

## VILLAGES AND THE GROWTH OF SOCIAL POWER IN THE EARLY BRONZE I

### INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the Early Bronze Age in the Levant – half a millennium before the emergence of cities and states – occurred with little fanfare. In fact, one could claim that the dispersed and slowly evolving village culture that existed in the Levant for the bulk of the fourth millennium scarcely merits the designation of a new age and might better be understood as the tail end of the previous epoch. Nonetheless, the Levantine EB I, originally defined on ceramic grounds, does stand up to scrutiny as a period defined by the deployment and physical character of its settlements, by the relations of production and exchange that it reveals and by the transitions that frame it, placing it apart from what came before and setting the stage for what was to come next. It emerges on the heels of the Ghassulian/Beersheba Chalcolithic, a well-defined entity with powerful expressions of religious and social ideologies (see Chapter 1), which appears to fade away (some would say collapse) in the early centuries of the fourth millennium BCE. It ends with three interrelated phenomena: a swift transition from open to walled communities, rapid changes in the distribution of settlements in the landscape and a marked simplification of the material assemblage. Throughout its 500- to 600-year span, EB I was characterized by an apparently stable village existence, slow demographic growth, and a Mediterranean agricultural economy. Although several important technological innovations can be attributed to the period, EB I society was hardly a buzzing hive of creativity, wealth production or social change. Material culture might therefore show regional differences, but within a consistent technological paradigm. Over time, small EB I communities coalesced into larger villages. Our understanding of the organization and workings of these larger villages is rudimentary; however, the existence of several buildings identified as temples and of large-scale construction efforts reflects an increasing concentration of social power at some localities. Social evolutionists view this as evidence for the gradual emergence of

urbanism in the EB I–II transition, but there are other possibilities, which will be explored in due time.

Early Bronze I is generally subdivided into two main subperiods: EB IA and EB IB (sometimes referred to as “early” and “late” EB I).<sup>1</sup> In the southwest Levant, fine-honed ceramic analysis assisted by Egyptian synchronisms has led to the further subdivision of each subperiod,<sup>2</sup> but since these subdivisions cannot be applied to the Levant as a whole, they will be noted only in reference to sites and events implicated in them. S.A. Rosen has suggested that the term Middle/Late Timnian (derived from the ancient term for “south”) be applied to pastoralist, largely aceramic sites of the fourth millennium Negev and Arabah, since they were often only minimally integrated with the Mediterranean-zone settlements.<sup>3</sup>

EB IA, 3800/3600–3350/3300 BCE, is the longer, less familiar subperiod, generally characterized by dispersed village settlement (with a few remarkable exceptions). It corresponds to the Middle Uruk or Late Chalcolithic 3 in Mesopotamia and northern Syria, at the very nascence of urbanism and the initial stages of its expansion, and to the Badarian–Naqada I transition in Egypt, well before the emergence of the state (see Chapter 1). EB IB, 3350/3300–3050 BCE, is characterized by the emergence, alongside the small villages, of the larger, more densely built-up settlements. It is this subperiod that has also received the label “proto-urban” (or pre-urban)<sup>4</sup> and that has attracted comparisons with Late Uruk Mesopotamia and predynastic Egypt, both of which were in an expansive phase. Indeed, EB IB is marked by a significant incursion of Nile Valley people into the southwest Levantine coast, and by their rapid departure before the onset of EB II. The impact of Late Chalcolithic Uruk and predynastic Egypt on the Levant will be discussed at length below.

According to various climate proxies, the Chalcolithic and most of the Early Bronze I shared a period of relatively abundant precipitation, although there could have been decadal-scale droughts within that time frame that might have affected settlements in marginal zones. More significant is the apparent evidence for a more even distribution of precipitation over the winter months, with fewer flash-flooding events than witnessed in later Bronze Age (and modern) phases. The low-energy alluviation of the late fifth and most of the fourth millennium would have allowed wadi-terrace water-harvesting and farming, in places where later flash-flooding led to deeply incised streambeds that restricted agricultural exploitation.<sup>5</sup> Within this general framework, a collation of recent studies indicates two significant short-term periods of low precipitation (characterized as “rapid climate change”), one at c. 3800–3600 BCE, the other c. 3300–3200 BCE.<sup>6</sup> The first event correlates quite remarkably with the beginning of EB IA, and although the Chalcolithic had been in decline from the start of the fourth

millennium, it seems likely that climate change would have precipitated the movement away from marginal zones and back into more traditional dry-farming zones (Figure 2.1). The second event comes at, or slightly after, the transition to EB IB, and might have induced a response that is far less easy to pin down, since Mediterranean agricultural communities were able to respond to declining productivity in various ways (e.g., by adopting new agricultural technologies, by pooling resources or by regulating land use). In this specific case, the beginning of EB IB seems to be characterized by settlement intensification and possibly the creation of collective institutions, as we shall see below.

#### THE POST-CHALCOLITHIC WORLD: EARLY BRONZE IA (3800/3600–3300 BCE)

Early Bronze IA has only recently come into its own as a recognizable archaeological entity. The character of the period remains, however, elusive. Clearly, it is post-Chalcolithic in terms of social and economic organization. It is also quite distant from the agglomerated village society that appears to presage the advent of urbanism in the late EB I. Social formations were small and segmented; craft specialization and long-distance contacts were limited. And yet strands of ideological cohesiveness can be traced, as well as receptiveness to interaction with outside world, that was to have significant consequences in the following period. As for its chronology, a growing consensus, based on the most recent radiocarbon determinations, places the beginning of EB I well before the middle of the millennium, between 3800 and 3600 BCE.<sup>7</sup> The “beginning” of Early Bronze I is, however, a conventional term, as it is becoming increasingly clear that the Chalcolithic–EB IA transition was played out over several centuries. The end of EB IA and the transition to EB IB, placed at 3350/3300 BCE, is based on radiocarbon determinations and on synchronisms between the early EB IB and the late predynastic Naqada IID–IIIA1 phase in Egypt (see Chapter 1 and the section on “The Erani C Phase,” below).

Until the final decades of the twentieth century, the possibility of a gradual transition from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age and the existence of an extended early stage of the EBA were only faintly recognized. While sporadic elements could be attributed to an EB IA – the Gray Burnished ware of the northern valleys<sup>8</sup> and ceramic and lithic assemblages of “Site H” and Azor’s “Installation C” on the coastal plain<sup>9</sup> – the principal remains associated with EB I were those found at the base of the major Palestinian mounds such as Megiddo and Bet Shean, Tell el-Far’ah (North), Tel Erani



Figure 2.1 Map of sites mentioned in this chapter.

(Sheikh al-‘Areini) or Arad, as well as in the cemeteries of the coastal plain and inland valleys. These often impressive remains and striking mortuary assemblages of the late EB I were considered to represent the entire period, presenting a stark contrast to the preceding Chalcolithic (whether of the Ghassul–Beersheba variety or that of the northern valleys and hills). This gap appeared so insurmountable that many archaeologists posited the complete disappearance of Chalcolithic culture and people, and their comprehensive replacement with a new Bronze Age culture, presumably carried by colonists from the northern Levant who settled in a depopulated south Levantine countryside.<sup>10</sup>

A series of excavations and publications of the last two decades of the twentieth century entailed a radical revision of this scenario: excavations at Sidon–Dakerman, Yiftah’el and Tel Te’o in the north,<sup>11</sup> Jawa in the east,<sup>12</sup> Azor and Nizzanim on the coast,<sup>13</sup> Moza in the hills,<sup>14</sup> Taur Ikhbeineh and Halif Terrace in the south,<sup>15</sup> and the publication of Lapp’s excavations in the Bab edh-Dhra’ cemetery in the Dead Sea basin<sup>16</sup> established the existence of a chronologically robust and materially distinct horizon predating the well-established EB I. This horizon featured loosely organized villages with curvilinear single-family dwellings and a material culture assemblage marked by its extreme simplicity. Once established, the reassignment of previously unrecognized contexts to this horizon became possible, e.g., at the base of the Megiddo and Bet Shean sequences<sup>17</sup> and probably at Byblos as well, where the “Eneolithique recent” includes a local Chalcolithic with affinities to the Ghassulian as well as a later phase characterized by curvilinear dwellings.<sup>18</sup>

Establishing the existence of an initial stage of EBA village society, distant in time and character from the complex villages of the late EB I, allowed the Chalcolithic–EBA transition to be painted in far less vivid colors than before: rather than the utter collapse of one cultural system, abandonment and the installation of a new system in its place, a nuanced transition could be proposed, in which typical traits of the later period reveal their origins in the earlier one, e.g., the ceramic ledge handle, the lithic Canaanite blade or the mainstay of the Mediterranean economy – the cultivated olive. At the same time, some typical late Chalcolithic traits were found to survive in the EBA: copper tool-making technology, ceramic forms, the mining and knapping of cortical flint and techniques of working basalt.<sup>19</sup> The transition between the two periods could now be characterized as a shift in economic, social and cultural strategies implicated in the movement of communities toward a system that focused on agriculture and the production of staple goods, at the expense of herd management and the exchange and production of precious, finely wrought goods. This strategic shift, first outlined by L. Stager,<sup>20</sup> would have been accompanied by the declining ritual-political

importance of complex and durable ceremonial objects, exotic materials and the iconographic representation of ancestors and deities.<sup>21</sup> The decline of the Chalcolithic and the emergence of new village systems may have been expedited by external factors (such as ecological imbalances or the capture by the Uruk system of raw material sources such as arsenical copper) and by the successful adoption of a Mediterranean agricultural economy founded on cereal crops (wheat and barley) and horticulture (vine and olive). Thus, Chalcolithic culture was not physically wiped out; rather, its core ideological structure was gradually gutted, leaving intact the primary technologies related to agricultural cultivation, staple storage and food preparation and consumption. The material changes doubtless imply changes in social relations, leading to a redefinition of values such as wealth, leadership and corporate identity. Evidence of such shifts – not only at the start of the EBA, but as they are played out throughout the period – can be sought in the plan of settlements and individual houses, in mortuary practices and in routines of agricultural and craft production and exchange.<sup>22</sup>

The first stage of the EB I lasted 300 years, at the least. During this long period, change was slow, leaving only minor traces in the material culture assemblages, which in some regions can be assigned an earlier or later date within the period. As of the time of writing, however, we are largely in the dark concerning the nature of these developments.

#### *Landscapes of Settlement: Site Location, Architecture and Economy*

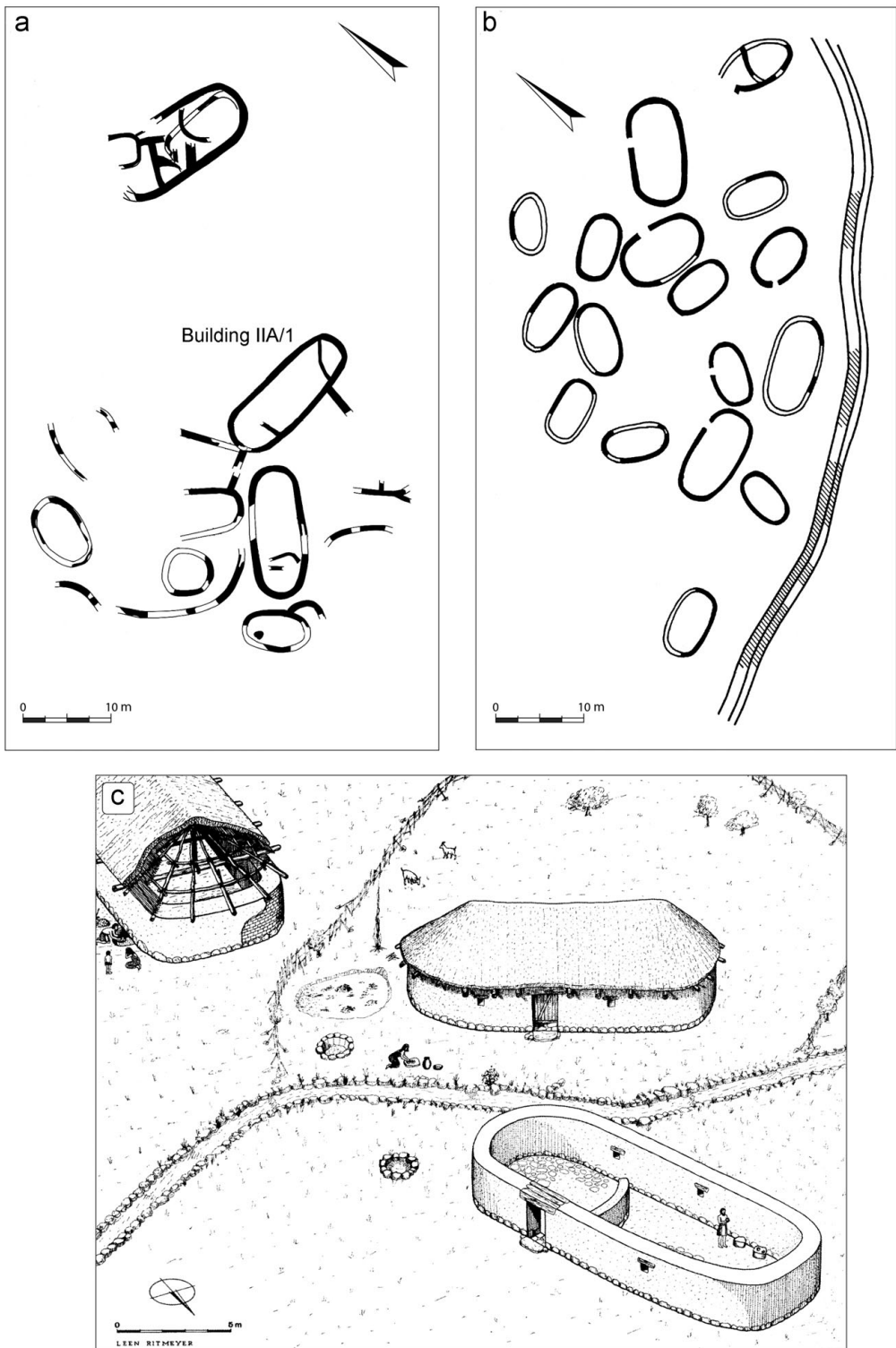
EB IA settlement may be characterized as extensive rather than intensive, dispersed rather than agglomerated, with sprawling villages spread thinly along wadi beds, on alluvial fans and on valley floors, and only loosely tethered to specific locations. The character and location of the sites – often discovered in roadcuts or foundation pits, beneath an overburden of sterile soil – has made their identification in surveys difficult and inconsistent. Surveys conducted prior to the 1990s are unlikely to have distinguished the separate phases of EB I, especially in southern and eastern regions, where the highly diagnostic Gray Burnished ware is rare. The main concentrations of surveyed EB IA sites occur along the coastal plain, especially its northern part,<sup>23</sup> in the Hula Valley and Bīqa<sup>24</sup> and in the Leja and Badia regions of southwest Syria and northeast Jordan.<sup>25</sup> Excavated sites, most of which are described below, are spread over the entire Mediterranean zone – the coastal plain, the interior valleys, the central hills and the rift valley – and along the eastern desert margins, including the Arabah valley.

Early Bronze IA villages may not have been settled the year round, and the lack of order evident in their internal layout suggest that houses were periodically abandoned and rebuilt (Figure 2.2). Thus, some villages occupied

extensive tracts of land due to settlement creep over decades and centuries. Elsewhere, clusters of seemingly coeval settlements might represent different occupation episodes of a single population. The typical house in these settlements was simple: an ovoid residential broad room, often with meager dividing walls and evidence for functional subdivision (such as paved storage areas or cooking corners). This basic living unit was occasionally adjoined by additional construction, usually demarcating an irregularly shaped courtyard, pen or compartment. There was no fixed size or orientation to the structures, and large portions of each site appear to have been left open and given over to communal activities of members of adjacent households. Some sites show evidence of collective construction, such as a drainage channel found at Tel Te'o, or a perimeter fence built at Sidon-Dakerman.

Yiftah'el, in the lower Galilee, may be taken as a representative of the "extensive" site type.<sup>26</sup> Stratum II at the site, built over the remains of a seventh-millennium Pre-Pottery Neolithic B village with some evidence for a sixth-millennium occupation as well, yielded the remains of about fifteen houses in two separate excavation fields. Some of these houses were built one above the other or overlapped each other in a manner that precluded contemporaneous use. Among the latest and most complete structures in the stratum is Building IIA/1, the "safety-pin" house: an oblong, curvilinear structure with curved dividing walls at each end. Its internal floor area of 67 square meters is adequate for a nuclear family of six, while its internal divisions, with a paved space on one end and a stone pot-stand on the other, are reminiscent of Chalcolithic houses with central broad rooms flanked by walled-off storage and work spaces (though the latter were always rectangular). Finds included storage vessels, for the most part, and a copper axe. Additional houses at Yiftah'el were of similar size and contained similar inventories, but several smaller structures might have served smaller families or were used for storage alone. The pottery of Yiftah'el was largely of local manufacture, in a simple manual technique, with a high proportion of basins, holemouth vessels and pithoi, many with a signature pie-crust or rope decoration and prominent ledge handles (Figure 2.3e–j). Some vessels with a finer execution, including a large group of Gray Burnished vessels and red burnished spin-offs, represent more specialized manufacture, possibly in a regional workshop (see section below on "Ceramic Industries and Other Crafts"). The mammal bone assemblages indicate secondary exploitation of small and large cattle, alongside a relatively high proportion of pigs and hunted species.<sup>27</sup>

Comparable sites in the northern lowlands include Tel Te'o in the Hula valley and 'Ein Assawir, at the eastern edge of the northern coastal plain.<sup>28</sup> Both sites show curvilinear house units of similar size and shape to Yiftah'el. In addition, at Tel Te'o a stone-lined drainage channel that wound between the houses appears to represent a communal effort at water management. The sites were of considerable size, with remains found along a 200- (Assawir)



**Figure 2.2** Partial site plans of (a) Yiftah'el and (b) Sidon Dakerman, and (c) artist's reconstruction of the curvilinear houses of Tel Te'o. Plans redrawn by I. Ben-Ezra after Braun 1997: figs. 5.2 and 5.3 and Saidah 1979; reconstruction by L. Ritmeyer (Eisenberg, Gopher and Greenberg 2001: fig. 14.4). Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.



or 500- (Te'o) meter-long transect, but they were not densely built up. Another large site in the Jordan Valley is Tel Bet Yerah. While the EB IA levels at this major site have been reached only in limited soundings, they provide an extended sequence and ceramic repertoire that allow some insight into the evolution of material culture over that time span.<sup>29</sup> As at Yiftah'el, the EB IA ceramic industry seems to be composed of onsite workshops producing basic forms and somewhat more sophisticated regional or specialized red and gray burnished wares. Significantly, the excavators claim to have identified a late EB IA ceramic horizon populated by large bowls with a flaky, burnished red-brown to black slip and ridged holemouth jars. Since these types are well represented at Tel Te'o and the Hula Valley survey sites, as well as at long-lived sites like Yiftah'el, there might be an opening to identify an early-late dynamic in EB IA settlement patterns that has so far eluded us.

The most extensively excavated site (or site cluster) in the southern part of the southern Levant is that excavated in the Afridar neighborhood of Ashqelon.<sup>30</sup> Located on a kurkar ridge, the site consists of dispersed groups of residential structures and a large industrial area with evidence of metal-working. Like the northern sites, the houses are curvilinear to subrectangular, some of them having adjunct rooms or pens. Ceramic, ground-stone and radiocarbon evidence all point to an almost uninterrupted sequence from the late Chalcolithic (found only in pits) to the EB IA. Lithics and stone processors, as well as faunal remains, point to an agricultural economy; craft activities are indicated by spindle whorls, pottery tournettes and crucibles for copper processing. The presence of equids among the fauna is consistent with the evidence for interregional trade, expressed in the presence of copper, basalt artifacts, Canaanite flint blades and a carbonized fragment of cedar wood.

Several sites located outside the coastal plain and inland valley regions display a somewhat more condensed configuration of houses as well as rudimentary defensive construction. The site of Sidon-Dakerman, in a rather isolated location on the narrow Lebanese coastal strip, consists of a dense but haphazard cluster of ovoid houses, very similar in outline to those of Yiftah'el (see Figure 2.2).<sup>31</sup> Remains of a stone fence partly encircled the site. The hilltop site of Jebel el-Mutawwaq, overlooking Wadi Zerqa, on the semi-arid eastern edge of the Ajlun hills in central Transjordan, consists of a large concentration of ovoid to circular houses and auxiliary structures (numbering in the hundreds), also surrounded by a stone fence.<sup>32</sup> Adjacent to the site, which appears to have been occupied during both EB IA and EB IB, is a large megalithic cemetery. Further to the east, in the Black Desert south of Damascus, lies the site of Jawa, in which house-clusters of irregular plan abut a sturdy stone barrier.<sup>33</sup> Here, and in moister basaltic regions to the west, surveys have revealed evidence of early water-management systems, including check dams, canals and reservoirs, that could have supported pastoral communities and small-scale cultivation in zones that were either semi-arid or had only pockets

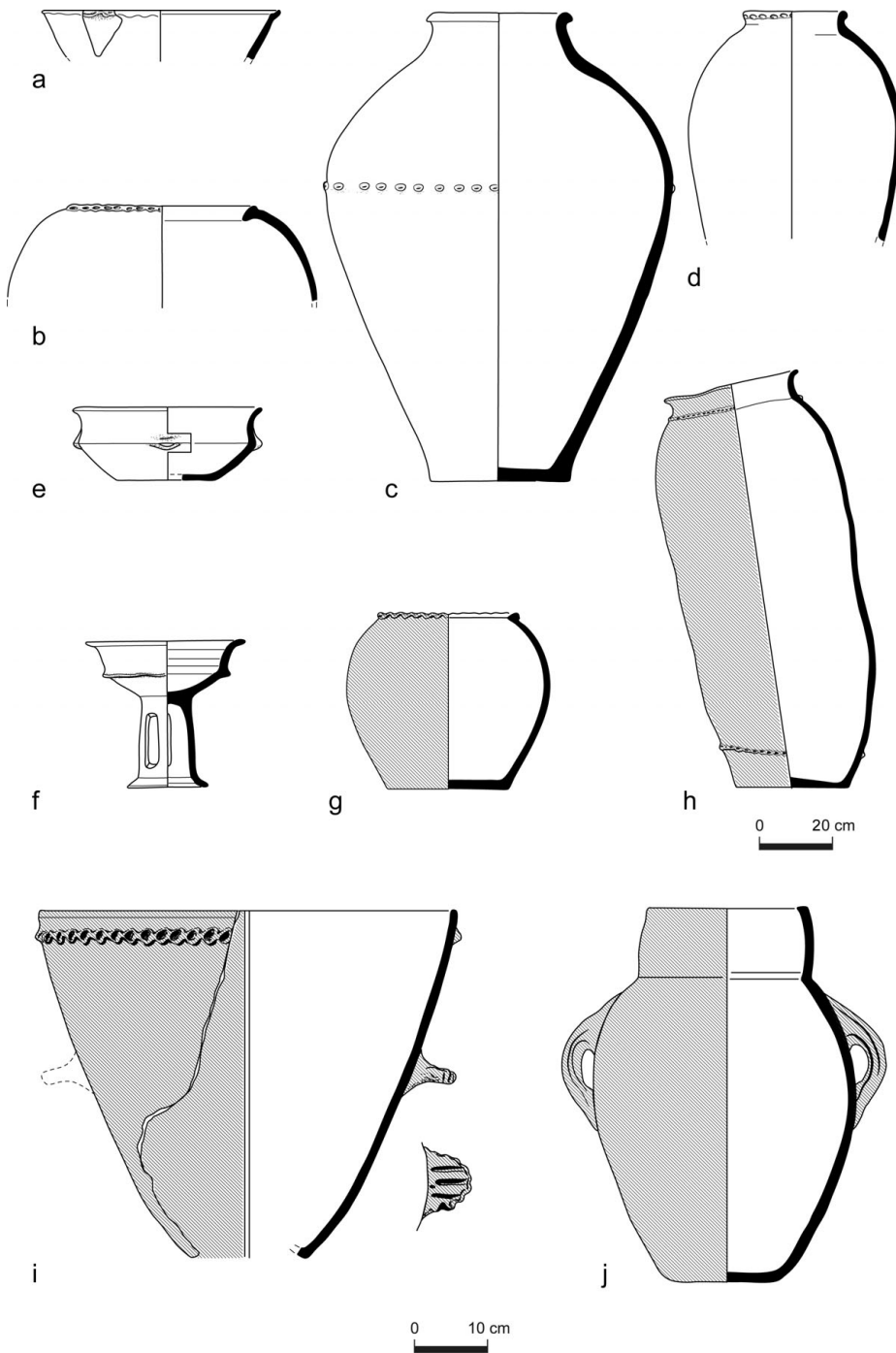


Figure 2.3 EB IA pottery: (a–d) southern types, (e–j) northern types. Redrawn by N. Earon after Khalaily 2004: figs. 6–8, Braun 1997: figs. 9.3–9.24.

of arable land.<sup>34</sup> Similar technologies would have been available and could have been used to irrigate fields in the Mediterranean zones as well. Nicolle and Braemer report the discovery of fourteen early EB I sites in the basaltic Leja district of southwest Syria, including the mega-site of Sharaya with an estimated 500–800 structures, most of which were concentrated within a walled enclosure. They propose that the larger sites served as seasonal aggregation sites for the same pastoralist populations who used the small sites, which typically consist of enclosures surrounded by peripheral rooms. Their EB IA date is, however, based almost solely on structural comparisons with Dakerman and Mutawwaq.

Further illustration of successful arid-zone adaptation is provided by the EB IA Arabah Valley site of Wadi Fidan 4. This was primarily a farming community, occupying a cluster of rectangular and subrectangular structures, some of whose members also specialized in mining and processing of copper and small-scale production of tools.<sup>35</sup>

The location of most Early Bronze IA villages on or very near alluvial soils in valleys and wadi beds, as well as their typical domestic inventory composed principally of vessels and artifacts associated with household agricultural production, cereal processing, storage and consumption, indicate that their inhabitants practiced a diversified, risk-avoiding Mediterranean agricultural economy. The EB IA economy relied on cereal farming in the valleys and wadi flood-terraces, horticulture (primarily of olive and vines) on hill slopes or near springs, and small-scale animal husbandry. In a sparsely populated landscape, where villages could afford to be built on arable soils, production was constrained not by the availability of land but by that of labor. Starting in the EB IA, the measure of social power would have been the ability to recruit labor, in the first instance for agricultural production, and subsequently for other collective aims. A corollary may well have been the entrenchment of patriarchy in Levantine societies, in advance of the incorporation of villages as “house societies.”<sup>36</sup>

The EB IA animal economy relied primarily on sheep/goat, both for meat and for secondary products – wool and milk. Studies on the faunal assemblages from Yiftah’el, Azor, Ashqelon–Afridar and Bet Yerah show that cattle husbandry was more important for its secondary products – milk and traction – than for its meat.<sup>37</sup> Pigs, probably free-roaming in the villages, were abundant (15–46 percent of the total recorded assemblage) and an important auxiliary source of meat. The presence of donkeys, raised to maturity, might be seen as an index of the use of animals for transport, as well as for traction (plowing and threshing). There was evidence of hunting, as well as for the consumption of fish and mollusks. The data suggest that livestock was locally managed at each site.

Direct evidence for the plant economy is extremely meager, but it does show that olive, and probably grapes as well, were an important part of the agricultural package in the Mediterranean regions. While plowing is only

indirectly attested by the presence of adult equids and cattle, it is a reasonable inference, considering the location of villages on or near heavy alluvial soils at sites like Yiftah'el or Bet Yerah. Arid-zone sites show considerable cereal cultivation, probably in winter plots to which wadi floodwaters could be diverted. Additional arid-zone cultivars included flax and grapes.<sup>38</sup>

Non-agricultural pursuits do not seem to have played an important role in EB IA communities of the Levantine heartland. Aside from Ashqelon-Afridar (see above), specialized crafts were practiced at sites located near the relevant resources. This would have included copper tool production in the Arabah Valley, Canaanite blade and tabular-scraper production at quarry sites, basalt vessel production in areas such as the Hauran and the Karak region in Transjordan, and Gray Burnished ware by itinerant potters in the northern valleys. Presumably, some of these products circulated in the Levant through interregional trade, yet their numbers are too small to suggest anything other than gift and limited commodity exchange occasioned by seasonal gatherings and ceremonial encounters. Likewise, evidence of long-distance contacts, for example, with Egypt, is sparse, and the few examples of imported pottery (e.g., Naqada II pottery at Taur Ikhbeineh) can be accounted for by sporadic, mutual contacts along the Sinai coast, of the type attested in the Chalcolithic period, if not earlier.<sup>39</sup>

### *Ceramic Industries and Other Crafts*

Early Bronze IA ceramic industries were typically household or village workshop industries, with some evidence for regional specialization and trade. Although handmade and hand-finished vessels were the norm in most industries, the first certain appearance of the basalt tournette<sup>40</sup> testifies to a willingness to invest time and effort in the creation of symmetrical, well-finished vessels, which can be understood as either a residue of Chalcolithic practice or the harbinger of later, EB IB, specialization. Due to the diverse contexts of production, EB IA ceramics from across the region might betray a family resemblance, but show a great deal of variation in technique, morphological details, decoration and general quality. Broadly speaking, two main ceramic provinces can be delineated, one in the northern coastal region and inland valleys and the other in the southern coastal plain. Less widely distributed traditions are associated with Bab edh-Dhra' and cemeteries of the southeast Dead Sea plain, and with sites in the az-Zarqa basin east of the Jordan River.

In the southern assemblages, especially those of the southern coastal plain and lowlands (Figure 2.3a–d), some morphological continuity can be observed with the Chalcolithic (alongside abrupt changes in raw material and in the organization of production, which had been far more specialized).<sup>41</sup> This continuity is expressed in details, such as the continued existence of straight-walled (V-shaped) bowls and jars with conical necks and the use of

indented “pie-crust” decoration on jar and krater rims or handles. Significant differences include the disappearance of iconic Chalcolithic forms such as the cornet and churn, the universal use of ledge handles (at the expense of pierced lug handles) and the increasing use of red slip, which was sometimes burnished. In the northern valley assemblages too (Figure 2.3e–j), a degree of continuity with the northern Chalcolithic is evident: this is expressed in the frequency of plastic decoration (rope and incised decoration) in all the northern village industries, as well as in the painted EB IA style of Tel Bet Yerah.<sup>42</sup> Red burnished slips are far more common than in the south, and kraters and tall, often deformed pithoi typically bear a band of rope decoration around the neck (on jars) or at the rim (on kraters). Holemouth jars have ridged rims, often decorated with incisions. Most characteristic of all in the northern valley assemblage is a well-defined group of vessels fired to varying shades of gray and bearing a glossy burnish. This group, termed Gray Burnished ware (GBW), is comprised solely of large bowls and fenestrated chalices (Figure 2.3e, f).<sup>43</sup> The bowls are decorated with a row of tongue-shaped protrusions or nubs, usually placed along a distinct carination that gives them a sinuous profile (when the nubs are closely spaced they form a prominent wavy band). The GBW vessels are reminiscent in size, color and shape of the basalt vessels of the Chalcolithic and, like them, may well have been prestige objects, used to present food or drink in a collective, ceremonial setting. But they differ significantly from the basalt vessels in their molded contours, sinuous applied bands or tongue-like knobs, and in their high, “oily” burnish, which provide a sensorial impression quite distinct from that of Chalcolithic ceramic or stone containers, angular and rough to the touch.

The high technical quality of GBW, consistent from one site to another, suggests that it was produced by highly skilled craftspersons who may have traveled from one community to another, or who formed a closed guild (petrography indicates that vessels were usually made of locally available materials at each site).<sup>44</sup> High burnish and a smoky surface had long been part of the central and northern Levantine potter’s toolkit, maintained throughout the sixth and fifth millennia. Their fourth-millennium emergence in the northern valleys of the southern Levant could point to a north Levantine orientation of these specialists.

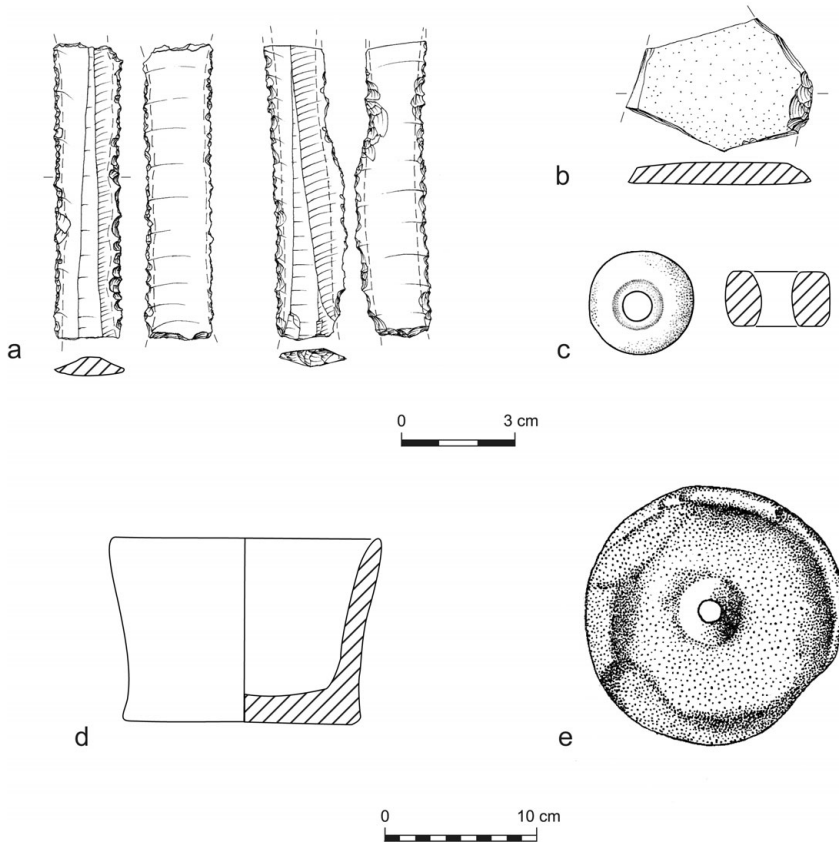
The Bab edh-Dhra’ ceramic assemblage, as a mortuary assemblage, can represent only a particular facet of the regional industry of the southeastern Dead Sea plain, which is otherwise attested in pottery looted from the large regional cemeteries at Safi and Fifa. It includes a large group of red-slipped hemispheric bowls with a beaded decoration beneath the rim and similarly decorated amphoriskoi and small jars. Loop handles and plain ledge handles are found on both jars and bowls.<sup>45</sup> The assemblages of the Wadi az-Zarqa basin, extending eastward from Tell Um Hammad in the Jordan Valley, also feature

bands of incised decoration, but are notable for their pushed-up lug handles, applied to holemouth and necked jars.<sup>46</sup>

As noted earlier, typo-chronological subdivisions within the 300–500 years of the EB IA have been attempted for the southern plains and for the northern valleys, but they have yet to be expanded beyond local stratigraphic sequences.<sup>47</sup>

The chipped stone industry underwent a significant contraction in the Chalcolithic–EBA transition. Long-standing traditions of lithic production, such as the manufacture of bifacials – axes, adzes and chisels – went by the wayside, perhaps in the wake of the expanded use of copper tools. Surviving craft practices diverged, one path being that of ad hoc, expedient production of simple tools at the local level, and the other, specialized production of two principal products, Canaanite blades and tabular (or fan) scrapers (Figure 2.4a, b).<sup>48</sup> Canaanite blades – long trapezoidal blades struck off prepared cores, subsequently snapped into smaller segments and retouched to serve as sickle segments or threshing-board inserts – were produced at sites with suitable flint bulbs, mainly in the northern and central Levant. Tabular scrapers, large retouched flakes that usually retain part of the cortex on one side, were produced for the most part in the southern and eastern deserts, where tabular flint is readily accessible. They most likely would have been used for butchering and wool-shearing. Whether the blade and scraper production sites were permanently occupied by specialists or were operated by seasonal expeditions from the permanent villages, the widespread distribution of their products testifies to the survival of interregional trade in the EB IA and, with it, the possibility of information transfer in the mid-fourth millennium Levant.

A similar development can be observed regarding ground stone vessels, with the Chalcolithic prestige industry being largely replaced with limited production of flared-rim mortars (Figure 2.4d).<sup>49</sup> A notable development is the regular production of small, symmetrical basalt flywheels, introduced in the Chalcolithic, but standardized in the EB I (Figure 2.4c). These are generally defined as spindle-whorls, although they could have served as flywheels for any tool requiring steady rotary motion, such as a pump drill. The first basalt ceramic *toumettes* were fashioned at this time as well (Figure 2.4e).<sup>50</sup> The investment of time and labor in the production of sturdy polished wheels intended to produce kinetic energy<sup>51</sup> is emblematic of the utilitarian, engendered tendencies of work-allotment in the EB IA – and in the EBA as a whole. Assuming the procurement of basalt and the grinding and polishing of flywheels and *toumettes* to be masculine activities, the investment of such labor in implements usually associated with domestic work in a village setting (spinning and pot-making) testifies to the attempt to regulate and perhaps physically constrain female work in the context of the reorganization of human labor and productive technologies in the run-up to urbanization.<sup>52</sup>



**Figure 2.4** EB IA flint and stone artifacts: (a) Canaanite blades, (b) tabular scraper, (c) basalt whorl, (d) bowl and (e) potter's wheel. Redrawn by N. Earon after Khalaily 2004: figs. 19, 22, 23 and Dothan 1959: fig. 8.

The same utilitarian tendency evident in the chipped stone and ground stone industries can be observed in the copper tool assemblage. Although the number of tools found is quite small, a number of EB IA sites – especially in the vicinity of Ashqelon-Afridar – have yielded traces of metal-working.<sup>53</sup> The technology exhibited at these sites – casting, hot and cold forging, and annealing – testifies to a robust metalworking tradition, focused on the production of basic tools. Most were no doubt melted down and recycled when they went out of use, and hence do not turn up in tombs or middens, but only in the occasional unreclaimed cache (differing in this respect from the common association of metals with subterranean ceremonial or mortuary contexts in the Chalcolithic period). Copper tools include simple axes and adzes, knives and awls. While tool production took place at village sites, the ore sources remained unchanged: most of the copper was mined either in the northern Arabah Valley, in and around Wadi Feinan, or in its south, near Timna. In the latter region, the German–Jordanian excavations at Hujeyrat

el-Ghuzlan and Tell el-Magass, near Aqabah, have revealed intensive metal-working activity in well-preserved, densely built up villages dated to 3900–3500 BCE, i.e., precisely spanning the Chalcolithic–EB IA transition. The absence of typical Levantine assemblages at these sites suggests that they may have been established by non-Levantine people who exploited their location near the mines and the Gulf of Aqaba to initiate trade with Egypt, via the Sinai Peninsula, or with more distant regions, by way of the Red Sea.<sup>54</sup>

### *Tombs and Cemeteries*

An early glimpse into the evolution of EBA mortuary practices is afforded by the remarkably well-preserved remains in the Wadi Makukh cave in the Judean desert, where a primary burial and a rich trove of organic materials dating to about 3800 BCE was discovered in 1993.<sup>55</sup> We may imagine the funeral procession making its way along the wadi bed, northwest of the Dead Sea. In our imagined procession, four men carry the pallet, upon which lies the body of an elderly man of some distinction, wrapped in a red-stained shroud, covered by a tasseled linen shawl and placed on a woven mat. Following them, mourners carry the personal effects of the deceased: a hunter's bow and arrows, ritually "killed"; a willow staff; his sandals; a wooden bowl; a sieve; and the only non-perishable item – a fine flint blade. Had any of them been awarded the benefit of archaeological hindsight, they might have remarked on the difference between this procession and those that had taken place nearby, some centuries before. In those ceremonies, the dead – or, rather, their collected bones – would have been deposited with those of their ancestors, provided for with ceramic and stone receptacles and honored by the interment of precious objects made of exotic metals or minerals.<sup>56</sup> Here, in a post-Chalcolithic world, prestige was indicated by the entourage, the personal effects and by the sheer transformative labor needed to produce the flax and the 15 square meters of linen cloth for the shroud. Annette Weiner, who has written extensively on the significance of cloth in sacral and mortuary contexts, dwells on the relation between cloth and death, noting how cloth differs from hard and durable materials in the work of commemoration:

It is not accidental that the very physicality of cloth, its woven-ness, and its potential for fraying and unraveling denote the vulnerability in acts of connectedness and tying, in human and cultural reproduction, and in decay and death. Contrastingly, hard possessions such as jade, precious metal, or bones are much more durable than cloth, making them better physical objects for symbolizing permanence and historical accountings. Cloth, unlike hard materials, is able to represent the more realistic paradox of how permanence in social, political, and ancestral relationships is sought after despite the precariousness of these relationships always subject to loss, decay, and death.<sup>57</sup>



One of the seemingly dramatic changes at the Chalcolithic–EBA transition was in the way the dead were commemorated in the landscape, above ground or below the surface, in carved or natural tomb–caves: the Chalcolithic period is usually associated with rich and complex burial paraphernalia (e.g., the well-known decorated ossuaries), next to which the EB IA appears to be frugal and nondescript. A second look reveals the change to be less abrupt. The key here is the realization that burial rituals were primarily aimed at ensuring the successful transition of the soul, after the death of the body, to its final resting place, and that such rituals comprised a series of representations – of the community, of the next of kin, of the deceased and of the circumstances of death. In other words, cemeteries are a part of society and of the negotiation of social relationships, and the practices associated with burial may therefore exhibit a considerable degree of variation, in accordance with changing social and personal circumstances. In his study of Chalcolithic burial grounds, Nativ has demonstrated how Chalcolithic mortuary practice fell into several different classes, in terms of the structure and organizing principles of the cemetery, and that burial paraphernalia varied from the exotic and spectacular to the spare and unadorned, but that all were founded on the principle of secondary burial (primary burials are occasionally found within settlements or in cultic settings).<sup>58</sup> From such a perspective, burial furniture and gifts take on a secondary role, while the social relations expressed in Chalcolithic burial are diverse: some appear to prioritize status, others prioritize lineage continuity, while still others prioritize shared communal values.

Early Bronze IA cemeteries, of which only a few have been excavated, testify to a considerable degree of continuity with some Chalcolithic concepts and the jettisoning of others – particularly those that are concerned with durable representations of ancestors in the form of sculpture, painting or bone-hard objects of metal and stone. In an isolated tomb cave at Gadot, in the Hula Valley, several secondary burials were accompanied by a modest ceramic assemblage and a few beads. The ceramics included unusual libation vessels and receptacles that might have been custom-made for the burial ritual.<sup>59</sup> A huge EB IA cemetery has been explored and partly excavated at Bab edh-Dhra', on a plateau just east of the Dead Sea. In a formal burying ground numbering thousands of carved chambers, which must have served the population of several communities in the region, Paul Lapp, Walter Rast and R.T. Schaub excavated a series of family tombs.<sup>60</sup> Each such tomb typically consisted of a single vertical shaft, excavated from the surface to a depth of several meters, from which four or five subterranean chambers branched out (Figure 2.5). In the center of each chamber lay the post-cranial remains of a number of individuals – adults and children – in discrete bone piles placed on mats, with the skulls placed around them. Burial gifts – ceramic, wood and basalt vessels, as well as the occasional crudely fashioned anthropomorphic figurine, stone mace head, or item of personal adornment (including a number

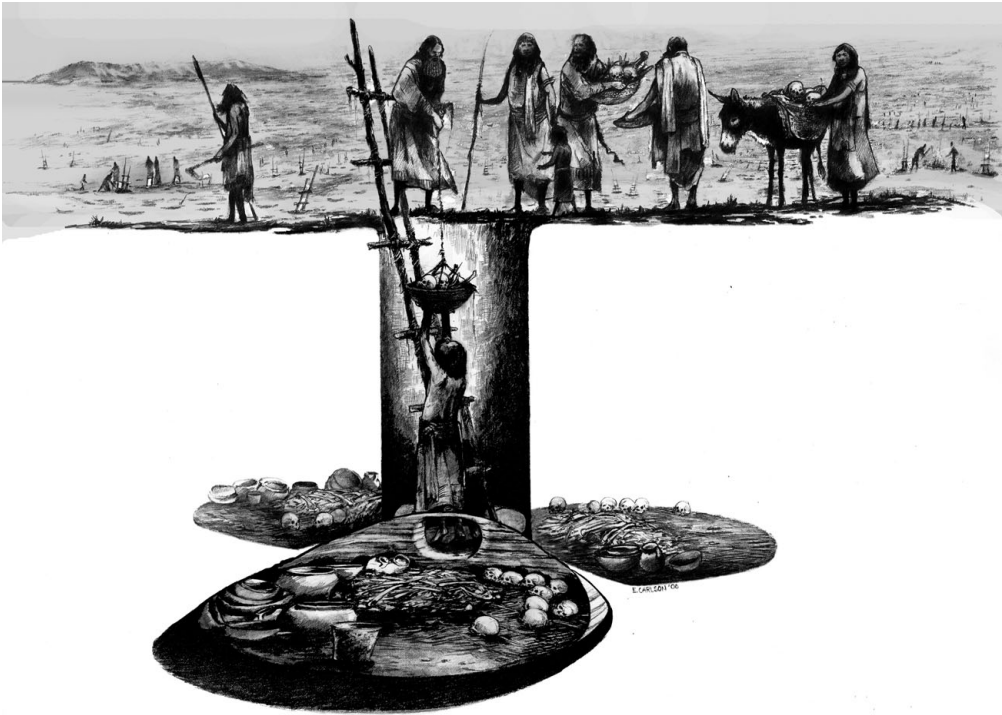


Figure 2.5 Reconstruction of shaft-tomb burial at EB IA Bab edh-Dhra'. Drawing by E. Carlson. Courtesy of M. Chesson.

of exotic beads) – were placed around the perimeter of the chamber. Meredith Chesson has written extensively of the structured commemoration exhibited in the EB IA cemetery at Bab edh-Dhra', which she sees as the first evidence for appropriation of the landscape by previously mobile groups.<sup>61</sup> She notes an absence of gender- or age-related patterning: all the members of the extended family in each tomb group became part of the ancestral community. Among the grave offerings, ceramic vessels were ubiquitous, stone vessels far less so, and figurines and mace heads very rare indeed. And although the differential distribution of material goods might express differences in wealth or ability to obtain exotic materials, it seems that the emphasis on perishables – whether wooden bowls and staves, mats and cloth, or the real or imaginary contents of the ceramics – points to a similar set of values as that exhibited in the Wadi Makukh cave mentioned at the start of this chapter, emphasizing nature's bounty and human productivity as well as unravelling and decay.

South of Bab edh-Dhra', extensive looting has occurred in at least two more enormous EB IA cemeteries, at Fifa and es-Safi. Many of these looted tombs were stone-lined cist graves, and thus represent an otherwise unknown practice with Chalcolithic antecedents. As in the case of Bab edh-Dhra' we must assume that the burial ground served a dispersed population.<sup>62</sup>

While children have been identified in the Bab edh-Dhra' tombs, infants were not usually accorded full status as social personas; rather, the practice of intramural subfloor burial, usually in pots, has been sporadically recorded. For example, several infant burials were reported from late EB IA contexts at Tel Bet Yerah: a sequence of burials in rather archaic splayed bow-rim jars from the "deep cut" in Area SA, each capped with crackled ware bowls/lids, and a holemouth jar from Area GB, capped with a bowl and sealed with lime plaster.<sup>63</sup>

At Sidon-Dakerman, and especially at Byblos, burial grounds containing primary adult pithos inhumations, often richly furnished, have been described. The Byblos cemetery includes upward of 2,000 inhumations, located in proximity to the houses (a minority of the inhumations were found beneath houses, but they may well precede them).<sup>64</sup> Adults were buried in pithoi that were placed horizontally in pits, whereas infants were buried in small upright pots. Burial gifts included primarily ceramics and personal ornaments. The dating of the cemetery is uncertain, but most likely covers the end of the Chalcolithic, the EB IA and part of EB IB. The custom of primary burial, as well as the style of the pithoi themselves and of their contents, is clearly distinct from those of any neighboring regions, underlining the independent evolution of the small, isolated entities of the central Levantine coast in the period preceding their late fourth/early third millennium incorporation in international sea trade routes.<sup>65</sup>

### *The End of EB IA*

Life in a sparsely populated village society, like that of the EB IA Levant, was laden with risk. In the absence of unifying institutions and networks of mutual support, village households had to be self-reliant and flexible, ready to relocate if times were hard – hence, the impermanence that characterizes EB IA village architecture. Seasonal gatherings of scattered households or groups, vital for the exchange of goods and marriage partners, may be responsible for some of the large aggregations of structures that characterize EB IA, as well as the broad distribution of Gray Burnished feasting paraphernalia. A chronic shortage of labor might have spurred several important innovations, such as the perfection of the "traction complex" comprised of plow, sledge and ox/donkey. Donkeys could also help maintain vital internal transport routes for flint, stone and metals (whether as raw material or as finished products). But the impact of these innovations was slow to appear in the three to five centuries of EB IA existence. Limited population growth and the virtual absence of interaction with the rapidly evolving Late Chalcolithic societies of Syro-Mesopotamia might explain the absence of evidence for social change during EB IA and the fact that few villages maintained their existence into EB IB. Nonetheless, the founding principles of this agricultural society eventually served as the basis for

large-scale economic and social development in the following periods, as the control of labor and staple products was the key to the emergence of economies and societies of scale.

COMPLEX MEDITERRANEAN VILLAGES (EARLY BRONZE IB),  
3300–3050 BCE

In Chapter 1 it was noted that the Uruk “world system” effectively marginalized the Levantine seaboard, in relation to other parts of the Near East. Eventually, the rift was healed, so that by the final third of the fourth millennium, parallel, mutually reinforcing processes were set into motion that allowed the Levant to emerge from its isolation and encouraged change in its social structure. First, contact was established between Uruk Mesopotamia and pre-dynastic Egypt. This contact was enlisted by agents of political and social change within Egyptian society to promote the swift and dazzling emergence of elite culture. Egyptian elites forged an ideology of rulership at home and began to cultivate trade with Egypt’s near and distant neighbors. Concurrently, selected facets of Mesopotamian urban culture began to find their way into local Levantine inventories. For themselves, Levantine village societies began to exhibit spatial durability and physical and architectural expansion.

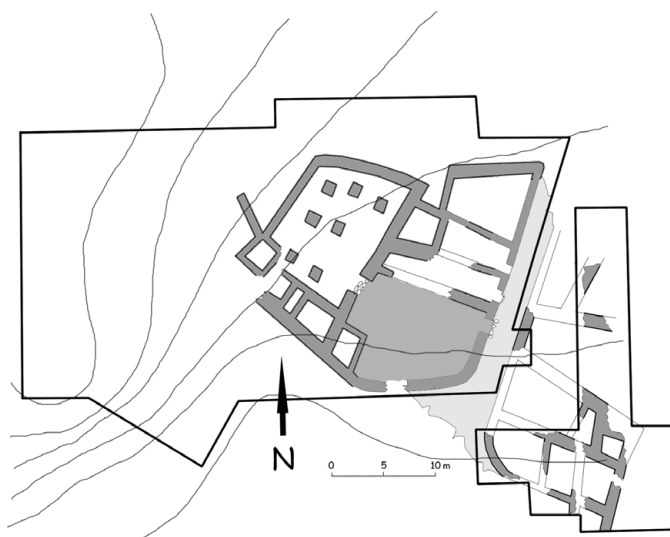
The last quarter of the fourth millennium BCE has begun to emerge as the “golden age” of Levantine (or, more specifically, south Levantine) village society. Hundreds of sites identified through survey, accompanied by scores of large and small cemeteries, reveal a density of settlement unparalleled in earlier periods and unmatched for millennia to come. Excavations of large and small villages show permanent, long-term residences of extended families, a developed material culture that testifies to multiple specializations; developed cultivation of cereals, olives and vines; and interregional trade in raw materials and prestige objects. Prosperous households testify to the accumulation of wealth by leading families or possibly of local rulers, and at one site – Tel Megiddo – a temple precinct has been discovered that shows the extraordinary growth of planning and construction capabilities at this site, which no doubt served as a regional ceremonial center.

Despite the wealth of data compiled and the confidence with which one may delineate the contours of its settlement, culture and economy, there is still considerable uncertainty about chronological subdivisions within EB IB and the character of the changes that characterize both its beginning and its end. It is now clear that two phases, at least, may be discerned. In the earlier phase, beginning at about 3300 BCE (we lack a precise date for the transition, and it may easily be moved earlier or later by fifty years), the Levant – and especially its southernmost region – sees the establishment of aggregated, densely built-up villages, some showing the rudiments of social stratification, wealth accumulation and collective construction. In the later phase, from

about 3150 BCE onward, many villages attain their greatest extent, with some – particularly in the Jordan and Jezreel Valleys – showing signs of centralization. However, the expansion is also marked by signs of stress that lead to dramatic changes at the transition to EB II. The evidence for precise date of this latter transition is contradictory: in some places it can be assigned to a time no later than the mid-thirty-first century, while at others it falls later, within the thirtieth century BCE. Thus, the end of the EB I should probably not be strongly marked, but rather characterized as a fuzzy or fractured horizon, within which change at one site could predate, by some decades, a similar change at another.

### *The Erani C Phase*

The clearest evidence for the existence of a distinct early phase within EB IB comes from the southern inland and coastal plain. In this region, several planned and unplanned (salvage) excavations conducted since the 1980s have revealed a shared ceramic assemblage that has come to be known as the “Erani C” horizon, after the type site of Tel Erani (also known by the names Sheikh Ahmed al-‘Areini or Tel Gat), where it was first defined. Stratum C of the Kempinski and Gilead excavations at Erani (which were an attempt to establish a correct sequence in correlation with the poorly published Yeivin excavations of the 1950s–1960s) is represented by parts of two impressive compounds, each containing multiple rooms, pillared halls and courtyards, separated by a street (Figure 2.6). In another part of the site a broad mudbrick fortification has been attributed to the same phase.<sup>66</sup> These remains have been interpreted by Yekutieli as an incipient form of urbanization, characterized by conspicuous private construction and collectively planned and executed fortification.



**Figure 2.6** Plan of the “Stratum C1” buildings at Tel Erani. Courtesy of Y. Yekutieli.

The ceramic characteristics of the Erani C horizon, which are, oddly enough, better represented at sites quite distant from the type-site than at the type-site itself, belong to two industries, one confined to Tel Erani and its immediate environs, and one that is shared among a group of sites in southwest Canaan and which was exported beyond its borders. It is the latter industry, or style, which is of greater interest. Its salient features include the use of broad red “pajama” stripes on jars and bowls, rows of small incisions along the base of jar necks and on their handles, short bands of incised rope-decoration attached to holemouth jars with vertically cut rims, notched ledge handles on large jars, and a peculiar asymmetrical amphoriskos or churn, bearing a characteristically incised crossed circle appliqué on one end. The largest corpus of complete vessels of the Erani C type comes from Egyptian late predynastic tombs in Abydos (Tomb U-j, discussed further below) and Minshat Abu Omar, and the ware also figures prominently in ceramics collected in the North Sinai Survey.<sup>67</sup> It is thus a useful tool for synchronization between the predynastic and Levantine sequences.

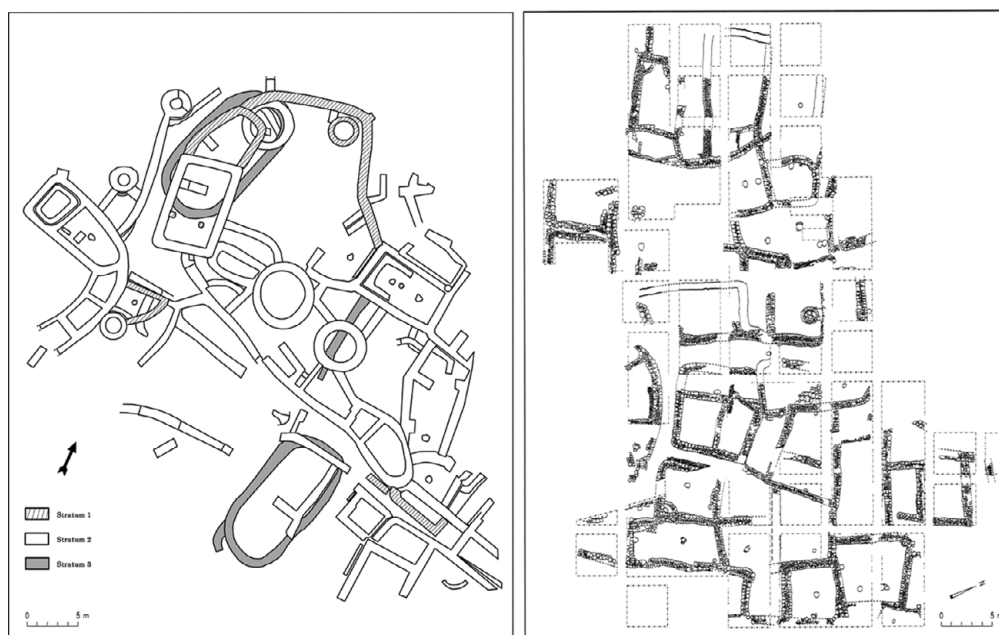
Additional sites that are contemporaneous with Erani Stratum C include the coastal site of Ashqelon-Barnea (a short distance north of the Afridar sites) and Petura, some distance inland.<sup>68</sup> Stratum II at Ashqelon-Barnea comprises a series of walled compounds and industrial complexes with evidence for metal-working. Similar compounds – rectilinear with rounded corners – have been excavated at Petura. Two significant sites of the same horizon were excavated near Bet Shemesh: the Hartuv site – a well-built multiroomed rectilinear complex that has been interpreted as a shrine – and the Eshta’ol Junction site, where part of a large, well-ordered village, with domestic compounds and streets, was revealed during salvage work.<sup>69</sup> Erani C phases have also been identified at Jericho, Tel Halif Terrace and ‘En Besor.<sup>70</sup> The emerging picture is one of rapid growth and systemization of village settlement in the southwest Levant, with signs of incipient stratification and institutionalization. As will be shown below, this phase can be placed – thanks to Egyptian correlations – within the thirty-third to thirty-second centuries BCE.

The existence of a parallel phase in other parts of the Levant has not been substantiated, as the ceramic sequences do not match those of the south. There are several sites with an extended EB I sequence, but no ceramic markers have been established for an early EB IB phase corresponding to Erani C. At some sites, a stratified architectural sequence within EB IB has been observed, from curvilinear houses with two parallel long walls and rounded ends, to rectilinear broad rooms with rounded external corners. If the ovoid structures at sites such as ‘En Shadud and Qiryat Ata are to be equated chronologically with the Erani C phase, it might be posited that the north lagged behind the south, in terms of village complexity.<sup>71</sup> The same would hold true of the eastern Jordan Valley and central Levant, where no discrete early EB IB phase can be discerned.

### Complex Villages of the Levant

By the final centuries of the fourth millennium BCE, village settlement in the Levant had reached its apex, in both numbers and size. In certain regions, particularly in the Jordan Valley, the Bet Shean and Jezreel Valleys, the western Galilee and along the coastal plain, archaeological surveys indicate a remarkable increase in settlement, particularly alongside streambeds, which were often exploited along their entire length. For example, in a limited area between the Bet Shean Valley to the east and the eastern Jezreel Valley in the west, 105 EB I sites, the majority founded in EB IB, were counted in an area of about 1000 square kilometers (about half of which is a virtually uninhabitable basalt plateau), three times the number recorded for the EB II.<sup>72</sup> Other regions show large numbers of EB I sites as well. In their review of EBA settlement patterns in Jordan, Savage, Falconer and Harrison award the largest number of settlement clusters to EB I, and the West Bank archaeological database ascribes 260 sites to this phase.<sup>73</sup> A considerable number of the EB IB villages reached sizes of more than 20 hectares, including those lying at the base of Tel Bet Yerah, Tel Kabri, Tell Assawir, Megiddo, Tell esh-Shuna and Tell Um Hammad. At many other sites, extensive EB I village occupations form a distinct “lower city” or terrace underlying the later, smaller mounds. When excavated, the large villages tend to be densely built-up, with occasional evidence for site-wide organization. A number of town walls have been attributed to EB I, though they are by no means universal.

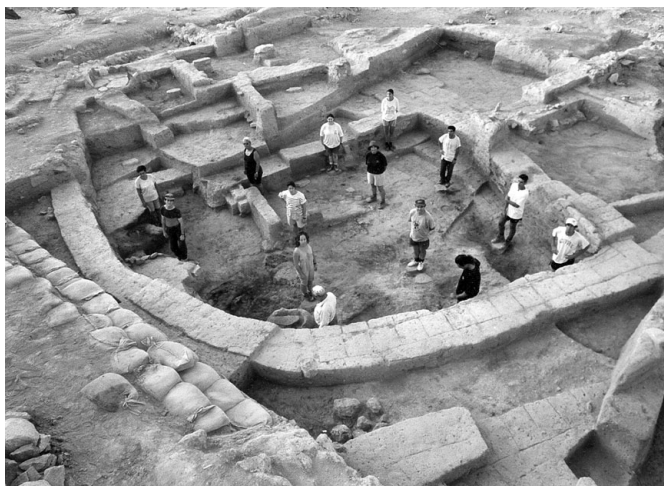
Early Bronze IB settlements take on a plethora of forms (Figure 2.7). At Horbat ‘Illin Tahtit, in the Judean foothills, salvage excavations have revealed a



**Figure 2.7** Plans of the EB IB village at Palmahim Quarry (superimposed on ovoid structures of the EB IA) and H. ‘Illin Tahtit. Courtesy of E. Braun.

tidy compact village composed of rectangular, multiroomed structures arranged around courtyards and separated by alleys. Similar architecture can be seen at the Jordan Valley sites of Tell Abu al-Kharaz and Tel Kitan.<sup>74</sup> Elsewhere, house complexes are less regular in outline: in the early phase of the EB IB village at Qiryat Ata, at Tel Qashish (Tell Qasis) and at 'En Shadud, the ovoid building tradition is carried over from EB IA, in double-apsidal buildings with parallel long walls and a central row of pillars.<sup>75</sup> At Palmahim Quarry and Megadim on the coast, and at Tel Bet Yerah, Tel esh-Shuna and Jericho in the Jordan Valley, rounded and rectilinear structures were built next to one another, creating an attractive village-scape of flat-roofed and domed structures within fenced household compounds.<sup>76</sup> The round structures range from about 2 to 4 meters in diameter, and sometimes more, and have therefore been variously labelled as silos, storage structures and houses. Common to most of sites is the division of the village into discreet house compounds, furnished with multiple rooms and open spaces and serving the full range of domestic activities: habitation, food preparation, crafts, storage and perhaps the sheltering of animals as well. Sarit Paz has commented on the flexibility of the compound as an organizing concept within the EB IB village, maintaining the autonomy of the house as a social unit.<sup>77</sup>

The substantial compound excavated at Tel Bet Shean, Stratum M<sub>3</sub>, illustrates the wealth accumulated by some families in the late EB I Levant. Comprising at least six rooms and extending over more than 150 square meters, the compound was bounded by alleys on its north and west sides.<sup>78</sup> A large, 52-square-meter hall occupied the northwest corner of the compound (Figure 2.8). Like the other rooms, its floor and wall were plastered, and it was furnished with benches, a perfectly preserved grinding installation, and bases for fourteen pillars that held up its wood, wattle and daub roof. Destroyed by fire, apparently in the wake of an earthquake, the building contained masses of debris that sealed its contents. These included more than 100 ceramic vessels, copper



**Figure 2.8** The large EB IB building at Tel Bet Shean, Area M, with figures standing on pillar bases. Photo by A. Mazar, Tel Beth Shean Expedition, Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

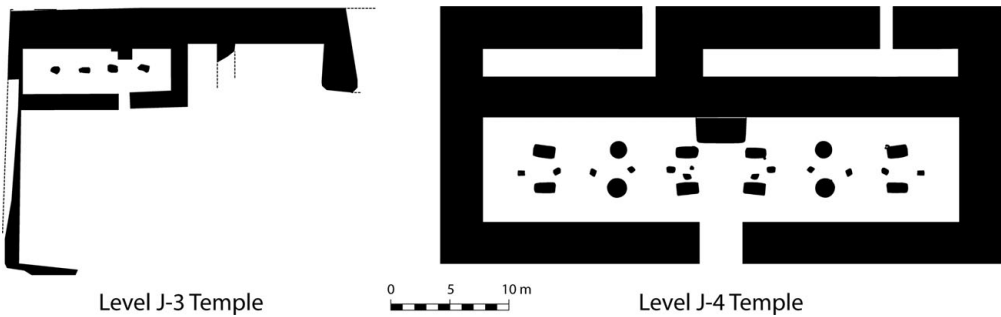


tools and large quantities of burnt produce – wheat, barley and legumes. The capacity of the storage vessels found in the compound comes to about 5,000 liters. After its destruction, radiocarbon-dated to the mid-thirty-first century BCE, the compound was rebuilt, along more modest lines, in Stratum M2.

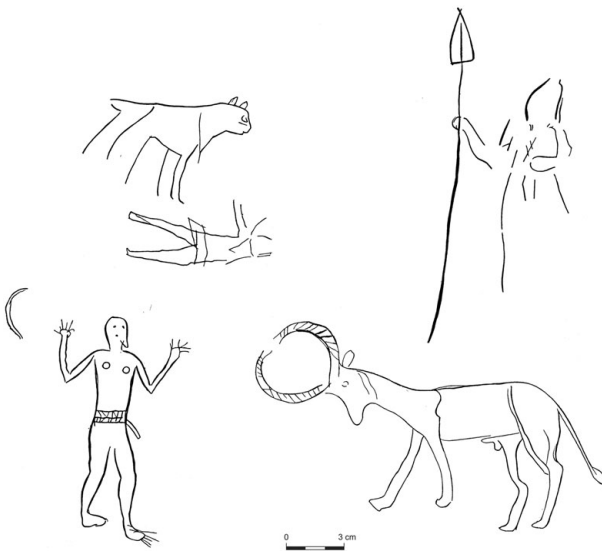
At Tel Abu al-Kharaz, east of the Jordan and some distance to the south, parts of what might be construed as a similar compound were excavated.<sup>79</sup> Destroyed, like Bet Shean Stratum M3, in an intense conflagration (see Figure 2.18, below), the small excavated part of a rectilinear, multiroomed domestic compound contained storage spaces, a room with charred remnants of stored grain in jars, grindstones and a wooden trough that has been interpreted as part of a bakery, and a courtyard with a cooking hearth. Two burnt wooden sickles, their blades intact, are among the scores of domestic and personal objects (including a necklace, a mace head and copper tools) found in this complex. Radiocarbon dates place the destruction in the thirty-first century BCE.

Tel Shalem, a short distance south of Bet Shean, provides the most explicit evidence for late EB I fortification.<sup>80</sup> The remains exposed at this site, which appears to have been abandoned at the very start of the EB II, include a broad mudbrick fortification, built in several stages, that encircled a site (unexcavated) several hectares in size. A number of recent salvage excavations have reported the discovery of similarly dated walls (e.g., 'En Zippori).<sup>81</sup> While none of these sites survived the transition to EB II, it may be surmised that the concept of fortification was tested in the late EB I but became universal only in the following EB II period. On the east side of the Jordan, fortifications attributed to late EB I are reported from limited soundings at Pella.<sup>82</sup>

Megiddo, in the Jezreel Valley, provides a striking example of public architecture on a grand scale. Recent excavations on the mound (Tel Megiddo) and at its foot (Megiddo East), as well as Braun's renewed study of earlier excavation results, increasingly support the possibility that this was a dual settlement, consisting of a ceremonial center located on the natural hill that underlies the mound, and a large, dispersed village situated in the fields to its east.<sup>83</sup> A sequence of temples was built on the hill, beginning with the Stratum XIX shrine excavated by the Chicago Oriental Institute expedition.<sup>84</sup> This temple had two main phases (Strata J2 and J3, according to the Tel Aviv University numbering system) and was approached via a sloped, stone-paved courtyard. Later, the massive Stratum J4 "Great" temple was built above the earlier complex (Figure 2.9). This 1,100-square-meter structure, built symmetrically, to precise architectural specifications, had a large central hall furnished with a row of ten or twelve pillars and six pairs of enormous, alternately circular and rectangular, basalt offering tables. Part of the earlier, Stratum XIX temple courtyard pavement was given over to carefully arranged rows of small chalk and limestone slabs, many of which bore incised graffiti depicting a wide range of symbolic representations – anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and



**Figure 2.9** The EB IB temples at Megiddo: left, the Stratum J3 temple and courtyard; right, reconstructed plan of the Stratum J4 Great Temple that succeeded it. Courtesy of M. J. Adams.



**Figure 2.10** Selected incised drawings from the Megiddo picture pavement, showing a feline straddling a headless human corpse, the figure of a ruler with headdress and spear, a suppliant and a bull. Redrawn by N. Earon after Loud 1948: pls. 273, 275, 277.

geometric.<sup>85</sup> Many of these figures can be associated with concepts of charismatic leadership, expressed in a vernacular idiom, drawn from the Egyptian visual vocabulary. They include representations of crowned rulers, defeated enemies, figures of bulls and other wild animals (Figure 2.10). In some cases, there are several layers of incisions, which have been interpreted by Yekutieli as intentional, politically motivated defacement (see further, below). In the later structure, great quantities of mammal bones found in the long corridors behind the main hall reveal evidence of segregated deposition of sacrificial remains.<sup>86</sup> However, there were no other finds of a ritual nature that could be associated with the structure.

The large settlement excavated in the fields east of the mound is coeval with the various temple phases and exhibits a considerable level of organization. The uneven terrain was modified with large terraces and fills, above which

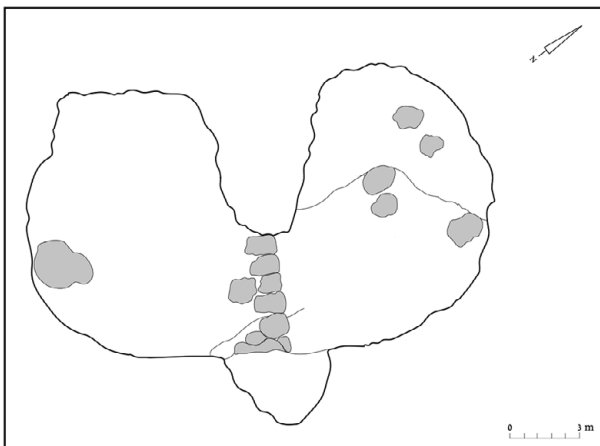
houses and larger (public?) compounds, were laid out on a regular plan. Like the temples themselves, Megiddo East exhibits considerable collective effort, but little evidence for individual wealth, staple-goods accumulation, or administration.

Many sites of the late EB IB, especially those of the Jordan Valley, experienced severe destructions, leaving rich archaeological assemblages. These have generally been attributed to one or more earthquakes, to which the rift valley is prone. However, earthquakes cannot be charged with the eventual abandonment of most of the EB I sites, as many were resettled after their destruction and survived for some time before being abandoned at the end of the EB I. The possibility of human agency in these destructions – perhaps associated with social unrest – therefore remains on the table (see below).

### *EB IB Cemeteries*

Many late EB I cemeteries have been identified near excavated or surveyed village sites. West of the Jordan and in the Dead Sea basin they consist for the most part of subterranean cave and shaft tomb cemeteries, the most prominent published of these being Bab edh-Dhra' and Jericho in the Rift Valley, et-Tell ('Ai) and Tell el-Far'ah (North) in the central hills; the Assawir, Ma'abarot, Haqiryah (Tel Aviv) and Azor cemeteries on the coastal plain; and that of Gezer in the foothills.<sup>87</sup> East of the Jordan they consist of megalithic structures and tumuli,<sup>88</sup> and on the Lebanese coast, mainly of pithos burials at Byblos.<sup>89</sup>

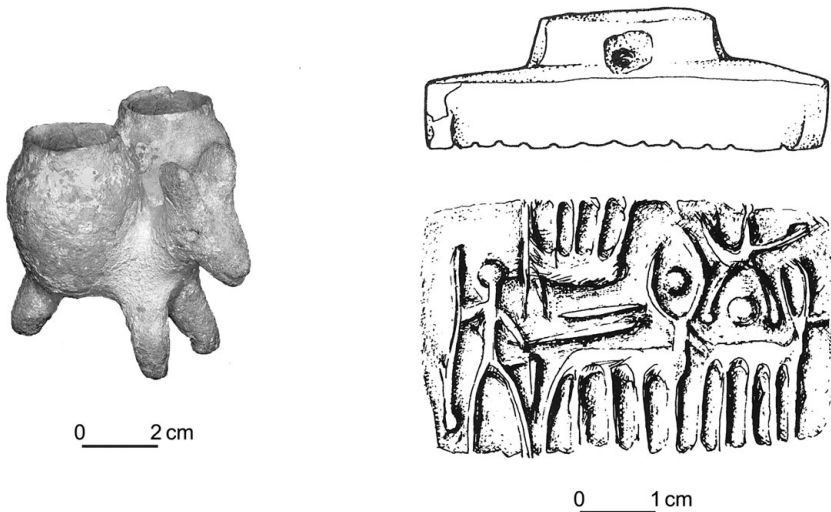
Cave-tomb cemeteries consist for the most part of collective secondary burials in round or bilobate carved chambers (Figure 2.11). The post-cranial bones were generally piled together, and the skulls placed alongside them. When space was needed for new inhumations, the previous bone piles would be either covered over, creating layered depositions, or moved to the sides of the chamber. Rarely, evidence of burning has been found in the chambers, but



**Figure 2.11** A bilobate EB IB tomb at Azor. Redrawn by I. Ben-Ezra after Ben-Tor 1975: fig. 3.

this appears to be a rite connected with the already dismembered skeletons (perhaps to expedite complete defleshing), rather than a full cremation. Tombs generally contain numerous ceramic containers, most often in a narrow range of types: small bowls, jugs, juglets and amphoriskoi. The quality of these ceramics is variable and it seems that there was a custom industry for miniature and even second-rate vessels intended for burial. It is virtually impossible to associate the grave goods with specific skeletons – a practice that was certainly intentional and could only have been intended to emphasize the collective nature of the tomb and of its ancestral population.

Beyond the large – but often monotonous – standard tomb assemblages, occasional prestige objects and other artifacts of a personal nature could – at the moment of interment, when the individual was still distinguishable from the other inhabitants of the tomb – reflect the status or vocation of the deceased. For example, terracotta figurines of pannier-bearing donkeys, found in several coastal tombs, might indicate the importance of trade to some of the interred (Figure 2.12).<sup>90</sup> A similar inference may be drawn from Egyptian palettes and imported ceramics found in the same region, or from Ninevite V pots, of north Syrian origin, found in the cemetery of ‘Ein Assawir. Another imported vessel, constituting a rare case of conspicuous consumption, is a silver bowl from the Tell el-Far’ah cemetery.<sup>91</sup> Other possible markers of ascribed status are the occasional weapons – daggers and mace heads – that might have been indicative of some form of leadership.



**Figure 2.12** Representations of the EB I traction complex: a donkey bearing panniers from a tomb at Azor and a plowing scene on a stamp seal from Tel Kitan. Photo by M. Salzberger, courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority; drawing by M. Ben-Gal, courtesy of E. Eisenberg.

In a study of the coastal plain cemeteries, Nathan Ben-Ari has noted that while tombs were intentionally carved (and natural caves rarely used) in proximity to village sites, a degree of separation was maintained, with the cemeteries located on the opposite bank of a stream or on the far end of a topographical saddle.<sup>92</sup> Located near prominent landmarks, but usually concealed on a slope that overlooked the village or its fields, the principal social function of cemeteries seems to have been internal to the community, that is, maintenance of territorial attachments and bonds of kinship. The large number of interments in many of the tombs indicates that they were entered repeatedly, with each reentry presumably requiring a series of structured actions that involved the rearrangement of previous burials and the proper disposal of the newly deceased. These actions of ancestral commemoration included the libation and perhaps ingestion of liquids (for which most of the containers are best suited), and the eventual deposit of a standard mortuary assemblage, which may be taken as evidence of dominant collective values.<sup>93</sup> The exceptions to this rule – whether items of value added to the basic funeral kit or departures from standard treatments of the dead (such as rare primary inhumations) – should be seen as attempts to ascribe status, reflect a personal biography (in defiance of standard practice), or cope with unusual circumstances of death.

James Fraser, in his recent study of EB I table-dolmens of the Transjordanian highlands, notes a similar distribution for above-ground cemeteries.<sup>94</sup> He suggests that they too served sedentary communities for multiple burials, their construction being a function of their peculiar geological setting, which was not suitable for cave-carving.

### *Crafts and Specialization*

The EB IB presents one of the high points – in variety and inventiveness, if not in quality – of ancient ceramic production in the southern Levant. Prominent regional traditions include the industries associated with Tel Erani and the southern inland plain at the start of the EB IB (“Erani C”), which have been described above, and a possibly contemporary (early EB IB) central Jordan Valley tradition characterized by a dark red fabric and prominent use of applied rope decorations. Um Hammad ware, first identified at the large site of the same name on the east bank of the river, is found on both sides of the valley.<sup>95</sup>

Two painted traditions stand out in the Jordan Valley and along its eastern and western flanks. Line-painted pottery, which is more prominent in the lower and central valley, includes jars, jugs, amphoriskoi and spouted bowls that were decorated in groups of delicately lines painted on a white ground (often a lime-slip). “Grain-wash” (or band-slip) is a coarser painted decoration, applied in swift diagonal strokes with a single broad brush or with multiple brushes, to short-necked piriform jars, to tall, heavy-rimmed pithoi, or to holemouth spouted kraters. Pottery decorated in this fashion typifies the upper Jordan Valley, the eastern Jezreel Valley and the Kinneret basin.

Looking beyond the painted traditions, red slip dominates in the pottery industries of the coastal plain, central hills, inland valleys, and all points north. This is true both of domestic and mortuary contexts. Tel Kitan in the Jordan Valley sports an assemblage that combines grain-wash pithoi and jars alongside an exceptionally fine group of red-slipped consumption and storage vessels (Figure 2.13).<sup>96</sup> Bowls and jug necks were wheel-finished; closed vessels bear a deep red slip, burnished either continuously or in a fine net-pattern. A group

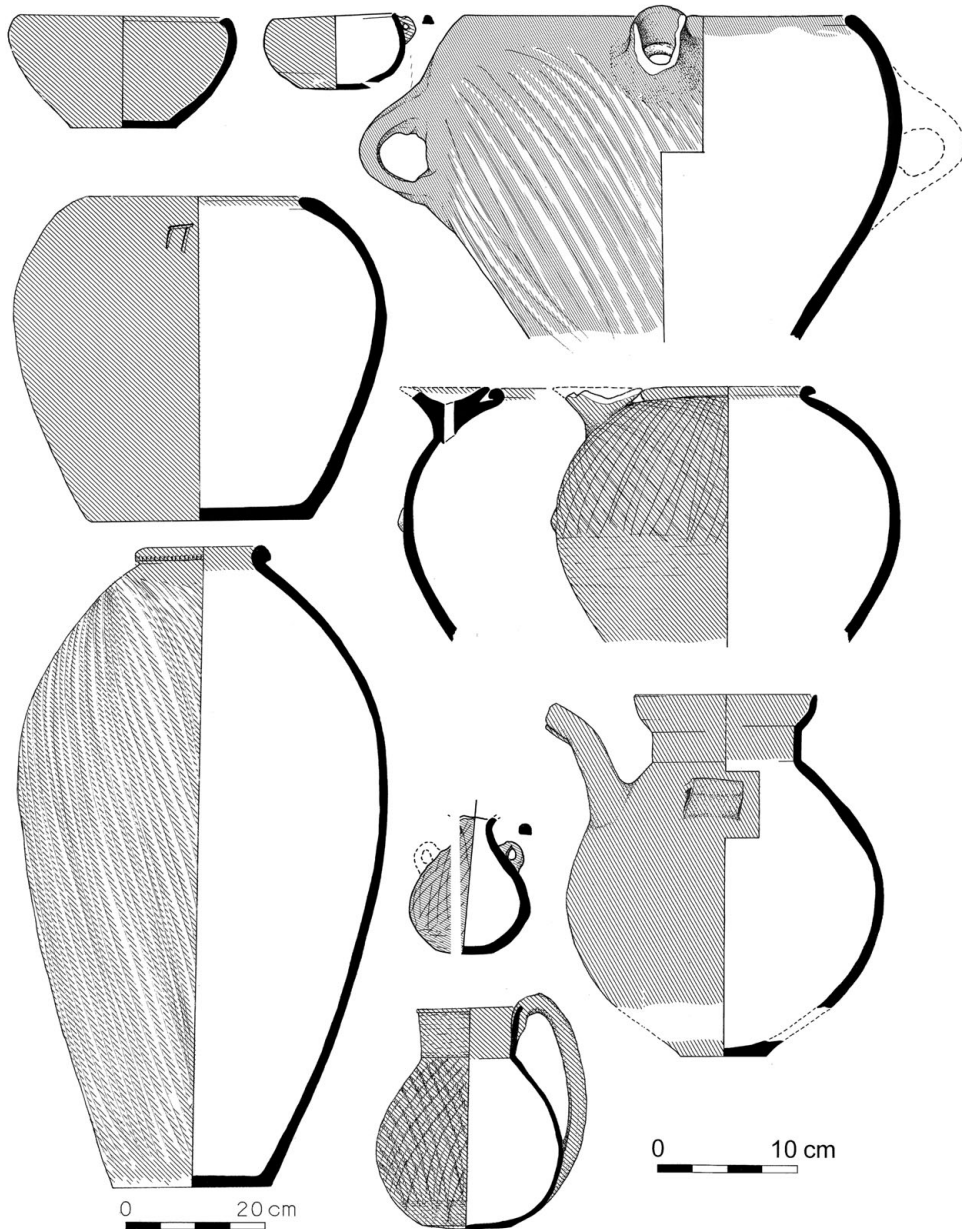


Figure 2.13 Selected EB IB pottery from Tel Kitan. Courtesy of Yael Rotem.

of bent-spout teapots – one of them double-spouted – represents one of the diagnostic features of the period and appears to emulate the bent-spout bottles and teapots of the contemporaneous Uruk assemblage. Tomb assemblages reproduce selected elements of the household ceramics, while adding many vessels characteristic only of burial contexts, such as the omphalos-based bowls and jugs of the Tel el-Far'ah (North) and Azor cemeteries.

Technological analyses of red-slipped and grain-wash vessels at Tel Bet Yerah showed different fabrics and unpredictable inclusions used to make typologically similar vessels. It was therefore suggested that EB I potters “[took] several routes to the production of a fairly uniform set of pots. Specialization decreed the form and appearance of the end-product –at least in its broad characteristics, but the specific *chaînes opératoires* could diverge.”<sup>97</sup> This points to the activity of several part-time specialists working within each tradition, the presence of itinerant potters using the materials most readily available to them or, what is most likely, a combination of both.

A late version of the Gray Burnished bowl and chalice, smaller than the EB IA vessels, carinated, and lacking the high, “oily” burnish or the typical flat lugs, was produced in separate industries in the region of Tel el Far'ah North and in the western Jezreel Valley.<sup>98</sup> The latter region also had its own bowl-rimmed jar and pithos workshops; the jars were occasionally decorated before firing with cylinder seal impressions, usually applied in a haphazard fashion, without much consideration for the orientation of the scenes. The typical theme on these seals is of animal processions or *tête-bêche* pairings, which usually consist of a dominant, powerful beast (usually a lion) and a passive or domesticated horned animal.<sup>99</sup> The geometric designs that appear on some seal impressions of this group are also often of zoomorphic origin, derived from fish or horned animals. The dominant theme here is therefore of the fecundity of nature, its power, and its ordering by humans (expressed, among other things, by the classification and representation effected in the seals themselves). A rectangular stamp seal from Tel Kitan, which may be interpreted as depicting a human figure guiding an ox-drawn plow, complements the themes of human control over nature (see Figure 2.12).<sup>100</sup>

The motifs on the cylinder seals – stylized animal processions and geometric reductions of similar origin – testify to familiarity with glyptic traditions that developed in the Uruk periphery,<sup>101</sup> but their decorative use indicates that the administrative origins of the practice of sealing had been lost. Thus, instead of applying the seals to disposable lumps of clay or other forms of documentation, endorsement or validation of individual transactions as in the region of origin, the “miscopied” practice was used by potters to attach significance to the pot for its entire use-life. This pseudo-administrative mode of sealing was to become a feature of Levantine ceramic production for the entirety of the Bronze Age and well beyond it.

Ceramic assemblages of the final decades of EB I reveal the presence, in limited quantities, of a highly fired ceramic termed Metallic ware (or, to set it apart from other, similarly named wares, Levantine Metallic ware [LMW]) due to the characteristic clinking sound it produces when struck. LMW includes carinated bowls, small platters and small containers (jugs and jars), made of clays obtained in outcrops of Lower Cretaceous deposits in the Mount Hermon massif.<sup>102</sup> In the succeeding period, LMW expands to become a dominant industry in the southern Levant (where it may be termed South Levantine Metallic ware) and is emulated at sites situated on the central/north Levantine coast (North Levantine Metallic ware).

The lithic industry shows no significant change in relation to the EB IA: Canaanite blades and tabular (fan) scrapers are the main specialized products of the era, alongside the expedient production of ad hoc flake tools. Egyptian-type twisted bladelets, locally made, as well as pressure-flaked knives imported from Egypt, occur in the regions of Egyptian contact (see below).

After a relative decline in the art of basalt-working in EB IA, there was a resurgence in later EB I, paralleling the rise of ceramic and other specializations.<sup>103</sup> Alongside the ubiquitous discoid spindle whorls, sometimes serving as loom weights, basalt tournettes are increasingly common, especially in the north.<sup>104</sup> The most notable products of the basalt workshops are the two- and four-handled mortars typical of the Jordan Valley, which at times display exquisite workmanship (especially evident in an example bearing two ibexes in relief, from a tomb in 'En Hanaziv, near Bet Shean). Several of the mortars of this type found at Tel Bet Yerah were stained with red ochre. Rarer are knobbed basalt bowls and chalices, of which the most complete example comes from a tomb in Megiddo.<sup>105</sup> The effort expended in the 'En Hanaziv mortar and the Megiddo chalice are both expressions of the occasional forays into conspicuous consumption evidenced in EB IB burials.

### *EB IB Society and Economy: Signs of Inequality*

Although physical data for EB I subsistence practices is spotty, it is clear that the basic building blocks of the Mediterranean agricultural economy, as described earlier in this chapter, remained at the foundation of Levantine village communities. Large quantities of economic plant seeds recovered in destruction levels at Tel Bet Shean and Tell Abu al-Kharaz consist of largely of two-rowed barley (the most abundant cereal at Bet Shean), naked and emmer wheat (dominant at Abu el-Kharaz) and pulses (chickpea, lentil and horsebean), with only small quantities of grape and olive at both sites.<sup>106</sup> Chaff and weeds recovered in the Bet Shean courtyards indicate that crops were processed, at least in part, within the dwelling compound, rather than at a central or communal location. In their study of a late EB I community in the south-eastern Dead Sea plain, White, Chesson and Schaub described a diverse



agricultural base, including cereals (mainly barley), figs, and an unusual concentration of grape and flax seeds. As the site is located well within the arid zone, farming would have been limited to irrigated plots in protected enclaves along the Wadi Numayra.<sup>107</sup> As noted above with regard to the arid-zone sites in EB IA, water management in arid zones was well developed in the fourth millennium. This is particularly true of the southeastern Dead Sea plain and the Arabah Valley, where the proximity of copper ore deposits in Wadi Feinan and Timna had attracted permanent settlement since Chalcolithic times. Limited zooarchaeological evidence, skewed as a result of discrepancies in collection methods and excavation contexts across different sites, reveals no fixed pattern in the utilization of small and large cattle, pig and other species in EB IB.<sup>108</sup>

It therefore emerges that, despite the intensification of EB IB settlement and the growth of mega-villages at sites like Bet Yerah, esh-Shuna, Assawir and Megiddo, there is little evidence of far-reaching structural change. Levantine EB IB society was a village society, with sporadic local attempts to garner political and/or economic power. This statement is based on a number of observations. First, most of the “mega-sites” that have been investigated to any extent – such as Bet Yerah, Megiddo East, ‘Ein Assawir or Palmahim – show the village layout writ large. The principal building units are heterogeneous courtyard compounds, and little can be seen in terms of planning or organization of common areas. Second, despite the evidence for the accumulation of staple goods in large households, like that of Bet Shean, there is no evidence for institutional regulation of economic activity. As far as we know (and we know very little, it must be admitted), each household functioned as an independent economic unit, and no evidence has surfaced for internal functional division within sites (such as centralized storage), for herd management and regulated meat supply or for commodity production. Regarding the last, the proliferation of ceramic workshops, traditions and styles points to the existence of small-scale production and exchange networks serving fairly close-knit groups. Within such networks, each product would be recognized as a product of a specific social interaction. Such systems, based on a structure of mutual obligations, would have had only a limited component of alienable, marketable commodity production. This was still – and would remain for some time to come – a “human economy,” focused on the provision of material needs, and hence more concerned with the disposition of people than the creation of wealth.<sup>109</sup>

The ceremonial center at Megiddo offers the most telling evidence for the potential, as well as the limitations, of collective building projects in a village society. The results of prolonged excavations on the summit of the mound, on its slopes and in the settlement to its east form a fascinating and complex ensemble. The most recent research suggests that activity on the mound and its slopes was mainly of a ritual nature: the temple precinct, described earlier, was

on the summit, while the southeast slope contained a number of elaborate shaft tombs and adjacent structures that might have been devoted to mortuary activities.<sup>110</sup> We have already seen that the earlier temple precinct attracted expressions of power adopted from the Egyptian cultural sphere (the incised pavement) and also yielded a number of Egyptian prestige objects. The “Great Temple” is, of course, a manifestation of power in its own right. However, nothing in the temple itself can testify to anything beyond occasional gatherings and rituals that left no lasting imprint. It shows no evidence of extensive economic activity or of any permanent presence of temple personnel. It has no ritual deposits, religious iconography or cult paraphernalia. The building can therefore be characterized as the product of considerable collective effort – a form of popular mobilization for the construction of a ceremonial center – unaccompanied by any kind of religious-economic institutionalization. Once built, the precinct served for temporary, seasonal gatherings, but did not create a religious order. As a place of memory, it did not answer individual needs, but collective ones. The locus of individual piety, as well as of ancestral commemoration, must have still been limited to the house and the tomb.

Just as the Megiddo temples do not testify to structural change, but only to the potential of corporate action in the densely occupied valley regions, so too can the scattered evidence for fortification testify to local initiatives for collective action. So long as such construction was not accompanied by additional changes in social organization – as will be shown to occur in EB II – it should be seen as one of several possible avenues of channeling the productive potential of a developed village society by a thin or even temporary stratum of leadership. It may, however, be suggested that the effort dedicated to mobilizing labor for public construction is itself testimony to the intention of elites to parade the power of the communities that they headed, just as aberrations in the uniform funeral kit testify to a wish to distinguish certain individuals from the rest. In this sense, the monumental structures, like the prestige objects in tombs or the accumulations of produce at Bet Shean, signal internal tensions in EB IB Levantine society, a tension that emerges from contradictions between the absence of institutionalized stratification and the ambitions of a few to demonstrate their wealth and power.

#### THE FIRST EGYPTIAN INTRUSION: THE NORTHEAST AFRICAN COLONY ON THE SOUTHWEST MEDITERRANEAN COAST

The growth of the thriving early EB IB villages of the southern coastal plain did not go unnoticed by their (somewhat distant) neighbors in Egypt. It will be recalled that late fourth millennium Egypt was in a state of flux leading to the creation of competing polities in the north (Nile Delta) and south (Upper Egypt). These polities sponsored emergent ideologies of royal power and centralized economic institutions. A focal point of royal ideology was the

sanctification of the body and image of the king, to whom was ascribed the power to subjugate distant lands. Royal construction, royal ceremonies and the cult of the king demanded materials and products obtained at the ends of the earth – namely, from western Asia (lumber and resin, copper and silver, precious stones, wine and oil) and Nubia (gold, granite, exotic plants, spices). Economic centralization required the acquisition of advanced agricultural and administrative technologies.<sup>111</sup>

A degree of contact between Nile Valley and the south Levantine communities had existed in the Chalcolithic and EB IA. The most convincing evidence for this contact comes from Nile Delta sites (such as Ma'adi and Buto), where evidence of the presence of people with Levantine technologies and practices takes the form of construction techniques and ceramic production derived from the Beersheba Chalcolithic, as well as direct imports of EB IA ceramics, including Gray Burnished ware.<sup>112</sup> Their presence should be viewed as the consequence of a natural back-and-forth movement between two regions – the eastern delta and southwest Levantine coast – that are only a few days' travel from each other. At the start of the EB IB, however, an abrupt change of pace occurred: a great deal of evidence has been amassed, throughout the Nile Valley and along the northern coast of Sinai, for a lively flow of products and people from the Levant toward Egypt. Pottery of the Erani C type appears in scores of sites along the north Sinai land route and in elite and royal burials in Upper Egypt. This comes to a climax in Tomb U-j, in the pre-dynastic royal cemetery at Abydos, where, in the tomb of local ruler, a chamber was exposed containing scores of pots of southwest Levantine type.<sup>113</sup> These included imported vessels as well as locally made imitations, the latter manufactured, perhaps, by a Levantine potter residing in Egypt. The vessels contained, among other things, wine residues, and were doubtless intended to convey the ability of the king to obtain the produce of the Asiatic vineyards. But it has been suggested that the ambitions of this ruler and of his contemporaries extended beyond the products to the agricultural technology that was the basis for the prosperity of the thriving Erani C villages.<sup>114</sup> It did not, in fact, take long before Egyptians acquired new practices of plowing, agricultural storage, viti- and viniculture, and apparently dairying as well. What the Levantine villagers received in return is not clear: the entire process may have been effected through occasional contacts and gift-exchange, as there is no evidence for the accumulation of Egyptian goods in Erani C communities or of any kind of political advantage accrued through contact with Egypt. Whatever the case may be, this pattern of asymmetric contact, evidenced in Egypt alone, was about to change decisively in the wake of the events that led to the unification of Egypt under a single ruler.

In the late thirty-second or early thirty-first century BCE, Upper and Lower Egypt were unified by the ruler of Upper Egypt, Narmer. At approximately the same time, a growing amount of archaeological evidence points to the establishment of sedentary settlements with Nile Valley material-culture

assemblages in the southwest coastal Levant.<sup>115</sup> The nature of this fixed presence, or colony, is still a matter of debate: Was it an extension of the unified Egyptian polity, of one of its regional precursors, or perhaps a colony founded by exiles from the defeated polities of Lower Egypt? Did the colony's inhabitants trade freely with indigenous communities, or did they impose their presence as military conquerors, exploiting and enslaving local farmers? Whatever the nature of their presence might have been, its extent and components are quite clear: the colony consisted of a core zone, where sites with a predominantly Egyptian material culture have been identified, with the site of Tell es-Sakan, near modern Gaza City, at its center. Surrounding this core zone was a belt of settlements in which Egyptian and indigenous material culture and people appear to coexist. The presence of actual Nile Valley settlers in the core zone and in the contact zone around it finds expression in the presence of everyday objects made in Egyptian technique and style; these include coarse clay bread molds, large ceramic beer vats, lotus-shaped bowls, pressure-flaked flint knives and more. Some of these objects were imported from the Nile Valley, but most were made of locally available materials.

Tell es-Sakan, the main settlement, is a large site encircled by massive mudbrick fortifications that grew by accretion over a considerable length of time (Figure 2.14).<sup>116</sup> The interior of the site is a dense warren of domestic structures furnished with storage and cooking installations characterized as Egyptian by the excavators. Finds included many ceramic vessels, local and imported, almost all of them of Egyptian type, and ornaments, figurines and evidence of Egyptian administrative practices: imported wine jars, including



**Figure 2.14** The Tell es-Sakan EB IB mudbrick fortification lines, visible to the right of and beneath the standing figure. Courtesy of P. de Miroschedji.

some bearing the incised royal *serekh* (emblem and name) of Narmer and clay sealings bearing cylinder-seal impressions.

Additional convincing evidence of Egyptian administrative practices comes from the diminutive site of 'En Besor where, in an isolated building that appears to have served as a way-station or inn, dozens of seal-impressed lumps of clay, used as sealings for jars or sacks, were found alongside rich Egyptian-style ceramic and lithic assemblages and elements of an Egyptian bakery-brewery.<sup>117</sup> Although the precise significance of the seal impressions at 'En Besor and at other sites of the colony cannot be deciphered, they contain signs and symbols that might represent names of places or persons, as well as quantities, and thus comprise the only evidence in the Levant for any kind of regulation of the movement of commodities, taxes or supplies. Various explanations for their large number at this small site may be offered. The site could have played a role in the transshipment of goods between Levantine and Nile Valley communities, or the sealed goods may have been provisions intended for trader caravans or captive labor crews making their way toward Egypt.

Tel Halif Terrace (Nahal Tillah) represents the contact zone, where people with Egyptian and Levantine cultural assemblages appear to have lived side by side. Limited excavations in several parts of the 12-hectare site uncovered a stratigraphic sequence extending from Chalcolithic to the end of EB I. Stratum II, which contained the stone foundations of houses built in the local Levantine style, provided a wealth of Egyptian remains, including a bread oven surrounded by hundreds of fragments of bread molds, several ceramic fragments incised with a *serekh*, and several seal impressions on a bulla.<sup>118</sup> The excavators also attached considerable importance to a cave approached by a long corridor that resembles the plan of pre-dynastic Egyptian tombs (the scant finds within the cave were equivocal as to its original function or the ethnicity of the simple inhumation found within it). Quantitative analysis of the pottery at this site revealed a distinct pattern of spatial segregation between Canaanite and Egyptian types, suggesting on-site interaction between two ethnic populations. A similar situation has been observed at Lod, in the central plain, making it the northernmost site exhibiting intensive contact between Egyptians and locals. Remarkably, the site at Lod yielded freshwater Nile mussels and fragments of imported Egyptian wine jars alongside the locally made bread molds and lotus-shaped bowls, suggesting the ongoing provision of supplies from the homeland to the expatriate Nile Valley population.<sup>119</sup>

Tel Erani ('Areini), where the earliest evidence for the presence of Egyptians had been discovered in the late 1950s in the form of inscribed *serekh* signs of King Narmer, was also the first to reveal an assemblage of locally made Egyptian pottery, from a stratum now understood to postdate the Erani C phase. A selective publication of the ceramic repertoire from this site indicates that the site was a crucible of Canaanite–Egyptian interaction,



**Figure 2.15** Incised serekh of Narmer on an imported Egyptian jar found at Arad. Photo by C. Amit. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

producing hybrid ceramic forms made by potters working in both Egyptian and local traditions.<sup>120</sup> Other contact zone sites include the neighboring sites of Small Tel Malhata and Arad, in the northern Negev. Both sites provided small quantities of imported Egyptian ceramics only (with no local production), including several carrying an incised *serekh* (Figure 2.15).<sup>121</sup>

Beyond the core and contact zones, only sporadic relations, seemingly comprised of gift-exchange and occasional forays from the Egyptian zone, were maintained between the Egyptian and Levantine communities. Evidence for these two types of contact comes from Megiddo and from a cache of copper objects found some sixty years ago near the modern coastal plain village of Kfar Monash. As noted earlier, it seems increasingly likely that Megiddo was a dual settlement, consisting of a ceremonial center on the mound and a large village at its foot. In the ceremonial center, the incised pavement leading to the earlier temple of Stratum XIX (J2–J3) has been linked to Egyptian concepts of charismatic leadership.<sup>122</sup> In addition to the pavement, Egyptian prestige objects and knick-knacks were recovered in all three EB IB strata at Megiddo (J2–J4, according to the Tel Aviv University numbering), including a ceremonial spearhead.<sup>123</sup> These might be construed as evidence of a local elite maintaining its status through contact with the Egyptian colony, while purveying materials and goods coveted by the Egyptians from more northerly parts of the Levant (especially lumber and resin). Another scenario places Egyptian agents or delegations at the Megiddo temples themselves; the graffiti and articles of Egyptian origin would then be offerings or expressions of respect to the local ceremonial center.

In this context, the cache of copper objects found in 1962 near Kfar Monash might offer a tangible demonstration of the nature of the services rendered to – or of the activities initiated by – the Egyptians.<sup>124</sup> The cache was found in a

field, devoid of any archaeological context. It comprised twenty axe, adze and chisel blades; a large saw, decorated with a bull's head engraved in a shallow pointillé technique; several daggers and spearheads; a knife; a large mace head; a large crescent-shaped object and hundreds of copper "scales" – curved and crinkled 10 × 5 cm plates of unknown use that could be interpreted as a form of currency. Since all these objects were in usable condition, the cache appears to have been a carefully stored assemblage, intended for recovery and reuse, rather than scrap intended for recycling. The most stylized tools – the knife and saw – have Egyptian parallels, and the assemblage as a whole can be assumed to be contemporaneous with the Egyptian colony of Narmer's time. It has even been suggested that the cache comprised the equipment of an Egyptian work crew, sent to obtain lumber north of the colony.<sup>125</sup>

Beyond such circumstantial evidence, and assuming that Egyptians came to the southern Levant in order to exploit its resources, are we in a position to know what it was that was sent southward to the Egyptian colony, and possibly to the Nile Valley itself? The relative dearth of Levantine jars in Naqada IIIB–C1 Egypt (in contrast to the earlier flourish of Levantine imports, in Naqada IIIA1–2) suggests that Levantine wine and olive oil were no longer in demand there, but resins and other aromatic oils, required for rituals and mortuary rites in Egypt, could have been supplied in small containers, whereas lumber, needed for royal construction, might have been conveyed by sea. The abundance of evidence for beer and bread production in the Egyptian outposts in the Levant could attest that there were many mouths to feed – perhaps of captive laborers destined to serve the royal estates in Egypt. Such a scenario could complement the evidence for local resentment of, and resistance to, the Egyptian presence, and to the rejection of Egyptian influence in the Levant after Narmer.

### *Understanding the Egyptian Presence in Southwest Canaan*

When the possibility of early dynastic Egyptian contact was first broached by Yadin about half a century ago, the "default value" of military conquest was assumed.<sup>126</sup> This assumption was soon bolstered by the discovery, at Tel Erani, of *serekh* fragments bearing the name of Narmer, the ostensible unifier of Egypt and founder of the first dynasty.<sup>127</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, however, evidence began to mount for prolonged contact, and a trade diaspora (or core-periphery) model replaced that of brief military incursion.<sup>128</sup> Evidence for prolonged contact included the discovery of several sites in southwest Canaan with numerous finds of Egyptian character, including objects of everyday use such as bread molds; the discovery of the north Sinai overland route, dotted with sites containing evidence of both Canaanite and predynastic Egyptian contacts; the discovery and rediscovery of Egyptian tomb deposits with Canaanite Early Bronze I pots; and last – and perhaps most telling – the

discovery of Egyptian administrative paraphernalia (impressed clay bullae and incised jars) in southwest Canaan.

With the advent of routine petrographic provenience analysis and refined ceramic synchronisms with Egypt, several anomalies cropped up in the trade model. For example, while the *serekh*-bearing jars were all imported to Canaan, the bullae were found to be local, implying different or evolving administrative functions. Furthermore, a chronological disparity began to become evident between the main phase of Canaanite materials found in Egypt – Naqada IID–IIIA (Dynasty “oo”) – and that of Egyptian materials in Canaan – Naqada IIIB–C (Dynasty o–1). Last, hybrid ceramic traditions began to be identified, “Egyptianizing” in Canaan and, most lately, “Canaanizing” in Egypt. These anomalies required that a more complex model be adopted, allowing for evolution in response to changes in both the Egyptian and Canaanite milieus.

The more recent descriptions of EBA Egypto–Levantine interaction propose a sequence of phases, each characterized by a different set of motivations for interaction and by concomitant variations in the symmetry of the relations. Detailed considerations of both the Nile Valley and southwest Levantine evidence support the simplified scheme shown in Table 2.1.<sup>129</sup>

Another point concerns the actual number of Egyptians involved. If the main impetus for the Egyptian presence was the procurement of raw materials (presumably wine, olive oil, and softwood), a small number of agents could have been sufficient to establish and maintain asymmetrical contact. The concatenation of phenomena in time and space could, in theory, result from the impact of trade, emulation, “third space” entanglements or even estate administration.<sup>130</sup> There are, however, several problems with this trade-based model: (1) the virtual absence of Canaanite products in Egypt in the third phase of interaction (Dynasty o), coupled with the apparent decrease of Canaanite presence in northern Sinai; (2) the production of wine in Egypt and evidence suggesting its exportation to Canaan rather than from it; (3) the absence of evidence for any kind of large-scale raw material procurement in

**Table 2.1** Stages of Nile Valley–Levant interaction in the Early Bronze I

Stage	EB I phase	Naqada phase	Type of interaction	Main sites
Early	A	IB–IID	Small-scale, symmetrical	Maadi, Buto Ib; Site H, Taur Ikhbeineh
Middle	B early	IIIA1–2	Intensive, asymmetrical interaction favoring Egypt; most finds in Egypt	Tomb U–j; Erani C; North Sinai
Late	B late	IIIB–CI	Egyptian colony in southwest Canaan; most finds in Canaan	Erani B (V); ‘En Besor; Sakan; etc.



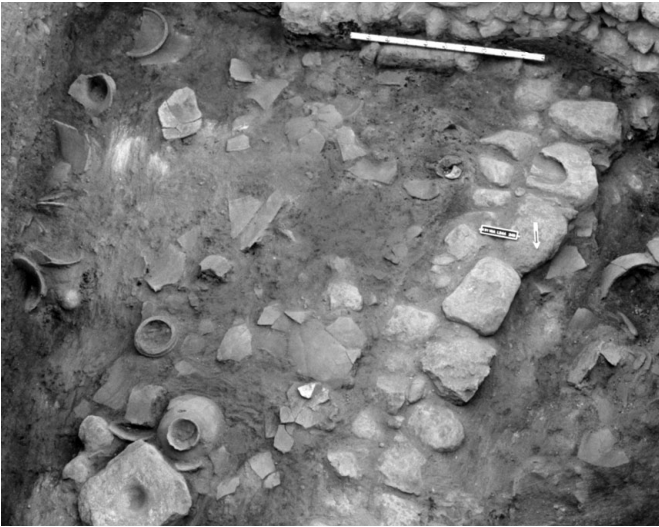
sites putatively associated with trade and (4) the uncertainty as to the ability of the nascent Egyptian state to support a trade colony.

The discovery of Tell es-Sakan seems to have scored some very telling points in favor of another alternative: that of the self-contained Egyptian implant or, to be more precise, the temporary annexation of southwest Canaan to Egypt. Arguing in favor of this alternative are the heavy fortifications of Sakan, suggesting a military presence and the need to intimidate the local populace, and the evidence – as reported by the excavators – of considerable administrative activity at the site. Such a site as Sakan must have been built at the initiative of a central state power, rather than by individual entrepreneurs, and its very existence comprises a clear expression of the asymmetry of Egypto–Canaanite interaction.

Keeping in mind that a full report on the finds from Sakan remains to be published, the issues in debate appear to be the following: the impetus for the massive Egyptian effort, the duration of the colony, and the degree of aggression exhibited toward the locals. Regarding the last point, opinions range from those who see conflict and resistance<sup>131</sup> to those who propose a far more integrative and entangled relationship.<sup>132</sup> There is some support for the former proposition, that is, that Egyptian presence was not well integrated in the local scene. The absence of cemeteries within the core zone is noteworthy, testifying not only to Egyptian aversion to being buried outside the Nile Valley (a theme commonly encountered in later texts) but to the exclusion of locals from the Egyptian zones. It also suggests that Egyptians saw their presence as temporary, rather than as colonizers of “New Egypt.” The massive fortification of Tell es-Sakan is a sign of insecurity, suggesting that Egyptians felt threatened. If the scenario I have suggested above with regard to captive laborers being sent to Egypt is true, their fears may have been well founded. Last, the absence of any recognizably Egyptian contributions to south Levantine culture in the period immediately following their withdrawal speaks to an uneasy relationship between the two communities.

#### THE END OF THE EARLY BRONZE I

Radiometric dating of the EB I–II transition places it between the early thirty-first and early thirtieth centuries, and it is likely that it did not occur all at once, but during a span of decades. Still, it may be characterized as a dramatic transition, since scores of EB I sites, including major sites such as Megiddo, Bet Shean, Tel Shalem and Tell esh-Shuna, failed to complete it and were abandoned, some for the duration of EB II and some for much longer. At sites that were resettled in EB II, the transition was usually expressed in the complete destruction of the earlier village and new construction in EB II (Figure 2.16).



**Figure 2.16** The late EB IB destruction at Tell Abu al-Kharaz. Courtesy of P. Fischer.

What could have been the cause of this universal abandonment of EB I villages across the entire landscape, from the Arabah Valley to the Lebanese coast? Two possible explanations – or, rather, speculations based on circumstantial evidence – may be offered. The first is related to the Egyptian withdrawal from the southwest coastal plain, either late in the reign of Narmer or early in that of his successor, Aha; the second – to internal social contradictions in EB IB society. The withdrawal of the Egyptians must have had significant implications in the regions adjacent to the colony and at sites that interacted with it. Within the colony and in its immediate surroundings, most sites were abandoned (e.g., Tell es-Sakan, ‘En Besor, Tel Halif Terrace) or were severely reduced in size (Lod). Megiddo, which seems to have benefited from Egyptian patronage, appears to have fissioned at the end of EB I, to be resettled only in EB III.<sup>133</sup> Still, these changes do not seem to have been the cause of the massive transformations in the valley heartlands, at sites like Bet Shean, Tel Kitan, Tel Shalem or Tell esh-Shuna, which were abandoned, or Tel Bet Yerah, Tell es-Sa‘idiya or Tell Abu el-Kharaz, which were destroyed and rebuilt. To explain the transitions in the heartland, which had only ephemeral contact with Egypt, we must assume an internally generated crisis emerging, perhaps from the inequalities, the absence of staple wealth redistribution or the attrition of the levelling mechanisms inherent in village societies. The evidence for such internal contradictions – apart from the fact of the physical dissolution of villages – can be gleaned from the nature of transformations in the succeeding period, the Early Bronze II. This period, as will immediately become evident, is characterized by an emphasis on the values of uniformity, in a manner that contrasts sharply with the diversity of late EB I.

## NOTES

- 1 Braun 1989; 2012.
- 2 Yekutieli 2000; 2001.
- 3 S.A. Rosen 2011; 2013.
- 4 These terms were introduced by K.M. Kenyon (1965) and P. de Miroschedji (1971), receiving wide usage; later, Miroschedji (1989b: 64), suggested that the terms be abandoned.
- 5 Rosen 2007.
- 6 Clarke et al. 2015.
- 7 Joffe and Dessel 1995; Golani 2004; Braun et al. 2013.
- 8 Wright 1937; 1958.
- 9 Macdonald, Starkey and Harding 1932; Roshwalb 1981; Perrot 1961.
- 10 De Vaux 1971: 233–234; Kenyon 1979: 66; Ben-Tor 1989; Gonen 1992b; for a contemporary dissenting view, see Richard 1987.
- 11 Saidah 1979; Braun 1997; Eisenberg, Gopher and Greenberg 2001.
- 12 Betts 1991.
- 13 Yekutieli and Gophna 1994; Golani and van den Brink 1999.
- 14 Eisenberg 1993a.
- 15 Oren and Yekutieli 1992; Alon and Yekutieli 1995; Dessel 2009.
- 16 Schaub and Rast 1989.
- 17 Braun 2004: 62; 2013: 142.
- 18 Dunand 1973; Artin 2010.
- 19 Yekutieli 2000; Lovell and Rowan 2011; Braun and Roux 2013.
- 20 Stager 1985; later elaborated upon by Esse (1991) and Joffe (1993).
- 21 Yekutieli 2014.
- 22 As demonstrated for the EBA of Transjordan by Philip (2001).
- 23 Gophna and Portugali 1988; Peilstöcker 2003.
- 24 Marfoe 1995; Greenberg 2002.
- 25 Nicolle and Braemer 2012; Müller-Neuhof 2014.
- 26 Braun 1997.
- 27 Horwitz 1997a.
- 28 Eisenberg, Gopher and Greenberg 2001; Yannai 2006.
- 29 Greenberg, Rotem and Paz 2013.
- 30 *'Atiqot* 2004.
- 31 Saidah 1979.
- 32 Hanbury-Tenison 1986; Polcaro et al. 2014.
- 33 Betts 1991.
- 34 Braemer et al. 2009; Nicolle and Braemer 2012.
- 35 Genz and Adams 1995; Meadows 2001; Muniz 2007.
- 36 Smuts 1995; Chesson 2003.
- 37 Horwitz 1997a, b; Wichter Kansa 2004; Berger forthcoming.
- 38 Meadows 2001.

- 39 Yekutieli 2001.
- 40 Roux and Miroschedji 2009.
- 41 Yekutieli 2001; Baumgarten 2004; Braun and Gophna 2004; Golani 2004; Khalaily 2004.
- 42 E.g., Braun 1997; Eisenberg 2001; Greenberg, Rotem and Paz 2013.
- 43 Wright 1937; 1958; Amiran 1969.
- 44 Goren and Zuckerman 2000.
- 45 Lapp 1968; Schaub and Rast 1989.
- 46 Betts 1992.
- 47 Yekutieli 2001; Greenberg, Rotem and Paz 2013.
- 48 Rosen 1997; Gurova 2013; Müller-Neuhof 2013; Manclossi, Rosen and Miroschedji 2016.
- 49 Braun 1990; Rowan 2004.
- 50 Roux and Miroschedji 2009.
- 51 Childe 1954.
- 52 Wengrow 2010a: 60.
- 53 Segal, Halicz and Kamenski 2004.
- 54 Hauptmann 2007; Klimscha 2011.
- 55 Schick 1998; Ashkenazi 2008.
- 56 Nativ 2014.
- 57 Weiner 1992: 59.
- 58 Nativ 2014; Rowan 2014.
- 59 Greenberg 2001.
- 60 Schaub and Rast 1989.
- 61 Chesson 2001; 2007.
- 62 Chesson 2007; Kersel and Chesson 2013.
- 63 S. Paz 2006; Y. Paz 2006.
- 64 Dunand 1973; Artin 2008; 2014–2015.
- 65 Cf. Bradbury and Philip 2017.
- 66 Brandl 1989; Kempinski and Gilead 1991; Yekutieli 2006; Cialowicz, Yekutieli and Czarnowicz 2016; Yegorov and Milevski 2017.
- 67 Kroeper 1989; Oren 1989.
- 68 Baumgarten, Gorzalczany and Onn 2008; Rosenberg and Golani 2012.
- 69 Mazar and Miroschedji 1996; Golani and Storchan 2014.
- 70 Yekutieli 2000; Nigro 2007: fig. 20.
- 71 Braun 1985; Golani 2003.
- 72 Esse 1991.
- 73 Savage, Falconer and Harrison 2007. For most surveys, “EB I” is considered equivalent to EB IB, since identification was largely based on EB IB diagnostics. For the West Bank data, see Greenberg and Keinan 2009, and the searchable database at <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/map/collection/p15799coll74>.
- 74 Braun 2008a; Fischer 2008; Eisenberg and Rotem 2016.

- 75 Ben-Tor, Bonfil and Zuckerman 2003; Braun 1985; Golani 2003.  
76 Philip 2001; Nigro 2007; Braun 2008b; Wolff 2008; Greenberg and Paz 2014.  
77 Paz 2012.  
78 Mazar and Rotem 2009.  
79 Fischer 2008.  
80 Eisenberg 1996.  
81 Milevski and Getzov 2014.  
82 Bourke 2014.  
83 Braun 2013; Adams 2014; Adams, Finkelstein and Ussishkin 2014; Ussishkin 2015.  
84 Loud 1948.  
85 Loud 1948: pls. 271–282.  
86 Wapnish and Hesse 2000.  
87 De Vaux and Steve 1949; de Vaux 1951; Kenyon 1960; 1965; Callaway 1964; Ben-Tor 1975; Dar 1977; Seger 1988; Schaub and Rast 1989; Yannai 2016. A detailed analysis of fourteen coastal sites is included in Ben-Ari 2010.  
88 E.g., Dubis and Dabrowski 2002; Polcaro et al. 2014; Fraser 2018.  
89 Artin 2010.  
90 Amiran 1985.  
91 De Vaux 1951: pl. 27; Yannai and Grosinger 2000.  
92 Ben-Ari 2010.  
93 Ilan 2002.  
94 Fraser 2018.  
95 Bar 2010.  
96 Eisenberg and Rotem 2016.  
97 Greenberg and Iserlis 2014: 57–59.  
98 Goren and Zuckerman 2000.  
99 Joffe 2001; Greenberg 2013.  
100 Eisenberg 1992.  
101 Ben-Tor 1978.  
102 Greenberg and Porat 1996.  
103 Braun 1990; Rosenberg and Golani 2012; Rosenberg and Greenberg 2014; Rosenberg and Chasan 2018.  
104 Greenberg and Iserlis 2014.  
105 Guy 1938: fig. 21.  
106 Fischer 1997; Simchoni and Kislev 2012.  
107 White, Chesson and Schaub 2014.  
108 Hesse and Wapnish 2001; Horwitz 2003.  
109 Polanyi 1977: 34; Graeber 2012.  
110 Ilan 2013.  
111 Wengrow 2006.

- 112 Levy and van den Brink 2002; Cialowicz 2016.
- 113 Oren 1989; Braun and van den Brink 1998; Porat and Goren 2002; Hartung 2002.
- 114 Wengrow 2006; Yekutieli 2006.
- 115 Anelkovic 1995; Levy and van den Brink 2002; de Miroschedji 2002; Yekutieli 2008; Atkins 2017.
- 116 De Miroschedji and Sadeq 2000; 2005.
- 117 Gophna 1995.
- 118 Levy et al. 1997; 2001.
- 119 Van den Brink 2002; van den Brink and Braun 2002.
- 120 Yeivin 1960; 1963; Brandl 1989; Cialowicz et al. 2016
- 121 Amiran 1974; O. Ilan 2002.
- 122 Keinan 2007; 2013, to which Yekutieli (2008) has added his observations concerning the intentional, politically motivated, defacement
- 123 Loud 1948: pl. 283:1.
- 124 Hestrin and Tadmor 1963; Tadmor 2002.
- 125 Hestrin and Tadmor 1963.
- 126 Yadin 1955; 1963.
- 127 Yeivin 1960; 1963.
- 128 Ben-Tor 1982.
- 129 Watrin 2000; Levy and van den Brink 2002; Miroschedji (2002) proposes a similar sequence, yet considers the middle phase to already have the characteristics of an Egyptian colony in SW Canaan.
- 130 Braun 2002; Kansa and Levy 2002; Atkins 2017.
- 131 E.g., Yekutieli 2008.
- 132 Braun 2002; Kansa and Levy 2002; Atkins 2017.
- 133 Greenberg 2003.