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The Enigma of the Hyksos VOLUME IV

Changing Clusters and Migration
in the Near Eastern Bronze Age



Harrassowitz



The Enigma of the Hyksos
Volume IV

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Manfred Bietak, Rahim Shayegan and Willeke Wendrich

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The Enigma of the Hyksos

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Manfred Bietak and Silvia Prell

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In Memory of John Högberg Schweske
(1)

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Developing Connections and Changing Clusters: The Levant between c. 2600 and 1900 BCE

by Marta D'Andrea¹

Abstract

Transformations in the Levant between the late Early Bronze Age and the initial Middle Bronze Age are analysed in the article at different spatial scales and with a *long durée* perspective. It is suggested that in the archaeological record for the timespan between c. 2600 and c. 1900 BCE it is possible to isolate at least three stages when material culture clusters changed in the Levant, each time in response to socio-political and/or socio-economic re-configuration. These transformations took place respectively at the Early Bronze III/IV transition, between 'earlier' and 'later' Early Bronze IV phases, and at the Early Bronze/Middle Bronze transition and are examined in the article. It is proposed that, along with macro-local transformations, sub-regional areas changed differentially during these periods, which suggests the importance of re-examining meso- and micro-local trajectories for a better interpretation of inter-regional dynamics. It is also discussed how the study of these processes in a long-term perspective may prove relevant to research into the later Middle Bronze Age phases.

Introduction

Between the late Early Bronze and the early Middle Bronze Ages the Levant (Fig. 1) saw socio-political, socioeconomic, and sociocultural changes at various times, mirrored by as many transformations in the material culture and the associated social practices. From c. 2600/2500 to c. 1900 BCE – that is from the Early Bronze III/IV transition to the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age according to the most recent regional chronologies (Tab. I)² – political vicissitudes in different periods prompted changes in inter-regional connections that influenced material culture patterning.

Traditionally, scholars have identified the appearance of northern Levantine features related to consumption of food and drinks, and to funerary customs in the late 3rd and early 2nd millennium BCE dataset of the southern Levant and explained them as brought by migrations, generally of Amorites,³ although other groups have been proposed too,⁴ cultural transfer mediated by pastoralism,⁵ or, more rarely, trade.⁶ Even in more recent times, interpretive constructs for inter-regional contacts and changes in material culture in the timespan under review centre on pastoralism and cultural transfer for Early Bronze IV,⁷ and progressive acculturation brought by transregional and interregional migrations, and cultural homogenisation connected with the emergence of Amorite identities between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages.⁸

During the last decade, these phenomena have been reframed within a revised chronological backdrop.

2 For the southern Levant, see REGEV et al. 2012; 2014; SHAI et al. 2014; HÖFLMAYER 2017 (Early Bronze Age); MARCUS 2010; 2013; COHEN 2017 (Middle Bronze I); northern Levant: HÖFLMAYER et al. 2014; SCHWARTZ 2017; VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020 (Early Bronze Age); MORANDI BONACOSSO 2008; 2014; MATTHIAE 2020 (Early/Middle Bronze transition and Middle Bronze I). In this paper, for the southern Levant we follow the use of Early Bronze IV for the period from c. 2500–1950/1920 BCE and Middle Bronze I for the earliest Middle Bronze Age phase, which in the literature are also called, respectively, Intermediate Bronze Age and Middle Bronze IIA.

3 WRIGHT 1938,4; ALBRIGHT 1961; KENYON 1966.

4 Egyptians: MAZAR 1968; CALLAWAY 1978, 55; Kurgan people: LAPP 1966, 110–111. See discussion in PALUMBO 1990, 10–11.

5 PRAG 1974, 106–107; 2009, 86–87; 2011, 72; DEVER 1980, 49–58.

6 PALUMBO 1990, 118–119.

7 BUNIMOVITZ and GREENBERG 2004; 2006; WILKINSON et al. 2014, 90–92; KENNEDY 2015a, 195–197; 2016, 17–18; GREENBERG 2017; 2019, 136–179; SCHLOEN 2017.

8 WEISS 2014, 367–376; 2017, 145–146; BURKE 2017.

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Fig. 1 Map of the Near East with sites mentioned in the text (base map by M. Zingarello, edits by the author; map data: SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, NEBCO, Landsat, Copernicus through Google Earth Pro and Bing Maps Tile System, 2020)

Traditional synchronisms between the later southern Levantine urban phase in Early Bronze III and the first half of the northern Levantine Early Bronze IV from c. 2500 to c. 2300 BCE, and between the non-urban Early Bronze IV in the south and the second half of the Early Bronze IV period in the north from c. 2300 to c. 2000 BCE (Tab. I) are considered no longer tenable due to both revised and fresh radiocarbon dating for the south.⁹ This has placed the Early Bronze III period in the southern Levant from c. 2850 to c. 2500 BCE and the Early Bronze IV period from c. 2500 to c. 1950/1920 BCE,¹⁰ that is, roughly in line with the same periods in the north, whose absolute chronology has remained basically unchanged thus far (Tab. I).¹¹ The revised absolute chronology for the southern Levantine Early Bronze Age has been widely accepted by scholars, though with remarkable exceptions.¹² On the one hand, the realignment of the northern and southern regional chronologies may

provide new and more differentiated readings of connections between those regions in the timespan considered in this article. On the other hand, the stratified evidence from the southern Levant is still too scarce to paint a regional picture for a five- or six-century long Early Bronze IV period, and there are gaps and uncertainties.¹³

In this article, building on previous works, we argue that, within these centuries, there were three major developments associated with changes in material culture clusters. To analyse these changes, we will summarise current issues in the study of material culture patterning in space and time and of human interactions mirrored by such modelling at a more general level and discuss case studies for the timespans under review to propose some hypotheses on why material culture clusters changed at these points in time in connection with developing inter-regional contacts. As is suggested in the conclusion, a better understanding of these earlier phenomena at a large geographical scale and within a long-term perspective may prove relevant also to research into the later Middle Bronze Age phases.

⁹ See, recently, the contributions in RICHARD (ed.) 2020.

¹⁰ REGEV et al. 2012, 558–561; 2014, 259–260; HÖFLMAYER 2017.

¹¹ D'ANDREA and VACCA 2020 (Syrian Early Bronze III); HÖFLMAYER et al. 2014 (northern Lebanon, Early Bronze III/IV transition); SCHWARTZ 2017 (Syrian Early Bronze IV).

¹² NIGRO 2019; 2020; NIGRO et al. 2019.

¹³ See, most recently, D'ANDREA 2019a; 2020a; GREENBERG 2019, 139; COVELLO-PARAN 2020, 392.

Absolute dates	Southern Levant Traditional Chronology	Southern Levant Revised Chronology	Southern Levant ARCANE	Northern Levant Traditional Chrono-1	Northern Levant Traditional Chrono-2	Northern Levant ARCANE	Central Levant	Mesopotamian historical chronology						
3000 BC	EB II	EB II	ESL 4	EB II	EB I	ENL 2	ECL 2	Jemdet Nasr						
2900 BC		EB III	ESL 5	EB III	EB II		ENL 3	ECL 3	Early Dynastic I					
2800 BC					EB III	EB III			ECL 4	Early Dynastic II				
2700 BC	EB III	EB IV	ESL 6	EB IVA	EB III	ENL 4		ECL 5		Early Dynastic III				
2600 BC					EB IV		EB IVB		EB IVB	ENL 5	ECL 6	Akkadian		
2500 BC	EB IV	EB IV	ESL 6	EB IVB	EB IVB	ENL 6	ECL 6	Post-Akkadian						
2400 BC								MB I (=IIA)	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	Ur III
2300 BC														MB I (=IIA)
2200 BC	MB I (=IIA)	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	Old Babylonian						
2100 BC									MB I (=IIA)	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I
2000 BC	MB I (=IIA)	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	Old Babylonian						
1900 BC									MB I (=IIA)	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I
1800 BC	MB I (=IIA)	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	MB I	Old Babylonian						

Tab. 1 Table with different scheme of archaeological periodization and terminology used for the northern and southern Levant and compared to ARCANE's phasing and historical periodization for Mesopotamia. EB = Early Bronze; MB = Middle Bronze; ESL = Early Southern Levant; ENL = Early Northern Levant; ECL = Early Central Levant, the latter referring mainly to northern Lebanon

Methodological Issues in the Study of Archaeological Clusters

In the study of transformations in the archaeological record it may happen that it is not possible to apply unambiguously a single explanatory construct, and different readings are conceivable for the same set of data. Moreover, analysing material culture changes in the past it is often difficult to identify processes lying behind the spread of new traits,¹⁴ which may include trade and exchange, migration (at different scales), hybridization, movements of semi-nomads and pastoralists, cultural transfer, and techno-stylistic influence as either alternative or concurrent factors. Therefore, generalising labels applied to material culture traits distributed widely across space and long lasting in time – such as ‘Caliciform Culture’ and ‘Amorite *koiné*’ – might hinder multiple processes spatially and temporally differentiated.¹⁵

Recent scholarship has discussed the importance of developing a common vocabulary among geneticists and archaeologists to allow genomics to be effectively incorporated into archaeological data and vice versa.¹⁶ Clearly, the main limitation is the lack of a one-to-one correspondence between a given archaeological cultural designation and a genetic cluster¹⁷ and the risk of falling into the pitfalls of ‘pots and people’ paradigms. Moreover, even archaeologists define clusters from the

archaeological point of view in different ways. Several possible designations have been proposed that may be used as alternatives to ‘archaeological culture’ to label the spatial and temporal patterning of material culture traits, such as tradition, complex, techno-complex, facies, horizon, style zone, and phenomenon.¹⁸ Clearly, these terms may describe situations that can even be concurrent within the same geographic boundaries at the same point in time. Considering these shortcomings, Benjamin W. Roberts and Marc Vander Linden have suggested that “either a new device for grouping archaeological data needs to be found, or we must explore how patterns in the archaeological cultures are perceived, classified and accepted”.¹⁹

Moreover, it is acknowledged that to integrate social practices into interpretive models may tie material culture evidence to immaterial aspects in creative interpretations that include situated learning, transculturality, interculturality, entanglement, and even collective memory and may bring people and places into play in the archaeological discourse. In this regard it has been recalled that archaeology should engage not only hard science for data analysis but also social sciences for data interpretation, yet still always preserving its own methodological specifics, and, to say it with Susan Sherratt, without losing “confidence in its ability to create its own agendas”.²⁰

Recently, scholarship centring on more traditional historical and archaeological approaches seems to be increasingly regarded as outdated even by archaeologists compared to more theoretically

¹⁴ BURMEISTER 2016, 42.

¹⁵ For a review of the question of the ‘Caliciform culture’, see COOPER 2020, 111; for recent reconsiderations of the question of the ‘Amorite *koiné*’, see HOMSHER and CRADIC 2017; 2018; D’ANDREA 2019a.

¹⁶ EISENMANN et al. 2018; RIEDE, HOGGARD and SHENNAN 2019. See remarks on the potential and limits of this cooperation in SAMIDA and FLEUCHTER 2016.

¹⁷ EISENMANN et al. 2018, 2.

¹⁸ ROBERTS and VANDER LINDEN 2011, 2; RIEDE, HOGGARD and SHENNAN 2019, 2; BURMEISTER 2019, 34.

¹⁹ ROBERTS and VANDER LINDEN 2011, 2.

²⁰ SHERRAT 2011, 18.

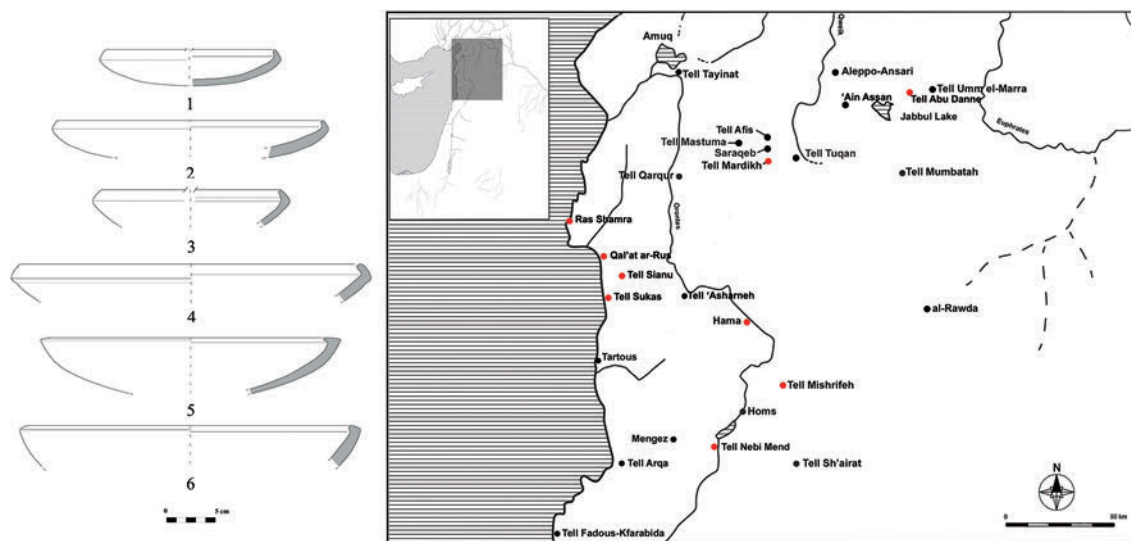


Fig. 2 Early Bronze III carinated platter-bowls in the northern Levant (nos. 1–6) after VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020 with map of distribution on the right;

- no. 1: Qal'at ar-Rus, level 8 (after ENRICH 1939, tab. VIII, fig XI.8.12, redrawn);
- no. 2: Ras Shamra/Ugarit, level E (after COURTOIS 1962, fig. 44E, redrawn);
- no. 3: Tell Abu Danne, level VII (after TEFNIN 1980, pl. XII, fig. 22.9, redrawn);
- no. 4: Tell Mishrifeh/Qatna, Operation J, level 41 (after BESANA, DA ROS and IAMONI 2008, fig 1.1; redrawn);
- no. 5: Hama, level K1–2 (after VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020, fig.7.8.9, redrawn);
- no. 6: Tell Mardikh/Ebla (after VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020, fig. 7.8.11, redrawn,

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concerned and technologically advanced studies, while these three aspects of research should go hand in hand. Even in the era of many revolutions that influenced positively archaeological research, traditional methods are still irreplaceable²¹ and, if rigorously applied to the study of datasets, may allow archaeology to give significant contributions to collaborative, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. The elaboration of relative periodization and synchronization schemes based on a sound stratigraphic basis are the grids framing radiocarbon dating, the setting of sociological and anthropological interpretations, and the backdrop of DNA studies. If this backdrop is opaque, vague, or approximate, interpretations may be biased or to some extent speculative.

In the last decade, work on periodization and synchronization has been done to better reconstruct regional developmental trajectories in the Levantine area in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages that may allow changes in patterns of inter-regional connectivity and, consequently, in material culture clusters to be reanalysed for those critical periods of the Levantine history.

Clusters Changing during the Early Bronze III/IV Transition

Core-periphery Interactions, Pastoralism, and Elite Emulation

The spread of the so-called 'Caliciform Ware' or 'Caliciform Culture' across the Levant²² – the appearance of regional variants of vessels associated with the consumption of liquids, particularly cups, goblets, and the so-called 'teapots' – has been traditionally considered the hallmark of the Early Bronze IV period. The southern Levantine subsets of cups, goblets and teapots have been considered the material proof of a 'Syrian connection'²³ in this region in the local non-urban period, which during the last twenty years has been reinterpreted consistently as the result of local emulation of drinking behaviours of the northern Levantine urban elites.

In the early 2000s, Shlomo Bunimovitz and Raphael Greenberg suggested that the adoption of drinking behaviours of Syrian urban elites in Early Bronze IV shown by the spread of different variants of goblets and teapots across the southern Levant

²² For a recent treatment of this phenomenon, including questions of terminology, chronology, and regionalism, see WELTON and COOPER 2014; COOPER 2018; 2020; D'ANDREA and VACCA 2020.

²³ The earliest uses of this term may be found in DEVER 1980, 5 2; MAZZONI 1985, 15; PALUMBO 1990, 119.

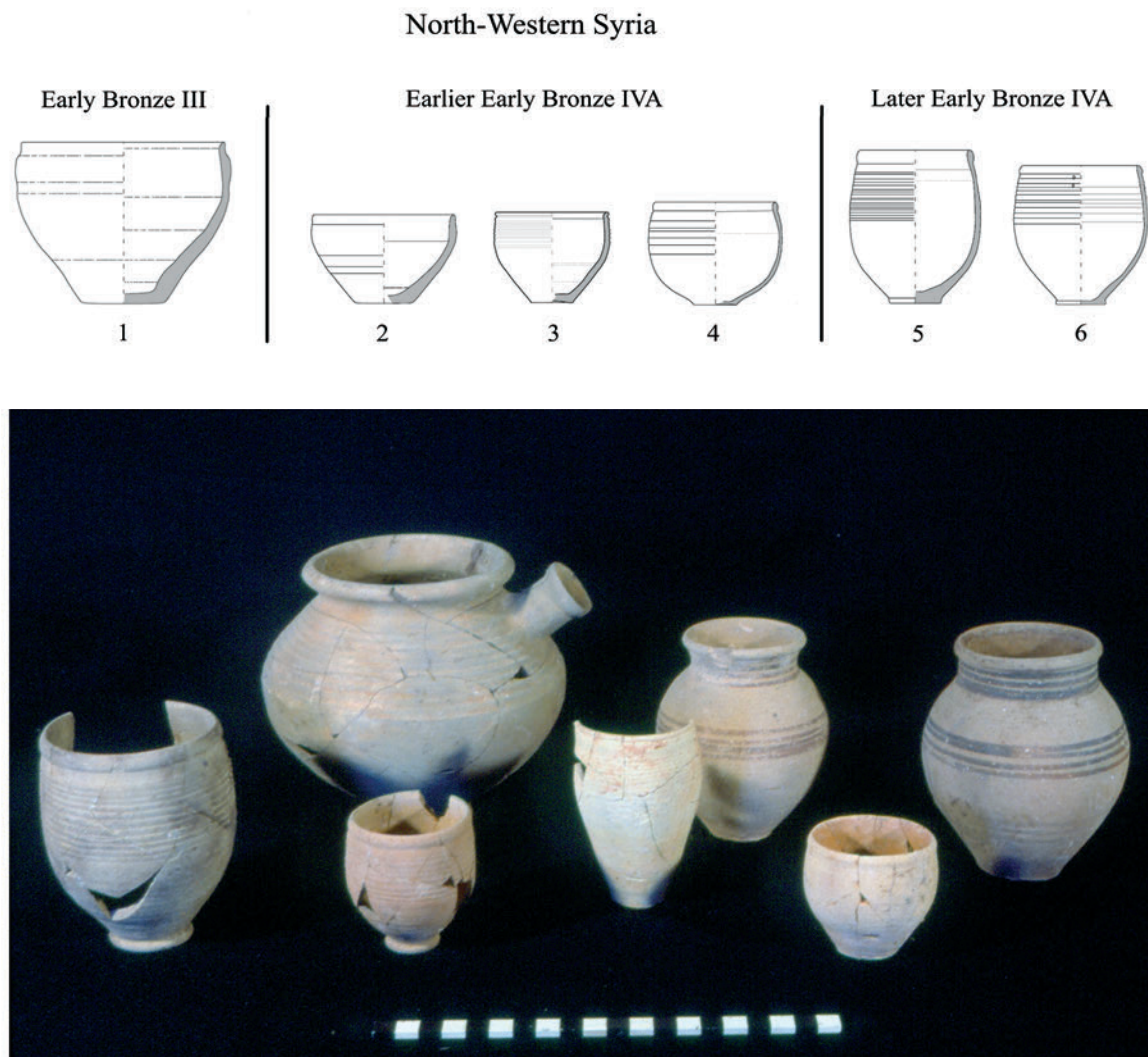


Fig. 3 Development of goblets at Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Syria, from late Early Bronze III to final Early Bronze IVA (nos. 1–6) according to VACCA 2015, fig. 13 (with additional vessel drawings, no. 3 after VACCA 2015, fig. 5.9 and no. 6 after VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020, fig. 1.7, redrawn) and Early Bronze IVA pottery with goblets and teapot from Palace G at Tell Mardikh/Ebla (no. 7) (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

was a response to rejection of local sets of symbols associated with the Early Bronze II–III social order represented, instead, in particular by the large carinated platter bowls, at the time of the demise of the fortified settlements of the previous period.²⁴ These interactions would have been conducive to emulation of northern drinking behaviours and the associated equipment in the south, and the carriers of cultural and techno-stylistic information would have been semi-nomadic pastoralists “straddling the interface between Canaan and the urban centres of central Syria”.²⁵ This theory is followed by Tony Wilkinson

²⁴ BUNIMOVITZ and GREENBERG 2004, 20–23, fig. 1.

²⁵ BUNIMOVITZ and GREENBERG 2004, 27; 2006, 29.

et al., who besides drinking kits have included also the deployment of weapons and personal ornaments in burials as evidence for the introduction of Syrian status-marking practices in the south.²⁶ They believe that the “apparent contradiction” between these new traits in the material culture of the southern Levant and some degree of continuity with the local Early Bronze III pottery tradition may be explained by semi-nomadic pastoralism as theorised by Bunimovitz and Greenberg and reported above.²⁷

More recently, Greenberg has framed within this model and the higher absolute chronology for the

²⁶ WILKINSON et al. 2014, 92. See also BRADBURY and PHILIP 2017.

²⁷ Ibidem.



Fig. 4 Pottery from Palace G at Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Early Bronze IVA
(© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

southern Levantine Early Bronze Age the theory of a gradual decline of fortified settlements in the region during the later Early Bronze III. This would have led the southern Levantine communities to convert intentionally to pastoralism as a winning economic option to overcome decline and engage in intensive animal herding connected with the nascent wool economy market controlled by the northern Levantine urban centres.²⁸ The theory of a “transmutation” to pastoralism is largely based on his reading of the archaeological evidence from the Hula Valley, where he has identified a gradual abandonment of settlements and the re-emergence of megalithism during the later Early Bronze III.²⁹ This hypothesis is endorsed by David Schloen, who also considers “adaptation” to pastoralism as a strategy to cope with the decline of the Early Bronze III “walled settlements” and the mechanism through which Syrian practices spread to the south.³⁰

The Early Bronze III/IV Transition in the Northern Levant

Recent works analysed the consequences of the realignment of regional periodization schemes for the northern and southern Levant during the Early Bronze Age not just from the standpoint of Early Bronze IV, but also of the preceding Early Bronze III that according to the revised interregional synchronisms

was partly contemporary in the two regions from c. 2750 to c. 2500 BCE. Based on this new correlation it has been observed that the development of southern Levantine fortified settlements in Early Bronze III did not coincide with the advanced literate urban society portrayed by the Ebla archives for the northern Levant, but with a previous northern Levantine formative phase of urbanization.³¹ The latter stage is comparable to the southern Levantine Early Bronze III in terms of seeming absence of writing and complex administrative systems, and material correlates.³² Moreover, in the second quarter of the 3rd millennium BCE, Western Syria and Lebanon show multiple lines of connectivity with the southern Levant, including the spread of local variants of carinated platter-bowls (Fig. 2).³³

Research has demonstrated that gradual changes in the typological array of the pottery assemblages of Syria and northern Lebanon can be observed during late Early Bronze III and towards the Early Bronze III/IV transition, a stage that we may place approximately between c. 2600 and c. 2500 BCE (Figs. 3, 5).³⁴ Indication for increasing commercial contacts connecting the northern Levant to Mesopotamia on the one hand and to the Aegean world

²⁸ GREENBERG 2017, 47–48; 019, 127–128.

²⁹ GREENBERG 2002, 77–81, figs. 4.4–4.5; 2003, 30–31, figs. 2–4 and 2–5. See also GREENBERG 2019, 122–123.

³⁰ SCHLOEN 2017, 69.

³¹ VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020.

³² WILKINSON et al. 2014, 85–86; VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020, 131–132.

³³ VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020, 133–137; see also D'ANDREA 2018a, 82–83.

³⁴ VACCA 2015, 11–16 and fig. 13; VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020, 123–124.

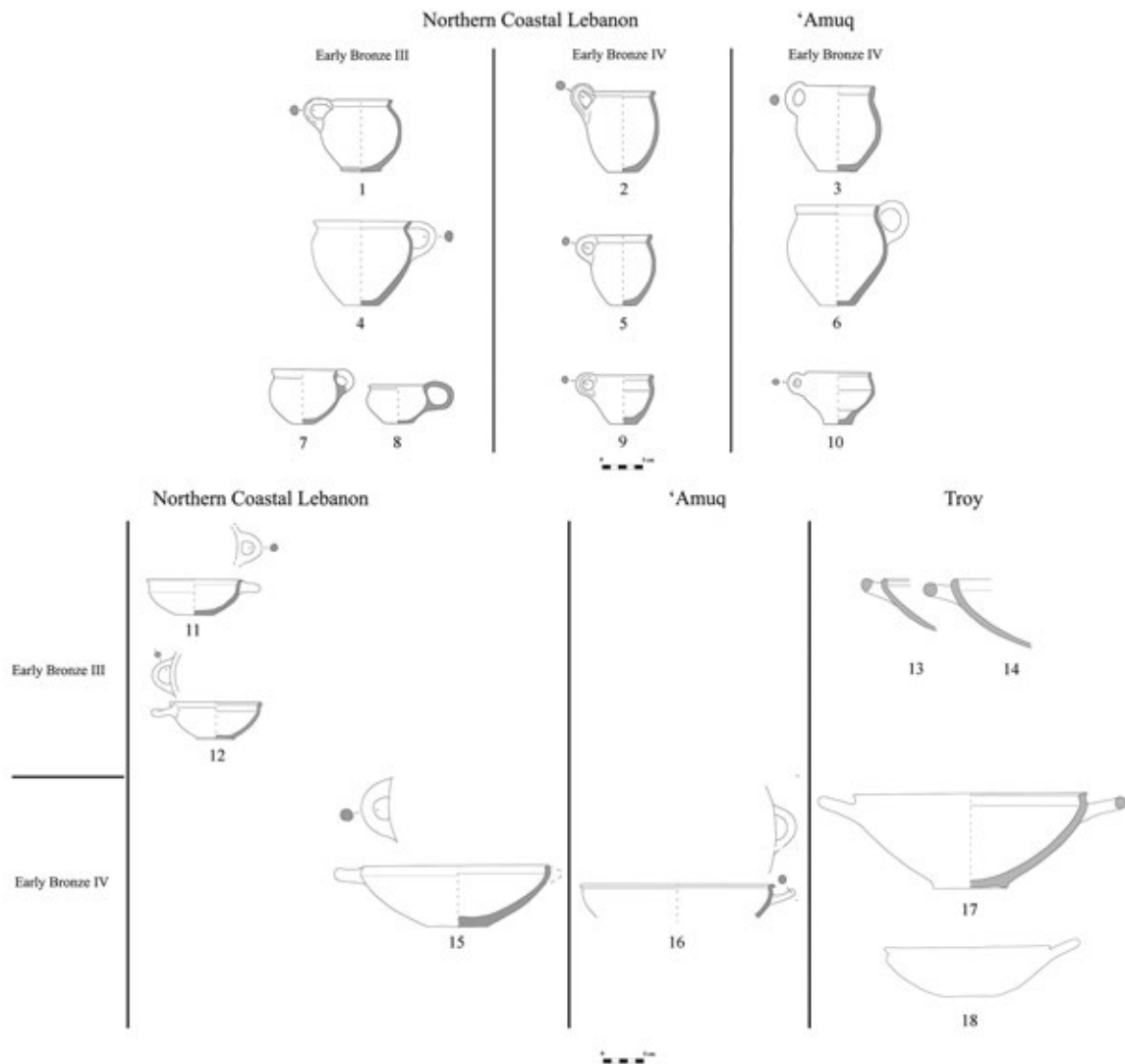


Fig. 5 New vessel shapes in northern Lebanon from Early Bronze III to Early Bronze IV and their foreign prototypes and parallels; no. 1: Tell 'Arqa (after ROUX and THALMANN 2016, fig. 4.22, redrawn); no. 2: Tell 'Arqa (after THALMANN 2006, pl. 56.24, redrawn); no. 3: Tell Ta'yinat (after BRAIDWOOD and BRAIDWOOD 1960, fig. 338.19, redrawn); no. 4: Tell Fadous-Kfarabida (after GENZ and SADER. 2007, pl. 1.2); no. 5: Tell 'Arqa (after THALMANN 2006, pl. 56.27, redrawn); no. 6: Tell Ta'yinat (after WELTON 2014, fig. 5.1, redrawn); nos. 7-8: Byblos (after THALMANN 2008, fig. 6.1-2, redrawn); no. 9: Tell 'Arqa (after THALMANN 2006, pl. 57.24, redrawn); no. 10: Tell Ta'yinat (after BRAIDWOOD and BRAIDWOOD 1960, fig. 338.17, redrawn); no. 11: Tell Fadous-Kfarabida (after GENZ and SADER. 2007, pl. 1.1); no. 12: Tell 'Arqa (after ROUX and THALMANN 2016, fig. 4.25, redrawn); nos. 13-14: Troy (after BLEGEN et al. 1950, fig. 414.25-26, redrawn); no. 15: Mougharet al-Hourriye (after BEAYNO et al. 2002, pl. 1.3, redrawn); no. 16: 'Amuq (after WELTON 2014, fig. 4.7, redrawn); nos. 17-18: Troy (after BLEGEN et al. 1950, pl. 60.34.338 and pl. 59a.A 21 respectively, redrawn)

on the other starting already from the 26th century BCE were identified. This is suggested by the spatial distribution of artefacts, including bilateral imports of pottery (Syrian bottles in Anatolia, tankards and/or *depata* in northern Syria and the Euphrates Valley, occasionally metalwork, and the incised bone-tubes) as well as by the evidence of shared weighting systems.³⁵ It is believed that this might have been (one of) the mechanism(s) behind the appearance and success of the new drinking paraphernalia in different regions, such as the Euphrates River Valley, north-western Inland Syria, and northern Lebanon.³⁶

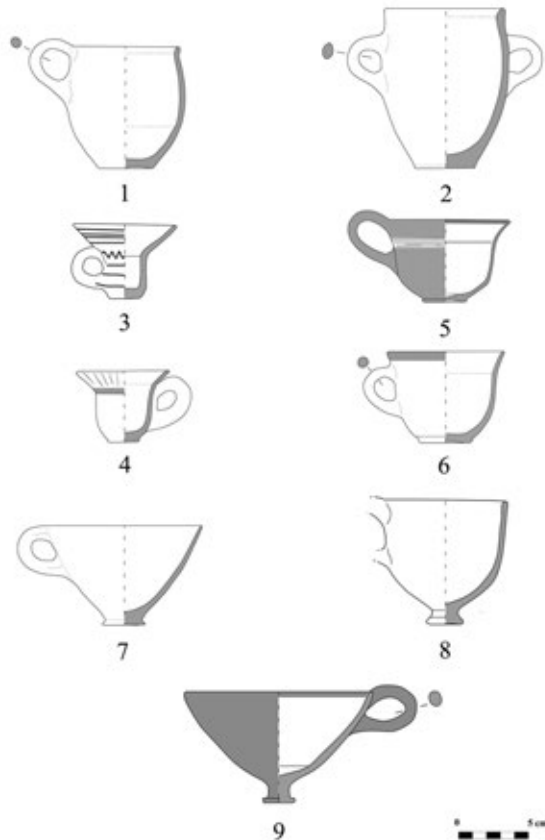


Fig. 6 New vessel shapes in northern Lebanon during Early Bronze IV;

nos. 1–2: Tell ‘Arqa (after THALMANN 2006, pls. 56.29, 57.5 redrawn); nos. 3–4: Byblos (after THALMANN 2008, fig. 6.3–4, redrawn); nos. 5–6: Tell ‘Arqa (after ROUX and THALMANN 2016, fig. 4.38 and THALMANN 2008, fig. 6.31, redrawn); no. 7: Byblos (after THALMANN 2008, fig. 6.9, redrawn); no. 8: Tell ‘Arqa (after THALMANN 2008, fig. 6.29, redrawn); no. 9: Tell Fadous-Kfarabida (after GENZ et al. 2010; pl. 1.2, redrawn)

³⁵ GENZ 2003; RAHMSTORF 2006a, 30–38, figs. 7–8; 2006b; MASSA and PALMISANO 2018; MAZZONI 2020, 15–20 and figs. 13–14. See also the contribution by PRELL, RAHMSTORF and IALONGO in this volume.

³⁶ D’ANDREA and VACCA 2020, 139; VACCA and D’ANDREA 2020, 122, 129–130.

In the pottery assemblages of Western Syria and the Middle Euphrates Valley goblets first appeared alongside local Early Bronze III types during the 26th century BCE (Fig. 3), coinciding with the flourishing phase of early urbanism and the development of more structured commercial interactions with the Mesopotamian world, requiring the incorporation and local adaptation of new sets of material culture to fuel those new crucial contacts (Fig. 4).³⁷ Likewise, in northern Lebanon transformations in the local ceramic repertoire began during late Early Bronze III when new vessel shapes appeared, such as one-handled goblets and bowls with horizontal handles (Fig. 5).³⁸ These vessel forms further developed through Early Bronze IV, when a variety of new drinking vessels appeared including bell-shaped cups, often with handles, cups with splaying rims and high loop handle, two-handled goblets, and a variety of footed and pedestalled bowls (Fig. 6).³⁹ Clearly, as suggested earlier,⁴⁰ in this case the new shapes point to connections to the north and west, to the ‘Amuq Plain, Cilicia, Western Anatolia and the Aegean (Figs 5, 7) that, in a time when metal trade and metallurgy had become key economic activities generating long-distance contacts,⁴¹ might have been prompted by the development of flourishing urbanization⁴² accompanied by intense metallurgical production in northern Lebanon.⁴³ Actually, the period from c. 2500 to c. 2300 BCE, corresponding to the Early Bronze III/IV transition and to the first half of Early Bronze IV in the Levant, saw the establishment of the so-called ‘Anatolian Trade Network’ which would last until c. 2200 BCE.⁴⁴ Although this route mainly connected western and central Anatolia to each other and to the eastern Aegean, the existence of a southern offshoot reaching northern Lebanon through Cilicia and the ‘Amuq might explain the incorporation of new

³⁷ VACCA 2015, 14, fig. 13; VACCA and D’ANDREA 2020, 13 ; see also COOPER 2020, 13; MAZZONI 2020, 13.

³⁸ THALMANN 2006, 112–113, fig. 40.a–b, pl. 47.11, 13–14; 2008, 72 and fig. 6.1–2 (Tell ‘Arqa), 23–24 (Byblos); 2016, 65, 68 and figs. 23.11–21, 24.1–5; ROUX and THALMANN 2016, fig. 4.22–23, 25 (Tell ‘Arqa); GENZ 2014, fig. 8.2 (Tell Fadous-Kfarabida).

³⁹ THALMANN 2006, pls. 46 14, 17, 21–35, 47.12, 56–57; 2008, 70–72, fig. 6.3–22, 27–42; ROUX and THALMANN 2016, fig. 4.33–42 (Tell ‘Arqa); VACCA and D’ANDREA 2020, 82–83, figs. 3.5–8, 4.1–2, 12–13, 18.

⁴⁰ D’ANDREA and VACCA 2020, 126–128 and figs. 3.1–12, 4; for Tell ‘Arqa, see THALMANN 2006, 120.

⁴¹ MAZZONI 2020, 3.

⁴² THALMANN 2010; GENZ et al. 2016

⁴³ THALMANN 2008, 72–76, figs. 8–9.

⁴⁴ ŞAHOĞLU 2005, 344–354, figs. 1a–2; 2019, 122–126; EFE 2007, 60–62 and figs. 17a–17b (calling it “the Great Caravan Route”); see MAZZONI 2020, 16



Fig. 7 Map of the eastern Mediterranean and the Levantine coast showing regional variants of Early Bronze IV handled drinking vessels at a representative sample of sites (base map by M. Zingarello, edits by the author; map data: SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, NEBCO, Landsat, Copernicus through Google Earth Pro and Bing Maps Tile System, 2020).

Vessels from Lerna after RUTTER 1995, Ill. S-7.3, redrawn; vessels from Troy after BLEGEN et al. 1950, fig. 129.A 26, A 45; 1951, fig. 60.33.144, redrawn; vessels from Gözlü Kule/Tarsus after GOLDMAN 1956, figs. 356.470–471, 484, 495, 357.468, redrawn; vessels from Tell Ta'iyinat after BRAIDWOOD and BRAIDWOOD 1960, fig. 338.14, 17, redrawn; vessels from Tell 'Arqa after THALMANN 2006, pls. 56.27, 57.5, 24 and after ROUX and THALMANN 2016, fig. 4.38, redrawn; vessel from Tell Fadous-Kfarabida after GENZ et al. 2010, pl. 1.2, redrawn; vessels from Byblos after THALMANN 2008, fig. 6.4, 9, redrawn; vessels from Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo after LOUD 1948, pls. 9.13, 16.13, redrawn; vessels from Tell es-Sultan/Jericho after KENYON and HOLLAND 1983, fig. 67.3, redrawn; vessels from Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish after TUFNELL 1958, pl. 66.416, redrawn; vessels from Beit Dajan/Bet Dagan after YANNAI 2014, fig. 3.7.4, 7, redrawn.

Vessel drawings not to scale

material culture traits in the pottery assemblages of northern Lebanon. If this hypothesis is correct, this southern corridor might have been the path crossed by intermediaries, traders, merchants, and metalsmiths through which the new vessels and drinking behaviours reached northern Lebanon along with metals.

Summarising from previous studies, we may say that more than a dismissal of local sets of symbols in the southern Levant around 2500 BCE, the archaeological evidence shows a gradual introduction of exotic behaviours and the associated material culture in the northern Levant and the Middle Euphrates Valley starting from late Early Bronze III, which only progressively and during quite a long time led to the replacement of local practices connected with commensality and their material correlates (including carinated platter bowls in the northern

Levant⁴⁵; here see Fig. 5) with the foreign ones.⁴⁶ It is difficult to assess whether this phenomenon began at the elite level in this early phase or not, but certainly the new vessel shapes and the associated social practices had diffused through all sectors of the society in the northern Levant since already the first Early Bronze IV phase (local Early Bronze IVA, c. 2500–2300 BCE),⁴⁷ as well as by the time when the new vessel forms subsequently appeared also in some areas of the southern Levant.

⁴⁵ THALMANN 2006, pl. 46.5–11; ROUX and THALMANN 2016, fig. 4.6–8; VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020, 134–137, fig. 7.8.5–15; see also KENNEDY 2020a, 37–38, fig. 2.7.1–6, 10–12.

⁴⁶ VACCA and D'ANDREA 2020, 123–128.

⁴⁷ MAZZONI 2003, 185; 2020, 14; WELTON and COOPER 2014; COOPER 2020, 117–118.

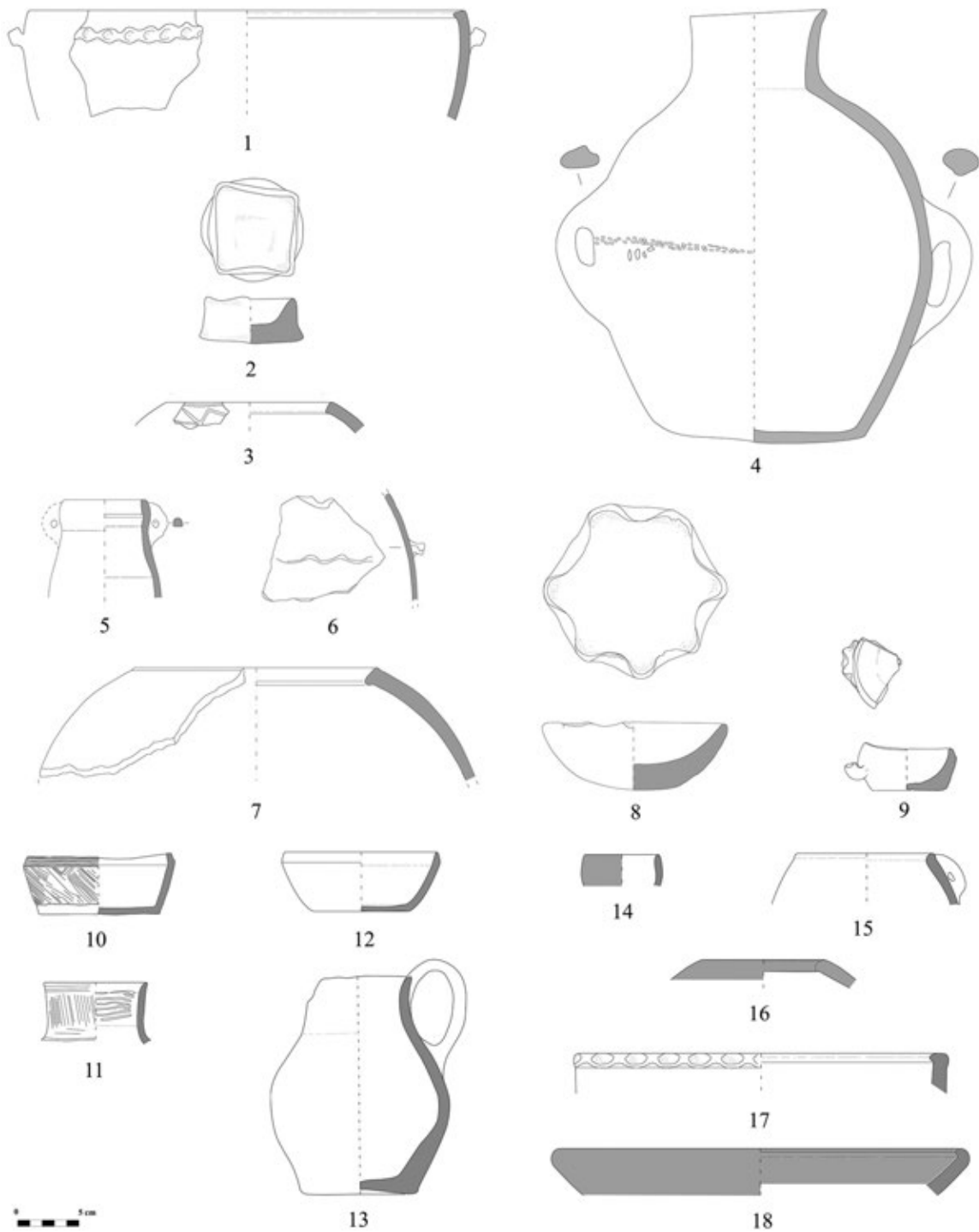


Fig. 8 Pottery of the earliest phases of Early Bronze IV in the southern Levant;
 nos. 1–4: Khirbet Kerak/Beth Yerah, Period E (after GREENBERG and EISENBERG 2006, figs 5.96.2, 9, 5.97.1, 5.99.4, redrawn);
 nos. 5–7: Elevation Point-167 (after BAR 2020, fig. 19.16.1, 7–8, redrawn);
 nos. 8–9: Tell Abu en-Ni'aj, Phase 7 and 6 respectively (after FALCONER and FALL 2019 figs 6.2 and 6.6, redrawn);
 nos. 10–11: Tell Umm Hammad, Stage 5 (after HELMS 1986, figs. 17.1, 18.1, redrawn);
 nos. 12–13: Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, Sultan IIIId1 (after NIGRO 2003a, fig. 21.1 and NIGRO 1999, fig. 4.1 respectively, redrawn);
 nos. 14–18: Khirbet Iskander, Area C, Phase 1 (after RICHARD et al. 2010, pls. 2.2–3, 11, 13.4, 14.18, redrawn)

The Early Bronze III/IV Transition in the Southern Levant

Stratified pottery assemblages of the initial non-urban Early Bronze IV period in the southern Levant show that goblets and cups were extremely rare in the latter region during this early phase.⁴⁸ This might suggest either that, albeit infrequent, goblets were introduced early also in the south⁴⁹ or that some very simple goblet and cup forms might just have been part and parcel of the local typological array already since this archaic period (as well as possibly earlier during Early Bronze III⁵⁰) disconnectedly from the ‘Caliciform Ware’ phenomenon. I will return to the question of possible mechanisms of diffusion of new material culture traits in the southern Levant during ‘later’ Early Bronze IV phases in the following paragraphs and concentrate here on the hypothesis of a possible conversion to pastoralism in the latter region at the turn between Early Bronze III and IV.

Actually, the theory of pastoralism as a carrier of cultural and techno-stylistic information is not entirely new in the research into the southern Levantine Early Bronze IV as it goes back to William G. Dever’s model of “pastoral nomadism” proposed in 1980.⁵¹ In contrast, Falconer and Fall on the one hand, and Richard and Long on the other, taking the view from northern and central Transjordan respectively, have argued for enduring ruralism connected with a strong sedentary base in some areas more than others.⁵² Subsequently, in consideration of such evidence for a stronger rural and sedentary component in the southern Levantine Early Bronze IV societies, Dever has turned to an “agro-pastoral model” including both semi-nomadic pastoralism and ruralism.⁵³

In the north-eastern Jordan Valley at least two excavated sites yielded long Early Bronze IV sequences with evidence of occupation in the earliest phase of the period, Tell Abu en-Ni’aj, which had not been occupied before,⁵⁴ and Tell Umm Hammad, which had not been settled since Early Bronze II (c. 3000–2860 BCE).⁵⁵ At Tell es-Sultan/Jericho in the south-western Jordan Valley occupation in the earlier phase of the Early Bronze IV period followed directly the destruction of the last Early Bronze III settlement, which might explain the shrinkage of the occupied sector of the *tell*, limited to the top of the

mound in this earlier stage.⁵⁶ Evidence from these three main sites may suggest that the Jordan Valley offered a refugium to communities fleeing from the Early Bronze III fortified settlements in a time of crisis as well as that it was occupied by permanent settlements already in the initial phase of the Early Bronze IV period. The pottery horizon of these early phases (Fig. 8) is a blend of vestigial Early Bronze III traits and harbingers of the Early Bronze IV pottery tradition proper that suggests ‘transitional’ characteristics.⁵⁷ A similar mixture of features can be noticed also in the pottery associated with the ‘post-urban’ Period E at Khirbet Kerak/Beth Yerah⁵⁸ on the southern shore of Lake Tiberias that precedes the abandonment of the site until later Middle Bronze I, and at Elevation Point-167 in eastern Samaria, which seems to have been a temporary site.⁵⁹ Radiocarbon determinations in the 2-sigma range from the latter site point to average dates in the interval between 2480 and 2240 calBC.⁶⁰ Likewise, the site of Khirbet el-’Alya Northeast in the Shephelah yielded ceramics that may be compared to those of the early EB IV phase at the above-mentioned sites,⁶¹ associated with radiocarbon determinations falling in the interval between 2570 and 2460 calBC in the 2-sigma range.⁶²

Greater continuity of occupation between Early Bronze III and IV, though punctuated with discontinuities (destruction, abandonments, and shifts),⁶³ has been traditionally recognised also for the eastern Dead Sea basin.⁶⁴ A ‘transitional late EB III/early EB IV’⁶⁵ occupation associated with radiocarbon dates has been uncovered at Khirbet al-Minsahlat in the Kerak Plateau;⁶⁶ as we noticed earlier, the pottery can be compared to that of the earliest Early Bronze IV phase attested at Khirbet Iskander (here see Fig. 8.12–18).⁶⁷ Recent excavations at Khirbet Iskander showed that, after a major destruction at the end of Early Bronze IIIA, there was a continuous,

48 D’ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 183–187 with references; see also KENNEDY 2020b, 328.

49 See discussion in D’ANDREA and VACCA 2020, 125–126, 129–130.

50 RICHARD and D’ANDREA 2016.

51 DEVER 1980, 49–58.

52 FALCONER, FALL and JONES 2007; RICHARD and LONG 2007a; 2007b, 2009; 2010; RICHARD 2016; 2020.

53 DEVER 1995; 2003; 2014, 3–5, fn.6

54 Phases 7–6: FALCONER and FALL 2019, 42–45.

55 Stage 5: HELMS 1986, 30–31, 42–49.

56 Sultan III d1: NIGRO 2003a, 130–131; MONTANARI 2020, 137–139.

57 D’ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 59–73; 2019a, 64–65 and fig. 2. For the three sites, see, respectively, HELMS 1986, 43; FALCONER and FALL 2019, figs 6.1–6.6; NIGRO 2003a, 133–134.

58 GREENBERG and EISENBERG 2006, 151–157, figs. 5.96–5.99.

59 BAR 2020, 358–360 and fig. 19.10.

60 BAR 2020, 359 and tab.1 9.1.

61 LEV et al. 2020, 1640, fig. 3.

62 LEV et al. 2020, 1642, ab.1, 1643.

63 ADAMS 2006, 139; D’ANDREA 2012, 44–45; 2020a, 408.

64 See, e.g., earlier DEVER 1973; 1980, 38–39 and, more recently, SCHAUB 2009, 108–109; DEVER 2014, 3–4.

65 CHESSON et al. 2005, 47.

66 CHESSON et al. 2005, 19–20, 33–37 and figs. 10–11, 25–26; see pp. 36–37 for radiocarbon dates from the site: EGS-AQ244: 2840–2500 calBC; ISGS-AG245: 2565–2460 calBC; ISGS-A0247: 2618–2471 calBC.

67 RICHARD 2010, 105–106; D’ANDREA 2012, 20, 27–28, 36–37 and fig. 9; 2014a, 134, 183; 2016a, 545; 2019a, 66–67, fig. 2.10–11; 2020a, 400.

multiphase occupation all through Early Bronze IIIB with no break observable also with the following Early Bronze IV period.⁶⁸ In particular, on the south-east edge of the mound, the upper and latest Early Bronze III phase was directly covered by the walls and surfaces of the earliest Early Bronze IV phase.⁶⁹ Like the other sites mentioned above, also at Khirbet Iskander the material culture of this initial Early Bronze IV phase is somewhat *transitional*, as noticed in several earlier works.⁷⁰ This new evidence for the stratigraphic transition between Early Bronze III and IV framed within a continuous multiperiod sequence does not seem to support a local microregional narrative of conversion or adaptation to pastoralism, but, rather, evokes resilience and reorganisation that might have lasted through late Early Bronze III and initial Early Bronze IV. This might explain the seemingly more substantial nature of the settlement at Khirbet Iskander in the initial Early Bronze IV phase with its considerable stonewalls and thick plastered surfaces compared to other sites.⁷¹

As new evidence is becoming available from different sub-regional areas, we are increasingly able to distinguish this stage more clearly in terms of material culture not so much from Early Bronze III but above all from what is considered standard Early Bronze IV. Varying degrees of continuity with the Early Bronze III material culture may make it difficult to recognise it properly when it is not framed within continuous Early Bronze III–IV stratigraphic sequences, which, among the published sites cited above, is the case only for Jericho in Cisjordan and Khirbet Iskander in Transjordan, while at other sites, comparable evidence comes from either the last stage in a sequence (Khirbet Kerak/Bet Yerah and perhaps Khirbet al-Minsahlat), the initial part of a sequence (Tell Abu en-Ni'aj and Tell Umm Hammad) or one-phase settlements (Elevation Point-167 and Khirbet al-'Alya Northeast). Therefore, it might even be possible that at some sites those local *facies* overlapped with the very end of Early Bronze III at other settlements. Tell Abu en-Ni'aj is thus far the only site where this initial stage is associated with radiocarbon determinations that place the starting boundary of the period in the interval from 2518–2483

calBC according to the latest published modelling.⁷² In the revised absolute chronology for the southern Levant this interval overlaps with the ranges for the end of Early Bronze III at several sites.⁷³ This is a problem raised by the higher chronology for the southern Levant that we are not yet able to solve due to insufficient stratified data for the initial Early Bronze IV phase.

This chronological issue is connected also with the understanding of patterns of settlement in the Central Negev and the Faynan between Early Bronze III and IV. It is acknowledged that an Early Bronze III phase (with red-slipped and burnished vessels) of settlement in those regions and of industrial metallurgical activities at Khirbet Hamra Ifdan in the Faynan, possibly coordinated by the fortified settlements of the eastern Dead Sea basin,⁷⁴ was followed by an Early Bronze IV occupation at both places (with combed and ribbed vessels). While pottery parallels would put the latter phase in line with central-to-late Early Bronze IV in southern Palestine and central and southern Transjordan,⁷⁵ recently it has been proposed that the major phase of occupation of the Central Negev, the 'Arabah and the Faynan during the non-urban Early Bronze IV would have spanned the first half of the period, when metallurgical activities would have been managed by desert people.⁷⁶ This is

68 RICHARD, LONG and D'ANDREA in press.

69 *Ibidem*.

70 LONG 2010, 63; RICHARD and LONG 2010, 272–273; D'ANDREA 2014a, 133; 2016a, 545; 2019a, 66; 2020a, 400; RICHARD, LONG and D'ANDREA in press.

71 D'ANDREA, LONG and RICHARD in press.

72 Bayesian modelling yielded dates at 2483–2452 calBC for Phase 7 and at 2452–2415 calBC for Phase 6: and modelled radiocarbon dates for the occupation following the two earliest stages at Tell Abu en-Ni'aj place the following five stratigraphic phases in the interval from c. 2415 to ca. 2266 calBC, therefore in the first half of the Early Bronze IV period: FALCONER, FALL and HÖFLMAYER 2021, 27, Tab. 5, 28–29 (see earlier FALCONER and FALL 2019, tab. 5.2 with slightly different modelled dates: starting boundary of the period in the interval from 2553–2479 calBC in the 1-sigma range with a median of 2524 calBC, 2524–2486 calBC for Phase 7 and at 2486–2457 calBC for Phase 6, and from 2457 to ca. 2250 calBC for the period corresponding to Phases 5–1).

73 REGEV et al. 2012, 558–561; 2014, 259–261; SHAI et al. 2014.

74 On the EB III phase: LEVY et al. 2002; ADAMS 2006, 137–138, 140; D'ANDREA 2012, 36–40, figs. 13.1–11, 14.1–11, tab. 4; 2014a, 128–129; 2019a, 67–68, fig. 3; 2020a, 400–491; BEN-YOSEF et al. 2016, 71, 80–82; DUNSETH, FINKLESTEIN and SHAHACK-GROSS 2018; FINKLESTEIN et al. 2018; FRIEDMAN et al. 2020; GIDDING and LEVY 2020.

75 D'ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 201, 205–206. See D'ANDREA 2012, 31, 33, 36, figs. 13.12–13, 14.12–15, tab. 4 for the pottery parallels; though discussed there still in the framework of traditional lower chronology for the southern Levantine Early Bronze IV the suggested parallels still work because based on comparative stratigraphy, independently from the absolute chronological systems. For a more recent discussion that considers the revised chronology, see D'ANDREA 2019a, 67–68, fig. 3; 2020a, 400–401. *Contra* DEVER 2014, 189–190, fig. 11.59.

76 FINKLESTEIN et al. 2018, 77.

maintained on the base of a new corpus of radiometric determinations that span the interval between late Early Bronze III and mid-Early Bronze IV according to the revised chronology and add to previous dates falling within similar ranges.⁷⁷ However, no ceramics associated with the new radiocarbon dates have been published thus far, therefore it is not possible to evaluate independently whether the new pottery evidence would fit into an early phase of the Early Bronze IV period.⁷⁸

The available radiocarbon dates with very broad intervals that would equally fit into the late Early Bronze III, the Early Bronze III/IV transition, and the first half of Early Bronze IV with no possibilities to fine-tune the chronological range are by no means conclusive with respect to the question of dating the settlements in the Central Negev and the Faynan region *exclusively* to the first half of the Early Bronze IV period. However, should our reading of the published pottery evidence be correct, seeming lack of permanent settlements during the initial or earlier Early Bronze IV phases would not per se mean that those desert areas were not crossed, frequented, and exploited also in this period.

When the southern Levant transitioned from Early Bronze III to IV huge changes in the socio-political and socio-economic organization were taking place. Therefore, to better understand not just the chronology but also the ways those arid regions were occupied (including the role of desert nomads, as well as contacts with Egypt and perhaps with resilient sedentary settlements in the Dead Sea basin?) in this Early Bronze IV phase would be of the greatest importance also to reinvestigate how intense copper exploitation developed in the following phases of the period.

Although the archaeological evidence available to investigate the Early Bronze III/IV transition and the initial Early Bronze IV phase in the southern Levant is still somewhat unclear and sparse, a universal model of general reversion to pastoralism and appearance of new shapes inspired by foreign prototypes and mirroring the introduction of non-local practices and behaviours in this early stage of the period seems unlikely. Across the region the material culture of the initial Early Bronze IV phase seems largely derived from the previous Early

Bronze III tradition.⁷⁹ Settlement patterns mirror a variety of local responses including crisis, decline and discontinuities in some areas possibly entailing less permanent ways of settlement as noted by Greenberg for the Hula Valley,⁸⁰ and resilience and reorganisation at other places as noted at several places in the Jordan Valley as well as at Khirbet Iskander, as discussed above. Certainly, pastoralism was part of the regional picture, but already in this early stage it might have been altogether not disconnected from a sedentary presence in the region, a rural and resilient component that certainly played a crucial role in regional reorganisation too and paved the way for a phase of regional growth during the following Early Bronze IV phases.⁸¹

Clusters Changing within Early Bronze IV and new Patterns of Interregional Connectivity Changes in the Northern Levant during Early Bronze IV

Research during the past fifteen years has revolutionised our understanding of the second half of Early Bronze IV in the northern Levant (locally called Early Bronze IVB, c. 2300–2000/1950 BCE), showing developments that were unexpected in the past. Still until the early 2000s, the last quarter of the 3rd millennium BCE was considered as a phase of decline also in the north, despite continuing urbanization, following the destruction of Ebla and the end of its mighty regional state.⁸² This regional narrative of crisis would have fit well into an inter-regional picture of regression, climatic deterioration and instability in the last quarter of the 3rd millennium BCE also in Mesopotamia during the post-Akkadian Period, in Egypt during the First Intermediate Period, and in the southern Levant in the non-urban period after the crisis of local fortified settlements.⁸³ However, more recently it has become clear that the second half of the Early Bronze IV period in the northern Levant was not a period of

77 FINKELSTEIN et al. 2018, 70–76; GIDDING and LEVY 2020, 320–321.

78 A short description of the pottery is provided by DUNSETH, FINKELSTEIN and SHAHACK-GROSS (2018, 8), referring mainly to a few diagnostic and non-diagnostic red-slipped sherds normally ascribed to the earliest Transjordanian tradition. However, without drawings or photos it is impossible to determine the ceramic chronology independently – red-slipped lamps, bowls and cups can be found in central and southern Transjordan with different variants during Early Bronze III and during different Early Bronze IV phases.

79 See regional overviews in PALUMBO 1990; 2001; 2008; D'ANDREA 2012; 2014a; 2015; 2019a; 2020a; COHEN 2018. For the evidence from individual sites, see HELMS 1986, 30–31, 42–49; NIGRO 2003a; GREENBERG and EISENBERG 2006, 151–157, figs. 5.96–5.99; RICHARD 2010. Before multiphase sequences became available, strong continuity between the Early Bronze III and IV ceramic traditions had been demonstrated by DEVER 1973; 1980 and RICHARD 1980.

80 GREENBERG 2002, 77–81, figs. 4.4–4.5; 2003, 30–31, figs. 2–4 and 2–5.

81 On this “rural complexity”, see RICHARD 2016; 2020.

82 Radiocarbon dates obtained from the weighted average are 2458–2418 calBC (18.8%), 2408–2375 calBC (23.0%) 2367–2293 calBC (53.6%) calBC in the 2-sigma range: CALCAGNILE, QUARTA and D'ELIA 2013, 454, fig. 27.5.

83 See the discussion in HÖFLMAYER 2015.

recession but a time of change and realignment of economic and political balances.⁸⁴

As noticed in several recent reviews of this period Ebla recovered gradually from the destruction and only after an initial phase of decline and shrinkage,⁸⁵ while the region to the south between Qatna and Tell Nebi Mend developed continuously and flourished in Early Bronze IVB.⁸⁶ It is acknowledged that the growth of sites in the central Syrian steppe might have been in part prompted by the decline of Ebla's regional state⁸⁷ that had controlled the area from Karkemish to around Hama directly,⁸⁸ but had also defeated and subjugated the confederation of tribes settling the steppe east and south of Qatna,⁸⁹ which, therefore, recovered political autonomy in the later Early Bronze IV phases.⁹⁰ These tribes seem to have become organized as a socio-political entity already in the third quarter of the 3rd millennium BCE with the creation of an original version of urbanism reflecting a local imprint as well as multiple connections to the neighbouring regions. There are increasing hints that, after recovering political independence, during the second half of Early Bronze IV this entity might have achieved a leading role in driving intra and inter-regional economic connections thanks to the key position of its system of circular cities at the western edge of the central Syrian steppe, at the intersection between a path connecting the coast to the central Euphrates Valley through the Orontes Valley and a path leading northward to the Jabbul Lake and the Middle Euphrates Valley and southward to Damascus and thereafter to the Hula Valley and the Transjordanian plateau.⁹¹

Also the social structure of the tribal confederation settling the central Syrian steppe might have been key to achieving this new role in a time of economic and political redefinition at the regional level that will have a long-lasting impact on the socio-political configuration of the northern Levantine societies in the following Middle Bronze Age. It is well known that, in Syria, Amorite and non-Amorite people were part of an interwoven social fabric already since the mid-3rd millennium BCE and it seems that Amorite people were connected traditionally

with economic activities entailing mobility and control of technology, such as metallurgy, crafts, and specialised animal herding. It seems that the socio-political entity settling the steppe of Central Syria during Early Bronze IV was ruled by Amorite leaders already during the first half of Early Bronze IV,⁹² and that after the transition from the 3rd to the 2nd millennium BCE Amorite groups came to power at other places, like Umm el-Marra in the Jabbul Plain.⁹³ At Ebla the shift of supremacy to the hands of a local social component that was not in power at the time of the Ebla archives might have happened already during the late Early Bronze IVB period.⁹⁴

Evidence of interactions between Ebla and the central Syrian steppe in the later part of Early Bronze IV is coming into focus in the material culture, suggested by both pottery evidence of contacts⁹⁵ as well as similarities between the Early Bronze IVB religious complexes at Ebla and Al-Rawda,⁹⁶ and might mirror relationships between the 'new' Ebla leaders and those of the cities in the steppe that were not as antagonistic as in Early Bronze IVA.⁹⁷ Much stronger sociocultural similarity between the chiefs of the late Early Bronze IV communities at Ebla and in the steppe compared to the first half of the Early Bronze IV period might have been conducive to a resurgence of contacts between them during Early Bronze IVB. A tantalising hypothesis is that the possibility for the new Ebla leaders to progressively gain power might have been somehow facilitated by recovered political independence and increased economic importance of the cities in the steppe. The local social element responsible for the rejuvenation of urbanisation at Ebla during a late phase of the Early Bronze IV period might have been at the same time a segment of a larger component made of more flexible and mobile groups that were traditionally part and parcel of Syrian societies over a much broader geographical area from the Jezirah to the central Syrian steppe.⁹⁸ In other words, although this needs further investigation and testing, it might not be farfetched to assume that the political and economic consolidation of the confederated tribal groups settling the expanding cities of the central Syrian steppe might have been a factor enabling the ascent of a similar though distinct and local sociocultural component in northwest inland Syria in a period of socio-political reorganisation, as the second half

84 COOPER 2012, 487–490; 2014; MAZZONI 2013, 34–39; 2020, 1.4.2 0–22; D'ANDREA 2019b, 16–26; 2020b.

85 D'ANDREA 2014/2015; 2018b; 2018c; 2020b; MATTHIAE 2020.

86 KENNEDY 2015a, 64; 2015b, 3; MOUAMAR 2016, 74–77, figs. 3, 6, 12.

87 ASCALONE and D'ANDREA 2013, 225; KENNEDY 2015a, 282–283, 316–317; 2016, 3; D'ANDREA 2019b, 17–19; 2020b, 212–213.

88 On opposing theories considering Hama within or beyond the borders of the Ebla state, see VACCA et al. 2018, 1.9, with relative bibliography.

89 CATAGNOTI 1997; ARCHI 2013, 8.3; BIGA 2014, 201–205.

90 D'ANDREA 2020c, 136–137.

91 AL-MAQDISSI 2010.

92 See CATAGNOTI 1997 on the Amorite linguistic substratum; see also LAFONT 2010, 76.

93 NICHOLS and WEBER 2006, 50–51.

94 D'ANDREA 2019b, 2.4.2.6

95 D'ANDREA 2020c, 153–154, fig. 1.

96 MATTHIAE 2007, 504–505; CASTEL 2010, 142.

97 D'ANDREA 2020c, 159.

98 MAZZONI 2013, 3.4–37. See PORTER 2019, 21.



Fig. 9 Map of distribution of copper ingots in the southern Levant during Early Bronze IV (base map by M. Zingarello, edits by the author; map data: SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, NEBCO, Landsat, Copernicus through Google Earth Pro and Bing Maps Tile System, 2020)

of the Early Bronze IV period certainly was. With respect to this, it is worth noting that to the east, in the Middle Euphrates Valley, where the end of Early Bronze IVA was marked by violent destructions at several major sites, there is some evidence for important changes during Early Bronze IVB at Tell Bi'a/Tuttul. At the latter site the palace built at the end of Early Bronze IVA (the Pillar Building) above

another destroyed Early Bronze IVA palace was reused during the first half of the Early Bronze IVB period (ARCANE's Early Middle Euphrates 5 = EME 5).⁹⁹ Moreover, a huge temple *in antis*, which remained in use all through the Early Bronze IV

⁹⁹ NOVÁK 2015, 68–69, fig. 24.

period and beyond, was dated to the same phase,¹⁰⁰ and the Early Bronze IVA texts report that a regional sanctuary dedicated to the god Dagan existed already at that time¹⁰¹.

It has been suggested that “the agro-pastoral communities of the zone of uncertainty during the later third millennium BCE put in place the foundations – economic, socio-political and symbolic – for the Amorite states that followed during the early second millennium”.¹⁰² Such a pattern of intra-regional connectivity might allow us to frame sociocultural transformations between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages within *long durée* processes, including some degree of population admixture across Syria.¹⁰³ In my opinion, the latter phenomenon might be read as the result of mobility and even small-scale migrations related to increasing connectivity developing from economic interactions in a period of changes and renegotiation of economic and political balances¹⁰⁴ rather than to migrations of climatic or political refugees in a time of crisis and uncertainty.¹⁰⁵

Changes in the Southern Levant during Early Bronze IV

The chronological framework of the Early Bronze IV period in the southern Levant is less accurate than that of the northern Levant as we are not thus far able to determine how much time elapsed from the initial Early Bronze IV phase to the following phases of the period.¹⁰⁶ Likewise, although there are some sites with long multiphase stratigraphic sequences where a ‘central’ and a ‘later’ Early Bronze IV horizon can be identified in terms of relative, stratigraphic phases, it is thus far impossible to define their duration. Despite the blurring absolute chronology, comparative stratigraphy may allow for the reconstruction of a landscape dotted with sedentary, permanent villages during the period following the initial phase of Early Bronze IV, although it is reasonable that not all of them were occupied at the same time and throughout the whole period.¹⁰⁷ The archaeological evidence shows some complexity despite absence of urbanisation, intra-regional connectivity along east-west and north-south axes, specialisation of various

sites and areas in different economic activities,¹⁰⁸ and a synergetic relation between sedentary villages in some regions and less permanent occupation in other areas.¹⁰⁹

As discussed above, recent research points to a date in the first half of the Early Bronze IV period for the occupation of the Central Negev sites based on radiocarbon dates that would situate the smelting and trade of copper parallel to the late Old Kingdom (that is before the First Intermediate Period) and would support the hypothesis that Egypt was the prime destination of the southern Levantine metal.¹¹⁰ However, the parallels for the thus far published Early Bronze IV pottery found in the Central Negev as well as at Site 149 (a smelter site) at Timna¹¹¹ can be found in later stratified assemblages at sites in the eastern Dead Sea basin, which would fit well with radiocarbon determinations from ‘Ein Ziq and Har Dimon in the Central Negev respectively in the intervals between 2266 and 1951,¹¹² and from Khirbet Hamra Ifdan in the Faynan between 2201 and 1884.¹¹³ Moreover, the suggestion that metallurgical activities on a grand scale were carried on during later Early Bronze IV phases is supported also by other radiocarbon dates available for the smelting site of ‘En Yahav in the ‘Arabah falling in the intervals 2030–1920 calBC (1-sigma) and 2140–1880 calBC (2-sigma).¹¹⁴

On the one hand, the available evidence suggests that the Negev complex was settled and exploited, and that copper from the ‘Arabah and the Faynan was extensively mined and traded at least also during later Early Bronze IV phases.¹¹⁵ Future research will hopefully clarify whether these patterns of settlement and landscape use in those arid regions developed continuously from the earlier Early Bronze IV phases but intensified in the later Early Bronze IV phase due to increasing internal and external demand, or if there was a new surge of industrial

¹⁰⁰ NOVÁK 2015, 66

¹⁰¹ ARCHI 2016, 138–139.

¹⁰² WILKINSON et al. 2014, 96 also citing FLEMING 2004 and PORTER 2012.

¹⁰³ SKOURTANIOTI et al. 2020, 1168–1169.

¹⁰⁴ D’ANDREA 2019b, 16–26; 2020b, 211–214.

¹⁰⁵ E.g., WEISS 2014, 376–377; 2017, 145–146; BURKE 2017, 276–295.

¹⁰⁶ GREENBERG 2019, 139.

¹⁰⁷ See GREENBERG 2019, 138 on “the tendency of IBA settlements to relocate every few decades” (though in connection with his view of this period as mainly characterised by seminomadic pastoralism).

¹⁰⁸ D’ANDREA 2020a, 408–409; RICHARD 2020, 436–438. Beside metallurgy (YEKUTIELI, SHALEV and SHILSTEIN 2005, 15–19; HAIMAN 2009; HAUPTMANN et al. 2015), pottery and flint blade production (FALCONER 1987; D’ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 247–249, 251–252; COVELLO PARAN 2020, 385, 392), and olive oil production (FRASER and CARTWRIGHT 2018).

¹⁰⁹ HAIMAN 1996; 2009; DEVER 2014, 226–227.

¹¹⁰ FINKELSTEIN et al. 2018; GIDDING and LEVY 2020.

¹¹¹ ROTHENBERG 1999, 86

¹¹² Samples RT-2514 and RT-1558 respectively: SEGAL 1999.

¹¹³ Beta-143812: LEVY et al. 2002.

¹¹⁴ Sample RTT-4683 (EY 17): BOARETTO in: YEKUTIELI, SHALEV and SHILSTEIN 2006, 19–20.

¹¹⁵ Based on the archaeomagnetic study of slag deposits, BEN YOSEF et al. (2016, 71, 80–82) suggested that copper production in the ‘Arabah Valley lasted from late Early Bronze III through the entire Early Bronze IV period, from c. 2600 BCE to c. 1950 BCE, but considered this activity limited in the latter period, based on a lower number of radiocarbon dates.

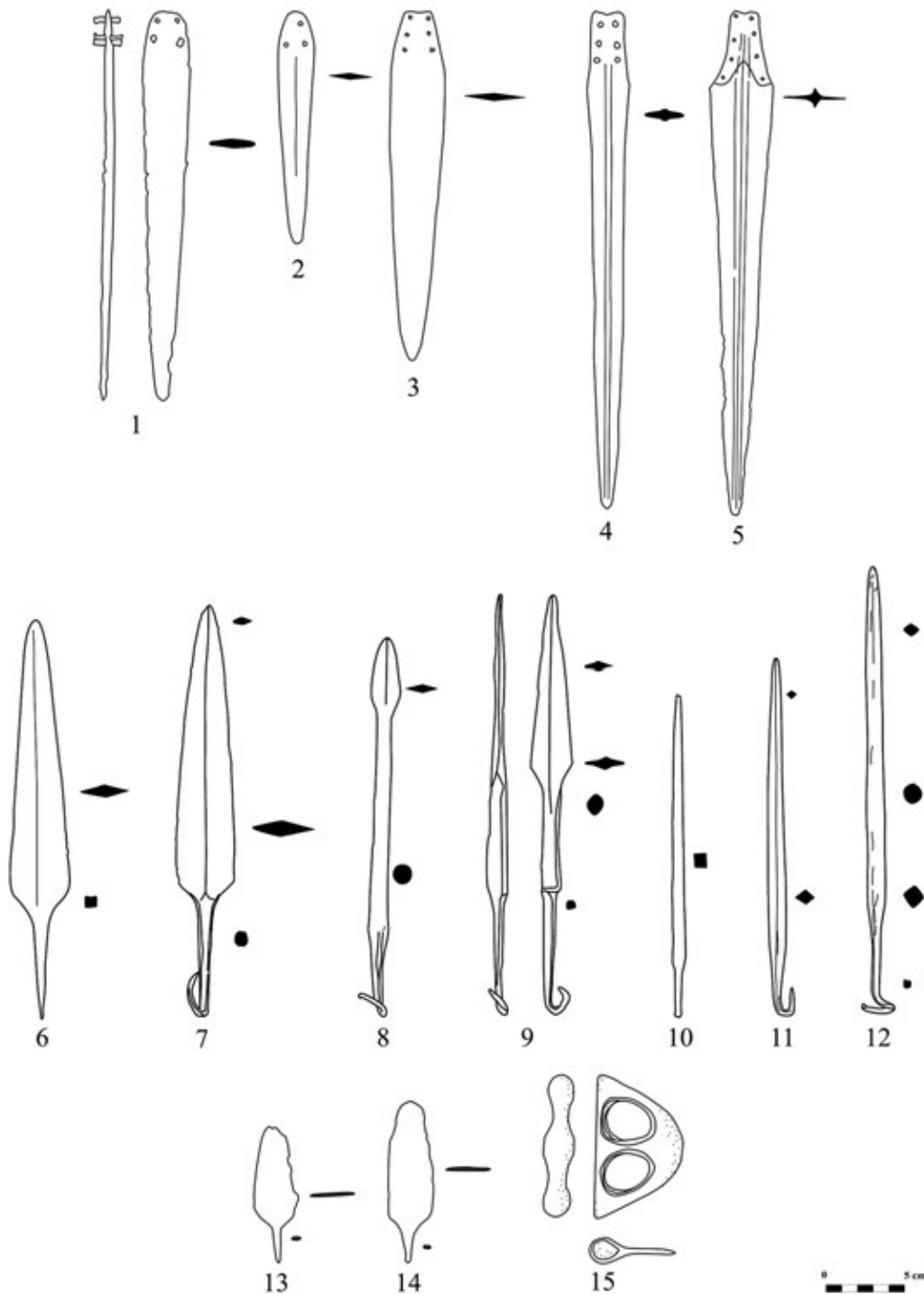


Fig. 10 Metal weapons in the southern Levant during Early Bronze IV (after D'ANDREA 2013, fig. 1; 2014a, Vol. 1, fig. 6.15, re-elaborated, here with corrected caption); no. 1: Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, Tomb A 95 (after KENYON 1960, fig. 70.4 redrawn); nos. 2–3: Tell el-'Ajjul, Tombs 1526 and 1532 (after PETRIE 1932, pl. X.47–48, redrawn); no. 4: Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, Tomb A 26 (after KENYON 1960, fig. 70.9, redrawn); no. 5: Tell el-'Ajjul, Tomb 1534 (after PETRIE 1932, pl. XIII.67, redrawn); no. 6: Nahf, Tomb 3 (after GETZOV 1995, fig. 9.1, redrawn); no. 7: Ma'abarot, Tomb 12 (after DAR 1977, fig. 23.13, redrawn); no. 8: Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish, Tomb 2100 (after TUFNELL 1958, pl. 22.3, redrawn); no. 9: Jebel Qa'aqir (after DEVER 1972a, fig. on p. 233, the first item from the left, redrawn); no. 10: Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish, Tomb 2009 (after TUFNELL 1958, pl. 22.9, redrawn); nos. 11–12: el-Jib/Gibeon, Tombs 50 and 52 (after PRITCHARD 1963, figs. 56.8, 58.7, redrawn); nos. 13–14: Ain Mallaha/Enan (after EISENBERG 1985, fig. 9.50–51); no. 15: Ma'abarot, Tomb 6 (after DAR 1977, fig. 22.12, redrawn)

and commercial organization of copper production and distribution in the latter phase prompted under different circumstances by new inter-regional connections after a gap following late Early Bronze III or the Early Bronze III/IV transition. On the other hand, it has emerged clearly that Egypt might have been one destination of the copper traded from the southern Levant, if the Early Bronze IV campsites distributed along the Way of Horus¹¹⁶ and the temporary settlements scattered across the Negev and Sinai deserts¹¹⁷ with southern Levantine pottery are any indirect evidence of these contacts.¹¹⁸ However, bar ingots cast in the Faynan were distributed towards the north (Fig. 9) along different possible pathways considering that thus far they have been found (together with 'later' Early Bronze IV pottery) at sites in the Central Negev, the Shephelah, the Hebron Hills, at Jericho, and at Hazor.¹¹⁹ Interestingly, in the interregional scenario this phase would correspond to the decline of the Anatolian Trade Network from c. 2200 BCE,¹²⁰ which might have provided an occasion for the southern Levant to meet inter-regional demand for copper in a time when other routes of interregional procurement seem to have not been at work. This might have been at least one possible factor drawing the southern Levant into interregional connections during the advanced phases of the Early Bronze IV period.

The 'Syrian Connection' and the Other Interregional Interactions: Evidence from Archaeological Clusters

The archaeological documentation for the phases following the initial Early Bronze IV phase in the southern Levant allows us to appreciate a variety of new elements emerging along with a progressive technological improvement noticeable in ceramics and metalwork and pointing to multiple lines of connectivity between the southern Levant and the surrounding regions.¹²¹

Although for metal artefacts it is more difficult to pinpoint transformations in time because these are almost always found in tombs, the association with 'later' pottery might suggest that technological changes characterised the production of metalwork in the second half of Early Bronze IV. The older repertoire of daggers with simple blades deriving from the still little known local Early Bronze Age tradition (Fig. 10.1–3) was flanked by the spread of several new and more elaborated types with sub-regional distribution (Fig. 10.4–5), as well as by the introduction of new weapons, including various spear and javelin types (Fig. 10.8–12), arrows (Fig. 10.13–14), and the first fenestrated axes (Fig. 10.15).¹²² Metal weapons indicate multiple lines of development, some of which suggestive of a coastal and an inland routes with east-west connectors across the southern Levant. Ribbed daggers with triangular blade and butt (Fig. 10.5) that are common at sites on the southern Levantine coast, and the archaic fenestrated axes that appear at Enot Shuni in the Carmel Mountains and Ma'abarot in the Sharon Plain (Fig. 10.6), as well as at inland sites located at nodal points, such as Megiddo and Jericho, are suggestive of connections with the northern Lebanese coast, where these types of weapons appear around the Early/Middle Bronze transition and will be continuously produced during Middle Bronze I.¹²³ On the other hand, the so-called poker-pike or javelin with rhomboid section (Fig. 10.11–12) that is frequently found in central and southern Cisjordan may be connected to prototypes attested in the 3rd millennium BCE tradition of the Middle Euphrates Valley and Mesopotamia.¹²⁴ These developments were accompanied also by a growing presence of tin-bronze items that, although not yet replacing those made of arsenical copper, certainly attest for the inclusion of the southern Levant within paths of long-distance, interregional distribution of this metal too.¹²⁵

¹¹⁶ OREN and YEKUTIELI 1990; YEKUTIELI 2002, 4 25, 4 31.

¹¹⁷ HAIMAN 1996; 2009.

¹¹⁸ See discussion in D'ANDREA 2018d.

¹¹⁹ COHEN 1999, fig. 115 and DEVER 2014, fig. 11.64.4–5 (Be'er Resisim, 'Ein Ziq and Har Yeruham, Central Neg v); TUFNELL 1958, pl. 21.11–13 (Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish); DEVER and TADMOR 1976, 163–164, 168, fig. 1.71.77.3 0, 71.77.3 3, 71.77.3 7, 71.77.243, pl. 30.C–D (Hebron Hills); YAHALOM-MACK et al. 2014, 19, fig. 3.1 and BECHAR 2020, 372 (Hazor); SELLIN and WATZINGER 1913, fig. 104 and NIGRO 2003a, 123, fig. 3; 2003b, 10–12, fig. 3 (Jericho); PHILIP 1989, 196–197 and HAUPTMANN et al. 2015 for a comprehensive discussion. On the existence of a northern and a southern route of distribution, see also KAUFMAN 2013, 279.

¹²⁰ ŞAHOĞLU 2019, 126–127.

¹²¹ VACCA and D'ANDREA 2015; D'ANDREA 2018a; COOPER 2020, 117–118.

¹²² D'ANDREA 2013, 138, fig. 1; 2014a, Vol. 1, 237–239, fig. 6 & citing earlier references.

¹²³ For the chronology of finds in northern Lebanon see particularly THALMANN 2008, 72–76, figs. 8–9. For the analysis of regional and diachronic developments of fenestrated axe types see PHILIP 1989; NIGRO 2003b, 10–26, figs. 3, 5–23; GERNEZ 2008, and the recent discussion in HAUSLEITER, D'ANDREA and ZUR 2018, 421–426 including a radiocarbon-dated specimen from a cemetery in the oasis of Tayma in Northwest Arabia (HAUSLEITER, D'ANDREA and ZUR 2018, 419).

¹²⁴ PHILIP 1989, 73–74, fig. 14.136, type 9; D'ANDREA 2013, 138; VACCA and D'ANDREA 2015, 50–51, fig. 7.11–15; SQUADRONE 2015, 309, pl. 6 4–7; MONTANARI 2020, 119–120.

¹²⁵ See, e.g. PHILIP 1991, 93, 100–101; RICHARD 2006, 125–126; KAUFMAN 2013, 663–665, 668–669, 272, 278–279, 683–684, figs. 1–2; KAUFMAN and SCOTT 2015, 1019–1021.

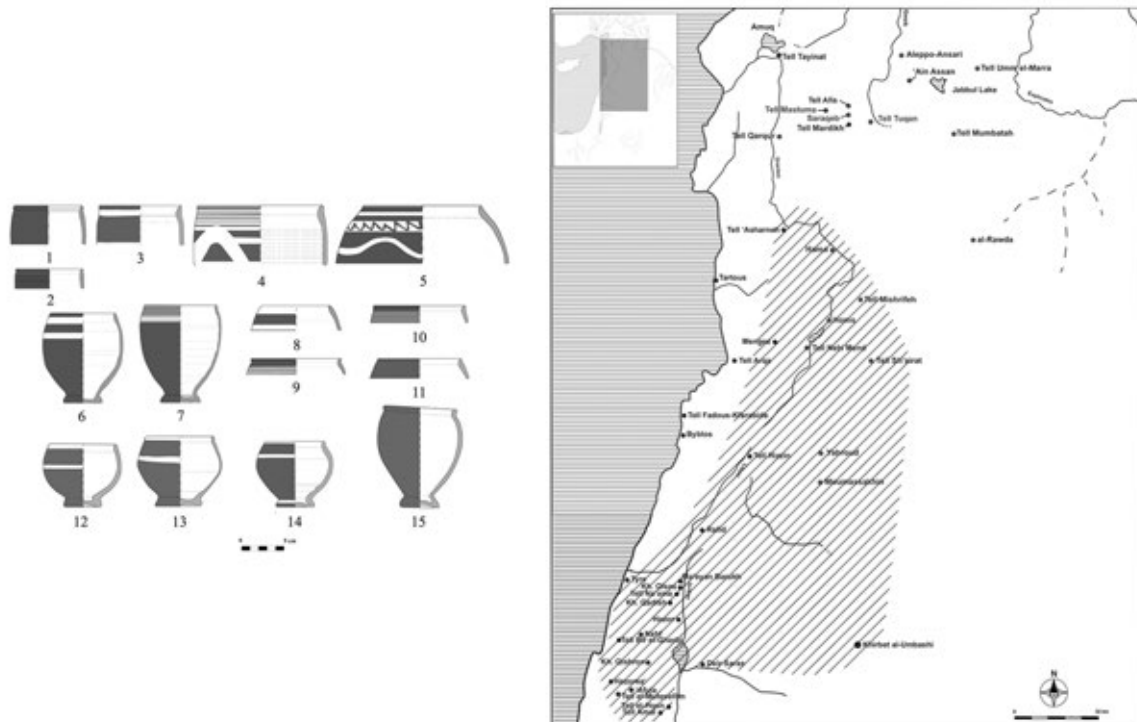


Fig. 11 The ‘grey wares’ in the Levant (1–15) and their distribution during the second half of Early Bronze IV, after D’ANDREA 2017, figs. 1 and 3 (re-elaborated); no. 1: Tell Nebi Mend (after KENNEDY 2015a, fig. 69.18, redrawn); no. 2: Tell ‘Asharneh (after COOPER 2007, fig. 7: the first vessel from the top, redrawn); no. 3: Khirbet al-Umbashi (after ÉCHALLIER and BRAEMER 2004, fig. 584.C.157, redrawn); nos. 4–5: Tell el-Waqas/Hazor (after BECHAR 2015, fig. 5.9, 17, redrawn); nos. 6–7: Tell Sha’irat (redrawn after MOUAMAR 2016, fig. 8.8–9, redrawn); nos. 8–9: Tell Nebi Mend (after KENNEDY 2015a, fig. 79.15, 21, redrawn); nos. 10–11: Moumassakhin (after AL-MAQDISSI 1989, figs. 19.123, 37.130, redrawn); no. 12: Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo (after GUY 1938, pl. 11.27, redrawn); no. 13: Khirbet Qadish/Qedesh: Qedesh (after TADMOR 1978, fig. 8.70–229, redrawn); no. 14: Nahf (after GETZOV 1995, fig. 8.1, redrawn); no. 15: as-Sanbariyya/Ma’ayan Barukh (after AMIRAN 1961, fig. 6.7, redrawn)

Compared to the earlier phase of this period, increasing use of a different, more advanced technology is noticeable also in the pottery of the later Early Bronze IV phases that attests for a skilled use of the slow wheel homogeneously across the southern Levant (especially for the making of smaller open-shaped vessels). While a clear technological change in the southern Levant during Early Bronze IV compared to Early Bronze III was identified early in the research into the local Early Bronze IV,¹²⁶ only later scholarship has recognised this development as typical of more advanced Early Bronze IV phases thanks to the stratified evidence of multiphase sites.¹²⁷ This technological development cuts across pottery regionalism in the southern Levant. The latter observation may support our hypothesis that technological transfer may have started from contacts

with the surrounding regional areas at nodal points within the southern Levant, but that subsequent capillary diffusion across the latter region might have been driven by strong intraregional connectivity. In contrast, new types of ware classes and vessel forms were introduced differentially in the various sub-regional areas of the southern Levant, mirroring differentiated local needs to elaborate means suitable to fuelling differential interactions with given external areas incorporating heterogeneous exotic behaviours and their material correlates in the respective local subsets.¹²⁸

The Black Wheel-made Ware found between the Galilee and the Jezreel Valley, with its characteristic grey goblets and teapots has been considered the hallmark of the ‘Syrian connection’ and of emulation of Syrian elites in the south. These vessels have been

¹²⁶ ALBRIGHT 1933, 64; KENYON 1970, 152.

¹²⁷ HELMS 1986, 30–31, 42–49; NIGRO 2003a, 131–134, 138–139; D’ANDREA 2012, 24–36 and tab. 1; 2014a, Vol. 1, 73–94; 2015, 3 2–34; 2016a, 5 42–545; 2020a, 3 98–400.

¹²⁸ D’ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 252–256, figs. 6.11–6.15; 2018a.

originally thought to be imported from the Orontes Valley,¹²⁹ until petrography showed that they were at least partially produced with clays outcropping in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains.¹³⁰ Moreover, it has been demonstrated that this ware class was present also in the Lebanese Beqa'a,¹³¹ but it is still under investigation if there were different independent workshops in the Lebanese Beqa'a and the Hula Valley that were clearly the heartlands of distribution of this particular ware class in the southern Levant, while further south this ware was imported.¹³² In addition, connections with and differences from the various classes of so-called 'grey wares' distributed in Central Syria have come into sharper focus in terms of shapes, styles, and petrography.¹³³ It seems increasingly accepted that the spread of this techno-stylistic phenomenon – of which the Black-Wheelmade Ware vessels of the Beqa'a and the Hula Valley, produced locally, were part – in a region stretching from Central Syria to the northernmost areas of the southern Levant may have been limited to the second half of Early Bronze IV (Fig. 11). However, these later regional variants of grey wares seem to have derived from ware classes originally elaborated during the first half of the period apparently only in the Central and Upper Orontes Valley.¹³⁴ Therefore, we may reconsider the paradigm of elite emulation and retain that of the 'Syrian connection', although with a different meaning compared to the first uses of the term that were mainly connected with trade.¹³⁵

While we have no data on the occupation of the Beqa'a during Early Bronze IV,¹³⁶ it seems that in the Upper Galilee, following a drop in permanent settlements at the beginning of Early Bronze IV,¹³⁷ sedentary settlements were re-established during later Early Bronze IV phases, including a developed

permanent village at Hazor.¹³⁸ The ambition of economic interactions with the flourishing neighbours in Central Syria during the second half of Early Bronze IV (of which we have discussed before in connection with their possible key role in interregional interactions during this phase) might have been a catalyst for the communities at the northern fringes of the southern Levant to get reorganized in permanent villages.¹³⁹ The regional variants of 'grey wares' with their immediately recognizable common visual properties (Fig. 12.1–15) might have provided an efficient tool for discrete communities – each represented by otherwise different pottery traditions, oriented towards the northern Levant in Central Syria¹⁴⁰ and towards the southern Levant in the Lebanese Beqa'a and the Hula Valley¹⁴¹ – to affirm their participation in a broader network, while still differentiating themselves from one another with minor variations in shapes and styles.¹⁴² The fact that the material assemblage capable of fuelling these interactions was chosen among prototypes derived from central Syria with a long tradition and elaboration behind them might be suggestive of the role played by this region not only in transferring techno-stylistic information, but also in interactions that may have contributed to prompt a socioeconomic reorganization during later Early Bronze IV in their closest neighbouring areas located at the northern fringes of the southern Levant.¹⁴³ This seems another case where the archaeological evidence suggests that some aspects of the interregional socio-political, socioeconomic and sociocultural configuration of the Middle Bronze Age – when Qatna, Tell Nebi Mend, Damascus and Hazor will be important regional centres – might have been in embryo already in the later Early Bronze IV phases. If and to which extent also the Lebanese Beqa'a was part of these processes will be determined only when more data on the Early Bronze IV occupation in the latter region will become available.

Beside this phenomenon of 'true' 'Syrian connection' limited to the areas located at the interface between the northern and southern Levant, a variety of different exotic elements emerged and developed

129 GUY 1938, 148–149; DEVER 1980, 50; MAZZONI 1985, 15; PALUMBO 1990, 118–119.

130 GREENBERG et al. 1998, 3; GREENBERG 2002, 53–54; BUNIMOVITZ and GREENBERG 2004, 3.

131 GENZ and SADER 2008, 187, pl. 1.2–3, 4, 7; GENZ 2010, 209–211, figs. 2–4.

132 To the references cited at fn. 130, must be added BECHAR 2015; 2017, 173–178, figs. 6.12.5–11, 6.16.8, 6.18.8–9, 6.20.4, 6.21.9–12; 2020; COHEN-WEINBERGER 2016 for the Hula Valley and GENZ, BADRESHANY and JEAN in press for the Beqa'a.

133 See D'ANDREA 2017, with references. Recently: KENNEDY, BADRESHANY and PHILIP 2018; BOILEAU 2018, 1, 5–6, 10; COOPER 2018, 194–195, figs. 11–12; MOUAMAR 2018, 6–8, figs. 7, 9; Group B; VACCA et al. 2018, 28–34, figs. 7–8.

134 D'ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 2018, 203–206; 2017, 178–180, fig. 3; 2020b, 20, fig. 3; 2020c, 154; WELTON and COOPER 2014, 335–336; BECHAR 2015, 51; 2020, 366; KENNEDY 2020b, 36.

135 DEVER 1980, 52; MAZZONI 1985, 15; PALUMBO 1990, 119.

136 GENZ 2010, 208–210.

137 D'ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 117–120, tab. 6; 2020a, 402–405; 2020b, 213–215; GREENBERG 2019, 141; BECHAR 2020, 369.

138 BECHAR 2013; 2020, 372–374.

139 D'ANDREA 2020b, 213; 2020d, 135–137.

140 MOUAMAR 2016, 82–84; 2018; KENNEDY 2019.

141 GENZ 2010, 209–212; D'ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 192–194; 2014b, 209–210.

142 D'ANDREA 2020d, 136–138. BECHAR (2020) recently re-discussed the evidence from Hazor, and provided an interpretation of the Black Wheel-made Ware moving from visual aspects of a connection to Syria. However, her own theory centres on local appropriation of visual means associated with Syrian urban palaces as an exclusionary strategy to construct local elites in the Hula Valley discriminating between elite consumers of grey ware and non-elite consumers of plain ware respectively.

143 D'ANDREA and VACCA 2015, 49.

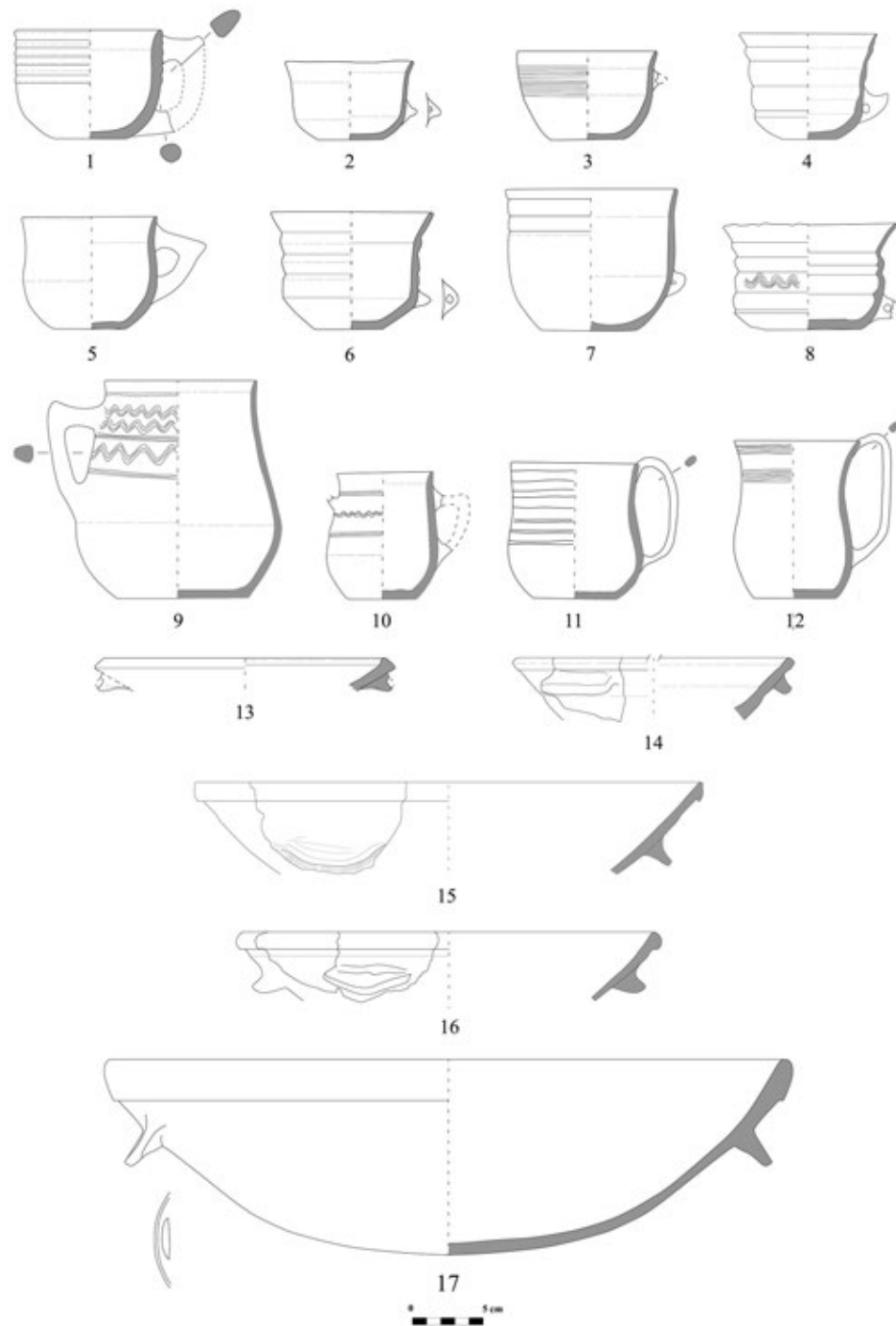


Fig. 12 New vessel shapes in the southern Levant during Early Bronze IV; no 1: Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo (after LOUD 1948, pl. 9.13, redrawn); no. 2: Khirbet Kirmil (after DEVER 1975, fig. 5.18–19, redrawn); no. 3: Jebel Qa'qir (after DEVER 2014, fig. 2.93.9, redrawn); no. 4: Tell Beit Mirsim (after DEVER 2003, fig. 1.5, redrawn); no. 5: Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo (after LOUD 1948, pl. 16.13, redrawn); no. 6: Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish (after TUFNELL 1958, pl. 66.416, redrawn); no. 7: Tell Beit Mirsim (after DEVER 2003, fig. 1.4, redrawn); no. 8: Tell ed-Duweir/Lachish (after TUFNELL 1958, pl. 66.403, redrawn); no. 9: Tell es-Sultan/Jericho (after KENYON and HOLLAND 1983, fig. 67.3, redrawn); no. 10: 'Ain Samiya (after DEVER 1972b, fig. 3.10, redrawn); nos. 11–12: Beit Dajan/Bet Dagan, Tombs 767 and 773 (after YANNAI 2014, 3.7.4, 7, redrawn); no. 13: Nahal Rimmonim (after COVELLO-PARAN 2008, fig. 6.2, redrawn); no. 14: Tell el-Waqqas/Hazor (after YADIN et al. 1961, pl. CLVI.12, redrawn); no. 15: Tell Mardikh/Ebla (after D'ANDREA 2018b, fig. 8.6, © Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria); no. 16: Tell Mastuma (after WAKITA 2009, fig. 3.8.26); no. 17: Tell Meskene/Emar (after SCONZO 2015, pl. 26.7, redrawn)

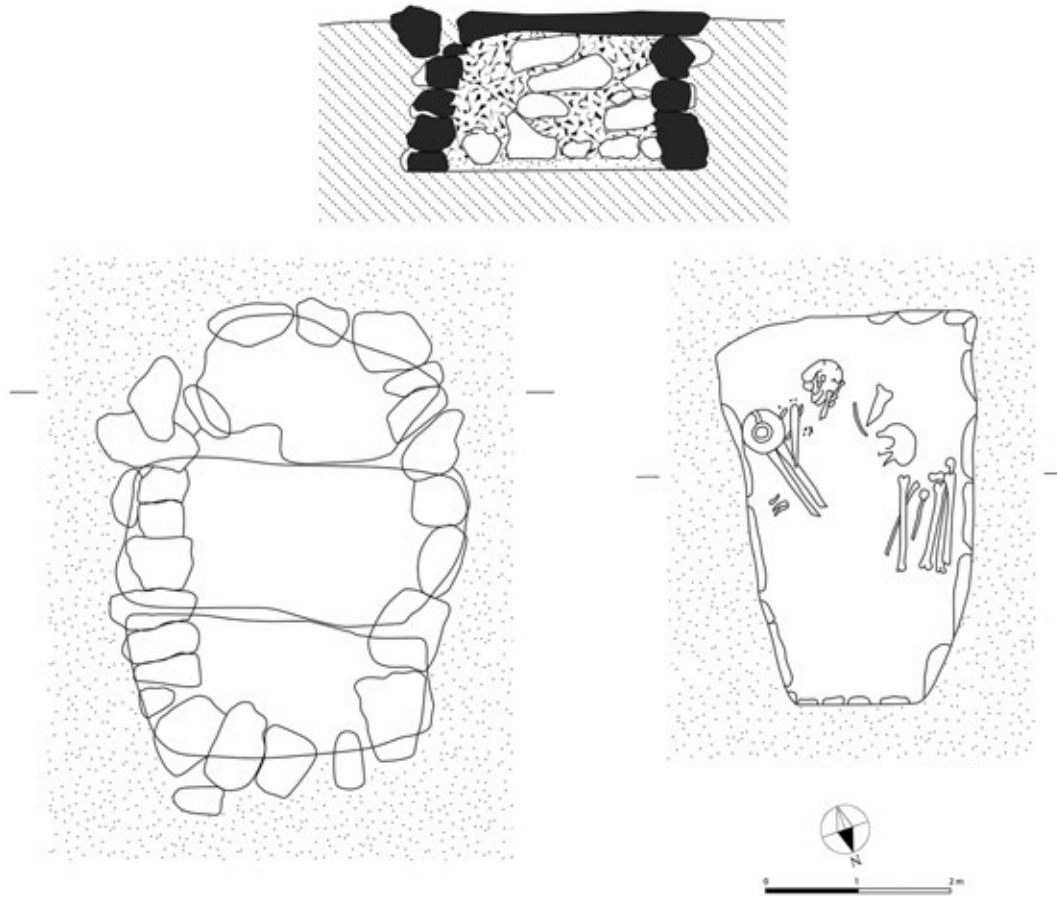


Fig. 13 Tomb N8 in the Early Bronze IV cemetery at Tiwal esh-Sharqi, Jordan (after TUBB 1990, fig. 11, redrawn)

across different parts of the southern Levant. Firstly, goblets and cups with several sub-regional variants¹⁴⁴ were numerically important in the assemblages of the more advanced phases only in few subregions within the southern Levant, all located along important intra-regional intersections (that might have been also crossed by inter-regional paths).¹⁴⁵ Secondly, along the coast of the southern Levant and its hinterland in the Shephelah (and only more rarely inland though always at nodal points along communication routes,

e.g. at Megiddo and Jericho) beside goblets and cups it is possible to isolate handled cups and mugs (Fig. 12.1–12) that resemble those found in northern Lebanon (see Fig. 6).¹⁴⁶ As suggested recently, the spatial distribution of these vessel forms might allow us to identify a general coastal ‘imprint’ shared among the eastern Aegean, western Anatolia, the ‘Amuq Plain, and northern Lebanon during the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE and marking the existence of a coastal ‘handled-cup area’ that might have extended its influence further south to the littoral of the southern Levant (see Fig. 7).¹⁴⁷ As well known, not only very limited but tangible evidence in the material culture indicates contacts between the southern Levant and the Aegean,¹⁴⁸ but also interactions between the northern coast of the southern Levant and northern Lebanon around the Early Bronze/Middle Bronze transition are suggested by the discovery of two identical archaic fenestrated axes with a decoration in the shape of

¹⁴⁴ For a more recent attempt of regional typological classification, see D’ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 2, 188–193, pls. XVII–XXVIII; see, earlier, the analysis of DEVER 1980, 38, 48 and figs. 2.14, 3.3, 14, 4.7, 13, 15–17 and RICHARD 1980, 18, fig. 3.5–12; see also KENNEDY 2020b, 328, fig. 18.1.

¹⁴⁵ D’ANDREA in press. At Tell Abu en-Ni’aj cups are attested from Phase 3, which is placed by modelled radiocarbon dates in the interval between 3 73 and 3 31 cal BC (according to the new model in FALCONER, FALL and HÖFLMAYER 2021, 27 Tab. 5; see also FALCONER and FALL 2019, fig. 6.6 for the pottery, p. 72, tab. 5.2 for slightly different modelled radiocarbon dates in the interval between 3 82 and 3 35 calBC). At Tell Umm Hammad goblets appear later in the sequence too (KENNEDY 2020b, 336).

¹⁴⁶ D’ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 252–254, figs. 6.13–6.14; 2018a, 84, figs. 3–4.

¹⁴⁷ D’ANDREA and VACCA 2020, figs. 126–130, figs. 3–4.

¹⁴⁸ See OREN 2003; D’ANDREA 2018a, 84, with references.

a hunting dog evidently cast in the same mould at Byblos on the northern coast of Lebanon and in the cemetery at Enot Shuni at the southern piedmont of the Carmel Mountain.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, exotic elements appearing in more conservative spheres, such as food habits and culinary preferences, and burial customs may adumbrate foreign behaviours. Examples recalled in previous studies are, respectively, the Cooking Ware bowls (Fig. 12.13–14) resembling those of the area comprised between northern inland Syria and the Euphrates River Valley (Fig. 12.15–17),¹⁵⁰ and cist graves (Fig. 13) that are foreign to the southern Levant and contained inhumations accompanied by typically local material culture.¹⁵¹ Such evidence might suggest that non-local people lived side by side with the local communities, but this hypothesis has never been tested by means of bioarchaeological studies.

While emulation of foreign elites' behaviours might be one explanation behind changes in the material culture of the southern Levant, it seems clear that transformations did not stem from a single phenomenon. Long-distance and multi-directional mobility and small-scale migrations of non-local people connected with economic activities might be possible mechanisms lying behind material culture changes, requiring the renegotiation of social practices to fuel communication among people operating in an inter-regional milieu but belonging to different groups. The variety of the new elements emerging in the southern Levant during the advanced phases of the Early Bronze IV period are indirect but clear evidence of multiple and differentiated contacts, which might suggest that the region was part of general changes taking place at a greater level and connected with emerging large-scale economic activities in the Near East and the Aegean. In the northern Levant, changes might have started in advance because this region was integrated earlier into the new emerging inter-regional scenario, while it is reasonable that a certain time elapsed before the southern Levantine communities recovered from the collapse of the Early Bronze III urbanization and regained a role in inter-regional connections.

¹⁴⁹ Byblos, Temple of the Obelisks: DUNAND 1950, pl. CXIX.14434; Enot Shuni, Tomb 65: CASPI et al. 2009, fig. 6a.

¹⁵⁰ D'ANDREA 2014a: Vol. 1: 262, fig. 6.16.4–5; Vol 2: 198, 201, 203, Types B1.1, 1.2C, B1.4; 2014d: 157, fig. 8.8–9; 2018a, 85.

¹⁵¹ TUBB 2009; PRAG 2011; D'ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 261, fig. 6.15; 2014d, 157, fig. 7.c; 2018a, 85–86; KENNEDY 2015c; 2020, 328, 336–337 and fig. 18.2.

The Early/Middle Bronze Age Transition in the Levant: 'Sloping Horizons' or Changing Clusters?

The Northern Levant between the 3rd and 2nd Millennium BCE

Material culture clusters changed once again in the Levant towards the end of Early Bronze IV. At several sites, such as Tell Mastuma, Ebla, Tell Afis, and Hama, harbingers of Middle Bronze I vessel shapes appeared in late Early Bronze IV contexts (Figs. 14–15).¹⁵² At some sites, this phenomenon was followed by transitional Early Bronze/Middle Bronze phases where the two cultural traditions coexisted side by side – like, for instance, at Tell Afis, Tell Mishrifeh/Qatna and perhaps Tell Nebi Mend.¹⁵³ At other sites, like Ebla, it is possible to isolate the final peak of Early Bronze IVB from the initial peak of Middle Bronze I.¹⁵⁴

The definition of absolute chronology for the late Early Bronze IV stage and the Early/Middle Bronze tradition in western inland Syria is still fluid and radiometric evidence is rather limited. Tell Mastuma yielded radiocarbon dates for Early Bronze IVB layers roughly spanning the last two centuries of the 3rd millennium BCE,¹⁵⁵ and determinations from Qatna place the Early/Middle Bronze transition at the site in the interval between 2040 and 1930 calBC. Two early Middle Bronze Age radiocarbon dates from Ebla, associated with archaic pottery from an initial phase, fall respectively in the intervals between 2140–1910 calBC and 1980–1740 calBC,¹⁵⁶ but the archaeological context of the samples was a midden, therefore, all the material, including the very early Middle Bronze I pottery, was in secondary deposition.¹⁵⁷ However, in terms of comparative stratigraphy and relative chronology, the position of the later Early Bronze IV phase with harbingers of the Middle Bronze Age attested at Ebla *before* the transitional Early Bronze/Middle Bronze phase identified at other sites seems secured by comparative stratigraphy.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² See D'ANDREA 2014/2015, 146, fig. 12.12, 18–19, 22; 2018b, 228, figs. 10.18, 20–22, 25; 2018c, 14, figs. 17.14–19, 19–20; 2019c, 269–270, figs. 1.12–15, 5.15, 17, 8.4–7.

¹⁵³ Tell Afis: MAZZONI and FELLI 2007, 209–219; FELLI and MERLUZZI 2008, 98–102, fig. 6; Qatna: MORANDI BONACOSSO 2008, 132–135, figs. 15–18; IAMONI 2014; Tell Nebi Mend: KENNEDY 2015a, 63.

¹⁵⁴ D'ANDREA 2014/2015, 151–152; 2018b, 33; 2018c, 16, 23–24, figs. 17–19; 2019c, 268–270, figs. 5–10.

¹⁵⁵ Layers d (UCIAMS-21675) and c (UCIAMS-21676) in Square 15Gc respectively in the intervals 2200–2130 calBC (1-sigma) and 2210–2120 calBC (2-sigma), and 2130–2080 calBC (1-sigma) and 2140–2010 calBC (2-sigma): NISHIYAMA 2009, figs. 10.13–10.14.

¹⁵⁶ Respectively, LTL-386A and LTL-386A: FIORENTINO et al. 2008, tab. 2.

¹⁵⁷ PEYRONEL 2019, 744–747, figs. 5–8.

¹⁵⁸ D'ANDREA 2018c, 3–24, tab. 2–3.

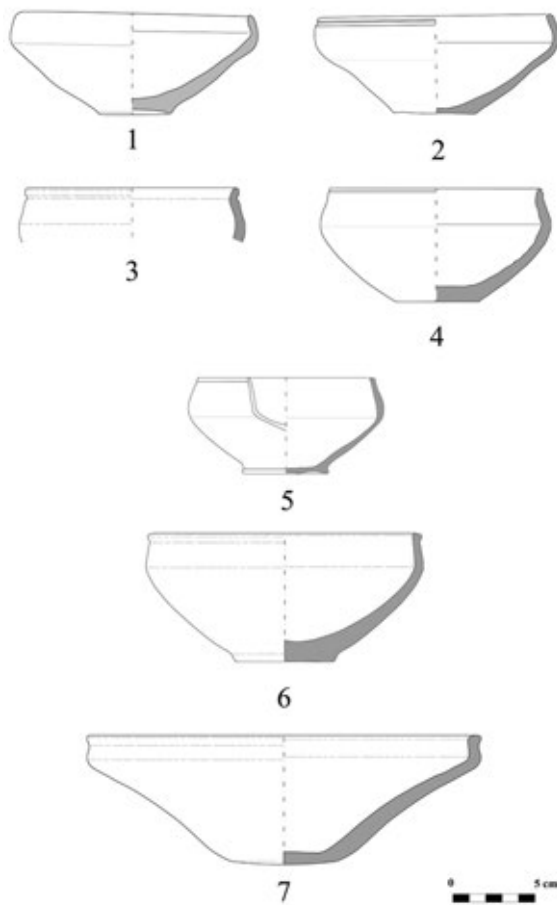


Fig. 14 Harbingers of Middle Bronze Age pottery types in late Early Bronze IVB contexts in north-western inland Syria;

- no. 1: Hama, Level J1 (after FUGMANN 1958, fig. 103.3C 52, redrawn);
 no. 2: Tell Mastuma, Stratum VIII (after WAKITA 2009, fig. 3.7.17, redrawn);
 no. 3: Tell Mardikh/Ebla, late phase Mardikh IIB2 (after D'ANDREA 2018b, fig. 10.22, © Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria);
 no. 4: Tell Mastuma (after TSUNEKI 2009, fig. 3.19.13, redrawn);
 no. 5: Tell Afis, phase Afis IV–V (after FELLI and MERLUZZI 2008, fig. 5.9, redrawn);
 nos. 6–7: Tell Mardikh/Ebla, late phase Mardikh IIB2 (after D'ANDREA 2019c, figs. 5.17, 10.3, © Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

The difference between Ebla's trajectory and the continuous evolution observable at other sites might be due to the destruction that hit the late Early Bronze IV period's Ebla, though apparently did not stop its development as it had been the case for the destruction at the end of the first Early Bronze IV phase.¹⁵⁹ Even at the latter site Early Bronze IV/Middle Bronze I continuity is remarkable in many important material and immaterial aspects,¹⁶⁰ and, as said above, this phenomenon may be due to the general renegotiation of economic and political power during the later Early Bronze IV in northern and central Syria, which would gradually shape the sociocultural transformations that characterized the social order of the Middle Bronze Age in these regions. In this regard, it is worth noting that striking continuity between Early Bronze IVB and Middle Bronze I is observable at other important sites in the region to the east, such as Tell Bi'a/Tuttul. In fact, at the latter site not only a new palace (Palace A), resembling the roughly contemporary *Shakkanakku* period palace at Mari in its plan, was built during the later Early Bronze IVB phase (Ur III period) and used through Middle Bronze I,¹⁶¹ but there is also evidence for continuous use of the temple *in antis* (the Temple of Dagan) from Early Bronze IVB through Middle Bronze I.¹⁶² In fact, the site seems to have served as an interregional cultic centre all through these periods, which suggests some degree of continuity of social structures and interactions between the two periods that might be related also to the role played by Mari in the interregional scenario at the turn between the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BCE.

The Southern Levant between the 3rd and 2nd Millennium BCE

In the southern Levant material culture clusters and settlement patterns changed once again towards the end of the Early Bronze IV period too. Possibly except for Tell el-Hammam in the southern Jordan Valley,¹⁶³ the main Early Bronze IV sites in central and southern Transjordan were deserted permanently towards the end of the period, as well as settlements in the Central Negev; likewise, the exploitation of the copper ores in the 'Arabah and the Faynan seems to have ceased by that time. Conversely, an early Middle Bronze Age phase is attested thus far only at a few sites in the northern and coastal areas of the southern

¹⁵⁹ D'ANDREA 2019d, 19–26, figs. 4–15. On the EB IVB destruction see MATTHIAE 2020.

¹⁶⁰ PINNOCK 2009; D'ANDREA 2014/2015, 146–149; 2019b, 19–24, figs. 8–10, 13, 16–17; 2019c, 269–272, figs. 3–4.

¹⁶¹ NOVÁK 2015, 72–73, fig. 28.

¹⁶² NOVÁK 2015, 66.

¹⁶³ COLLINS 2020, 282, f. n. 5, 289.



Fig. 15 Late Early Bronze IVB pottery assemblage from Tell Mardikh/Ebla with bowl types pre-announcing the Middle Bronze Age tradition (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

Levant.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, not only at some Early Bronze IV sites transitional vessel forms appear that are harbingers of the Middle Bronze Age tradition, but above all there are striking similarities between pottery types attested in assemblages dating to the late Early Bronze IV phase in the eastern Dead Sea basin and to the initial Middle Bronze I (= Middle Bronze IIA) phase at sites in the northern and on the coastal areas of the southern Levant, among which, in particular close-shaped carinated bowls (Figs. 16.1–7, 17.1–5, 7–8) and straight-sided cooking pots with unpierced steam holes (Figs. 16.8–9, 18.8) that are

considered typical of the Middle Bronze I pottery horizon (Fig. 16.11–17).¹⁶⁵ The main open research question is whether this documentation reflects a shift in settlement patterns between two phases that followed one another in time or two different *facies* that were attested at the same point in time in different regions.¹⁶⁶ This issue is currently unresolved because continuous Early Bronze IV–Middle Bronze I sequences with stratified evidence associated with radiometric determinations for each phase are lacking, and the available radiometric dates are related to either one-phase Early

¹⁶⁴ ILAN 1995, 301–304; COHEN 2002, 54, 107–109, figs. 3a–3b, 12; 2017; MAEIR 2010, 64, 136–139, figs. 8, 59; D'ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 281–282, fig. 6.4; 2014d, 154–155, fig. 1; 2019a, 70–72, fig. 5.

¹⁶⁵ D'ANDREA 2014d, fig. 9; 2019a, 70–72, fig. 4; 2020a, 409, fig. 22.4. For the early Middle Bronze I close-shaped carinated bowls and straight-sided cooking pots see, respectively: ILAN and MARCUS 2019, 12, pl. 1.2.6 1–7, 14, fig. 1.2.12.1–7.

¹⁶⁶ NIGRO 2003a, 139; 2007, 367; D'ANDREA 2014a, Vol. 1, 280; 2019a, 72; 2020a, 409–410; in press; COHEN 2017, 36–37, 39.

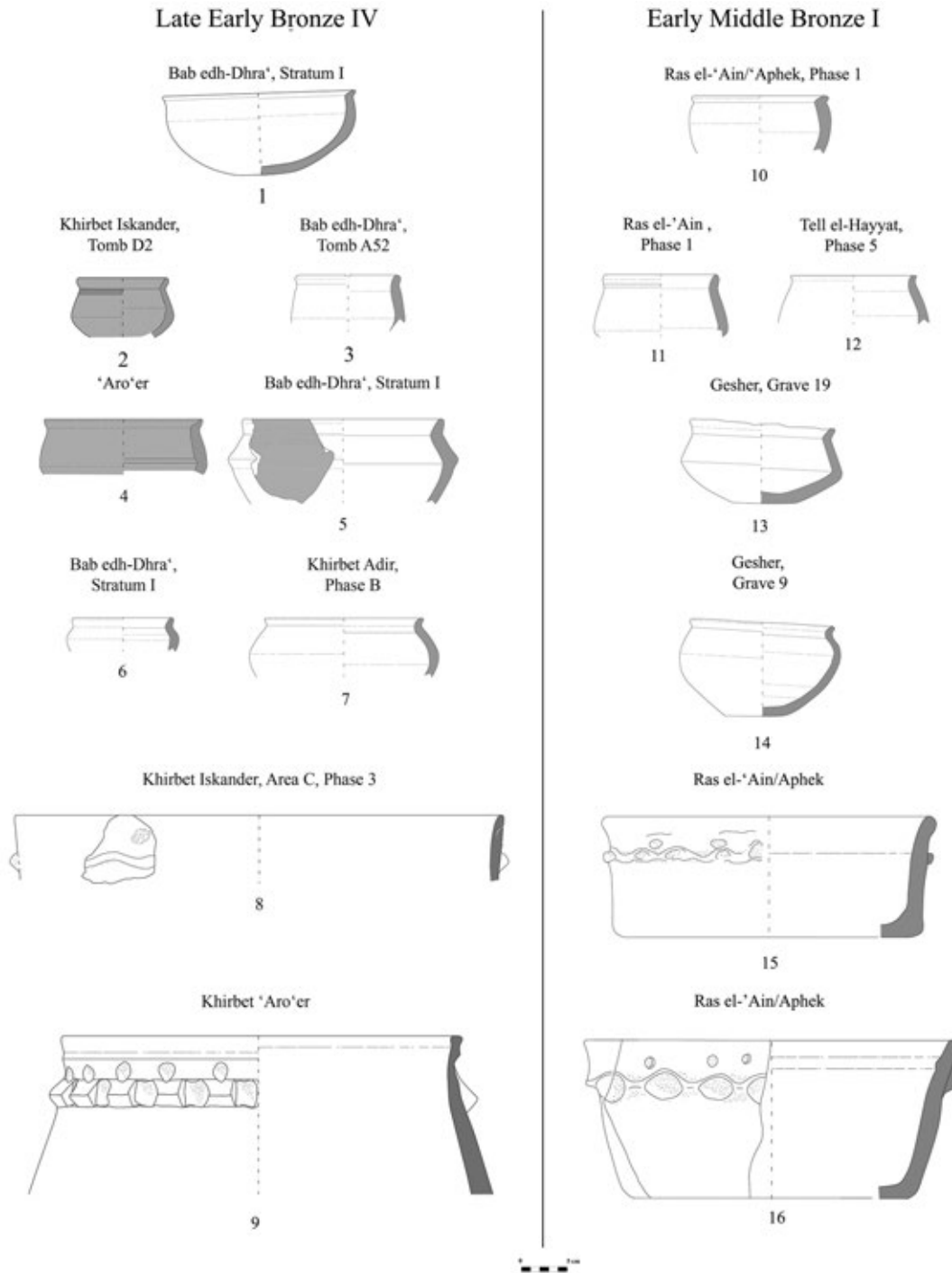


Fig. 16 “Late” Early Bronze IV pottery types (nos. 1–9) from the southern Levant compared to initial Middle Bronze I shapes (nos. 10–16); no. 1: Bab edh-Dhra’, Stratum I (after RAST and SCHAUB 2003, pl. 116.36, redrawn); no. 2: Khirbet Iskander, Tomb D2 (after PETERMAN and RICHARD 2010, fig. 10.3.2, redrawn); no. 3: Bab edh-Dhra’, Tomb A 52 (after RAST and SCHAUB 2003, fig. 276.19, redrawn); no. 4: ‘Aro’er, Level VIa (after OLÁVARRI 1969, fig. 4.17, redrawn); nos. 5–6: Bab edh-Dhra’, Stratum I (after RAST and SCHAUB 2003, pl. 112.21, 23, redrawn); no. 7: Khirbet Ader, Phase B (after CLEVELAND 1960, fig. 14.13, redrawn); no. 8: Khirbet Iskander, Area C, Phase C (after RICHARD et al. 2010, pl. 17.16, redrawn); no. 9: ‘Aro’er, Level VIa (after OLÁVARRI 1960, fig. 5, no. 12, redrawn); nos. 10–11: Ras el-‘Ain/Aphek, Phase 1 (after BECK 1985, fig. 2.3–4, redrawn); no. 12: Tell el-Hayyat, Phase 5 (after FALCONER and FALL 2006, fig. 4.2.h, redrawn); nos. 13–14: Gesher, Graves 19 and 9 (after COHEN and BONFIL 2007, figs. 5.9.5, 5.12.2, redrawn); nos. 15–16: Ras el-‘Ain/Aphek (after ILAN and MARCUS 2019, pl. 1.2.12.7 and 3 respectively, redrawn)



Fig. 17 Close-shaped bowls with rounded carination (nos. 1–5, 6–7) and fragment of straight-sided cooking pots from Early Bronze IV assemblages of Khirbet Iskander (photo by the author, © Khirbat Iskandar Expedition)

Bronze IV contexts (Bab edh-Dhra¹⁶⁷) or to early Middle Bronze Age contexts which are not preceded by Early Bronze IV occupation, like Tell el-'Ifshar/Tel Hefer on the Sharon Plain¹⁶⁸ and even Tell

el-Hayyat.¹⁶⁹ Climate change and environmental degradation during the 20th century BCE are suggested by proxy data for the eastern Dead Sea basin and south-central Transjordan and have

¹⁶⁷ RAST and SCHAUB 2003, 639–640: sample 134016: 2341–2139 calBC (1-sigma), 2462–2128 calBC (2-sigma); sample 134017: 2145–2013 calBC (1-sigma), 2211–1915 calBC (2-sigma); P-2573: 2290–2131 calBC (1-sigma), 2351–2026 calBC (2-sigma); sample SI-2872, 2342–2141 calBC (1-sigma), 2462–2128 calBC (2-sigma); sample SI-2875: 2039–1889 calBC (1-sigma), 2139–1753 calBC (2-sigma).

¹⁶⁸ MARCUS 2013, 185, tabs. 15.1–15.3, figs. 15.3–15.4, 15.6–15.7: radiocarbon dates for the earliest Middle Bronze I phase at the site fall in the interval between 1942–1876 (1-sigma) and 1977–1767 (2-sigma); modelled dates are 1912–1842 1-sigma).

¹⁶⁹ At Tell el-Hayyat evidence of a late Early Bronze IV occupation has been identified in Phase 6, which is radiocarbon-dated to the interval between 1921 and 1887 (modelled dates after FALCONER, FALL and HÖFLMAYER 2021, 27, Tab. 5, in place of higher modelled dates between 1949 and 1907 calBC published in FALCONER and FALL 2019, 72 and tab. 5.2. However, this occupation is thus far represented only by pottery sherds retrieved in a basal layer of sterile soil of “apparently reworked nature” connected with levelling and clearing at the time of the construction of the Phase 5 temple (FALCONER and FALL 2006, 33), therefore, the radiocarbon dates cannot be used to date the terminal Early Bronze IV phase at the site.

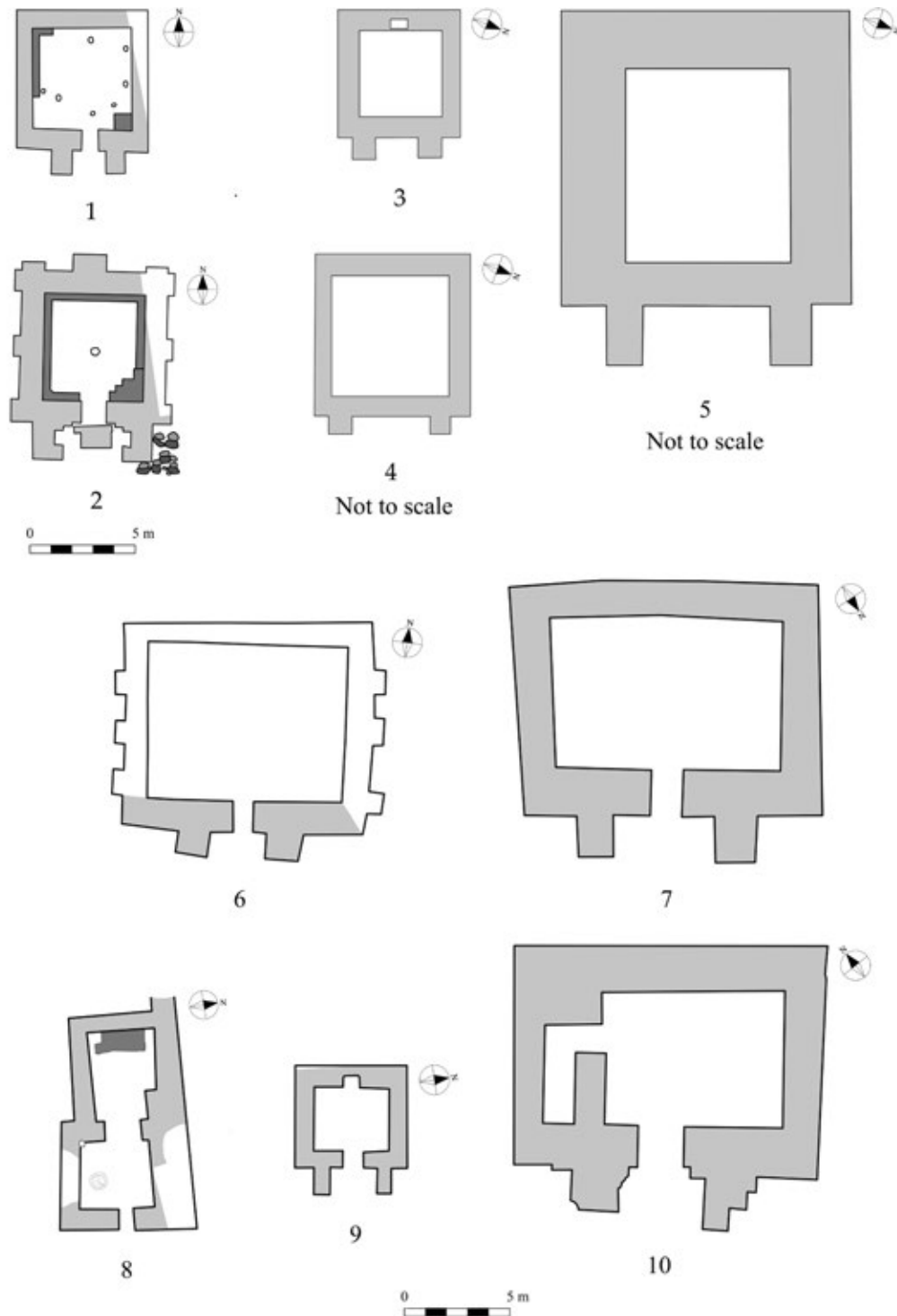
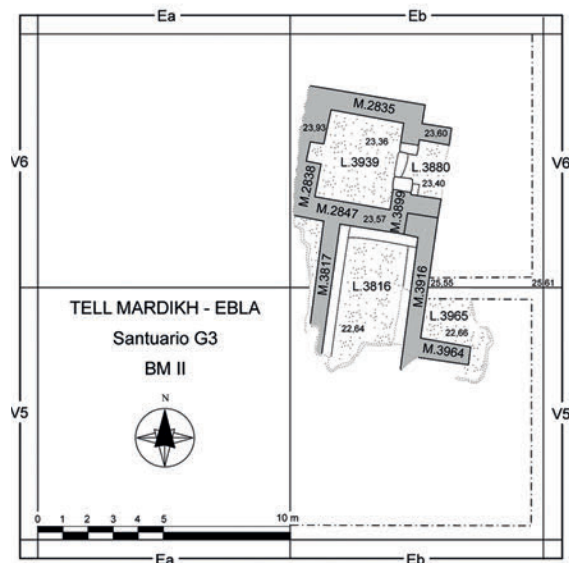


Fig. 18 Temples in antis with antae moved toward the entrance to the cult room in the 3rd and 2 millennium BCE; nos. 1–2: Tell el-Hayyat, Phase 5 and Phase 4 temples, Middle Bronze I (after FALCONER and FALL 2006, fig. 2.1.a–b, redrawn); nos. 3–5: Tabaqat Fahl/Pella, “Green Mudbrick Temple”, Phase 1, Stratum XI.3b, Middle Bronze I(=IIA) “Brown Mudbrick Temple”, Phase 2, Stratum XI.3a, Middle Bronze I(=IIA), and “Stone antentemple”, Stratum XI.2, Middle Bronze II (=IIB) (after BOURKE 2012 tab. 1, redrawn, not to scale); no. 6: Tell Halawa B, Bau I, Phase 1c–a (after WERNER 1994, fig. on page 129, redrawn), Early Bronze II–III; no. 7: Tell Hariri/Mari, Temple Tour, Ville II, Early Bronze IVA (after PARROT 1974, fig. 38, redrawn); no. 8: Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Shrine HH5, Early Bronze IVB (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria); no. 9: Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Shrine G3, Middle Bronze I-II (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria); no. 10: Tell Hariri/Mari, Temple of Ninhursag Ville III, late(?) Early Bronze IVB–early Middle Bronze II (after PARROT 1974, fig. 53, redrawn)

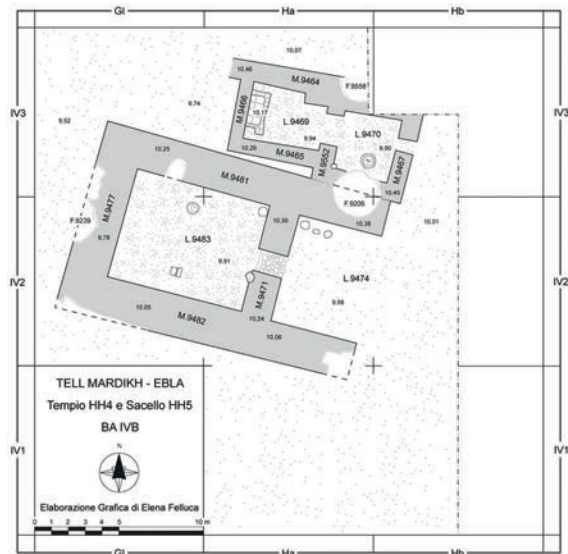


a



b

Fig. 19 Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Shrine G3; schematic plan (a) and general view, looking north (b) (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)



a



b

Fig. 20 Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Shrine HH5, schematic plan of the religious complex with Temple HH4 and Shrine HH5 (a), and general view of Shrine HH5 looking north-east (b), Early Bronze IVB (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

been considered as possible factors diminishing the carrying capacities of sites and leading to their desertion at the end of Early Bronze IV.¹⁷⁰ However, other factors may lie behind the end of permanent settlements in a region that had proved resilient to multifactorial crisis already in the 3rd millennium BCE, as discussed above. Considering that starting from early Middle Bronze I *tell*-sites in Transjordan seem located only in the Jordan Valley,¹⁷¹ the opening of new trade routes cutting central and southern Transjordan off from major commercial interactions

might be another possible or concomitant explanation for the abandonment of permanent settlements in the latter areas and in the Central Negev, as well as for the cessation of mining operations in the 'Arabah and the Faynan with the advent of the Middle Bronze Age.¹⁷² Mining activities in southern Sinai favoured Levantine-Egyptian interactions in this region of the southern Levant during the Middle Bronze Age,¹⁷³ starting from the early 12th Dynasty;¹⁷⁴ likewise, evidence of Levantine-Egyptian interactions in the same period are traceable at sites on the southern

¹⁷⁰ FINKELSTEIN and LANGGUT 2014, 222–226, fig. 3.

¹⁷¹ MAEIR 2010, figs. 58–62.

¹⁷² ROSEN 2016, 202, 217–218.

¹⁷³ GOLDWASSER 2013; COHEN 2019, 80–81.

¹⁷⁴ ROSEN 2016, 217; COHEN 2019, 84.



Fig. 21 Tell Mardikh/Ebla, view of the main cult room of Shrine HH5 from the top, looking southwest, Early Bronze IVB (© Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria)

Levantine littoral.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, on a more general scale, from the mid-20th century BCE a trade network between Anatolia, Syria, and Mesopotamia was revived with the establishment of the *kārum* system of contacts and the Assyrian Trade Colonies¹⁷⁶ that might have changed once again inter-regional paths of procurement of raw materials, excluding some areas that had played a role in interregional distribution of copper before.¹⁷⁷

In contrast, contacts between the Syro-Mesopotamian areas and the north-east Jordan Valley were still at work during the earliest Middle Bronze I phase. As the current author has suggested in previous works, this may be mirrored by the presence

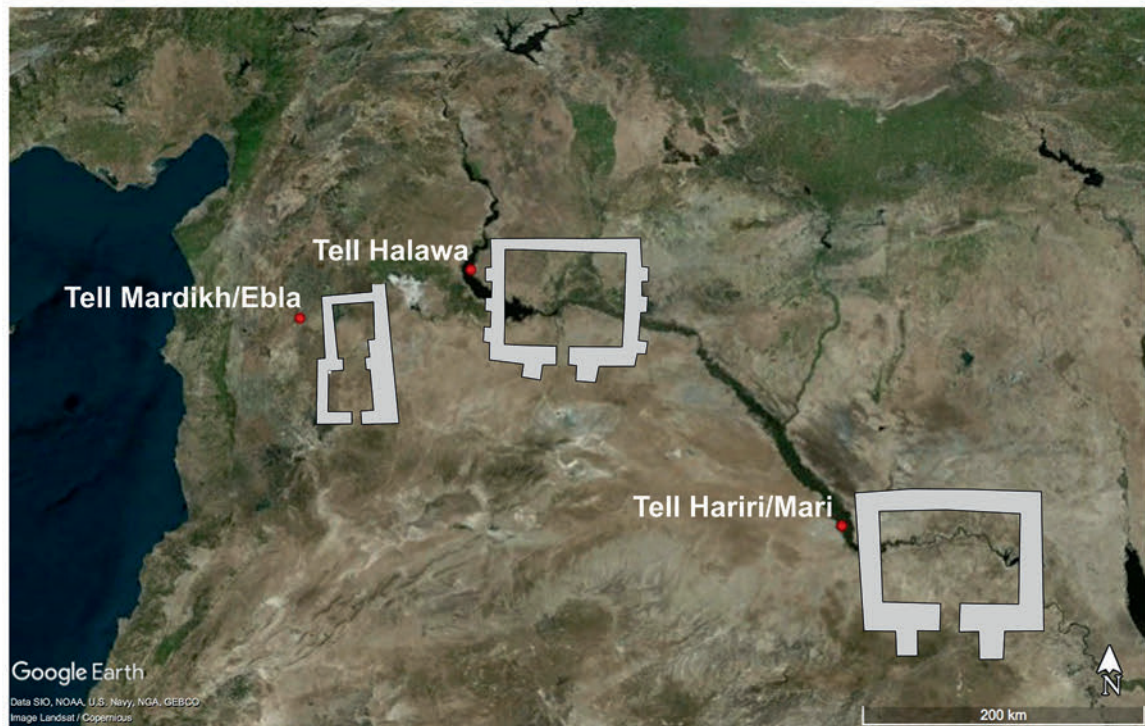
of cult buildings that can be ascribed to foreign prototypes in the earliest Middle Bronze I phases at Tell el-Hayyat (Fig. 18.1–2), and Tabaqat Fahal/Pella (Fig. 18.3–4), where this temple layout will be used also for the Middle Bronze II (=IIB) temple (Fig. 18.5). The particular square buildings with two perpendicular *antae* framing the entrance to the cella documented at those two sites¹⁷⁸ can be compared with Shrine G3 on the acropolis of Ebla used during Middle Bronze I–II (Figs. 18.9, 19) and to the Temple of Ninhursag at Tell Hariri/Mari used between the *Shakkanakku* and the Amorite periods (Fig. 18.10). While the resemblance of the early Middle Bronze I Transjordanian temples to Ebla's shrine has been traditionally recognised, the connection to the Mari temple has been overlooked. An ancestry in the 3rd millennium BCE architectural tradition of the Euphrates Valley can be recognised for this type of

¹⁷⁵ MARCUS et al. 2008; MARCUS, PORATH and PALEY 2008; COHEN 2015, 253–255; 2016, 46–47; 2019, 86. On maritime contacts, see also MARCUS 2007.

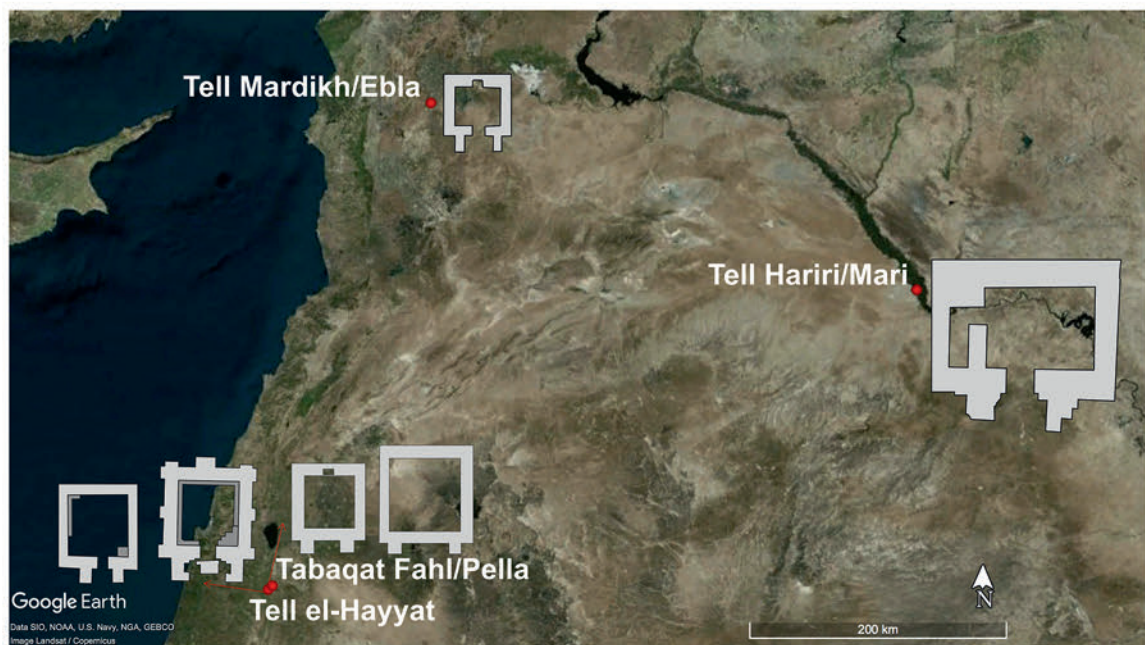
¹⁷⁶ See BARJAMOVIC 2008; 2011; KULAKOĞLU 2011.

¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, metallographic analysis of metal weapons from Tell 'Arqa and Byblos in northern Lebanon dating to Middle Bronze I have suggested that copper from Iran or Oman was used, probably reaching the coast through Mesopotamia and Syria (EL MORR et al. 2013, 4300–4303). Sidon yielded additional evidence for the use of Omani copper in Lebanon during the Middle Bronze Age (VERON et al. 2011/2012, 73).

¹⁷⁸ These earlier cult buildings appear at the beginning of a sequence that would culminate in the construction of massive Syrian-style temples at both sites, the one at Tell el-Hayyat being a temple *in antis* with long-room cella, the one at Pella an impressive tripartite *midgol* temple (see, respectively, FALCONER and FALL 2006, 84–101 and fig. 6.2; BOURKE 2012, 161–164, fig. 3, and 194–195, tab. 1).



a



b

Fig. 22 Maps of distribution of temples in antis with antae moved toward the entrance to the cult room during the 3rd (a) and 2nd (b) millennia BCE shown in Fig. 18 (base map by M. Zingarello, edits by the author. Map data: SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, NEBCO, Landsat, Copernicus through Google Earth Pro and Bing Maps Tile System, 2020).

Plans of temples at Ebla © Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria; plans of temple at Tell Halawa after WERNER 1994, fig. on page 129, redrawn; plans of temples at Tell Hariri/Mari after PARROT 1974, figs 38, 53, redrawn; plans of temples at Tabaqat Fahl/Pella after, BOURKE 2012b, tab. 1, redrawn; plans of temples at Tell el-Hayyat after FALCONER and FALL 2006, fig. 2.1.a–b, redrawn.

All drawings not to scale

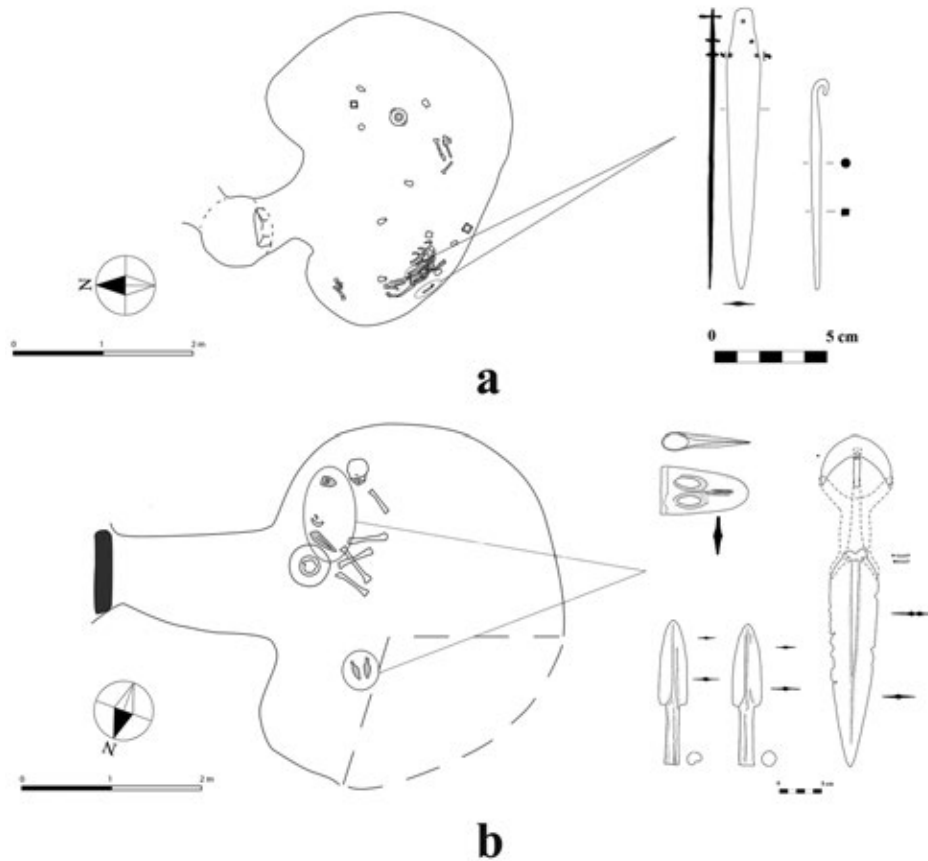


Fig. 23 Warrior burials in the Early Bronze IV and Middle Bronze I (=IIA) periods;
 a: Tomb A 41 at Dhahr Mirzbaneh (after LAPP 1966, pl. 9a [tomb plan], fig. 24.12–13 [weapons], redrawn),
 b: Tomb 2 from Tell es-Sarem/Tel Rehov (after YOGEV 1985, fig. 4 [weapons], plan 3 [tomb plan], redrawn)

cult buildings in the so-called *Bau I* at Halawa Tell B (Fig. 18.6) and in the *Temple Tour* at Mari (Fig. 18.7).¹⁷⁹ However, the Ebla, Pella, and Tell el-Hayyat temples have a direct access to the cella according to the Levantine tradition, while the 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE temples in the Euphrates Valley mentioned above have a bent-axis approach that is a prototypical characteristic in the latter region since the earlier phase of the 3rd millennium BCE.¹⁸⁰ However, as proposed by the present author, Shrine HH5 at Ebla (Figs. 18.8, 20–21), dating from the end of Early Bronze IV, might be an earlier Levantine antecedent with direct access, suggesting an earlier adoption of this temple type in the Levant.¹⁸¹

The peculiar square mudbrick temples of Middle Bronze I at Tell el-Hayyat and Pella are the earliest Middle Bronze Age temples attested in the southern

Levant and their resemblance to foreign prototypes with a clear ancestry in a 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE architectural tradition of the Euphrates River Valley (Fig. 22) adapted locally to the Levantine cultic practice of temples with direct access needs to be explained too. This combination of exogenous and endogenous characteristics might indicate not just local awareness of foreign architectural traditions but adumbrate the possibility that those temples were used by people from different communities crossing the corridor that linked the Euphrates Valley and northern Transjordan since already the early 3rd millennium BCE.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ MATTHIAE 2006, 224–225 = 2013, 329–330; D'ANDREA 2014c, 46–49, figs. 6, 9; 2014d, 155, figs. 3–4, 6; 2016b, 190–192, 12, 14–17, with relative bibliography.

¹⁸⁰ NOVÁK 2015, 62, figs. 10.20.

¹⁸¹ D'ANDREA 2014c, 49–50, figs. 11–13; 2014d, 155, fig. 5; 2016b, 192, figs. 3a, 18–19.

¹⁸² The current author has suggested that a similar phenomenon can be observed also at Early Bronze II–III religious complexes, as, for instance, at Khirbet ez-Zeraqon in the northern Transjordanian plateau, where the sacred area of the 29th century BCE included a circular platform, a temple with simple broad-room layout in the southern Levantine tradition of the Early Bronze Age, and two temples with the very same layout (but different cult orientation) of their contemporary *Bau I* at Halawa Tell B (D'ANDREA 2020e, 11–13, figs. 11 and 13).

Interregional Connectivity and the Development of Intercultural Visual Codes

To complete this review of material culture clusters changing in the Levant in relation to inter-regional connections developing between c. 2600 and ca. 1900 BCE it will be worth revisiting once again briefly the emergence of the so-called ‘warrior burials’ between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages (Fig. 23).¹⁸³ The notion that the burials with sets of weapons belonged to a class of warriors or mercenaries emerging in connection with a presumed period of insecurity between 2000–1900 BCE is still present in recent literature,¹⁸⁴ although there is not enough evidence to connect unmistakably the individuals buried with weapons to such statuses or roles.¹⁸⁵ Likewise, while the phenomenon of ‘warrior burials’ has been traditionally associated with the Amorites,¹⁸⁶ interpretations connected more generally with the construction of social identities in terms of rank or role within given societies, independently from the sociocultural and/or ethnic affiliation of the individuals buried with the weapons, have been elaborated more recently.¹⁸⁷ My suggestion is that this phenomenon might be better understood in the context of gradual encryption of intercultural visual codes within the material culture connected with social identity construction in a context of interregional trade and long-distance mobility between the late 3rd and early 2nd millennium BCE.¹⁸⁸

Metal statuettes from Byblos from deposits in the Temple of the Obelisks show sets comparable with both those found in the southern Levant during the later Early Bronze IV phases and those occurring on the Syro-Lebanese coast, in the Middle Orontes Valley, southern Syria, and the north-central Jordan

Valley during Middle Bronze I.¹⁸⁹ Looking at the spatial distribution of progressively codified sets of weapons, it seems that those sets spread along the Levantine coast and in the southern Levant (as well as in North-Western Arabia) between the late Early and the early Middle Bronze Ages.¹⁹⁰

Later elements that may support the hypothesis that burials with codified sets of weapons might refer to individuals connected with technology, trade and mobility more than with warriors is offered by references to Asiatics in textual and pictorial Egyptian sources dating to the Middle Kingdom re-examined by Orly Goldwasser also in connection with



Fig. 24 The donkey rider iconography in Sinaitic stele dating from the Middle Kingdom:

a) scene from Sinai stela 112 according to the new drawing proposed by GOLDWASSER 2013, fig. 2, redrawn; b) scene from Sinai Stela 405, south-east face (after GARDINER, PEET and ČERNÝ 1955, 206, redrawn); c) scene from Sinai Stela 115, west face (after Gardiner, Peet and ČERNÝ 1952, pl. XXXIX, redrawn)

¹⁸³ On the phenomenon of the ‘warrior burials’ see OREN 1971; PHILIP 1995; 2007; NIGRO 2003b; ANTONETTI 2005; GARFINKEL 2001; RHEM 2003; COHEN 2012; D’ANDREA 2013; BRADBURY and PHILIP 2016, 314, 318; HAUSLEITER, D’ANDREA and ZUR 2018; GREENBERG 2019, 197–200; PRELL 2019; MONTANARI 2020.

¹⁸⁴ KAUFMAN 2013, 670; BURKE 2019, 86; BRADBURY and PHILIP 2017. Dealing with the Middle Bronze I (his Middle Bronze IIA) phenomenon of the ‘warrior burials’, BURKE (2014a, 361) associates the individuals buried with weapons as (Amorite) mercenaries serving in the context of overland caravan trade flourishing during the Middle Bronze Age and, therefore, depicts them as “individuals employed in such a capacity, displaying no evidence of exposure to armed conflict but often possessing the trappings of merchants”.

¹⁸⁵ D’ANDREA 2019b, 31.

¹⁸⁶ See, e.g., BURKE 2014a, 361; 2014b, 407; 2019, 83–8.

¹⁸⁷ HOMSHER and CRADIC 2018, 10–12; HAUSLEITER and ZUR 2016, 155–158; LUCIANI 2016, 25–26; HAUSLEITER, D’ANDREA and ZUR 2018, 414; D’ANDREA 2019b, 31.

¹⁸⁸ D’ANDREA 2019b, 33, 35; see also HAUSLEITER, D’ANDREA and ZUR 2018, 326–328.

¹⁸⁹ OREN 1971, fig. 5; D’ANDREA 2013, 140; D’ANDREA and VACCA 2015, 51; HAUSLEITER, D’ANDREA and ZUR 2018, 427, fig. 11.

¹⁹⁰ HAUSLEITER, D’ANDREA and ZUR 2018.

the 'warrior burials' of Levantine tradition identified at Tell ed-Dab'a, the capital city of the Hyksos in the Nile Delta. In the first place, Goldwasser recalls that in the inscription of Khnumotep at Dahshur it is clearly possible to make a distinction between the "Unfriendly Canaanite" "represented in the script system by the "Kneeling Captive" position"¹⁹¹ and the "Friendly Asiatic" or "Non-belligerent Canaanite" whose classifier is "a peacefully seated Canaanite holding a Canaanite 'eye' axe typical of the period of the early 12th Dynasty".¹⁹² Secondly, Goldwasser elaborates on the possibility to identify "prototypical culturemes" in pictorial representations of Asiatics in connections with weapons and mobility that may be expressed also in the archaeological record from Tell el-Dab'a. In fact, her review of the pictorial record available from the Sinitic stele, dating mostly to the reigns of Amenemhet III and IV,¹⁹³ connected with the exploitation of the Serabit el-Khadim mines in southern Sinai has allowed her to document a recurrent schema that she considers an "identity signifier" of "the Canaanite universe".

This schema (Fig. 24) consist of a main central male figure holding an axe and riding a donkey – the so-called 'donkey-rider' – framed within two individuals carrying a spear/javelin – the so-called 'armed boy' motif that appears also in the Beni Hasan painting, leading the procession of Asiatics.¹⁹⁴ It is to this milieu of "desert experts, caravaners and entrepreneurs 'on the move'" emerging from Egyptian pictorial and textual documentation, rather than to warriors, that Goldwasser has connected the individuals inhumated with codified sets of Levantine weapons and bronze belts, and sometimes associated with equid burials in Middle Bronze Age Tell ed-Dab'a at the end of the 12th Dynasty, further emphasising that it is likely that all such groups in the Near East were armed to some extent.¹⁹⁵ This consideration fits well with our proposal that the burials with codified sets of weapons may have not been necessarily connected with a connotation of the buried individuals as 'warriors'.¹⁹⁶

During the last years, the presence of burials with sets of weapons of Levantine type has emerged conspicuously also in other areas outside the Levant, in particular Northwest Arabia, although in the latter case, such weaponries might occur in closer connection with a local element than is observed in Egypt where they appear associated rather unmistakably with a Levantine presence. In fact, at Tayma the Levantine weapons are found inside local types of constructed tombs, as analysed in depth

by Arnulf Hausleiter and Alina Zur, who have also underlined that in the Tayma burials with weapons it is the local component – the tomb type – that is visible, while the non-local element – the sets of Levantine weapons – is concealed though intimately connected with the identity of the buried individuals.¹⁹⁷

The diversity of the evidence from different regions might mirror a multiplicity of situations including non-local people buried according to the traditions of their places of origin or to customs that might reconnect with their place of origin (such as the cist graves at Tell ed-Dab'a) and people buried according to the local traditions (such as the constructed graves at Tayma). Within such a diverse record, the different visual emphasis on funerary traditions and the sets of weapons observed by Hausleiter and Zur at Tayma is of the greatest interest. While the grave type may refer to the geographic origin of the individuals buried with the weapons and might have been used to characterize them conspicuously as local or non-local in the different cases that we have recalled above, the sets of weapons were not visible though their placement within the burials in close connection with the deceased denotes clearly their function as identity markers.¹⁹⁸ However, during both the Early Bronze IV and the Middle Bronze Age, their codified assortment was a unifying trend among the different depositions that cut across all the possible differences in burial customs and grave/tomb types, suggesting a unique identity/rank/role of the people buried with the weapons overlapping with their individual ethnic or socio-cultural identities. This question could be better understood with a major contribution of bioarchaeology to the definition of the geographical origin(s) of the people inhumated with weapons at different places in the Levant and in the neighbouring areas. However, the evidence might support the hypothesis that the emergence of this phenomenon was related to increasing contacts developing from large-scale economic activities (such as metal trade and metallurgy, and textile production) that required long-distance mobility and interregional connectivity. These phenomena might have prompted the need for visual identity markers for individuals who travelled long distances in connection with commercial operations cutting across their possible different ethnicity, provenance, and socio-cultural affiliations.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹¹ GOLDWASSER 2013,3 56,f n.1 4.

¹⁹² GOLDWASSER 2013, 355–356, fn. 14 and fig. 7, citing ALLEN 2008,3 3; see also COHEN 2019,8 2,f n.1 0.

¹⁹³ COHEN 2019, 84.

¹⁹⁴ GOLDWASSER 2013,3 58; see also COHEN 2019, 80–83.

¹⁹⁵ GOLDWASSER 2013,3 71.S ee also PRELL 2020, 324.

¹⁹⁶ D'ANDREA 2019b, 31.

¹⁹⁷ HAUSLEITER and ZUR 2016, 154–157; 2018; HAUSLEITER, D'ANDREA and ZUR 2018, 427.

¹⁹⁸ See fn.1 96

¹⁹⁹ HAUSLEITER, D'ANDREA and ZUR 2018, 421, 427; D'ANDREA 2019b, 33–35.

Conclusion: Material Clusters Changing, Expanding, and Overlapping in the Levant (and beyond) between the 3rd and 2nd Millennium BCE

During the last twenty years urban elites' emulation has become the model *par excellence* for changes observable in the material culture of the southern Levant during the local non-urban Early Bronze IV period, particularly for the emergence and spread of new vessel shapes apparently associated with consumption of beverages and burial customs. Likewise, seminomadic pastoralism, climatic change and migrations of refugees have been considered prime factors to explain evidence for human mobility and changes in archaeological clusters across the Levant and the neighbouring regions in the centuries that led to the transition from the Early to the Middle Bronze Ages.²⁰⁰ Here we have proposed some re-examination of the archaeological evidence for transformations in the material culture that may mirror broader (socio-political, socioeconomic, or sociocultural) changes through the lens of higher chronological and spatial definition that are now possible thanks to a wider set of stratified data for both the northern and southern Levant.

We by no means intend to rule out that in the timespan under review elite emulation, cultural and/or technological transfer, movements of pastoralists and climatic change did not take place at all, and we have tried to include evidence for these phenomena when relevant to the above analysis and discussion of data. Rather, we wish to stress the importance of discriminating between micro-local responses and macro-local changes though retaining a large-scale spatial approach to get the big picture, as well as of considering the long-term perspective to better understand transformations mirrored by changes in material culture.

The spatial distribution of material culture across the Levant between c. 2600 and c. 1900 BCE suggests that there are at least three stages when we can see archaeological clusters changing, respectively at the Early Bronze III/IV transition, within 'earlier' and 'later' Early Bronze IV, and at the Early Bronze IV/Middle Bronze I nexus, each time in response to socio-political and socio-economic vicissitudes, and often accompanied by sociocultural transformations too. Mobility and migration that have been so much connected with material culture changes and transformations across the Levant in these periods have not yet been investigated systematically through the lens of bioarchaeology, which has just started to be applied to the Levantine datasets for the Early

and Middle Bronze Ages.²⁰¹ However, within this long timespan, even using more traditional methods different archaeological clusters can be identified that overlap differentially and reflect the diversity of phenomena taking place in those regions as well as different ways and scales of intra- and interregional connectivity.

As discussed above, the realignment of the archaeological periodization for the 3rd millennium BCE in the northern and southern Levant brought by the higher absolute dates for the southern Levantine Early Bronze III and IV has some advantages, in particular the possibility to appreciate a comparable formative stage of urbanization taking place in the northern and southern Levant during Early Bronze III. Transformations during the late Early Bronze III and around the Early Bronze III/IV transition, took place progressively with a shift from a homogeneous formative phase of urbanisation to differentiated regional trajectories during Early Bronze IV (c. 2500–1950 BCE). Continuous urbanism, though with important internal changes, developed in the north, and a long non-urban period, though with internal developments, began in the south.²⁰² However, at present we do not have enough stratified evidence to fill a longer Early Bronze IV period in the southern Levant; the definition of the initial Early Bronze IV in the latter region is still blurry and the duration of different local Early Bronze IV sub-phases is still unknown.²⁰³ However, it seems that from c. 2600/2500 BCE Syria and northern Lebanon transitioned to a flourishing and more developed phase of urbanism, accompanied by the adoption of new convivial practices and the associated sets of banqueting vessels inspired by different foreign prototypes that mirrored new interregional interactions. In contrast, the southern Levant experienced the crisis of local urbanization, with differentiated localised responses ranging from decline to resilience, still under investigation. This might have delayed the inclusion of the latter region in the scenario of increasing interregional connections between the northern Levant, Anatolia, the eastern Aegean, the Middle Euphrates, and Mesopotamia developing from the Early Bronze III/IV transition.²⁰⁴

The second change took place between the first and the second half of the Early Bronze IV period, when, despite the different regional developments, both the northern and southern Levant witnessed important internal re-configurations between 'earlier' and 'later' Early Bronze IV phases influencing the development of new connections and changes in material culture clusters that took place differentially at individual

²⁰⁰ The state of research on these issues in Levantine archaeology is discussed throughout the present paper, with literature; for an overview and examination of these matters from the point of view of Egyptology, see PRIGLINGER 2018; 2019a; 2019b.

²⁰¹ HABER et al. 2017; AGRANAT-TAMIR et al. 2020; SKOURTANIOTI et al. 2020; STANTIS et al. 2020.

²⁰² D'ANDREA 2019b.

²⁰³ GREENBERG 2019, 138.

²⁰⁴ On these connections, see MAZZONI 2020, 15–20.

sites and areas within those regions. In the northern Levant, the fall of Ebla's territorial state that had been a major regional entity, prompted a renegotiation of economic and political power among different subregions as well as among different components of the local communities that would lay the foundations for the social order of the Middle Bronze Age, the time of the Amorite dynasties. As said above, this reconfiguration might have involved to some extent also the areas located at the northernmost fringes of the southern Levant, where local versions of the 'grey wares' typical of Central Syria were produced as a sign not just of interaction but also of major integration with sites in the latter region.²⁰⁵

In the southern Levant, a web of sedentary settlements was established and developed in the wake of recovery from crisis and new growth despite the continuing lack of urbanisation. The spatial distribution of the new techno-stylistic elements and classes of artefacts derived from exotic prototypes suggests multiple and differentiated contacts through major paths of connectivity, running north-south along the coast and inland, through which each region within the southern Levant adopted and adapted different elements.²⁰⁶ Certainly, a major factor projecting the southern Levant into multidirectional interregional connectivity was copper mining and trading on a grand scale. While it is reasonable that mining activities in the 'Arabah and the Faynan regions might have developed from exploitation during the first half of Early Bronze IV (though not thus far visible archaeologically), there is sufficient archaeological evidence that exploitation of local copper on a commercial scale took place in the later Early Bronze IV phase, when the disruption of the Anatolian Trade Network around c. 2200 BCE may have provided a chance for the southern Levant to satisfy interregional demand for copper. These processes on the one hand laid the foundation both for the adoption and adaptation of foreign sets of material attributes that would aptly fuel the new relations that individual subregions had with certain external areas. On the other hand, these contacts prompted technological transfer into the southern Levant from the neighbouring areas where more advanced technical knowledge in both pottery making and metallurgy had become established earlier,²⁰⁷ but, along with this, intense intraregional connectivity might have been a concomitant mechanism of transmission of technological

information at a much more capillary level across the southern Levant.

Finally, understanding the Early Bronze IV/Middle Bronze I nexus in the Levant is still a critical issue and there were certainly substantial changes from one phase to the next and from one tradition to the other. Both in the northern and southern Levant, the Middle Bronze Age sociocultural complex developed in the wake of substantial continuity with late Early Bronze IV, but with significant changes that were the outcomes of long-term factors paired with important external stimuli,²⁰⁸ including intense interregional mobility and the possible presence of 'foreigners' from the neighbouring regions in both the northern and southern Levant in connection with economic activities. This process may have paved the way for growing material culture homogenisation between the northern and southern Levant (and beyond) and to a phase of re-alignment of the two regional trajectories in a new pan-Levantine urban phase in the Middle Bronze Age from the 19th to the 16th century BCE.

One of the most important aspects of such growing homogenisation is the spread of burials of individuals with progressively codified sets of weapons starting from the late 3rd millennium BCE and lasting into the 2nd millennium BCE. This is, at the same time, a sign of a certain degree of continuity in socio-economic structures between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages. Moreover, this is the outcome of a need for a medium to characterise social identities within communication at a 'supra-regional' level quite likely connected with trade, cutting across all the differences in the material correlates of interactions recognisable at smaller spatial scales. Although a one-to-one correlation of burials with sets of weapons and 'warriors' or mercenaries still resonates in recent scholarship,²⁰⁹ as well as their exclusive association with the Amorites,²¹⁰ the need for new interpretative constructs that may take into account homogeneity of the sets of weapons across space and time within diversity of burial practices at different places has been advocated.²¹¹ In a quest for the ancestry of visual canons adopted as identity markers over such a wide spatial scale and through quite a long span of time I have recently recalled that the close connection between individuals and weapons recurs on seal impressions found in the area between the Euphrates Valley and north-western Syria representing a

²⁰⁵ D'ANDREA 2020d, 136–138.

²⁰⁶ D'ANDREA and VACCA 2015, 47–51, figs. 2–8; 2020, 125–126, 128–130; D'ANDREA 2018a; COOPER 2020, 117–118.

²⁰⁷ For the tin-bronze technology, see already PHILIP 1991, 90–98; for the wheel-coiling technique, see e.g. ROUX and THALMANN 2016, 117–120 and HOMSHER and CRADIC 2018, 17.

²⁰⁸ For the northern Levant, see MORANDI BONACOSSO 2014; for the southern Levant, see HOMSHER and CRADIC 2018, 10–19.

²⁰⁹ COHEN 2012; KETTLER and LEVI 2016; BURKE 2019, 86 and see also BURKE 2017, 287.

²¹⁰ GERNEZ 2007, 124–125; 2012, 120; BURKE 2014a, 361; 2018, 407; 2019, 83–8. See also BRADBURY and PHILIP 2017.

²¹¹ LUCIANI 2016, 25–26; HAUSLEITER, D'ANDREA and ZUR 2018, 426–428; HOMSHER and CRADIC 2018, 10–11.

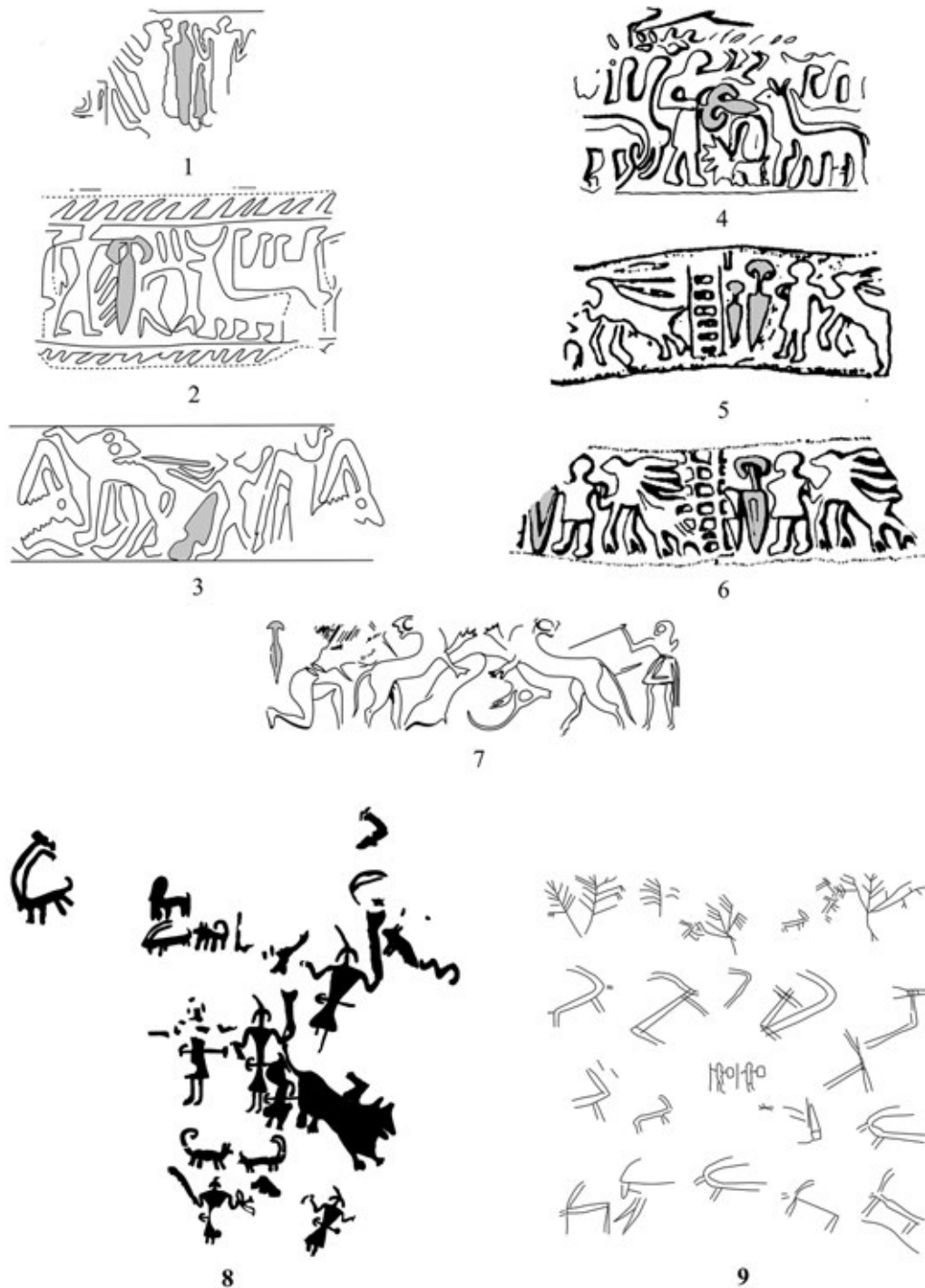


Fig. 25 Iconographies of armed individuals or individuals connected with weapons (coloured in grey); no. 1: seal impression UMM04 G-001 from Umm el-Marra, Early Bronze III (after SCHWARTZ et al. 2012, fig. 17, redrawn); no. 2: seal impression 3H 380 from Hama Level J5, Early Bronze IVA (after RAVN 1960, 98–99, no. 119, redrawn); no. 3: seal impression UMM99 G-1 from Umm el-Marra, Early Bronze IVB (redrawn after SCHWARTZ et al. 2003, fig. 4); nos. 4–6: seal impressions TM.68.D.30, TM.90.P.327 and TM.77.G.477 from Tell Mardikh/Ebla, Early Bronze IVA (respectively after MAZZONI 1992, A3, pls. IV, XI; MAZZONI 1993, A46, fig. 6, pl. 73.2 and MAZZONI 1992, A16, pls. VI, XIV; © Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria); no. 7: seal impression with the theme of the ‘Master of Animals’ from Fara, Early Dynastic Period (after AMIET 1980, pl. 64, no. 857, redrawn); no. 8: petroglyphs at Har Nafha in the Central Negev (after SCHWIMER and YEKUTIELI 2017, third illustration, redrawn); no. 9: graffiti on the walls of Tomb P3 at Tell es-Sultan/Jericho (after KENYON 1965, pl. 7.2, redrawn). Drawings not to scale

personage either armed or connected with weapons in the act of protecting or defending the flocks.²¹² These seal impressions document an iconography of protection of the flocks attested from Early Bronze III to Early Bronze IVB (Fig. 25.1–6).²¹³ The complex elaboration of this local theme has been analysed in several works, pointing out a possible connection with the protohistoric theme of the ‘Master of Animals’ attested in southern Mesopotamia and at Susa since the local Late Chalcolithic period, re-elaborated in a particular local fashion in the Levant in the course of the 3rd millennium BCE, as well as later influences of the Early Dynastic Mesopotamian glyptics on the elaboration of those local iconographies.²¹⁴ In addition, similarities between some cylinder seal impressions from southern Mesopotamia dating from the Early Dynastic Period and reproducing scenes with the ‘Master of Animals’ and our Early Bronze III–IV specimens from Syria (Fig. 25.7) are noteworthy, also for the association of the latter figure with a dagger with crescent-shaped hilt analysed earlier by Frances Pinnock.²¹⁵ Interestingly, as we noticed in a previous work, an iconography of protection of the flocks by an armed individual that somehow recalls the scenes represented on the Syrian seal impressions seems to occur, in a local fashion, also in rare depictions in the southern Levant during the Early Bronze IV period (Fig. 25.8–9).²¹⁶

More work on this issue is needed, but, if this hypothesis is correct, it would suggest that the visual components of codes progressively elaborated at the transition between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages to convey social identities were chosen among features that had become intercultural visual elements due to a long-term acquaintance between communities of different regions put in gradually more structured contacts with each other by the need for valued resources (such as wool and textiles,

metals and metalwork, and timber) in a time of formation of complex societies, including states, in several areas of the Near East. This might be one factor behind the success of such visual codes both in time – from Early Bronze IV to Middle Bronze II – and in space – extending beyond the borders of the Levant. The reason why identity markers created during Early Bronze IV were still used efficiently during the Middle Bronze Age may have been their original connection with large-scale economic activities requiring long-distance mobility – such as metallurgy and metal trade, and textile production – that had been catalysts of interregional connectivity during different Early Bronze Age phases and that remained crucial also in the new social order of the Near East during the Middle Bronze Age.

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212 D’ANDREA 2019b, 33 and fig. 24.

213 MAZZONI 1993, 410; SCHWARTZ et al. 2012, 172, fig. 17 and see also fn. 76 therein, citing comparative evidence from Selenkahiye and Tell Kh era; TUMOLO 2014, 3 3–3 7; 2017, 168–170.

214 References at fn. 2 12.

215 PINNOCK 1997, 465–466, figs. 3–7.

216 D’ANDREA 2019b, 3 3, with references.

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