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Hybridisation of an imperial encounter: Egypt and the Wadi Gaza in the Late Bronze Age

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Abstract

Processes of culture contact have been approached in traditional studies on early empires through unilateral perspectives such as acculturation studies and World System theories. Over the past decades, however, a new scepticism of these dominant narratives has emerged. The Wadi Gaza area during the period of Egyptian New Kingdom imperialism provides a to-date little utilised analytical arena in which to explore the challenges and opportunities of a different approach. This research aims to critically examine the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Gaza area, reevaluating its timeframe and changing nature, and highlighting differences from previous interpretations of Egyptian imperial narrative.

I approach these issues using a conceptual framework based on postcolonial concepts of hybridisation and cultural fluidity, which sees contact between cultures as a constant negotiation. The aims are addressed through a multiscale approach, focusing on the regional scale, first, and on two site-specific case studies, Tell el-^cAjjul and Tell el-Far^cah (South), then. I investigated these case studies through the analysis of their major “Egyptianizing” features alongside significant local material evidence. I took into account architecture, funerary customs, and pottery, examining the contribution of both cultures, Egyptian and Canaanite, in the creation of objects and practices.

The results of this research demonstrate that a hybridisation perspective provides a new and more balanced account of the cultural dynamics resulting from the Egypto-Canaanite encounter and its negotiation. Liberated from the restraints of a literal interpretation of Egyptian sources, this nuanced interpretation casts new light on the material evidence, and provides fresh avenues for research on cultural encounters and early empires.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Angela Massafra". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Angela" and the last name "Massafra" clearly distinguishable.

Angela Massafra

Abbreviations

BR	Base Ring Ware
BS	Black Slip Ware
BWMW	Bichrome Wheel-Made Ware
BW	Bichrome Ware
CG	Cypro-Geometric
CoW	Chocolate-on-White Ware
EB(A)	Early Bronze (Age)
IA	Iron Age
IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority
JM	Jewish Museum London
LB(A)	Late Bronze (Age)
LC	Late Cypriot
LH	Late Helladic
LoD	Light on Dark Ware
MB(A)	Middle Bronze (Age)
MC	Middle Cypriot
MK	Middle Kingdom
Myc	Mycenaean
NK	New Kingdom
ProBA	Protohistoric Bronze Age
RoB	Red-on-Black Ware
RoR	Red on Red Ware
RS	Red Slip Ware
RWB	Red, White and Blue Ware
SIP	Second Intermediate Period
UCL	University College London
WP	White Painted Ware
WSh	White Shaved Ware
WS	White Slip Ware

1 Egyptians and Canaanites: perspectives of an imperial encounter

1.1 Introduction

The study of Egyptian imperialism in the Southern Levant in the 2nd millennium B.C. was a fashionable topic in Levantine archaeology a few decades ago. In particular, this matter was at the centre of heated academic debate in the 1980s and 1990s. The main interest was to establish the extent and nature of Egypt's influence over the Southern Levant during the LBA. The alleged collapse of the Canaanite¹ urban culture at the end of the MBA has been disputed (Dever 1987: 175; Finkelstein 1992: 216). Scholars have debated whether the evidence for destruction at late MBA and early LBA Canaanite sites could be attributed to Egyptian raids or to other factors. Such debate was predominantly generated by the lack of sources concerning the first part of the LBA: most existing Egyptian sources are indeed focused on narrating the events that happened at the end of the MBA and the LB II, generating a gap in the available texts that scholars have been trying to fill using archaeological evidence. However, as often happens in academic discourse, such discussion trends tend to ebb and flow, leaving behind a series of unanswered questions to be analysed by a new generation of researchers. In this case, there still was no consensus on the beginning of Egyptian imperial domination over the Southern Levant.

In more recent years, several studies have explored this topic, mostly concurring on attributing an important role in the “collapse” of the Canaanite MBA to the Egyptian empire (Killebrew 2004; Morris 2005; Burke 2008; 2009; Burke and Vidal 2010; Martin 2011). These studies have provided invaluable information on the diplomatic and military relationships between the two regions, clarifying the political situation of the Southern Levant during the LBA.

Some of these scholars, from contemporary and previous generations alike, have focused on locating traces of “Egyptianization” at Southern

¹ The term Canaan will be used in this dissertation to refer to the LBA territorial-political entity geographically encompassing modern Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan. The term is known from the international correspondence of the 2nd millennium, where Canaan seems to indicate the Egyptian province in Western Asia and Canaanites the name of its inhabitants (Naaman 1994, 408).

Levantine sites, identifying material culture categories interpreted as indicating an Egyptian presence or influence (e.g. Weinstein 1981; Oren 1984; Higginbotham 2000; Killebrew 2004; Brandl 2010a; Martin 2011). In some of these cases, contemporary Egyptian and later Biblical sources have been used as a basis for archaeological research, aiming to find confirmation of such accounts in the material evidence (e.g. Kempinski 1974).

All these approaches, based on literal readings of the sources or rigid interpretative frameworks, have not provided a balanced understanding of complex processes of intercultural contact. Moreover, they have produced generalised assumptions ambiguously attributed to the whole Southern Levant, which did not take into account local differentiations. The region is, in fact, a heterogeneous territory, where interactions with the Egyptian authority are likely to have generated a range of different outcomes at the local level.

Moreover, so far, little attention has been given to the social aspects of this relationship. The situation of both locals and foreigners living in Canaan under Egyptian domination was, indeed, probably very different from the picture depicted by the official imperial narrative. The professions of these foreigners, in previous studies generally identified with the Egyptian administration (i.e. governors and soldiers), have not been fully investigated, and the same holds true for their behaviours and practices in the local reality of Canaanite settlements. Equally not well researched are the responses of local people to this foreign presence. Cohabitation with Egyptian people had a certain impact on the life of the Canaanite elite and, possibly, commoners alike. The nature and extent of this impact, however, has never been investigated.

Therefore, this thesis will not deal with topics of diplomatic or political interactions, nor with the military aspect of the Egyptian imperialism, all abundantly researched in previous studies (e.g. Killebrew 2004; Morris 2005; Burke 2008; 2009; Burke and Vidal 2010; Martin 2011). It will instead investigate the social agents of this imperial relationship in a well-defined Canaanite context.

In addition to the understanding of the social agents and their interaction within the local context of the Wadi Gaza area in the imperial period, this study also adds to our understanding of early empires. More particularly, this research aims to demonstrate how the use of a hybridisation framework (van Dommelen 1997; 2006), which will be presented in detail in Chapter 3, provides the tools

for a more balanced and nuanced investigation of relationships between locals and foreigners in an imperial situation. The main critiques to hybridisation theory will also be acknowledged and, for this reason, I will propose a specific use of this framework. This will not be treated as a result of the mix of “pure” cultures, but instead the employment of hybridisation as an investigative tool to detect processes of cultural mixing in a situation of imperial encounter. This goal would support future studies on early empires, not limited to Egypt, setting a new way of understanding empires beyond the imperial narrative, aimed at human relationships between social agents.

Finally, this thesis will focus on a specific region within the wider Southern Levant, which is the Wadi Gaza. Previous research, indeed, showed the presence of clear regional differences in the Southern Levantine area during the 2nd millennium B.C. (e.g. Liverani 2008). These diversities, which will be examined in the thesis, produce a particular response in the Wadi Gaza to Egyptian imperialism. This reason, together with the necessity of restricting the geographical area of this research, brought me to select the Wadi Gaza as a case study.

This thesis, therefore, aims to provide an innovative perspective on the social interactions between Egypt and the Southern Levant during the imperial period. It aims to do so by investigating the local reality of a distinct region, the Wadi Gaza area. It will employ an innovative framework, based on postcolonial concepts of hybridisation and cultural fluidity. This will provide a contribution not just to the studies of the Southern Levant, but to the wider field of studies on early empires.

Drawing on published and unpublished data from archaeological research in the Gaza area, this thesis will demonstrate that the processes which transformed cultural identities in the region following the establishment of an Egyptian imperial presence are complex and mutual; and that a conceptual framework based on hybridisation can provide a more comprehensive understanding of them. It will be demonstrated that the archaeological evidence, liberated from the straitjacket of limited and circumstantial literary sources, can significantly alter our understanding of the area and its role within the local socio-political milieu, as well as of the character of Egyptian imperialism in the Levant. This fresh analysis of the evidence will address those unresolved issues left by the previous generation of scholars, re-interpreting the

nature of the imperial domination over the region during the LBA. Moreover, this research moves beyond generalised and oversimplified assumptions, and proposes for the first time a comprehensive analysis of a distinct region within the wider Southern Levant, the Wadi Gaza area, examining the complexity of localised social practice and agency. In the following section are outlined the research questions designed to fulfil these aims, and the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Research questions and outline of the thesis

The thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What is the outcome of the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Southern Levant, as attested by the archaeological evidence of the Wadi Gaza area?

This main research topic can be further broken down into more specific questions, namely:

- How can we characterise the relationships between Egyptians and Canaanites in the local setting, as suggested by a contextual analysis of their practices?
- What is the timeframe for this encounter, and how does the nature of the Egyptian presence change during this period?
- How do the results of a contextual archaeological analysis of the local material culture and practice differ from previous interpretations of Egyptian imperial narrative?

In order to answer these questions, I will first present the context of this research in Chapter 2. This will begin with an outline of previous scholarship on the theme of Egyptian imperialism in the Southern Levant and discussing the limitations of such studies (Chapter 2.2). I will then present the reasons for limiting my investigation to a small area of the Southern Levant, the Wadi Gaza (Chapter 2.3) and for the choice of chronological framework here employed (Chapter 2.4). After that, I will introduce the challenges posed by material from old excavations, more specifically those excavated and published by archaeologist W.F.M. Petrie, and the approach taken to counter these problems and minimise any possible resulting bias in the context of this research (Chapter 2.5).

Chapter 3 sets out the theoretical and methodological framework of this study. It will first present an overview of the main approaches used in the past when dealing with culture contact and imperial relations. Acculturation theory (Malinowski 1923; M. J. Herskovits 1937), World System theory (Wallerstein 1974), and Postcolonial studies (van Dommelen 1997; Knapp 2010) will be reviewed, discussing their advantages and shortcomings. I will then discuss the reasons for selecting an approach based on hybridisation and material culture studies.

The following three chapters analyse and discuss the archaeological evidence from the region. Chapter 4 examines the questions on a regional scale. It presents a settlement analysis of the Gaza area between MBA and LBA (Chapter 4.3), discussing the differences between these two periods and how these may have affected the socio-political organisation. It will then examine some of the most salient “Egyptianizing” elements of the Levantine material culture of the LBA, namely governors’ residences, Egyptian pottery, and anthropoid coffins (Chapter 4.4).

Chapter 5 and 6 will shift the focus to a site level of analysis, centred on two case studies. Chapter 5 deals with the site of Tell el-ʿAjjul, a debated late MBA and early LBA site. It analyses material evidence from the settlement to show discrepancies between the two periods, as well as the contrast between the degree of hybridised practices attested in the palatial area and that of the rest of the town.

The following chapter discusses the site of Tell el-Farʿah (South), which is instead mostly inhabited in the later LBA and early Iron Age (henceforth IA). While remains from the settlement are in this case meagre, the site offers the opportunity to look at funerary practices and at the role of different practices in Egypt and in the Wadi Gaza.

Chapter 7 will discuss the evidence so far analysed, identifying some key themes emerging from the investigation and how these answer the proposed research questions. Such conclusions will be developed further in Chapter 8

Having outlined the overall purpose and structure of this thesis, the following chapter now returns to a more detailed consideration of existing literature and broader context of this research.

2 The wider context: previous scholarship and chronological settings

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the broad context for this study, identifying the problems with previous research that will be addressed in this thesis. The first section presents a short literature review, which examines the principal studies on Egyptian involvement in the Southern Levant during the LBA. As will be discussed below, previous scholarship made disproportionate use of textual evidence to explain the events occurring in this period. For this reason, it will be argued that these approaches have sometimes provided a misleading narrative on the outcomes of the imperial encounter between Canaanite and Egyptian cultures. The chapter will therefore present the main problems related to previous interpretations and the gaps in earlier research, which provide the context for the research questions, presented in the previous chapter.

The analysis of former scholarship will clarify why this research is focusing on a small part of the Southern Levant, the Wadi Gaza area. The following section will then introduce the geographical settings and historical context.

2.2 Investigating Egyptian imperialism in the Southern Levant: a text-driven narrative of conquest

Egypt and the Southern Levant shared much of their history throughout the Bronze Age, but the New Kingdom (NK) and LBA is probably the one where they were most interconnected. This strong connection bears a compelling fascination, especially for scholars interested in imperial dynamics and culture contact. However, for many years, studies on the relationship between the two regions have been over-reliant on written sources, primarily Egyptian texts. Previous debates have been particularly centred on two issues. The first of these is the extent of the Egyptian involvement in Palestine during the first part of the 18th Dynasty. Scholars have been divided between maximalists, who believe that Egypt had already established a form of imperial control over Canaan at the beginning of the LBA, and minimalists, who instead state that a form of hegemony is only attested from after Thutmose III (1479-1425 B.C.) (Höflmayer 2015: 193).

A second set of problems concerns the kind of control established by the pharaohs - regardless of whether this started at the beginning or in the mid-LBA. While some believe in some form of direct Egyptian rule, others have explained the archaeological evidence in terms of elite emulation. Without doubt we owe much of our current knowledge to these previous studies, which have the merit of having analysed and debated numerous written sources and encouraged archaeological research in the region. However, these approaches are in need of revision, especially with regards to their use of ancient texts. This section discusses the historical context of the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Southern Levant, presenting the main texts used by previous scholars and their interpretations. It will concentrate on the two issues above described, the solutions proposed so far in the literature and, finally, will explain the need for a revised study of the evidence.

The first part of the second millennium, the MBA, was a period of urban development for the Southern Levant, as the archaeological evidence clearly demonstrates (see Chapter 4). It was characterised by significant growth in settlement size and quantity, sophisticated urban planning, massive fortifications and public buildings, and a peak in ceramic technology (Dever 1987; Mazar 1992; Ilan 1995). At the same time, Egypt was emerging from a phase of political disintegration, known as the Second Intermediate Period (SIP). In this period, the region was fragmented into small kingdoms ruled by several minor dynasties. The most powerful of them was centred in the Nile Delta and associated with the domination of the so-called Hyksos, a people of Asiatic origin (Bourriau 2000). Around the mid-16th century B.C., the Egyptian armies led by pharaoh Ahmose of the 18th Dynasty (1550-1295 B.C.) succeeded in expelling the foreign kings from their capital in the Delta, Avaris, corresponding to modern Tell el-Dab^a (Bietak 1996). The events are described by an inscription from the tomb of commander Ahmose, son of Eben, an officer in the pharaoh's army, and in a fragmentary relief from the funerary temple of Ahmose at Abydos (Pritchard 1950: 233-34). The latter depicts a war scene between the Pharaoh's army and the Asians, identifiable by their beards and fringed dresses with long sleeves. Only fragments of the text are comprehensible, but these display the names "Ipep", i.e. Apophis, penultimate ruler of the 15th Dynasty, and "Hut-Waret", i.e. Avaris (Harvey 1994: 5). According to Morris, this evidence demonstrates that the events depicted are connected to the expulsion of the Hyksos from

Avaris (Morris 2005: 27). The inscription on commander Ahmose's tomb seem to provide a more detailed account of these events:

«The commander of a crew, Ahmose, son of Eben, the triumphant, says [...] When the town of Avaris was besieged, then I showed valor on foot in the presence of his majesty [...]. Then Avaris was despoiled. Then I carried off spoil from there: one man, three women, a total of four persons. Then his majesty gave them to me to be slaves. Then Sharuhén was besieged for three years. Then his majesty despoiled it» (Pritchard 1950: 233-34).

The text suggests that, after the expulsion of the Hyksos from the Delta, the Egyptian army conquered a town named Sharuhén. This toponym is also known from other later sources: the Prologue to Thutmose III's Annals, the topographical list of Amara, dated to Ramesse III, and the Old Testament (Joshua 19:6). These three sources seem to indicate the location of the town in the southern part of the Southern Levant. Some scholars, therefore, proposed to interpret Sharuhén as a safe haven for the "Asiatics" expelled from Egypt and as the main base of Egyptian operations in Palestine following its defeat (Kempinski 1974: 149). Much archaeological effort has been dedicated to identifying the archaeological site corresponding to Sharuhén and demonstrate, on the basis of its archaeological remains, its paramount significance for the Egyptian conquest of Palestine. The most widely accepted identification was proposed by A. Kempinski who, using the above mentioned texts, located it at modern Tell el-^oAjjul (Kempinski 1974: 149-52; Merrillees 1974: 62-63; Weinstein 1981: 6; Morris 2005: 28). An earlier proposal by W.F. Albright, who placed Sharuhén at Tell el-Far^oah (South) - henceforth Tell el-Far^oah - has also continued to attract followers (Albright 1929: 7; Bimson 1981: 243-44; Hoffmeier 1989: 184), while a less popular theory identifies it with Tell Haror (Rainey 1993). The location of Sharuhén, having been central in the previous literature, will be discussed again in later chapters.

Another main point of debate in earlier scholarship pertains the aftermaths of this first Egyptian campaign in the Levant. Written sources for the first part of the LBA are remarkably meagre, and very few texts openly refer to Canaan. The gap in available information covers the period of the beginning of

the 18th Dynasty, the LB IA, until Thutmose III (1479-1425 B.C.). Scholars, therefore, used the sources of this later period, in particular the Annals of Thutmose III, to reconstruct prior events and infer the role of the Egyptian empire in the political organisation of the Southern Levant (for a full account see Redford 1979; Weinstein 1981; Morris 2005: 27-38).

«Then it transpired in later times that the garrison which was there was (now) in the town of Sharuhen, while (the territory) from Yurza as far as the distant marshlands had broken out in rebellion against His Majesty» (Redford 2003: 9).

This text seems to imply the presence of a sort of Egyptian authority over the territory south of Yurza, also located in the Wadi Gaza area (for its possible identification, see Chapter 4; Redford 2003: 13). Similarly, the following passage has been interpreted as evidence for the presence of Gaza among the Egyptian possessions at that time:

«Regnal year 23, first month of shomu, day 4; the day of the festival of the king's accession (celebrated at) the 'Town-of-the-Ruler's Seizure', [called] Gaza [of Kharu]» (Redford 2003: 13).

These later texts, together with various analyses of the archaeological evidence, have been considered evidence for an already established Egyptian imperial domination over Canaan in the first part of the 18th Dynasty (Albright 1960: 80; Wright 1961: 91; Helck 1971: 114; Weinstein 1981: 2; Dever 1987: 174; Oren 1987: 90; Hoffmeier 1991: 111; Dever 1992: 14; Morris 2005; Burke 2009: 63). The shortage of contemporary LB IA sources is explained in various ways, for example by the lack of excavated temples erected by the pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty, where they would have celebrated their military victories (Morris 2005: 36-37). According to Morris, pharaohs rarely commemorated battles in which they did not take part and it is more likely that they concentrated their presence on the campaigns in Lebanon. Therefore, archaeologists believed that already Ahmose and the other early pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty, hence before Thutmose III, had annihilated the Southern Levant. As a consequence, they interpreted the LBA, and especially its first part, as a period of decay for

Palestine, destroyed and suppressed by the Egyptian empire (Weinstein 1981: 7; Hoffmeier 1990; Morris 2005: 37).

The view of these scholars, identified as maximalist, has been opposed by so-called minimalists (Höflmayer 2015: 193). Scholars supporting the latter stance stress the absence of relevant texts for the conquest of Southern Levant in the LB IA (Kenyon 1960: 195-206; Shea 1979; Bienkowski 1986: 127-30; Hoffmeier 1989: 181-93; Mazar 1992: 232; Redford 1993: 274; Na'aman 1994; Bunimovitz 1995: 322; Redford 2003: 193-94; Martin 2011: 18; Höflmayer 2015: 202). The Annals of Thutmose contain the following passage:

«For it had been a period of [many] years [that Retenu had lapsed into] brigandage, while everyone was committing [theft] against his fellow, and [...]» (Pritchard 1950: 235).

According to the minimalists, this text appears to confirm that at the time of the conquest by Thutmose III, Palestine was already going through a period of anarchy, caused by internal conflicts, and it was only with this pharaoh that Egyptian imperialism in the Levant began. Before that, namely in the first part of the 18th Dynasty, their contention is that Egypt was only interested in some key sites, important for moving people and goods to Egypt. Only these few sites would have been affected by some kind of direct Egyptian control (Höflmayer 2015: 202).

A third, moderate, theory has been argued in different ways by M. Bietak, D. Ilan, and A.M. Maeir, taking into account a wider range of factors to explain the conflagrations in Canaanite sites dated to the end of MBA (Bietak 1991: 57-62; Ilan 1995: 314-15; Maeir 2010: 165-75). According to these scholars, these widespread destructions were caused by a combination of issues, including Egyptian military activity, socio-demographic processes (particularly the Hittite infiltrations), and the economic decline caused by an over-exploitation of resources during the flourishing period of MB II-III.

All these theories, however, rely primarily on textual data, using these sources as the basis of their arguments. A similar, textual-driven, approach, has also characterised the interpretation of the following stages of the LBA, and the debate on the second of the above-mentioned topics, i.e. the nature of Egyptian control over Canaan in the imperial period.

Textual sources are indeed much more abundant in the LBA. The Annals of Thutmose III are, as already stated, the earliest contemporary texts available. The main event here described is the Battle of Megiddo, which conferred on Egypt a more solid territorial control over the Southern Levant. In Thutmose's 23rd year of reign (1456 B.C.), the pharaoh is said to have attacked the town of Megiddo, defeating a coalition of city-states led by the ruler of Kadesh, and protected by the northern chiefs of Mitanni (Bryan 2003: 237-38). Thutmose and his successors, according to the texts, would have then continued their campaigns in the Southern Levant, necessary to ensure control over products such as cedar wood, copper, and tin (Redford 2003; Morris 2005: 115-52).

The main texts used to understand the socio-political organisation of the Southern Levant in this period are the letters of Tell el-Amarna. This archive provides evidence of the diplomatic and administrative correspondence between the pharaohs of the late 18th Dynasty and several Near Eastern states (Cohen and Westbrook 2000: 1). The letters have been studied using both a literary and scientific approach. As for the latter, chemical and petrographic studies have clarified the provenance of the tablets, allowing the association of a town or its ruler, when mentioned, with a modern site or geographical area (Goren *et al.* 2004). Yet, the most applied approach uses the literal interpretation of the documents to comprehend the organisation of LBA Canaan and, therefore, the nature of Egypt's hegemony over the region (Liverani 1988; Finkelstein 1996; James 2000). According to the most prevalent interpretations, the Levant was divided into three provinces: Amurru, Upe, and Canaan, each one hosting Egyptian garrisons and troops (Killebrew 2005: 57). Egypt instituted a vassalage system, where local governors were kept in place. Each province, however, was controlled by an Egyptian overseer, to which each local governor was expected to report. Vassals were also required to send goods to Egypt in the form of tributes or gifts, and had to continue to prove their loyalty to the pharaoh, for example through intelligence reports and military support (Murnane 2000: 103-04).

It is undeniable that the Amarna letters are an extremely valuable source of information. However they are only one of the many instruments to be used in reconstructing the political system of the LBA (Liverani 2000: 16). Relying on textual sources, in general, has numerous limitations, as ancient texts are chronologically distant from the events they narrate and ideologically influenced

(Bunimovitz 1993b: 28). None of them are to be understood as accurate historical accounts: royal inscriptions, like the Annals of Thutmose, have an ideological agenda, serving as imperial propaganda to obtain political acceptance. Diplomatic texts like the Amarna letters, on the other hand, possess a different persuasive tone, presenting arguments of bargaining and emotional metaphors (Liverani 2000: 17).

The literal reliability ascribed to these texts by many authors, therefore, can be contested. Moreover, it is important to stress, for the Amarna archive, that the letters are dated from the age of Amenhotep III (1390-1352 B.C.) to as late as Tutankhamun (1336-1327 B.C.) (Cohen and Westbrook 2000: 6). Therefore, any evidence gathered from this correspondence is only limited to this short part of the LBA and cannot be extended without evidence to the rest of the period. For the later LBA phases, other sources usually employed are the Hittite archives, the reliefs of Karnak and Luxor, and commemoration stelae found in Levantine sites (for a full discussion, see Morris 2005: 217-19, 343-82). However, these sources are either diplomatic or propagandistic texts and, therefore, should also be addressed with caution.

A small number of authors have attempted to provide a synthetic approach, which would take into account textual sources as well as archaeological evidence, purportedly in equal measure. Some examples are the studies by C. Higginbotham and Ann E. Killebrew. The former proposes that Egyptian and Egyptian-style artefacts in the LBA Southern Levant can be explained as a result either of direct Egyptian rule and presence, or local elite emulation (Higginbotham 2000: 10-16). Higginbotham argues that LBA Palestine had a mixed administrative system, where, in combination with a limited Egyptian presence, local princes remained in charge of local polities. Killebrew instead defines the Egyptian presence as an “administrative” imperialism (Killebrew 2005: 81-83). He argues that until Ramesse III there was only a limited occupation, defined by military troops at garrison cities and administrative staff stationed in towns with governors’ residences (see chapter 5). Even though these studies have the merit of placing at least partial analytical emphasis on the archaeological record, they remain limited by their binary theoretical approach, which will be analysed in detail in the next chapter.

Few studies on Egyptian imperialism in the Levant are entirely independent from the textual sources. Perhaps the most important one is

represented by M. Martin's publication, which examines Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery in the Southern Levant (Martin 2011). Martin presents an overview of the pottery investigated, including a full typological classification and a study site-by-site. Through this analysis Martin argues the absence of an Egyptian domination in the beginning of the LBA. Archaeological evidence would support Egyptian imperial control over the Southern Levant only from the 19th Dynasty, when Martin recognises a sudden increase in Egyptian and Egyptian style pottery at most sites. The scholar also believes that there is no reason to suggest a use of Canaanite material by Egyptian personnel and that, therefore, only the occurrence of Egyptian material in considerable amounts can detect a presence of Egyptian people in the Southern Levant. At the same time, however, Martin also recognises the lack of a uniform situation across the region, and suggests that the Southern part of the region seems to show a different pattern (Martin 2011: footnote no. 282). The distinct role of the southern part of the region had already been stressed by other scholars, even though their data is mostly textual. Evidence consists of the location in the Wadi Gaza area of the toponyms in the aforementioned sources - Sharuhén, Yurza, and Gaza. W.G. Dever, for example, believed that the Wadi Gaza area hosted the headquarters of the Hyksos army in the MBA, while N. Na'aman stressed the role of the Wadi as a defence line to control the movements of nomads and to prevent Egyptian raids (Na'aman 1982; Dever 1985; 1997). E.D. Oren also considered Southern Palestine a peculiar settlement phenomenon directly related to the close relationship of the area with the Hyksos in the Delta, a hinterland of the Delta kingdom (Oren 1997: 256) . Always according to Oren, the region played a similar role in the LBA and in the IA as well. Neither Martin, nor any of these other authors, however, provided a detailed investigation of this area that was not limited to a concise assessment of a few of its sites.

Altogether these studies represent important reference works for any study on Egyptian imperialism in the Levant. The latest publications, and in particular Martin's work, have the significant merit of focusing their attention on material culture and on its importance in socio-political discourses. However, they also highlighted issues in previous literature and certain themes that need to be researched in more depth. Firstly, they make clear that there is the need for more material-based studies to shed light on the Egyptian empire in Palestine. The uncritical use of historical sources has produced a misleading

understanding of the texts, inadequately taking account of their underlying agenda. Secondly, many of these studies have highlighted the presence of evident distinctions between different areas of the Southern Levant. Yet, as demonstrated above, most of the previous accounts deal with the Southern Levantine area in its entirety, rarely focusing on regional specificities. Finally, nearly all the former studies have focused on political institutions or structures, leaving out any consideration of social relations within communities.

To redress these shortcomings in the extant literature, my research focuses on material evidence from a specific region, the Wadi Gaza area, and on the processes and practices involved in the co-production of the imperial condition by both agents of Egypt and local communities. In order to show the importance of this narrow geographical focus for a study on Egyptian imperialism, I will now present the Wadi Gaza, its geographical features, the archaeological excavations carried out in the region, and elaborate on the reasons for choosing it as the main focus of the present research.

2.3 The Wadi Gaza area, a passageway to the Near East

This study focuses on a small area of the Southern Levant, its southern edge. The region, called the Wadi Gaza area, Gaza area, or simply Southern Palestine, is located in the southern coastal plain overlooking the Mediterranean (Figure 2.1). It encompasses the modern territories of the Gaza Strip, part of modern-day Palestine, and the Northern Negev, in the State of Israel. The distinctiveness of the area within the wider region and its importance in this study can be evidenced by an analysis of three main factors, namely its geographical features, its strategic importance in the period examined, and the role conferred to it by previous scholarship.

Geographically, the Wadi Gaza area is considered a marginal region, comprised between the Negev desert in the south and the Shephela in the north. It is a transitional zone between the Mediterranean and the desert, characterised by fluctuations in climate and rainfall patterns, which, depending on the year, can either cause drought or excellent crops (Oren and Mazar 1974: 3). Despite its unpredictable environment, the area's value is enhanced by its location on the coast and by the presence of the Wadi Gaza basin - also called Nahal Besor - which springs from the Negev hills, and its main tributary, the

Wadi Gerar. During the Bronze Age, the level of the Mediterranean Sea was probably about 1 m higher than today, making the wadi navigable and forming several natural harbours around which settlements could grow (Raban 1987: 295-308; Dever 1997: 255; Morhange *et al.* 2005: 75-78). The region also contains abundance of grazing land, encouraging the development of a prolific pastoralist economy.

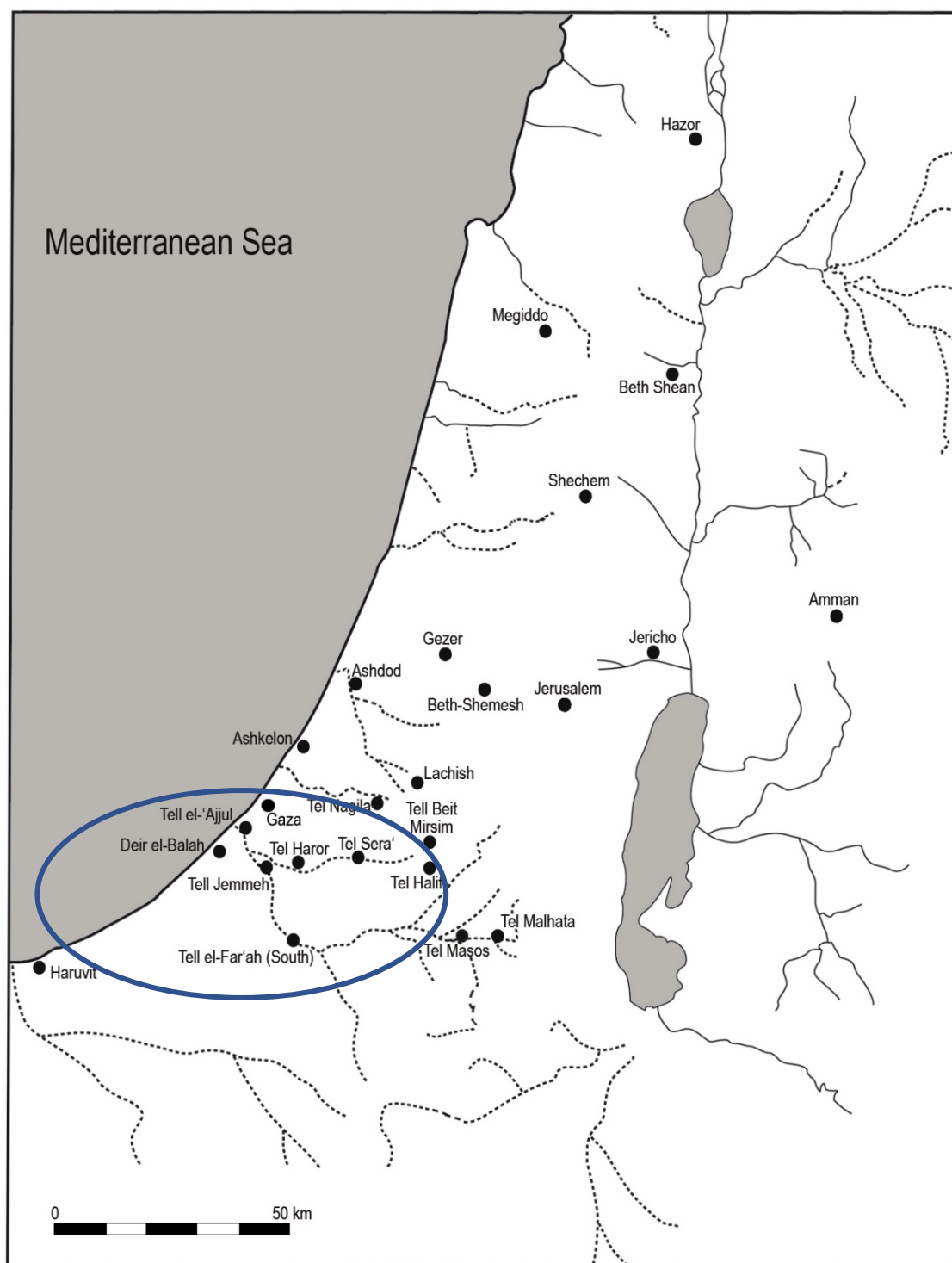


Figure 2.1. Map of the Southern Levant with the main sites and the sites discussed in the thesis; the Wadi Gaza area is circled.

These environmental and topographical features, which contribute to the identification of the Wadi Gaza as a distinct geographical region in the Southern Levantine context, also allowed the presence of a virtually continuous human occupation since the Chalcolithic, with at least 14 tells inhabited during the Bronze Age.

The flourishing of settlements attested in the MBA and LBA (see Chapter 4) also relates to the strategic aspect of the region. The area was indeed a main passageway on the highway connecting Egypt to the Levant and the rest of the Near Eastern region. Its main LBA centre, Gaza, is considered to be the endpoint of the way of Horus, the route along the Mediterranean through North Sinai, and a main stop on the *Via Maris*, connecting Egypt with Mesopotamia and the Northern Levant (Aharoni 1979: 42-43; David A Dorsey 1991: 59, map. 1; Morris 2005: 49, note 78). This attribute makes the Wadi Gaza area highly appropriate for the present study. The region's importance as a passageway and access point, not only to the Levant but to the whole Near East, would have also been perceived by Egypt. Especially in a period of military campaigns and imperial occupation, the control over this region, therefore, would have been of immense value to ensure enduring connections between Egypt and its domain.

Another reason for focusing the research on this area is its role in previous scholarship. As examined in the previous section, several published works have pointed to the region's distinctiveness in connection to the Hyksos and, later, to the Egyptian empire. The reputation of the Gaza area in modern scholarship caused some controversial interpretations of the archaeological remains, which will be analysed in more detail in the following chapters. This interest has sparked archaeological research in the area, which, at the same time, has unfortunately been hindered by modern geo-political circumstances.

The main excavations were carried out in the early 1900s by W.M.F. Petrie, a pioneer of Egyptian and Palestinian archaeology (Petrie's methods and issues with his work will be discussed below in section 2.5). Petrie's campaigns were halted by the Arab revolt in Palestine in 1936, while subsequent archaeological activity was prevented by the Second World War and the 1948 Palestinian War. From 1948, the archaeological heritage of the Gaza area was administered by the Egyptian government, which left the country in 1967, when the Gaza strip started to be administered by the Israeli army, until 1994 (Taha

2010). During the Israeli occupation, some excavations were carried out, including one at the LB IA site of Deir el-Balah (see Chapter 4). From 1994, authority over the strip was transferred to the Palestinian people and archaeological activities briefly flourished. An example is the Swedish-Palestinian expedition to Tell el-^cAjjul (see Chapter 5). The Intifada of 2000 and the following upheavals between Israel and Palestine have prevented any later archaeological activity in the region and continue to damage both the population and the archaeological sites within the Gaza strip to this day. However, some new excavation data is available from recent archaeological excavations in the Northern Negev, such as the expeditions at Tell Jemmeh and Qubur al-Walayda (see Chapter 4).

The neglected state of archaeological excavations in the area constitutes one final reason for focusing this study on the Gaza area. While research in the northern Negev is possible and currently practised, the Gaza Strip, a central territory for the understanding of the region, is currently inaccessible to archaeological investigations. Even if these circumstances were to change in the future, much of the archaeological heritage of the region has already been destroyed or looted, causing permanent loss of important evidence. The data available, either in form of archaeological reports or material, as flawed as it might be, in many cases will be the only information ever available. This issue is particularly pressing in contemporary Middle Eastern archaeology since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, but it has been ongoing, to a lesser extent, in the archaeology of the Gaza Strip for many years. It is vital, therefore, to research old excavation data under a new light, using modern-day approaches and methods (see Chapter 3).

To summarise, this study will focus on the Wadi Gaza area for multiple purposes. First, for its geographical distinctiveness within the Southern Levantine region, which allows us to consider it as a discrete area in the wider regional context. Secondly, for its strategic location, which made it an important connection for Egypt, for commercial, military, and political reasons. Additionally, to re-evaluate the connection of the Wadi Gaza area to the Egyptian empire in previous scholarship. Focusing primarily on the archaeological evidence will allow us to evaluate the soundness of previous interpretations, which focused disproportionately on written evidence. A final purpose is to counter the ongoing loss of information on the area due to the complicated geo-

political situation. All these reasons make the Wadi Gaza area an ideal and imperative case study to analyse the outcome of the meeting between the Southern Levantine and Egyptian cultures in the 2nd millennium B.C.

Before turning to the discussion on theoretical and methodological frameworks, the next section of this chapter will review the Southern Levantine chronology, presenting a comparative chart of the different areas discussed in the thesis and the nomenclature employed.

2.4 The chronological setting

The academic debate around the chronology of the second millennium B.C. in the Mediterranean is still ongoing, regularly updated in the light of new archaeological and scientific discoveries. As chronology is a vast topic, but not the central focus of this research, I will only present a brief overview of the recent debate leading to the chronology adopted in the study, its sources, and the reasons for preferring it. This section, therefore, presents the chronology of the second millennium B.C.

The main controversy with the chronology of the second millennium is related to the Canaanite MBA and its synchronisation with the rest of the Mediterranean. While the LBA is well-known both archaeologically and, most of all, historically, the anchors for the MBA chronology are meagre. It must be kept in mind that the dates proposed do not necessarily refer, in my opinion, to the areas considered as a whole. Especially when dealing with the end of the MBA and the beginning of the LBA, we have to acknowledge the presence of different regional patterns, which determine slightly diverse chronologies for each area. This has been clearly demonstrated, for example, for the Jordan Valley (Maeir 2010: 128). In this area, not all evidence from the final stages of the MBA are datable to the same period, but more likely span through a phase comprising the last years of the conventional MB III and the whole LB IA (Maeir 2010: 169).

The approach of homogenising large areas into one chronology, which relies on the Egyptian history to establish chronologies in neighbouring territories, has also been adopted for the Southern Levant (for an overview on Levantine chronology and the main theories, see Sharon 2014). Several Levantine archaeologists based their reconstructions on the so-called Conventional Egyptian chronology and made each subdivision of the MBA correspond to an

Egyptian Dynasty (e.g. Dever 1991; 1992; Weinstein 1992). This practice, however, started to be disputed in a series of international conferences and projects, first by the initiative of Paul Åström, with the Symposium “High, Middle or Low”, and later developed by Manfred Bietak, Hermann Hunger, and Walter Kutschera, in a special research project called “The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second millennium BC” (SCIEM, Åström 1987; Bietak 1991; Bietak and Czerny 2003; Bietak and Czerny 2007). The SCIEM project led to a general consensus over the Low Chronology, based on the excavations at Tell el-Dabca as well as the Egyptian historical chronology, given by a convergence of genealogy/history and astronomy (Helck 1987; Kitchen 2000; Hornung *et al.* 2006; Kitchen 2007). This conclusion was supported and implemented also by several Palestinian archaeologists (Maeir 2010: 127). However, this debate instigated further research, notably that conducted by F. Höflmayer, who has recently revisited SCIEM’s hypothesis on the MBA Levantine chronology (Höflmayer *et al.* 2016).

The scholar argues that the High Chronology is, in the light of his new research, the most plausible option for the MBA Southern Levant. Höflmayer’s results are based on radiocarbon dates from Tell el-Dabca, Tell el-^cAjjul, Tel Ifshar, Tel Kabri, Jericho, Tell el-Hayyat, and Tell el-Burak. These radiocarbon sequences, as originating from recent excavations, carried out with modern scientific methods, are considered by Höflmayer more reliable than previous samples. They have been examined with the use of a Bayesian model, which is accepted by many and used in Levantine radiocarbon dating, although not immune to criticism (Mazar 2011: 105). This higher chronology creates few issues in correlating the first part of the MBA with Egypt (for details, see Cohen). However, being a recent publication, it has not been fully debated yet. Therefore, this research will not entirely discard the previously used Low Chronology in favour of Höflmayer’s proposal. Besides, the change caused by the adoption of a High Chronology does not affect the whole LBA, but only the beginning of the period, and therefore does not affect the main issues analysed in the thesis. Its impact mostly affects the analysis of the earlier phases, witnessed especially at the site of Tell el-^cAjjul, which is examined in Chapter 6. For this reason, I will refer in the study to both the Low and High Chronologies, when appropriate, and I present both options in the table below.

Other problems concern the end of the LBA and its transition to the IA. Again, scholars have noticed several regional differences (Finkelstein and Piasezky 2015). Numerous projects have collected ^{14}C samples from different sites to establish the beginning of the IA and, most of all, the Iron I/IIA transition, which represents a moment of change in the material culture of the Southern Levant (for discussion, see Sharon *et al.* 2008; Boaretto 2015). The end of the LBA is important for this research as it corresponds to the withdrawal of Egypt from the Southern Levant, and the arrival of the so-called Sea People and the Philistines. This phase has been denominated in diverse ways by different authors. While Mazar prefers to call it Iron IA (Mazar 1992; 2011), others, among which Ussishkin, consider it to be part of the LB, calling it LB III (Ussishkin *et al.* 2004; Ussishkin 2007; Finkelstein and Piasezky 2011). Other scholars have proposed to name it the LB/IR transition (Sharon *et al.* 2008). In this research, I prefer to use LB III, instead of Iron IA, as it expresses the continuity with the previous period, especially with reference to Egyptian domination. The following period is here called Iron I, in contrast to some studies that use the term Iron IB (e.g. Mazar 2011: 105).

The period has been usually dated according to three different schemes, corresponding to the High, Middle, and Low Philistine Chronologies, with the current debate mostly focused on the Middle or Low Chronologies (Killebrew 2005: 232). An important study, particularly relevant for the Wadi Gaza area, is the radiocarbon analysis of samples from Qubur al-Walayda (see Chapter 4, Asscher *et al.* 2015). The samples are considered reliable, as they were extracted from three different locations of the site, each accompanied by a clear stratigraphic sequence with correlated archaeological materials. The ^{14}C data has been analysed according to the Bayesian method (Asscher *et al.* 2015: 91-94). According to Asscher, the middle Philistine chronology is to be preferred, and the end of the Egyptian domination and the transition to the IA are here dated around 1140-1095 B.C. In this research, therefore, because of this reliability of this radiocarbon dating, I have adopted the middle Philistine chronology.

The chronology of Egypt is better defined, given that it is based on more solid archaeological and historical evidence. Studies have connected reign lengths of each pharaoh to absolute calendar dates associated to ancient astronomical observations and, more securely, radiocarbon dates. For this

research, I have used the recent radiocarbon analyses by Ramsey *et al.* combined with the chronology set down by Shaw, which is closer to the ^{14}C dates for the NK (Shaw 2003; Ramsey *et al.* 2010).

Finally, something needs to be said about the chronology of Cyprus. Even though the region is not central to this research, it is nonetheless of paramount importance in the exchange networks that involve Egypt and the Southern Levant during the Bronze Age. Moreover, its materials, and particularly pottery, are paramount for dating Levantine archaeological layers (see Chapter 4). As already stated for the Levant, also in Cyprus there are different regional chronological patterns for the second millennium B.C. For example, Manning has convincingly argued that the LC I originally commences in the northwest and only later can be detected in the western and the southern areas. The east, on the other hand, shows a lengthening of the MC culture, becoming “fully” LC only by the end of the western LC IB (Manning 2007: 121). However, there is a general agreement among scholars regarding their absolute dates. In the present research, I follow the chronologies proposed by Manning and Merrillees, which are based on radiocarbon and archaeological analyses (Manning *et al.* 2001; Merrillees 2002; 2009).

Regarding the delineation of Cypriot phases, however, this research will follow the distinction proposed by A.B. Knapp, who differentiates a Prehistoric Bronze Age or PreBA (ca. 2700-1700/1650 BC) from the Protohistoric Bronze Age or ProBA (ca. 1650-1100 BC). This classification does not rely on the more commonly used Egyptian chronological divisions, but on developments taking place on Cyprus (Knapp 2008).

The table below presents the absolute dates of the Levantine chronology for the second millennium B.C. and compares it to the other adopted chronologies for Egypt and Cyprus.

Period in the Southern Levant	Egypt	Cyprus	High Chronology	Low Chronology
MB I	MK: 12 th Dynasty	MC I-II	2000/1900 - 1850/1800 B.C.	1900 - 1750 B.C.
MB II	12 th , 13 th , 14 th	MC III/ProBA 1	1850/1800 - 1700 B.C.	1750 - 1650 B.C..
MB III	13 th , 14 th , SIP (15 th 16 th and 17 th)	MC III-LC IA/ProBA 1	1700 - 1600 B.C.	1650-1540 B.C.
LB IA	SIP (15 th 16 th and 17 th), NK 18 th	LC IA-LC IB/ProBA 1	1600 - 1479 B.C.	1540-1479 B.C.
LB IB	NK: 18 th Dynasty: Thutmose III - Amenhotep III	LC IB (late)-LC IIA (early)/ProBA 1/2	1479-1400 B.C.	1479-1400 B.C.
LB IIA	NK: 18 th Dynasty: Amenhotep IV - Horemheb	LC II A (late)-IIC (early)/ProBA 2	1400-1330/1300 B.C.	1400-1300 B.C.
LB IIB	NK: 19 th Dynasty	LC IIC (late)/ProBA 3	1330/1300-1200/1150 B.C.	1300-1200 B.C.
LB III	20 th Dynasty early	LC IIIA/ ProBA 3	1200/1150-1130 B.C.	1200/1150-1130 B.C.
IA I	20 th Dynasty late, beginning 21 st Dynasty	LC IIIB-CG IA/Early Iron Age	1130-1050 B.C.	1130-1050 B.C

Table 1.1.- Levantine chronologies (High and Low) and proposed synchronisation with Egypt and Cyprus

2.5 Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie: achievements and limitations

Any study of the Wadi Gaza area cannot be carried out without using the material excavated and published by one of the pioneers of Near Eastern archaeology, Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie. Petrie was an Egyptologist and holder of the Edward Chair of Egyptology at UCL from 1892 until 1934. Most of his archaeological excavations were carried out in Egypt on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Fund initially and, later, of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt, which he founded and based at University College London. Petrie's eminence amongst his fellow scholars is justified by his ground-breaking archaeological theories which, however, he did not always successfully translate into practice. Because of this divergence, as well as the sheer amount of material he excavated, Petrie has been at the centre of any archaeological discussion on the Wadi Gaza, with a few disagreements on the level of reliability of his data. Therefore, it is a priority to address such issues at the beginning of the thesis, review Petrie's methodology, and discuss how to overcome any potential bias introduced by the use of his work.

Petrie's method can be determined by a study of the vast dataset the scholar left behind, which is composed of his well-known excavation reports and accounts (Petrie 1907; Petrie 1928; Petrie 1930; 1931; William Matthew Flinders Petrie 1932; W. M. F. Petrie 1932; Petrie 1933; 1934; Petrie *et al.* 1952), as well as his unpublished material. The latter include photographs, field notebooks, tomb cards, and letters, for the most part held in the archives of the Palestine Exploration Fund and the Institute of Archaeology, UCL (Drower 2004; Sparks and Ucko 2007: 14). Also useful for studying Petrie's approach, as well as for research like the present thesis which uses his work, is the excavated material, partially kept at UCL or in other museums in the UK, and only in part stored in Israel and Palestine. Indeed, Petrie used to fund his excavations by accepting donations from museums, granted in exchange for some of his finds. For this reason, the assemblage of material from Petrie's excavations is scattered among several locations between Europe and the Middle East. Therefore, this research has been based on my examination of most of the archival data and archaeological remains kept in the different locations, which together can allow a sound understanding of Petrie's methodology.

As mentioned above, a large part of Petrie's archaeological career was spent in Egypt. However, in 1890 he was forced by the political situation in Egypt to suspend his excavations in the region and decided, therefore, to investigate the neighbouring area of Palestine. His first work here was at Tell el-Hesi, in the south-eastern coastal plain. The finds from this first excavation in the Southern Levant are possibly what later motivated him to resume exploring the region a few years later in order to establish a pottery sequence (Drower 1995: 161). It was at this site that he started a seriation of Canaanite pottery types, gathering them into sets, each one including a variety of shapes, before sending them to different museums and scholars in Israel, Palestine, and Europe. Petrie was indeed convinced of the importance of pottery for the correct interpretation of Tell el-Hesi (William Matthew Flinders Petrie 1932: 117). His approach to archaeological objects was revolutionary, especially with regards to pottery. He realised the importance of all artefacts, therefore not limiting the recording and keeping of finds only to precious or attractive objects, as was usual at the time. He instead realised that all artefacts, and pottery in particular, were essential for chronological purposes as well as for cultural considerations (Sparks 2013: 145). His work eventually led to the creation of the first pottery catalogue for the region (Duncan *et al.* 1930). However, this aspect brought some limitations as well to Petrie's recording method. As he was particularly interested in types not already known or recorded by previous studies, he only recorded the "addition to the corpus" (i.e. Duncan's "Corpus of Palestinian pottery"). Altogether, however, the scholar can be considered one of the founders of typological studies, and his contribution to modern knowledge of Canaanite pottery is of paramount importance.

Petrie's methodological achievements are not limited to artefact recording. The scholar was the first to introduce a more meticulous approach to excavation, even though his system is far from modern scientific methods. Formed in Egypt, his method consisted in removing strips of soil until he recognised a mudbrick wall. Using the identified architecture, he then cleared out the fill from each room, exposing the structures in their entirety. He would then transfer the fill to a previously emptied room, leaving the walls well in evidence in order to be recorded in plan and studied (Sparks 2007: 5). However, this methodology could not be easily applied to Palestine where, at Tell el-Hesi, Petrie encountered his first multi-phase site. This meant that he had to destroy

previously recognised structures in order to expose the following ones. For this reason, the scholar developed a method that may be considered one of the precursors of modern stratigraphy (Petrie 1904; Harris 2014: 9). He realised that, if he wanted to reveal the history of the town, he had to record all the different layers of the mound in sequence. However, this pioneering approach remained unrefined, and Petrie based any stratigraphic distinction on recognised architectural layers only. Many contexts, therefore, went undetected, especially in areas lacking any structures. He also believed that the absolute height of the structure was related to its chronology. He did not distinguish between foundation, use, and destruction layers. Furthermore, as he was developing the method while excavating, he was often changing opinion and editing his records, causing some of his early notes to be less reliable. This occurrence however decreases in time, making his last excavated sites in Palestine more dependable than Tell el-Hesi.

After this excavation, indeed, Petrie did not go back to Palestine for over 30 years. During this gap, he continued excavating in Egypt, where he became familiar with the Hyksos culture of the Delta through the excavation of notable sites such as Tell el-Yahudiye. In 1926 he went back to the Southern Levant, now under the aegis of the British School of Archaeology. Here, he decided to investigate sites in the Wadi Gaza area, where he believed he had found the same Hyksos culture recognised in Egypt. He explored the sites of Tell Jemmeh (1926-1927), Tell el-Farah (1927-1930), and Tell el-Ajjul (1930-1934, 1938). Each expedition lasted approximately six months, running from November-December until May (Sparks 2007: 2).

In these new excavations, Petrie added another element to his methodology, his characteristic numbering system. He used letters to name each recognised phase in each different area, using double letters when the excavated extension became too large (AA, AB, etc). At Tell el Ajjul he refined his method, and started using the first letter to define an area and the second or third letter to name the locus within each area. He labelled finds using the same system, marking the objects with the initials of the site, the relevant letters, and a number representing the height (in inches) of the finding spot. This reference proved extremely useful considering the vicissitudes of the collection, moved over the time to different buildings across London (Sparks and Ucko 2007: 19). It was only in his last season at Ajjul in 1938 that he started using a grid

system (Sparks 2007: 7). For the cemeteries, he named each cemetery with a number in hundreds (e.g. Cemetery 1500) and then each tomb with an individual number within the same sequence (e.g. Tomb 1501, 1502, etc). The recording system was the same used in Egypt, with the use of precompiled tomb cards, where dimensions, type, and content of the burial were recorded. Unfortunately, the same method was not applied to other contexts, making burials some of the most trustworthy recorded contexts from Petrie's excavations.

An additional issue endangering the reliability of Petrie's accounts is caused by the way he managed his workers. These were usually hired in place, and operated sometimes with little supervision, therefore often ignoring numerous archaeological features. Moreover, the system used to pay them affected the way they worked. While sometimes they were paid a daily fee, other times they were remunerated for the amount of soil they removed or for the quantity of objects they found (the so called bakshish system). Some objects were considered more valuable, including scarabs, decorated sherds, bronze tools and weapons, and balance weights (Sparks 2013: 149-50). This caused, as it will be clear by the analysis in the next few chapters, a bias in the available records, which needs to be considered and assessed. The bakshish system causes indeed two main issues. The first one is the presence of a number of artefacts with no records of their context. According to Sparks, less than 10% of finds from Tell el-Farah have a partial or no context, while this figure increases to almost 30% for Jemmeh. The number is quite variable for Tell el-Ajjul, where it depends on the expedition. While it is comparatively high in the first year (more than 50%), it goes down to about 8% by the last year (Sparks 2013: fig. 5). The second one is the greater occurrence of "valuable" materials than lowly paid objects, for instance painted pottery over plain wares. This issue is particularly attested at Tell el-Ajjul, as will be analysed in Chapter 5.

All these issues have sometimes led scholars to dismiss the entirety of Petrie's finds, arguing that the dataset is not reliable enough to be used in any scientific account (e.g. Killebrew 2005). However, I do not believe it necessary to discard the vast amount of information provided by the scholar. It is instead possible to provide a tailored approach to the study of these excavations, thus overcoming the bias produced by these records. Several studies have been carried out and helped develop a solid methodology for this purpose. For

example, some authors attempted to revise Petrie's stratigraphy to adapt it to modern archaeology. The first one was Kenyon, who did it for Jemmeh as recorded by UCL, when she was curator there (Sparks 2007: 8). In my opinion, it is not reasonable to adapt stratigraphy to a site excavated and recorded with such a different approach. However, it is possible to integrate Petrie's data with new excavations. This is what the new expeditions at Tell Jemmeh and Tell el-^oAjjul attempted to do, connecting Petrie's layer with one or usually more recognised layers (Fischer 2003b; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). This research will therefore take into account such considerations. Other scholars, for instance C. Bergoffen, have designed other methods to improve the reliability of Petrie's stratigraphy, based on the reading of his plans and the recorded levels of each structure and artefact. This method, also partially employed in this research, is outlined in more detail in Chapter 5.2, together with the specific challenges posed by the site of Tell el-^oAjjul. As for the partiality of the recorded finds, the method employed in this research will minimise the impact of this factor by employing a qualitative over a quantitative approach.

As will become clear from the remainder of this thesis, the data recorded by Petrie constitutes an invaluable resource for an understanding of the Wadi Gaza area. Therefore, even though there is a potential bias in dealing with Petrie's material there are methods which can be employed to reduce such bias, as the next chapter will outline more in detail.

2.6 Conclusions: towards a new approach on Egyptian imperialism

The research background presented in this chapter has clearly shown that the topic of Egyptian imperialism in the Southern Levant during the 2nd millennium B.C. is in need of major revision. Previous studies have relied too much on historical sources and have not exploited fully the potential of the archaeological data. Moreover, while many studies have noticed the presence of specific regional patterns, few have proposed an in-depth analysis of a single region, as this study does with the Wadi Gaza. The choice of this area is even more compelling when considering the current state of archaeological research in the region, which has been halted by several conflicts in the modern era, especially in the Gaza Strip. The impossibility of studying the region archaeologically first-hand, and the loss of material, urges the academic

community to find a way to use the material already available from previous excavations, combined with a new approach.

The next chapter, therefore, will present the theoretical background and methodological approach proposed in this research, tailored to the dataset and the issues here described.

3 Culture contact: old theories and new avenues for research

3.1 Introduction

Human societies have never existed without interacting with each other, either in a conflicting or peaceful manner. Every group is naturally in need of knowing and facing diverse human communities, on ontological grounds as well as for practical reasons. The desire to control land boundaries, the need to exchange raw materials or to obtain refined products are some of the main reasons behind contacts between cultures. Scholars have proposed a vast range of definitions for these relations. “Culture contact”, as it has been often defined, has been described as continued and direct exchange between members of different societies with diverse identities, characterised by the desire to control that interaction (Cusick 1998b: 4; Urban and Schortman 1998: 102; Gosden 2004: 4-5). This complex and essential process could be the key for understanding the social, economic, political, and ideological patterns of the societies involved in the contact, and therefore it needs a solid theoretical and methodological approach to be analysed.

Studies in the archaeology of the Southern Levant, however, have not typically engaged with the contemporary theoretical debate which is distinctive of other archaeological fields. Levantine archaeologists have instead opted for either a textual oriented approach (see Chapter 1) or, regrettably, the adoption of general common sense (Johnson 2010: 1-11). Issues connected to ethnicity, identity, and culture contact have been mostly analysed through the lens of typological studies, explaining culture change in the light of the shifting appearance of pottery or other diagnostic materials. Quite the opposite holds true for the neighbouring archaeology of the Mediterranean, where the theoretical debate has been intense and productive (see below).

This chapter will therefore present an overview of the previous approaches used when dealing with culture contact both in Southern Levantine contexts as elsewhere in the archaeology of the Mediterranean. It will present three main frameworks that gained popularity in the past few decades: acculturation theory, World System theory, and postcolonial studies. This study will particularly focus on the latter. I will present the major arguments in support of it, as well as the criticisms, and finally I will explain how this framework will be used in the present thesis.

3.2 Acculturation Theory

Acculturation theory was originally developed in the context of the late 19th century colonial ideology in America. It belongs to the anti-immigrant tendencies developed at the time, which argued that Native Americans and immigrants had to be raised into the fold of progress (Cusick 1998a: 127-28). The movement was largely influenced by the contemporary socio-political environment and motivated by the imperialistic desire of a capitalistic development. Seeking for a strategy for a successful acculturation, governments used the first theorists of culture contact as consultants, as was the case, for example, with Indian reservations or Japanese American relocation camps during World War II (Cusick 1998a: 134; Dietler 2010: 47).

The movement was more coherently formulated between the 1930s and 1950s and it accounts, among its most influential scholars, B. Malinowski and M. Herskovits (Malinowski 1923; M. J. Herskovits 1937). Their theories were then further developed in the 1960s as an anthropological and sociological model. Studies focused on culture changes in small scale societies as they came into contact with politically and economically dominant European and American states (Foster 1960; Spicer 1962). According to acculturation theory, the smaller and less powerful society in the relation undergoes major changes and loses its cultural distinctiveness as a result of the contact (Urban and Schortman 1998: 102). In this view, the agency is therefore completely retained by the biggest and most powerful society, which decides the kind of contact to establish and bears change to the subjugated societies. The individuality of the latter has no weight in the contact, which is therefore interpreted as a one-way experience.

Acculturation theory has been mostly abandoned in contemporary studies, with scholars recognising its limitations. The main problem is its restrictive view of Western groups as more advanced than non-Western societies. These were considered inferior groups, described as “traditional” or “primitive”, and characterised by a static culture, only altered as a result of the contact with Western societies (Powell 1882; Redfield *et al.* 1936; M. Herskovits 1937; Steward 1955). The agency of the subordinate group, consequently, was entirely denied, a feature that, in different forms, persisted in later theories as well (see below). Additionally, such changes were evaluated exclusively through the study

of cultural traits, represented by objects or techniques, which were transferred from the dominant to the subjugated culture (Dietler 2010: 47). Similar approaches, as above mentioned, have largely prevailed in the archaeology of the Southern Levant.

Nevertheless, even considering all the flaws of this approach, acculturation theory has played an important role in the history of culture contact studies. In some cases, it led to the publication of useful reference material - catalogues of pottery and objects - and it generally contributed to stress the importance of cultural interactions in archaeological studies. However, recognising culture change only through the alterations in material culture can provide misleading narratives, as exemplified by the mistaken equation pottery = people (Kramer 1977) . The understanding of this major flaw of acculturation studies led the scholarly community to abandon this approach and to the formulation of the World System Theory.

3.3 World System Theory

World System Theory was developed during the 1970s, after I. Wallerstein's publication of *The Modern World System* (Wallerstein 1974), and then applied to archaeological and historical interpretations with various alterations. According to Wallerstein's original version, the modern world could not be perceived in isolation: it consisted of an interconnected and interdependent economic system. Therefore, its political and economic developments could only be understood on a the larger scale (Wallerstein 1974: 15). In this view, a World System develops when different autonomous polities, called "minisystems", develop a net of interactions between each other, mainly through trade. Based on the initial differences in the distribution of population, resources, and technology, certain states become more powerful than others. This determines the formation of a "multiplicity", a system composed of a core, a semi-periphery and a periphery, which differ in their degree of political centralisation, organisation of labour, and main products (Wallerstein 1974: 38).

Even though this approach has been widely employed in archaeology, its original formulation has received several critiques. A central problem is its tendency to dichotomise core versus peripheral zones. Relations between the two remind of earlier acculturation themes, where the agency of the peripheries

is limited or denied, while the core is the only agent of the relationship (Urban and Schortman 1998: 106-07; Sherratt 2009: 9). Likewise, critics condemned its exclusive perception of interactions according to a capitalistic model, where exchanges are only related to food materials (Bell 2006).

Aware of these weak points in the theory, C. Chase-Dunn and T. Hall proposed an adjusted model. They provided a wider definition of World System that would not be confined to the capitalistic model, and argued that other forms of trade could be considered in this framework, such as exchange in prestige goods, warfare, and political symbolism (Chase-Dunn 1993: 855, 62-63). They therefore define their theory a “World System Perspective”, moving away from Wallerstein’s original model. However, even this more moderate view has been subjected to various criticisms. Parkinson and Galaty, for example, believe it to be too broad, therefore losing the descriptive and explanatory power of Wallerstein’s model (Sherratt 2009: 9). According to Stein, instead, the application of a world-system theory to non-capitalist, pre-fifteenth-century societies distorts our understanding of developmental change by overemphasizing the role of external over internal dynamics (Stein 1999: 26). Most importantly, as argued in this research, a World System approach, even when adopting the loose framework proposed by Chase-Dunn and Hall, still minimizes the role of “peripheries”, as well as their social groups and individuals (Lightfoot and Martinez ; Dietler 1998: 299).

World System theory, nonetheless, has been accepted and used by several scholars, especially in research on Mediterranean trade (e.g. Rice 1998; Bell 2006; Kardulias 2009; Sherratt 2009). Other studies have employed a World System framework not only in the case of commercial exchanges, but also in situations of imperial interactions, aiming to understand the economy, political structure, and process of imperial formation and collapse (Sinopoli 1995: 4). In relevance to the present research, various scholars have stressed the importance of economic processes to understand the history and social changes of Egyptian imperialism in the Southern Levant (Liverani 1988; Higginbotham 2000; Killebrew 2005; Flammini 2010; Cohen 2016). Extremely influential was the study by C. Higginbotham, according to whom Egyptian and Egyptian-style artefacts in the LBA Southern Levant can be explained as a result either of direct Egyptian rule and presence or of local elite emulation (Higginbotham 2000: 10-16). Higginbotham argued that LBA Palestine presented a mixed administrative

system, where, in addition to a limited Egyptian presence, local princes remained in charge of their polities. The latter, located as they were at the periphery of Egyptian civilization, would have selected and incorporated Egyptian material culture and styles into their own cultural repertoires for the purpose of garnering local social capital (Higginbotham 2000: 141-42). Similar conclusions are reached by Flammini, though in the earlier context of MBA relations between Egypt and the Levant. According to the scholar, the Canaanite MBA elite belongs to a periphery, opposed to the Egyptian core. Therefore, the material culture of MBA Levant can be explained, in the light of this relationship, as a phenomenon of elite emulation (Flammini 2010). Also in partial agreement with Higginbotham is Killebrew, who defines the Egyptian presence in the LBA Palestine as an “administrative” imperialism. Archaeological evidence - from this perspective - is mainly used to identify the administrative and military presence of the dominant power (Killebrew 2005: 81-83).

These approaches, especially if compared to the previous textual driven interpretations (see Chapter 1), have the merit to return analytical emphasis, at least in part, to the archaeological record. Furthermore, they succeed in bringing the attention to cultural and social interactions. However, the main problem common to the above approaches is that they fail - by and large - to acknowledge the complexities of a cultural or imperial encounter. They are focused too intently on the dominant power and, therefore, result in a partial and incomplete account and analysis of available archaeological data. In the case of the Egyptian domination in the Levant, in particular, this approach still reproduces, as those textual-focused interpretations, the Egyptian imperial narrative, only from a different, i.e. material, perspective.

The context of an imperial encounter, however, is extremely complex and cannot be only exemplified by a rigid dichotomy. While it is indeed characterised by an asymmetry of power at an administrative level, it is important to remark that not every context is affected by the imperial situation, and everyday life goes on with limited interactions with the imperial structure (Khatchadourian 2016). In understanding this complexity, most archaeological approaches to empire and colonialism have long moved away from the acculturation models that underlie notions such as ‘Romanization’ or ‘Hellenization’ (e.g. Droysen 1843; Haverfield 1915; for discussion, see Woolf 2000). On the contrary, research on Egyptian imperialism still largely insists

retaining 'Egyptianization' as a valid model of cultural change. In the attempt to acknowledge the complexity of the encounter between Egypt and the Southern Levant, I will now present a third approach to the study of culture contacts, represented by postcolonial studies. This is the framework adopted in the present thesis and, therefore, the next few sections, after presenting an outline of the main theories, will analyse the reasons for this choice and how this approach will be employed in the research.

3.4 Postcolonial studies

As the critiques to World Systems increased from the later 1990s onwards, new perspectives and methodologies started to be proposed by scholars looking for a more flexible way of studying local histories within larger scale processes. An emphasis on the local milieu and on the individual is the main characteristic of these approaches, which focus on indigenous agency and recognise the roles of both locals and foreigners in bringing about cultural change as the result of their encounter. These approaches have been grouped under the label of "postcolonial" studies.

There have been different uses of the term, which has been sometimes written with a hyphen and others as one word. Generally, "post-colonial" is referred to the period after colonialism: it has been used by economists, political scientists, and anthropologists dealing with the events following the colonisation of Third World countries by western authorities. The use of the term as one word, on the other hand, has been employed by academics when dealing with the theoretical approach that goes beyond colonialism, not only chronologically but mostly ideologically (van Dommelen 2006: 104).

The origins of postcolonial studies have to be sought in the critique of colonial approaches expressed by E. Said in *Orientalism* (Said 1979). Colonial studies, based on notions of race, unchangeable ethnicity, fixed nationality and language, were indeed employed even in archaeological research as a tool for controlling and justifying the western possessions through the establishment of a link with the past (Trigger 1989: 74). On the other hand, postcolonial approaches were characterised since the beginning by the attention to the issue of shifting boundaries and fluid identities, and to the continuous blending nature of colonial societies, carefully avoiding binary categories (van Dommelen 1997: 308-09;

Dietler 2010: 50; Knapp 2010: 194-95; van Dommelen and Knapp 2010: 4). According to these approaches, the meeting of different cultures leads to the creation of new cultures, in a creative process distinguished by fluidity, ambiguity, and ambivalence, and by the adoption and rejection of foreign materials and practices (van Dommelen 2002: 129; Knapp and van Dommelen 2008: 31). Culture is in fact a fluid entity, constantly changing in response to both external and internal factors (Hodos 2010: 15). The fluidity of culture, in a context of contact, permits the creation of different identities that are not just a simple combination of the local and colonial cultures, but entirely new entities (Knapp 2008: 47). In this conception, contact between cultures can be defined as a cultural encounter, in agreement with Stein, where both colonisers and colonised played an important role in the definition of their identities (Stein 2005: 17).

A postcolonial perspective therefore provides us with the opportunity to re-empower those traditionally envisaged as passive in the context of imperial or colonial encounters (Given 2004: 13), and offer a more balanced perspective to the interpretation of archaeological evidence from imperial and colonial situations. The connection of postcolonial approaches and archaeology, in particular with material culture studies, is fairly recent, but it has been encouraged as a productive analytical tool (van Dommelen 2006: 120). Such approaches have already been employed, for instance, in the study of colonial encounters in the western Mediterranean (e.g. Delgado and Ferrer 2007; Counts 2008; Vives-Ferrándiz 2008; Ioannis Voskos and A. Bernard Knapp 2008; Van Dommelen 2012). Only a small number of scholars, by contrast, have employed this theoretical framework for the interpretation of the ancient Levant, and they have done so exclusively with regards to cultural transformations taking place in the first millennium B.C. (Hitchcock and Maeir 2013; Bunimovitz and Lederman 2015).

The application of a postcolonial perspective to the LBA Southern Levant, nevertheless, makes it possible to consider the inhabitants of Palestine as active participants with an effective role in constituting the LBA society. This allows us to focus our attention on what happens during and as a result of imperial encounters, on the cultural negotiations that take place between imperial and local agents, and on the ongoing, creative co-production of new and varyingly shared cultural norms and traditions (van Dommelen 2006: 137; Ioannis Voskos

and A. Bernard Knapp 2008: 661; Tırpan 2013: 471). This continuous and mutual process is known as hybridisation, which can be defined as the ambivalence produced by the encounter of cultural differences in a colonial context (Bhabha 1994: 110; van Dommelen 1997: 309; Silliman 2013: 493).

The concept of hybridity has been originally developed by M. Bakhtin as a linguistic model (Bakhtin 1981: 305), but it was H.K. Bhabha who later applied it to colonial contexts (Bhabha 1994). Bhabha describes hybridity as a process that reverses the structures of the colonial authority and that can be addressed as a practice of appropriation and resistance. The author expanded this view to create the so-called “third space”, where the mixed cultural formation is theoretically located and thus can be analysed (Bhabha 1994: 38). Postcolonial studies in archaeology have brought the concept to new light, also thanks to a discussion on its terminology. In particular, Van Dommelen has pointed out that the term “hybridity” has little analytical strength. This word refers to the observation of different objects combined and, therefore, does not improve our understanding of the entire context. Conversely, the term “hybridisation” is better suited and succeeds to provide a conceptual tool, describing the process underlying the cultural mixture and helping to define the effect of mixed cultural practices and material culture (van Dommelen 2006: 119). It is for the first time with B. Knapp and I. Voskos that the terminology has been completely detached from the constraint of a colonial dominance. The authors stress that in different cases of cultural encounter, all the cultures involved contribute to the shaping of the hybridised cultures (Knapp 2008: 57-61; Ioannis Voskos and A. Bernard Knapp 2008: 661).

Postcolonial approaches, nevertheless, have not been exempt from critiques. Among them are the tendency to deal in a homogeneous way with colonial encounters, to neglect the material aspect of colonialism, and to stress too much subjectivity - denying any real scientific objectivity (Young 2003: 3). They have also been criticised for their excessive tendency to focus on local contexts, paying less attention to general models (Turner 1995: 204; Dirlik 1998; Parry 2004; Gosden 2012: 241-43, 52). The use of the concepts of hybridity/hybridisation, in particular, has been accused of perceiving cultural stasis as the default condition and of conceiving a pre-existing state of ‘purity’ (Silliman 2013: 491). Particularly critical of the concept is P.W. Stockhammer, who argues that archaeologists tend to perceive as hybrid all those objects

which seem to resist classification within predefined taxonomies (Stockhammer 2012: 46; 2013: 11).

As a result, several scholars have proposed alternative designations to hybridisation, for example creolization, mestizaje, syncretism, appropriation, or entanglement (Webster 2001; Hahn 2004: 220-24; Stewart 2011: 50; Hodder 2012; Stockhammer 2012: 49-51; Bader 2013: 260-62). However, the concept here supported is wider than what Stockhammer and others attack. Especially in the light of van Dommelen's terminology, hybridisation is not just limited to objects, and certainly not only to those who do not clearly classify in predetermined typologies. In archaeological terms, hybridization is visible in products, but also in practices and traditions displaying features belonging to both the indigenous and the colonising cultures. These are the outcomes of a constant negotiation between the two cultures, marked by both acceptance and resistance to different materials and practices (Given 2004: 163).

Another major critique to postcolonial studies is the importance given to individual agency. As above mentioned, one of the aims of postcolonial theory is to re-empower the colonised in the analytical literature, giving them individuality, choice, and an active role in society with agency theory (Given 2004, 13). Social agents have been humanised to become socially embedded people, while the structures in which they live and those they create have started to be viewed in a more dialectic relationship (Giddens and Dallmayr 1982; Bourdieu 1986; Garfinkel 1991). The main critiques to this concept, not just limited to postcolonial approaches, are the difficulty of detecting agency in archaeology - especially in pre-historic contexts - the risk of projecting modern ideas into past cultures, and the actual capacity of people to act outside the limits of their social structure (Dobres and Robb 2000: 13; Jones 2010; Barrett 2012: 61). In postcolonial studies, however, there is no purpose to invoke a wide concept of agency, where indeterminacy and intentionality lead the interpretation. At the same time, postcolonial agency is not limited to the economic sphere, as it was in structuralist approaches. The intention is instead to grasp a more complete picture of human needs, ambitions, and desires as mechanisms for promoting social change (Given 2004: 13-15).

Analysing the archaeological evidence through the lens of hybridisation, therefore, allows us to understand how hybrid cultures are generated and develop (van Dommelen 2006: 119). In the imperial context of LBA Palestine,

this framework permits us to overcome previous unidirectional approaches, only stressing the agency of the Egyptian culture. It discloses a different meaning of the hybridised material culture itself and of the relationship between the people behind it.

In this study, therefore, I employ a postcolonial approach to the study of the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Southern Levant in the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. This approach, and the concept of hybridisation more specifically, can be fruitfully employed to shed a new and more nuanced light on Egyptian-Levantine imperial relationships. Before turning to the analysis of the archaeological evidence, I will present in the next section how I will apply this framework to my research.

3.5 A material culture approach

The postcolonial framework, as above examined, provides suitable tools to analyse different situations of cultural encounter and, more specifically, the imperial relation here analysed. The research will explore traces of hybridisation in the Southern Canaanite area, the so-called Wadi Gaza. The analysis will start on a regional scale and will then move on to a local scale with the study of two selected sites, Tell el-^cAjjul and Tell el-Far^cah. The reasons for this choice have been outlined in Chapter 2 and will be explained in more detail in Chapters 4-6. For every case study, including the regional analysis, this study will examine the physical and social contexts of consumption of material culture, which, as seen above, is vital for detecting the process of hybridisation.

For every site the thesis will discuss the more significant archaeological evidence that bear traces of the hybridisation process between Egypt and the Wadi Gaza region. This research employs the main concepts of this approach through a contextual analysis of material culture. Indeed, it is solely through a grasp at the local context in which the above mentioned societies operated that we can appreciate hybridised materials and practices and understand the reasons behind their actions and perceptions (Jiménez 2011: 118; van Dommelen and Rowlands 2012: 22).

Material culture is a meaningful tool in a context of cultural encounter, as it gives insights into the practices of the colonised, highlighting different beliefs and traditions (van Dommelen 2006: 112). In particular, it allows the

investigation of both extraordinary and routine practices (Bourdieu 1986: 52-65), the latter being typically absent from historical documents. Moreover, material culture facilitates the understanding of interactions between non-locals and indigenous groups, highlighting the contributions of each culture and stressing how objects are culturally redefined and used (Kopytoff 1986: 67-68; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 274-78; Thomas 1991: 205-06; van Dommelen and Rowlands 2012: 22; Villing and Spataro 2015: 17).

This research will examine different kinds of material evidence, but it will particularly focus on pottery remains. Ceramics are, more than any other class of materials, a great means for re-empowering the traditionally 'passive' groups, in line with the postcolonial concepts. Pots were used by every stratum of the population, for a variety of practices. They represent the agency of the Egyptian and Canaanite cultures, therefore providing a reliable dataset to study their active role in the negotiation of imperial relationships, while detecting processes of hybridisation. However, especially in the field of Levantine archaeology, pottery has been seen primarily as a chronological tool or as an ethnic marker, leading scholars to classify vessels in strict typologies loaded with excessive meaning. In the context of the Egyptian domination over the Levant, for instance, some influential pottery studies are M. Martin's examination of Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery in Levantine sites and A. Fantalkin's study of coarse kitchen and household pottery. Both authors, however, tend to fall into those misleading practices, composing rigid categorisations and connecting absence or presence of specific types to an ethnicity or gender (Martin 2011: 262; Fantalkin 2015). Even though their conclusions are not to be discarded, these approaches do not allow us to understand the more complex picture of human interactions occurred in this cultural encounter. In the present thesis there will be no attempt to compile a new typology of the wares analysed. The main interest here is not in categorising pottery through morphological or stylistic criteria, but to investigate practices and behaviours in a context of imperial encounter in the local milieu of the Wadi Gaza. Nevertheless, typologies, when theoretically oriented towards the solution of some specific research questions, can be useful, providing a good starting point to organize the material for future studies (Miller 1985: 10). In accordance with this last statement, it is considered important to have a typological reference as a ground for the study of vessels, devoid of any rigid application. A critical use of

typologies, for instance, could be beneficial for detecting wares that do not fit a given morphological structure, helping us define the materiality of the hybridisation process.

As an alternative to these qualitative studies, ceramics have been examined using quantitative approaches, either in terms of pottery quantification or chemical and petrographic analyses. The problems of this approach, however, cannot be underestimated, especially when dealing with old excavations not organised according to scientific methodologies and aims, as it is the case of the sites here analysed. Sampling is a major issue, especially in Petrie's excavations (see Chapter 1), though this is a general limitation of the archaeological context, which is intrinsically incomplete (Lis 2015: 104; Rice 2015: 205-07). The contribution to knowledge of scientific analyses is not here disregarded. However, these have not been directly performed as part of this research and they will only be reported in the presence of existing studies corroborated by recognised publications. Residue analyses and petrography can indeed provide valuable information on the content of ceramic vessels or on their provenance and, therefore, help us analyse the function and usage of the assemblage.

In general, however, this research opted for a different kind of qualitative approach, which belongs to the so-called performance-based life history approach (Schiffer 2010; Skibo 2013; Rice 2015). This method analyses the life story of the vessel: its production, its diverse uses through time, and its recontextualization. To this end it is particularly informative the concept of *chaîne opératoire*, which is defined as the procedures transforming raw materials into a finished product (Cresswell 1976: 13). The operational effectiveness of applying this approach to pottery studies has been clearly outlined by Roux (2016). The *chaîne opératoire* method allows us to identify the transmission of technological processes through the observation of procedural traditions within social groups (Roux 2016: 113). Also important for the aims of this research is the concept of behavioural chain. This focuses on the life of the artefact after its production, and therefore in connection to its various uses until its disposal (Skibo 2013: 8). In the situation of imperial encounter here examined, these two methods assume major significance, as they can support our understanding of the reasons and the modes in which different technologies and traditions were borrowed between the interacting cultures. As a result of

this, therefore, they can improve our comprehension of the role of this encounter in the reshaping of both cultures.

Some successful attempts to implement this perspective are instead exemplified, for instance, by the study of IA cooking pots by Ben-Shlomo (Ben-Shlomo *et al.* 2008). The use of pottery, and in general of material culture, applied by Ben-Shlomo and proposed in the present research draws upon the definition of *habitus* proposed by Bourdieu. This is the set of dispositions through which individuals act, reflecting all the intertwining identities in which they recognize themselves (Bourdieu 1986: 169-225). Vessels, as containers connected to food preparation and consumption, are an important indicator of these identities. Behaviours connected to food preparation and consumption are in a dialectic relationship with identity: the food that we eat is defined by our culture and at the same time it contributes to defining our belonging to a social group (Samuel 1999) (Samuel 1999: 121; Bray 2003; Orton and Hughes 2013: 227; Villing and Spataro 2015: 13). Foodways can drive change as well as encourage tradition and their alteration can be a result of cultural interactions (Goody 1982: 33-39). Moreover, food is linked to status and wealth and, therefore, is an indicator of economic and social divisions.

The act of eating and sharing food is in many cultures embedded with meaning, such as symbolic representations of social relations (Dietler 2001: 89). Meals cooked and served in specific occasions, like feasts, are different from those cooked in the everyday life. Feasts are distinguished by the kind of food prepared, the containers in which it is prepared and served, the place of consumption, plus some events (e.g. performance) that might have accompanied the meal (Green 2004: 205). The benefits of holding a feast have been described by various scholars, and include the strengthening of relationships between groups, the request of support, the creation and showcase of political power and control of goods on behalf of the elite (Hayden 2001) (Hayden 2001: 29-30). In contexts of imperial dominations, as the LBA Southern Levant, food was used by empires in feasting activities as a negotiation tool for relationships serving their political agenda (Bray 2003: 2). Pottery has therefore a specific and important social value for these elite, who, even if they could have afforded more luxurious and expensive containers, show a conspicuous use of plain pottery (Glatz 2015: 185). Therefore, the identification of food and drink consumption in this context, if positively connected to commensal activities, can shed light

on patterns of social interaction and the underlying cultural processes. These practices can give us an insight into the relationship between Egyptians and locals, their perception of their own cultural identity and of their way to relate to the otherness.

In order to successfully gather this information from the archaeological evidence, I have personally analysed material from Wadi Gaza sites kept in different museums and collections of the UK. Most of these items belong to the UCL collection, with minor assemblages from the Manchester Museum, Ashmolean Museum, Boston Museum, British Museum, and The Hunterian, Glasgow.

For all the observed items, I have taken photographs and recorded the main macroscopic observations (measurements, fabric colour and composition, firing and manufacture techniques, decoration). An important feature for the topic of this thesis was recognising the place of manufacture for the pottery. Especially with regards to pottery of Egyptian shape, it was paramount to understand whether these wares had been manufactured locally or had been imported from Egypt. In the remainder of the thesis, I will refer to the former as Egyptian-style wares, while the latter will be simply categorised as Egyptian wares. Even though I did not perform any petrographic analyses, previous studies on pottery, both imported and locally produced in the Southern Levant, have made it possible to make some comparisons (Martin 2011: 99-108).

The classification here used relies on previous studies, mostly by Mario Martin and the so-called Vienna system (Bourriau and Nordström 1993; Martin 2011: 92). According to such system, Egyptian pottery can be broadly categorised into Nile clay and Marl clay shapes. Martin's study on Egyptian pottery in the Southern Levant convincingly concluded that vessels in Nile clay shapes, used in Egypt as household wares, were locally produced in the Southern Levant using local clays. Conversely, Marl clay shapes, commonly employed as transport wares, were imported from Egypt (Martin 2011: 91). These conclusions were also attested in my visual examination of Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery from the Wadi Gaza. Imports (i.e. Marl clays) were characterised by their fine calcareous clay. They present few organic inclusions but a wide range, in varied quantities and sizes, of mineral inclusions. Marl clay vessels are usually fired at high temperatures, resulting in a hard and compact sherd. On the other hand, local clays were used in a variety of pottery shapes which in Egypt are

usually manufactured using Nile clays. Local wares in the Wadi Gaza area are mostly produced in the same region, sometimes in the vicinity of the site (evidence of pottery making facilities have been investigated, for example, at Deir el-Balah, see Chapter 4). For the manufacture of these Egyptian-style vessels, potters used the same clay employed in the production of Canaanite pottery, although mixing it with significant amounts of straw. This feature, resulting in a porous ware, is visible to the naked eye and makes the vessel soft and fragile. This technology has been recognised by Martin as being functional to mass produced wares and, at the same time, typical of the Egyptian tradition, as attested in Nile clay wares as well (Martin 2011, 98).

To sum up, material culture, and pottery in particular, will be a central focus of this research. All of this data will be examined in a diachronic perspective, aimed at detecting changes in the practices and materials of the Southern Levantine societies, stressing differences between the pre-imperial period, the MBA, and the following LBA. The gathered evidence will be used to build a more balanced narrative of the period under examination, identifying the social issues of Southern Palestine in the MBA/LBA transition and the relationship between Egyptians and locals.

3.6 A new interpretative framework for Egyptian imperialism

As above presented, theoretical frameworks on culture contact and, specifically, on Egyptian imperialism, have too often relied on the literal interpretation of written sources or on binary approaches, including acculturation or World System theories. Conversely, this research argues that an interpretative framework based on postcolonial concepts can provide a transformative perspective on the imperial encounter between Egypt and Palestine in the LBA. The key concept of hybridisation has been considered especially appropriate when dealing with the LBA Levantine society. It can help restore the agency of those traditionally envisaged as passive groups and gain a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between Egyptian and Canaanite people in the local context.

The way to detect this process is through a contextual evaluation of the material culture. Pottery will be the main tool, though other kinds of archaeological evidence will be analysed as well, with a special focus on those

deemed as representative of the hybridisation process between the two cultures. The material will be examined with a critical reference to typologies and the current literature on the topic, in order to define their material and functional properties. The method of this examination will be a performance-based life history approach, which focuses on the artefacts and their story, from production to disposal. Drawing upon the concepts of *habitus*, chaîne opératoire, and life stories, this research will move beyond typological classification and investigate the social and political meaning of pottery consumption.

Having laid the ground of the selected theoretical and methodological frameworks, in the next three chapters this research will discuss the archaeological evidence from the Wadi Gaza area. It will begin with a regional scale analysis (Chapter 4) to then move on to a site assessment (Chapters 5 and 6) and recognise how traces of hybridisation in these contexts can provide a more balanced account of the imperial relationship between Egypt and Palestine in the 2nd millennium B.C.

4 Settlement patterns and imperial encounter in the Wadi Gaza area

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses how the interaction of Egypt and Southern Palestine is reflected at a regional scale in the Wadi Gaza area. The region undergoes marked political changes in the MBA-LBA transition, which are revealed by a settlement analysis and an examination of the material culture of selected sites. Situating the archaeological evidence of these two periods within their socio-political and material context will help us assess the political and social changes that occurred as a result of the encounter between Egyptians and the local population in the LBA.

The Wadi Gaza region has been selected for this study for two main reasons: its strategic position in the imperial conquest of the Southern Levant; and its relevance in the previous literature (see Chapter 1). As a main node on the Egypt-Palestine highway on the southern coast of Palestine, the area was of paramount importance to Egypt's commercial, political, and military contacts with the rest of the Syro-Canaanite region. Its main LBA centre, Gaza, is also considered to be the endpoint of the way of Horus, the route along the Mediterranean through North Sinai, and a main stop on the Via Maris, connecting Egypt with Mesopotamia and the Northern Levant (Aharoni 1979: 42-43; D. A. Dorsey 1991: 59, map 1; Morris 2005: 49, note 78).

As already mentioned in Chapter 2, the interpretation of written sources has played a dominant role in the reconstruction of the historical and socio-political events of the Bronze Age Southern Levant. The Wadi Gaza area, in particular, has been central in studies of Egyptian imperialism in Palestine. Many scholars believe it to have been the seat of the Hyksos kingdom in the MBA Levant, attacked and conquered by the first pharaohs of the NK. This narrative is largely derived from the Egyptian texts of the early NK and the inscriptions and diplomatic correspondence of the LBA, presented in the previous chapter. As examined earlier, a new interpretation of this evidence, based on contextualised archaeological materials, is required to gain a balanced and evidence-based understanding of this imperial encounter.

This chapter, therefore, will provide an investigation of the archaeological remains from the main 2nd millennium published sites in the Wadi Gaza area. The evidence from these sites, considered at a macro-scale and in their socio-political context, will help determine the political organisation of the area and its changes from the MBA to the LBA. My analysis will stress the role of the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Levant in generating these shifts. However, in accordance with the postcolonial framework employed here, the discussion will focus on the creation of hybridised materials and on how the agency of Canaanite and Egyptian agents reshaped the LBA culture of the Wadi Gaza area.

4.2 The Wadi Gaza area: the southernmost region of Canaan during MBA and LBA

The Wadi Gaza region occupies a position of strategic importance on the southern coastal plain overlooking the Mediterranean (Figure 4.1). At least 14 tells were inhabited during the Bronze Age: these are located along the banks of the Wadi Gaza, which springs from the Negev hills, and its main tributary, the Wadi Gerar.

The area has been explored by several expeditions, mostly led by the British School of Archaeology in London and the Ben Gurion University of the Negev (Petrie 1928; Petrie 1930; 1931; W. M. F. Petrie 1932; Petrie 1933; 1934; Petrie *et al.* 1952; Oren 1972; Biran 1974; Oren and Mazar 1974; Dothan 1979b; Oren 1982; Seger 1983; Seger *et al.* 1990; Oren 1993; Clarke and Steel 2000; Fischer 2000; Fischer and Sadeq 2000; 2002; Fischer 2003b; Clarke *et al.* 2004; Steel and Clarke *and et al.* 2004; Dothan *et al.* 2010; Lehmann *et al.* 2010; Ben-Shlomo 2012; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). Unfortunately, much of this research has been affected by several levels of bias. From a regional point of view, the region lacks extensive surveys, resulting in the possible absence from the available records of several smaller sites. Only a few sites have been subject to extensive excavations and/or excavated using scientific methods (Table 4.1). Tell Jemmeh and Deir el-Balah represent the most modern examples, even though they were excavated between the 1970s and 1980s. Tell el-^cAjjul and Tell el-Far^cah represent instead the oldest data available and their bias is discussed in Chapter 1. Another issue is represented by sites only published in

preliminary form, such as Tel Sera^c, Tel Haror, Tell Halif, and Qubur al-Walayda, the latter being excavated in recent years (2007-2010). Finally, some of the sites are only known through salvage excavations, preliminary soundings, or survey, and have been only partially published.



Figure 4.1. Satellite view of the Wadi Gaza area with the 2nd millennium sites mentioned in this chapter

This situation might create some bias in our analysis. However, as also discussed in Chapter 1 with regards to Petrie's method, this data is still valuable and cannot be ignored in an analysis of the imperial relations between 2nd

millennium Palestine and Egypt. Bearing in mind this bias, which is typical of most archaeological studies, the available data, integrated with contextual information and analysed through the proposed methods (see Chapter 3), will allow us to address our designed research questions.

4.3 Settlement analysis

As discussed in an earlier chapter (see 2.2), the period of Egyptian imperialism has often been interpreted as an age of decline for the Southern Levant. Egyptian texts claiming the collapse of the MBA Levant have found confirmation in archaeological accounts of destruction and abandonment layers at several Canaanite sites (Dever 1987). Previous scholarship on the LBA Southern Levant, therefore, argued that many settlements were destroyed at the end of the MBA and abandoned for some period, while new settlements were rarely attested (see Chapter 1). The same has been said for the Gaza area: this was believed to be the southern line of defence of the Canaanite kingdoms, the “Reign of Sharuhén” (e.g. A. Kempinski 1992: 189; Oren 1997). It would have represented the main Hyksos stronghold in the Southern Levant, destroyed by the Egyptian army with most of its settlements at the end of the MBA (Kochavi 1993: 936; Burdajewicz 2000: 31).

However, an overview of settlements and population density shows that the decay proposed by previous scholarship might have been exaggerated or that past interpretations oversimplified a more complex process. It seems clear, instead, how different areas of the Southern Levant reacted differently to the political and social changes that occurred at the end of the MBA. In the next section, I will present the survey data from the Wadi Gaza region for the MBA and LBA periods, analysing their settlement pattern, size, and distribution. I will then compare the two periods and discuss some of the social and political implications gathered from the evidence.

Site	Period of occupation	MBA size (ha)	LBA size (ha)	References	Available data
Tel Haror	MBA - LBA	16.2	1-3	Burke 2008: table 18	Excavations
Tell el- ^c Ajjul	MB III - LBA	10	10 (LB I-IIA), <1 (end of the LBA)	Jasmin 2006; Burke 2008: table 18	Excavations
Tell el-Far ^c ah	MBA - LBA	3.1	6.5	Jasmin 2006: 176	Excavations
Tell Jemmeh	MBA - LBA	4.9	4.9	Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014: 3	Excavations
Tell Sera ^c	MBA - LBA	1.5	2-3	Jasmin 2006: 184	Excavations
Tell Ridan	MBA - LBA	0.2	0.2	Biran 1974	Salvage excavations
Tell Ali Muntar	MBA-LBA	>0.1 (0.01)	>0.1 (0.01)	Clarke and Steel 2000; Clarke <i>et al.</i> 2004: 35	Survey
Ziqim	MBA-LBA	Unknown	Unknown	Clarke and Steel 1999: 224	Survey
El-Moghraqa	MBA (LBA?)	Unknown	abandoned	Steel <i>et al.</i> 2002	Survey, soundings
Gaza	LBA?	N/A	10-50	Clarke <i>et al.</i> 2004: 31, 33; Jasmin 2006: 176	Soundings
Deir el-Balah	LBA	N/A	4	Jasmin 2006: 176	Excavations
Tell Halif	LBA	End of LB IB	1-3	Jasmin 2006: 184	Excavations
Qubur al-Walaida	LB II	N/A	0.4-1	Cohen 1978; Finkelstein 1996a: 239	Excavations
Tel Ma ^c aravim	LB II	N/A	0.2-0.3	Oren and Mazar 1974	Soundings

Table 4.1. Comparative table of the sites in the Wadi Gaza during the Second Millennium B.C.

4.3.1 Settlement analysis: the MBA

The MBA Southern Levant has been designated as a large, integrated urban system (Bunimovitz 1993a: 146; Bunimovitz 1993b: 445; Bunimovitz 1995: 323) centred around city-states (e.g. Dever 1987: 165; Bunimovitz 1993b; Na'aman 1997; Hasel 1998). However, the term city-state has attracted criticism, as it is an imprecise expression, used in a variety of different contexts, and with little explanatory value (Jasmin 2006b: 162; Burke 2008: 119-21). Borrowed from modern studies on Greek *poleis*, the term assumes the presence of an independent city government and is more suitable in accounts of the IA Levantine administration than the Bronze Age system (Liverani 1996: 251; Liverani 2002). For this reason, I will use alternative terms, for instance small kingdoms or polities, to define the political and territorial entities of the Canaanite Bronze Age landscape (Ilan 1995: 305; Liverani 2002).

In the Wadi Gaza area, 9 sites with remains dated to the MBA have been distinguished. Excavation data are available for the sites of Tel Haror (Oren 1982; Oren 1993), Tell el-^cAjjul (Petrie 1931; W. M. F. Petrie 1932; Petrie 1933; 1934; Petrie *et al.* 1952), Tell el-Far^cah (Petrie 1930; Macdonald *et al.* 1932; Starkey and Harding 1932), Tell Jemmeh (Petrie 1928), and Tel Sera^c (Oren 1972; Oren 1982). Some preliminary soundings have been performed at the site of El-Moghraqa Steel and Clarke *and et al.* 2004: and salvage excavations at Tell Ridan (Biran 1974). The two sites of Tell Ali Muntar and Ziqim are only known from survey (Clarke and Steel 1999; 2000; Clarke *et al.* 2004).

In this period, all settlements are distributed either around the Wadi Gaza and its main tributary, the Wadi Gerar, or on the coast (Figure 4.2). The largest is Tel Haror, with a surface of 16.2 ha (Burke 2008: table 18). This is located in a central position within the region, halfway through the length of the Wadi Gerar. A short distance to the East lies the 1.5 ha Tel Sera^c (Jasmin 2006a: 184). Along the Wadi Gaza to the South, are the 4.9 ha Tell Jemmeh (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014: 3), and 3.1 ha Tell el-Far^cah (Jasmin 2006a: 176). The remaining sites are located along or in proximity to the coast. Centrally located here, on the outlet of the Wadi Gaza, is Tell el-^cAjjul, a centre covering a surface of roughly 10 ha (Burke 2008: table 18), and the adjacent site of Tell El-Moghraqa, located only 700m away. El-Moghraqa's MBA extension, when it was a satellite settlement or even continuation of Tell el-^cAjjul. has not been yet estimated, though it has been given a 15 ha area for the EBA, (Clarke and Steel 1999: 215;

Steel and Manley *and et al.* 2004: 84-85). Were El-Moghraqa's possible status as a continuation of Tell el-^cAjjul to be confirmed, it would change the estimated size of Tell el-^cAjjul. Unfortunately, archaeological research at the site has been limited to two brief campaigns in 1999 and 2000, which were interrupted by the Second Intifada and are unlikely to be resumed in the near future. Less than 10 km distance from Tell el-^cAjjul, on its North-East, is the small site of Tell Ali Muntar, measuring 0.01 ha (Clarke *et al.* 2004: 35), while around 15 km North on the coast is Ziqim, whose measurements are not known. Also near the coast, but south of Tell el-^cAjjul, is Tel Ridan, another small settlement of roughly 0.2 ha (Biran 1974).

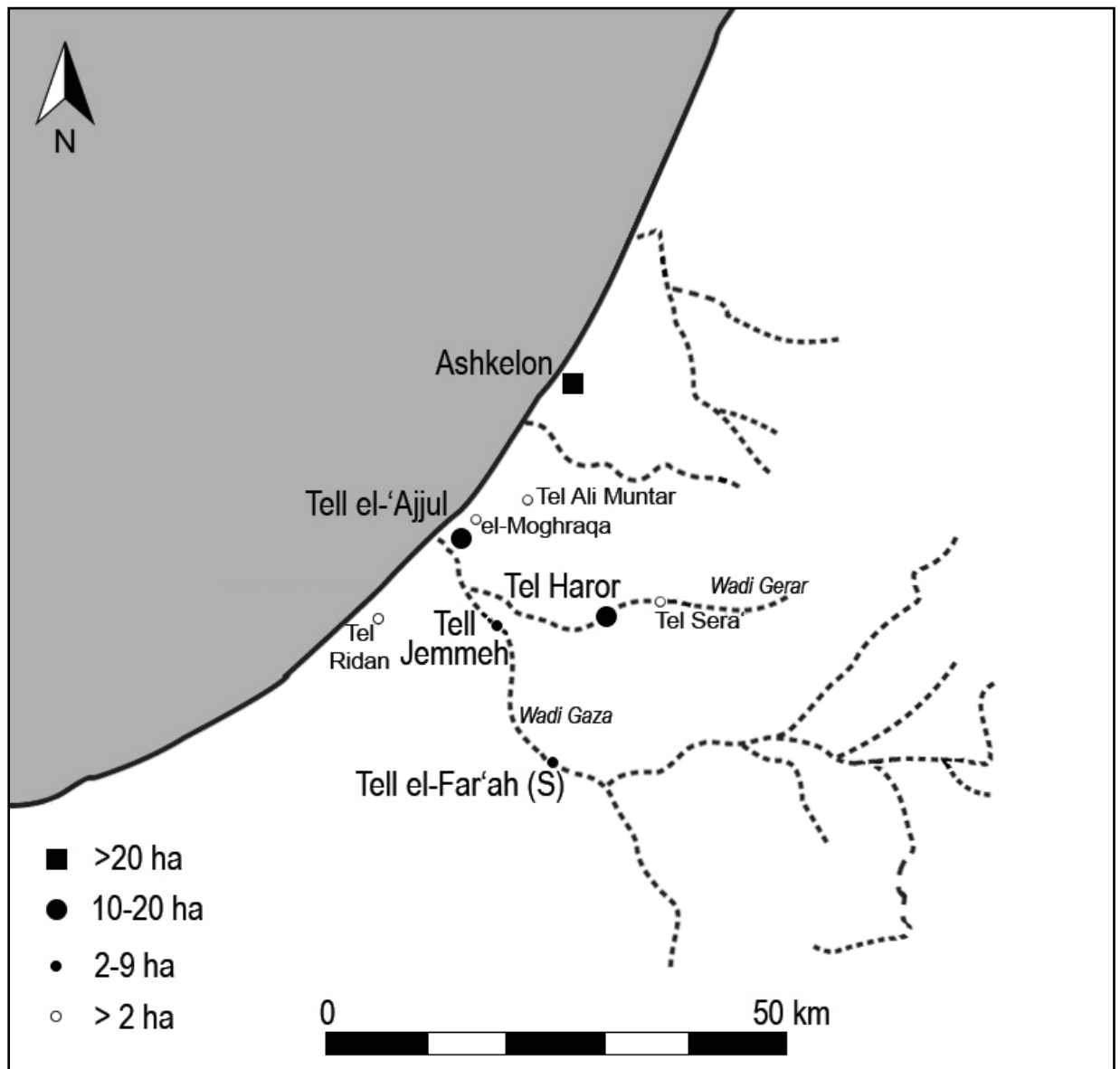


Figure 4.2. Map of the Wadi Gaza area with MBA sites discussed in this chapter and indication of their size.

Rank-size analyses can be useful in assessing the organisation of the area and the different spatial relationships between sites. Scholars have usually divided the organisation of Bronze Age Canaanite settlement into a rank-size hierarchy, with a number of proposed tiers ranging from two to six (Kotter 1986: 504; Wolff 1991: 285; Bunimovitz 1994: 5; Jasmin 2006b; Burke 2008: 104). A convincing theory is proposed by A. Burke who, based on a rank-size analysis and an examination of the southern coastal area, argues that this integrated system in this southern coastal region during the MBA was centred around the polity of Ashkelon (Burke 2008: 125-39). Whilst Ashkelon does not strictly belong to the Gaza area, being located more than 20 km north of the Wadi Gaza, it represents the largest MBA settlement in the whole Southern coastal area of Palestine. It surpasses by far all the centres of the Wadi Gaza, with a ca 10 ha mound and 50 ha enclosure (Broshi and Gophna 1986: 83). Its finds point to the settlement's importance as a trading post that had intensive contact with Egypt, especially with Tell el-Dab^{ca} (Nakhai 2001: 353; Stager 2001a: 635). Some examples of these exchanges are provided by jars and boxes with scarab stamps recovered in the MB I town of Ashkelon, which would have been received from Egypt. Conversely, numerous amphorae of Levantine type common at Ashkelon were found in the Egyptian Hyksos capital of Avaris (Stager 2001b: 635).

According to Burke's regional analysis, based on the study of recorded fortifications in the area, Ashkelon's hinterland would have included small and medium-sized settlements between 5 and 22 ha in size (Burke 2008). The Gaza region in the MBA would have been part of this same kingdom, which included the whole southern coastal area from Tell Jemmeh in the South to Yavneh-Yam in the north and reaching Lachish in the East (Figure 4.3). Burke's interpretation, supported by this research, discloses the political organisation of the Southern coastal plain. Like the rest of the MBA Southern Levant, this area was composed of large kingdoms clustered around a major centre (Gonen 1984). Therefore, based on Burke's analysis and on a detailed overview of the Wadi Gaza area, I suggest a four-tier classification of the MBA Wadi Gaza area (Figure 4.4). The first tier would be represented by Ashkelon, the main centre of a wider polity encompassing the whole Southern Coastal plain. Without analysing the other sites included in this polity, but only those falling within the Gaza area, three more categories can be recognised. The first is composed by Tel Haror and Tell el-^cAjjul. These, measuring respectively 16.2 ha and 10 ha, were

the largest centres in the area during the MBA. They were also located in a significant position: Tel Haror is at the centre of the region, less than 25 km from every other site in the area and more or less the same distance from Ashkelon. It is also situated halfway through the Wadi Gerar, making it easy to reach any part of the region, including the coast, the central hills, and the Negev.

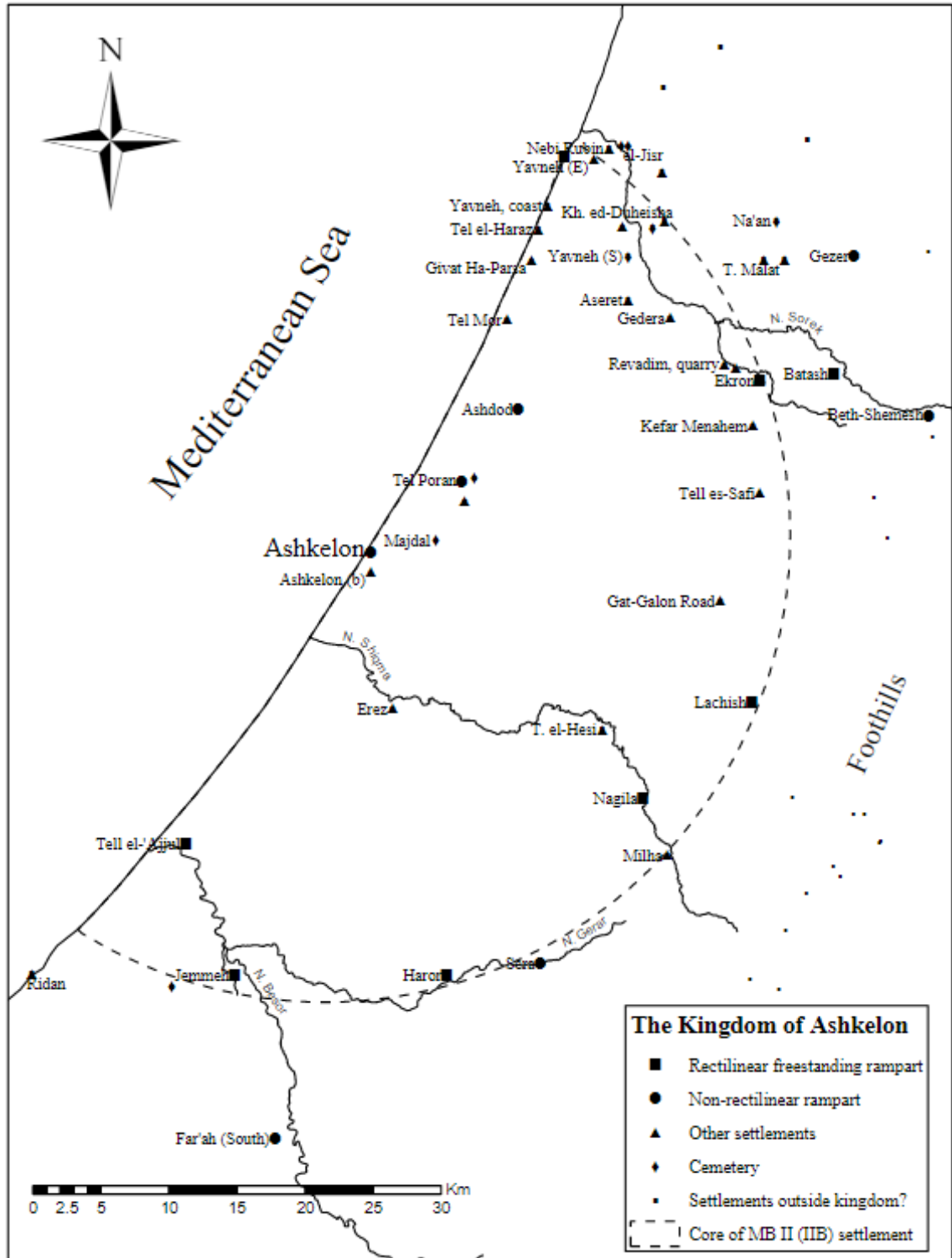


Figure 4.3. Geographical representation of the MB II-III kingdom of Ashkelon according to Burke (2008: fig. 13).

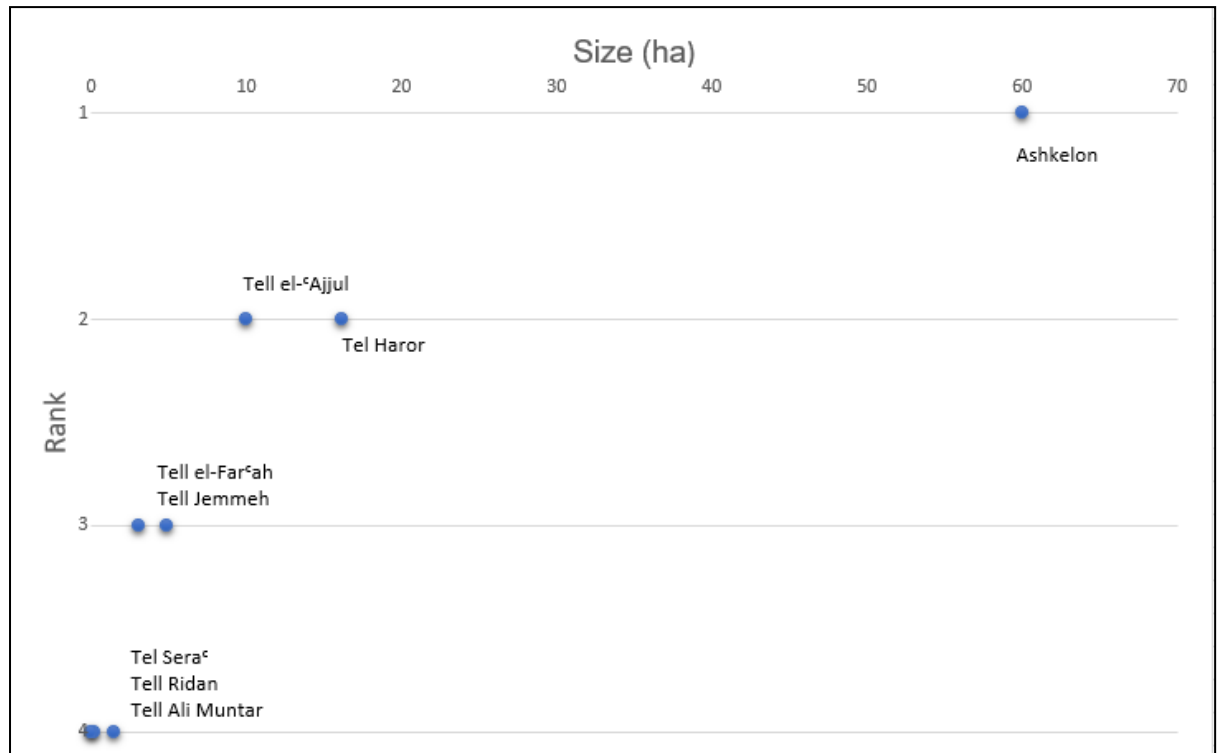


Figure 4.4. Graphic representing the rank-size analysis for the Wadi Gaza settlements in the MBA. The x-axis indicates the size in hectares of the settlements analysed, while the y-axis shows their rank. The graph clearly shows the gap between Ashkelon and the other sites, in keeping with its role as centre of the kingdom, as well as supporting the rank-size analysis outlined in the text.

A third tier can be recognised in the settlements of Tell Jemmeh and Tell el-Farʿah. These, being comprised between 3 and 5 ha, were intermediate in size. Moreover, even though situated on a strategic location, the Wadi Gaza, they are set at the edges of the region, especially Tell el-Farʿah. The fourth and final tier includes sites smaller than 2 ha and specifically Tel Seraʿ (1.5), Tel Ridan (0.2), and Tell Ali Muntar (0.01). These are located within 50 km of one of the major sites and can, by their size and location, be deemed minor villages. The dimensions of Ziqim and Tell el-Moghraqa, as above mentioned, are not known. However, due to el-Moghraqa's location, it can be considered one of Tell el-ʿAjjul's satellites. Unfortunately, little can be inferred about Ziqim besides its short distance from both Tell el-ʿAjjul and Ashkelon. It should also be remembered that more minor sites are probably missing from our records due to the lack of extensive surveys and the difficult political situation in the region (see Chapter 1).

From the data available, therefore, we can conclude that during the MBA the Wadi Gaza should not be considered as forming a standalone kingdom but as the southern part of a larger polity, centred at Ashkelon. This analysis has important repercussions for the interpretation of the area and the role of the

two centres that I will analyse in subsequent chapters, Tell el-ʿAjjul and Tell el-Farʿah. As main candidates for Sharuhēn (see Chapter 1), both, but especially Tell el-ʿAjjul, have been presumed to be the centre of a southern Canaanite polity. However, as seen above and analysed in more detail in the dedicated chapter, Tell el-ʿAjjul was a rather modest settlement of 10 ha. Despite benefitting from a prominent location on the Mediterranean coast, it does not appear to be the centre of a major MBA kingdom. Tell el-Farʿah was even smaller, measuring 3.1 ha, and was located on the southern edges of the area which, whilst favourable to external communications, is not appropriate for the alleged Hyksos headquarters. Compared with Ashkelon, I suggest that both Tell el-ʿAjjul and Tell el-Farʿah would at best have been secondary centres at the time of the Second Intermediate period in Egypt. The situation of this region, however, undergoes significant changes in the following LBA. A comparison with this period, therefore, can shed new light on the result of the encounter with the Egyptian empire.

4.3.2 Settlement analysis: the LBA

In the LBA, the settlement pattern of the whole Southern Levant underwent major change. The former MBA kingdoms now present lower urban density, fewer fortified towns, and possibly a lesser degree of integration (Bunimovitz 1993a: 146; Jasmin 2006b: 163). LBA urban centres are generally considered to be smaller and with reduced hinterland compared to their MBA counterparts (Gonen 1992b: 217). Contributing to the generalised picture of decline, various archaeological excavations in the Southern Levant have reported layers of destructions in numerous sites across the region, all dated at the MBA-LBA transition (Figure 4.5)². Nonetheless, this scenario of destructions

² Destruction layers dated to the end of the MBA or early LBA have been attested at Tell Abu al-Kharaz (Fischer 2006) (Fischer 2006b, 33-45); Tell el-ʿAjjul (Petrie 1932a: 4); Ras elc Ain/Aphek (Beck and Kochavi 1993: 67); Ashkelon (Stager 1993: 107); Tell Beit Mirsim (Albright 1932: 38); Rumeileh/Beth Shemesh (Grant 1934: 12); Khirbet et-Tubeiqā/Beth Zur (Sellers et al. 1968: 6); Tell el-Qadi/Dan (Biran 1993: 326) (Biran 1993, 326); Tell el-Jazari/Gezer (Macalister 1912: 242; Dever 1967: 58); Tell Waqqas/Hazor (Yadin 1972: 32); Tell es-Sultan/Jericho (Garstang 1948: 103-104); Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish (Ussishkin et al. 2004: 56); Tell el-Milh/Tel Malhata (Kochavi 1968: 393); Tell Nagila (Amiran and Eitan 1964: 220); Tabaqat Fahl/Pella (Smith and Potts 1992: 46); Tel Qashish (Ben-Tor 1993: 1203); Tell Balata/Shechem (Campbell and Wright 2002: 121-123, 130, 135-139); Khirbet Seilun/Shiloh (Finkelstein et al. 1985); Taʿannach (Lapp 1964: 8).

and decline present some regional differences and a distinctive situation for the Wadi Gaza area.

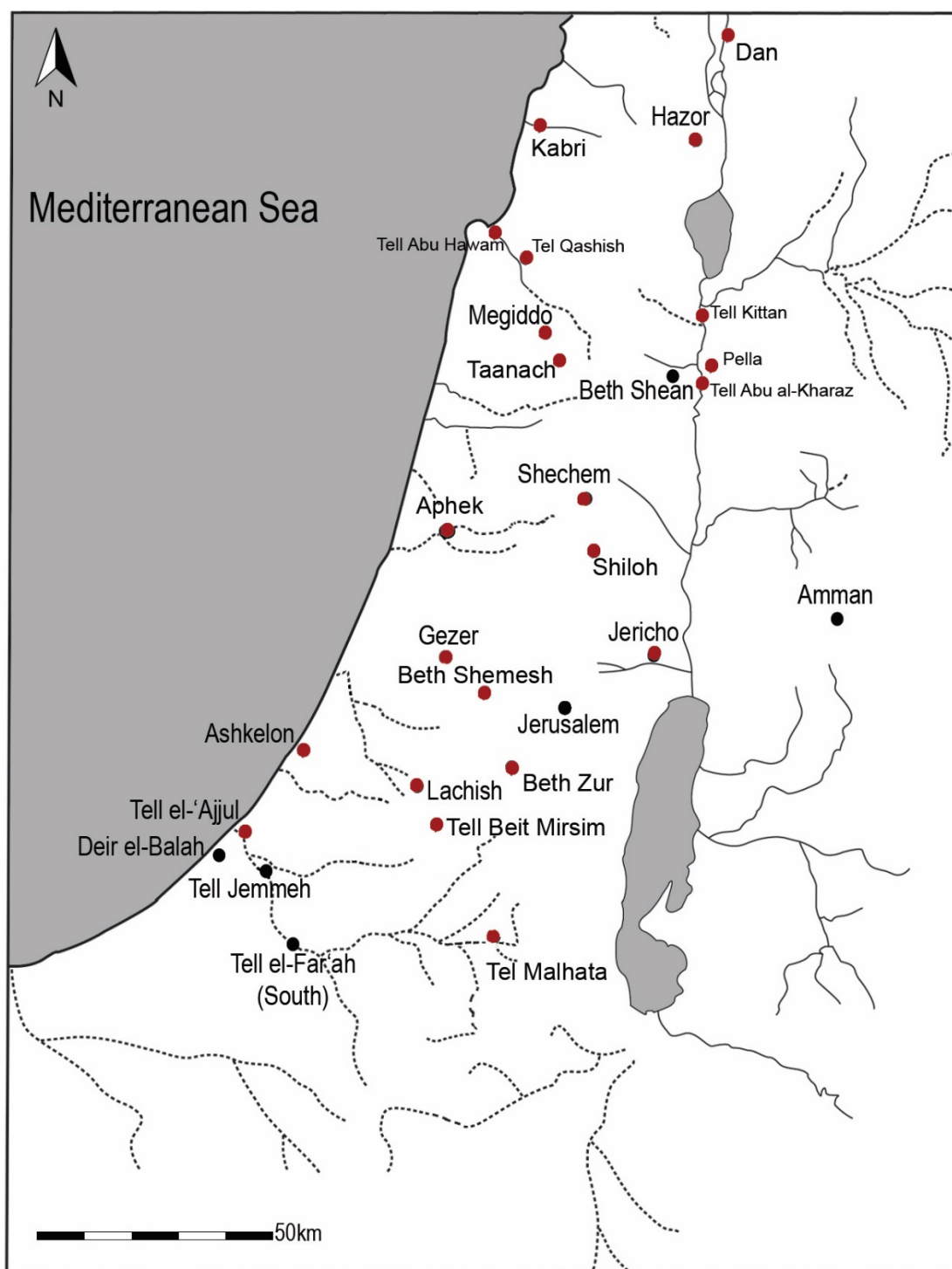


Figure 4.5. Map showing the recorded destructions (in red) between the final MBA and the early LBA at Southern Levantine sites.

Analyses of the population density, based on limited surveys of the area carried out in the last decades of the past century, show a shift in the occupied area, with the coastal plain more densely populated in the LBA than in the MBA, and an opposite situation for the hill and northern regions (Finkelstein 1992: 212; 1996: 243). The area of the Wadi Gaza was part of the region with an

increased population density during the LBA, as it is clear from an overview of the settlement pattern.

Here, many of the settlements attested in the MBA are still occupied in the LBA, with the exception of the smaller centre of Tell el-Moghraqa, which is abandoned at the end of the MBA. The size of the major MBA existing centres, nevertheless, changes considerably. In general, whilst there were at least two major settlements in the MBA, the LBA is characterised by a single large settlement and a variety of medium and small towns and villages (Figure 4.6).

The most significant shift is represented by Tel Haror, which shrinks from a 16.2 ha town to a 1-3 ha village. Tell el-^cAjjul retains a 10 ha size at the beginning of the period, but decreases to a small 0.4-1 ha settlement after the LB IIA (Jasmin 2006a). The other previously occupied sites either retain their dimensions or, in some cases, show some growth. It is the case of Tell el-Far^cah, which shifts from 3.1 ha to 6.5 ha, or Tel Sera^c, growing from 1.5 ha to 2-3 ha (Jasmin 2006a).

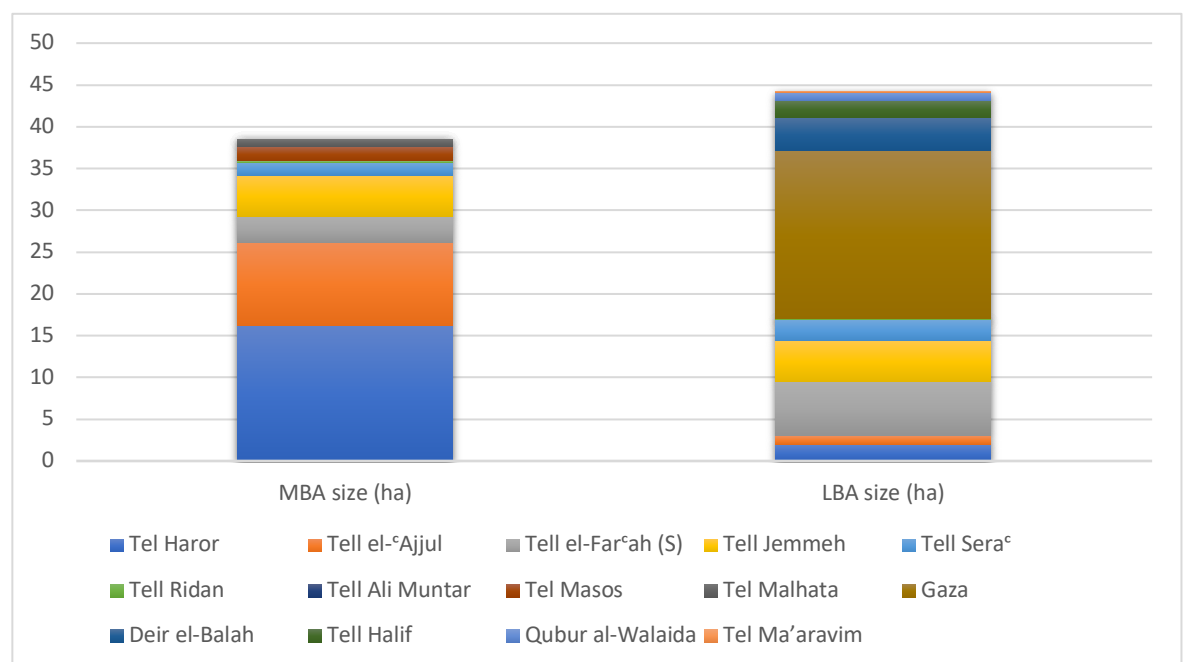


Figure 4.6. Comparison between MBA and LBA settlement size in the Wadi Gaza area (size indicated in the y-axis). The graph shows that even though the MBA presents fewer sites than the LBA, most LBA sites are minor or satellite settlements (measuring >3 ha).

Simultaneously, at least five new centres are documented in the area: Gaza, Deir el-Balah, Qubur al-Walayda, Tel Ma^caravim, and Tel Halif. Gaza is now the only large site in the area. Its ancient tell corresponds to Tell Kharuba and, although this is entirely covered by the modern city, its estimated dimensions were around 20 ha (Clarke *et al.* 2004: 31, 33; 50 ha according to

Jasmin 2006a: 176). Limited soundings and excavations have confirmed the presence of a continued settlement since the LBA (Garstang 1920; Peters 1921; Phythian-Adams 1923a; 1923b; Clarke and Steel 1999; Burdajewicz 2000: 32; Clarke and Steel 2000; Clarke *et al.* 2004; Steel and Clarke *and et al.* 2004). Deir el-Balah, located on the coast south of Tell el-^cAjjul, has been subject to extensive excavations, though mostly focused on the cemetery (Dothan 1979b; Dothan *et al.* 2010). At the present state of knowledge, its size has been estimated to be around 4 ha. Qubur al-Walayda is a 0.4-1 ha village located on the Wadi Gaza, halfway through between Tell Jemmeh and Tell el-Far^cah. A similar size is shared by Tel Ma^caravim, comprised between 0.2-0.3 ha and located a short distance from Tel Sera^c, on the Wadi Gerar. Further East is located Tel Halif, a medium size village of 1-3 ha set at the edge of the region.

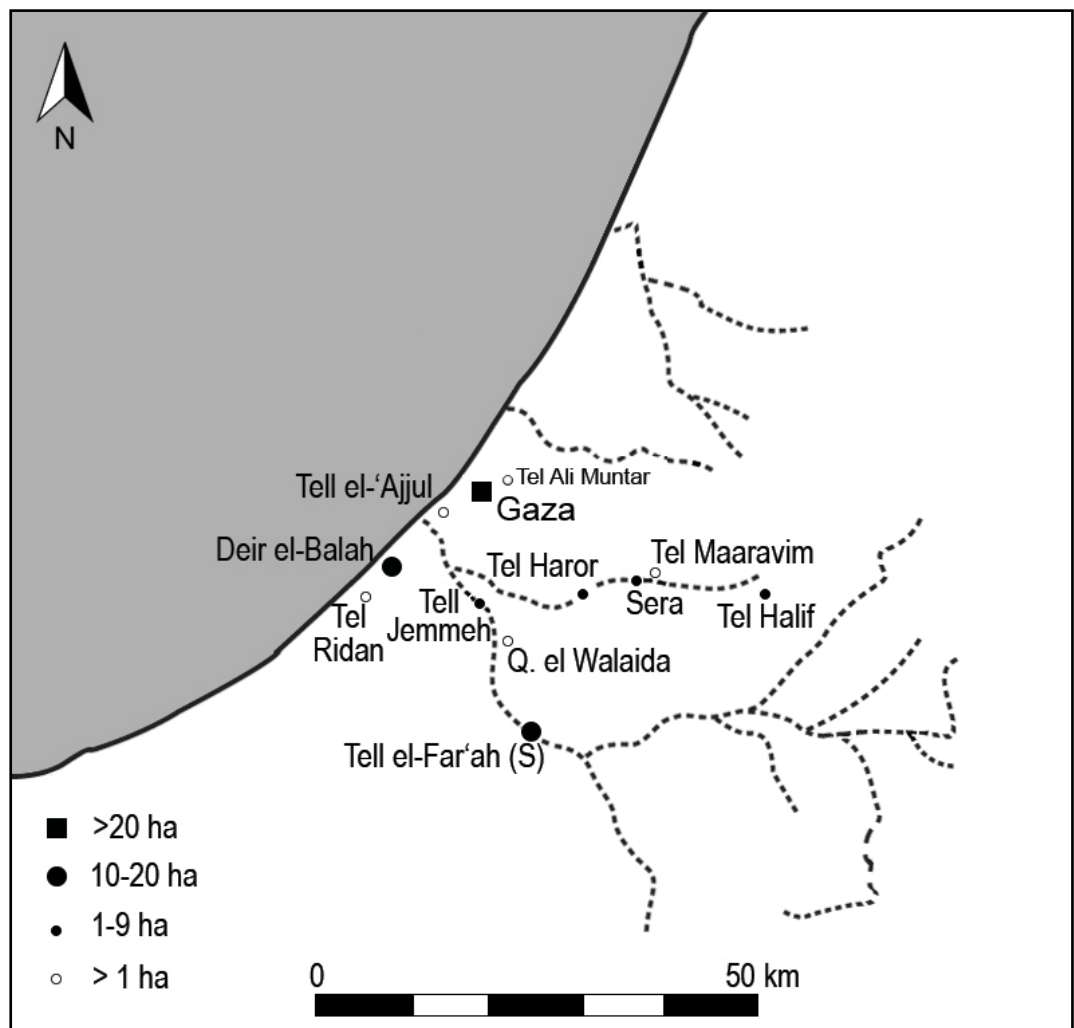


Figure 4.7. Map of the Wadi Gaza area with LBA sites discussed in this chapter and indication of their size.

Only two of the excavated sites display layers of destruction, Tell el-^cAjjul and Tel Halif. Tel Halif was only settled in the LB I, and the destruction is dated at the end of the LB IB (Seger 1993: 556). Tell el-^cAjjul, as will be examined in Chapter 5, was also destroyed in the first part of the LBA. The reconstructions in both sites happened shortly afterwards, even though both sites experienced some changes in the building pattern (Chapter 5; Seger *et al.* 1990: 20). Regardless of whether we attribute these destructions to the Egyptian army or not, the Wadi Gaza sites still occupied in the LBA do not generally show a period of abandonment.

The aforementioned picture of decline often presented in studies on the LBA Southern Levant, therefore, is not evidenced in the Wadi Gaza area. By contrast, the region seems to flourish during the LBA and is effected only marginally by the phenomena of destruction and abandonment attested in other areas of the region. The reasons for this possible discrepancy can be sought in the role of the region that, as will be discussed later, had an important position in the imperial programme.

The impact of the Egyptian influence, however, is not marginal, and rank-size analysis highlights changes in the MBA on a settlement level (Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.8). The region can be still divided into a four-tier organisation, but the first tier is now occupied by the central site of Gaza, measuring between 10 and 50 ha and surrounded by smaller satellite settlements. Less than 10 km from Gaza was Tell el-^cAjjul, which undergoes a major transformation in the course of the LBA. Whilst in the early LBA it remains roughly the same size as in the MBA (10 ha), from the LB IIB its extent decreases to 0.4-1 ha. This significant change (analysed in detail in the next chapter) is accompanied by the disappearance of its satellite site el-Moghraqa at the beginning of the LBA. As Tell el-^cAjjul was a medium-sized town in the MBA, this shows a shift in both population and administration to another centre in the region, possibly the neighbouring Gaza itself.

The small hamlet of Tel Ali Muntar (0.01 ha), a satellite settlement of Tell el-^cAjjul in the MBA and only a few kilometres from Gaza, might now be within the Gaza's territory. The extent of Ziqim, also falling within a short distance of Gaza, is unknown for this period as well. Three sites, ranging from 4-6.5 ha, can be attributed to a second tier: Deir el-Balah, Tell Jemmeh, and Tell el-Far^cah.

These are all located on the South-Western side of the region along the Wadi Gaza and the Southern coast. They are accompanied by the small fourth-tier villages of Tel Ridan, near Deir el-Balah, and Qubur el-Walayda, South-East of Tell el-Jemmeh. Along the Wadi Gerar are located three third-tier sites: Tel Sera^c, Tel Haror, and Tel Halif, accompanied by the small fourth-tier village of Tel Ma^caravim³.



Figure 4.8. Graphic representing the rank-size analysis for the Wadi Gaza settlements in the LBA. The x-axis indicates the size in hectares of the settlements analysed, while the y-axis shows their rank. The graph clearly shows the gap between Gaza and the other sites, potentially indicating its role as centre of the Wadi Gaza kingdom.

This analysis, combined with the evidence from the Amarna letters (see Chapter 1), shows some significant alterations in the political organisation of the Wadi Gaza during the LBA. Ashkelon retains its status and importance, but its territory no longer included the settlements around the Wadi Gaza, which were now perhaps within the territory of Gaza (Clarke *et al.* 2004: 31, 33; Jasmin 2006a: 176; Burke 2008: 137). The town, however, is rarely mentioned in the

³ Not included in this list is the site of Tell es-Sanam. This, located in proximity of Tell el-^cAjjul, on the coast, has been briefly surveyed
Clarke, J. and L. Steel

1999 Demographic patterns and differential settlement in the Bronze Age landscape of Palestine. In I. A. Abu-Lughod, R. Heacock and K. Nashef (eds.), *The Landscape of Palestine: Equivocal Poetry*, 211-31. Birzeit: Birzeit University Publications.. The exploration has revealed only IA pottery at the site, and the presence of LBA remains, even though suspected, could not be confirmed.

Amarna letters (Moran 1992: XXVI-XXVII). This raises doubts as to its status as centre of a Wadi Gaza polity. More often mentioned in the sources is Yurza. The toponym is cited in the topographical list of Thutmose III, as well as in the Amarna letters and in the later inscription of Sheshonq I (Finkelstein 1996: 225, 31-32; Na'aman 1997). From this correspondence, Yurza appears in the 14th century as the capital of a Canaanite kingdom in the southern coastal plain, whose ruler was named Pû-Ba'lu or Pû-Haddu (Maisler 1952: 49; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014: 3). Another possible interpretation, therefore, is that Gaza was an Egyptian administrative base in the region, seat of an Egyptian commissioner - an official in charge of the liaison with local rulers (Na'aman 2002: 135). Gaza, according to this interpretation, would be independent from Yurza and ruling over a small territory around it (Finkelstein 1996: 232). In any case, according to the sources, both Gaza and Yurza appear to have held a particular status connected to Egypt by diplomatic ties (Jasmin 2006b: 169).

The identification of Yurza has been widely discussed in previous scholarship. The favourite candidate, also according to the present thesis, is Tell Jemmeh (Maisler 1952: 48-51; Aharoni 1979: 24; Oren 1982; Jasmin 2006b: 173). The identification with Tell Jemmeh is justified by the location of the site, which matches Thutmose's description as the southernmost city in the coastal area of Palestine (the so called "Brook of Egypt") to have rebelled against Egypt (Maisler 1952: 48-49; Na'aman 1979; Van Beek 1993: 667; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014: 3). This theory is also supported by petrographic analyses of the two Amarna letters addressed to the King of Egypt from Pû-Ba'lu (Goren *et al.* 2004: 300-01). Not everyone has agreed with the identification of Yurza with Tell Jemmeh, which has been labelled too small (4.9 ha) to be the capital of a Southern Levantine kingdom (Finkelstein 1996: 231). For some scholars, the site corresponding to Yurza is Tel Haror, also inhabited in the LB and located along the "brook of Egypt" of the Assyrian and Biblical texts (Finkelstein 1996: 93; Na'aman 1997: 612). However, Tel Haror, as seen above, only measured between 1 and 3 ha during the LBA, making it even more unlikely to be the capital of a regional kingdom. Whether Tell Jemmeh is to be identified with Yurza or not, this evidence, together with the above analysed settlement pattern, clearly shows a change in the political organisation of the region from the MBA to the LBA.

4.3.3 Conclusions of the settlement pattern analysis

The evidence from the settlement pattern combined with the Amarna letters shows the outcomes of the encounter with the Egyptian empire in the territorial organisation of the Wadi Gaza area. As analysed above, the region holds a special status in the literature concerning relationships between Egypt and the Levant in the 2nd millennium. Some scholars in the past have described the LBA Southern Levant as a period of decline. The whole region, including the Gaza area, would have been affected by destructions attributed to Egyptian raids. However, the settlement analysis of the MBA and the LBA shows that this decay is not attested in the Wadi Gaza, where, instead, almost all the MBA centres are still inhabited in the later period, and new sites appear as well. A main difference between the two periods is given by the different scale of the political organisation. During the MBA, the Wadi Gaza area forms the southernmost component of the wider Kingdom of Ashkelon. In the LBA, the whole Southern Levant is divided in smaller polities: a new kingdom now only includes sites in the Wadi Gaza area and is possibly centred around Gaza or Tell Jemmeh. This smaller polity, however, does not show any signs of decay as a result of the Egyptian domination. Instead, it displays a settlement growth and only minimal destructions or abandonment.

An analysis of other kinds of material culture evidence can help us further explore this new organisation of the LBA Wadi Gaza. Specifically, the next sections will explore some of the most commonly used indicators of “Egyptianization”: residences, pottery, and anthropoid coffins. This evidence, complemented by the following two site-specific chapters, will allow us to investigate the degree of hybridisation in the region generated by the encounter with Egypt.

4.4 **Material remains**

Of all the sites presented in the regional overview above, few of them have been the subject of exhaustive archaeological investigations. The main excavated sites are Tell el-^oAjjul (Petrie 1931; W. M. F. Petrie 1932; Petrie 1933; 1934; Petrie *et al.* 1952), Tell el-Far^oah (Petrie 1930; Macdonald *et al.* 1932), Tell Jemmeh (Petrie 1928; Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014), and Deir el-Balah (Dothan *et al.* 2010). Preliminary reports are published for Tel Sera^o (Oren 1972;

Oren 1982), Tel Halif (Seger 1983; Seger *et al.* 1990), Tel Haror (Oren *et al.* 1986), and Qubur al-Walayda (Lehmann *et al.* 2010). Tell Ridan has been partially uncovered in salvage excavations (Biran 1974), while Tel Maḥaravim, Tel Ali Muntar, and Ziqim are only known through surveys or soundings (Clarke and Steel 2000; Clarke *et al.* 2004), and therefore cannot be included in an in-depth analysis of the material remains. The first two sites of this list, Tell el-ʿAjjul and Tell el-Farḥah, will be the subject of the next two chapters. The following analysis will present instead some of the evidence often employed in the literature to present a unilateral view of a culturally dominated Southern Levant. These include governors’ residences, pottery, and tombs, particularly coffins and pit burials. Using a diachronic perspective and a postcolonial theoretical framework, the next section will explore the contributions of the local and Egyptian cultures in the creation of the LBA material culture.

4.4.1 Governors’ Residences in the Wadi Gaza

One of the main indicators of the process of “Egyptianization” has been deemed to be the presence of so called governors’ residences, sometimes identified more specifically as “Egyptian residencies” (Oren 1984; Singer 1986; Seger *et al.* 1990: 21). This type of building has been recognised at Tell el-Farḥah, Tell Jemmeh, Deir el-Balah, and Tel Seraḥ (Oren 1984; Brandl 2010b).

Their interpretation as signs of Egyptian cultural and political supremacy has been based mainly on the presence of two features: the square plan, resembling NK houses, and their building technique, in mudbrick, with foundations lined in sand and kurkar - a calcareous sandstone of Aeolian origin typical of the Levantine coast (Horowitz 1979: 109). Furthermore, the presence of imported Egyptian or locally made Egyptian-style finds has contributed to the interpretation of these buildings as “Egyptian residences” (Oren 1984: 52; Brandl 2010a: 251; Martin 2011: 210).

Other scholars, and in particular Nigro, challenged this explanation, interpreting these buildings instead as an expression of the Canaanite cultural identity of the LBA. This architectural typology would partly derive from the MBA Levantine tradition and partly from the different administrative needs of the new LBA territorial organisation examined above (Nigro 1996: 62). The MBA was distinguished by larger palaces typically composed of a central courtyard surrounded on all sides by smaller rooms (Aaron Kempinski 1992b: 105). In the

new political organisation of the LBA, characterised by smaller kingdoms, the palaces would - according to Nigro - not have been needed any longer and would have been replaced by smaller residences. Therefore, Nigro broadens Oren's category to take account of certain buildings with the following features: between 70 and 550 m²; located at the top of the settlement and physically separated from the rest of the town by roads, courtyards, or enclosures; and finally, with finds including luxury items (Nigro 1996: 4).

Both authors have defined a "static" identity of the inhabitants or architects of these buildings, determining whether this type of building adheres to the Canaanite or to the Egyptian tradition. However, it is argued here that south Canaanite cities in the LBA were characterised by mixed identities that cannot be properly understood with such a rigid framework (see Chapter 2). An overview of governors' residences in the area analysed can provide material evidence for understanding this fluidity and the process of borrowing witnessed by South Palestine in its development throughout the LBA.

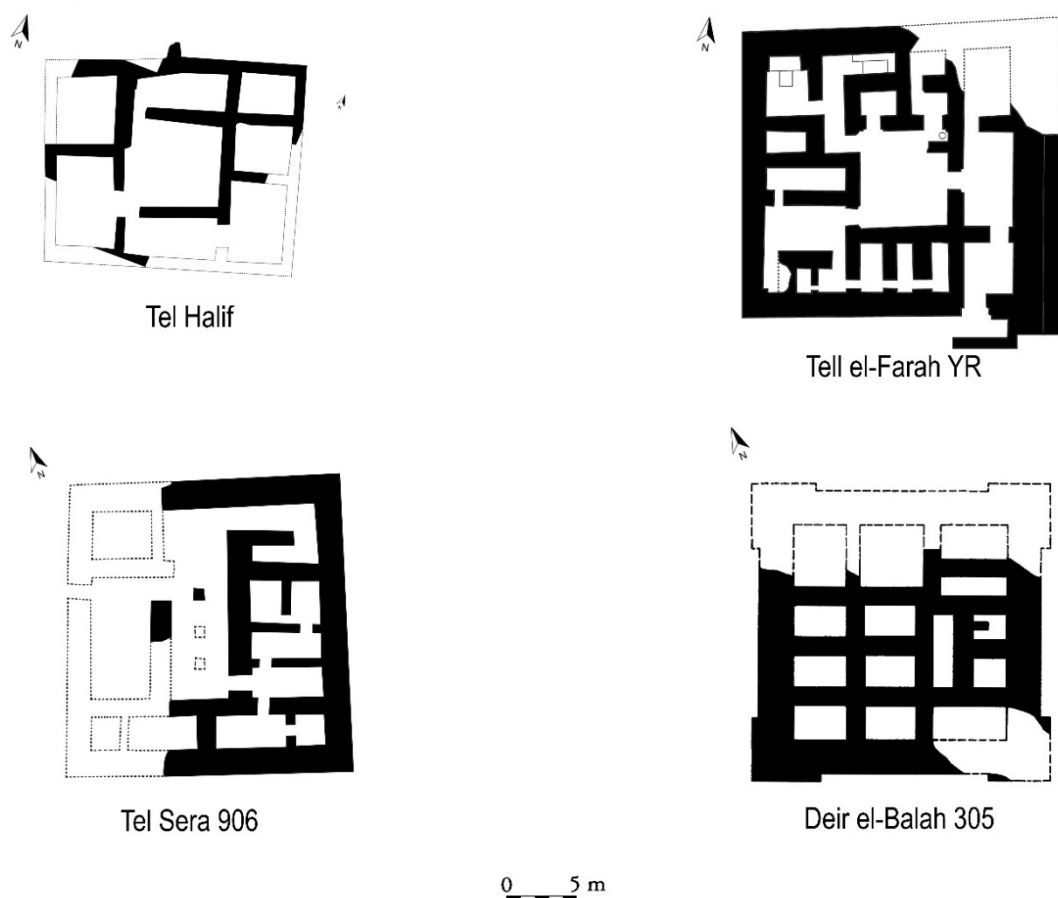


Figure 4.9. "Egyptian residences" characterised by a square plan in the Wadi Gaza area (redrawn from Seger 1990, fig. 20; Macdonald, Starkey, and Harding 1932, pl. LXIX; Oren 1974, 162; Killebrew, Golden, and Rosen 2006, fig. 17).

Nigro's elite residences are found in virtually all the excavated sites of the Wadi Gaza area. The building type recognised by Oren as governors' residence, conversely, can only be recognised in Residence YR from Tell el-Far^{ca}h and in the buildings of the last LBA phase of Deir el-Balah and Tel Sera^c. Oren's square residences are all roughly square in shape. Moreover, the buildings of Tell el-Far^{ca}h, Tel Sera^c, and Deir el-Balah display a similar size, all measuring roughly 25x25 m, for a surface of 625 sqm. A comparable plan is displayed by the square building of Tell Halif, belonging to the LB I (Figure 4.9). The latter has not been considered by Oren but, if accepting his categorisation, should be added to the analysis. Even though smaller than the others (ca 225 sqm), the building presents several similarities with the other structures.

Admittedly, these four buildings present some features also typical of the Amarna houses, structures of the NK unearthed at Tell el-Amarna and belonging to the middle class. These private buildings are characterized by a square shape, a rectangular lobby accessing a central hall surrounded by smaller rooms, a corner entrance, a vestibule, and a side chamber (Figure 4.10). The central square room is displayed by Tell el-Far^{ca}h's Residence YR, as well as Tel Halif's building. This is the core of the edifice and connects all the different areas. Also comparable to the Amarna house tradition is Building 906 of Tel Sera^c, which presents a central elongated and pillared space. The presence of pillars in the central room is also typical of the Egyptian tradition, while rarely attested in the Southern Levant before the LBA.

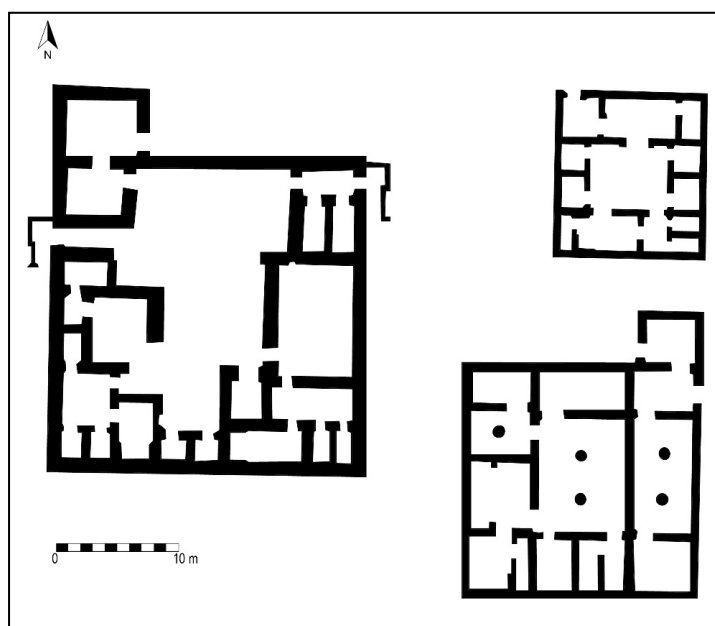


Figure 4.10. New Kingdom private residences in Egypt, characterised by a square plan with a central distribution space (redrawn from Oren 1984: fig. 3)

The characteristic central space is lacking at Fortress 305 of Deir el Balah. This building presents instead 6 rooms of the same size arranged in two rows on the NW, possibly storerooms, while the living area is confined to the SW and it is formed by a bathroom and a bedroom. The name of the building is due to its defensive features, represented by the thick walls and buttressed corners, not attested in any of the other buildings. This element, according to Brandl, would be inspired by the Egyptian architectonic tradition, recognisable in Egyptian mural art (Brandl 2010a: 255).

Oren also included in his category of Egyptian residences Building JF of Tell Jemmeh (Figure 4.11). This was severely damaged by later activities, and it has been only tentatively reconstructed as a square building 15x15 m, with outer walls 1.5 m thick on brick foundations (Petrie 1928: 5-6, pl. VI). Similarly to the other residences, it presents a central courtyard with a row of small rooms on the east and double row on the west.

Finally, the label of Egyptian residence has been used by other scholars for different buildings, like the structure uncovered at Qubur al-Walayda (Lehmann *et al.* 2010: 142). The edifice presents thick mudbrick walls without stone foundations and is characterised by a rectangular central hall, which opened on two sides on several smaller rooms (Figure 4.11).

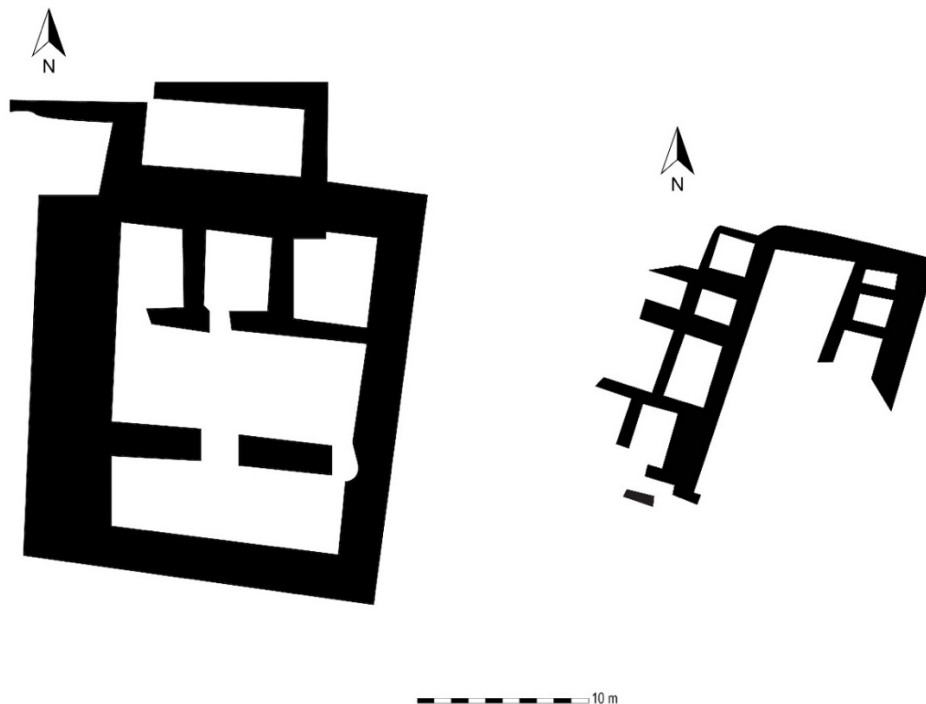


Figure 4.11. Plans of the residences of Qubur al-Walayda (left, redrawn from Lehmann *et al.* 2010: figure 5) and Tell Jemmeh (right, redrawn from Petrie 1928: pl. VI). Even though their plan is only partially attested by archaeological remains, they have both been identified as “Egyptian” residences.

Another feature recognised as typically Egyptian is the building technique. The residences of Deir el-Balah, Tell el-Far^cah, Tel Sera^c, and Qubur al-Walayda are entirely built in mudbrick, with deep foundations, ranging from 1.5 to 2m, filled with sand, a practice which has been generally considered an Egyptian trademark (Oren 1984: 52; Higginbotham 2000: 99; Killebrew 2005: 60; Brandl 2010a: 77). It was used in Egyptian monumental structures either to assure drainage along the foundations (Oren 1984: 50), or as part of a ritual, as sand would purify the building by isolating it from previous remains and therefore previous owners (Weinstein 1973: 5-6; Brandl 2010a: 255). The same building technique is employed in the Palaces II-V of Tell el-^cAjjul, dated to the LB I-IIA (see Chapter 4). These structures do not belong to Oren's typology, as they present different, elongated, plans. They are however included in Nigro's database of elite residences and provide a significant comparison, as will be discussed below. Turning back to the Egyptian building technique, this is also attested, with a slight variation at Building JF of Tell Jemmeh. Here, even though the walls were also mudbrick built, the corners of the structure were strengthened by limestone blocks, a feature not attested in Egypt but typical of the local architectural tradition (Nigro 1996: 29). Among the structures presented, the building of Tel Halif stands out, as it was built with stone foundations (Seger 1983: 4; Seger 1993: 556). This is considered a typical Canaanite technique, commonly attested in the Southern Levant before the LBA (Oren 1992: 115; Nigro 1996: 61).

Associated with the construction method is also the practice of burying votive deposits, which some scholars consider of Egyptian tradition (Petrie 1928: 8; Bunimovitz and Zimhoni 1993: 123). These usually consist of one lamp and one or more bowls, recovered either within the walls or close to them at the buildings of Deir el-Balah, Tell Far^cah, Tell Jemmeh, and Tel Sera^c. It has also been documented at public structures of other Southern Levantine sites, such as Gezer, Tell el-Hesi, Ashkelon, Tel Migne/Ekron, and Tell es-Safi/Gath (Bunimovitz and Zimhoni 1993; Dothan and Nahmias-Lotan 2010b). All these sites are located in the SW part of Palestine and the deposits are all dated between the latest part of the LBA and the beginning of the IA. However, typical Egyptian votive deposits are quite different. They were meant to symbolise the construction of the building itself and, therefore, were constituted by scaled models of building tools and materials, and by inscribed objects (Bunimovitz and

Zimhoni 1993: 123). This kind of deposit is attested at Tell Jemmeh, in the IA levels, where Petrie recovered a model of a grindstone and the leg bones of a calf (Petrie 1928: 7-8). Only during the 20th Dynasty in Egypt did the offering include pottery, and this was never standardised into lamps and bowls. Moreover, before the 20th Dynasty, all deposits were placed into pits lined with mudbrick, a feature not observed in Palestine (Bunimovitz and Zimhoni 1993: 123).

The practice of votive deposits was not entirely unknown in the Levant, where ritual depositions, hoards, and cultic offerings are recorded already in the previous Bronze Age phases (Philip 1988; Ilan 1992). However, unlike in Egypt, they were not typically associated with building in the Levant. Therefore, the practice of placing a foundation deposit in Levantine elite residences appears to be borrowed from the Egyptian tradition. Yet, it is reinterpreted using typically Canaanite materials, such as pottery. The lamp is particularly meaningful as it is a local shape, not attested in Egypt, and often connected to the ritual sphere (Zuckerman 2007: 197). Therefore, it would be limiting to interpret this evidence just as an “adoption of Egyptian cultural elements” (Bunimovitz and Zimhoni 1993: 124), which indicates a passive acceptance of external elements. If these practices were adopted by the local population, then the use of locally significant material culture, and specifically lamps, shows an active process of hybridisation, with a local reinterpretation of Egyptian traditions.

This last point raises the question of whether the Wadi Gaza residences were used by local or Egyptian governors. To propose an answer, it is useful to look at the function of these buildings. A way to do so is to understand the practices carried out within or around them, though a contextual analysis of their finds. Past studies have often stressed the military nature of ‘Egyptian’ residences, interpreting them as forts or military outposts on the Via Maris (Aharoni 1979; Oren 1984: 41). A different theory has been proposed by Lehman, who interprets them as fortified rural estates, built by 20th Dynasty pharaohs in a specifically designed agricultural programme (Lehmann *et al.* 2010: 148). Finds from some of the buildings would corroborate Lehman’s theory. Among them are indeed several production tools, for instance mortars, pestles, and sickles. At the residence of Tell Jemmeh, Petrie claims to have recovered more than 400 flint sickles. Several other specimens are also recorded from Deir el-Balah

(Petrie 1928: 5; Dothan 1981: 127; Nigro 1996: 29, note 41) and stone tools are reported from Tel Halif (Seger 1983: 4).

Moreover, as would be expected by agricultural estates, other finds hint at administrative activities such as the hieratic inscriptions of Tel Sera^c (see above, Goldwasser 1984) and the scarabs and sealed jars from Tell el-Far^{ca}h (see Chapter 7, Starkey and Harding 1932: 28). In all buildings, furthermore, the excavators discovered several luxury finds. Particularly well documented is the case of the residence of Tell el-Far^{ca}h (see Chapter 7) and of Building 906 of Tel Sera^c, where Oren recovered several alabaster and faience vessels, two votive copper ingots, cobalt blue, an Egyptian sceptre, and a goblet on a trumpet foot (see below). All these finds, therefore, show that the residences were inhabited by an elite, which was probably dealing with some of the administrative activities of the town and was involved in supervising and managing certain production activities, possibly connected to agriculture.

The presence of all these mixed techniques and practices can lead to some important considerations through an examination of the chronology of the buildings. The residence of Tel Halif is the earliest of these structures. It has been dated by the excavators to the first part of the LBA, with a destruction in the LB IB (Seger 1983: 4). All the other structures appear to be dated to the latest part of the LBA or to the early IA (Table 4.2). This is the case for Building 906 of Tel Sera^c, dated to the end of the 13th - beginning of the 12th century. This chronology is based on the finds, including some administrative hieratic inscriptions (Goldwasser 1984), several Egyptian-style and local vessels, and some scarabs of the 19th Dynasty (Oren 2006: 263). Residence YR of Tell el-Far^{ca}h also belongs to a late LBA phase. However, its chronology is debated and will be analysed in chapter 5. Similarly, establishing a clear date for the foundation of Fortress 350 of Deir el-Balah is difficult because of the lack of floors (Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 115), which caused Brandl to propose that the building was actually never finished (Brandl 2010b: 84). Some scholars follow Dothan's high chronology, based on her interpretation of the adjacent crater as a water reservoir and its comparison to ponds at Amarna, and date it to the 14th century (Dothan 1993: 343; Morris 2005: 302-05; Issar 2010: 289-90). Using geological and archaeological evidence, Killebrew proposed instead to interpret the crater as a clay and mudbrick quarry, filled with refuse in one or two generations (for full discussion, see Killebrew *et al.* 2006), allowing us to date it

more securely to the late 13th - 12th century, in agreement with Killebrew's analysis (Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 115). The most recent building is the residence of Qubur al-Walayda, which is dated by the excavators to the 12th century B.C. (Lehmann *et al.* 2010: 142-43).

Site	Residence	Period
Tell el- ^c Ajjul	Palaces II-V	LB I-II
Tell el-Far ^c ah	Residence YR	LB II - IA
Tell Jemmeh	Building JF	LB II - IA
Tell Sera ^c	Residence 906 (previous 2052)	LB II - IA
Tell Halif	Residence Stratum X	LB I
Deir el-Balah	Fortress 350	LB II - IA
Qubur al-Walayda	Residency Field 1	IA

Table 4.2. Residences in the Wadi Gaza

Besides the above discussed structures, other buildings of the same kind appear in other sites of the Southern Levant, including Tell Kheidar, Gezer, Tell el-Hesi, Tel Masos, Tel Yin^cam, and Beth Shean (Nigro 1996). These are all dated to the end of the LB and beginning of the IA, and entirely mudbrick built.

The analysis of the architectural layout and the building techniques of these structures, combined with their chronology, offer some significant insight into processes of hybridisation between Canaanite and Egyptian cultures. If taken in isolation from their context, it might be tempting to interpret the "Egyptianizing" features in the residences as a sign not only of Egyptian identity, but cultural and military domination, as often proposed in the past. However, there are some meaningful differences in the use of these features in Amarna and in the Southern Levant. Firstly, their distinctive plan was used in Egypt only for private residences belonging to the middle class, and never in public buildings as is the case with Canaanite examples. The performance of activities related to the public sphere, production and administration is demonstrated by the aforementioned finds. The other main feature linked to the Egyptian tradition is the building technique, which consists of the sole use of mudbrick and foundation trenches filled with sand. However, the chronological pattern of this technique shows a complex process. The earliest of the buildings, the residence of Tel Halif, as seen above, employs a typically Canaanite technique, stone foundations, combined with an Egyptian square plan. The same building technique, with a different plan, is also used by the Tell el-^cAjjul buildings,

dated from the LB I to the LB IIA. The Egyptian building technique, therefore, was not unknown in the Southern Levant in the earliest stages of the LBA. It is combined with another typically Egyptian feature, the square plan, only in the later phases of the LBA. The first part of the period, however, shows at least two examples of a mixed tradition, with an Amarna plan accompanied by Canaanite construction methods (Tel Halif) and a Canaanite structure realised in an Egyptian technique (Tell el-^cAjjul). Therefore, I believe that we can define as elite residences in the LBA Southern Levant different kinds of structures with a variety of features borrowed from the Egyptian tradition as well as the local one. However, this category undergoes a complex transformation during the period. In the first part of the LBA architects and inhabitants of these buildings actively select Egyptian and local methods and practices, resulting in hybridised structures where the contribution of both traditions is visible. Later, in the LB IIB and early IA, the process of hybridisation is far-reaching, as demonstrated by standardised building plan, size, and technique at different sites. What Oren has labelled as “Egyptian residences”, therefore, is no more than the result of a continuous process of hybridisation between the Egyptian and local cultures in the Southern-Canaanite setting.

The practices of the elite residing in the Wadi Gaza and their meaning will be better understood through a discussion of the other evidence from the area, namely pottery and funerary remains, which will be analysed in the next sections, and through the investigation of the two case studies in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.4.2 Pottery

Among the sites analysed in this chapter, pottery has been recorded for Tell el-^cAjjul, Tell el-Far^cah, Tell Jemmeh, Deir el-Balah, Tel Sera^c, and Qubur al-Walayda. The ceramics from the first two sites will be analysed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6, while this section will present an overview of the pottery types more commonly recorded in the Wadi Gaza and discuss their role in the context of the imperial encounter with Egypt.

The impact of the Egyptian empire in the LBA Southern Levant has often been analysed through pottery studies, counting the number of Egyptian imports and Egyptian-style wares and interpreting them as an inevitable sign of Egyptian cultural predominance (e.g. Killebrew *et al.* 2006). However, very few studies

(mainly Braunstein 2011: for the cemetery of Tell el-Farah, see chapter 7) have focused on the function of these wares in their social and political context or have acknowledged the presence of local pottery productions. As seen in Chapter 3, employing a qualitative approach allows us to get a deeper understanding of the relationship between objects and people in this context of the Egyptian-Levantine imperial encounter.

One of the more commonly discussed examples of quantitative studies on Egyptian pottery in the Levant is Deir el-Balah. The analysis of their percentages show a high concentration of Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery, amounting to roughly 50% of the total ceramics recorded (Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 108). Most of the pottery from the settlement has been retrieved in Stratum IX - the layer of the first residence (early 13th century) - particularly from an area interpreted as a pottery workshop (Killebrew 2005: 80; Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 111). A large quantity of ceramic finds was also retrieved in the cemetery. The presence of a highly “Egyptianized” pottery repertoire has been suggested at Tel Sera^c as well, where almost the totality of Egyptian shapes is locally manufactured. The first remains of the LBA are attributed to strata XII-XI and are dated to the late 15th and 14th century. This percentage changes considerably in the following layers, rising to 25% in stratum X, dated to the 13th century, and 40% in stratum IX, attributed to the beginning of 12th century (Martin 2011: 224-27). Other figures are published for Tell el-Farah, where Egyptian and Egyptian-style wares represent 27% of pottery vessels reported from the cemetery (Braunstein 2011: 10). The data from the settlement are not available nor reliable, as only sketchily recorded by Petrie.

One of the problems of these statistics is in the bias of quantitative approaches for archaeological data, already examined in Chapter 2. Moreover, while these numbers point without much doubt to a physical presence, at some degree, of Egyptian people - including potters/craft specialists - they are of little use for understanding the dynamics between locals and Egyptians. An analysis of the functions of the entire pottery assemblage, instead, combined with a functional study of these wares, can provide a more useful insight into the practices carried out in the Wadi Gaza sites examined as well as the relationship between the cultures involved in the contact.

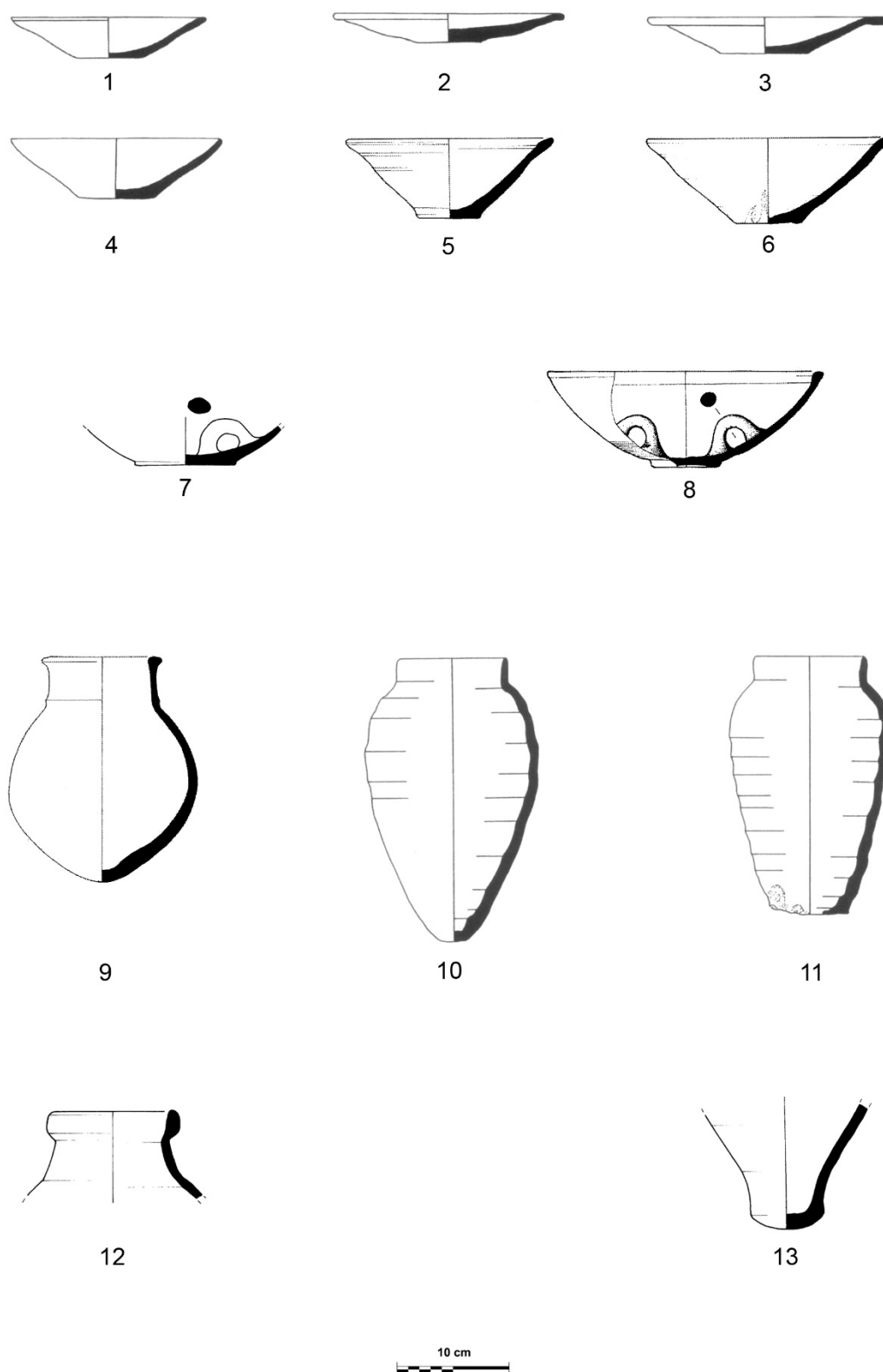


Figure 4.12. Selected examples of Egyptian-style pottery from the Wadi Gaza. 1-4, Egyptian-style bowls from Deir el-Balah, potter's workshop, P. 1913 (Killebrew et al. 2006: fig. 15:1, 2, 4, 5); 5-6, Egyptian-style bowls from Tel Sera^c, B. 951, stratum X (Martin 2011: pl. 52:15, 18); 7, spinning bowl from Qubur al-Walayda, "Egyptian" residency, stratum VIII (Lehmann et al. 2010: fig. 8.3); 8, spinning bowl from Tel Sera^c, B. 951, stratum X (Martin 2011: pl. 52:13); 9, globular jar from Tel Sera^c, B. 906, stratum IX (Martin 2011: pl. 61:5); 10-11, beer jars from Deir el-Balah, potter's workshop, P. 1913 (Killebrew et al. 2006: fig. 15:15, 20); 12-13, storage jars from Qubur al-Walayda, "Egyptian" residency, stratum VIII (Lehmann et al. 2010: fig. 8:1-2).

The assemblage of Egyptian-style pottery at all sites includes consumption, preparation, and storage wares, while Egyptian imports consist mostly of storage jars and, more sporadically, consumption vessels (Yellin *et al.* 1990: fig. 1; Killebrew *et al.* 2006: fig. 16:3, 6; Gould 2010: figs. 2.6, 2.8; Yellin and Killebrew 2010: 73). The technological features of Egyptian-style pottery are similar in all the settlements.

Their production is characterised by the mixture of local clay with straw temper, and by the use of string-cut bases, rope impressions, fingerprints, and perforated bases, whilst some are also painted (Gould 2010: 8; Martin 2011: 214).

The most common consumption ware at all sites are straight-sided and rounded bowls, which can hardly be distinguished from local bowls (Figure 4.12.1-6). Their frequency is so high that at some sites, like Tel Sera^c, they are more frequently attested than local bowls (Martin 2011: 224-25). Ovoid jars, also used as tableware, are quite common in the recorded assemblage. About 15 specimens have been retrieved at Deir el-Balah (Gould 2010: 18-22, fig. 2.2) and one at Tel Sera^c (Martin 2011: 223) and Qubur al-Walayda (Lehmann *et al.* 2010: fig. 8.2).

An important functional group is represented by ceramics for cooking and food preparation. At Deir el-Balah, for example, globular jars are attested, both in the carinated and elongated type (fig. 4.11.9; Gould 2010: fig. 2.3-2.4; Martin 2011: type JR5). These containers were mostly used for cooking purposes, and they are otherwise rarely found in Palestine. In the Wadi Gaza, however, published specimens come from, besides Deir el-Balah, Tell el-^cAjjul, Tell el-Far^cah, and Tel Sera^c (Martin 2011: 63, Table 47; also see Chapters 6-7). The two globular jars from Tel Sera^c were manufactured with the same clay as local cooking pots, leaving no doubt as to their use as cooking containers. Meanwhile, the lid finds parallels in Gurob and Amarna, and presented traces of soot on its exterior surface (Martin 2011: 88, 225).

Several beer jars were also retrieved (Figure 4.12.10-11), representing the most widespread Egyptian form at Deir el-Balah (Gould 2010: 31, fig. 2.5), while being also attested at Tel Sera^c (Martin 2011: 224), Tell el-^cAjjul, and Tell el-Far^cah (see Chapters 6-7). Studies on Neutron Activation Analysis (NAA) and thin section studies on these vessels showed that the specimens from Deir el-Balah were all produced locally (Goldberg *et al.* 1986; Yellin *et al.* 1986: 72;

Yellin and Killebrew 2010: 73). Conversely, the only beer jar retrieved at Tell el-Farḥah is an import and, significantly, was found in a tomb (see Chapter 7). Tombs are indeed the most common context of retrieval for this shape in Egypt, while in the Southern Levant they are mostly found within the settlement (Yellin *et al.* 1986: 68-69). At Deir el-Balah, all the specimens display finger impressions on their lower walls but, while the examples from the cemetery were not perforated, most beer bottles from the settlement had a perforated base (Gould 2010: 31-32). This points to a different use of this ware in the two different contexts. Their recovery in the settlement, in particular, can be related to everyday practices of production and consumption. As analysed more in detail in Chapter 5, even though the function of beer jars is still debated, they were probably connected to drink preparation, and possibly of beer.

Another type from the same category of production vessels that can be considered are spinning bowls. A group of at least 10 has been attested from the settlement of Deir el-Balah (Gould 2010: fig. 2.7), one from Qubur al-Walayda (Figure 4.12.7), one at Tel Seraḥ (Figure 4.12.8), and more from Tell el-ʿAjjul and Tell el-Farḥah.

Among the storage vessels recorded at different sites in the Wadi Gaza are big containers such as handleless large jars with rolled rim and amphorae (Figure 4.12.12-13). These were storage and transport containers, well-known from Egypt, where they usually contained wine, grain, meat, resins, oils, and honey (Nagel 1938: fig. 8.1; Holthoer 1977: 97). Their composition has not been chemically analysed, so it is not possible to state whether they were locally made or imported, even though this type is usually an import (Martin 2011: 73). It is important to notice, however, that this type is already an imitation of the LBA Canaanite jar (Dothan 1979b: 10). This evidence shows clearly that the process occurring between these cultures is not one-sided: Egypt also used to imitate and elaborate Canaanite materials and ideas.

Another Egyptian import is handled cups, which in Egypt are interpreted as containers for specific substances. This explanation is mostly linked to the discovery of one specimen in Tutankhamun's tomb marked as containing honey (Aston 2007: 18). In the Levant, according to Martin, these vessels were used in public consumption settings as a status symbol (Martin 2011: 81).

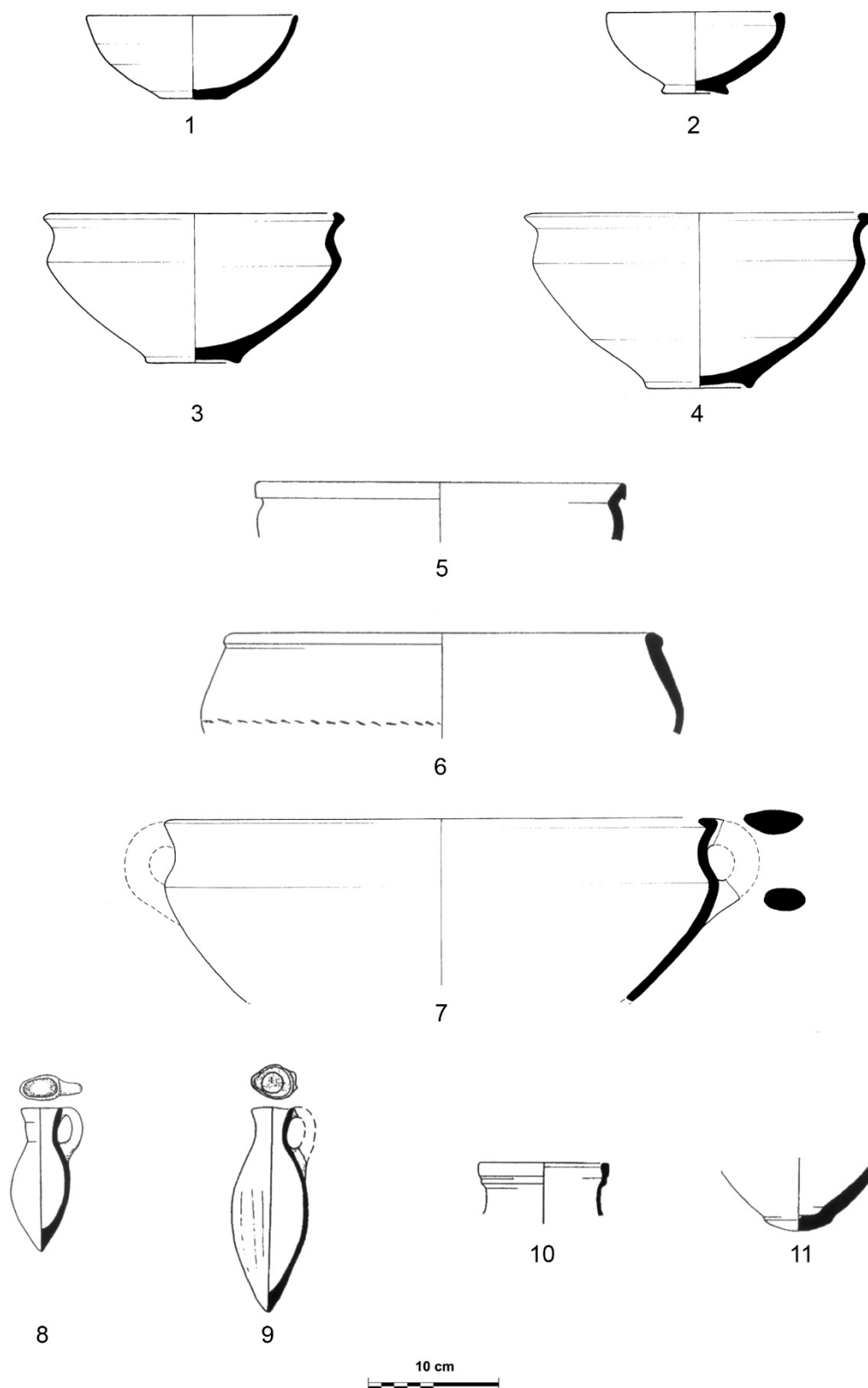


Figure 4.13. Selected examples of Canaanite pottery from the Wadi Gaza. 1-4, bowls from Qubur al-Walayda, "Egyptian" residency, stratum VIII (Lehmann et al. 2010: fig. 6.3-6); 5, cooking pot from Deir el-Balah, potter's workshops, P. 1913 (Killebrew et al. 2006: fig. 14:7); 6, krater with rope decoration from Deir el-Balah, potter's workshop, P. 1913 (Killebrew et al. 2006: fig. 14:6); 7, krater from Qubur al-Walayda, "Egyptian" residency, stratum VIII (Lehmann et al. 2010: fig.6:9); 8-9, dipper juglets from Deir el-Balah, potter's workshop, P. 1913 (Killebrew et al. 2006: figs. 15:13 and 14:18), 10-11, storage jars from Deir el-Balah, potter's workshop, P. 1913 (Killebrew et al. 2006: fig. 14:12-13).

However, even though they might have been used in feasting activities as well, it is likely that these cups, together with other storage and transport vessels imported from Egypt, were used to transport ingredients not commonly found outside Egypt. Significantly, they are not frequently found in the Southern Levant, but are well attested in the Wadi Gaza area, where they have been recorded at Deir el-Balah, Tel Sera^c, and Tell el-^cAjjul. This evidence strengthens the particular role of the Gaza region in contacts with Egypt, already theorised above and discussed in detail later on. Moreover, it shows the desire of presumably Egyptian personnel stationed at these sites to preserve the tastes of their homeland (see Chapter 5).

As mentioned above, many previous studies on pottery have focused on these Egyptian wares to support the picture of an “Egyptianizing” Southern Levant. This left out of the discussion, however, the local pottery, which instead contributes to our understanding of the local contribution to the encounter. Canaanite pottery is widely attested in every site, even at Deir el-Balah, so far described as the most Egyptianized site in the literature (Figure 4.13). Local wares have been recorded both from the cemetery and the settlement and cover all the main functional groups. Consumption ware is represented by bowls, kraters, jugs, and juglets. Kraters from Deir el-Balah were not usually painted, but some of them present a rope decoration, which Killebrew recognises as an “Egyptianizing” feature (Killebrew 2010: 76). Jugs are rare while juglets are better represented, and mostly belong to the dipper type. Cooking pots are also commonly attested and belong to the long-lived tradition of the Bronze Age Southern Levant. Among the storage and transport vessels are several Canaanite transport jars and few ovoid jars, used for domestic storage. Vessels for ritual purposes were lamps and miniature bowls.

Also used for ceremonial functions is a goblet retrieved at Tel Sera^c (Figure 4.14). The goblet is a typical LBA Canaanite shape, developed from the MBA goblets, and for its cultic/ceremonial function is frequently attested in public contexts (Amiran 1970: 161). The features of the specimen from Tel Sera^c, however, are very significant for the topic here discussed. The item was recovered in the temple of Stratum IX of the early 12th century B.C. (Oren 2006). It presents a painted decoration with the typical LBA Canaanite frieze organised in a metope style. Yet, the scene depicted is a marsh scene, an archetypal Egyptian theme not otherwise attested in the Southern Levant. It is

characterised by an Egyptian figurative scheme with lotus flowers, papyrus plants, and birds in an Egyptian style. The combination of the local shape with the Egyptian scene in a Canaanite metopal organisation, therefore, creates a new product, which does not find direct parallels either in Egypt or in the Southern Levant, and clearly represents the process of hybridisation occurring in the LBA Palestine.

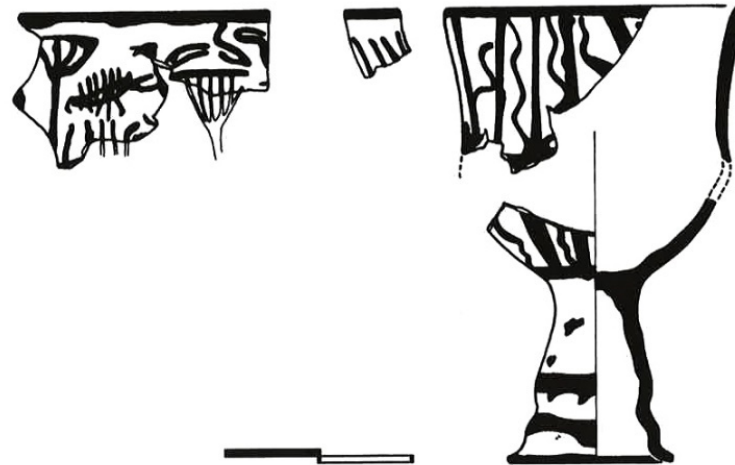


Figure 4.14. Goblet from Tel Sera^c, showing the process of material hybridisation in the combination of a Canaanite shape with Egyptian iconographic motifs (Oren 2006: fig. 2).

At all sites, Cypriot and Mycenaean pottery was widely attested. Cypriot imports already appear in the last part of the MBA, but become increasingly more frequent in the 14th century, dropping in the second part of the 13th and 12th centuries. They constitute a relatively frequent find at Tell el-Ajjul (see Chapter 6), Deir el-Balah (Merrillees 2010), and, less so, Tell el-Farah (Chapter 7) and Tel Sera^c (Oren 1982, 165). The most commonly found shapes are WS bowls and BR bowls and juglets. Mycenaean imports, found in minor amounts, consist of stirrup jars, piriform jars, and pictorial kraters (Dothan and Nahmias-Lotan 2010c: 117-31; also see Chapters 6-7). A few local imitations of Cypriot ware were found at all sites (Oren 1984: fig. 7.3; Killebrew *et al.* 2006: figs. 14-15; also see Chapter 6; Killebrew 2010: fig. 4.10.7-9; Merrillees 2010: 137-40, fig. 8.1). The most frequently imitated shapes in the LBA are BR jugs, which are distinguished by the use of different clays; the finishing on the slow wheel; a dark paint instead of a white; the presence of Canaanite painted motifs; and the attachment of a loop handle on the external surface of the vessel (Killebrew 2010: 103-04). Local imitations of Mycenaean wares are also attested, mostly from Deir el-Balah (Dothan 1979b: figs. 84, 91; Killebrew 2010: fig. 4.10.9). The significance of these wares will be discussed more in detail in the next chapter,

through the detailed case study of Tell el-^cAjjul. In general, they point to the increase of international trade in the LB I-IIA, but also to a specific taste for these wares. These were indeed produced specifically for export to the Levant, and reveal the presence in the Wadi Gaza of a middle class, with a demand for goods with ‘substitute elite’ value (Sherratt 1999: 185-87).

Among the other sites here analysed, pottery has been recorded for Tell Jemmeh and published in a preliminary way for Tel Haror. For the latter, given the preliminary state of the publication, it is not possible to draw any significant conclusions. The publication only mentions the similarity of the assemblage with Tel Sera^c's repertoire, and the presence of Cypriot and Mycenaean imports, together with Egyptian and local pottery. Unfortunately, nothing is specified about their amount, their shapes, or their contexts (Seger *et al.* 1990: 74).

As for Tell Jemmeh, Petrie's excavations suffer from the methodological issues discussed in Chapter 1. The data he recorded, however, can be combined with the significant sample of pottery recovered by the most recent Smithsonian expedition (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014). The interesting feature of the site is its contrast to the other centres analysed so far. If Cypriote and Mycenaean imports are excluded, the pottery at Tell Jemmeh is almost completely local in all phases. In comparison with other sites, the phases corresponding to building JF should have contained the greater amounts of Egyptian style pottery. However, Egyptian and Egyptian-style wares here are limited to few bowls of possible Egyptian manufacture retrieved within the residence (Petrie 1928: pls. XLVIII-XLIX, LI; Martin 2011: 242). In the most recently published reports, Egyptian and Egyptian-style vessels remain very low. The only finds correspond to a beer jar base from Field III, located at the edge of the settlement (phase 9, Ben-Shlomo 2012: 139). From the area of the earlier residence, the Smithsonian identified as Egyptian style some straight-sided bowls, both for the shape and manufacturing technique (Ben-Shlomo 2012: 145). Imports are composed of Cypriot and Mycenaean wares, which were found in high concentrations (Bergoffen 2014: 658). Among them are sherds of WS II, WSh and BR II fragments, and a local imitation of a BR juglet. Most of the assemblage, however, is composed by local wares, covering all of the functional categories and including bowls, kraters, cooking pots, jars, jugs and juglets, and lamps, in a typical LB II repertoire of Canaanite tradition (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014: 84-86, 293-302).

From this overview of pottery at the main sites of the Wadi Gaza area, therefore, we can gather some preliminary conclusions. Firstly, not all sites are associated with a substantial presence of Egyptian-style and Egyptian pottery. Among the sites with significant quantities of these are Tell el-^cAjjul, Tell el-Far^cah, Deir el-Balah, and Tel Sera^c. Here, most of the Egyptian pottery shapes are locally made, rather than imported, and realised with the same technological methods used in Egypt. However, all sites present local pottery in higher percentages than Egyptian-style or imported wares. Furthermore, local vessels were used for all the main functions (food production, consumption, and storage) and were used by the majority of the population. Conversely, most of the Egyptian imports, as well as Egyptian-style wares, were recovered from the residences analysed above, and therefore restricted to the elite. Consequently, the pottery repertoire overall never becomes fully Egyptian at any of the sites or contexts analysed. Egyptian pottery is mostly confined to the elite sphere, but even there, it does not replace the local repertoire. The two pottery traditions instead become intertwined and, in some cases, even complement each other. In few cases, the process of reciprocity involves not only the practices or the general assemblage, but also individual items, which show evidence of a material hybridisation. The goblet from Sera^c represents the undistinguishable mixture of the two identities in a new one, incorporating the traditional shape and material of the Canaanite goblet, to an otherwise all Egyptian marsh scene (for a similar iconographic hybridity, see 6.3.4).

Not at all sites, however, the ceramic evidence indicates this process. The site of Tell Jemmeh, for example, preserves with very few exceptions the local pottery tradition in all its phases. This valuable information can be interpreted in integration with the literary sources. If Tell Jemmeh is really to be identified with Yurza (see above), then it would seem reasonable to find here a predominantly local pottery repertoire. Yurza, in fact, would have been the main centre of local authority in the region. Therefore, from an ideological as well as practical point of view, the predominance of local practices at Tell Jemmeh is consistent with the interpretation of the centre as a seat of a local governor.

To sum up, the process expressed by ceramic finds in the Wadi Gaza area should not be described as Egyptianization. It can more properly be defined as a process of hybridisation, where selected Egyptian and Canaanite traditional pots

are both used to perform different practices. The mixture is mostly attested in the residences, especially at Tell el-^cAjjul and Tel Sera^c, while the combined pottery repertoire of Deir el-Balah has been retrieved in both settlement and tombs. The Egyptian-style pottery of Tell el-Far^cah, on the other hand, comes almost exclusively from the cemetery area, even though this has probably to be attributed to Petrie's excavation methods. These wares, however, are employed in a new way, alien both to Egypt as well as Palestine, to create unique and new practices of consumption.

Chronologically, this hybrid assemblage reaches its peak in the Ramesside period, although the process starts earlier at Tell el-^cAjjul, where it is already visible in the 14th century. The only other site with an earlier occupation, Tel Sera^c, only shows a hybrid character in the 13th century, the same period of the first occupation at Deir el-Balah and Tell el-Far^cah.

Before concluding this regional overview of the imperial encounter between Palestine and Egypt in the Southern coastal area, one last feature to examine is the funerary aspect. The following section will therefore present the main burial customs of the Southern Levantine area analysed in the MBA and how the meeting with Egyptian imperialism changed or integrated those practices.

4.4.3 Funerary evidence

The funerary evidence is often taken into account in studies on the Egyptianization of the Southern Levant. The presence of coffins in some cemeteries, in particular, has been employed to advance hypotheses on Egyptian domination or elite emulation. Their "Egyptian character" has been noted by several scholars, and used as one of the main arguments in proposing cultural domination by Egypt in the area (Albright 1932; Oren 1973: 142; Dothan 1982; Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 115). However, an examination of the funerary customs as a whole shows a multi-faceted scenario, of which anthropoid coffins represent only a part. Moreover, the coffins themselves can be interpreted as more than just a unilateral representation of Egyptian culture (see below). The other most frequently attested interment is constituted by simple pit burials, which have also been considered a sign of Egyptianization in the Wadi Gaza area (Gonen 1992a: 36-37). In this section I will analyse how the LBA funerary tradition in the Wadi Gaza area departs from the MBA customs, and therefore evaluate the impact of the Egyptian encounter in developing different funerary practices. I

will mostly focus on Deir el-Balah, where most of the funerary evidence has been retrieved, and on the two main attested kinds of burials above mentioned, pit burials and anthropoid coffins. This analysis will be complemented by the discussion of selected burials in the next chapters.

Anthropoid coffins were found, among the analysed sites, only at Deir el-Balah and Tell el-Farah, while pit burials were largely documented in the LBA Wadi Gaza. They have been discovered at Tell el-Ajjul, Ridan, Deir el-Balah, and Tell el-Farah. Pit burials are already attested in the Southern Levant during the MBA. In this period, however, they constitute quite a rare occurrence, sporadically recorded in the Southern coastal area and at Megiddo and Lachish, where some remnants are still attested in the LB I. It is only in the LB II that this practice becomes frequent, together with the first attestations of coffins, but remains confined to the Southern coastal area (Gonen 1992a: 32-34). Conversely, in the MBA the most attested burial in the whole Southern Levant was the cave burial, alongside with masonry built tombs, shafts, and pits (Hallote 1995: 97). Also typical of the MBA are burials inside the settlement, mostly jar burials and mudbrick-lined tombs, which have sometimes been interpreted as a sign of the cult of the dead (Hallote 2001: 208; Nigro 2009). In the LBA the latter disappear completely, with the last specimens dated to the LB I. When pit burials spread in the LBA, cave burials recede to the hill regions, where they are still attested in the LBA (Gonen 1992a: 36-37).

The transition from the MBA to the LBA, therefore, shows a significant change in the funerary customs of the southern coastal area of the Southern Levant. While there is a general continuity in the burial practices in the region as a whole, these are characterised by a strong regionalisation. Pit burials, moreover, only increase in the LBA. This evidence seems to reflect a major change in the funerary ideology. The impact of the Egyptian presence on these changes can be better evaluated through a look at coeval Egyptian practices.

Egyptian archaeology, unfortunately, has for long been characterised by a focus on elite structures, and the same holds true for funerary archaeology (Richards 2005: 52). Nevertheless, more recent research, supported by textual studies, has improved the available knowledge on the topic (e.g. Meskell 2001; Richards 2005). In Egypt, pit burials are frequent in the MK. They constitute the typical middle-class burial during the first part of the Second millennium and are characterised by single interments, in supine position, accompanied by several

funerary gifts. According to Egyptian ideology, death and rebirth were cyclical, and individuals continued to exist even after death (Meskell 2001: 28-30). For this reason, interments were usually single, not reopened after the burial, and employed the practice of mummification. The embalmers had the duty to maintain the body as intact as possible, preserving it for the afterlife (Hornung 1992: 168). Conversely, the main feature of cave interments in the Levant is that they are multiple, and that the bones of older burials were periodically moved to the sides of the tomb to host new deceased. The interpretation of this phenomenon has often been connected to the lack of burial space (e.g. Doumet-Serhal 140; Bloch-Smith 1992), although new research has correctly pointed out the importance of family identity and continuity in this practice (Cradic 2017). Whether this proves to be true or not, the Levantine ideology had a different consideration of the materiality of the body than the Egyptian religion. The two traditions appear therefore to be very distinct in the MBA.

During the NK, pit burials continue to be used in Egypt, and become more common in the Levant. While the concept of a single simple burial is now common to both areas, some differences arise as well. Pit burials in Egypt were always associated with simple brick chapels. The objects of their funerary kits included furniture, statues, pottery, jewels, tools, containers for the organs, figurines, and cosmetics (Richards 2005: 175-76). On the other hand, in Wadi Gaza, chapels are not attested, and the funerary kit does not follow to the Egyptian models, but rather seems aligned to the previous MBA local tradition. The MBA, and in particular the MB II-III, is characterised by the noteworthy presence of pottery vessels of all sizes and function, usually deposited around the cranium, torso, and feet of the deceased. The assemblage is composed of local as well as Cypriot wares, and it includes table and storage wares, in addition to ceramics for specific usage, such as lamps. Among the objects, scarabs and toggle pins are frequently documented (Baker 2016: 95). The LBA funerary kit shows minor changes, mostly related to the pottery repertoire. The amount of pottery vessels deposited with the corpse increases, as well as the imports among them, which include Cypriot and Mycenaean wares, while locally produced wares consist of Canaanite and Egyptian-style pottery. The southern coastal area, in particular, is characterised by the high amount of Cypriot wares, which dominate among the imports, and in some cases also over locally

produced wares (Baker 2016: 100). Furthermore, the use of scarabs and toggle pins continues from the previous period.

In sum, the use of pit burials, barely attested in the MBA, increases significantly in the LBA Southern Levant. However, whilst the burial type itself can be considered typically Egyptian, it is adapted to the Southern Levantine tradition with the use of a local funerary kit. The use of pit burials in the Levant, therefore, represents a new hybrid tradition generated in the LBA Southern Levant as a result of the encounter with Egypt. Such adaptation of an Egyptian practice reveals an active borrowing of different funerary patterns related to both Egypt and Palestine.

A similar process of hybridisation characterises the second class of “Egyptianizing” burials in the LBA Southern Levant, clay coffins. Anthropoid clay coffins have been documented in various sites of the Southern Levant, where they are dated between the LB II and the early IA. The largest collection has been found at Deir el-Balah, but fragments have also been reported from Tell el-Farḥah (see chapter 7), Beth Shean (Beit-Arieh 1985: 38) and Lachish (Merrillees 2010: 36), with one coffin fragment from Tell el-Madrassa, near Beth Shean (Adler 2010: 4-5, pl. 1a).

Trude Dothan, who excavated the cemetery of Deir el-Balah, was one of the main contributors to the study of anthropoid coffins. She divided Southern Levantine coffins into two broad categories based on their stylistic features: naturalistic and grotesque (Dothan 1982; 2008: 94-95). Naturalistic coffins are described as mummy-shaped, with clearly delineated head characterised by Egyptian wigs, and well-defined bodies and arms. Conversely, grotesque style coffins are characterized by the absence of any division between head and body, long thin arms, and unnatural facial features (Figure 4.15).

This division is regularly used in modern literature (e.g. Morris 2005: 520), even though there is disagreement on the causes of this difference. Coffins of the ‘grotesque style’ are by some thought to be of Aegean origin or, alternatively, a Philistine adaptation of naturalistic style clay coffins, which would represent the “original” Egyptian version (Yellin *et al.* 1990: 308; Morris 2005: 520). Pouls Wegner, who also connects them to Egypt, proposes a correlation between grotesque style coffins and shouldered pottery jars with applied human arms, known in MK Egypt (Pouls Wegner 2015: 296). Others, however, trace the development of the coffins to Canaanite MBA tombs

(Weinstein 1973: 174; Gonen 1992b: 240; Gilmour 1995: 157-61; Braunstein 1998: 159; Brandl 2010b: 83-84). Finally, some authors believe that coffins in the Levant in general, and grotesque coffins in particular, are a local, poor imitation of original and high quality Egyptian coffins (Higginbotham 2000).

The earliest attestation of grotesque clay coffins in the Levant dates to the 13th century (Dothan 1982; Braunstein 1998; Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 116) and, therefore, pre-dates the emergence of Philistine culture in the 12th century. While a Philistine influence is to be discarded for chronological reasons, a link with the Egyptian tradition seems more feasible. In order to gain a better understanding of the possible connections between Egyptian and Levantine coffins, however, it is necessary to examine the archaeological evidence available and the related practices from both Egypt and the Levant.



Figure 4.15. Examples of naturalistic-style (left) and grotesque-style (right) coffins from Deir el-Balah, Israel Museum.

In Egypt, anthropoid sarcophagi are attested since the Old Kingdom (Dothan 1982: 29; Yellin *et al.* 1990: 294; Steel 2004: 29; Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 134). They were realised in different materials, for example stone, wood, or

cartonnage, but coffins in fired clay are typically attested in the NK, retrieved in the Delta area and in Nubia (Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 139; Dothan 2008: 95). While the long-lived tradition of coffins in Egypt leaves little doubt about the origin of this practice, this evidence alone does not explain the difference between the two styles distinguished by Dothan. Examples of grotesque style coffins have been uncovered in Egypt as well, as in the site of Tell el-Yahudiye and Kom Abou Billou in the western Delta (Petrie 1906: 16, pl. XIIC; Hope 1989: 15; Pouls Wegner 2015: 299-300). These specimens are dated to the 18th and 19th Dynasty and are therefore contemporary with the Southern Levantine finds. This evidence, instead of pointing to the grotesque style as just an inaccurate imitation of Egyptian models, leads us to consider the grotesque style as a deliberate outcome of the encounter between the two different traditions⁴. Even more significantly, this mixed design was also adopted by the Egyptians in their homeland, demonstrating the bidirectionality of the hybridisation process. This theory can be better explained by a more detailed look at the specimens from the Levant, and Deir el-Balah in particular.

Coffins of Deir el-Balah were mostly recovered by illegal excavations and only in minor part by Dothan, who nevertheless visually examined and documented many illicitly excavated finds (Dothan 2008: 94-116). The scholar identified, counting both the finds from previous digs and hers, a total of around 50 coffins, representing the largest group so far uncovered in the Southern Levant (Dothan 1972; Dothan and Nahmias-Lotan 2010a). However, the boundaries of the cemetery are still unknown, so the data available is not complete.

The coffins from Deir el-Balah were both in the grotesque and in the naturalistic style (Perlman *et al.* 1973: 130). They were clustered within the cemetery in groups of 3 or more, and each of them contained more than one individual (Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 116). Besides the use of the coffin itself, which as above mentioned is closely connected to the Egyptian tradition, other features of these burials are typically Egyptian. Firstly, several coffins bear typical traits of the Egyptian iconography, for instance representations of the lotus flower, Egyptian wigs, Osiris beards, and arms in a crossed position.

⁴ It is significant that, at a later period, the Phoenicians will use the grotesque element in a similar way, for example with representations of Bes in tombs for apotropaic purposes (Schmit 2016).

Furthermore, the burial gifts include some distinctive Egyptian funerary objects, such as ushabti figurines (Dothan and Nahmias-Lotan 2010c: 111), otherwise not found in the Southern Levant. More common in the Levant, and yet always connected to the Egyptian tradition, are gold and carnelian jewellery, scarabs, and alabaster and bronze vessels (Dothan 1982: 254).

However, coffins from Deir el-Balah divert in significant ways from Egyptian practices. A peculiarity of the Southern Levant is the exclusive use of fired clay for the manufacture of coffins. Conversely, in Egypt anthropoid coffins were also made of stone, wood or cartonnage - a composite made of layers of gypsum plaster (Killebrew *et al.* 2006: 130). The use of clay in Egypt is mostly limited to Tell el-Yahudiye, where it is attested from the 18th Dynasty (Petrie 1906: 16), and in the Fayum region from the 19th Dynasty (Hope 1989: 14). The reason for this difference could lie in the availability and value of these materials, as wood was common in the Levant and, therefore, not considered a luxury as it was in Egypt (Higginbotham 2000: 78). It has also been argued that the preparation of coffins in wood or cartonnage would have required specialized craftsmen, who may not have been available in Palestine (Yellin *et al.* 1990: 310). The idea relies on the Egyptian interpretation of anthropoid coffins, which would be the burial practice of the poor (Oren 1973: 133; Issar 2010: 305) or, at least, the funerary practice used by the “richest among the poorest” (Goldberg *et al.* 1986: 77). Consequently, also the manufacture of clay coffins in Palestine has been considered to be low cost and effortless.

Nonetheless, the production of such big and decorated ceramic containers, like those in wood and cartonnage, would have required a certain effort and skilled manufacturers, in Egypt as in the Levant, as shown by the analysis of their production methods. An insight into the production of coffins is given by the finds in the pottery workshop of Deir el-Balah. Some kilns here were associated with coffin fragments, while traces of ochre and blue material are linked to their painting, still visible on some fragments (Dothan and Nahmias-Lotan 2010a: 176). These remains provide evidence of local manufacture of coffins at the site, also supported by NAA (Perlman *et al.* 1973: 149). Also amongst the finds from the quarter are manufacturing remains of the funerary gifts, including a stamp identified as the god Ptah, the patron of artisans (Dothan 1987: 131). Overall, the finds point to a kind of assembly-line system for the production of these items, where different groups of workers were engaged

in different tasks (Dothan 2008: 94). The coffins were made with a clay rich in grit and straw, modelled using the coil technique. When the clay was partially dried, the lid was separated from the body using a knife or a rope. The face of the naturalistic type was produced in a mould and applied on the lid, while the facial details of the grotesque type were added one by one through applique and/or incision (Oren 1973: 133-35). This is the main difference in the manufacture of Egyptian and local coffins as well: while the naturalistic coffins follow the original technique, the grotesque kind departs from it (Pouls Wegner 2015: 297). As for the firing, this occurred in different ways for the lids and the coffins: the former were fired in kilns, while the latter were placed on the ground or in pits, where they would have been fired for around 8-9 hours, reaching a temperature of 800 degrees (Dothan 2008: 94). After the firing process was finished, the coffins were finally painted.

This lengthy process leaves little doubt that anthropoid coffins cannot be defined as the burial of the poor but were instead used by the middle or elite classes. The differences in the exclusive use of fired clay and in the iconography and manufacture of the 'grotesque' type seem a deliberate choice to depart from the Egyptian tradition. Other differences between the two traditions are given by the number of interred, treatment of the body and some funerary gifts. The interments from the Levant often contained multiple burials, as proved by the few contextualised remains from Deir el-Balah, but also from the two coffins from Tell el-Farah (Dothan 1973: 770; 1982). This practice is never attested in Egypt. Even at Tell el-Yahudiye, the largest documented cemetery with clay coffins in Egypt, all burials contain only a single body (Yellin *et al.* 1990: 303). Multiple interments, instead, are well documented in Palestine, where they are already attested in the MBA (Mazar 1992: 213-14). The treatment of the body also diverges from Egyptian practice, where some of the corpses bear evidence of mummification (Dothan 1979a: 18). The practice has not been recorded in any of the anthropoid burials of the Southern Levant (Dothan 1982: 254). Finally, besides the aforementioned luxury finds more typical of the Egyptian tradition, grave goods also included several pottery vessels, especially domestic pottery, a practice that is less common in Egypt but usual in the Southern Levant (Gonen 1992b; Steel 2004: 14). The pottery kit generally included a big vessel, like a Canaanite jar, covered with a bowl and containing a dipper juglet (Dothan 1972: 68).

This combination of pottery vessels and luxury finds leaves little doubt on the attribution of the deceased to a middle or elite class. Likewise, the practice of mummification, even though only attested in some Egyptian specimens, would not have been available to the lowest social strata. Another sign of the elite status of the interred could be given by the retrieval at Deir el-Balah of four basalt stelae. These, dated to the Ramesside period, were found by the illicit digs, so it is not possible to associate them with the coffins or other burials with certainty. However, the erection of stelae in association with the funerary context is not a customary practice in the Levantine tradition, while it is widely attested in Egypt. Here, stone stelae were used since the Old Kingdom, and were placed in wealthy tombs or elite mortuary chapels (McGovern 1990: 159). They were usually inscribed with the name and title of the tomb owner, and from the MK also included a figurative representation of the deceased together with their family (Pflüger 1947). At Deir el-Balah, these stelae were the only attested superstructure of the tombs, and might have therefore been used in place of the typical Egyptian funerary chapels (Ventura 1987: 113). However, there are some important differences from the Egyptian prototypes. For instance, the owner of the stele is not always acknowledged and, when it is, only the name is mentioned, and not the titles. One of the stelae from the Southern Levantine site, moreover, does not display a figurative representation, which is a distinctive element of Egyptian stele. According to Ventura, this evidence might be explained as a more private cult of the dead at Deir el-Balah (Ventura 1987: 115). This would therefore imply that, if the coffins were for Egyptian people, as commonly believed (Dothan 1987: 130; Martin 2011: 212), then the Egyptians at Deir el-Balah modified their customs in acceptance of some local practices.

The analysis of the burials from the Wadi Gaza, therefore, contributes to some important conclusions. From a general point of view, the transition from the MBA to the LBA bears some noteworthy changes in the funerary tradition. While the MBA was characterised by cave burials, in the LBA the most frequently attested graves of the area are pit burials and anthropoid coffins. Both are to some degree connected to the Egyptian tradition, especially coffins. This change, however, is limited to some parts of Palestine, and mainly to the southern coastal and Negev regions, which encompass the Wadi Gaza area. The impact of Egyptian imperialism here, therefore, seems to be deeper than in the

hill and northern regions of the country. At the same time, however, the analysis above has allowed us to debunk some myths and put into perspective the so-called Egyptianization of the region.

Firstly, it has been suggested that anthropoid coffins were not, as often said, the burial of the lower classes, but an elaborate burial, utilised by the middle or elite classes of society. This is demonstrated by the manufacture of the coffins, as well as by the luxury finds associated with them in both Egypt and Palestine. At the same time, the variations between the Egyptian and Canaanite practices show that the use of coffins, as well as pit burials, was not simply transferred or copied from Egypt to Palestine. Both burials in the Levant present differences in the utilised material, treatment of the body, and funerary kit, all pointing to an appropriation and reinterpretation of the original practices. In certain instances, some habits have even been adopted back in Egypt, probably as a result of the encounter with Levantine people both in the Delta and in Palestine. An example of this is given by the adoption of grotesque-style coffins in Egypt during the NK. Therefore, the analysis of funerary traditions in the Wadi Gaza area has provided evidence that the encounter with Egypt changed the material culture and the practices of the local Canaanite population, but also that this change is bidirectional and had created a third space with many features common to both the Egyptian and Canaanite cultures.

4.5 Conclusions

This analysis of the Wadi Gaza area has provided valuable conclusions on the materiality of the cultural encounter between Egypt and the Southern Levant, especially with regards to settlement pattern, public architecture, pottery, and funerary customs.

All this evidence has shown a meaningful change in the practices of the LBA from the preceding MBA. The new territorial organisation is characterised by smaller kingdoms replacing the major polities of the previous period. This is reflected by the new category of administrative architecture, represented by smaller elite residences superseding the greater MBA palaces. However, the new organisation is not a sign of political or economic decline, as often suggested. Conversely, the settlement analysis above clearly shows an increase in the number of settlements. Signs of the so-called collapse are not evident in the area, which suffers only minor destructions and virtually no abandonments.

Other evidence, namely from ceramic analysis and funerary contexts, illustrate the proliferation of international trade, demonstrated by the extensive amount of Cypriot and Mycenaean materials. Tombs also show a general wealth, with relatively rich funerary kits and the presence of some elaborate burial types, like anthropoid coffins.

Undoubtedly, the LBA is also characterised by stronger ties with Egypt than the previous period. These are indicated by the presence of architectural types borrowed from Egypt, specifically square type residences, imported pottery and locally produced wares in Egyptian shapes, and burial types common in Egypt, such as pit burials and anthropoid coffins. However, in every instance, these are locally appropriated and mixed with significant local practices. This mixture gave birth to different material products, which are not typical of either Egypt or Palestine, but instead belong to the so-called third space envisioned by Bhabha (see Chapter 2).

In some instances, for instance Canaanite jars or grotesque-style coffins, the Canaanite traditions or the new hybrid practices are attested even in Egypt. An example of this is provided by Canaanite jars or, more eloquently, by grotesque-style coffins retrieved in Egypt. This provides convincing proof that the hybridisation process attested in the Southern Levant is bidirectional and that mixed practices generated from the encounter between Egyptian and Levantine cultures were adopted in Egypt as well as in the Levant.

Two additional considerations can be made regarding chronological patterns and the identity of the rulers of the LBA kingdom in the Wadi Gaza. Firstly, most of the sites show a deeper cultural entanglement in the Ramesside age. To this period belong the square residences, most of the Egyptian-style pottery, and the anthropoid coffins. However, some sites such as Tell el-ʿAjjul show an earlier attestation of many of these features. Secondly, it has been noticed that most of this hybrid assemblage is connected to the highest classes of the population. It can therefore be suggested that the process is mostly limited to the elite sphere and does not involve, either for process of resistance or for other reasons, the rest of the population.

In order to further discuss these topics, I will now move on to the analysis of Tell el-ʿAjjul and Tell el-Farʿah. This settlement scale examination will complement the results provided by the regional investigation, keeping a balanced and nuanced approach to Egyptian imperialism in the Levant.

5 Tell el-^cAjjul: pottery consumption and hybridisation

5.1 Introduction

The analysis of the Wadi Gaza area at a macro-scale presented in the previous chapter provided a preliminary understanding of hybridisation patterns at a regional level. In order to get a more comprehensive awareness of this process, however, it is now essential to inspect selected locations of the area. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the archaeological evidence from one of the most debated sites in the Wadi Gaza, Tell el-^cAjjul. Through the analysis of the material remains and, in particular, pottery consumption patterns, this chapter will examine the outcomes of the imperial encounter between Egypt and Palestine at a site level, allowing us to get an in-depth insight into cultural practices while re-empowering the oft-neglected local agents.

Tell el-^cAjjul, and its generally accepted equation with biblical Sharuhēn, the alleged erstwhile Hyksos capital and later Egyptian military stronghold, provides an ideal case study of Egyptian-local relationships (for further theories on Sharuhēn's identification, see Chapters 1 and 5). Traditional scholarship has tended to reconstruct the site's role and significance in Egyptian-Levantine relationships mainly on the basis of literal readings of written sources. These rely heavily on the site's equation with the Biblical town of Sharuhēn (Kempinski 1974). A town of this name is also mentioned in contemporary Egyptian sources, namely in the Prologue to Thutmose III's Annals and in the topographical list of Amara, dated to Ramesse III. Tell el-^cAjjul as the purported Sharuhēn is presented in standard narratives of Egyptian imperialism as a Hyksos stronghold during the MBA and, once conquered, the seat of an Egyptian military garrison during the LBA (Pritchard 1950: 233-34; Redford 1979: 274; Weinstein 1981: 6-7; Höflmayer 2015: 201). With the site's Bronze Age identity seemingly well established, archaeological research has focused primarily on confirming this text-derived narrative by identifying archaeological indicators of Egyptian presence and domination at the site. The equation of Tell el-^cAjjul with the Hyksos capital of Sharuhēn, however, is not an established historical fact but more of a truism - widely accepted, rarely questioned, but with wide-ranging implications for how scholarship has envisioned the Egyptian-Levantine imperial relationship and what questions it asks of it. As a result of this ready acceptance of Tell el-^cAjjul as the Sharuhēn of the texts, little attention has been paid to

the nature of the Egypt-Levantine imperial encounter and, in particular, to the complexities of its culturally embedded negotiation.

Regardless of whether or not it is identifiable with Sharuhén, other reasons for the choice of Tell el-ʿAjjul as first case study lie in its strategic position and in its archaeological remains. As for the first, the site is placed on an important junction between the Levant and the Northern Sinai, and therefore on the route to and from Egypt. It is also the major port town in the Southern Canaanite area, making the centre vital for commercial and military reasons.

Regarding its archaeological remains, the site, in only four expeditions, yielded an impressive amount of artefacts in a quite unique assemblage. The site's wide-ranging international contacts and imperial relationships with Egypt are made clear by the ceramic repertoire. Cypriot and Egyptian pottery were recovered in large quantities, alongside locally produced pottery. Drawing on published and unpublished data from Tell el-ʿAjjul, therefore, this chapter demonstrates that the processes that transformed cultural identities in the region after the establishment of an Egyptian imperial presence are complex and mutual. The study of the site's archaeological evidence, liberated from the straitjacket of limited and circumstantial literary sources, can significantly alter our understanding of the site and its role within the local socio-political milieu as well as the character of Egyptian imperialism in the Levant. To this end, I will first critically review past approaches to the study of Tell el-ʿAjjul, followed by a fresh presentation of the archaeological evidence from the site. This results in the revision of the site's chronology and re-interpretation of its social organisation and political status. In concert, these strands of evidence challenge Tell el-ʿAjjul's identification with the Sharuhén of Egyptian sources and the historical and archaeological narratives constructed from it. A detailed analysis of pottery consumption patterns serves to illustrate the complex processes of cultural negotiation that took place between Egyptian imperial overlords and the local communities at Tell el-ʿAjjul during the LBA and that contrast sharply with the expectations of the models applied to Levantine-Egyptian imperial relationships to date.

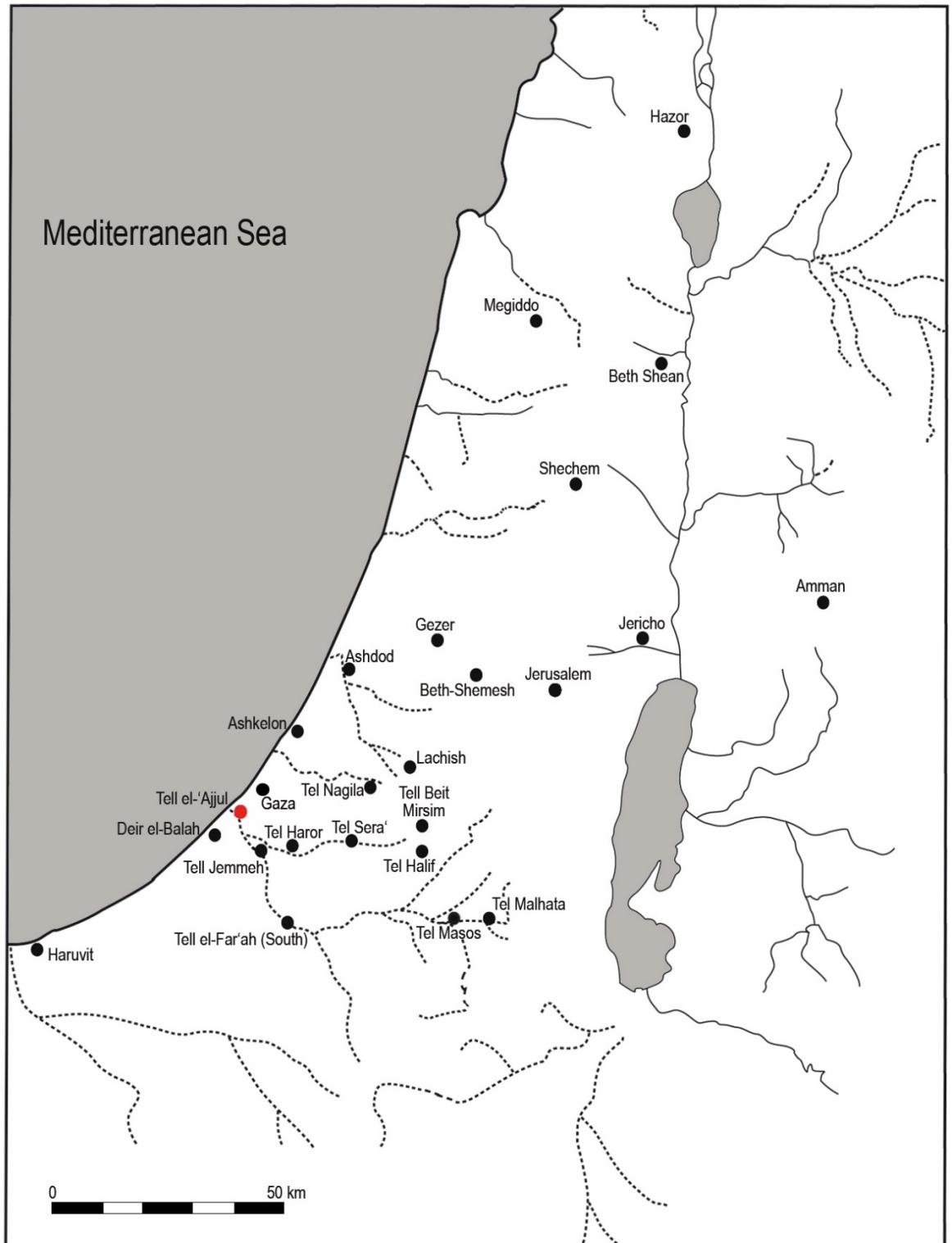


Figure 5.1. Map of the Southern Levant showing (in red) the position of Tell el-^cAjjul

5.2 A challenging stratigraphy

Tell el-^cAjjul is a mound of roughly rectangular shape, located about 6 km southwest of Gaza, on the northern bank of the Wadi Gaza (Figure 5.2). The tell is set on Wadi Gaza's contemporary bed, probably at that time representing an

estuarine-type feature and therefore one of the principal determining factors for the location of the settlement (Morhange *et al.* 2005: 78). Furthermore, the town was strategically located at the junction between the Northern Sinai and the Southern Levant, but also just a few kilometres off the coast, making it an important commercial passage point both for maritime and land routes.

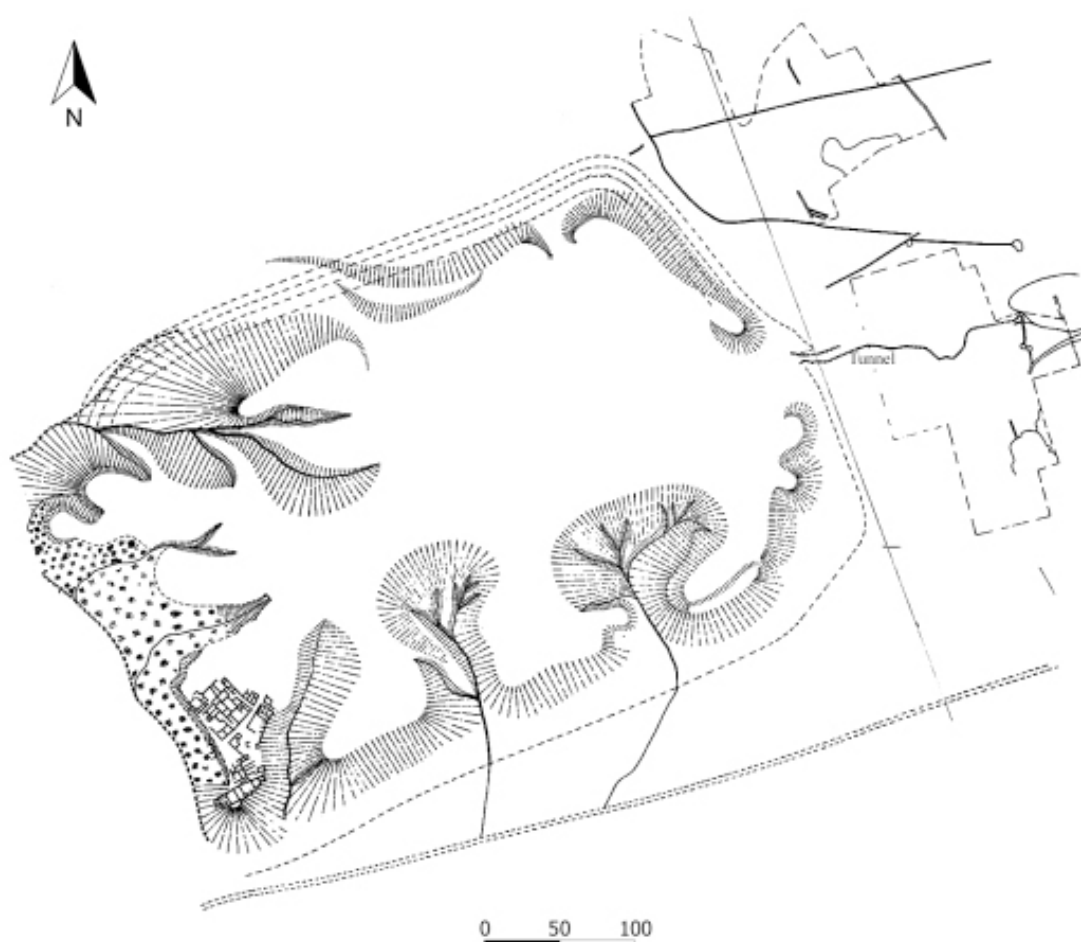


Figure 5.2. Site plan of Tell el-ʿAjjul (Petrie 1933: pl. XLV).

The study and understanding of Tell el-ʿAjjul has been limited by the excavation method and the lack of detailed publications. The major work on the site was carried out by the British School of Egyptian Archaeology, directed by W.F.M. Petrie in 1930-1934 and by E.H. Mackay and M.A. Murray in 1938. More recently, two new seasons of excavations at the site have been conducted by a joint Palestinian-Swedish expedition led by P.M. Fischer and M. Sadeq in 1999 and 2000. The material I have analysed is the one collected by Petrie only: I have decided not to include the most recent finds, as they have not been fully published and I have not been able to access them. Moreover, the Palestinian-Swedish expedition could not complete the planned research programme due to

the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, making the published results inconclusive.

A comprehensive understanding of the site has been prevented, as already examined in Chapter 1, by the excavation methods of the 1930s. As a consequence, Petrie mistakenly dated the site to the period spanning the 6th to the 18th Dynasty, while he attributed the tombs to the 5th - 22nd Dynasty (Petrie 1931; W. M. F. Petrie 1932; Petrie 1933; 1934). The site was re-dated by Albright (1938). According to the latter chronology, the oldest material from the site is dated to the EB IV (2350-2000 B.C.). This is limited to finds from the western cemetery 1500 and the eastern cemetery 100-200, which are likely to be connected to a small coeval village identified in the neighbourhood (Albright 1938: 342). The first architectural evidence on the mound belongs to the mid-II millennium B.C. Two contemporary cemeteries have been documented NE and E of the tell, while a smaller one, dated to the first part of the II millennium, was investigated inside the tell itself. The structures have been in use until the abandonment of the site after its final destruction in the 12th century B.C.

The detailed stratigraphy of the site, however, has been subjected to further adjustments. Debate has focused mostly on the Palace area and its first occupation phase, the only one showing traces of a monumental structure: Palace I (see below). The building has been usually dated to the MB III (e.g. Albright 1938: 342; Epstein 1966: 176-77; Stewart 1974: 58; Bergoffen 1989: 202; Oren 1992: 110, 16). Its destruction at the end of the period has been attributed to Ahmose, legitimising ʿAjjul’s identification with Sharuhēn. However, the main issue with this interpretation is Petrie’s report of WS I sherds, not usually associated with MBA contexts, in Palace I, whilst all the other pottery from the building is said to be typical of the final MBA. Scholars supporting this chronology justify the presence of such sherds with the position and importance of Tell el-ʿAjjul. Its role as a port town in close contact with Cyprus and as the political and military centre of the Southern Canaanite area would have supported an early appearance of WS ware, even though these finds are not witnessed by any other site in the Southern Levant (Epstein 1966: 176-77; Kempinski 1974: 148-49; Stewart 1974: 62-63; MacGovern 1985: 5; Bergoffen 2001b: 145-46). Conversely, some scholars rejected this interpretation and dated Palace I to the LB I (Kenyon 1971: 553-54; Gittlen 1977: 415).

A second problem is the synchronisation of the Palace area and its five different phases (Palace I-V) with the rest of the settlement: the “City” (phases III-I) of Petrie’s terminology. Both Petrie’s reports and following studies have tried to connect the different areas, but the lack of stratigraphic connections or a fully published assemblage of finds has made such a challenge difficult.

Considering all of these challenges in the study of Tell el-^cAjjul, it is necessary to clarify the stratigraphy and chronology before moving on to the discussion of hybridisation patterns at the site. In order to do so, the following sections will present an overview of the City and Palace areas, the data available, and a renewed interpretation of the stratigraphy according to such evidence. This analysis, besides clarifying the general organisation of the settlement, will provide some useful comparisons between the MBA and LBA city layout, and help us assess the impact of the cultural encounter with Egypt.

5.3 The “City”

The settlement of Tell el-^cAjjul has been scarcely studied so far. That is mostly due to the state of its publication: the description of the area in the reports is sketchy and Petrie did not provide a comprehensive plan of all its architectural features. The first four reports do not present a site grid, for instance, making the correlation between different areas difficult, and report some incorrect data, for example the wrong North indication in one of the plans (Petrie 1931: pl. LIV). In one case, an excavation area mentioned in the reports, Area C, is not documented on any of the plans (Petrie 1931: 9; 1934: 2). On the basis of the available information, therefore, the nature of the structure uncovered in this area and its position are impossible to reconstruct. Sparks proposed to locate it on the north-eastern side of Area A and north of Area E (Sparks 2005: 27, fig. 2). Even though this theory seems reasonable, there is unfortunately no solid evidence to prove it. Another issue of Petrie’s reports concerns the finds: these are rarely assigned to a specific find spot, but only to the generic area. Nevertheless, I will here reconstruct what can be gathered from the original publication and the later attempts at reconstructions. Subsequent studies too include a number of mistakes and misunderstandings: Yassine misplaced Area T (Yassine 1974: fig. 1), while Tufnell and Kempinski do not provide any accurate plan and locate Area LA in the wrong spot (Tufnell and

Kempinski 1993: 49). The most accurate reconstruction thus far is by Herzog, which I also broadly follow in my own reconstruction (Herzog 1997: fig. 4.9).

The so-called City has been published in *Ancient Gaza* I, IV and V and it corresponds to the portion mostly stretching along to the southern boundaries of the mound. On the plans, the following areas are mentioned, from west to east: A, B, D, E, F, G and T. The main feature of the city planning is retained in both phases: the buildings are arranged along a major road running SW-NE, parallel to the town limit to the south. A second parallel road, south of the first one, is attested on the westernmost edge of the settlement, but could have possibly run further east (Figure 5.3. Synchronic plan of Tell el-^cAjjul (Herzog 1997: fig. 4.9)).



Figure 5.3. Synchronic plan of Tell el-^cAjjul (Herzog 1997: fig. 4.9). The letters indicate the different excavation areas named by Petrie and mentioned in the text.

According to Petrie, three different layers have been distinguished: Level III, represented on the maps with an open outline, Level II, in black line, and Level I, corresponding to the 'top dust' (Petrie 1931: 5, 7; Petrie *et al.* 1952: 23). Moreover, the plans of Level II present some further architectural features marked with a dotted line. These represent in Petrie's report some later additions to Level II buildings, which he however attributed to the same phase. Some scholars tend instead to interpret this sub-phase as an extra level, taking the total amount of phases for the City to four (Epstein 1966: 185; Tufnell and Kempinski 1993: 52; Oren 2001b: 135). This latter interpretation seems feasible, yet Petrie did not provide enough information to allow us to corroborate it

through finds. For instance, no contextual information is provided for a great amount of pottery, labelled only with the general area or the level, while several pieces have no published provenance.

Petrie's reports are more focussed on the later occupational phases, therefore limiting our understanding of the earliest phase, City III. The original plans, however, allow us to recognise it in Area B, C, D, E and G. Areas B, C and D are occupied by residential compounds with small units separated by streets (Petrie 1931: pl. LIV; 1934: pl. LXII-LXIII). The plan of Areas B-D is probably incomplete, as some loci we know from the records are not shown on it (Petrie 1931: pl. LIV). The structures are separated by a main SW-NE street. Architectural features such as courtyards surrounded by minor rooms as well as shared walls point to private, non-elite dwellings. Two kilns in the courtyard of the dwellings (DF and BB) also indicate a domestic purpose. It is more difficult to analyse the structures of Area E and T, as they are particularly poorly documented and obliterated by the later occupation (Petrie 1934: pls. LXII-LXIII).

Slightly better documented from an architectural point of view is Area G on the SE corner of the site. This area was excavated in 1938 (Petrie *et al.* 1952: pls. XXXII-XXXIII). Here a major building was uncovered, with thick walls enclosing storage rooms and utility rooms with several ovens. The reports also mention the retrieval of specialized finds like sickles, while an impressive amount of weights have been found all over the complex, with a concentration in room GCM: they are 11 stone weights, mostly of the barrel-shape type with flattened bases, plus some unworked pebbles (Petrie *et al.* 1952: 23). The central hall (GGA) was entirely obliterated by a massive pit and the only remains documented are some infant jar burials dug on its N and W walls. The rooms west of the pit (GER and GEA) had several cavities dug in the floor, possibly for storage jars. All of these finds show that the function of the complex has to be related to industrial and commercial activities, whilst the size and kind of finds would point to some kind of public involvement in such practices. The chronology obtained from the material fits the final MBA horizon. Diagnostic types of this phase are the local grey burnished juglets, kraters with internally thickening rims, ovoid transport amphorae with rounded bottoms, and 'Red, white and blue ware'. A few Cypriot PWS and BW sherds also point to a date in the final MBA.

The architectural remains from the MBA city, therefore, point to a rather minor centre. The residential area (B-D) shows little social stratification, being formed by small houses roughly of the same size. The pottery from this portion of the settlement was utilitarian and local, indicating that the area was inhabited by the lower strata of the population. The only different building in the excavated city plan of the MBA is the structure in Area G, a major compound that bears traces of industrial and commercial activities. Its function can be inferred from the size of the building, together with the presence of several ovens, storage rooms and an unusual concentration of stone weights in one of the rooms. Such an amount of weights is usually found in administrative buildings or in exchange hubs, but minor quantities can also be found in military complexes and private residences, usually belonging to the upper social class (Ascalone and Peyronel 2006: 129, 33). This evidence, together with the presence of several furnaces, leads to the interpretation of the compound as the main centre of handicraft activities for public use and economic transactions. Its connection with a central administration is not a clear one, though the presence of such an organisation can be inferred for the MBA Tell el-^cAjjul by other evidence.

The best example is probably given by the fortification system. It is impossible to demonstrate that the *fossae* and the rampart encircling the town were erected during the MBA, due to a lack of recorded material from the excavation. Its typology, nevertheless, coincides with the Syro-Canaanite fortifications widely attested in the MBA and no longer built in the following period. A date in the MB II-III, in accordance with the other remains from the settlement, is therefore to be preferred. The erection of such an impressive public work would point to a kind of labour organisation capable of directing a major social effort. The town planning would also confirm this picture, for the presence of a well-organized rectilinear urban layout, even in the absence of large scale settlement, which will only develop in the following period (Aaron Kempinski 1992a: 125). Other finds from the tombs, here not analysed, could strengthen this hypothesis. Some burials dated to the last part of the MBA show features of social differentiation, for example horse and donkey burials (Petrie 1931: 4, pls. VIII-IX).

This scenario would fit well with the rank-size analysis proposed in the previous chapter, which would categorise Tell el-^cAjjul as a medium-sized

settlement belonging to at least a second tier, after Ashkelon. This situation, however, changes considerably in the first part of the LBA and this change may be due to the impact of the imperial encounter with Egypt.

Remnants of 'City II' were excavated in Area A, E, G and T. The plan shows some more clearly distinguishable architectural units, not only because they are better documented, but also for their major size and complexity compared to the previous period. On the west, Area A (Figure 5.4) was described by Petrie as a main house with square blocks (Petrie 1931: 5-6). Kempinski recognized in it a major residence, Building AM, which, based on the plan and the thickness of the walls, he classifies as a 'courtyard patrician house' (Aaron Kempinski 1992b: 116). According to Yassine this building would be part of a 'civic complex' that would have served officials (Yassine 1974: 132). North of it is structure, AF, interpreted as a shrine by Petrie (Petrie 1931: 6). This building does resemble Egyptian mortuary chapels, which are usually tripartite sanctuaries with raised floors and an offering court in front. The walls of AF were plastered and at the entrance of the structure was placed a water installation, which included a bench with a drain connected to a large jar underneath the floor level, all pointing to a ritual use. The presence of a bench in this Egyptian-style shrine could be a sign of hybridisation between the Egyptian and Near Eastern tradition already observed in Tell el-Dab^oa (Bietak 2008: 210), which will be further discussed below. The main street, here labelled AN, separates the building from a less well preserved south-western unit.

As for the chronology of the complex, Cypriot imports include several specimens of BW, RoB and WS I, with only one sherd of WS II, minor amounts of WP V/VI and Monochrome pottery. This assemblage can be dated with some confidence to the LB IA. The local pottery includes types typical of the transitional MB/LB as well as more specific LBA shapes including bowls with ring-bases, a pilgrim flask, and a transport amphora with elongated body and short neck. Chocolate-on-white ware is attested in the form of a few bowls which are usually dated to the MB/LB transitional or LB I (Fischer 2003a: 56).

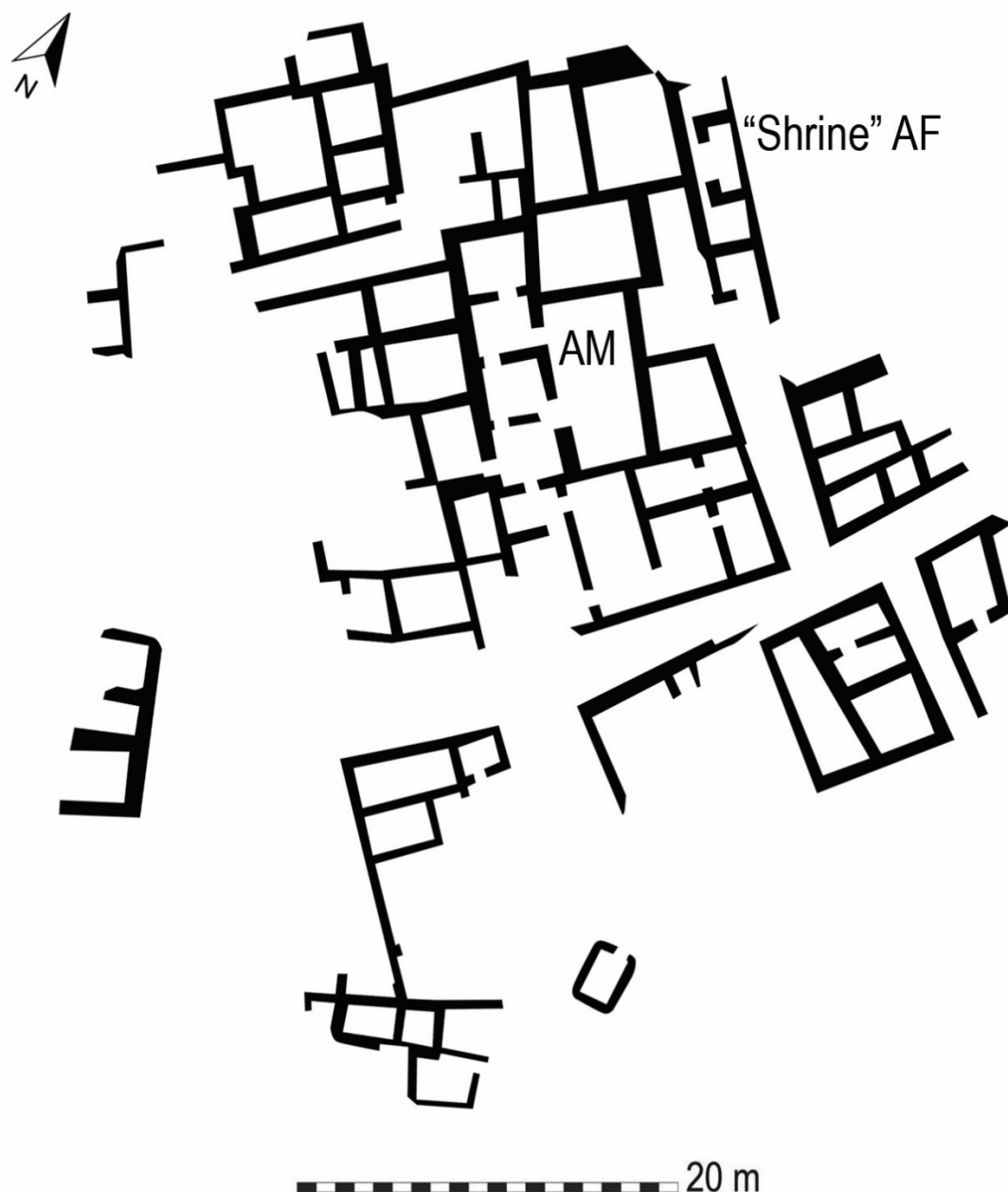


Figure 5.4. Plan of Area A, level II (Petrie 1931: pl. LIV)

Unfortunately, it is not possible to date the other areas of the City, as the amount of recorded ceramics from secured contexts is simply too meagre. We can, however, discuss the architectural features documented by Petrie on the AG plans. In Area E, Petrie recorded primarily the LBA phase, featuring two main complexes on either side of the main street. The western side is dominated by a massive building with thick walls with some installations and a possible vestibule. This structure can be interpreted as a temple of the Syro-Canaanite symmetrical type, representative of the 2nd millennium B.C. The position of the structure, at a crossroad between the main streets, would support this

hypothesis (Yassine 1974: 132). On the other side of the street lies unit 'EAD'. Its complex plan shows on the west a major courtyard with three installations labelled as ovens and can altogether be interpreted as another elite residence (Aaron Kempinski 1992b: 116). The two units adjacent to the east have been interpreted as separate domestic units (Yassine 1974: 132). In Area T was excavated a major structure partly built of stone, which stands out from the typical mudbrick architecture. The dimensions of the building and the use of the different material, together with the careful planning, indicate its possible public role. Another important building (TCT) is located on the south of the major street. Thick walls and a distinctive plan again suggest an elite residence (Aaron Kempinski 1992b: 116).

A significant change in the architectural layout of the City is also visible in Area G. This area, previously occupied by a possible handicraft centre, is now heavily disturbed by later pits. The reports suggest that these were for food storage, but the majority yielded no finds. Some of them contained a number of interments, including a horse burial (Petrie *et al.* 1952: 22-23). The structural layout of the previous period is partly kept, but the complex undergoes some significant modifications. The compound is still characterized by the major thickness of its walls compared to the rest of the settlement. Petrie documented a pebble or shell paving in most of the rooms, sometimes associated with water installation, such as partly buried large pottery water jars. The most interesting finds belong to the northern part, in the previous phase occupied by storage rooms and a pit. Here, room GGF is a major court connected to room GGD, where the northern wall is occupied by a niche (Petrie *et al.* 1952: 29). North of it, Petrie uncovered a stone lined drain and two stone lined pits. Among the finds are a bronze knife in the southern part of the complex (GBW) and a hoard of gold work in room GD. The latter was buried under the surface and contained, among the several fine pieces of jewellery, pendants representing a goddess figure (Petrie *et al.* 1952: pl. VI:13; MacGovern 1985: cat. no. 74). Finally, an assemblage of more than 120 *astragali* was unearthed in room GDS, south of the long room GGF (Petrie *et al.* 1952: 28). Architectural elements and finds disclose the templar function of the compound. These include the long room and adjacent niche, the several water installations and the rich finds, in particular the gold hoard and the *astragali*. Similar finds are indeed found in other cultic LBA sites in Palestine. An example is given by the Phase 1 of the Fosse Temple,

in Lachish, modern Tell ed-Duweir, dated to the LB I. Here the structure was equipped with several libation installations composed by jars set in the pebble floors. The excavations also uncovered a gold hoard with different pieces of jewellery and pendants and a conspicuous number of astragali (Tufnell *et al.* 1940: 39, 93-94, pl. XVI:5). Even in the absence of pottery, this comparison and the stratigraphic connections prove the presence of a cultic area at Tell el-^oAjjul, so far unidentified, and allows it to be dated to the LBA, possibly to its first phase.

The presence of a major cultic structure, together with other minor temples and elite residences in the City II, indicates a more stratified society in the first part of the LBA. During this period, as analysed in the previous chapter, the settlement retains its dimension of 10 ha, and is the largest settlement in the Wadi Gaza area after Gaza. As for the following layer, City I, only scanty remains are attributed to this phase (Petrie 1931: 5, 7; Petrie *et al.* 1952: 23), after which the size of the settlement seems to shrink to include only the northern corner (less than 1 ha, see Chapter 3). The last remains from the City can be dated within the LB I or early LB IIA, which therefore represent the last period of splendour for Tell el-^oAjjul. The importance of Tell el-^oAjjul during the LB I, however, can be further supported by the finds from the northern corner of the settlement, the so-called palace area.

5.4 The Palace area

In this section I will take another look at the much-disputed chronology of the palace buildings of Tell el-^oAjjul through a contextual pottery analysis. After a brief description of the architectural remains for each layer, I will then proceed with a description of the pottery assemblage and its chronological interpretation. The reassessed chronology will allow us to evaluate the remains of the MBA and the LBA respectively and, thus, to evaluate the outcome of the imperial encounter with Egypt in the LBA.

The palace area has been identified in the NE corner of the mound, shielded by the massive embankment. Petrie documented five different building layers and named each building 'Palace' followed by a Roman numeral (I-V). He indicated the relation between each layer by recording their depth in inches and drawing a plan of each structure. Most of the pottery is recorded or preserved in

museum collections and can be used to provide a secure dating for each building.

Palace I (

Figure 5.5) is the most substantial of the five consecutive structures. It measures about 40x45 m and is organized around a square central courtyard surrounded by small rooms on at least three sides (W. M. F. Petrie 1932: 2-3, pl. XLIII-XLV; Petrie 1933: 1-3, pl. II, XLVI). The layer is covered by a 15 cm thick deposit of ashes (W. M. F. Petrie 1932: 4) that has also recognized by the new Fischer excavations on top of level H5 (Fischer and Sadeq 2002: 125).

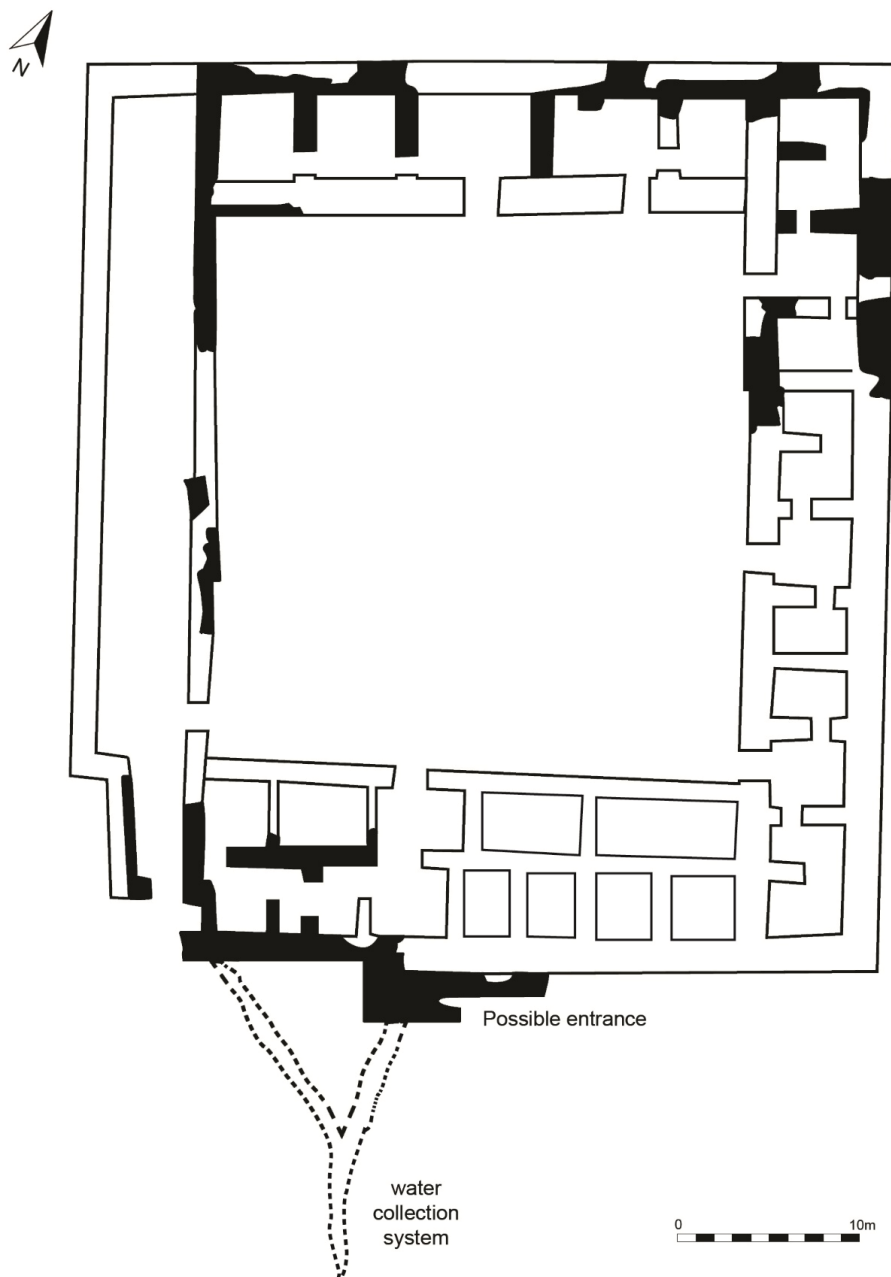


Figure 5.5. Palace I, Tell el-'Ajjul (redrawn from Nigro 1995: pl. 21).

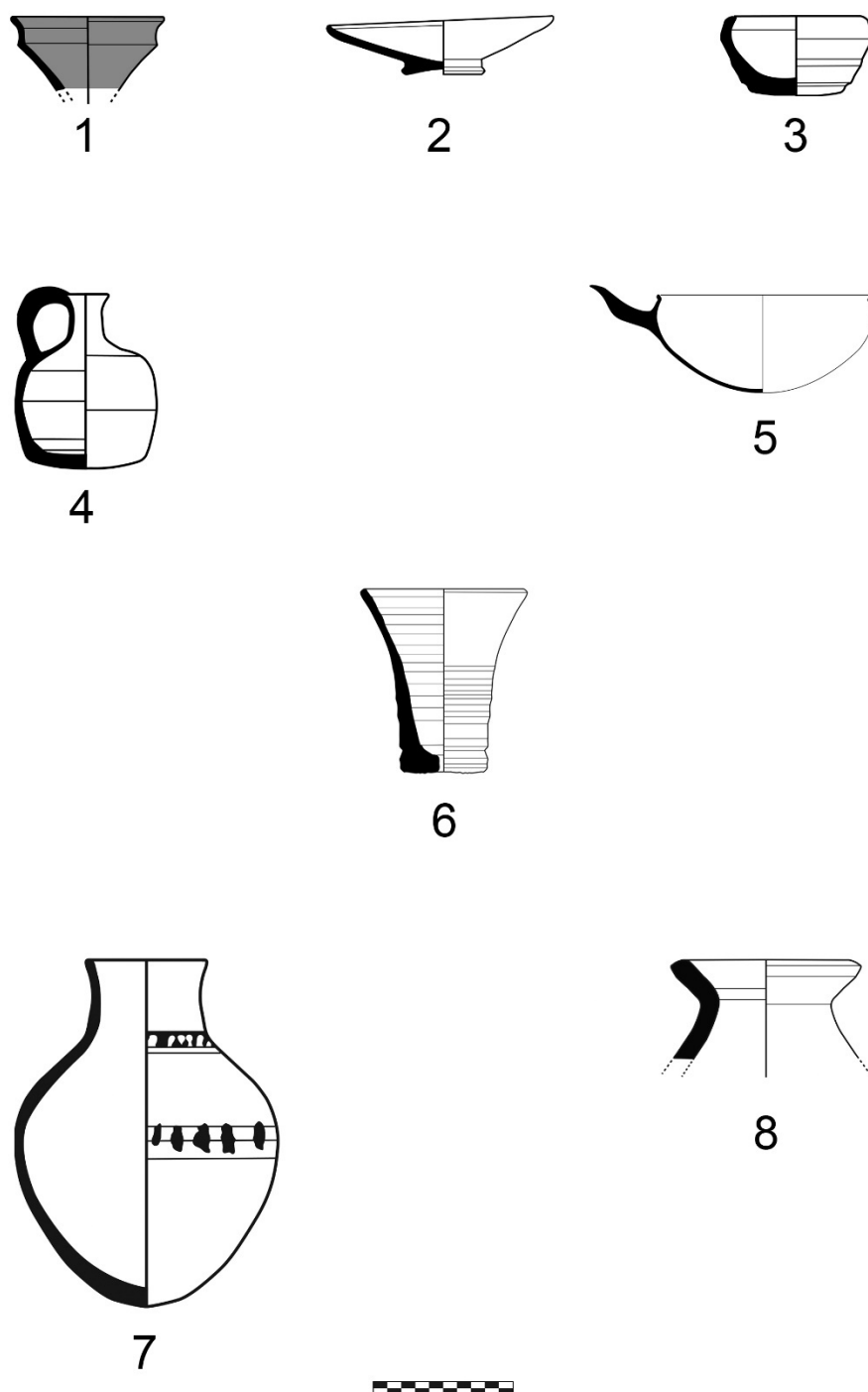


Figure 5.6. Representative pottery from Palace I, Tell el-ʿAjjul. 1. Chalice rim, red slip, Canaanite, ML 960, UCL, EXII.12/37 (Petrie 1932: pl. XXVIII.17W2); 2. Shallow bowl, Canaanite, ML 960, UCL, EXII.12/1, unpublished; 3. Miniature bowl, Canaanite, ML 960, UCL, EXII.12/2, unpublished; 4. Cylindrical juglet, Canaanite, MV 948, UCL, EXII.12A/1, unpublished; 5. Monochrome bowl, Cypriot, MVI-OG South of lower level wall; Manchester Museum 9187 (Bergoffen 1989: cat. 472); 6. Flowerpot, Egyptian-style, PL 970, IAA 2121 (Petrie 1932: pl. XXVII:9Q; Kopetzky 2011: fig. 108:9Q); 7. Squat jar, Egyptian, PL 960 (Petrie 1932: AG II, pl. XXXI:41E3; Kopetzky 2011: fig. 109b); 8. *Zir*, Egyptian, MT 952 (Petrie 1932: pl. XXX:31Y20; Kopetzky 2011: fig. 111).

A *terminus post quem* for the construction of the building is offered by the so-called ‘Courtyard Cemetery’, which was built over by the first palace, and which can be dated securely to the MB I (Tufnell 1962: 4). Analysis of the pottery finds allows us to narrow the chronology of the structure. Regarding the local pottery, several shapes can be generally attributed to the final part of the MBA and the beginning of the LBA (Figure 5.6). For this period, it is hard to find a sharp distinction in local pottery types. The local assemblage appears to undergo an uninterrupted and slow process of change, which is reflected in naming this period ‘transitional MB-LB’ or ‘MB IIC-LB I’ (e.g. Amiran 1970: 125, 34, 35, 46; Bietak 1991: 57; Dever 1992: 16; Panitz-Cohen 2013: 542; Sherratt 2013: 498). Typical shapes include rounded bowls, kraters with a rope decoration, and cylindrical juglets.

Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery is mainly represented by squat jars, *zirs* - big water jars representative of the Egyptian tradition - and bowls, all characteristic of the beginning of the New Kingdom (Kopetzky 2011).

Among the Cypriot imports, several specimens, in particular Monochrome, RoB, and BW, all belonging to the first LC phase, were uncovered. Whilst these wares are found already in the MB III and continue into the LBA, other finds provide a tighter chronological range. The occupational phase of Palace I yielded a considerable amount of WS I and a few specimens of BR I pottery, whilst the destruction layer includes WS II sherds (Table 5.1 and Fig. 5.7). Twenty-four pieces of WS I with reliable contextual information were found in Palace I. According to Bergoffen, they show an early style and can be dated to the LC IA1, which overlaps with the Canaanite MB III (Bergoffen 2001b: 155). It is worth considering that no PWS has been so far identified in the palatial area. This production, considered to pre-date the mature WS style, is usually found in the LC IA1, while WS I is only produced in the LC IA2 (Åström 2001: 50). Three fragments of WS II have been attributed to the destruction layer above Palace I. WS II develops from WS I and in Cyprus appears at the end of LC IB or the beginning of LC IIA (Crewe 2007: 39). As for the BR ware, Bergoffen only attributed 4 sherds to Palace I (Bergoffen 2001a: 41-44), against the 10 I have located. Six of them were found on the floor level of the palace area, while two come from the destruction layer. Bergoffen uses these sherds to demonstrate the early arrival of BR in Canaan before the end of MB III.

Type	Layer	Context	Location	Museum ID	Publication
WS I	Palace I	OX 954	Manchester Museum	9230	Unpublished
WS I	Palace I	PG 936	UCL	EXII.12/34	Unpublished
WS I	Palace I	MH 939	UCL	EXII.12b/7b	Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 1095, p. 470, pl. 57.
WS I	Palace I	MO 938	UCL	EXII.12a/3a	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1079, p. 467, pl. 195
WS I	Palace I	MR 945	IAA	32.2163/11	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1136
WS I	Palace I	MR 945	UCL	EXII.12a/2	Merrillees 1974, cat. 190, fig. 7, p. 109; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1094, p. 470, pl. 195.
WS I	Palace I	MS 960	UCL	EXII.12b/7c	Merrillees 1974, cat. 82, p. 97, fig. 4; Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 1080, p. 467, pl. 203.
WS I	Palace I	MV 910 A	unlocated		Bergoffen 1989, no. 1133
WS I	Palace I	MVI 955	UCL	EXII.12/9	Merrillees 1974, cat. 73, fig. 4, p. 95; Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 1185, p. 484, pl. 62.
WS I	Palace I	OG 936	UCL	EXII.12/31	Merrillees 1974, cat. 84, p. 98, fig. 4; Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 1184, p. 484, fig. 203.
WS I	Palace I	OG 936	UCL	EXII.12/32	Merrillees 1974, cat. 85, p. 98, fig. 4; Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 1184, p. 484, fig. 71.
WS I	Palace I	OJ 955	UCL	EXII.12/24	Merrillees 1974, cat. 112, p. 100, fig. 5; Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 1091, p. 469, pl. 93.
WS I	Palace I	OJ 956	Manchester Museum	9218	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1092
WS I	Palace I	OM 958	UCL	EXII.12/29	Merrillees 1974, cat. 114, p. 100, fig. 5; Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 1144, p. 479, pl. 53.
WS I	Palace I	OY 953	UCL	EXII.12/25	Merrillees 1974, cat. 110, p. 100, fig. 5; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1081, p. 468, pl. 72.
WS I	Palace I	OY 962	UCL	EXII.12/28	Merrillees, 1974, cat. 113, p. 100, fig. 5; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1124, p. 475, pl. 195.
WS I	Palace I	OY tower 961	IAA	32.2163/12	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1087
WS I	Palace I	OZ 936	UCL	EXII.12/33	Merrillees, 1974, I, cat. 136, p. 103, fig. 5; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1127, p. 476, pl. 212.
WS I	Palace I	OZ 955	UCL	EXII.12/23	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1152, p. 480, pl. 203.
WS I	Palace I	OZ 955	UCL	EXII.12/30	Merrillees 1974, cat. 115, p. 100, fig. 5; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1185.937, p. 485.
WS I	Palace I	OZ 960	UCL	EXII.12/27	Merrillees 1974, cat. 121, p. 100, fig. 5; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1090, p. 469, pl. 56.
WS I	Palace I	PE 964	IAA	32.2163/16	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1185.440
WS I	Palace I	PF 936	UCL	EXII.12/26	Petrie, 1932, pl. IV, top row far left; Merrillees 1974, cat. 140, p. 103, fig. 5.
WS I	Palace I	SQ 927	University of Melbourne		Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1256.

Type	Layer	Context	Location	Museum ID	Publication
			Museum		
BR I	Palace I	M 950	IAA	47.466	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 633.
BR I	Palace I	OG 927	UCL	no inv. No.	Merrillees 1974, no. 86, p. 98, fig. 4; Bergoffen 1989, no. 548.
BR I	Palace I	OJ 950	UCL	EXII.12/57	Merrillees 1974, cat. 122, p. 100, fig. 5; Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 635, p. 425, pl. 91.
BR I	Palace I	PF 936 (corrected from 926)	unlocated		Merrillees 151, p. 105, Bergoffen 1989, cat. 556.1694
BR I	Palace I	MU 932	UCL	EXII.12a/3b	Merrillees, R.S. 1974, cat. 74, p. 95, fig. 4.; Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 603, p. 423, pl. 53.
BR I	Palace I destruction layer	OD 967	IAA	32.2149/1	Petrie 1932, pl. XXVIII:19N3; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 541.
BR I	Palace I destruction layer	Area M	UCL	EXII.12b/25	unpublished
WS I	Palace I destruction layer	MD 978	UCL	EXII.13a/1	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1148, p. 479, pl. 197.
WS I	Palace I destruction layer	MU 971	UCL	EXII.12b/9	Merrillees 1974, cat. 81, fig. 4 (context given incorrectly as MW 971); Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1135, p. 477, pl. 195.
WS I	Palace I destruction layer	OFZ 953-993	Ashmolean	1932.1153d	Unpublished
WS I	Palace I destruction layer	OK 970	UCL	EXII.13/24	Merrillees 1974, cat. 111, p. 100, fig. 5 (with context OX 970); Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1128, p. 476, pl. 195.
WS I	Palace I destruction layer	OZ 973	UCL	EXII.13/10	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1155, p. 481, pl. 197.
WS I	Palace I destruction layer	PF 975	UCL	EXII.13/19	Merrillees 1974, cat. 146, p. 103, fig. 6; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1185.442, p. 484, pl. 197.
WS I	Palace I destruction layer	PF 975	UCL	EXII.13/21	Merrillees 1974, cat. 117, p. 100, fig. 5 and cat. 147, p. 103, fig. 6; Bergoffen, 1989, cat. 1125, p. 475, pls 72 and 197.
WS II	Palace I destruction layer	OY 970	UCL	EXII.12/21	Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1245, p. 494, pl. 46.
WS II	Palace I destruction layer	PD 966	UCL	EXII.12/22	Merrillees 1974, cat. 162, p. 105; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1260.
WS II	Palace I destruction layer	SQ 970	unlocated		Petrie 1932, pl. LV.

Table 5.1. List of WS and BR pottery from Palace I, Tell el-'Ajjul.

This is based on the assumption that all the other pottery from the first palace dates to the MB III (Bergoffen 2001a: 41-44). Bergoffen justified her assumptions mentioning an earlier study by Epstein (Epstein 1966: 176-77).

According to the latter and as reinforced by Bergoffen, Tell el-Ajjul would have been a major polity in the MBA, benefitting of a strategic position and of its connection with the Hyksos reign in the Egyptian Delta, according to its identification with Sharuhén. These factors would justify, in the scholars' opinion, a privileged commercial relationship with Cyprus. Tell el-^cAjjul would have received Cypriot products earlier than any other Canaanite site, at the same time as they were produced in Cyprus. This assumption on the one hand assumes that the identification of Tell el-^cAjjul with Sharuhén is correct and that the role of this town was paramount in the political balances of the Eastern Mediterranean of the MBA. On the other hand, it also means that we should expect the same pottery repertoire represented in the renewed, systematic, excavations at Tell el-^cAjjul. Yet, WS I is only found in levels H4 onwards, dated to the LB IA. Other imports such as BWMW are also only found from this layer onwards, as are RoB and BL wares. No BR was found in these levels; some sherds were only uncovered from the following stratum, H3, dated to the LB IB. Here also WS I and II and BW have been retrieved (Fischer 2001: 226-28). Moreover, several scholars have effectively demonstrated that BR ware did not reach Palestine before the LBA, specifically not before Thutmose III (Stewart 1955: 49; Oren 1969: 143-49).

A better insight into the chronology of Cypriot WS and BR wares in Palestine can be gathered through comparison with other Canaanite sites. E.D. Oren conducted a detailed analysis of stratigraphically controlled MB III - LB I sites. He showed how PWS (absent in the Palace area of Tell el-^cAjjul) is found in MB III Palestinian sites with significant amounts of Cypriot imports, for instance Akhziv, Megiddo and Tel Ridan. The same sites have yielded WS I only from LB IA contexts (Oren 2001b: 142). As for the BR, not a single Palestinian site shows signs of this ware during the MBA (Oren 2001a: 127).

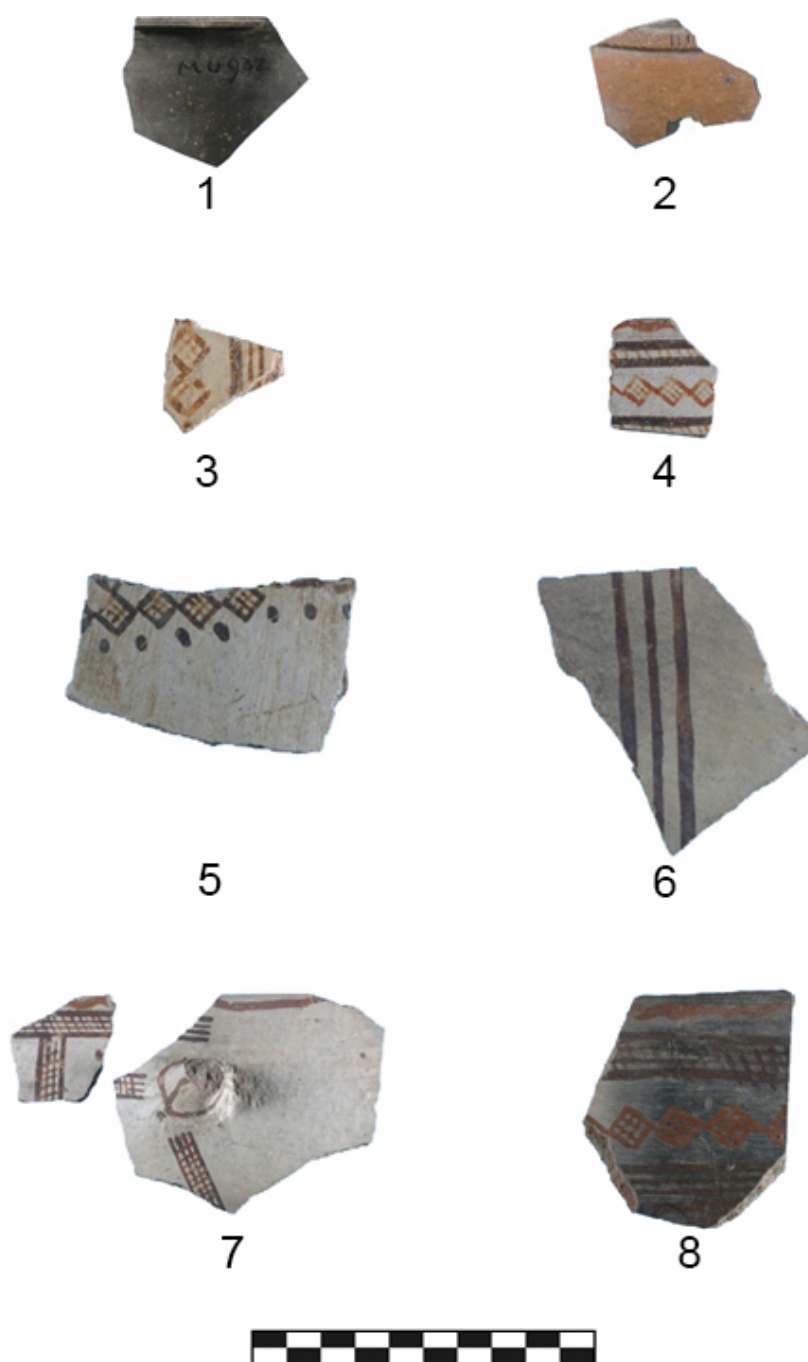


Figure 5.7. Some specimens of WS and BR ware from Palace I, Tell el-^cAjjul: 1. BR I bowl sherd from Palace I (Merrillees 1974, cat. 74, p. 95, fig. 4; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1090, p. 469, pl. 56), photo courtesy of the UCL Archaeology Collections, EXII.12a/3b; 2. BR I bowl sherd from Palace I (Merrillees 1974, cat. 122, p. 100, fig. 5), photo courtesy of the UCL Archaeology Collections, EXII.12/57; 3. WS I bowl sherd from Palace I (Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1095, p. 470, pl. 57), photo courtesy of the UCL Archaeology Collections, EXII.12b/7b; 4. WS I bowl sherd from Palace I (Merrillees 1974, cat. 82, p. 97, fig. 4; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1080, p. 467, pl. 203), photo courtesy of the UCL Archaeology Collections, EXII.12b/7c ; 5. WS I bowl sherd from Palace I (Merrillees 1974, cat. 136, p. 103, fig. 5; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1127, p. 476, pl. 212), photo courtesy of the UCL Archaeology Collections, EXII.12/33; 6. WS I bowl sherd from Palace I, unpublished, photo courtesy of the UCL Archaeology Collections, EXII.12/34; 7. WS I bowl sherd from Palace I (Merrillees 1974, cat. 190, fig. 7, p. 109; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1094, p. 470, pl. 195), photo courtesy of the UCL Archaeology Collections, EXII.12a/2; 8. WS I bowl sherd from Palace I (Merrillees 1974, cat. 121, p. 100, fig. 5; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1090, p. 469, pl. 56), photo courtesy of the UCL Archaeology Collections, EXII.12/27.

Oren later expanded his analysis to sites in Egypt and finally concluded that the first appearance of BR pottery outside of Cyprus cannot be dated before the LB IA, though it is more characteristic of the LB IB. At the neighbouring site of Tell el-Dab^a PWS is attested during phase D/2 (late Hyksos Period), while WS I and BR I only appear from the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, phase D/1 (Bietak and Hein 2001: 172, 80). Moreover, as already stated above, it is very difficult to distinguish with any confidence MB III local pottery from its LB I counterpart. Similarly, Red-on-black pottery was manufactured in Cyprus from the MC III to the LC I, and probably with the same frequency during both periods (Crewe 2007: 38). Monochrome and BWMW wares were both produced in the LC I, overlapping with the production of WS I and BR I. In other words, on the basis of the pottery evidence available, the complex could be dated to either the late MBA or the early LBA. In keeping with these results, I suggest that a date in the LB I is more appropriate for the first phase of the Palace, most likely the LB IA, which would account for the transitional local pottery as well as for the range of Cypriot imports.

This periodization has a series of knock-on effects on the interpretation of Tell el-^aAjjul and its role in the MBA-LBA international arena. First, the destruction at the end of Palace I could hardly be seen as the result of Ahmose's attack to Sharuhⁿ, which should have happened around 1540 B.C., corresponding to the Canaanite MB III according to the Low Chronology. This evidence could therefore undermine the identification of Tell el-^aAjjul with the town mentioned by the Egyptian sources. A different scenario would become possible if we decided, instead, to adopt the High Chronology (see Chapter 1). In this case, the transition from the MBA to the LBA would be around 1600 B.C., with the period ending in 1479 B.C. If this chronology was confirmed by future studies, then the attribution of Palace I to the LB I would not contradict the possibility of its destruction by Ahmose and might even corroborate its identification with Sharuhⁿ. At the present state of knowledge, as also stated in Chapter 1, this thesis will continue to use the Low Chronology, waiting for new studies to confirm or disprove Höflmayer's hypothesis.

Having laid the foundation for the chronology of the palatial sequence, the rest of this section will now analyse the evidence for the following periods, which will allow an analysis of the ongoing encounter with Egypt within the local context of Tell el-^aAjjul.

Above the layer of ashes recognised by Petrie, a new building was erected, Palace II. It is a smaller structure, just over 20 m² in size. A northern extension of the building, however, may have reached the edge of the mound, making it substantially bigger than the attested plan would suggest (Figure 5.8). The excavation plan shows a rectangular layout, with a courtyard surrounded by a row of rooms on the eastern side, where the entrance was probably located, and two parallel rows of rooms on the western side. Based on this layout and its modest size, the building has been defined as a ‘residence’ (see Chapter 3, Oren 1984; Nigro 1995: 170).

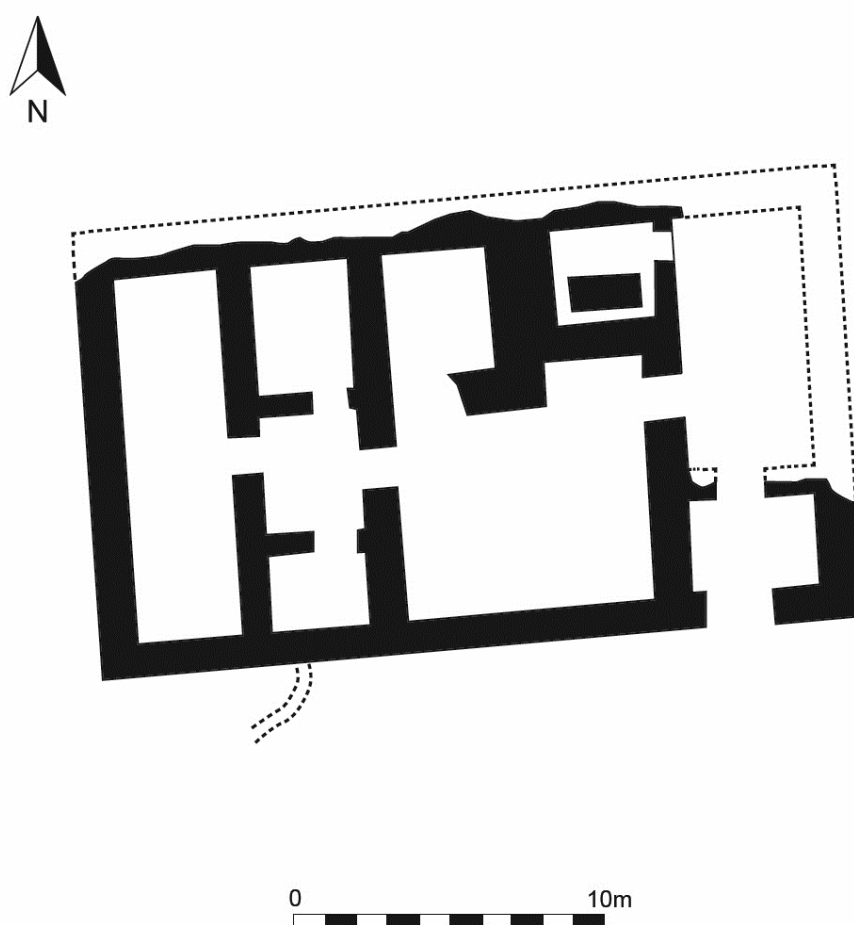


Figure 5.8. Palace II, Tell el-*°*Ajjul (redrawn from Nigro 1995: pl. 30).

The local ceramic repertoire is represented only by a few specimens of plain pottery, both table ware and storage jars, mostly found in the external courtyard area of the building. The chronological distribution of these finds fits well with a date in the LB I. A few sherds of Chocolate-on-white ware were recovered, also belonging to this chronological horizon (Fig. 5.9).

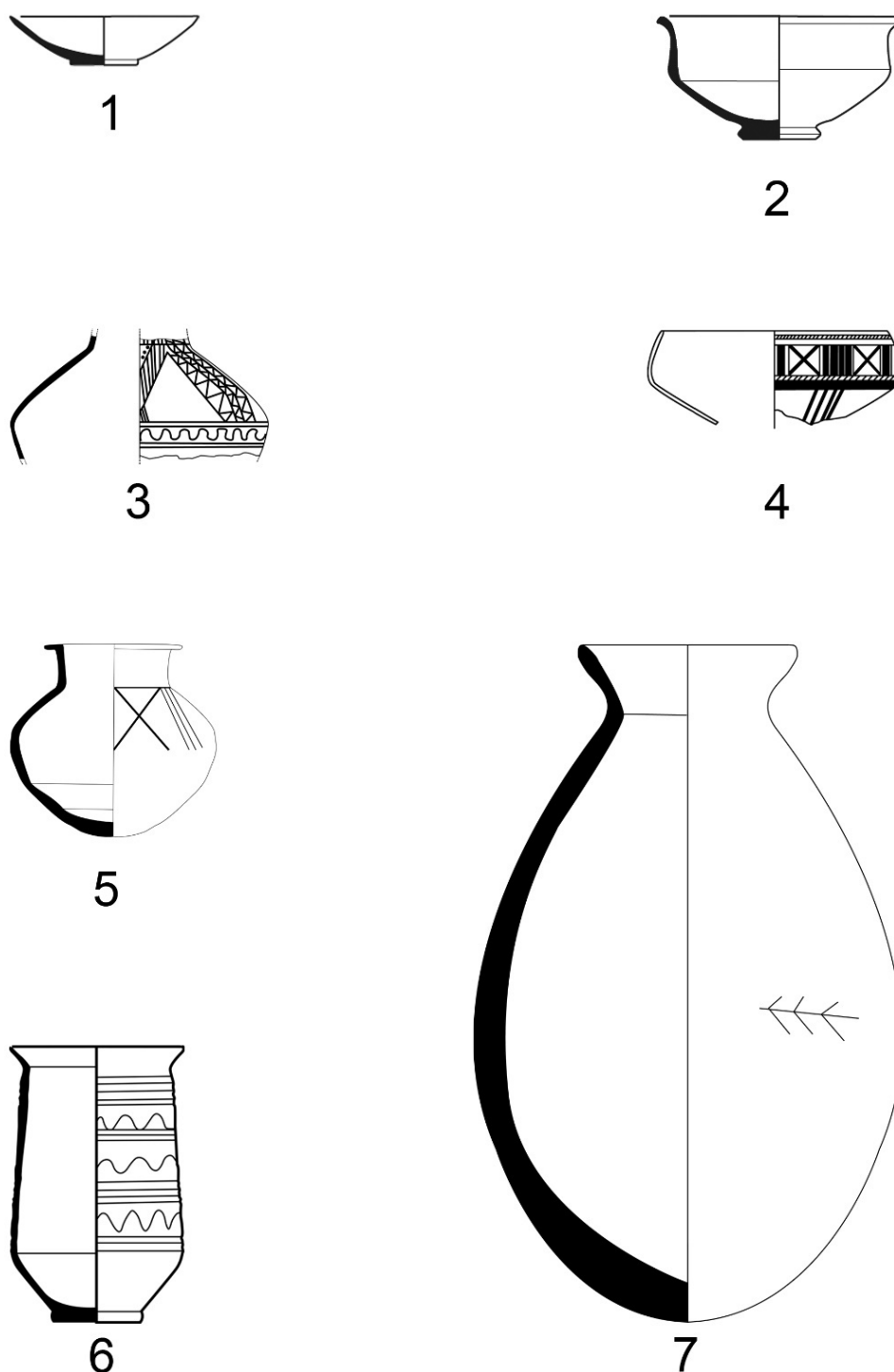


Figure 5.9. Representative pottery from Palace II. 1. Shallow bowl, Canaanite, QP 997, unlocated (Petrie 1933, pl. XXX:6N6); 2. Carinated bowl, Canaanite, MV 990, unlocated (Petrie 1933, pl. XXX:16K3); closed vessel body sherd (jar or jug), Chocolate on White ware, OX 980, UCL, EXII.13/38 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXXI.3807); 4. Bowl, BMWW, Cypriot, PD 989, UCL, EXII.13e/1 (Epstein 1966, pl. VII.16; Merrillees 1974, cat. 197, p. 107, fig. 7); 5. Squat jar, Egyptian, LP 978, IDA, 1947-2391 (Petrie 1933, AG III, pl. XXXIII:32A8; Kopetzky 2011, fig. 110:32A8); 6. Basin/jar, Egyptian, OC 990, IAA (Petrie 1932, pl. XXIX:31V7; Kopetzky 2011, fig. 109); 7. Zir, Egyptian, OH 984, unlocated (Petrie 1933, pl. XXXIII:31Y20; Kopetzky 2011, fig. 111).

Of Egyptian production were a few *zirs* and squat jars, while Egyptian-style pottery was only represented by mass produced plain bowls. The chronology of these finds has been homogeneously attributed to the first phase of the NK (Kopetzky 2011). Squat jars are particularly diagnostic: they are found in Lower Egypt only in the early 18th Dynasty (Kopetzky 2011: 207), while in Palestine they have been found from the LB IA to the LB IIA, such as at Yoqne'am, Megiddo, Beth Shean, Jaffa and Tel Dan (Burke and Lords 2010: 17). The specimens from Palace II present a characteristic decoration with parallel vertical strokes, hanging from a horizontal line, followed by a metopal decoration with one or more lines that cross over forming an X. This motif dates the jars to no later than Thutmose III (Burke and Lords 2010: 17). The Cypriot repertoire is dominated by WS I bowls, with a few specimens of WS II. BW, RoB and BR I are also present, with some sherds of Monochrome and a LoD bowl. This would make a date in the LB IB for Palace II plausible.

Palace III has been divided by Petrie into two sub-phases, IIIA and IIIB, of which the latter represents a partial reconstruction of the previous structure (W. M. F. Petrie 1932: 4). Palace IIIA was erected using building material from the Palace II foundations. The building has the characteristics of a fortified stronghold: it is composed of a fort and a possible tower adjacent to the main residence, while to the south of it there was a secondary structure, distinguished by thinner walls (Figure 5.10).

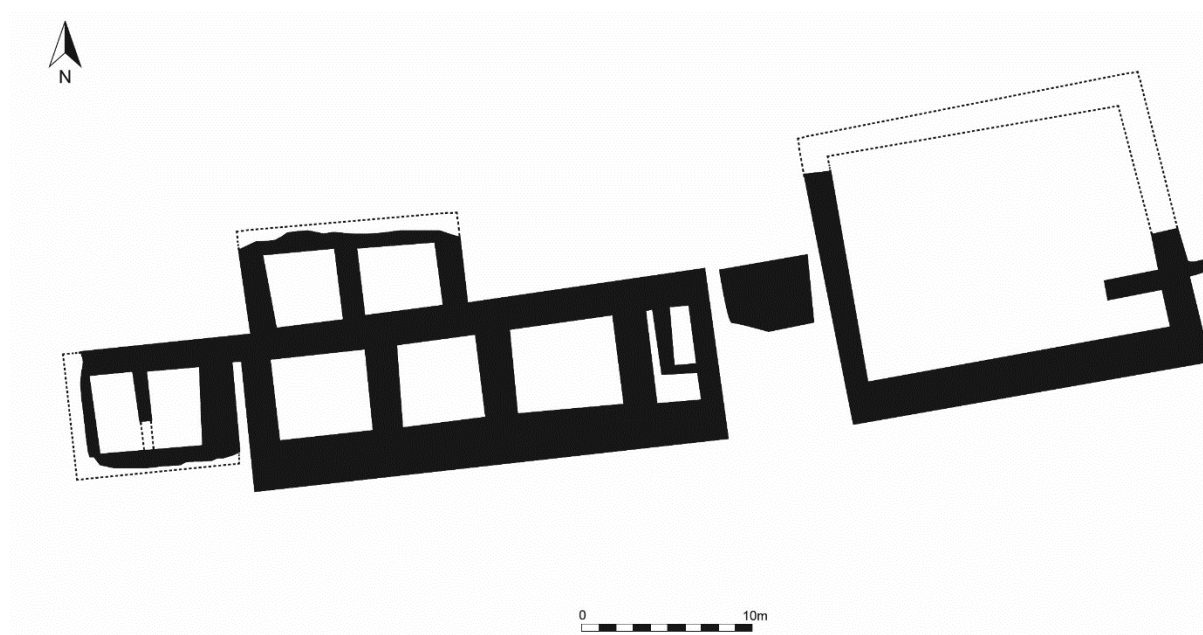


Figure 5.10. Palace III, Tell el-^cAjjul (redrawn, Nigro 1995: pl. 31).

The local pottery dates to a mature LBA, characterised by a significant increase of painted pottery: in particular carinated bowls and jugs, a few red slipped bowls, and a cooking pot with triangular everted rim. Also amongst the locally produced ceramics is a pilgrim flask. Its shape fits the chronological horizon of the LB IIA, especially for the technique employed for the handles, attached by spreading clay on the neck (Amiran 1970: 166). Egyptian pottery is mainly composed by squat jars with a decoration composed by either vertical or horizontal lines, which allows us to date them to the LB IIA. Cypriot pottery comprises several specimens of BWMW, WS I and II, BR I and II. Mycenaean pottery is attested for the first time at the site, with a sherd from an *alabastron* with a cross hatching decoration. This can be dated to the LH IIIA2 - LHIIIB, corresponding to the Canaanite LB II. Considering all these elements, I suggest a date for Palace III in the final LB I or early LB IIA.

Only a few sherds can be attributed to the second sub-phase of the structure, Palace IIIB. The repertoire of local pottery seems to fit the same chronological phase as the previous one, showing some carinated and shallow bowls and a few specimens of jars, among which some painted domestic jar. A couple of CoW sherds were also found. Only one Egyptian import is attributed to this phase - a squat jar - while Egyptian-style vessels were composed by a bowl and two ovoid jars. These in particular are attested in Egypt already during the Hyksos period, but only appear in Palestine during the LB I-IIA (Burke and Lords 2010: 16). Cypriot vessels, similarly to the previous phase, were mostly WS I and II bowls, with minor amounts of BWMW and BR I. A Cypriot imitation has been recognized in a locally made painted bowl. One Mycenaean sherd, probably belonging to a stemmed krater (Furumark shape FS8 or FS9), is also dated to the LH IIIA2 - LHIIIB. The layer, therefore, seems to belong to the same chronological horizon as Palace IIIA.

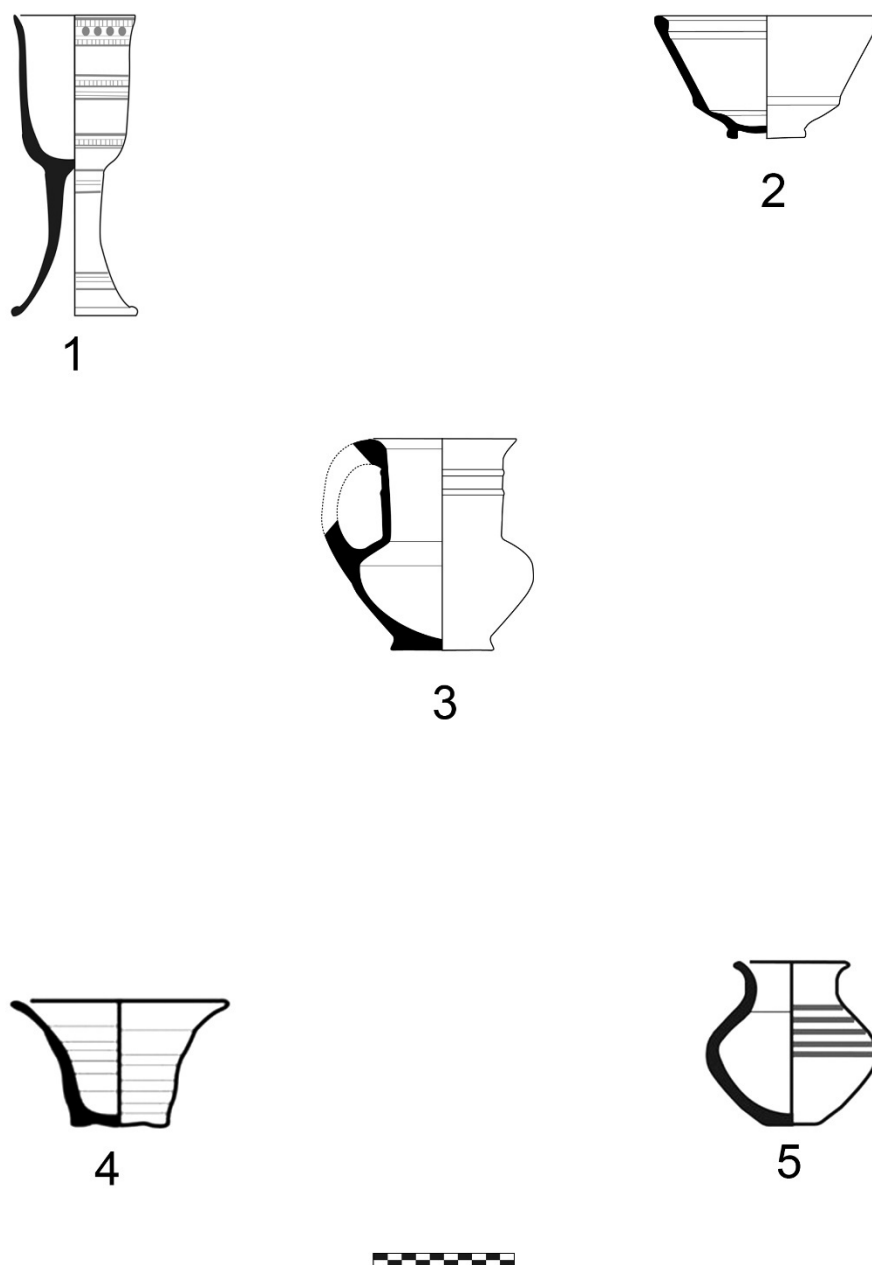


Figure 5.11. Representative pottery from Palace III. 1. Chalice, Canaanite, OJ 1025, unlocated (Petrie 1932, pl. XXVIII:17M); 2. carinated bowl, Canaanite, OH 1035 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXVII:4B2); 3. Tankard, Cypriot, BR I, LZ 1045, IDA, 33.1418 (Petrie 1933, XXXIX:89E3; Bergoffen 1989, cat. 632); 4. Flowerpot, Egyptian-style, OX 1016, IDA, 1932-2121 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXVII:4U; Kopetzsky 2011, fig. 108); 5. Squat jar, Egyptian, unlocated (Petrie 1933, pl. XXXIII:32A11; Kopetzsky 2011, fig. 110).

Palace IV was built over the foundation of the previous building and presents a similar plan (Figure 5.12). As Palace III, the new structure is composed by a main square body, possibly hosting the residential suite, and an adjacent building characterised by thicker walls and named ‘fort’ (Nigro 1995).

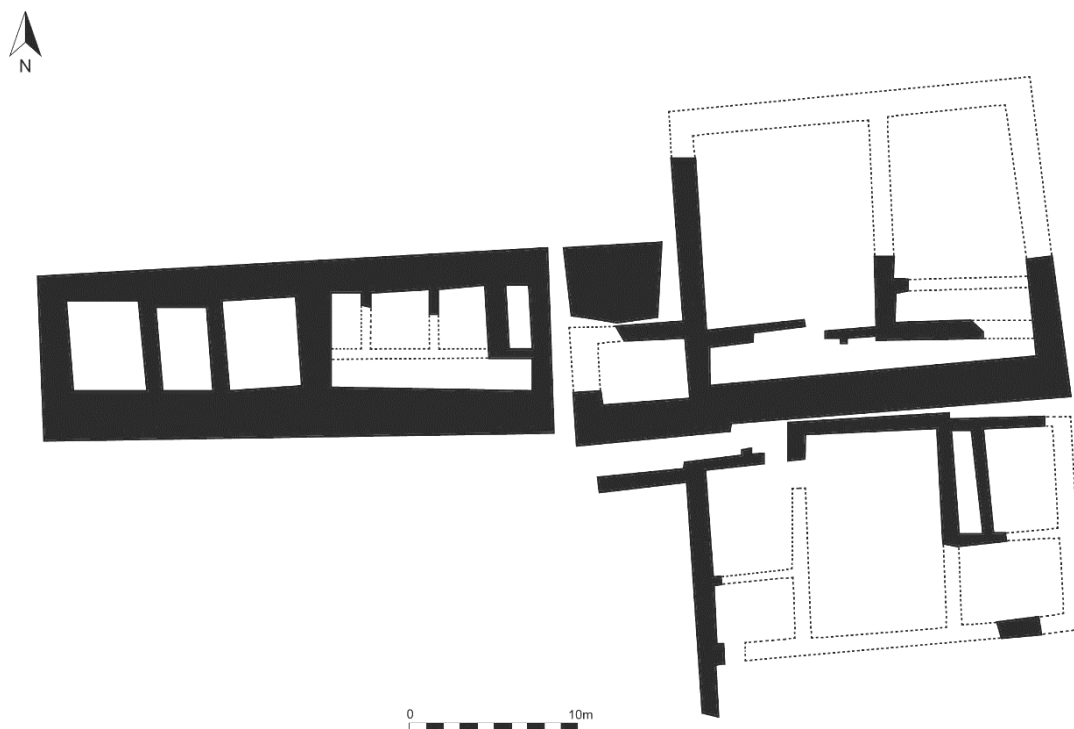


Figure 5.12. Palace IV, Tell el-^cAjjul (redrawn from Nigro 1995: pl. 32).

The amount of local pottery kept by Petrie is quite meagre and varied (Figure 5.13). It is composed mainly of shallow bowls and dipper juglets, generally datable to the LB II. Egyptian imports include squat jars, which are usually dated no later than LB IIA. A sherd of a transport amphora is also useful for a chronological indicator: it is decorated with two vertically stamped cartouches, bearing the names of Thutmose III, *men-kheper-re*, and Hatshepsut, *maat-ka-re* (Figure 5.14).

Egyptian-style pottery is represented mainly by shallow bowls (Figure 5.13). Cypriot pottery is mainly composed of BW and WS II, but two sherds of WS I are still attested; a few sherds of BR I were also found. Two sherds of Mycenaean production belong to a krater, (Furumark shape FS281) dated to the LH IIIB, corresponding to the Canaanite LB IIA-B. The proposed date of this structure, therefore, is within the LB IIA.

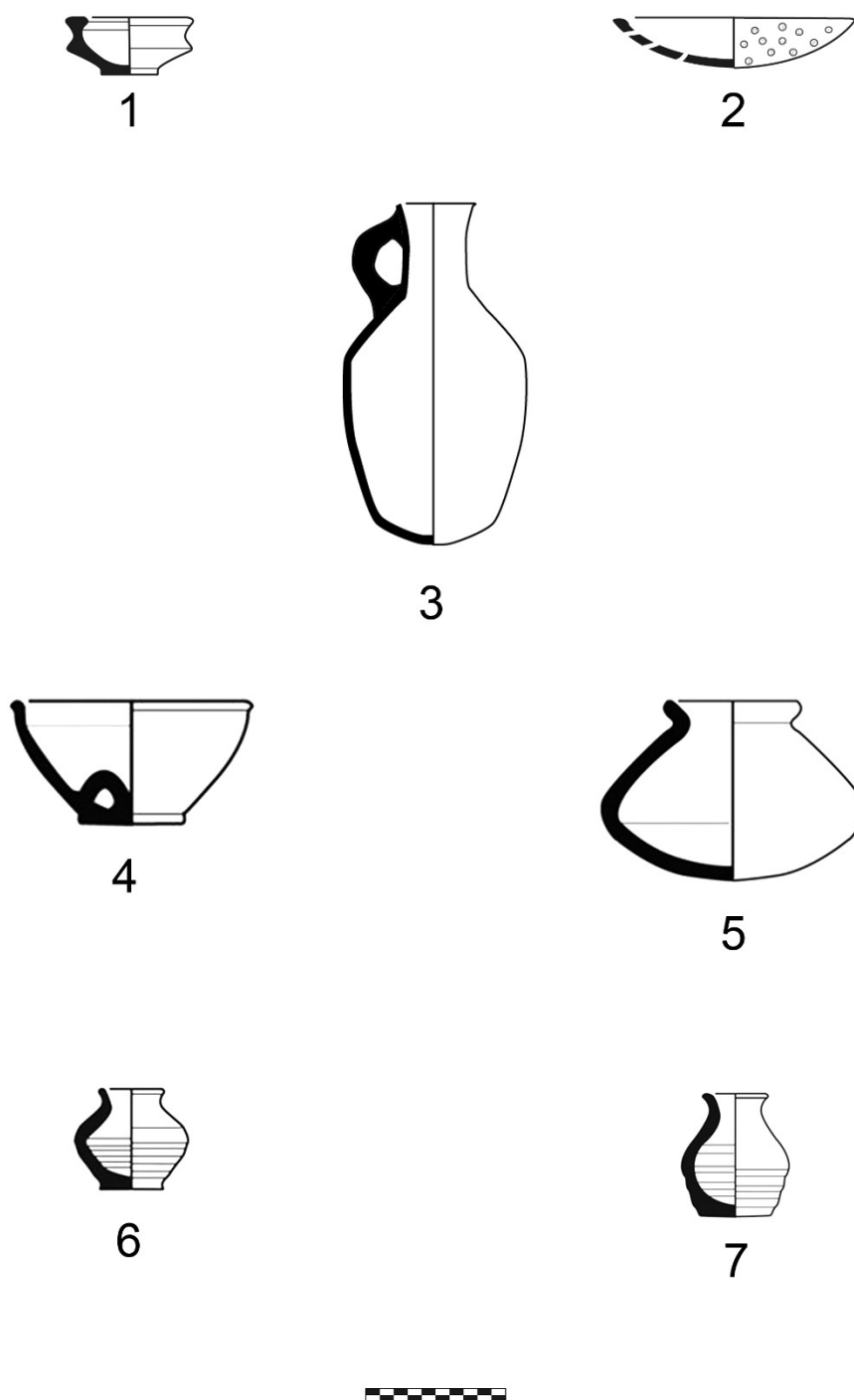


Figure 5.13. Representative pottery from Palaces IV and V. 1. Miniature bowl, Canaanite, Palace IV, MK 1060, unlocated (Petrie 1933, pl. XXVII:14X7); 2. Strainer, Canaanite, Palace V, MN 1100, UCL, EXIII.113/17, unpublished; 3. Juglet, Canaanite, Palace IV, MG 1078, UCL, EXIII.112e/16 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXXIV.51G16); 4. Spinning bowl, Egyptian-style, Palace IV, MG 1055, IDA, 1932-2112 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXVII:15W3; Kopetzsky 2011, fig. 108); 5. Squat jar, Egyptian-style, Palace IV, PM 1050 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXX:32A4); 6. miniature jar, Egyptian-style, Palace IV, MO 1075, UCL, EXIII.112e/14 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXXIV:55U8); 7. miniature jar, Egyptian-style, Palace V, MN 1131, UCL, EXIII.113/2 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXXIV:55U7).



Figure 5.14. Amphora sherd with impressed cartouches of Thutmose III - Hatshepsut from Palace IV, MG 1089, UCL, EXIII.112e/21 (Petrie 1932, pl. VIII.117; Keel 1997, cat. 'Ajjul 320, pp 210-211; Ucko, Sparks and Laidlaw 2007, 110, cat. 125), photo courtesy of UCL Archaeology Collections.

The last layer in the stratigraphy of the palace area is occupied by the scanty remains of Palace V (Figure 5.15). Only a small number of sherds is attributed to this phase and local pottery is almost absent, as far as the excavation reports and the preserved finds suggest, being represented only by a juglet and a strainer. Egyptian imports are also lacking, while a sizable number of Egyptian-style vessels have been published. Most of them are sherds of miniature jars and one specimen of beer jar. The first ones find a parallel in the pottery specimens from Kom el-Nana (see below), which are dated to the Amarna period. Cypriot pottery is represented for the majority by WS II sherds, though some BMWW and BR sherds are also visible. According to these finds therefore, the chronology of this structure would also fall within the LB IIA.

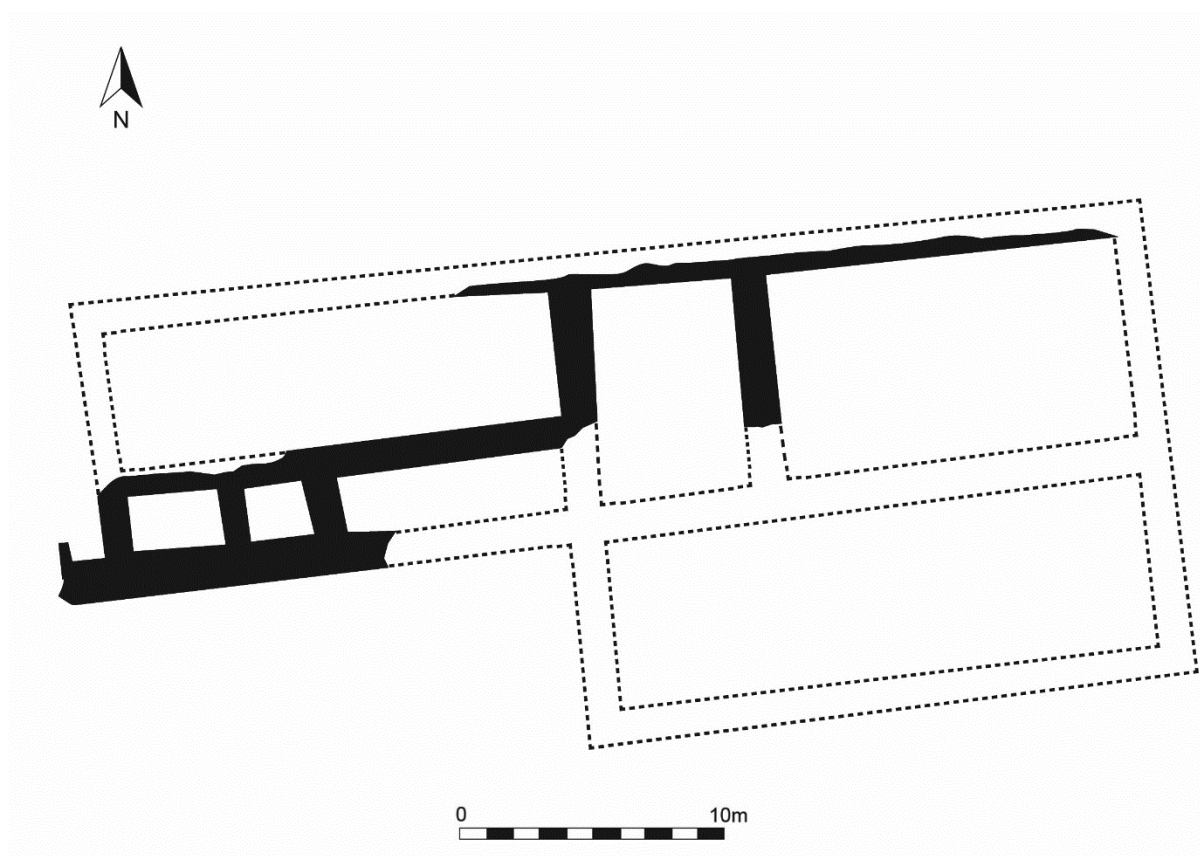


Figure 5.15. Palace V, Tell el-^cAjjul (redrawn from Nigro 1995: pl. 33).

Another area connected to the palace area is shown on Petrie's plans. It is simply labelled as 'area south of Palace', though it is more precisely situated to the SE of the Palatial area (Figure 5.16). Its connection with the palace itself has never been clarified and for this reason scholars often tended to exclude it from discussions of the palatial area (e.g. Epstein 1966: 176). I have decided to include this area in the present study, as it offers interesting insights into the local elite practices.

The structures to the south-east of the palace area appear to span the whole LBA, as well as the palaces, though only three major phases have been documented. It is quite difficult to come to a functional interpretation of these buildings, as they have been poorly defined by the excavations. The earliest phase, in outline on the plan, has been detected only in complex L, but it's mostly covered by later structures and therefore not fully documented. The second phase, represented in diagonal shading, is attested in the same complex, but with major remains. To the last phase, drawn in full black, belong some structures in area K-L and a major building named P. All the structures seem to be functionally connected to the palaces. The structures, in particular the complex of the second phase in Area L and the last one of Area P, are major

buildings, with massive walls, though their publication state does not offer any ground for more detailed interpretations.

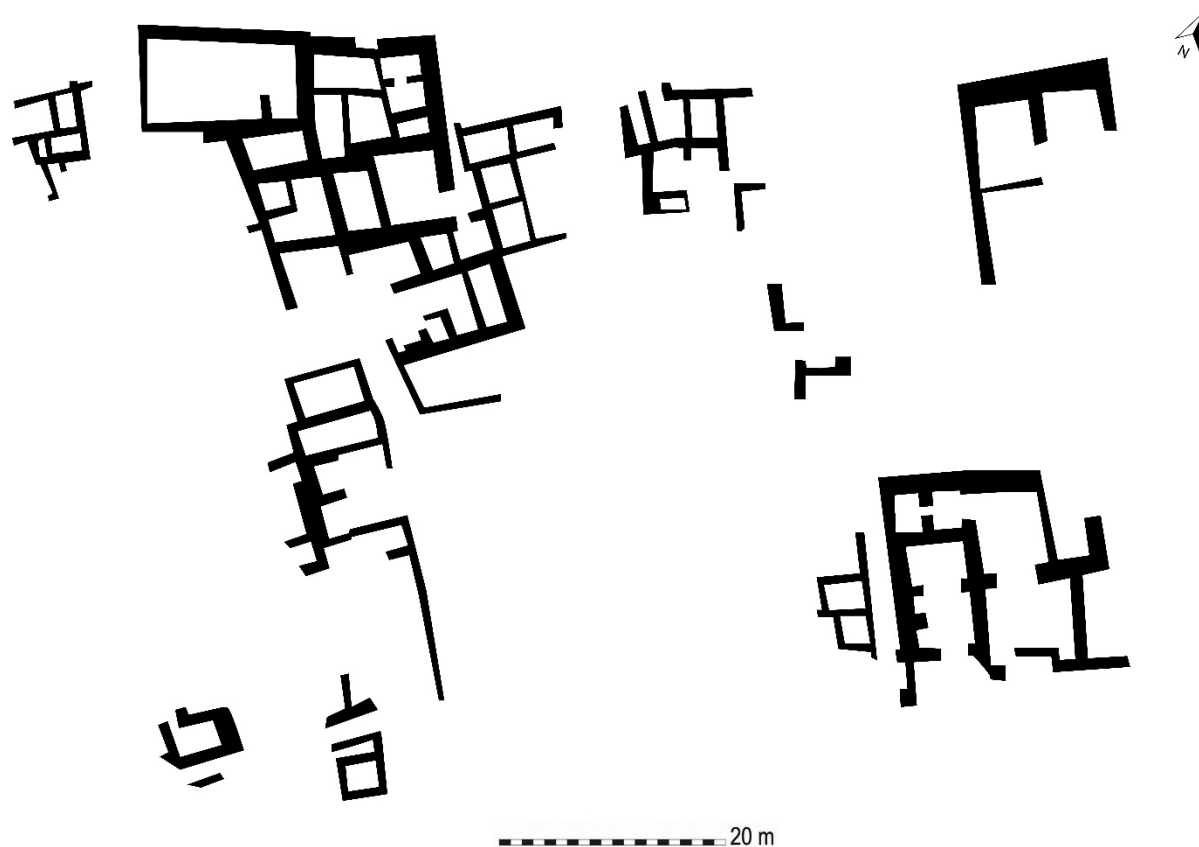


Figure 5.16. Area 'south of Palace' (redrawn from Petrie 1933: pl. XLVII). This is the only map published by Petrie: unlike what he did with the Palaces, he did not provide a separate map for each layer of this area.

Altogether, I have identified and catalogued almost 50 sherds. Their dates range from the LB IA to the LB IIA, making this area more or less contemporary to the sequence of palatial structures. This includes several Cypriot imports, among which there are some RoB, WS I and II and BR I. The Egyptian-style repertoire points to a date within the LB IIA, as shown by several squat jars, while only a few sherds of local pottery have been recognised.

To sum up, the evidence from the Palace area shows the presence of five subsequent buildings and an adjacent service area covering a period from the LB I to the LB IIA. In the MBA period, conversely to what previously assumed, there is no attestation of an administrative structure, as Palace I can be safely dated to the LB I. The repercussions of this statement are significant if we decide to adopt the Low Chronology, as it would deny the attribution of its destruction to pharaoh Ahmose I. While the MBA settlement, therefore, at the current state of knowledge does not display a major governmental structure, the LBA shows a continuous presence of an administrative building. These are all in the same

location, on a discrete part of the settlement, well separated from the rest of the City, and next to one of the possible gates. Only the first of these buildings, however, shows features typical of a proper palace - according to Southern Levantine standards - while the following ones can be attributed to the category of residences (see Chapter 3). This evidence shows a difference not only between the period predating the Egyptian control, the MBA, and the following LBA, but it also indicates a main distinction between the first part of the imperial domination and the later LBA. In the LB I, Tell el-^cAjjul was the seat of a major palace, pointing to a major power of the site over the surrounding area. A decreased importance of the site in the LB IIA, significantly, is consistent with the shift in the dimensions of the site analysed in Chapter.

A more comprehensive understanding of this process can be gained from an analysis of consumption patterns at the site, both in the palace area as well as the settlement. As argued in Chapter 2, such examination will provide an insight into cultural practices and allow us to detect the outcome of the cultural encounter between Egypt and Palestine at the site of Tell el-^cAjjul.

5.5 Pottery production and function

This section will discuss the ceramic remains from Tell el-^cAjjul, as recorded in the original reports and/or preserved in museum collections. Particular attention will be paid to the technique, style, and production of each ware, to underline not only imported pottery, but also locally produced specimens according to different cultural traditions, above all Egyptian, local and hybridised traditions. In either case, the function of the vessels will be paramount in understanding the related practices and comprehend differences and similarities with the corresponding usages of the same vessels or assemblages carried out in Egypt. This in turn will allow us to appreciate the degree of borrowing and reciprocity between Egypt and Palestine witnessed at the site by pottery consumption.

One of the major biases to keep in mind in the whole analysis results from the excavation and documentation method used by Petrie. Petrie was only keeping complete or nearly complete shapes and decorated sherds. Moreover, he never kept a sherd count. Therefore, the assemblage available for study does not reflect the real amount of pottery retrieved at the site. The categories mainly affected are probably Canaanite, Egyptian and Egyptian-style wares, all

generally characterized by plain pottery. On the other hand, Cypriot pottery is probably over represented, as it mostly comprises fine and decorated wares. For these reasons, as outlined in more detail in Chapters 1-2, a quantitative analysis is unviable. Conversely, a qualitative study of the documented remains, keeping in mind the limitations of the record, can prove useful for the aims of this research.

5.5.1 Local practices in the “City”

The MBA settlement, represented by City III, has provided only a very limited amount of pottery, predominantly from Area C and Area D. Therefore, the assemblage analysed here only comprises the pottery from these areas. The assemblage is mostly composed of local pottery (172 specimens), with only a few specimens of Cypriot pottery (20); Egyptian (3) and Egyptian-style wares (11); and other Levantine wares (2).

The study of pottery shapes shows the range of activities probably performed in these structures. The presence of bowls, together with jars, jugs/juglets, krater and cooking pots, indicate the utilitarian activities of domestic setting, related to food storing, cooking and consumption. All of these practices were performed according to the local tradition, using almost exclusively local pottery.

It is not possible to present a proper contextual analysis of the finds, as some of the loci to which the pottery is assigned are not represented in the plan or described in the reports. Among the better published loci, a concentration of pottery was found in room DF, where a kiln is also attested (Petrie 1931: pl. LIV). The assemblage is dominated by bowls (with 163 specimens counted), together with cooking pots and storage jars, all of local production and made according to the local tradition. Only one Egyptian-style storage jar is documented, as coming from inside the kiln itself. The presence of the kiln and the high quantity of pottery associated with it could point to the functional use of the structure as a pottery production area.

The following layer, City II, is much better documented (see above). Here, the proportions of local and imported pottery change considerably. Most of the finds registered with a locus number have been retrieved in Area A, and my analysis, therefore, focuses on the material from this area. In this phase, the amount of imports - mostly Cypriot (209 sherds) - grow considerably. Other

imported ceramics are composed by CoW (26), Egyptian (13), and Mycenaean ware. Locally produced pottery is represented both in local style (111) and the Egyptian-style (7).

In terms of function, cooking and serving vessels are all local, CoW, or Cypriot imports, while storage pottery is mostly composed of Egyptian imports, alongside local pottery, and smaller quantities of Cypriot and Egyptian-style pottery.

Again, a contextual analysis of the pottery assemblage is difficult to perform, as many sherds are simply labelled 'A II', denoting that they were attributed to Level II of Area A. The majority of this group is composed of Cypriot and CoW bowls. In the main complex on the NE most of the pottery was local. In the W building (rooms AT, AS) the repertoire was composed of several local bowls, strainers, kraters, and juglets. Cypriot pottery was composed by bowls (RoB, BW and WS) and a teapot. This assemblage represents what a typically local serving kit would look like, as it is composed by locally produced wares following local techniques and style, as well as Cypriot imports specifically realised for the Levant (see below for differences between Cypriot imports in the Levant and in Egypt). A similar ceramic set was retrieved in the south-western unit, only partially preserved (AP, AO, AR), where no Egyptian or Egyptian-style vessels were recorded, but Canaanite and Cypriot wares were present. The assemblage is largely composed of serving pottery, particularly bowls and juglets, but cooking ware is attested as well in the form of local cooking pots. Therefore, the pottery repertoire suggests that these buildings were private residences for what might be described as the local middle class. Significant in this regard is the frequency of Cypriot pottery which, if found outside its original production area, is a good indicator of 'sub-elite' or 'substitute elite' value (Sherratt 1999: 185).

A ceremonial function is more likely for the pottery found in the vicinity and inside the shrine AF, where a miniature cup and saucer was found, together with a RS pilgrim flask and some Cypriot and local bowls.

According to Petrie's records, a slightly different assemblage was retrieved in the south-eastern unit (AC, AQ, AJ), where all the Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery of Area A has been retrieved. It consists of *zirs*, a ceramic *alabastron*, and a cooking pot. Local pottery was also attested, with bowls, dippers, a krater, and a cooking pot, as well as Cypriot pottery represented by a

bowl and a juglet. Altogether, this assemblage covers the main domestic functions of cooking, storing and serving food and drinks, actions that were therefore all performed within the structure. The presence of food storage and cooking vessels of Egyptian and Egyptian-style production, however, shows a significant difference from the previous households. In this case, the inhabitants of the structure seem to have used a mixed pottery repertoire for distinct functions. Food and drink consumption was only performed with the use of local and Cypriot ware, while for food preparation processes and storage, a combination of both local, imported, and locally produced Egyptian-style vessels were in use.

The evidence from the settlement, therefore, shows some degree of hybridisation between the local and Egyptian cultures in the LBA. Ceramic consumption patterns display few changes in the local practices from the MBA to the LBA, which are mostly limited to the increased use of Cypriot imports, as consistent with the general growth of international trade with Cyprus in the LBA. At the same time, however, the analysis of LBA ceramics reveals the significant presence of Egyptian imports and locally produced pottery according to Egyptian styles and techniques, which were absent in the previous layer. To better understand the process of hybridisation at the site, however, it is useful to compare these patterns with the pottery consumption documented from the palace area.

5.5.2 Hybridising public consumption in the palace area

A different scenario is indicated by the pottery from the palatial area. Between the MBA and the LBA there is a remarkable shift in Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery. Starting from the layer corresponding to Palace IIIA, Egyptian and Egyptian-style wares begin to increase in number, while simultaneously Cypriot pottery slightly decreases. This development reaches its peak in the layer of Palace IV, where a majority of Egyptian-related productions is documented. Palace V, instead, shows an absence of Egyptian imports, totally superseded by local production of the same ware. This absence, however, could also be related to the disturbed nature of the context, that at the same time presents almost no local pottery.

Looking at the distribution of shapes in each context, it has been possible to recognize several trends. Local pottery is generally represented by wheel

made vessels for consuming food and liquids. Shallow and carinated bowls are the most attested category, with rims ranging from 18 to 33 cm that, in the case of deep carinated bowls, could have served more than one individual. They are typically plain, but some of them bear a painted decoration. In the early phases (Palace I-III A) some bowls are red slipped, though this treatment is mostly attested in chalices. This shape has been sometimes considered as a cultic vessel (Amiran 1970: 95), but can also be connected to liquid consumption in feasting context (Zuckerman 2007: 197). Other serving vessels recognized throughout the contexts are represented by specific shapes related to liquid, possibly wine, consumption: kraters, strainers, jugs and juglets. While kraters were often decorated, as is common in the LBA Canaanite tradition, the majority of the closed containers are small and undecorated. Besides serving vessels, the local repertoire of pottery also includes two miniature bowls, found respectively in Palace I and IV. These are usually interpreted as votive vessels and are often retrieved in 2nd millennium Canaanite contexts of ritual or cultic genre (Åström 1987: 177-79). As the previous categories, these vessels are coarse and undecorated.

Always a Levantine production from the north of the region is represented by some CoW ware, imported from the Jordan Valley or Southern Lebanon (Fischer 1999: 20). These sherds constitute a wheel-made, fine-quality pottery with painted decoration. The most-attested shapes are bowls and jugs and are therefore connected to food and liquid consumption. Nevertheless, their number is quite meagre in every phase.

Cypriot pottery, as noted above, represents the majority of pottery from the palace in virtually every phase. Open shapes largely outnumber closed shapes and the latter are mostly documented in the cemeteries (Bergoffen 1991: 65). Open shapes are generally represented by bowls: WS most of all (118), but also RoB/RoR (40), Monochrome (23), BR (21) and BW (17). Their function has been variously argued, but it is now clear from residue analysis that Cypriot bowls and, in particular, WS bowls were multi-purposed containers for meat and vegetables, though on some occasions were also used as drinking bowls for wine (Beck *et al.* 2004: 18). It seems feasible, therefore, that the massive use of Cypriot open vessels in the Palatial context of Tell el-^cAjjul, is connected to communal dining occasions.

The closed shapes found in the Palace are as well represented by table ware specimens, like juglets and tankards. It has sometimes been stated that Cypriot pottery was mostly imported for the content of closed containers, mainly perfumed oils, and that bowls were used as lids or anyway not traded for their own value (Gittlen 1981: 52; vs Sherratt 1999).

As for Mycenaean pottery, this was perceived in the Levant as an exotic ware and it was probably imported for its contents, for example perfumes, while kraters might have been used to mix wine, in analogy with Cyprus and the Northern Levant (Steel 2002: 36). Only a few specimens of Mycenaean pottery are documented as retrieved in the Palaces, possibly confirming their perception as an exotic and luxurious good also at the court of Tell el-^cAjjul.

Local and Cypriot pottery in the palatial context, together with the smaller percentages of CoW and Mycenaean ware, form therefore all the serving pottery belonging to the area. This assemblage is characterised by shapes usually associated with communal events of consumption, as documented by the varied kinds of bowls, RS and/or painted chalices, painted kraters, jugs and juglets, and strainers or teapots (Steel 2004: 292; Yasur-Landau 2005: 170-80; Zuckerman 2007: 197-99). The minor amount of special-purpose or ceremonial pottery, like locally-produced miniature bowls and lamps, would also fit this purpose. On the other hand, the entire range of productive pottery is represented by Egyptian-style pottery and almost the totality of storage wares are either Egyptian or, to a lesser extent, Egyptian-style, with only a few local storage vessels.

The pottery directly imported from Egypt is composed of jars, most of which are biconical examples. The only other shape attested in Marl C, a direct import from Egypt, is large storage vessels for water: the so-called *zirs* (Kopetzky 2011: 207). As for the local production of Egyptian-style ware, this was carried out locally, using the available clay to reproduce some Egyptian shapes with the use of typically Egyptian techniques. Besides the more common bowls, also attested in the local production, the other shapes are all hallmarks of the Egyptian tradition: ovoid jars, beer jars, flowerpots, cooking pots, and spinning bowls. Ovoid jars were possibly used as table ware for pouring liquids, as inferred from Egyptian tomb scenes (Paice 1997: fig. 10, 16a-b), though some found in the Levant are adapted for more specific usages (Martin 2011). For example, a specimen from Palace IIIA (Figure 5.17) presents a perforation at its

base, resembling those typically found on beer jars and flowerpots. Its function could therefore be related to food and drink production and could represent a filtration container to strain liquid from the beer mash, similar to beer jars and flower pots (Petrie 1907: 23). The use of a different kind of jar for the same purpose could have been dictated by a lack of availability of proper beer jars and flowerpots that, even though locally produced, were probably not as easily accessible as in Egypt.

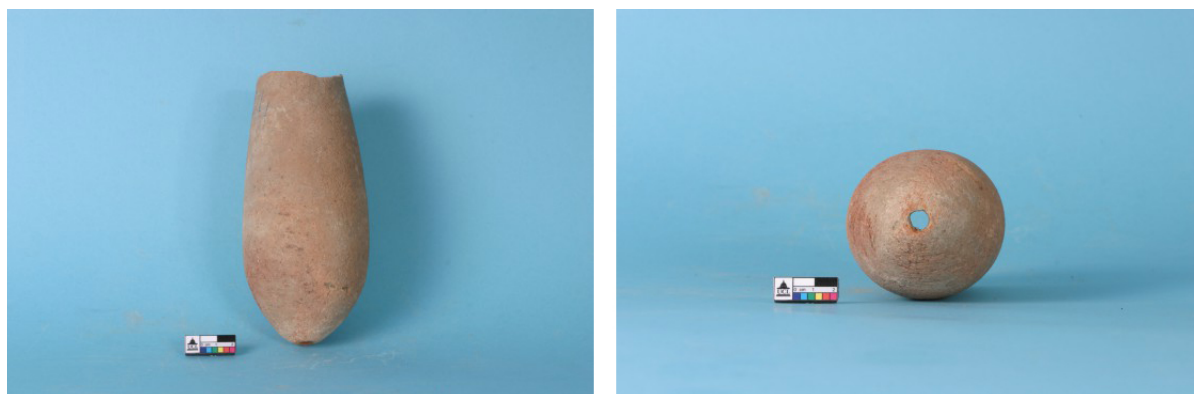


Figure 5.17. Egyptian-style slender jar with perforation at the bottom, UCL, EXIII.67/44, unpublished, photo courtesy of the UCL Archaeology Collections.

The remaining shapes are all clearly connected to food preparation and cooking (Figure 5.18). Beer jars have a utilitarian character, as shown by their shape, though their actual function is still under debate. The function is inferred by the lack of any superficial treatment and by a perforation attested in the bottom of some specimens. Furthermore, they are found almost exclusively in the settlement and not in the cemeteries, which would prove their connection to the domestic sphere. Non-perforated jars could have been used to store liquid or non-liquid goods, but perforated specimens could possibly be associated with a productive process, perhaps of beer (Martin 2011: 55). In this capacity, they would be connected to flowerpots, also retrieved in the palaces. Finally, the function of spinning bowls is interpreted quite securely from tomb scenes from the XI Dynasty to the New Kingdom (Dothan 1963: 105-11). They were proper tools for spinning flax fibres into threads or to ply spun thread (Vogelsang-Eastwood 1987: 84-87; Martin 2011: 45).

On the basis of the above observations, it is clear that locally produced Egyptian-style pottery was meant to cover a whole range of preparation and utilitarian functions closely connected to specific foods and products including beer or textiles. Even the most common Egyptian-style bowls were used not only

as serving equipment, but, in Egypt, were also utilised to prepare food (Smith 2003: 48).



Figure 5.18. Selected Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery from the palaces of Tell el-Ajjul. From left to right: flowerpot, Egyptian-style, Palace IV, MH 1088, UCL, EXIII.112e/20, unpublished; miniature jar, Egyptian-style, Palace IV, MO 1075, UCL, EXIII.112e/14 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXXIV:55U8); miniature jar, Egyptian-style, Palace V, MN 1131, UCL, EXIII.113/2 (Petrie 1932, pl. XXXIV:55U7); Jar, painted, Egyptian, PL 960 (Petrie 1932, AG II, pl. XXXI:41E3; Kopetzky 2011, fig. 109b); Jar, painted, Egyptian, Palace IV, MG 1075, UCL, EXIII.112e/37, unpublished.

Even more interesting is the picture gathered from the area ‘South of Palace’. This has been represented synchronically, as no significant difference between phases has been recognised.

Meagre remains are documented from complex P and from the remains in area Q, while a more substantial bulk of material comes from complex K-L (about 30 sherds). Only a few sherds of Cypriot pottery are attested here, in contrast to the Palace area, while the majority of pottery is constituted by Egyptian and locally produced Egyptian-style pottery.

Here, as in the Palace area, the whole sphere of pottery related to food preparation is dominated by Egyptian-style pottery, attested by mass produced bowls, cooking pots, beer jars and drop-shaped jars. Egyptian imports are again attested by storage ware, with carinated jars and *zirs*. Local pottery is mostly restricted to serving ware, with some bowls, chalices, strainers and, in high volumes, jugs and juglets. The few Cypriot imports fall into the same category of serving ware, with bowls and jugs retrieved in equal amount.

5.6 Hybridisation at Tell el-^cAjjul

From the analysis of the pottery repertoire and consumption patterns at Tell el-^cAjjul, it is possible to gather some important considerations. In particular, there are two sets of issues worth noting: firstly, the chronological attribution of finds from the palaces and, with it, the role of Tell el-^cAjjul in the MBA, and secondly, the presence of processes of hybridisation in the LBA indicated by pottery consumption patterns.

As for the first point, this chapter discussed pottery remains from the palatial buildings and has proved that the chronology of the first structure must be revised. In light of the material from Palace I, it is no longer possible to support the chronological attribution of this building to the MBA. This previous and often endorsed interpretation relies too much on the historical sources and the proposed identification of Tell el-^cAjjul as Sharuhén. As shown above, the pottery repertoire and, particularly some categories of Cypriot pottery, like BR I and WS I-II, point with no further doubt to a chronological attribution of Palace I, at the earliest, to the LB IA. This assumption, if it does not entirely exclude the identification of Sharuhén with Tell el-^cAjjul, at least changes the role of the town. According to the interpretation of the sources, Sharuhén should be an outpost of the Hyksos regime in Palestine. The presence of a major public building, substituted in the following period by a modest ruler's residency, is tempting evidence for the presence of a thriving local government in the MBA that was abruptly ended by a military attack and replaced in the LBA by a foreign governor. Nevertheless, the archaeological evidence for the MBA cannot confirm the presence of a palace dated to this period and, at the present stage of the research, no other such structure has been identified in any other part of the settlement. It cannot be excluded that this lies beneath the unexcavated part of the tell: during the MBA it is quite typical for palatial buildings to be found in the central part of the settlement, rather than at its borders, and in close proximity to religious buildings. Conversely, in the LBA, some Levantine settlements present a shift of the palatial structure to the boundaries, while the religious structure is often kept in a more central location, as observed, for instance, at Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo (Loud 1948: 15-16, 97-102). This pattern has been sometimes explained in connection to the new administrative organisation of the LBA, when the palace would have been in charge of

overseeing trades and movements (Nigro 1995: 61-62). Alternative theories describe this phenomenon in the light of a separation of the secular from the religious power occurred in the LBA, which would have led to a physical separation of the main religious and governmental buildings (Herzog 1997: 150). Nevertheless, with the current information we cannot state whether this was also the case for Tell el-^cAjjul.

Without the established presence of a palace, the MBA remains from the site do not contribute to creating the picture of Tell el-^cAjjul claimed by some previous studies. According to proposed textual interpretations discussed above, Tell el-^cAjjul would be the major centre in the Southern Palestinian region, identified with Sharuhén and, therefore, the Hyksos stronghold in Canaan. However, we need to keep in mind the political purpose of these texts (see Chapter 1). In this case, their main objective was to glorify the achievements of a new pharaoh, Ahmose, the first of a Dynasty that was unifying Egypt after the political fragmentation of the SIP. It would have been useful for this purpose to depict the Hyksos as barbarians and cruel conquerors - a picture maybe merged afterwards into Manetho's account (Manetho, *Aegyptiaca*, frag. 42, 1.75-79.2). Concurrently, it was also necessary to present the defeat of the Hyksos as a difficult accomplishment: not only were they expelled from Avaris, in the Egyptian Delta, but pursued until the Gaza area, in a fortified town where the Egyptians laid a siege lasting three years. More convincingly, Tell el-^cAjjul during the MBA, in accordance with the results of the settlement analysis, seems a medium-sized town, with a central organisation capable of organising communal labour, as demonstrated by the exchange compound of Area G and the fortification system. With the present knowledge, it is probably impossible to state whether this town can be identified with Sharuhén. However, what we can reconstruct from the archaeological evidence is that the MBA site is not, as often interpreted, the centre of a major polity predominating the South of Palestine.

The analysis of the City and palace areas, moreover, shows significant shifts between the MBA and the LBA and between the first part of the LBA and the second. While the MBA remains portray Tell el-^cAjjul as a modest town, architecture and finds of the LB I disclose instead the highpoint of the site. The northern corner presents a major palatial structure, Palace I, and the settlement shows obvious signs of social stratification, with elite residences and temples. Such splendour, however, does not last until the LB II, where the remains from

the settlements are meagre and Tell el-^cAjjul seems to have shrunk to a small village of roughly 1 ha, centred around the residence in the northern corner.

Turning now to the second main point of my analysis, I have shown above contextualised patterns of pottery consumption according to their production and function. The pottery repertoire from the settlement shows a change from the MBA to the LBA. While during the first phase almost the total amount of ceramics is local and covers the whole range of domestic activities, the second period marks the appearance of considerable amounts of Cypriot imports. This development is partly due to the internationalization of trade and the new role of Cyprus in the LBA, but also to the presence of major social stratification in the settlement, well-illustrated by the architecture, with the presence of different purposed buildings (major residences, temples). The inhabitants and other people attending these buildings were using sub-elite pottery: a 'luxurious', though not exchangeable, traded good, appreciated by the middle class, possibly as a proof of their status.

The pottery assemblage from the palatine area, on the other hand, showed a different picture, with a multiplicity of functional groups associated with specific pottery productions. The series of buildings presented a considerably higher ratio of Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery than the rest of the settlement. Egyptian imported vessels were constituted almost exclusively by storage wares, possibly sent as support to the troops or the governor stationed at the town from the central Egyptian administration. This would be proved by the presence of locally produced Egyptian-style pottery: there was no need to import vessels from Egypt when it was possible to produce them locally, unless the interest was in the product imported in it. Moreover, a transport amphora from Palace IV bears a stamped cartouche of Thutmose III - Hatshepsut (1473-1458 B.C.), which would have only marked official products sent from the central administration.

The pottery produced locally according to Egyptian shapes, on the other hand, was serving utilitarian purposes, particularly food and drink preparation. This pattern seems to point to a desire from the inhabitants of the palace and the surrounding structures of preserving the Egyptian culinary tradition, aiming for a certain flavour in food and drink. It has been shown, for example, that the composition of Egyptian *zirs* contribute to the flavour of water stored in them, while the shape of cooking pots would give a specific flavour to the food (Rice

1987: 465). This would explain the choice of importing *zirs*, therefore using Egyptian clays to produce them, while cooking pots could have been manufactured with locally available materials but according to Egyptian shapes.

Therefore, even considering the indirect correlation between pots and people, it is possible to state that an Egyptian presence at Tell el-^cAjjul is indicated by this pottery since the beginning of the Palatial occupation in the LB IA. The presence of these kind of Egyptian-style vessels in Palestine has, indeed, already been considered a strong indicator of an actual Egyptian presence in the territory (Martin 2011: 55). The manufacture of these specialised vessels on the site, as opposed to the decision of importing them, shows the needs of a stable settlement of Egyptian people, for whom it would have been easier to produce these vessels locally. Moreover, it implies the presence of specialised skilled workers, together with troops and officials, capable of manufacturing such pottery since the beginning of the Egyptian stay in Palestine and exponentially increasing their production in the following two centuries.

Besides the phenomenon of preservation of the Egyptian tradition, the pottery assemblage from the Palace area shows another trend. As we have seen, the inhabitants of the Palace, along with Egyptian-style production vessels, were using local (i.e. South Canaanite) and Cypriot pottery as a serving ware. The reason for this mix of cultural traditions can be seen in the function of the assemblage as a whole. It is a context of communal consumption, as evident from the repertoire's size and composition. According to the Egyptian tradition of the NK, feasting played an important role in daily life: communal consumption of food and drink was used both on public occasions, such as religious feasts, an occasion for displaying the ruler's power, but also by individuals for private commemorations or in connections to religious celebrations. Specialised dishes are supposed to have been served on these occasions (Smith 2003: 54). The role of plain pottery in these feastings, though, is not paramount. The main marker of status in Egypt, already from the end of the III millennium B.C., is constituted by stone and metal vessels, while pottery is represented in less wealthy contexts. Egyptian pottery, indeed, has a strictly utilitarian character, it is mass produced on a slow wheel and has very limited decoration. It does not come as a surprise that the Egyptian elite society, so focused on appearance, chose other means to express their status in Egypt. Even the presence of Cypriot pottery is quite different in Egypt from the trends recognised, for example, at Tell el-

°Ajjul. Finds from °Ezbet Helmi have widened our perception of Cypriot imports in Egypt and give us a good comparison for a palatial environment. Here, as in the rest of Egypt, closed shapes for Cypriot pottery are predominant. Open shapes are mostly represented by kraters, while bowls are almost absent (Hein 2009; Hulin 2009).

The pottery assemblage from the palace, therefore, is quite surprising both if assuming an Egyptian ethnicity for its inhabitants or a local one. The residents and their guests were eating and drinking Egyptian food and drinks, probably coming straight from Egypt in jars, but consuming it in local and Cypriot vessels otherwise not used in Egypt. The explanations of this pattern could be several. A first hypothesis is that the Egyptians did not import their serving vessels and for practical reasons decided to use locally available pottery to serve meals, limiting the production of Egyptian-style vessels to the necessary shapes for food preparation. A second theory could be that Egyptian serving vessels did not survive, being made of precious materials such as bronze and faience. The importance of communal consumption, however, makes it worthwhile to consider other options. Feasting could have served a variety of social purposes, among which are community approbation, the consolidation of social relationships and the creation of hierarchies (Dietler 2001; Bray 2003; Glatz 2015: 23). The Egyptian empire, even though their texts underline their supremacy over the other peoples, could in reality have been in a more nuanced situation. First of all, even though Egypt's relations with foreigners is one of superiority, where the Asiatic is seen as a "barbarian" according to the sources (Smith 2003: 40), the New Kingdom is a period of extreme connectivity for Egypt, especially with the Levant. It comes after a Hyksos authority in the Delta, where archaeological remains witness the extreme cultural mixture of Canaanite and Egyptian features. These contacts are even increased in the NK with the Egyptian presence in Palestine. Secondly, local elite were present at Tell el-°Ajjul, as argued above. The use of a mixed cultural pottery repertoire in the context of feasting, then, could be seen as a deliberate choice of the Egyptians or their delegate governor to express, through food and its consumption, the Egyptian as well as the local identity, or the taste of the local elite (i.e. Cypriot pottery) and trying to bond with the locals. Ceramic vessels in the Southern Levant, as we know, are not just an imitation of metal for poor people, but a deliberate cultural choice (Zuckerman 2015). Pleasing the local elite invited at

their feasts, therefore, would have played a key role in the maintenance of internal power balances and in the preservation of the Egyptian rule over the territory.

In conclusion, in contrast to traditional approaches to Egyptian imperialism, my analysis shows that an interpretative framework based on postcolonial concepts of culture contact and, in particular, on hybridisation theory, can provide a much wider perspective on the meaning of the cultural encounter between Egypt and Palestine. The local - Canaanite - LBA culture, as shown from the pottery, combined with other finds from the settlement of Tell el-^cAjjul, is far from being just a peripheral extension of Egypt. On the contrary, it plays a pivotal role in the reshaping of both the identities playing in this scenario, the Egyptian as well as the Canaanite one. This is particularly well shown by the finds from the significant context of communal consumption represented by the palaces. The nature of this context bears a strong cultural meaning with it: Egyptian pottery is almost confined to the main seat of authority and to the practices of displays of power, for example feasting activities. But even in this situation, there is not the perception of a dominant culture suppressing the local one. On the contrary, the Egyptian administration adopts solutions that show a complex negotiation between the once defined 'dominator' and its 'vassal'. The latter always preserves its identity, flourishing in the LBA with new trends, such as the massive importation of Cypriot products, and at the same time keeping its own traditions, as can be detected from finds both from the palace as well as from the rest of the settlement.

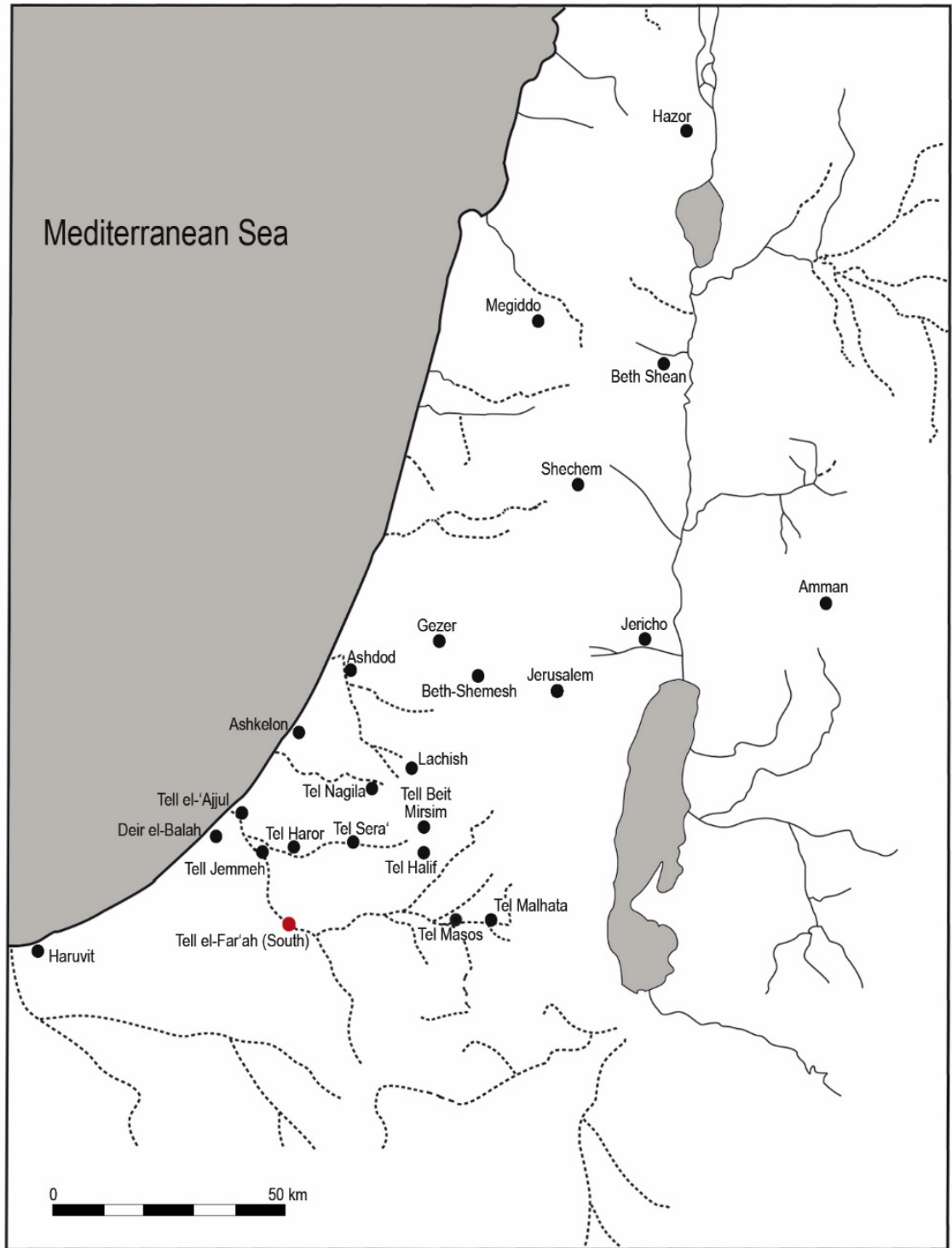
6 Tell el-Far^{ah}: outcomes of the encounter at the end of the LBA

6.1 Introduction

This second case study explores another major settlement in the southern part of Palestine, Tell el-Far^{ah}. The site, as Tell el-^cAjjul, has often been presented as an example of the Egyptian cultural hegemony in the Southern Levant. My analysis of the archaeological evidence from the settlement and cemetery, however, reveals a more nuanced relationship between the Egyptian and Canaanite communities in this local milieu.

Tell el-Far^{ah}'s usefulness as a case study is rooted in its relationship with Tell el-^cAjjul. The two sites overlap chronologically and share their association with the Sharuhēn of the texts. Tell el-^cAjjul was settled during the MB III until the LB IIA and was abandoned during the final part of the LBA and the IA. On the other hand, the chronology of Tell el-Far^{ah} has so far showed meagre remains of the mid-2nd millennium, whilst the majority of finds belongs to the last part of the LBA and the IA. This provides us with the opportunity to examine the development of the region during the whole 2nd millennium and to track diachronically the changing nature of Egyptian imperialism in the southern Levant. The two sites also have a common role in the literature, as Tell el-Far^{ah} is the second main candidate for the identification of Sharuhēn (see Chapter 1). The supporters of this hypothesis base their arguments on its topographic location and the fortified character of the mound, capable of withstanding a three-year siege by the Egyptians.

At the same time, the two sites differ in interesting ways. While in Tell el-^cAjjul, as we have seen, the signs of hybridisation between the Canaanite and Egyptian cultures are very strong in the pottery assemblage of the main residence, Egyptian finds in the settlement of Tell el-Far^{ah} are quite limited. Even though the major focus of the excavations has been in the cemeteries, the excavators have nevertheless unearthed two important areas of the settlement, with a gate and a public building. An analysis of their archaeological finds can therefore show significant evidence of cultural negotiation happening at the site.



6.1. Map of the Southern Levant. In red the location of Tell el-Far'ah.

Likewise, the position of the tell within the region is a matter of interest, providing further reasoning for the choice of Tell el-Far'ah as second case study. The site is located along the Nahal Besor, at the boundary between arable land and the desert, and is considered to have been inhabited by sedentary groups as well as frequented by nomad populations (Lehmann and Schneider 2000: 258). Moreover, the city lies at a nexus of ancient routes connecting Egypt, Syria, and

Mesopotamia, and had trade contacts with the Arabah, demonstrated by the presence of Midianite pottery (Fischer 2011: 14). During the 2nd millennium, therefore, Tell el-Far^{ah} was a centre of interaction for a range of different groups and cultures, and thus presents a good case study to explore processes of hybridisation and culture contact in the Southern Palestinian region.

In this, chapter, therefore, I will analyse how the cultural encounter with Egypt affected Tell el-Far^{ah} and compare this to the experience of Tell el-^{ah}Ajjul. I will first present a general overview of the site, to then focus on the available evidence from the settlement and the cemetery, and discuss, through an analysis of material culture, the degrees of negotiation between cultures interacting at the site.

6.2 The site

Tell el-Far^{ah} is located roughly 22 km south of Gaza, in the northern Negev area (6.1). It lies on a natural hill 100 m above sea level, on the western side of the Wadi Gaza.

Various publications present differing estimates for total site area in the MBA: it would have measured 6 ha according to Broshi and Gophna (1986: 85); 2.5 ha for Herzog (1997: 162); and 1.8 according to Braunstein (2011: 4). According to Burke, the site could have been originally circular in shape, but the eastern side of the tell would have been eroded by the wadi. In this case the original inhabitable area could have been around 3.1 ha (Burke 2008: 259). This is rather small compared to the other sites in the area, Tell el-^{ah}Ajjul and Ashkelon measuring 10 ha and 50 ha respectively. Its dimensions would have increased in the LBA to reach a size of 6.5 ha, making it the largest late LBA site in the area after Gaza (see Chapter 3).

The site was excavated by W.M.F. Petrie on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Egypt and with the cooperation of J.L. Starkey and L. Harding, who edited the second volume of the reports. The excavations took place in three seasons, between 1928 and 1930, before the work at Tell el-^{ah}Ajjul. These expeditions were published in two volumes called *Beth Peleth* (Petrie 1930; Macdonald *et al.* 1932), according to the identification proposed by Petrie with the biblical town (Joshua 15:27). Some surface explorations and soundings were carried out in 1976 (Cohen 1977) and 1998-2000 (Lehmann and Schneider 2000).

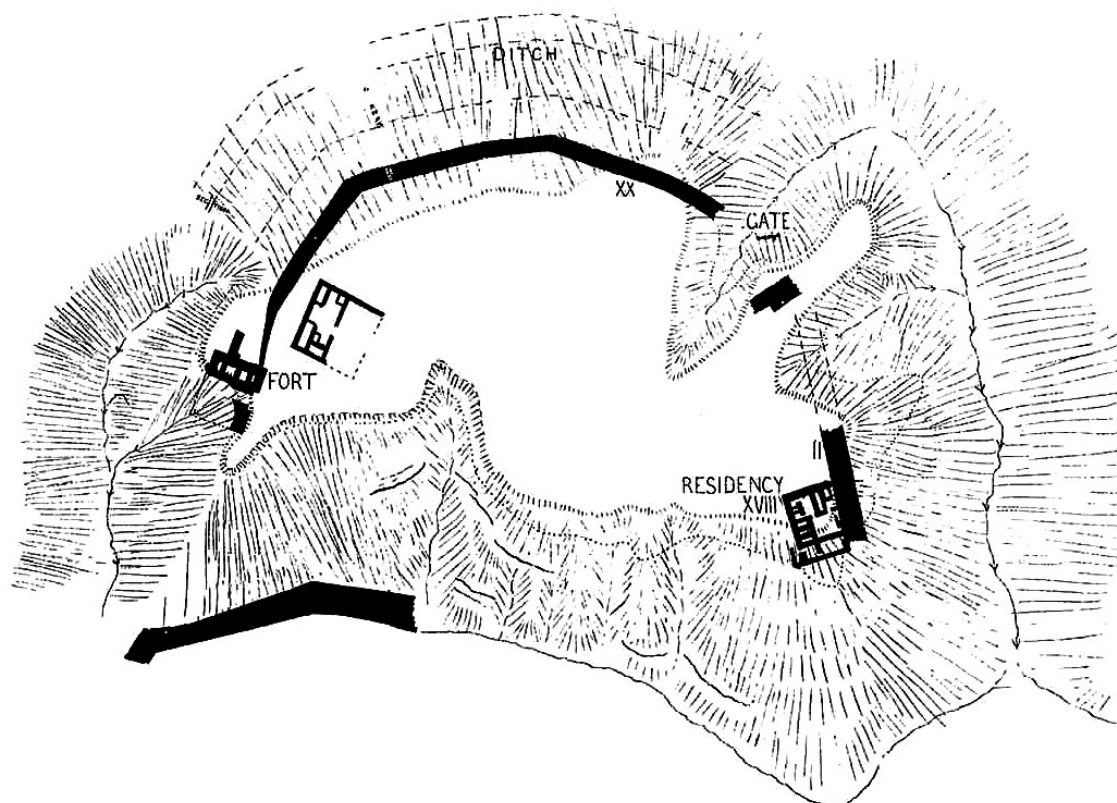


Figure 6.2. Plan of tell el-Far'ah showing the main architectural remains uncovered by Petrie (Petrie 1930: pl. LI).

The only fully published excavations of the site, by Petrie and his colleagues, showed a virtually continuous occupation from the MB II to Roman times. Meanwhile, Cohen's excavation identified three levels, all dated to the Iron Age and later periods (Cohen 1977: 170). The soundings by Lehmann and Schneider only reached the latest occupation phases (Lehmann and Schneider 2000: 260-61).

The following analysis is, therefore, based on Petrie's reports and museum collections that I examined personally. Tell el-Far'ah excavations and reports are affected by the same problems that characterise Tell el-^cAjjul (see chapter 5). In contrast to the previous site, however, Petrie and his team focused mostly on the cemetery, while data from the settlement is limited. The closed context of the graves makes it easier to follow Petrie's notes. As regards the settlement data, much information is irretrievable due to Petrie's excavation and recording methods. Yet, the re-examination of Petrie's material, based on an in-depth knowledge of his method, provides us with significant data to examine Tell el-Far'ah's relationship with Egypt in the final phase of the Late Bronze Age.

6.3 The ancient settlement

The excavations of Petrie and his team exposed part of the settlement, specifically on the southern and northern corners. The earliest remains from the site date to the MBA, when part of the fortification system on the south was erected. The town was apparently destroyed at the end of the MB III and then reoccupied only in the LB II, following a hiatus (Yisraeli 1993: 441-42). In the LBA the fortifications were no longer in use. Tombs were dug into the rampart and structures built on top of it (Petrie 1930: 16). The LBA is represented by a main building erected on the northern corner, partly resting on top of the MBA fortification walls, that Petrie labelled as 'Egyptian Residency' (Petrie 1930: 17). The structure seems to have ended in a major conflagration marking the end of the LBA (Petrie 1930: 18). The residency, and the town with it, were occupied during the Iron Age. The latest remains are dated to the 1st century B.C., when Tell el-Farāḥ was part of the Roman empire (Yisraeli 1993: 442). The following sections examine the MBA and LBA architectural and artefactual data for the fortifications and northern corner. I will use the archaeological evidence and, in particular, the pottery to show evidence of cultural negotiation at Tell el-Farāḥ during the second part of the 2nd millennium B.C.

6.3.1 The MBA fortification system and the 'Hyksos' gate

The construction of the fortification system at Tell el-Farāḥ has been dated to the MB II-III (Burke 2008: 258). In this period, the town was fortified on all but the eastern side, that was naturally defended (Petrie 1930: 16). The fortifications consisted of a *fosse* on the western side, with a ditch at the bottom. The site also features a rampart, but there are no remains of a wall on top of it. The only wall preserved is of the casemate type and is attested on the northern side of the town (Burke 2008: 258-59).

According to Petrie, one of the city gates was located on the northern part of the tell (Petrie 1930: 2). The only remains of this is a threshold of large stones, but this evidence alone is not enough to reach such a conclusion (Yisraeli 1993: 441). On the other hand, the excavators clearly discerned a gate on the southern edge of the tell, in Area F (Figure 6.3). This belongs to the six-pier gate type and measures 21.60 x 18 m. This gate architecture is typical of the

Canaanite MBA and of local character (Aaron Kempinski 1992a: 133-36; Burke 2008: 67-70). The excavators did not keep or document any pottery from the perimeter of the fortification system, its MB II-III date the result of architectural comparisons with other Canaanite sites (see below).

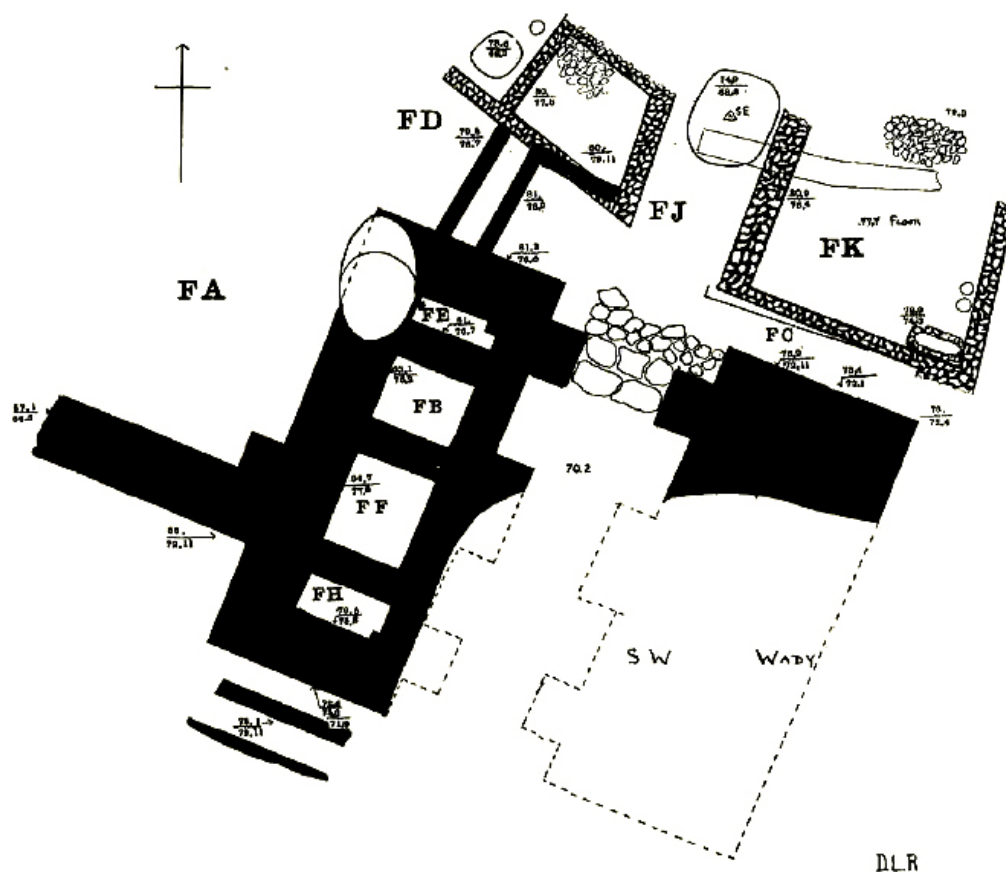


Figure 6.3. Six-pier gate of area F (Macdonald *et al.* 1932: PL. LXXVII)

The pottery from Area F, the gate area, provides a chronological anchor, as well as evidence of possible culture contact. It is worth keeping in mind that the excavations took place in the early 20th century and did not use a scientific method for the collection and recording of materials. Considerable information has probably been lost, but the study of Petrie's methodology, already examined in chapter 1, shows some patterns. The excavator generally kept all painted pottery but only complete unpainted vessels. While this of course biases any pottery study to some degree, plausible analytical results may nonetheless be gained from this material due to the consistency of Petrie's collection and recording bias.

The assemblage from Area F includes both Cypriot imports and local wares (Macdonald *et al.* 1932: pls. LXXII, LXXXV, and LXXXVIII). There are no other

prominent imports and, significantly, no evidence of Egyptian or Egyptian-style ceramics. The proportion of Cypriot pottery itself is quite limited, especially in the light of Petrie's recording preferences, which would point to a date later in the LBA.

The Cypriot corpus comprises 2 fragments of wheel made WP V-VI, 3 WS I sherds, 8 WS II and 1 White Shaved (Bergoffen 1989: 497, pls. 237, 41, 43, 44, 46). The wheel made WP points to a date within the LB I (Crewe 2007: 36). The presence of WS accounts for WS I rope Lattice, early WS II, and normal WS II, therefore providing a date ranging from LB IA to LB IIA. BR I and II is also found in the gate, with 7 sherds of BR I, 5 of early BR II and 12 of BR II mature. These also suggest a date within the LB IIA-B.

Meanwhile, the local pottery is chronologically inconsistent. There are some specimens of RWB Ware, dating to the final MBA and, in particular, to the period preceding its terminal phase (Maeir 2002: 232). Some bowls with ring bases, kraters with rope decorations, and chalices can be assigned to the same date (Macdonald *et al.* 1932: pls. LXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXVII). A LB II date might be given to bowls with straight or slightly rounded walls and rims thickened on the inside (Amiran 1970: 125), carinated bowls with a 'degenerated' profile (Amiran 1970: 129) and *pithoi* with a rope decoration (Amiran 1970: 143). It is also worth noticing the absence of Egyptian or Egyptian-style pottery. However, this might be due to the excavation and documentation methods, which, as already analysed, did not consider recording or keeping plain ware. The excavators also did not properly distinguish stratigraphic layers. The pottery of the MBA can be mostly attributed to some areas, like FH and FJ. These areas might have preserved the original foundations of the gate, while the other remains show a clear re-use, with a possible partial reconstruction of the rest of the structure during the LB II.

Nevertheless, the presence of RWB ware is significant. This was an indigenous product of the Southern coastal plain of Palestine, but it reflects the nature of the relationship with Egypt during this period. The blue used to paint the pottery in this style is derived from cobalt imported from Egypt. Likewise, the technique of painting a vessel with cobalt blue on top of a white slip was used in Egypt, albeit applied post-firing (Maeir 2002: 233). Altogether, then, the pottery from the gate seems to imply the existence of a trade relationship with

Egypt. There is limited exchange of cultural practices, but the two cultures do not appear to be involved in a transforming encounter.

6.3.2 The northern corner

The northern corner of the settlement was a major focus of the archaeological investigation by Petrie and his team. The archaeologists recorded two phases of an important building that they labelled as ‘Residency’ and dated to the second half of the second millennium. Unfortunately, with the exception of a few sherds, the pottery was neither recorded nor kept. Nevertheless, its architectural features provide some useful insights into practices of cultural negotiation happening at Tell el-Far^{ca}h. Additionally, Petrie uncovered two levels pre-dating the public building that yielded a modest amount of pottery finds. The next section will analyse the ‘pre-residency’ structures and then present and discuss the evidence from the main building.

6.3.2.1 *The ‘pre-residency’ structures*

The ‘pre-residency’ structures were initially exposed during the first campaign of excavations and then better investigated during the following two (Petrie 1930: 17, pl. LII; Starkey and Harding 1932: pl. LXVI). However, only a minor portion of the buildings has been excavated and it is not possible to recognise any particular pattern. The excavators recognized two layers and recorded the level of each in inches. The lowest one comprises rooms ZZL-ZZX. While not all of these are represented on the plan, some finds are attributed also to the *loci* not illustrated. The second layer includes rooms ZZA-ZZH (Figure 6.4). Though very fragmentary, the archaeological evidence shows a domestic context. The lowest level is characterised by a local pottery assemblage, with very few imports and no locally made pottery inspired by foreign traditions. Whilst the second layer mostly reflects the same patterns, a meagre presence of Egyptian style pottery indicates some degree of mixture between local cultural practices and Egyptian ones at a domestic level, although its exact nature remains difficult to reconstruct.

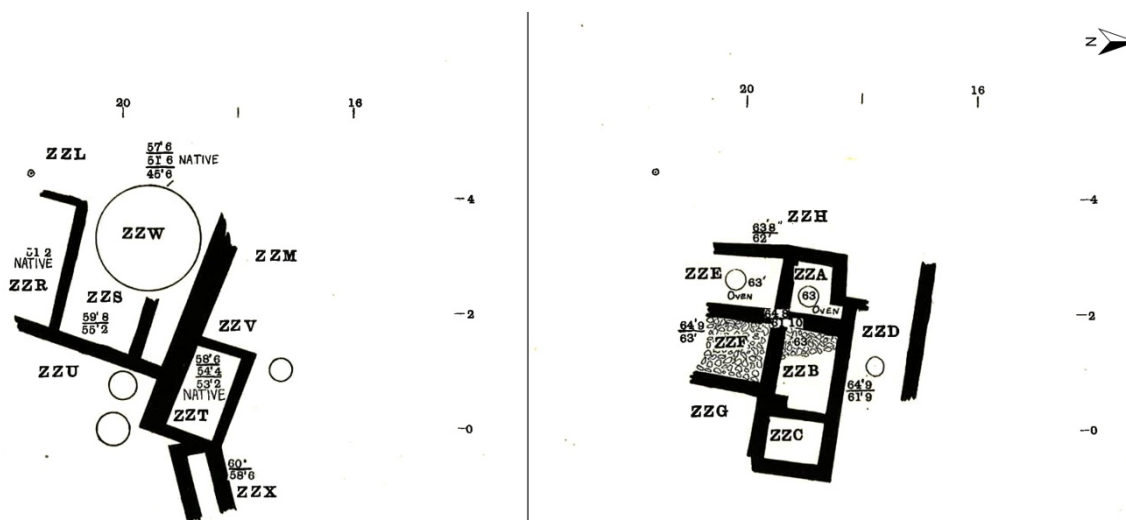


Figure 6.4. Pre-Residency layers: on the left ZZZ-ZZX, while on the right ZZA-ZZH (Macdonald *et al.* 1932: PL. LXVI).

The lower level ZZZ-ZZX is characterised by the presence of an oven or kiln in room ZZX (Starkey and Harding 1932: 27). Using the same method applied to Tell el-^cAjjul, we can attribute some pottery finds to this level thanks to the elevation recorded in the report (Starkey and Harding 1932: 27, pl.LXVI). The associated pottery belongs to rooms ZZZ, ZZM, ZZR, ZZS, ZZT and ZZU, and can be used to date the structure. While Petrie attributed the level to the Hyksos period because of the finds of several Hyksos scarabs (Petrie 1930: 17), Starkey and Harding dated the layer to the late Hyksos - early 18th Dynasty, on the basis of three decorated pottery sherds (Starkey and Harding 1932: pl. LXIII:35, 37 and 38). These, however, can be more appropriately dated to the LB II, and include a sherd of WS IIA pottery (Macdonald *et al.* 1932: pl. LXIII:38; Bergoffen 1989: 213, cat. 1327), generally appearing from the LC IIA:2 (Eriksson 2007: 132). The only other evidence of Cypriot pottery is represented by two sherds of White Shaved pottery that can be dated to the same period. From the same layer, the excavators record a sherd of Tell el-Amarna ware, with blue and black bands on red slip (Starkey and Harding 1932: pl. LVIII:37A). This ware is more common in the 18th Dynasty, but it is also found during the 19th-20th Dynasty (Martin 2011: 231). The rest of the pottery is mostly local, including some painted specimens and plain pottery generally dated to the LB IIA horizon. Other sherds belonging to the same level in inches are not represented on any plan, and are labelled as found in loci ZZJ, ZZK, ZZN and ZZO. Their chronology fits the same period and provides a date within the LB IIA for buildings ZZZ-ZZX. This account matches the

evidence from the cemetery, as will be analysed below, and could prove the absence of any significant early LBA remains at Tell el-Farḥah.

The area bears more consistent remains from a later phase. The LB IIA layer was cut by pit ZZW, containing late LB and early IA pottery including Philistine and Midianite ware. Two fragments of creamy slip vessels with black ink hieratic inscriptions were also recovered from the pit. These might have been part of the same bowl, as the handwriting is the same (Goldwasser and Wimmer 1999: 39). The sherds have been dated to the 20th Dynasty (1187-1064 B.C.) and deal with grain deliveries. Similar inscriptions in votive bowls have been found at Lachish, Tel Seraḥ, Tel Haror and Deir el-Balah, and have been associated with the Ramesside administration of Southern Palestine, probably under Ramesses III (Goldwasser and Wimmer 1999: 41).

The second layer, ZZA-ZZH, contemporary with the pit, has been dated by Starkey and Harding to the 19th Dynasty (Starkey and Harding 1932: 27). The lower foundation of the layer is dated on the basis of three sherds (Starkey and Harding 1932: pl. LXIII:36, 39 and 40). The assemblage, which only totals around 50 items, includes a mere three Cypriot sherds: a BW, a WSh, and a WS II, all dated to the 13th-12th century. There are 6 Egyptian-style vessels, all of which are locally-produced bowls. The remaining specimens belong to the local tradition of the final LB II but also include a Philistine sherd and a fragment of Midianite ware, both generally dated to the 12th century. Additionally, it is also possible to recognize a Myc IIIC sherd (Starkey and Harding 1932: pl. LXIII:36), which can be dated to the early IA. Some other pottery sherds from the same elevation are labelled as found in room ZZI, but they are not represented on the plan. They also belong to the same chronological horizon, dating the layer to the final LB II - early IA.

As already mentioned, Petrie and his colleagues did not record any pottery from the layer above ZZA-ZZH, the earliest layer of the residence. This led some authors to assert that some of the pottery from the pre-residency layers actually belonged to the period of occupation of layer Z, the first residence (Bergoffen 1989: 98; Yannai 2002: 369-70). However, there is no conclusive evidence to support this claim. On the contrary, Starkey and Harding recorded a layer of carbonised material sealing ZZA-ZZH that is also shown on a photograph (Starkey and Harding 1932: 28, pl. LXVIII:15). This would support the

legitimacy of Starkey and Harding's statement and, therefore, allow us to analyse the material from the Residency as recorded by them.

6.3.2.2 *The Residency*

Most studies on the settlement of Tell el-Far^oah have been based on the so-called 'Residence YR'. The building belongs to the previously examined category of residences, labelled alternatively as 'Egyptian residences' or 'governors' residences' (see Chapter 3). The overview of different buildings in the Wadi Gaza area proposed in Chapter 3, however, disclosed their hybridised general character which cannot be strictly defined as Egyptian or Canaanite. Even in the specific case of Tell el-Far^oah, previous scholarship has focused on the Egyptian features of the building to prove the Egyptianization of the settlement. However, a closer analysis at the architecture and finds, with the appropriate comparisons to Egyptian and Levantine examples, discloses a more complex scenario of cultural mixture.



Figure 6.5. Jar fragment with Seti II's cartouche, IDA, I.9834, photo courtesy of the Israel Museum.

The structure was labelled 'Egyptian Residency' by Petrie, who recognised the distinguished position and dimension of the building (Petrie 1930: 17). In the first report, Petrie presented two different phases of the structure: phase Z, dated to the 18th Dynasty, and phase Y, which would have been in use during the 19-20th dynasties, and destroyed in the 11th century. In the second report, Starkey and Harding reiterated this chronology, presenting as evidence the occurrence of Philistine Bichrome Ware in the layer above the courtyard, and its

absence in the levels below. Furthermore, they uncovered a fragment of a vessel with the cartouche of Seti II (1200-1194 B.C.) on the surface of the courtyard (Figure 6.5). On account of this find, they concluded that the building was still in use at the beginning of the 12th century and that its destruction should be dated somewhat later (Starkey and Harding 1932: 28-29). This find is significant for more than dating purposes and will be discussed in further detail below.

This theory was accepted by some scholars, such as Albright and Dothan, although the latter was doubtful about basing the chronology of the structures and the appearance of Philistine pottery on the cartouche of Seti II (Albright 1932: 53; Dothan 1982: 27-28). Oren also corroborated this theory, dating phase Z to the late 13th - early 12th century, while the destruction of phase Y would have happened early in the 11th century (Oren 1984: 47-48). Nigro dates the earliest phase to the Amarna age and the second to the LB IIB, with a destruction date in the mid-12th century, because of the absence of Philistine BW (Nigro 1995: 181). Also Braunstein supports the theory of two phases, dating the later phase to the second half of the 12th century (Braunstein 2011: 4).

Not everyone agreed with the original reports. In his 2002 paper, Yannai, with whom Fischer agrees, suggests that the two structures of phases Z and Y were in fact two phases of the same structure, with Z representing its foundation and Y its living phase (Yannai 2002: 374-75; Fischer 2011: 22). To support his theory, the Yannai claims that Starkey never published any Philistine BW pottery from the residence itself, only from the courtyard YX and from loci YEE and YAA of the adjacent building. On the one hand, these conclusions are mostly based on the rejection of any evidence published by Petrie, Starkey, and Harding, which are labelled as unreliable. Although there is no positive evidence to support the claim, this hypothesis would explain the similarities in the plans of building Z and Y and would also account for the complete lack of recorded pottery from level Z. I will therefore follow this theory in presenting the evidence from the residence, bearing in mind that all of the pottery considered was originally recorded as belonging to level Y, while no pottery has been assigned to level Z.

The residency was built on the top of the MBA rampart, in the north-eastern part of the tell, in close proximity to the perimeter of the town. It is composed of a roughly square building, measuring 25x22 m (Figure 6.6). To the west of the residence, adjacent to it, is a secondary building (YAA). Both

structures open on a cobbled courtyard (YX), encircled by a wall and with a paved path leading to the main entrance (Starkey and Harding 1932: pl. LXIX). Additionally, the layout of the residency finds a good parallel in Palace III from Tell el-^cAjjul (see Chapter 4, Morris 2005: 535). Both structures cover the same extension (570 m²) and present a main building with an auxiliary structure to its west.

The structures were entirely built in mudbrick, including the foundation walls (see Chapter 3, Petrie 1930: pl. III). According to Petrie the western side of the building was later restored, as it would be shown by the better technique of YA and YB (Petrie 1930). The roofing of this last stage would have been in cedar beams, all burnt in the final conflagration. The entrance to the building can be identified in the SE corner, where a stairway leads to porch YM, followed by vestibule YP (Daviau 1993: 410). The interior is focused on a central plastered court, YR, which is surrounded by smaller rooms.

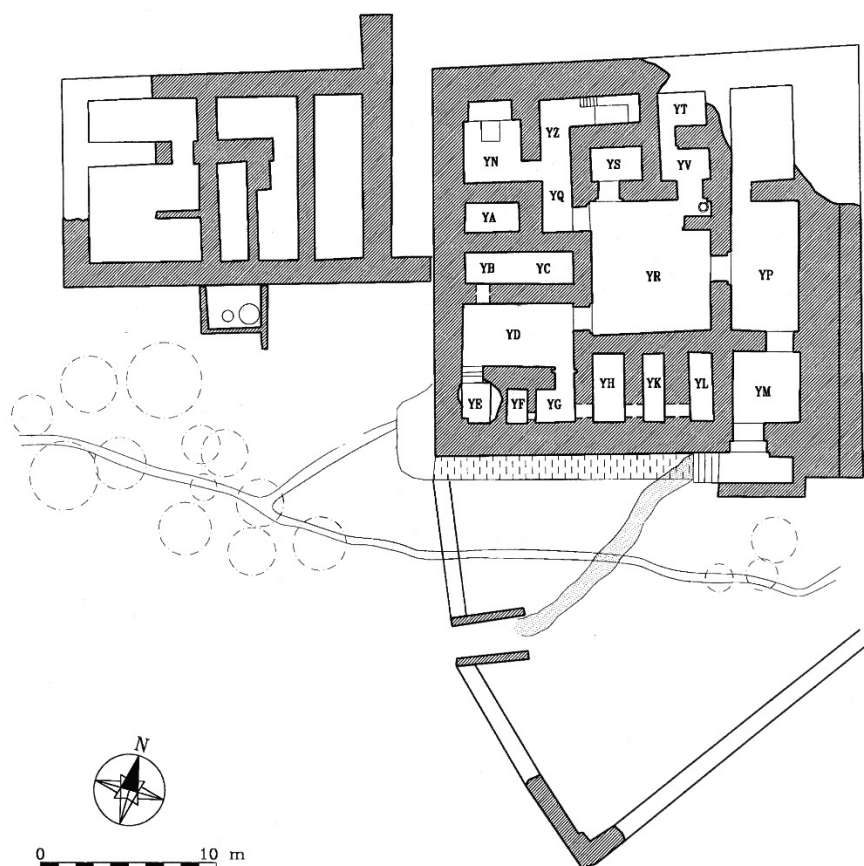


Figure 6.6. Plan of the residence (Nigro 1995: PL. 40)

The excavators proposed a functional identification for some of the rooms based on their finds. They recognised a bedroom, with a platform in a niche for the bed (YN); a raised bathroom, characterised by a plastered water tank and

accessible via several steps (YZ). Another room can be identified as a storage area (YS), which, given the 45 storage jars retrieved from here, may have held wine. Some of these jars were sealed with conical clay stoppers stamped with the image of a god holding a sceptre and standing on a lion (Starkey and Harding 1932: 28). Other scholars have provided further functional interpretations: Nigro, for example, argues that rooms YV and YT have been interpreted as spaces for the transformation of food, as would be confirmed by the presence of an oven in a niche preceding these rooms (Nigro 1995: 182). According to Nigro, the court itself could have been used for the consumption of meals, although this reading is made on structural analysis alone and not on actual finds. Daviau and Nigro suggested that the long rooms in the southern part of the building were used for storage purposes (Daviau 1993: 410; Nigro 1995: 182). Furthermore, the SW corner presents a staircase (YE) that was connecting to the upper floor of the building or to the rooftop (Nigro 1995: 184; Morris 2005: 535).

One of the main features of the residence, originally attributed to its second phase, is the presence of an auxiliary building to its west, building YAA (Starkey and Harding 1932: pl. 69). Its function has also been debated: its connection to the main residence is clear, though the excavators did not expose any structural connection between the two buildings. It has been interpreted as a domestic building or service area (Starkey and Harding 1932: 29; Yisraeli 1993: 442), as a kitchen or office wing (Daviau 1993: 412), as a storage or administrative area (Nigro 1995: 181, note 86; Morris 2005: 533).

The final stage of the building complex shows clear signs of a violent conflagration, with several charcoal deposits, fused broken pottery and by an ivory box (see below), also burnt (Petrie 1930: 18).

The finds from both structures, as above mentioned, have not been fully recorded, preventing an in-depth investigation of cultural practices in the main centre of power. Some of the finds, though, together with the architectural features of the buildings, can still shed light on processes of cultural hybridisation at Tell el-Farḥah. The plan of the main building, in particular, reveals a combination of Egyptian and local traditions. Several authors have already noticed similarities between this and the central hall houses of NK Egypt (examined in Chapter 3) (Oren 1984: 49; Daviau 1993: 409; Killebrew 2005: 60; Morris 2005: 534-35; Fischer 2011: 64-65). Very few of them, though, have stressed the importance of the local tradition in the making of this prominent

building at Tell el-Far^{ah} and some, in particular Higginbotham, have denied any local cultural agency whatsoever (Higginbotham 2000: 99).

Of course, the Egyptian features are remarkable in the Tell el-Far^{ah} example. The structure has a square plan, similar to Amarna houses, and presents a typically Egyptian building technique where mudbricks are used both for the elevation as well as the foundations of the building.

However, other features are not typical of Egyptian houses and their presence appears related to the local cultural context. Most significant here is the absence at Tell el-Far^{ah} of the columns in the central hall, typical of the Amarnian architecture. It has been proposed that the smaller dimension of the residency compared to Amarna houses would have allowed the construction of a roof without the structural need for columns (Martin 2011: 230). However, this seems unlikely for a 7.2 × 6.8 m room, while similar columns are attested at Tel Sera^o's residence, of similar dimensions (see Chapter 3). Even though it is possible that the columns were just not preserved at Tell el-Far^{ah}, the evidence could point to a different use of the central room, which could have been open (Oren 1984: 49). Another element of distinction is the thickness of the walls: these, roughly 2 m thick, are significantly heavier than the average walls of Amarna houses, which usually measure less than a metre. This may be connected to the primary function of the building: while Amarna houses fulfilled mostly domestic functions, the Tell el-Far^{ah} residence was of clear central significance, an elite building and/or defensive structure. The thickness of the walls, together with the evidence of a staircase, could endorse the presence of a second storey at the residence, as suggested above.

This evidence shows that the building of Tell el-Far^{ah} is not the result of the unilateral and indiscriminate adoption of Egyptian designs but expresses local Canaanite identity as well. The differences from both the Egyptian and local traditions show the creation of the 'third space', materialisation of a new cultural identity and of the diverse cultural practices to which it connected. These considerations also imply some issues regarding the workmanship involved in the construction of the building. On the one hand the similarities with the Egyptian models could indicate the presence of Egyptian engineers at work at the Canaanite site (Daviau 1993: 410). These workers, on the other hand, were not strangers to the local building practices and were either cooperating with local constructors or were personally familiar with local techniques. In both

cases, the architectural features of the residence at Tell el-Far^{ah} are by themselves a good example of cultural mixing.

Similar processes of hybridisation can also be detected in finds from the residence, such as some ivory plaques (Figure 6.7). These were found in fragments in Rooms YB-YC, together with a jar containing sulphurous material (Petrie 1930: 18). The plaques were reconstructed into either three or four panels constituting the inlaid decoration of a wooden box (Petrie 1930: 19; Liebowitz 1980: 168), or into two longer panels, part of the back of a throne or the footboard of a bed (Brandl 1996: 19).

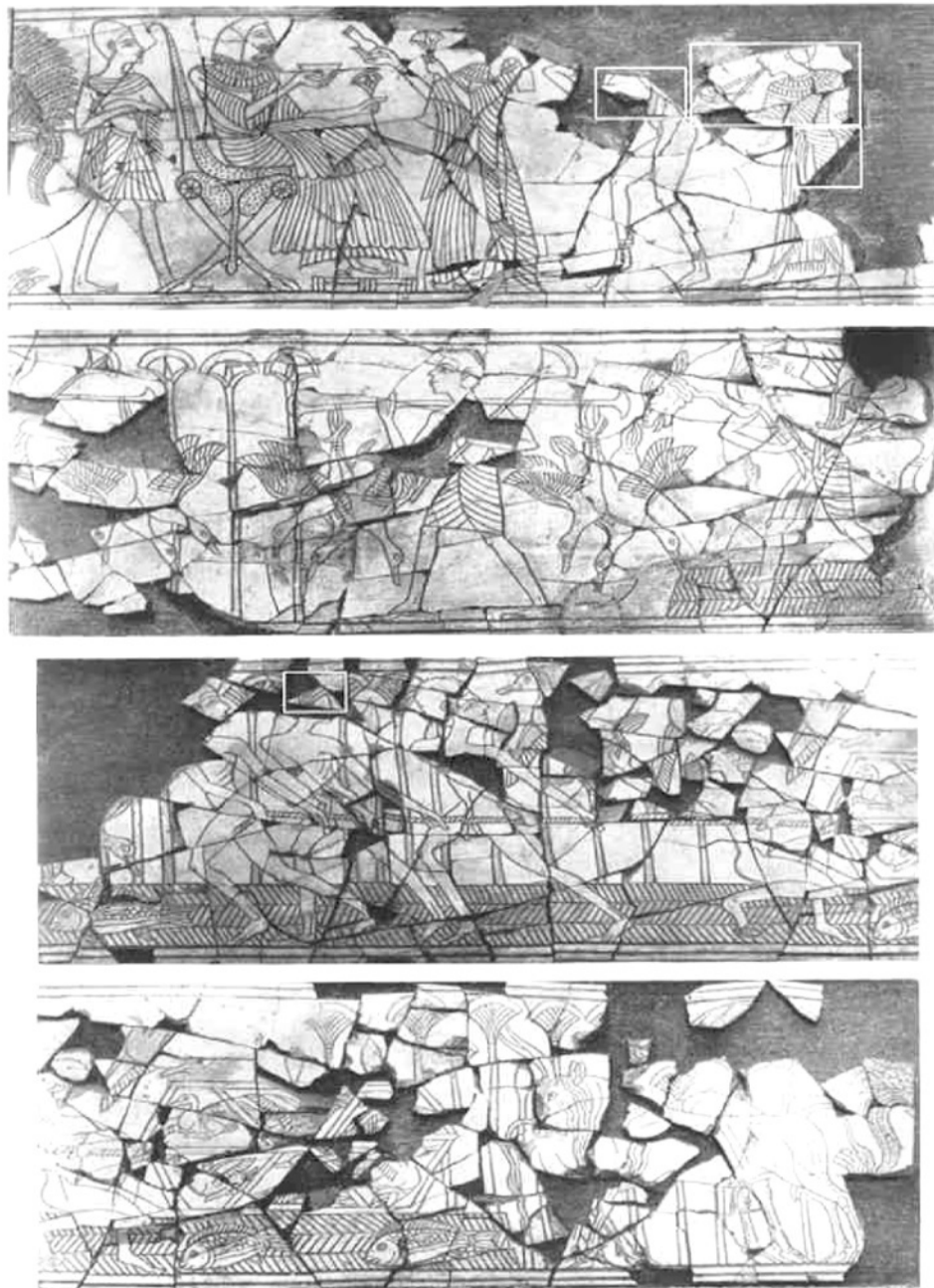


Figure 6.7. Ivory plaques from the residence of Tell el-Far^{ah}, showing the process of hybridisation at the site (Fischer 2011: PL. 19).

The find has been dated to the 14th century by Liebowitz (1980: 168), to the 13th century by Brandl (1996), or to the 12th century (Bryan 1996: 62; Fischer 2011). The latter suggestion, supported by a thorough stylistic analysis, is considered the most reliable in this thesis.

The ivory plaques are traditionally interpreted as an expression of 'Egyptianization' (Petrie 1930: 19; Kantor 1945: 168; Liebowitz 1980: 167; Bryan 1996: 61; Higginbotham 2000: 260-61), although some authors have correctly pointed out the complexity of this process (Bryan 1996: 61).

The illustrations on the panels, which are incised, have been more times reconsidered. According to the most widely accepted interpretation, the first panel (on top in Figure 6.7) depicts a banquet, where a seated ruler accepts libations from an attendant. The other panels portray the returns of hunters with their preys, a bird hunting scene and a fishing scene in a marsh (Fischer 2011). Conversely, Liebowitz interprets the scenes as the various stages of a battle and the following celebratory feast (Liebowitz 1980: 165-66).

Previous scholarship around the Far^{ca}h ivories has been centred around the cultural identity of the craftsman and the represented ruler, aiming to establish their Egyptian or Canaanite origin. According to such studies, the plaques had been realised by a Canaanite artisan extremely knowledgeable of Egyptian themes and styles, who was seeking to emulate Egyptian carving methods (Ziffer 2005: 151; Fischer 2011). Another popular theory presumes that Levantine ivories were manufactured by a group of itinerant workshops, possibly of Levantine origin, but with a cosmopolitan knowledge of styles and production methods (e.g. Bryan 1996: 79; Aruz *et al.* 2008: 334).

The identity of the ruler, instead, has been inferred from contrasts with the Megiddo ivories (Loud 1939), to which the Far^{ca}h plaques have often been compared (Bryan 1996: 77; Ziffer 2005: 150). Whilst the Tell el-Far^{ca}h ivory shows a prominent Egyptian influence, the style and iconography of the Megiddo plaques would be influenced by Syrian prototypes (Bryan 1996: 77). This discrepancy would be due to the direct Egyptian control at Tell el-Far^{ca}h, in contrast to the north of the region, where local governors were in place. Based on this evidence, these scholars suppose that the plaque depicts - and, therefore, belonged to - an Egyptian prince (Petrie 1930: 19; Weinstein 1981; Fischer 2011). Conversely, Liverani believes that the style of Tell el-Far^{ca}h ivories mirrors the local taste for Mediterranean luxury goods, coexisting with

the pharaonic power (Liverani 1987: 66-73). In agreement with Liverani, Bryan and Ziffer argue that the ivories show the presence of independent elites emulating the Egyptian iconography (Bryan 1996: 79; Ziffer 2005: 158).

An analysis of the Far^{ca}h plaques shows that several of the iconographic elements recall indeed the NK Egyptian tradition. Among these is the representation of the seated ruler with a woman pouring libations in front of him, as well as their outfits, the distinctive double flute, and the marsh scene (Ziffer 2005: 150). However, typical Egyptian scenes of the 19th and 20th Dynasty are quite different from the Tell el-Far^{ca}h ivories. The former usually depict military events rather than focusing on the feasting preparation and the feast itself, which are the main topic of the Far^{ca}h plaques (Ziffer 2005: 152). Furthermore, the offers of prisoners and booty in the Egyptian scenes are always made in front of gods, as opposed to Canaanite examples, where the king is placed at centre-stage (Bryan 1996: 73). Likewise, other iconographic elements are typically local, including the fieldworkers' hairstyles and the combination of lotus flower and cup, which seldom appear in Egyptian iconography (Ziffer 2005: 153). Aegean models are also visible, in particular in the figure of the bull (Bryan 1996: 66-69).

Therefore, the ivory plaques from the residence, as in the architecture of the building itself, show a complex process of acceptance of some Egyptian iconographic motifs, together with the rejection of others (e.g. the military focus or the presence of the divinity). This precise and conscious selection of motives involves other iconographies, borrowed from the Aegean milieu as well as from the local tradition. Instead of labelling the find as 'Egyptianizing', which would stress the cultural dominance of Egypt over the other cultures, this find can be interpreted as a result of hybridisation processes. In this view, establishing the identity of the ruler is not as paramount, as in either case the item shows a mutual relationship of cultural borrowing. However, had the Egyptian origin of the governor to be accepted, this would accentuate how the dominant narrative perpetuated by the Egyptian pharaohs and some modern studies alike has been exaggerated. These princes, in their local reality of a medium-ranked Canaanite site, were accepting different traditions and displaying them in a valuable artwork within their residence.

Another insight into cultural encounters at Tell el-Far^{ca}h can be given by an analysis of the ceramic repertoire. Unfortunately, the meagre publications do

not include a complete record of pottery finds. The original reports attribute all the ceramics from the structure to layer Y, therefore supporting Yannai's hypothesis that layers Z and Y belong in reality to the same structure (see above). Furthermore, all of the recorded pottery has been uncovered either in the auxiliary building, in rooms YAA and YEE, or in the external courtyard. The only exception are the above mentioned 45 jars found in room YS (Starkey and Harding 1932: 28). The absence of ceramic finds from the main building is particularly striking. The reason for this absence is usually attributed to the method of the excavations. Though this is certainly the main problem of the record, Petrie, even if not collecting every sherd available, did keep complete examples, painted sherds, and some of the incomplete vessels that could add new data to his typology. A possible explanation is given by Petrie himself in the records. According to the archaeologist, the excavations of the north end yielded scarce finds compared to his previous work at Tell Jemmeh (Petrie 1930: 17). Therefore, it seems like Petrie was aware of the typical archaeological record of a flourishing Palestinian city and found the lack of finds at Tell el-Far^{ah} surprising. He explained the difference between the two towns in functional terms: Tell Jemmeh was a trading town, whereas Tell el-Far^{ah} would have to be regarded just as a military fort. Whilst the difference in role of the two towns is also supported by the rank-size analysis in Chapter 3, Tell el-Far^{ah} cannot only be seen as a military fort, as will be discussed more in detail later. Nevertheless, some key ceramic finds were kept by Petrie and can help shed some light on the role of the town within the Egyptian empire in the Southern Levant and the local relationships between cultures.

The total amount of retained sherds, both published and unpublished, total 65 (without considering the finds from the grain pits). They are mostly local, with the exception of one Egyptian import, 5 Egyptian-style items, and 2 Cypriot specimens.

The most discussed item is perhaps the aforementioned jar inscribed with the cartouche of Seti II (1200-1194 B.C.) that was retrieved in pieces on top of the cobbled courtyard (Macdonald *et al.* 1932: pl. LXI:1). In addition to dating the residence, this item has implications for the local administration at Tell el-Far^{ah}. Finds belonging to Seti II's administration are indeed sporadic in the Southern Levant. Yet, two fragments of similar storage jars with Seti II's cartouche have been recovered at Haruba site A-289, located in Northern Sinai,

on the Way of Horus (Oren 1987: 91-93). The sherds have been retrieved in the courtyard of a structure usually identified as a fort and have been interpreted as a sign of Egyptian administration in the period (Morris 2005; Ben-Tor 2016: 84). Similarly to Tell el-^cAjjul, therefore, also Tell el-Far^cah, in a later period, received imported goods from the Egyptian administration.

Otherwise, however, evidence for Egyptian or Egyptian-style materials is quite meagre, consisting of only five bowls of a type already popular at Tell el-^cAjjul (see chapter 5), which was locally produced according to Egyptian mass-produced traditions. These were used mainly for the consumption of food and drink and, possibly, also for cooking.

Two Cypriot sherds were found inside the accessory building (UCL, EVI.84/28, unpublished, and EVI.86/85, Bergoffen 1989, cat. 1335). They are both WS II bowls, which are attested from LC IIA, 1425-1375 B.C., until the LC IIIA, 1200-1100 B.C. (Crewe 2007: 39). As discussed in chapter 4, these bowls were multi-purpose containers used for the consumption of meat, vegetables, and wine.

Among the remaining finds, there are 15 sherds of Philistine pottery (Dothan 1982, 113). The assemblage is mostly comprised of kraters and stirrup jars and was retrieved in the layers above the courtyard and in the rooms of the accessory building. Philistine pottery is generally considered a decorated table ware used for consumption purposes (Ben-Shlomo and Van Beek 2014: 722). The rest of the local pottery was mostly found in the courtyard, where the excavators retrieved 18 bowls, 6 commercial jars, 2 flasks, and a jug. The local pottery from inside rooms YAA and YEE includes 5 bowls, 2 jugs, 1 juglet and 1 krater. All the finds support the above proposed date within the late 13th and 12th century. The structure, therefore, would have been built in the LB IIB and destroyed at the beginning of the IA.

Therefore, the ceramic record at hand suggests that both the courtyard and the accessory buildings were exclusively dedicated to the consumption of food and drink. Cooking or preparation vessels are entirely absent from this assemblage. Some forms are particularly dedicated to the short-term storage and serving of liquids, including flasks, jugs and juglets. The majority of finds, however, are bowls (35 in total). As for the production of these wares, the assemblage mostly consists of local ware. The absence of Cypriot pottery is not surprising and agrees with the proposed chronology of the building, as the

amount of Cypriot fine wares imported in the Levant drops significantly in the 13th century (Bergoffen 1989: 211). The amount of Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery is also not overwhelming. Moreover, the Egyptian-style pottery used in this level at Tell el-Far^{ah}, which includes exclusively coarse and mass-produced bowls, lacks any of the more emblematic types of Egyptian pottery such as beer jars, flower pots or spinning bowls. Also missing are shapes popular at Tell el-^{ah} Ajjul, for instance Egyptian squat jars and Egyptian-style miniature jars. However, the only preserved Egyptian imports bear great significance, showing the presence of imported goods sent from the central Egyptian administration.

To sum up, the evidence from the settlement and, in particular, its residence, conveys two important preliminary conclusions regarding the cultural identity of the residents at Tell el-Far^{ah}. Firstly, the governor and his entourage were certainly aware of Egyptian tastes, expressed in the architectural layout and technique of the residence, by some motives of the ivory plaque, and by the desire of importing products from Egypt, as witnessed by the jar with Seti II's cartouche. The latter can be interpreted as evidence of an Egyptian administration of the town, where goods would have been sent directly by the central pharaonic government. It is possible, therefore, that Tell el-Far^{ah} at the time of the final LBA and early IA was administered by an Egyptian ruler. At the same time, however, the identity of such a ruler, and his entourage, cannot be considered rigidly Egyptian, in line with the non-static and fluid nature of identity itself. All of the finds examined above show a high degree of negotiation with the local identity. This is well-illustrated by the use of Egyptian techniques and styles for different purposes or in ways not usually employed in Egypt, as discussed above. The residence shows the appropriation of an Egyptian private domestic architecture for public functions, which may have included administration and/or defence. A material hybridisation is displayed by the plaques from the same structure, which represent a prime example of mixture of Egyptian and local traditions. The second interpretation that can be deduced from the analysis above, therefore, is that there is a complex cultural negotiation at Tell el-Far^{ah} between local and Egyptian cultures not simply definable as the Egyptianization of the local culture.

Nonetheless, as described above, the major and better documented materials from Tell el-Far^{ah} belong to the cemeteries. For this reason, the next

section will present the funerary remains from Tell el-Far^{ah} and discuss their role in the creation of mixed identities at the site.

6.4 The cemetery

Petrie excavated eight different cemeteries in the north, west, and south of Tell el-Far^{ah}, amounting to a total of 379 excavated graves (Braunstein 2011: 6). A detailed study of the cemeteries is not the aim of the present research, as the mortuary remains from LBA Tell el-Far^{ah} have been meticulously studied previously (e.g. Perlman *et al.* 1973; Morris 2005: 537-40; Bergoffen 2014). Consequently, rather than presenting a full overview of the tombs, this section will highlight the most significant evidence that can show practices of cultural negotiation at the site.

All the cemeteries are located on the plain around the tell, with the exception of cemetery 900, which is dug into the slopes of the MBA fosse (Petrie 1930: 16; Starkey and Harding 1932: 22). The tombs date from the 2nd millennium B.C. to the Persian period, with some Hellenistic and Roman graves. MBA burials were excavated in cemeteries 500, 600, 700, 800, and 1000 (Petrie 1930: 2-5; Starkey and Harding 1932: 22), but only 45 tombs from cemetery 500 were studied and published. These were dated to the last part of the MBA on the basis of their ceramic content (Price Williams 1977: 151). Therefore, together with the fortifications - the only other MBA remains from the tell - the substantial number of MBA tombs at the site speaks for the presence of an MB settlement at Tell el-Far^{ah}, probably belonging to the final stage of the period.

As for the LBA, only eight burials dating to the LB IA were published (Petrie 1930: pls. 51, 67), while no burials can be attributed to the LB IA or LB IIA with certainty (Steel 2004: 97). This evidence strengthens the chronology attributed to the finds from the settlement, where the only structures recorded have been dated to the last part of the 2nd millennium (see above). Therefore, integrating the evidence from the settlement and the cemeteries, it appears feasible that, at the present state of knowledge, Tell el-Far^{ah} remained uninhabited after the MBA and was settled again during the LB IIB.

The bulk of graves examined here are dated to the later part of the LBA and the early IA, the period coinciding with the Egyptian presence at Tell el-Far^{ah}, coeval with the major remains analysed in the settlement. The tombs

have been found in cemeteries 100, 500, 800, and 900 (Petrie 1930: pl. 51). In this period, a range of burial types were in use: simple pits; chamber tombs, some with bench and a *dromos*; and shaft graves.

Several features attest the mixing of cultural traditions at the site in the period of Egyptian imperialism. The presence of a strong Egyptian component in the LBA tombs of Tell el-Far^oah is undeniable and this has been often perceived in previous scholarship as proof of Egyptian culture's effect on local burial customs (e.g. Killebrew 2005: 65-67; Martin 2011: 235). Egyptian-style objects and pottery are attested in the majority (82% according to Braunstein 2011: 9). These include scarabs (Petrie 1930: 2, pls. VII, X, XII), jewellery, amulets, alabaster vases and *tazzae* (Petrie 1930: 4, pls. VI, IX, XI; Starkey and Harding 1932: 22). Egyptian style pottery is mostly domestic in nature and includes 107 bowls, nine ovoid drop jars and one beer jar (Braunstein 2011: 10). The pottery is thought to be of mostly local manufacture (Martin 2011: 235), although there are no analyses to support this statement. The only exception to this at the moment is the beer jar, which is supposed by Laemmel to be of Nile silt clay and, therefore, imported from Egypt (Laemmel 2009: 177-78).



Figure 6.8. Beer jar Tell el-Far^oah, Tomb 939, Ashmolean Museum, Braunstein 2011: fig. 7

The presence of Egyptian and Egyptian style objects, however, does not justify conclusions of Egyptian cultural hegemony over Palestine. Previous studies have neglected local material culture, while overstating the significance of Egyptian objects (see below), whose significance, when viewed in isolation from their wider archaeological context, is easily overstated.

In order to provide a more balanced account of the LBA funerary customs at Tell el-Far'ah, I will examine some of the most highly-debated categories: first, the chamber tombs from Cemetery 900 and; second, clay anthropoid coffins from Cemetery 500. The latter, more than any other burial practice, have been used to argue for Egyptian culture influence on local customs. However, in my analysis below, I will demonstrate that a process of mutual cultural exchange sits more comfortably with the evidence at hand.

6.4.1. Chamber tombs and anthropoid clay coffins

Cemetery 900 contained some of the most elaborated tombs, cut into the slopes of the MBA rampart. They have been dated between the 13th and 12th century B.C. (Dothan 1982: 29; Braunstein 1998: 149). Burials in this cluster mostly belong to the chamber tomb type, some of which present a stepped *dromos* and a central depression surrounded by benches. Several pit burials are scattered around the chamber tombs (Starkey and Harding 1932: 22-27).

The material evidence from these burials is mostly Egyptian in style, with Egyptian style pottery attested in roughly half of the documented tombs (53% according to Morris 2005: 537). Other finds include a high number of scarabs, amulets and jewels, with each of the upper burials containing between 20 and 142 scarabs (Starkey and Harding 1932: pls. XLVII-LV; Morris 2005: 538). The rest of the pottery, however, is local in character, in concert with minor amounts of Cypriot and Aegean imports (Laemmel 2016: figs. 20.1-5). Local pottery and objects were recorded in every tomb and included mostly plain pottery such as bowls, jugs and juglets, jars, pilgrim flasks and lamps (Figure 6.9). This assemblage is completed by scarabs, ornaments, and metal weapons and tools, all of which contribute to the perception of Cemetery 900 as a wealthy burial place (Starkey and Harding 1932: pls. XLIX-LIV). According to Morris, the elite could have been buried in the chamber tombs, whilst the pit tombs surrounding them could have been reserved for their entourage (Morris 2005: 538).



Figure 6.9. Local bowls Tell el-Far'ah, Tomb 982, JM, 12-73.66 (above) and 12-73.68 (below).

Previous studies have often interpreted the elite burials of Cemetery 900 as an indication for the presence of an Egyptian imperial institution at Tell el-Far'ah and I will return to this point shortly. Before then, however, we ought to investigate in more detail the burial customs that have been associated most often with the Egyptian cultural sphere: anthropoid coffins. A general overview to this burial kind has been provided in Chapter 3. Here, however, we will examine the specimens from the site and analyse their meaning in relations to the cultic sphere.

Petrie and his team uncovered three fired clay anthropoid sarcophagi in the necropolis of Tell el-Far'ah, one in Cemetery 900 (Tomb 935), which was missing its lid, and two complete specimens in Cemetery 500 (552 and 562). T.935 was a bilobate chamber tomb dug in the MBA fossae, whereas T.552 and

T.562 were two rock cut shaft tombs with a stepped *dromos* entrance (Petrie 1930: 8, pls. XV, LXIX, XXIV; Starkey and Harding 1932: 25). The two complete specimens (Fig. 5) belong to the grotesque style (see Chapter 3). Both figures are depicted with an Osiris beard and T.562 also bears a wig. The examples could have been manufactured locally, as has been demonstrated through NAA analysis for the similar specimens from Deir el-Balah, where NAA analyses have shown the local origin of clays (Dothan 1993: 149).



Figure 6.10. Lid of anthropoid coffin Tell el- Farah, Tomb 552, IAA (Braunstein 2011: fig. 8).

The clay coffins have taken a central role in discussions about the ethnicity of the population at Tell el-Far'ah, as well as other Canaanite sites. Petrie labelled T.552 and T.562, together with three other graves, the "Tombs of the Philistine Lords". Each was a rock-cut chamber burial that he considered to be close to Philistine culture on account of their features (Petrie 1930: 7-9). A connection with the "Sea Peoples", for example, is seen in the square shape of the chamber, which is dissimilar to the irregular or circular shapes of Canaanite cave burials (Waldbaum 1966: 142). Moreover, the finds include significant amounts of Philistine pottery (Waldbaum 1966: 58; Perlman *et al.* 1973: 154-64; McClellan 1979). This evidence contributed to the interpretation of grotesque sarcophagi as a Philistine adaptation of Egyptian prototypes (see Chapter 3).

As discussed in Chapter 3, this type of burial and the different styles of coffins attested are material witnesses of the process of borrowing and mixture generated by the imperial encounter between these cultures. Moreover, the evidence from some Egyptian sites showed the bidirectionality of this process, with hybridised features adopted in Egypt as well as in the Levant.

This complex and mutual process can also be detected by an examination of the pottery finds from T.552 and T.562. The coffins, as mentioned before, were each inside a chamber tomb with multiple burials, both plundered in antiquity (Goldberg *et al.* 1986: 205). It is not entirely possible, therefore, to state which vessels belonged to the coffin burial, rather than the other corpses interred in the same chamber. Therefore, I will present an overview of all the pottery retrieved in the two chambers.

The material shows a mixture of different traditions. Local pottery is the best represented, and consists of shallow and deep bowls, dipper juglets, juglets, lamps, and pilgrim flasks (Figs. 8-9). Philistine pottery is also documented in the form of long necked jars (Figs. 6-7). Also attested is Egyptian-style pottery, represented by an ovoid jar and a necked globular jar from T.562 (Duncan *et al.* 1930: 75N2, 41F). The latter typically functioned as cooking pots or storage jars (Martin 2011: 63). Other types are represented by two ovoid amphorae and three *amphoriskoi* from T.552. The ovoid amphorae are particularly interesting, as they show some hybridized traits between the Egyptian and the local tradition. Their shape is the typical NK amphora with a tall neck, but the decoration is entirely Canaanite (Dothan 1982: 263; Martin 2011: 234). This kind of amphorae was used to contain oils, honey and water and

may show the presence of imported goods from Egypt (Martin 2011: 79). An Egyptian origin, however, has not been proven to date and the decoration could point to local craftsmanship, perhaps an Egyptian potter living in Palestine, familiar with local decorative styles or working with a local potter. These finds allow us to date T.552 to the end of the LBA/beginning of the IA (1200-1150 B.C.), while T.562 seems slightly later and can be assigned to the first part of the IA (1150-1050 B.C.).



Figure 6.11. Pottery from Tomb 552 (Dothan 1982: fig. 7). Note the collection of ovoid amphorae (fourth row from above) showing hybridising features between the local and Egyptian traditions.

The ceramic assemblages of both T.552 and T.562, therefore, are characterised by cultural mixture and hybridisation between the local and the Egyptian traditions. A different scenario is shown by the pottery repertoire of T.935, where the incomplete clay coffin was found. The tomb was used for multiple successive burials from the LBA throughout the first part of the IA. It was heavily plundered, but it is believed that the coffin might have contained 2 skeletons (Starkey and Harding 1932, pl. XCII). In contrast to the previous tombs, the pottery was all local, and was composed of three bowls, two juglets, three *amphoriskoi*, two pilgrim flasks, a *pyxis* and a lamp. In this case, therefore, even if the funerary ritual included the use of a clay coffin, the rest of the ritual seems to have been more rooted in the local tradition.

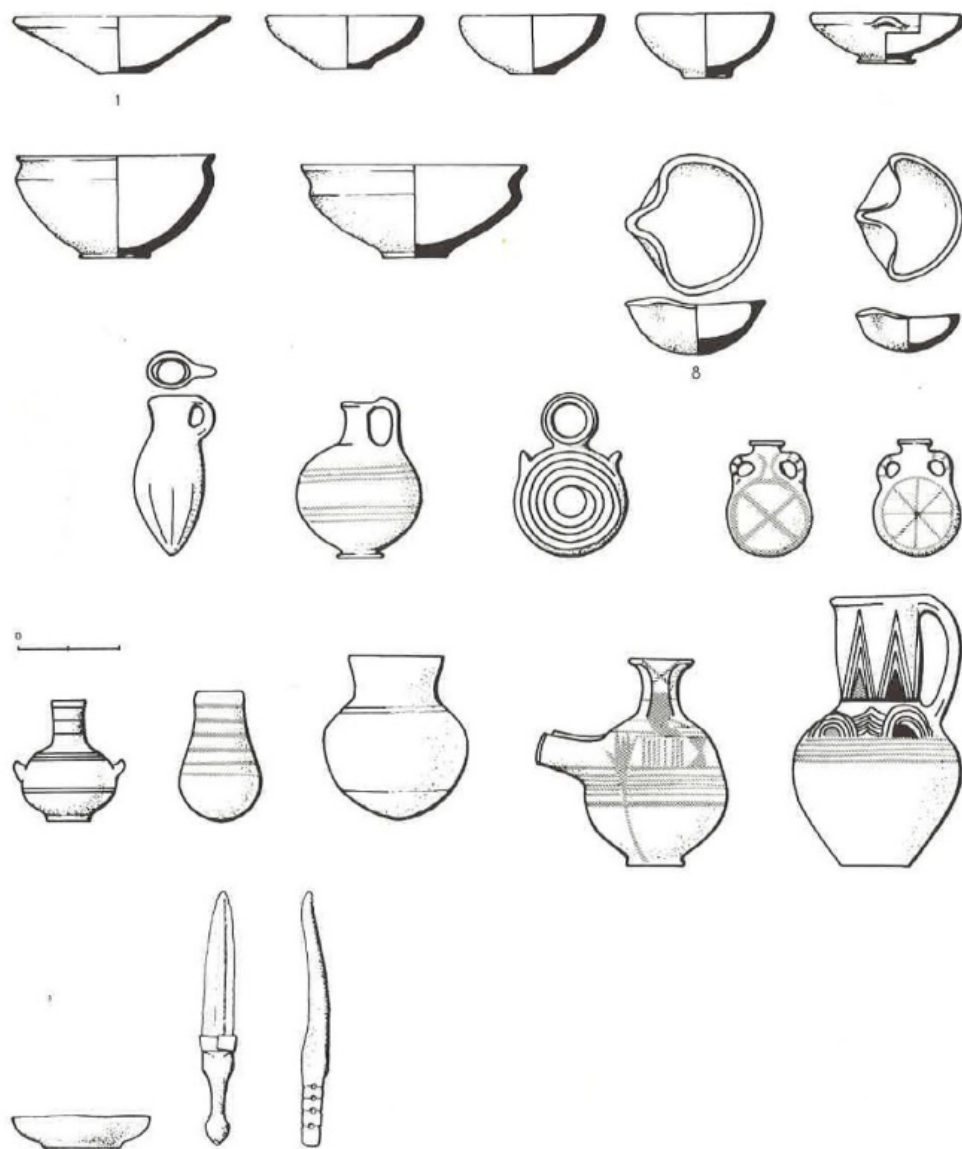


Figure 6.12. Pottery from Tomb 562 (Dothan 1982: fig.8).

Given the Egyptian origin of the practice, and the mixed assemblage of pottery and associated objects, the ethnicity of those buried in these coffins has been at the centre of scholarly debate. The most common theory is that the interred were Egyptian officials stationed in Canaan (Dothan 1973: 104; Oren 1973: 102-03; Van Beek 1992: 342; Killebrew 2005: 65), or people in close contact with the Egyptian imperial apparatus (Goldberg *et al.* 1986: 77). As presented above, it is generally assumed that these burials belonged to lower-class individuals, and only a few authors have argued for an elite status of the deceased (Morris 2005: 538).

According to some scholars, it was a dishonour for an Egyptian to be buried outside Egypt (Adams 1984: 39). This would be proven by the reading of some Egyptian sources. In the Tale of Sinuhe, for example, the protagonist asks: "What matters more than being buried in the land where I was born?". Similarly, several passages of the Book of the Dead mention the protection offered by the city gods to the deceased (Meskell 2001: 34). Furthermore, in his boundary stela, Akhenaten states that, if he were to die abroad, his corpse had to be brought back and buried in Akhetaten (Dijk 2000: 278). Some scholars proposed that such a rule only applied to higher rank administrators and, thus, that anthropoid coffins would belong to lower strata workers of Egyptian origin (Dothan 1973: 236-37).

The situation, however, seems to be more complex, and our interpretation cannot be simply limited to establishing whether the interred had an Egyptian or Canaanite origin. Identity is indeed a fluid entity and cannot be only related to the birthplace of the blood line, but it is instead changeable and adaptable (see Chapter 2).

First of all, it is necessary to foreground the actions of those who took care of the burial more so than the deceased: survivors are the real agents of the funerary rituals (Green 2014: 167). Therefore, the portrayed cultural identity and social rank of the interred may not be straightforward and establishing the deceased's identity from funerary equipment alone might lead to misinterpretation. The whole ritual, however, can give a better idea of the memory and the prestige that survivors wanted to display for the deceased as well as themselves. The burial kit preserved in association with coffins is, as analysed above, extremely diverse and shows both the deceased's and survivors' deep involvement in local and Egyptian culture, with a selection of material

borrowed from both traditions. In the light of these considerations, asking the archaeological record whether the deceased were originally born in Egypt or in Palestine is a misleading question. Instead, it appears that they did not recognise themselves as strictly Egyptian or Canaanite, as modern scholarship wishes. Whether originally Egyptians, or of Egyptian descent, these individuals appear to have spent a large portion of their life in the Southern Levant. Therefore, they became familiar with local traditions and practices, probably sharing some of their tastes with this culture. To these “Egyptians”, therefore, the foreign-burial-stigma implied by the sources had perhaps no meaning as, for them, the Southern Levant was not considered a foreign country. Similarly, survivors in charge of their burial did not feel as rigid about the Egyptian culture as later scholarship tended to depict them. Thus, more or less deliberately, they decided to employ a mix of Egyptian and Canaanite practices in the burial of their deceased. In concert, this mixture of elements would also disclose a process of hybridisation if we were to assume the local origin of the interred. The locals in charge of their burial chose to employ Egyptian traditions, namely anthropoid coffins, with Egyptian-style vessels and Egyptian figurines in the funerary kit. These traditions, however, were blended with meaningful local practices, displayed by the iconography of grotesque style coffins and by the rest of the pottery assemblage.

Whether accepting the original Egyptian cultural identity of the interred or not, these tombs show a high degree of mixture between different traditions and carry important meaning because of the high symbolism of the funerary sphere. This evidence, more than other strands, expresses on the one side some characteristics of the deceased, but also shows the survivors’ choices for remembering and idealising their kin.

6.5 Conclusions

The traditions and practices at Tell el-Far^{ah} show some peculiarities when compared to those investigated at Tell el-^{ah}Ajjul. These are partly but not entirely due to variable gaps in the excavated and recorded material from the two sites. The settlement of Tell el-Far^{ah} has not been investigated in the same depth as the one at Tell el-^{ah}Ajjul. Conversely, the cemeteries of Tell el-Far^{ah} have been extensively excavated, providing us with valuable insights about site’s

inhabitants and their identity or representations of their identity. Despite these differences in the record, the archaeology of Tell el-^cAjjul and Tell el-Far^cah point to the unfolding of complex processes of negotiation between the local and the Egyptian cultures, which find expression in a range of hybridized things and practices.

As for the settlement, the MBA period at Tell el-Far^cah is only represented in the fortifications, which do not show signs of contact with Egypt. During the MB III the only indications of trade relationships are a few fragments of RWB ware, produced using cobalt originating in Egypt, and executed using a typically Egyptian technique. At the same time, however, this pottery is entirely local with regards to the shapes represented.

In the following LB II/early IA period, to which most of the evidence belongs, the Egyptian imperial domination in the Levant is at its peak, and even Tell el-Far^cah is engaged in major exchanges with the Egyptian culture. Similarly to Tell el-^cAjjul, these connections are mostly attested at an elite level and shown, in the settlement, by the main residence. Egyptian related finds from the domestic context of the pre-residency levels are not significant, being limited to a few Egyptian-style bowls. The residence, however, shows a different pattern, where both the architecture and some luxury finds disclose various degree of hybridisation between the two cultures. Egyptian features are visible in several aspects of the architectural planning in the residence, analysed above, and in the iconography of the plaque. Nonetheless, the local element is still clearly attested and has a prominent role in the functional and ideological role of the residence. It can be assumed that both Egyptian and local manufacturers have been involved in the planning and construction of the building, and both cultures are visible in the choice of luxury items, such as the ivory plaque. Thus, both parts demonstrate a conscious selection of cultural traditions, which, at an elite level, creates hybridised and multi-faceted archaeological evidence.

Routine practices, as revealed by pottery from the building, do not show the same engagement with Egyptian traditions. Most of the pottery is local table ware, with scarce specimens of Egyptian-style mass-produced shallow bowls. This pattern stands in contrast to that of Tell el-^cAjjul, where, especially in the last phases, Egyptian-style pottery was common in the residence. However, it must be remembered that this ware was used mostly for preparation purposes,

whereas the assemblage of Tell el-Far^{ca}h does not include any preparation vessels. It is possible, then, that cooking practices were not performed in the buildings uncovered, which were instead mostly used for public consumption. Regardless, the assemblage from the residence of Tell el-Far^{ca}h clearly shows, similarly to Tell el-^cAjjul, that consumption activities were carried out in accordance with local traditions, at least as far as ceramic containers are concerned.

Funerary practices are better attested, and some types of tombs show a deep engagement between the local and the Egyptian cultures. In particular, anthropoid coffins have demonstrated that the cultural identity of the deceased and their survivors is a nuanced one. Egyptian and local elements are blended to create a unique material evidence, used by just a few people at Tell el-Far^{ca}h. These might have originally been Egyptian born - although there is no DNA evidence to support this - but ultimately did not impose any of their funerary rituals on the rest of the population and, more importantly, adopted some of the local practices.

In sum, the evidence from Tell el-Far^{ca}h shows different degrees of hybridisation with Egyptian culture. Both from settlement and cemetery, these can be associated mainly with the higher strata of the population, and are exemplified by architecture, luxury objects and elite burials. This is in some ways different from the picture that emerged from Tell el-^cAjjul, where hybridised practices are shown in food preparation and consumption, although also limited to the elite sphere in the context of palatial feasting. The main reason for these discrepancies may well be the diverse nature of the archaeological evidence available or might alternatively relate to the different chronology of the two sites. As above mentioned, the main occupation of Tell el-Far^{ca}h, as well as the tombs analysed, are all dated between the end of the LBA and the early IA, just after the end of the occupation of Tell el-^cAjjul. This is a period of stable Egyptian presence in the Southern Levant, characterised by a conspicuous presence of Egyptian material culture in the Canaanite lowlands. The evidence from Tell el-Far^{ca}h belongs to the same trend, but also convincingly shows that this phase of Egyptian imperialism does not result in the suppression of local culture. On the contrary, local culture has a prominent role as a main contributor to the hybridised expressions of culture in the Levant and remains the principal set of traditions employed in daily life.

Finally, some theories can be advanced regarding the cultural identity of these elites. The evidence seems to point to an Egyptian origin of the overlord and his entourage, as witnessed by the iconography of the plaque and the coffins. If this hypothesis is accepted, the evidence from Tell el-Farāh would show a ground-breaking pattern of hybridisation of such elite, who borrowed elements of the local tradition, mixing them with their own practices. Something similar has already been theorised for Tell el-ʿAjjul, as seen in the previous chapter. However, in this case, the reasons for such hybridisation seem different. No longer is there the involvement of the local elite or a context of community approbation such as feasting. At the same time, this evidence is dated to a later phase of the LBA, when the presence of Egyptian personnel in the Southern Levant had already been stable for a few generations. It appears feasible, then, that there is no other particular purpose in this hybridisation other than a genuine expression of a mixed cultural identity. As many times reiterated in the thesis, cultural identity is far from static, but it is constantly changing and reacting to external contacts and situations. The evidence from Tell el-Farāh, therefore, shows the peak of this process in the Wadi Gaza area, when, in the LB II, as a result of such prolonged contacts the boundaries between the two cultures are feeble, creating a highly hybridised Egypt-Canaanite cultural identity.

7 The impact of Egypt's imperial presence in the Gaza area

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to examine the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Southern Levant in the region of the Wadi Gaza during the LBA. Previous chapters examined both the early and advanced stages of Egypt imperial control over the Gaza area, focusing on the relationships developing between Egyptians and Canaanites through the lens of hybridisation theory and the contextual study of material consumption. The analytical approach taken was both multi-scalar, investigating the territory of the Wadi Gaza as a whole and two key LBA sites in more detail.

Three critical themes have emerged from this analysis. First, there is a marked difference in the material culture and nature of contacts between the MBA and the first part of the LBA, therefore between the pre-imperial period and the beginning of the imperial period. Another notable shift has also become apparent between the LB I-IIA and the LB IIB-IA. These differences reveal valuable information regarding the nature of the Egyptian hegemony over Palestine in each phase, and significant details on the relationship between cultures in the local milieu. Second, the thesis has discussed the contrast between the imperial narrative, as known from the Egyptian sources, and the local practice reconstructed from the archaeological evidence. Third, we have noted a continuous process of hybridisation in objects, traditions, and practices in the LBA Wadi Gaza.

In this chapter, I expand on these interconnected themes in light of the thesis' overall research questions. These themes answer, in reverse order, the three specific research questions proposed in Chapter 1.

7.2 Imperial narrative and local evidence

One of the main issues, often used as a starting point in the discussion, is how the narrative proposed by the primarily-Egyptian written sources is at times exaggerated. In many of these cases, the issue derives from the one-sided

interpretations of such sources provided by earlier scholarship that looked for confirmation of the texts in the archaeological evidence.

The main case observed throughout this study concerns the identification of Sharuhēn, the site mentioned by Egyptian and Biblical sources in connection with the Hyksos defeat in southern Palestine. According to previous scholarship, the main candidate for this site is Tell el-ʿAjjul, though some have also suggested Tell el-Farʿah. According to the standard scholarly narrative, Sharuhēn would have been the centre of the Hyksos kingdom in the Southern Levant, therefore leading scholars to look for signs of the site’s supremacy and confirmation of their text-derived hypothesis at ʿAjjul itself.

However, as the analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate, ʿAjjul was not a major centre during the MBA, but a medium-sized site of 10 ha. The town formed part of the polity of Ashkelon, second in size within the Gaza area to Tel Haror. A more detailed examination of the archaeological evidence from ʿAjjul, moreover, revealed the comparatively unimpressive nature of its MBA settlement. This includes a minor residential quarter in the “City”, composed of clusters of small dwellings. The existence of a central administration is indicated by the fortification system and the public complex of area G, but altogether this evidence is not sufficient to designate ʿAjjul as a key site in the area.

In Chapter 5, I have also proposed a chronological argument that would challenge the identification of Tell el-ʿAjjul with Sharuhēn, that is the date of Palace I. Previous scholarship has tended to date this structure to the MB III and attributed its destruction to Ahmose, first pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty, thus confirming the Egyptian sources. However, my examination of the pottery from Palace I has established that a date in the MBA is not sustainable. All the pottery specimens belong to the first phase of the LBA. Therefore, according to the widely adopted Low Chronology, the palace was erected after Ahmose’s attack. This interpretation does not entirely refute the identification of ʿAjjul with Sharuhēn, which is impossible to state with certainty at the present state of knowledge. However, both the site’s modest size and chronology suggest at the very least a marked mismatch between imperial narrative and archaeological evidence.

The accounts provided by the sources, according to which it took the Egyptian army three years to conquer it, are almost certainly inflated. The purpose of this exaggeration lies in the role of the sources themselves, which

were intended to celebrate newly acquired control over the Delta by the pharaohs of the new 18th Dynasty. The achievements of the new ruler, therefore, had to appear glorious and challenging at the same time. They had to appeal to the Egyptians “patriotism” and, thus, depict the Hyksos, who nonetheless had been living in the Delta for generations, as foreigners who needed to be expelled and sent back to their country of origin. Therefore, even if Sharuhén really corresponded to Tell el-^cAjjul, this does not imply that the MBA Hyksos town was a major site in the area, nor that it was really destroyed by Ahmose. On the contrary, the fresh examination of the archaeological evidence provided in this thesis demonstrates that the site was no more than a local centre during the MBA, with signs of a strong and prosperous administration evident only in the first phase of Egyptian domination during the LB I.

Connected to this topic is the matter of the alleged decline of the southern Levant at the end of the MBA. Following the numerous Egyptian accounts of raids and conquests in the Levant, especially by Thutmose III, many scholars have interpreted the end of the MBA and the first part of the LBA as a period of Canaanite cultural decline following the destruction or abandonment of many sites. This scenario, however, as my analysis in Chapter 4 demonstrated, is not borne out by the archaeological data at hand. On the contrary, the region appears to have experienced a period of growth and prosperity in the first phase of the LBA. With the exception of a minor site, El-Moghraqa, which is destroyed and abandoned at the end of the MBA, all MBA settlements in the area continue to be occupied and settlement expands to five additional sites. Other elements of the material culture also show the economic growth of the LBA and the lack of any significant hiatus at the beginning of the period. International trade thrived, especially with Cyprus, with the import of pottery crafted specifically on the island for consumption by the local middle and elite classes. Local luxurious products are also in demand, as demonstrated by the plaque of Tell el-Far^cah as well as by the fine and varied local pottery. Although we cannot generalise this to the whole southern Levant, not examined in this thesis, this evidence indicates that the late MBA and early LBA are not a period of “collapse” - either economical or cultural - for the Gaza area (Dever 1987: 175; Finkelstein 1992: 216). This transition undoubtedly involved change in the socio-political organisation. The different needs of the new administrative

arrangement are revealed, for example, by the new territorial administration and by the presence of elite residences at every site.

Another key difference between written sources and archaeological evidence emerging from my analysis regards the treatment of the dead. Chapters 4 and 6 have discussed the newly attested funerary practice typical of the LB II of anthropoid coffins. These, attested among the analysed sites at Deir el-Balah and, in lesser numbers, at Tell el-Far'ah, were only used by a fraction of the population, with the rest of the deceased interred in chamber and pit tombs. I have argued in Chapter 4 that individuals buried in such coffins had strong connections with Egypt and were possibly of Egyptian origin or descent. This conclusion was sustained by the long-lived practice of coffin burials in Egypt and its lack thereof in Palestine, as well as by the Egyptian iconographical elements and funerary kits associated to the coffins. However, as introduced in Chapter 6, according to some Egyptian sources, for instance Sinhue's account, it was not desirable for Egyptians to be buried outside Egypt. Therefore, the use of anthropoid coffins in the Wadi Gaza points to a discrepancy between the textual sources and everyday life in these conquered territories. As stated above, we must consider the role of these texts, which were certainly amplifying some concepts for their own agenda. At the same time, however, there is a clear divergence between written beliefs and their application in the local context.

Another element confirming these assumptions is given by the consumption patterns of Tell el-ʿAjjul. The use of a mixed pottery repertoire at feasting events at the court of ʿAjjul has been linked in Chapter 5 to the presence of local elites invited to these banquets. Once more, it has been hypothesised that the governors were originally Egyptian. Their behaviour in the local milieu of the Gaza area, however, does not entirely reflect the reading of the sources, where Egyptians would consider foreigners to be barbarians, letting scholars imagine a heavily militarised Palestine with little local agency. The consumption context of Tell el-ʿAjjul provides a different picture. The Egyptian governors were welcoming local people at their courts, probably for diplomatic talks and to strengthen their relationships.

This evidence shows that some of the previous interpretation of historical sources have brought limited understanding of ancient practices. However, I do not wish to argue for a dismissal of historical sources. As proposed by Khatchadourian, a multidisciplinary approach is still valuable, but only if based

on independent analytical methodologies (Khatchadourian 2016: 198). An archaeology of empires, however, must abandon a literal reading of the sources and rely on the contextual interpretation of materials anchored to the local situations of production and consumption. This is why the interpretation of the hybrid practices and materials discussed in this study is confined to the Wadi Gaza. Such practices and their rationale cannot be applied, for instance, to the pharaoh or elite living in Egypt nor to Egyptian personnel living in foreign territories other than the Wadi Gaza.

To sum up, the thesis has demonstrated that previous interpretation of the Egyptian empire in the Wadi Gaza area have treated archaeology as a distinct topic to history (see in particular Chapter 2.2). My analysis, based on an independent contextual analysis of the archaeological evidence from the area, has instead proposed a more balanced account, where, either for diplomatic purposes or as a result of prolonged cohabitation, Egyptian practices differed, at times significantly, from the narrative proposed by written sources and their interpretations.

7.3 Detecting the empire in the archaeological record

Whilst, as seen in the previous section, the decline of the LBA is not attested in the Wadi Gaza area, this research has investigated the differences between the MBA and the new imperial period. Studying the contrasts between the two periods was deemed essential to understand how the imperial encounter with Egypt affected the region under examination. However, in the course of the study, another development became discernible, namely between the first part of the LBA and the end of the period. This evidence shows how imperial relationships with the local population are continuously negotiated resulting in the creation of a new local identity over time. This section therefore discusses material witnesses of the new imperial relationship since the beginning of the LBA, reflected by the changes from MBA to early LBA. However, as examined in the thesis and reassessed below, it is only with the LB IIB that the Egyptian presence in the territory increases and the creation of hybrid identities becomes increasingly discernible.

At the regional scale, in the region of the Wadi Gaza, the dawn of the LBA witnessed changes in the political organisation, settlement pattern, pottery

consumption, and funerary customs. The LBA is characterised by a political system based on smaller polities than the MBA kingdoms. The Wadi Gaza area, previously part of the kingdom of Ashkelon, now constitutes a minor polity itself. This was centred either around Gaza or, if we were to accept the idea of Gaza as an Egyptian administrative base, at Tell Jemmeh (section 4.3.2). The examination of the Tell el-Amarna correspondence has shown indeed that the latter, accepting its identification with Yurza, had a local ruler, Pû-Ba'lu/Pû-Haddu, in a vassalage relation with Egypt. This assumption, however, can only be confirmed for the period of the archive, namely the LB IIA. The eminent status of Tell Jemmeh throughout the LBA, nevertheless, is supported by the rank-size analysis of the region carried out in Chapter 4. The site, with its 5 ha extension, is one of the largest settlements of the LBA Wadi Gaza, though it is not nearly as large as Gaza itself, whose purported Egyptian base measured between 10 and 50 ha, even though not much is known of the ancient tell, which is entirely covered by the modern city. It is possible, however, that Gaza, as the seat of an Egyptian commissioner, was independent from Yurza. The latter was instead the centre of the new Wadi Gaza polity in the LBA, in a relationship of vassalage with the pharaoh and strongly connected to the Egyptian empire by diplomatic ties.

The main change in the political and territorial organisation between the MBA and the LBA, therefore, is dictated by the newfound Egyptian control over the area. This shift in the administration was possibly the cause of some adjustments in the settlement pattern. Surveys and excavations of the Wadi Gaza have so far revealed only 9 sites dated to the MBA and 13 to the LBA, among which are 5 new settlements (one abandoned at the beginning of the LBA, see above). My rank-size analysis has shown that, within the area, the MBA is characterised by a substantial number of larger sites, accompanied by satellite villages, while the LBA presents only one major site (Gaza), and more sites of minor dimensions, always accompanied by small villages in their hinterland. Therefore, the LBA presents a more integrated regional political system where the only large site of the region, Gaza, was probably under the direct control of the Egyptian administration. These conclusions, if demonstrated, could reveal details on the kind of organisation of the territory in the imperial period. Unfortunately, conclusively demonstrating the role of Gaza during the LBA would require solid archaeological evidence from the site. However, as examined in

Chapter 4, the modern city of Gaza entirely covers the ancient settlement, preventing any extensive archaeological project.

Whilst the shift in the settlement pattern points to a different administrative system, other changes between the MBA and LBA reveal an increased Egyptian influence more explicitly. A relevant example is given by the examined patterns of pottery production and consumption. The striking presence of pottery imported from Egypt can be traced at virtually every site of the Wadi Gaza area, especially Deir el-Balah (section 4.5), Tell el-^cAjjul (section 5.5) and Tell el-Far^cah (section 6.4.1). At the same sites, there is a high incidence of Egyptian-style pottery, i.e. wares produced locally but following the Egyptian tradition. However, I have argued that while their quantities are not reliable due to the excavation methods, the practices associated are noteworthy. Such practices, attested from the LBA, are particularly evident at the settlements of Deir el-Balah and Tell el-^cAjjul and less so at Tel Sera^c and Tell el-Far^cah. At all these settlements, the Egyptian pottery assemblages include storage wares alongside locally produced Egyptian-style ceramics. The latter, in particular, were used for the preparation of food. This presents a major transformation of cooking practice at these Levantine sites. Egyptian food, imported in the dedicated containers, was cooked in locally-produced Egyptian-style vessels. As food and identity are strongly connected, this shows a major shift in cultural identity. Indeed, as is often stated, food is not just a physiological need. Practices of food production, consumption, and disposal are social acts embedded with meaning. Foodways are in fact culturally specific and representative of social strata, age, gender, religion, and wealth (Twiss 2007: 2-3). At the same time, however, food can determine political, ideological, social, and economic situations. Furthermore, we use food to affect how to present ourselves to the world. Therefore, foodways are representative and, in concert, participates in the creation and negotiation of identities. Perceptions of identity and difference and community are repeatedly affirmed in the daily practices of food preparation and consumption, therefore instructing *habitus* (Bourdieu 1986; Dietler 2007: 222-23). This evidence thus shows the presence in the LBA of original culinary practices associated with a new hybridised cultural identity.

Another characteristic of the LBA is the increased presence of Cypriot pottery and the occurrence of north-western and central Cypriot pottery styles in the Southern Levant (Crewe 2007: 14). This evidence is certainly the result of

the new role of Cyprus in the international scenario of the LBA. From the LC IB Cyprus became indeed more involved, economically and politically, with the neighbouring Aegean and eastern Mediterranean regions (Knapp 2008: 298). Accompanying the evidence of increased interactions are several changes in the settlement pattern and material culture of the island (Crewe 2007: 1). Likewise, it is possible that the expulsion of the Hyksos created a disruption in the market, and eastern style wares became replaced by north-western and central pottery producers (Merrillees 1971: 78; Crewe 2007: 15).

The increased occurrence of Cypriot imports indicates at the same time the flourishing economy of the Wadi Gaza since the beginning of the LBA. The inhabitants could indeed afford to import “sub-elite” and elite goods from the island, revealing the presence of middle and upper classes with distinctive tastes (Sherratt 1999: 185). It has been demonstrated that such pottery was specifically produced for export to the Southern Levant (section 4.4.2) and is different from the Cypriot wares uncovered, for example, in Egypt (Chapter 5).

Another new feature observed in mid-2nd millennium Wadi Gaza sites is a change in the funerary tradition, with a strong regionalisation attested in the LBA. This period is characterised by the disappearance of cave burials, typical of the MBA, and the attestation of pit interments, which reflects a change in the funerary practices (section 4.4.3), as pit burials are a typical Egyptian burial type not previously attested in the Levant.

As for the start of these new practices, many of them are already dated to the first part of the LBA. This is particularly visible at Tell el-^cAjjul, where Palace I already shows a combination of Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery, as well as Cypriot imports. The international opening to commerce and the presence of an elite is well illustrated by the “City” of ^cAjjul, where the analysis has shown the presence of elite residences, temples, and imported pottery. A similar chronology has been inferred for Tel Sera^c, where the occurrence of a different, more international, ceramic repertoire is attested from the 15th century.

These changes between the MBA and the LBA, therefore, indicate that the strong ties between Egypt and the Wadi Gaza began to develop already in the LB IA at a small number of sites. Altogether, they point to an Egyptian presence in the area since the beginning of the period, from around 1540 B.C. according to the Low Chronology here employed (see 2.4). It appears that Tell el-^cAjjul was

one of the sites with the most Egyptian influence at this time, but a significant presence can also be detected at Tel Sera^c and Tel Halif. The Egyptian administrative base of Gaza was also probably established around this time, laying the groundwork for a more intensive imperial involvement during the LBA.

In the Wadi Gaza, therefore, my analysis shows that since the LB I there is a significant Egyptian cultural presence. This caused a major shift in funerary and culinary practices of part of the Wadi Gaza population, mainly at Tell el-^cAjjul and, in minor extent at Tel Sera^c and Tel Ridan. At other settlements, this process of cultural change commences later, even though this can be attributed to the lack of evidence from earlier LBA phases. This is the case, for instance, at Tell el-Far^cah, where remains of the LB I are scanty, or of sites established in the LB II, such as Deir el-Balah, Qubur al-Walayda, and Tel Ma^caravim. Besides the appearance of new settlements, their characteristics of long-established centres also vary. One of the most significant changes includes a dramatic reduction of the settled area at Tell el-^cAjjul, which shrinks from a medium-sized settlement of 10 ha in the LB I to a small village of about 1 ha in the LB IIA, until ceasing to exist in the LB IIB. The role of ^cAjjul might be replaced by Tell el-Far^cah, which is now a relatively substantial site, slightly larger than Tell Jemmeh, and where the most significant remains are dated to the LB IIB-IA. This shift has been also theorised by Morris (2005: 533), though the scholar does not propose any reasons for this. Even though the archaeological evidence does not indicate the reason for the abandonment of Tell el-^cAjjul, it is possible that the shift to Tell el-Far^cah had a political motive. I believe that this was either a deliberate Egyptian tactic to depose a former regional centre or that the position of Tell el-Far^cah further south in the region was strategically more useful at this time, when Egypt's grip on the rest of the Southern Levant was more solid.

Additional changes between the LB I-IIA and the LB IIB-IA are witnessed by square residences, Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery, and coffin burials. Square residences are attested at many of the Wadi Gaza sites, including Tel Halif, Tell el-Far^cah, Deir el-Balah, Tel Sera, Tell Jemmeh, and Qubur al-Walayda. With the exception of Tell Halif's building, which dates to the LB I, all the others were erected in the final LBA and remained in use until the IA. The square residences incorporate several aspects of Egyptian architectural tradition while being firmly grounded in Levantine practice, and show, therefore, that

during the LB II the bond between the two cultures was deepening. The possibilities for this exchange of knowledge will be discussed in more detail below - including the likelihood of Egyptian architects working together with local professionals in the territory. Another indication of this new hybridised culture in development is given by the increasing quantities of Egyptian and Egyptian-style wares in the later phases of the palace at Tell el-^cAjjul (Palace III-V). Egyptian pottery, both imported and locally produced, is similarly popular at Deir el-Balah, Tel Sera^c, and Tell el-Far^cah. Finally, the presence of anthropoid coffins also points to an intensification of such relationships. As examined, they are a typical Egyptian feature which, in the Canaanite area, is reinterpreted with the borrowing of cultural features from the local tradition.

Therefore, the presence of more settlements, with strongly hybridising characters of mutual borrowing between Egyptian and local cultures, show that even if the territorial domination of Egypt on the Wadi Gaza was already established at the beginning of the LBA, the Egyptian presence in the territory significantly grows in the second part of the period. This evidence can also be connected to the role of the Wadi Gaza as a fringe area: for its location, the region was probably considered an optimal base for the administration of the rest of the southern Levant and, therefore, it was an important seat that the Egyptians strengthened during the LBA.

The analysis of the changes witnessed by the LBA and, in particular, between the first and the last phase of the period, shows the progressive entanglement of the Wadi Gaza with the Egyptian empire. This is demonstrated by the growing hybridisation of the material culture in the area and discloses, at the same time, the complexity of this imperial relationship. This goes beyond a mere military occupation or, as often described in the past, an Egyptianization or elite emulation. My analysis has instead shown that over the course of the LBA, objects and practices in the Wadi Gaza become progressively more hybridised. Such hybridisation is, therefore, one of the main outcomes of the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Gaza area. The next section will therefore discuss the materiality of this process in the archaeological evidence and its meaning for current research.

7.4 Hybridisation in the Wadi Gaza

At the end of the LBA, the mutual borrowing between Egyptian and local cultures is visible in numerous objects and practices of the Wadi Gaza. This ongoing process has been attested during the whole LBA and contributed to the formation of a new hybridised culture in the Gaza area. In the thesis we have pointed out that the limited presence of hybrid objects was accompanied by a larger attestation of blended traditions where the agency of both cultures was visible. In this section, I will thus reassess the evidence previously analysed and its meaning in understanding the Egyptian-Canaanite imperial relationship in the local milieu. I will stress, in particular, two characteristics that emerged from my analysis. Firstly, I will show that hybridising practices are deeply local phenomena and take many different shapes. Secondly, I will discuss how, in the Wadi Gaza area, these practices were mostly confined to the seat of power and the social implications of this interaction.

Single objects with hybrid features belonging to both cultures, as mentioned, are not predominant in the archaeological evidence from the Wadi Gaza. Nevertheless, they are represented, for example, by the ceremonial goblet retrieved at Tel Sera^c (section 4.4.2). As analysed in Chapter 4, the goblet represents an LBA Canaanite shape, with a decoration arranged in a Canaanite metopal style and, at the same time, presents a typically Egyptian figurative scheme including a marsh scene. Similarly hybrid are the amphorae and ivory plaques from Tell el-Far^cah, examined in Chapter 6, which also display the integration of Canaanite and Egyptian iconographies and shapes. All of these finds show the incorporation of elements belonging to different cultural traditions, predominantly Egyptian and local (together with some Aegean elements in the case of the ivory plaque). These are mixed together to create new and unique objects, which do not entirely belong to any of the previous traditions. In earlier literature, these objects have often been referred to as belonging to the “international style” (e.g. Smith 1965; Caubet 1998; Feldman 2006). The combination of different elements was mostly recognised in small portable luxury items and the style became associated with the notion of derivative. Besides the problems created by the denomination itself (including the concepts of nations and style), this definition is not explicatory of the agency behind these handiworks and leads instead to an oversimplification of the creative process. Moreover, studies on the international styles have

traditionally focused on determining such items' place of production or the identity of their artisans, in rigid interpretations of cultural identity. As argued by Feldman, such a rigid approach deprives the objects of their agency in influencing international relations and identity (Feldman 2006: 2-5). Therefore, in this study I have instead pointed at these objects as reflections of the hybridising cultures of the Wadi Gaza, generated by the specific imperial encounter between Egypt and locals.

This process is visible in several of the practices analysed in this thesis. For instance, it is particularly well represented by consumption patterns at the palaces of Tell el-^cAjjul. In this case the mixture is not represented by single objects, which are still realised according to the original Egyptian or local customs. Instead, the way these wares are used in the local context bears signs of the hybridisation process, creating a consumption pattern that is unfamiliar both to Egypt and the Southern Levant. In the context of feasting at Tell el-^cAjjul, local pottery is primarily used as a serving ware, together with Cypriot pots. The latter, even though not locally produced and not belonging to the local tradition, likewise represent local tastes. Egyptians imported almost exclusively closed shapes, in contrast to the considerable variety of Cypriot open shapes imported at Tell el-^cAjjul and in the Southern Levant in general. While the serving repertoire is local, cooking ceramics are to a large extent locally produced according to Egyptian methods and styles. Likewise, storage ware is largely constituted by Egyptian imports. I have interpreted this evidence in relation to the different roles of such pottery, which would also explain their significance in this context. Storage jars were directly imported from Egypt for their content, therefore indicating the desire of the local elite to consume Egyptian produce. Similarly, cooking and preparation wares were manufactured according to the Egyptian tradition to ensure the unchanged flavour of the meals, as their shape has been shown to affect the taste (Chapter 5.5.2). In chapter 5 I also proposed a specific purpose for the employment of local and Cypriot pottery in this otherwise Egyptian feasting assemblage. These wares would have been used for the meaning of pottery in the Canaanite culture combined with the significance of feasting for diplomatic aims. The choice of including a local serving repertoire has been linked to the need and desire of the Egyptian officials, assumed here to be the ruling elite, to appease the local elite and secure, therefore, a more solid grip on the administration of the town. The

result of using different traditions all together in a single context, therefore, marks a kind of hybridisation which, instead of changing or inventing new individual objects, results instead in a new set of behavioural practices. In this case, moreover, I have proposed that the acceptance of foreign practices by Egyptians stationed in the Levant had a specific aim, representative of local diplomatic needs.

The hybridisation process is also visible in other more widespread traditions typical of the LBA Wadi Gaza. Particularly relevant is the architecture of the square residences, which mixes different elements belonging to local and Egyptian traditions. This mixture of different styles and techniques creates a new architectural type only attested in the local milieu of the southern Levant. This style becomes an established tradition in the second part of the LBA and early IA, when square residences are erected in several sites of the southern Levant. At some sites, this process had already started in the LB I, when the residences of Tel Halif and Tell el-^cAjjul show architectural elements borrowed from both traditions. The first one presents the characteristic Egyptian square shape built exclusively using local building techniques, while the second displays a Canaanite plan with a construction method typical of the Nile region. Part of the same process is the deposition of a lamp and bowl(s) in residences' foundation deposits. This typically Egyptian practice is attested at Deir el-Balah, Tell Jemmeh, and Tel Sera^c. However, it is here reinterpreted using local ceramics, and in particular lamps, representative of the local tradition (see 4.4.1). In this case, the hybridisation seems justified by the presence of a mixed personnel at these sites.

Local and Egyptian born architects were probably living at the settlements and therefore generating a mix in the tradition. However, it is important to note that the type of square residences was used in Egypt not for the main ruler, but for middle class houses. A possibility, therefore, is that rulers living in these new square residences, perhaps of Egyptian origins and belonging to the middle class, affected the layout of the structures. The buildings of Tel Halif and Tell el-^cAjjul give us a significant insight into the intermediate stage of this process, as they display different characters typical of the "final" product - either the planimetry or the technique. Therefore, they seem to point to a negotiation between Egyptian and local traditions, made of experiments and trials, possibly mixing the Egyptian architectural knowledge with the available material or testing a

typical Egyptian construction method in a local planimetry. The result, however, shows the meeting point between the two cultures in creating something that recalls models and elements of both while adapting them for the different needs in the specific context. The final product is not, therefore, a sign of local Egyptianization, as often argued by previous scholarship, but, more precisely, is a local manifestation of an emergent Egypto-Canaanite culture in the setting of the Wadi Gaza.

Another new local tradition, though one not as widespread as the residences, is the interment of some deceased in anthropoid coffins. These burials were only recorded in a handful of sites, mostly located in the Wadi Gaza, but they illustrate the significance of the hybridisation process at its peak, as well as demonstrating the bidirectionality of the process. Anthropoid coffins are dated to the last part of the LBA and, among the analysed sites, have been mostly found at Deir el-Balah, with some specimens at Tell el-Far'ah as well. The coffin itself is typically Egyptian, but the employment of such a practice in the Levant diverges in some cases significantly from the original types. In Chapter 4 and 6, it has been proposed that coffin burials in the Wadi Gaza belonged to the elite residing at the sites, as the costs of production and the wealth of the associated funerary kits could not have been afforded by lower classes. At the same time, it has been proposed that the choice of using this feature would express the will of the survivors, and possibly the deceased as well, to recall the Egyptian tradition, to which they might have originally belonged, as well as the local one. This statement, therefore, has two important implications. The first one is that, if we assume that the deceased were originally Egyptians, they were accepting a series of local practices otherwise stigmatised in their texts (see above). Secondly, it shows that these individuals did not intend to portray themselves as totally Egyptian nor local, therefore leading us to believe that, whatever their origin or descent, they perceived themselves as a product of that hybridisation.

The hybridisation process displayed by the evidence of the Wadi Gaza area has also shown characters of bidirectionality, displayed for example by grotesque coffins. This style, an expression of hybridisation, is not only attested in the Gaza area but also in few sites of the Egyptian Delta (Chapter 4.4.3). Thus, not only were Egyptians using this mixed style in the "foreign" land, but they also adopted it in Egypt itself. It seems likely that people who had spent

some time living in the Wadi Gaza and becoming familiar with this style brought it back to the Delta. Another possibility is that this style was instead generated in the Delta itself, in a territory that was also highly hybridised with the southern Levantine culture after the Asiatic infiltration and the following Hyksos rule. Evidence of this is also available for other features (see Chapter 5). In either case, this evidence demonstrates that modified materials and practices generated from the encounter between Egypt and the Southern Levant were not only used by Egyptians living abroad but, in some cases, were also brought back to Egypt.

The hybridisation revealed by the Wadi Gaza sites, therefore, is a complex process which characterises single elements and objects but also involved the transformation of entire traditions in key areas of social and cultural production. The significance of the process is paramount for the interpretation of the relationship between Egyptians and local population in the wadi Gaza. However, one of the main features noted, as mentioned above, is that this phenomenon is in most cases limited to the elites and expressed by the archaeological evidence within the administrative contexts. This has been established at Tell el-^oAjjul, where, from my examination of the settlement area, a totally different pattern from the Palace has become evident. In the LBA “City”, the borrowing and mixture of cultural traditions is very limited, with most of the population using local ceramics for all their needs. The same pattern is demonstrated by all the aforementioned products of hybridisation, including square residences and anthropoid coffins, as well as by hybridised objects, as the Far^oah ivory plaque and the Tel Sera^o goblet. This occurrence has in the past sometimes been justified as an elite emulation process, where the local princes were imitating Egyptian iconographies and architectural traditions (Higginbotham 2000). However, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, this process goes well beyond mere imitation. The use of food shown at Tell el-^oAjjul, for example, is culturally specific and connected to identity. Similarly, it has been argued that the use of diverse funerary customs, demonstrated by the coffin burials at Deir el-Balah and Tell el-Far^oah cannot simply be an emulation, but it is more probably connected to the ancestry and origin of the people buried in them. The presence of Egyptian people at the courts of the Wadi Gaza sites, therefore, seems unmistakable. It is therefore even more counter-intuitive, given past narratives of empire, that it was the Egyptian population -

and not the local - that was transforming their traditions, borrowing and incorporating elements of the local customs. It looks also clear that this borrowing had in some cases an immediate purpose, such as in the case of consumption practices at Tell el-^cAjjul, where diplomacy was the main aim of the hybridisation.

The complexity of this imperial situation is equally demonstrated by the unusual case of Tell Jemmeh, which shows different kinds of administration and varied degrees of hybridisation coexisting in the same region. At the site there are indeed limited signs of the process attested at the other centres. Pottery and funerary traditions in particular seem to be unchanged by the encounter with Egypt. The peculiarity of Tell Jemmeh could be justified in the light of the Amarna letters, which demonstrate the presence of a local governor at the site. During the first part of the LBA and in the LB IIA, therefore, Tell Jemmeh was administered by a local governor. However, the situation might have changed in the later part of the period, where even at this site there are some signs of borrowing, witnessed by the architecture of the square residence (section 4.4.1). This evidence can be interpreted as a presence of Egyptian personnel at Tell Jemmeh in the later part of the LBA. Another hypothesis, however, is that the inhabitants of Tell Jemmeh's administrative seat and their architects were not perceiving the square residence type as a foreign style. As previously argued, this tradition was now typical of the Wadi Gaza, and recognised as the new local style by all rulers and their architects in the area.

In establishing the intricate relationship between imperial Egypt and the Wadi Gaza, the thesis has also proposed a specific application of the postcolonial approach, and the concept of hybridisation more specifically. Analysing the archaeological evidence through the lens of hybridisation, in fact, allowed us to rediscover the agency of the local Canaanite culture, understanding the relationship between these cultures, and detecting processes of formation of identities. In agreement with Knapp, therefore, this study supports the suggestion that a postcolonial approach based on hybridisation does not have only to be limited to strictly colonial situations (Knapp 2008: 57-61; Ioannis Voskos and A Bernard Knapp 2008: 661). *Likewise, other studies on empires have employed a similar framework, in particular when dealing with Roman and, less so, Egyptian empires (Jiménez 2011; Mattingly 2013; Moreno García 2014). This study, therefore, strengthens these previous attempts and demonstrates that a*

postcolonial approach can be successfully employed as a toolkit for the analysis and interpretation of imperial relationships.

To sum up, in the last part of the LBA, there is no clear distinction between Egyptian and local tradition. These have become a new tradition altogether, a hybridising Canaanite-Egyptian culture. It is hard to state whether the elites residing at the Wadi Gaza sites considered themselves Egyptian, local, or a mix of the two. After generations living in Palestine, it is possible to imagine that they did not consider each other as an alterity after all.

7.5 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed three relevant themes representative of the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Wadi Gaza. It has allowed us to put into perspective the contribution of the sources to our understanding of the archaeological evidence; to trace the beginning of the imperial hegemony over the area; to recognise the complex process of hybridisation resulting from the encounter and to evaluate the contribution of postcolonial theory to the analysis of imperial contacts.

It has been demonstrated that Egyptian sources have been at times interpreted too literally, without considering their ideological agenda and that the archaeological evidence has refuted some of these interpretations. In particular, this has been established for the role, and possibly, identification of Sharuhēn. The evidence from Tell el-ʿAjjul, commonly associated with the toponym, has shown that the site was only a medium-sized centre in the region and not a major stronghold. Moreover, the reading of sources stigmatising the burial of Egyptians abroad has been disproven by my analysis of the funerary evidence from the Gaza area. Such regulations do not appear to have been applied in the region, where Egyptians and locals were buried alongside in the same cemeteries.

My analysis has also demonstrated that the Egyptian empire in the Wadi Gaza is already attested at the beginning of the LBA and lasts until the early IA. This is demonstrated by changes in architecture, pottery, and funerary customs witnessed from the LB I, as well as by the new territorial organisation of the LBA linked to the Egyptian imperial presence. Moreover, I have showed that the dynamics between cultures living in the area shift considerably over the course

of the LBA. The introduction of a standardised and widespread architectural style (square residences), the diverse occurrence of Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery, and the new funerary practices of coffin burials mostly attested in the LB IIB bear proof of this. However, it has been noticed that much of this change only concerns the ruling elite and assumes different meanings in the various stages of the LBA.

A process of hybridisation is already visible at the beginning of the period, when the reasons for this mixture in this period appeared to be justified by the needs of the ruling Egyptian elite to become closer to the locals, as witnessed by the consumption patterns at Tell el-^cAjjul. At a later phase of the LBA, nevertheless, this phenomenon appears less superficial and the boundaries between the two (elite) cultures become increasingly blurred. Egyptian and Canaanite cultures, in the local milieu of the Wadi Gaza, have now formed a new hybridised culture. The elite living in the Gaza area were hardly considering themselves strictly Egyptian or Canaanite and they clearly show this feature in their material culture.

It appears likely that the population of the Wadi Gaza, as a result of the imperial encounter with Egypt, did not perceive differences, at an elite level, between the local and the Egyptian cultures. By the end of the LBA, elites in the region were probably composed by individuals of only Egyptian origin or descent, who would have already lived in the Wadi Gaza for a few generations.

These conclusions have been reached through the employment of a postcolonial approach and, in particular, of hybridisation theory. At the same time, these results prove that such a framework is appropriate in studies on empires to achieve a balanced account of the archaeological evidence.

Drawing on the results of preceding chapters, I thus argue for a major re-interpretation of the Egyptian-Levantine imperial relationships to those proposed by earlier studies. The outcome of the Egyptian imperial presence in the Wadi Gaza is not a passively Egyptianized Palestine, but an ongoing process of intermingling. Contrary to past interpretations, the archaeological evidence of the Wadi Gaza shows the incorporation of once Egyptian personnel into the local way of living, where the Egyptians adopt several ways of the local traditions in a continuous negotiation with the local identities. They do not abandon the Egyptian culture, but at the same time borrow elements of the local tradition, creating an elite hybridised Egyptian and Canaanite style. Thus,

the local tradition of those who were once called “periphery”, and in other situations addressed as “colonised”, is far from suppressed, displaying instead a powerful agency.

8 Conclusion: a new narrative for Egypt's imperial encounter with the Wadi Gaza

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has analysed and discussed the archaeological evidence from the Wadi Gaza in the LBA, a period of interconnections with Egypt. It has done so through a postcolonial approach based on hybridisation and material culture study. The main aim of this research was to understand the outcome of the encounter between Egypt and the analysed area, answering the following research questions:

- What is the outcome of the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Southern Levant, as witnessed by the archaeological evidence of the Wadi Gaza area?
- What are the relationships between Egyptians and Canaanites in the local setting, as suggested by a contextual analysis of their practices?
- When is the Egyptian imperial presence first attested in the area, according to the archaeological evidence? How does this presence change in the course of the imperial period?
- How do relationships between Egyptian and local cultures compare to previous interpretations of the official imperial narrative?

In order to explore these topics, the thesis has analysed the Wadi Gaza first on a regional scale, stressing the differences between the MBA - the pre-imperial period - and the LBA. It has discussed settlement pattern, political organisation, and the main features defined by previous literature as "Egyptianizing", including square residences, Egyptian and Egyptian-style pottery, and anthropoid coffins. The perspective has then been shifted to a settlement scale, with the analysis of two widely discussed sites, Tell el-^oAjjul and Tell el-Far^oah. Their main MBA and LBA features have been analysed, and the meaning of various practices emerged in the LBA discussed, along with their connection to the Egyptian presence. The previous chapter clarified how such analysis answered the research questions proposed at the beginning of the study, through the discussion of some major themes that had emerged in the data chapters. The next section will briefly review these findings and will then point

out the original contribution to knowledge emerged from this study. Finally, it will propose new avenues of research to continue exploring the issues here examined.

8.2 A new insight on imperial encounters

The analysis carried out in this thesis has led to the emergence of some major themes, analysed in detail in the previous chapter, regarding the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Wadi Gaza. The first one is the discrepancy between the narrative proposed in the Egyptian sources - or their explanation proposed by earlier scholarship - and an interpretation based on my analysis of the archaeological data. This theme helps us answer the last research question proposed in Chapter 1, which interrogates the reliability of available historical sources. As has been often stressed in this study, ancient texts have a specific agenda that is not necessarily conducive to producing factual historical accounts. This principle, already theorised in Chapter 2, has been established by several examples examined within the thesis. An important contribution was given by my new chronology of Palace I of Tell el-^cAjjul. This, for a long time dated to the MB III, can now be securely attributed to the LB I. This evidence would either disprove the identification with Sharuhēn, or require re-interpretation of the role of the town, attributed to it by the historical sources.

Furthermore, the thesis has demonstrated that funerary practices adopted by Egyptian people in the Wadi Gaza diverged from interpretations based on the sources, especially with regards to Egyptians buried in a foreign land. This practice, stigmatised by the texts, has been demonstrated to have occurred in multiple instances in the Wadi Gaza, mostly at Deir el-Balah and Tell el-Far^cah (Chapters 4 and 6).

The second main theme discussed in the previous chapter regards the differences between the MBA and the LBA, answering the second research question. The variance between the two periods has in past scholarship been explained in relation to the new political organisation of the Wadi Gaza in the LBA and the Egyptian presence in the territory. At the same time, however, the analysis has allowed us to shed light on the beginning of Egypt's imperial domination over the Canaanite territory, still a matter of debate in the

academic literature (Section 2.2). The conclusion reached by this study is that the Egyptian presence in the Gaza area is already detectable from the beginning of the LBA. Although not as strong as in the LB II, the archaeological evidence points to an imperial domination over the area already in the LB I. It has also been suggested that the Wadi Gaza might have held a different role than the rest of the Southern Levant, because of its strategic position giving access to the rest of the region. This would explain the presence of a stable Egyptian hegemony over the region since the beginning of the LBA, whilst other areas of the Southern Levant might have been reached at a later date.

These finds disclose another main theme of the thesis, answering the first research question of Chapter 1. This thesis has illuminated the complex and mutual relationship between Egyptians and locals in the Gaza area, a process here defined as hybridisation in accordance to postcolonial approaches. This phenomenon has been detected virtually at all sites of the Wadi Gaza area. While only few objects show signs of material hybridisation, several practices display hybrid characteristics with features typical both to the Egyptian and local culture, but new in their combination. These results have afforded an innovative reconsideration of earlier narratives about this encounter. Although previous scholarship tended to see Palestine as a peripheral culture with little or no agency, this study has demonstrated that the local culture was active as well as responsive. Moreover, this research has revealed two additional features of this hybridisation process. Firstly, this research has allowed us to analyse different stages of the process, from early examples of mixing features of the two cultures in the LB I, shown for example by the residences of Tel Halif and Tell el-^cAjjul, to a more advanced hybridisation in the LB IIB, demonstrated by several practices mainly at the sites of Deir el-Balah and Tell el-Far^cah. For each stage the thesis has proposed different reasons people may have adopted these mixed objects and practices, therefore explaining hybridisation not just as a passive process, happening without the cognition of its protagonists, but as a potential solution to various cohabitation issues. This was the case, for example, with the feasting practices at Tell el-^cAjjul. Conversely, another explanation was provided for the later Tell el-Far^cah, where the hybridised practices seem to be better understood in terms of the prolonged cohabitation of these cultures.

Secondly, the hybridisation process mostly concerns the elite of the Wadi Gaza. Furthermore, this elite has been supposed in most cases to be of Egyptian origin or descent. This theory brings an even more ground-breaking consequence: if only the elite is hybridised, and this elite, in most sites of the Wadi Gaza, is made up of Egyptian rulers, this means that it is mostly the Egyptian overlords and the inhabitants of the courts who engaged in hybridised practices. Among such inhabitants, as seen in the thesis, were certainly workers with different duties, including cooks, bakers, brewers, tailors, and architects. This is suggested by the presence of artefacts made according to Egyptian practices and traditions, such as typical pots (e.g. beer jars or spinning bowls) and architectural techniques (square residences laid in mudbrick foundations). In all the activities suggested by such artefacts, however, the local culture is always participating and clearly expressed. Therefore, an important conclusion is that the Egyptian presence in the Southern Levant is not only a military and administrative presence, but is more heterogeneous in nature, encompassing different kinds of workers as well as soldiers and governors.

A further point discussed in Chapter 7 is the bidirectionality of the hybridisation process. It is not only the Canaanite culture in the Wadi Gaza area that gets mixed with the Egyptian one. This phenomenon is also attested in Egypt itself, with material evidence, for example anthropoid coffins of the grotesque kind, an expression of the hybridised culture of Egypt and Palestine in the Wadi Gaza, found in the Delta. Contrary to all previous theories, therefore, not only does the local culture not lose its agency, but it also causes hybridisation to the Egyptian culture, supposedly carriers of the “strong” and immutable culture. Even if this last theory were disputed, and these overlords shown to be locals, it is undeniable that the outcome of their encounter with the Egyptian culture did not lead them to abandon their traditions in favour of Egyptianization or elite emulation. The result of the encounter is a hybridised culture, where both cultures, Egyptian and Canaanite, are still alive and active.

8.3 Proposals for a balanced approach

These conclusions make clear the need to acknowledge the power of agency in Southern Levantine culture, together with all other allegedly “passive”

cultures described in the literature, when dealing with the situation of cultural (or imperial) encounter. It is essential to overcome binary narratives of “core and periphery”, and seek instead a more balanced account where the agency of all the entities involved in the encounter is recognised.

A general consideration is related to our use of historical sources. As this thesis has demonstrated, archaeological studies cannot uncritically use historical sources as a guidance for their research, a practice used to different degrees by numerous studies, as analysed in Chapter 2. As also seen in the same chapter, historians warned earlier scholarship about the role of these sources, which have to be analysed with reference to their agenda. This research has demonstrated that an independent interpretation of the archaeological finds brings more balanced, evidence-based, results. As previously stated, this thesis does not seek to dismiss the study of ancient texts but argues for independent analysis of both texts and archaeological data, using specific methodological frameworks appropriate to the subject.

As for the long-lived dispute between minimalists and maximalists referred to in Chapter 2, the study has demonstrated the beginning of Egyptian imperialism in the Wadi Gaza already attested in the LB I, but has also pointed out the regional peculiarity of the Gaza area. Therefore, this thesis proposes to take into account, in future studies, such territorial differences (geographical, social, and, ultimately, political), and to avoid generalisations across the whole Southern Levant in periods when the archaeological evidence indicates no such political unity.

Finally, a word needs to be said about the potential of old collections. Most of the material analysed in this thesis was in fact excavated over a century ago, with methodologies that were far from scientific. My research has demonstrated the possibility of obtaining new information from this kind of material, when adopting a flexible and qualitative approach. This research therefore demonstrates the still considerable potential of these studies, especially in times when war and political issues prevent renewed archaeological excavations at such sites.

8.4 Looking forward

This thesis has therefore answered the proposed research questions, finding at times surprising evidence and, in concert, generating further questions that have not been explored yet.

Firstly, there is the further need to re-examine the relationship between Egypt and the Southern Levant in other areas of the region. There are clear benefits to carrying this out with a qualitative method and a hybridisation approach, based on contextual archaeological material. Such an analysis would bring a more balanced picture of the imperial encounter between Egypt and the Southern Levant in the LBA. A comparison between all the areas would then provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature of imperial domination, not just in chronological terms (the popular debate maximalists and minimalists) but, more importantly, on the impact of such encounter on people and practices.

Secondly, it would also be appropriate and useful to carry out the same kind of research in Egypt. The hybridisation framework can be easily applied to the SIP period as well as the NK period in Egypt. In recent years, as seen in the thesis, much has changed in Egyptian archaeology, with a shift of focus from only pharaonic structures and finds to the wider variety of archaeological evidence. However, an open and flexible approach to the NK, exploring its relationships with the neighbouring regions, could provide a broader, deeper and more nuanced insight into processes and practices.

Finally, from a methodological point of view, it is worth considering the application of the method proposed here to other areas, especially in the Middle East, where the only available data is in the form of now dated excavation material and reports. There is greater openness to these methods now, even though there is still much reluctance in the academic community. The limitations of such methods have been recognised and discussed in the thesis. Nevertheless, the results brought by my analysis, as well as by other scholars in their field (Witcher 2008; Chelazzi 2016), show the potential of old excavation material and legacy data in archaeological research. Therefore, among the propositions of this study is also the hope that the material excavated in the past, with less than scientific methodologies, will not be disregarded, but that

new ways to study it and recognise its importance will be researched and implemented.

8.5 Old trends, new interests

This research has been centred on differences and contrasts. MBA versus LBA, written sources versus archaeological data, Egypt versus Levant, old materials versus new interpretations. One more divergence has been pointed out at the very beginning of this thesis: that between old trends and new interests. It was in the 80s and 90s of the past century when the topic of Egyptian imperialism was being extensively, and sometimes fiercely, debated. However, many questions have only been answered thanks to renewed interests in this topic, decades after the trend had faded. Indeed, as demonstrated in this research, differences can sometimes bring about the creation of new entities. In the case of the contrast between Egypt and Levant, this led to a new hybridised culture in LBA Wadi Gaza. In the case of academic research, it is through debate, comparisons, and discussion that new theories can surface and be examined. It is therefore the hope of this thesis to provoke new contrasts and, perhaps, to bring new life to past trends to find new answers to old questions.

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