "hill" or "mound") is not a natural geological formation, but rather an entirely artificial topographic feature resulting from millennia of sustained human occupation, architectural superimposition, and subsequent material decay.¹ Tell Jindiris, recognized in classical antiquity as Gindaros, stands as one of the most monumentally significant and stratigraphically dense of these artificial mounds in the ancient region of Cyrrhastica, situated within the modern Afrin District of northwestern Syria.² To comprehend the nature of the Til is to understand a dynamic process of urban cyclicity. Mud-brick, the primary construction material of the ancient Levant and Mesopotamia, possesses a limited structural lifespan. As buildings collapsed due to environmental degradation, seismic activity, or warfare, the debris was not cleared away; rather, new foundations were leveled and constructed directly atop the ruins of the old.¹ Over thousands of years, this practice at Tell Jindiris created a towering stratigraphic cake. The physical dimensions of the Til immediately denote its historical role as a primary regional capital rather than a peripheral village. It covers an expansive surface area of approximately 400 by 500 meters—amounting to roughly 20 hectares (though some surveys conservatively estimate the primary core at 14 hectares)—and rises to a commanding height of 20 meters above the surrounding plain.⁴

Geographically, the mound is positioned roughly five kilometers from the western bank of the Afrin River, nestled strategically between Mount Simon to the east and the western mountain ranges.⁵ It dominates a fertile plain that extends toward the Mediterranean coast and the Syrian-Turkish border. The geomorphological appeal of the Afrin Valley has drawn human habitation since the Middle Paleolithic era, as evidenced by nearby cave sites such as Dederiyeh on the slopes of Mount Simon.⁶ However, the formation of the Til itself is primarily the result of sustained anthropogenic accumulation beginning decisively in the Early to Middle Bronze Age.⁵ This geographic serendipity positioned the Til as a highly coveted military, administrative, and economic prize—a vital nexus connecting the Anatolian highlands, the Levantine coast, and the Mesopotamian interior.⁴

Multilingual Historiography and Excavation History

The complexity of the Til has necessitated a highly collaborative, international, and multilingual approach to its excavation and interpretation. The archaeological record of Tell Jindiris has been constructed through a synthesis of Syrian, German, French, and Turkish academic endeavors, reflecting the site's importance across diverse historical disciplines.

The primary systematic excavations were initiated in 1993 as a joint Syrian-German mission.⁶ This collaborative effort was spearheaded by Dietrich Sürenhagen from the German academic sphere (publishing extensively on the geophysics and Late Bronze Age ceramics) and Syrian scholars such as Mohammad Kaddour and Ammar Abdulrahman, the latter directing the Al-Bassel Center for Archaeological Research in Damascus.⁶ Arabic academic publications, notably the extensive historical and archaeological studies authored by Nael Hannon and Ammar Abdulrahman, have been instrumental in contextualizing the Til within the broader settlement patterns of the Amuq Plain and the Neo-Assyrian political landscape.⁹ In his 2011 publication *The Amuq Plain and Jindires Excavations 2006-2011*, Abdulrahman details the extensive Hellenistic and Roman layers, while concurrently positing the highly significant hypothesis that the Til's Iron Age strata correspond to the lost Syro-Hittite capital of Kinallowa.⁴ German scholarship, particularly the exhaustive 2004 monograph *Gindaros: Geschichte und Archäologie einer Siedlung im nordwestlichen Syrien* by Norbert Krämer, has provided the foundational chronologies for the site's Hellenistic through early Byzantine phases.¹² Krämer's work, originating as a dissertation at the University of Konstanz, cross-references architectural and ceramic data with classical texts to build a comprehensive profile of the classical settlement.¹³ Furthermore, French archaeological reviews have deeply analyzed the specific ceramic typologies found at the site—such as Megarian relief bowls and Late Roman Red Slip wares—comparing them to finds in Anatolia and the broader Mediterranean to reconstruct ancient trade networks.¹⁴ Turkish archaeological literature frequently utilizes Gindaros as a comparative baseline for analyzing Roman frontier sites and ceramic distribution across rough Cilicia and the Euphrates.¹⁶

The identification of the mound in epigraphic and historical sources traces a complex linguistic evolution, which the international scholarly community has painstakingly reconstructed.

Historical Period/Language	Attested Toponym	Source / Epigraphic Context
Ancient Greek	Γίνδαρος (Gindaros) / Γίνδαρα	Strabo (Geo. 16.2.8), Stephanus of Byzantium (G208.8) ²
Latin	Gindarus	Pliny the Elder (Nat. Hist. 5.81) ¹⁸

Middle Persian	Gndlswy	<i>Res Gestae Divi Saporis</i> , Ka'ba-ye Zartosht (Line 8) ²
Parthian	Gndrws	<i>Res Gestae Divi Saporis</i> , Ka'ba-ye Zartosht (Line 6) ²
Arabic	تل جنديرس (Tell Jandiris)	Modern regional administration and Syrian archaeological registries ⁶

Non-Destructive Subsurface Mapping: Geophysical Prospection

The morphological complexity of Tell Jandiris, characterized by 20 meters of densely packed, overlapping stratigraphy, presents severe challenges to traditional excavation. Standard trenching is inherently destructive; to reach the Bronze Age horizons, archaeologists would be forced to obliterate the overlying Hellenistic and Roman cities. To map the internal anatomy of the Til without destructive wide-area excavation, researchers led by Burkart Ullrich employed a highly advanced multi-method geophysical approach incorporating geomagnetics, Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR), and notably 2D and 3D Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT).¹

The application of geomagnetics proved exceptionally effective in the upper strata, successfully producing a comprehensive map of the Hellenistic and Roman phases of Gindaros.¹⁹ However, both geomagnetics and GPR suffered from significant depth limitations and signal attenuation, providing only poor, ambiguous indications of the deeper Bronze Age structures. These older structures could only be faintly distinguished by a rotated orientation compared to the overlying Hellenistic grid.¹⁹

To penetrate the deeper historical horizons, the geophysical teams implemented advanced ERT. This technique involves placing a dense network of electrodes into the surface of the Til and injecting electrical currents into the ground, measuring the resulting potential differences to calculate the subsurface resistivity.²⁰ Utilizing tetrahedral meshes of cells, the team computed robust 3D resistivity models beneath the complex topography of the mound.²¹ The physics of electrical resistivity allowed researchers to differentiate between varying construction materials across chronological eras. For example, solid limestone retains very little moisture and is highly resistive to electrical current, whereas dense, ancient mud-brick retains moisture and is highly conductive (low resistivity).

The ERT results successfully classified the subsurface of the Til into three distinct electro-layers, directly correlating to different settlement phases and architectural paradigms:

Resistivity Signature	Archaeological Interpretation	Chronological Phase	Material Composition
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High Resistivity	Upper town building structures and superficial excavation zones.	Hellenistic & Roman	Solid limestone, basalt block foundations, and dry soil matrices.
Intermediate Resistivity	Intermediate defensive structures.	Late Iron Age / Early Hellenistic	Massive, densely packed mud-brick and mixed rubble.
Low Resistivity	Deep palatial/religious complexes and lower defensive walls surrounding the upper settlement.	Middle to Late Bronze Age	Deeply buried, moisture-retaining mud-brick architecture.

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The integration of 3D ERT was a watershed moment in understanding the structural makeup of the Til. It circumvented the "masking" effect of the massive Hellenistic stone foundations. Most spectacularly, horizontal slices of the 3D model revealed a colossal Bronze Age temple structure resting approximately 3.5 meters below the current surface of the northeastern acropolis.¹⁹ The outer wall of this temple extends roughly 10 to 12 meters into the unexcavated area of the mound, indicating a monumental complex.¹⁹ This non-invasive vertical mapping, which parallels similar successful ERT applications at Roman sites in Side (Turkey) and Ain al-Hajar (Morocco), confirmed that Tell Jindiris was a highly structured, repeatedly fortified urban center containing monumental civic and religious architecture throughout its prehistoric phases.²⁰

The Bronze Age Horizons: Fortification, Centralization, and Mortuary Practices

The deepest systematically identified and contextually understood layers of Tell Jindiris belong to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, a period during which the Levant saw the consolidation of powerful palatial city-states. The architectural footprint from this era indicates that the Til functioned as a heavily fortified, centralized polity capable of mobilizing significant labor forces.⁴

Monumental Defensive Architecture and Infant Burials

The most imposing feature of the Bronze Age Til is its sophisticated defensive network. Deep

excavations and corroborating ERT imaging have traced the foundations of a massive mud-brick defensive wall that extends for 325 meters along the northern axis of the mound and 100 meters along the eastern axis.⁵ The sheer scale of this fortification, which would have required millions of individual mud-bricks to construct and maintain, implies the presence of a highly organized state apparatus. The low-resistivity readings of these walls suggest a pure mud-brick construction typical of Near Eastern Bronze Age military architecture, relying on sheer thickness and mass to deter siege operations.²⁴ Furthermore, the remnants of defensive gates have been identified along this perimeter, indicating controlled points of ingress and egress that would have regulated trade and facilitated taxation.⁵

Excavations along these defensive structures yielded a grim but culturally significant discovery: infant graves were found embedded within the working slope designated for the construction of the defensive wall.²⁷ The practice of burying infants in foundation trenches or along the working slopes of massive public works is a documented phenomenon in ancient Near Eastern archaeology, often interpreted either as foundation deposits (ritual sacrifices intended to bless or fortify the structure) or, more practically, as the opportunist burial of high-mortality infants in freshly turned, sacred, or communal earth.

The Palatial and Temple Complexes

Within the protective embrace of this defensive circuit, archaeologists have identified the remnants of a Middle Bronze Age palace and an expansive Late Bronze Age temple.⁵ The temple, situated on the eastern side of the site, was significantly disrupted by the subsequent foundations of Hellenistic and Roman installations, a common fate for mud-brick structures subjected to later stone-building phases.⁵ However, as revealed by the 3D ERT models, the surviving footprint of this temple implies a religious complex of extraordinary proportions. Such temples in the Bronze Age Levant served not merely as spiritual epicenters, but as vital economic redistribution hubs, collecting agricultural surplus and managing localized trade.

Middle Bronze Age Ceramic Provenance

The material culture from the Middle Bronze Age further substantiates the mound's integration into broader regional networks. Ceramic assemblages from this period include specific jar typologies that align closely with finds from Ebla (specifically Grave D.1 on the Acropolis slope) and the Middle Bronze IB graves at Tell Afis.²⁸ The presence of these shared ceramic forms suggests that Tell Jindiris was actively participating in the robust intra-Levantine trade networks that characterized the Middle Bronze Age, exchanging goods, stylistic concepts, and perhaps populations with the major palatial centers to the south and east.²⁸

The Late Bronze to Iron Age Transition: The Mycenaeanizing Phenomenon

The transition from the Late Bronze Age (LBA) to the Iron Age (IA), roughly spanning the 12th to the 10th centuries BCE, marks a period of catastrophic systemic collapse across the Eastern Mediterranean. The fall of the Hittite Empire in Anatolia and the severe contraction of the

Egyptian New Kingdom's sphere of influence in the Levant created a profound geopolitical power vacuum.²⁹ At Tell Jindiris, this epoch is chronicled not merely through destruction layers, but through subtle, profound shifts in ceramic production and consumption, which have been heavily analyzed through advanced archaeometric techniques.

The Introduction of Late Helladic IIIC Pottery

The stratigraphic record at Tell Jindiris yields significant quantities of Late Helladic (LH) IIIC pottery, a style deeply associated with the Aegean world and the immediate post-palatial period following the collapse of the Mycenaean palatial centers.³⁰ The sudden appearance of this "Mycenaeanizing" pottery at a Syrian inland site—far from the immediate coast—raises critical questions regarding migration, trade, and cultural appropriation. Was this pottery imported by fleeing Aegean populations (often associated in historiography with the "Sea Peoples" who clashed with Ramses III), or was it a local adaptation by indigenous Levantine potters responding to shifting elite tastes?

To resolve this provenance debate, researchers Tobias Mühlenbruch and Johannes H. Sterba conducted extensive Neutron Activation Analyses (NAA) on the ceramics excavated from Tell Jindiris.²⁹ Neutron Activation Analysis is a highly sensitive radiometric technique that allows scientists to determine the precise chemical and trace-element isotopic signature of the clay matrix. By irradiating a ceramic sample with neutrons, the elements within the clay become radioactive isotopes; as they decay, they emit gamma rays at characteristic energy levels, allowing for an exact "fingerprint" of the clay's geological origin.

The NAA results from Tell Jindiris, integrated with comparative data from coastal sites, revealed a nuanced reality. While genuine imports from the Aegean and major Cypriot centers (such as Enkomi or Hala Sultan Tekke) existed in the broader Northern Levant, there was also a robust, verifiable *local production* of wheel-made, painted Mycenaeanizing pottery occurring right at Tell Jindiris.³⁰

Socio-Political Implications of the Ceramic Shift

The adoption and local production of LH IIIC styles at Tell Jindiris goes beyond mere aesthetic preference; it represents a fundamental re-wiring of community identity and elite signaling.²⁹ According to prevailing archaeological theory, the reuse and local replication of these exotic, handsomely decorated closed vessels allowed surviving or newly ascendant local elites to display "antique" or cosmopolitan sets of pottery to guests. This performance enabled families to show off their traditions and claim a continuation of prestige and authority in an era where the traditional palatial hierarchies had completely dissolved.³⁰ The data from Tell Jindiris proves that the community residing on the Til maintained vital, albeit transformed, cultural and economic connections with the Mediterranean coast and Cyprus even as the inland political structures of the Hittite and Egyptian empires disintegrated.³⁰

The Iron Age and the Kinallowa Hypothesis

As the Iron Age progressed into the first millennium BCE, the Til's strategic value necessitated continuous, dense occupation. The Syrian-German expedition, articulated deeply in the Arabic

publications of Ammar Abdulrahman, posits that the massive surface area (estimated between 14 and 20 hectares) and the occupational density of the Iron Age strata strongly support the identification of Tell Jindiris with the ancient city of Kinallowa.⁴

Mentioned prominently in the annals of the Neo-Assyrian kings, Kinallowa was the royal seat of the Syro-Hittite state of Patina (also known as Unqi). If this identification holds true—pending deeper epigraphic excavation to link the textual history strictly with the stratigraphic record of the mound—Tell Jindiris would represent one of the most critical administrative centers of the early Iron Age. This hypothesis elegantly explains the sheer volume of ceramics, the density of the intermediate resistivity layers detected via ERT, and the continuous fortification of the site prior to the Hellenistic era.⁴

The Hellenistic Acropolis: Urban Planning and Material Culture

Following the conquests of Alexander the Great and the subsequent partition of his empire, the Til underwent arguably its most radical urban reconfiguration under the Seleucids, transitioning into the classical era as the fortified city of Gindaros.

The Hippodamian Re-planning

The Hellenistic administration viewed the mound not organically, but as a blank canvas for rational, geometric urban planning. As revealed by the initial geomagnetic mapping conducted by the geophysical teams, the Hellenistic architects deliberately leveled portions of the earlier Iron Age structures and imposed a strict Hippodamian raster—a highly regularized grid plan of streets intersecting at right angles, defining precise *insulae* (city blocks).¹³ This grid was entirely rotated and disconnected from the alignment of the underlying Bronze Age temple and defensive walls, signaling a deliberate ideological and structural break from the region's indigenous past.¹⁹

The upper levels of the Til were transformed into a formidable acropolis—a fortified high city—overlooking a newly established lower town (Unterstadt) that sprawled at the base of the mound.¹³ During this period, Gindaros served as the capital or principal acropolis of the district of Cyrrhastica. The ancient geographer Strabo (Geography 16.2.8) explicitly notes Gindarus as "the acropolis of Cyrrhastica," while also somewhat derogatorily referring to it as "a convenient resort for robbers," likely alluding to its rugged, fortified nature which made it difficult for central authorities to completely control.³ The architectural shift on the acropolis from traditional mud-brick to massive limestone and basalt blocks (resulting in the high electrical resistivity values near the surface) reflects a massive infusion of state capital and a shift in Hellenistic construction technologies.²⁴

Material Culture: Megarian Bowls and Architectural Ceramics

The archaeological footprint of the Hellenistic period is characterized by intense militarization and distinct consumer goods, heavily analyzed in French and German ceramic studies. Excavations have uncovered Hellenistic residential units that heavily suggest military barracks

or temporary quarters designed for a standing garrison.⁸ This aligns with the strategic objective of controlling the Amuq plain and securing the vital trade and military routes leading to Antioch.⁸

A hallmark of the Hellenistic strata at Tell Jindiris is the discovery of so-called "Megarian" relief bowls, which serve as a critical dating and cultural indicator.¹⁴ Detailed typological studies show that the relief bowls discovered at Gindaros possess diameters consistently exceeding 12 cm, frequently approaching a robust 16 cm, which aligns them closer to the Syro-Palestinian bowl traditions found in Samaria rather than smaller Ionian variants.¹⁴ These vessels are highly decorated with relief motifs arranged in distinct registers, commonly featuring acanthus leaves, lotus leaves, and intricate rinceaux (foliate scrolls) with berries, culminating in a central rosette medallion.¹⁴

Technologically, these bowls were fired using a highly specific "mode oxydant partiel" (partial oxidizing mode) resulting from the precise stacking of the bowls in the kiln. This process yielded a striking bichrome appearance: a dark brown or black exterior rim contrasting sharply with a red-brown body.¹⁴ The prevalence of these specific bowl dimensions, technical firing methods, and decorative motifs links the consumer culture of the Gindaros garrison tightly with wider Anatolian and Levantine stylistic trends, providing vital comparative material for analyzing ceramics found as far away as the site of Porsuk in the Taurus mountains.¹⁴

Furthermore, the architectural sophistication of Hellenistic and early Roman Gindaros is evidenced by the discovery of specific roofing technologies. The structures utilized heavy clay roof tiles resting on a clay mattress system known as *dorôsis*, a technique shared with major Anatolian centers like Tarsus and Pergamon, indicating that the builders of the Til were fully integrated into the highest tiers of classical architectural engineering.¹⁵

Roman Gindaros: Militarization and the Parthian Conflict

The transition from Hellenistic Seleucid control to Roman dominion thrust the Til into the center of a global superpower conflict. The Roman Republic, and later the Empire, recognized the inherent topographical dominance of the mound and utilized Gindaros as a fortified bulwark against the formidable Parthian Empire to the east.

The Battle of Mount Gindarus (38 BCE)

The strategic value of the mound culminated in the year 38 BCE during the pivotal Battle of Mount Gindarus.² Following severe Roman setbacks in the preceding years—including the disastrous defeat of Crassus at Carrhae—the Parthian army, commanded by the highly capable Crown Prince Pacorus I, had swept across the Levant. The Roman commander Ventidius Bassus, tasked with repelling the invasion, lured the Parthian forces into an engagement near the Til.

Ventidius brilliantly utilized the elevated, fortified terrain of Gindaros and its surrounding slopes to neutralize the mobility and shock tactics of the legendary Parthian cataphracts and horse archers.³ By forcing the Parthian cavalry to charge uphill against fortified infantry positions, the

Romans inflicted a catastrophic defeat upon the invaders. Prince Pacorus I was killed in frontline combat, a devastating psychological and military blow to the Parthian state.² Ventidius capitalized on this victory by severing Pacorus's head and parading it through the rebellious cities of Syria, immediately quelling any pro-Parthian sentiment without the need for prolonged sieges.³⁷ This battle firmly anchored Gindaros in Roman imperial history, proving the effectiveness of Roman infantry tactics when anchored to the formidable geography of the Tigris, and solidified its status as a vital frontier fortress protecting the approach to Antioch.³

Economic Anxiety and Numismatic Hoards

The perpetual military tension that defined Roman Gindaros is vividly preserved in the numismatic record excavated from the mound. Most notable among the discoveries is a substantial and perfectly preserved silver coin hoard dating to 235 CE.³⁸ The composition of this hoard is highly specific and culturally revealing:

Coin Type	Quantity	Material Composition	Proportion of Hoard
Tetradrachms	97	Silver	~78.8%
Denarii	25	Silver	~20.3%
Radiates	1	Silver	~0.8%
Total	123	Silver	100%

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The terminal date of the hoard, 235 CE, is historically diagnostic. This year marks the assassination of the Roman Emperor Severus Alexander and the immediate onset of the "Crisis of the Third Century," a fifty-year period of severe military, political, and economic instability across the Roman Empire. The burial and non-recovery of such a significant sum of wealth—predominantly high-value provincial tetradrachms and imperial denarii—on the Tigris strongly indicates acute localized panic. The owner of this wealth was likely a merchant or military officer who buried their capital in the face of an impending disaster, intending to return, but ultimately falling victim to the chaos of the era.³⁸

The Sasanian Destruction by Shapur I

The anxieties reflected in the unrecovered silver hoard were entirely justified. The Parthian Empire had recently fallen, replaced by the far more aggressive and highly organized Sasanian Empire. In 252 or 253 CE, during his second great western campaign, the Sasanian *Šāhānšāh* Shapur I launched a devastating invasion of the Roman eastern provinces.² The Sasanians

advanced from the Euphrates (likely crossing at Zeugma or Hierapolis) driving directly toward the Syrian capital of Antioch. Standing in their path was the fortress of Gindaros.³ Despite its formidable defenses, the Til was captured, and the settlement was violently destroyed by Shapur I's forces. This event was considered so strategically vital to the Sasanians that the conquest of Gindaros was permanently recorded on Shapur's monumental trilingual *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* inscription at the Ka'ba-ye Zartosht in Naqsh-e Rostam. It appears alongside major cities like Zeugma and Apamea, rendered as *Gndlswy* in Middle Persian, *Gndrws* in Parthian, and corresponding directly to the Greek text.² The destruction layer on the mound corresponding to the mid-3rd century marks the definitive end of Gindaros's peak as a major Roman military fortress.

Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Twilight

Despite the sheer devastation wrought by Shapur I, the intrinsic geographical value of the Til ensured that it was not entirely abandoned. During the early Byzantine period (spanning the 4th to 6th centuries CE), the mound experienced a localized, fundamentally altered renaissance, transforming from a hardened military target into a vital ecclesiastical center.¹³

The Bishopric and the Cult of St. Marinus

By the 4th century CE, the demographic and functional profile of the settlement on and immediately surrounding the Til had shifted dramatically. The militaristic Hellenistic and Roman architecture was repurposed for spiritual administration. Gindaros was officially elevated to a bishopric, holding a recognized seat within the early Christian ecclesiastical hierarchy, and is still recognized today in the Catholic Church's list of titular sees.²

The religious significance of the site was vastly amplified by the miraculous discovery of the relics of the holy Roman martyr Marinus just outside the city walls.¹⁸ The presence of these sacred relics would have transformed the mound and its immediate environs into a regional pilgrimage destination. This shift fundamentally altered the local economy from one based on military supply, garrison taxation, and imperial defense, to one centered entirely on religious tourism, pilgrims' offerings, and ecclesiastical administration. The bishop of Gindaros held considerable local authority, frequently acting as a mediator in disputes among the rural populations of the Amuq plain, as was customary for holy men and bishops in Late Antiquity.⁴⁰ However, textual sources from the 5th century, such as those by the historian Theodoret, refer to Gindaros no longer as a grand city, but merely as a village.³ This suggests that while the religious importance of the site was exceedingly high due to the relics, its secular population and urban footprint had significantly contracted since the height of the Roman era.³ By the time of the Emperor Justinian in the 6th century, the administrative status of the church at Gindaros had been further downgraded; it was overseen only by a *periodeutes* (a rural itinerant priest responsible for visiting country parishes) rather than a full resident bishop, and the venerated relics of St. Marinus were eventually transferred to the patriarchal seat at Antioch for safekeeping.²

Late Roman Red Slip Wares and Final Trade Networks

Despite the administrative contraction of the settlement, the material culture proves that the inhabitants of the Til remained firmly connected to the broader Mediterranean economy until the very end of Late Antiquity. Excavations of the late Byzantine strata have yielded significant fragments of Late Roman Red Slip Wares, specifically African Red Slip (ARS) from North Africa, Late Roman C (Phocaeen Red Slip) from western Anatolia, and Late Roman D (Cypriot Red Slip) wares.¹⁶

Detailed quantitative analyses by Norbert Krämer of the ceramic typologies on the Til show that the proportion of these imported fine wares in the overall assemblage constitutes roughly 1.7% of the total diagnostic sherds.¹⁶ While this may seem like a small percentage, it aligns perfectly with consumption patterns seen in other major inland Syrian and Cilician sites like Apamea (where such wares are also present, though in slightly different ratios).¹⁶ These ceramics, securely dated from the second half of the 6th century into the first half of the 7th century CE, represent the absolute final phases of production for these major Mediterranean workshops before the impending Arab conquests permanently severed the traditional maritime trade routes.¹⁶ The presence of ARS and Phocaeen wares confirms that even as a diminished village under a *periodeutes*, the Til maintained enough economic vitality to import luxury tableware from across the sea. Furthermore, network analyses of terra sigillata distributions highlight Gindaros alongside Epiphaneia and Antioch as part of a complex web of low-cost travel and trade nodes connecting the Syrian interior to the Mediterranean.⁴³

The Ultimate Abandonment

The 6th century ultimately proved fatal to the urban continuity of Tell Jindiris. A confluence of catastrophic, systemic events systematically degraded the viability of the settlement. The region of Antioch and the Amuq plain was repeatedly battered by severe tectonic activity and devastating earthquakes during this period, heavily disrupting the remaining stone and mud-brick architecture of the mound.¹³ Compounding the physical destruction was a severe demographic collapse initiated by the Justinian Plague, which swept through the Eastern Mediterranean and decimated the rural and urban populations of Northern Syria.

Finally, the relentless, grinding warfare between the Byzantine Empire and the resurgent Sasanian Empire under Khosrow II drained the remaining economic vitality of the region.¹³ The armies that repeatedly marched through the Afrin valley stripped the land of its agricultural surplus, making the maintenance of a settlement atop the high mound logistically impossible. By the time of the Islamic conquest of Syria in the mid-7th century (circa 637 CE), Gindaros is conspicuously absent from the primary historical records.¹³ The great mound, which had hosted Middle Bronze Age palaces, resisted Aegean collapses, housed Hellenistic garrisons, witnessed the defeat of Parthian princes, and sheltered Byzantine bishops, was finally abandoned as a primary site of habitation. The remnant population shifted to the surrounding plains, evolving eventually into the modern town of Jindires, leaving the Til as a silent, heavily stratified monument to three millennia of continuous Levantine history.⁶

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