



## **RECONSIDERING EGYPTIAN–SOUTH LEVANTINE INTERACTION: EVIDENCE FROM EARLY BRONZE AGE II CONTEXTS AT TELL ES-SULTAN AND TELL EL-FAR’AH NORTH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In recent decades, evidence of a two-way relationship between First Dynasty Egypt and the Early Bronze Age II communities of southern Levant progressively emerged. The ongoing investigation hints at a branched network of exchanges between Egypt and the Levant, which was operational at the dawn of the earliest Levantine urbanization and involved multiple Levantine centers. While a complete reassessment of Egyptian–south Levantine relations in the EB II/ESL 4 is beyond its scope, this paper reviews evidence from two key south-Levantine sites: Tell es-Sultan and Tell el-Far’ah North. The paper examines the amount, range, and find context of the Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects from Tell es-Sultan and Tell el-Far’ah North, and seeks to assess their role in these early urbanized societies.

### **KEYWORDS**

Egyptian–south Levantine interaction; Early Bronze II; Tell es-Sultan; Tell el-Far’ah North; Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects; social differentiation

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Interactions between Egypt and the southern Levant in the late 4th/early 3rd millennium BCE have been reconsidered in recent scholarly literature. The growing identification of Egyptian material at south Levantine sites (e.g., Tel Beth Yerah, Tell Abu al-Kharaz, Tel Yarmuth, Tell es-Sultan) on the one hand, and archaeometric studies on imported ceramics from royal tombs at Abydos on the other, have corroborated the existence of a two-way relationship between First Dynasty Egypt and the south Levantine communities during the Early Bronze Age (henceforth EB) II. While a complete reassessment of First Dynasty–EB II relations is beyond its scope, the paper seeks to review evidence from two key sites: Tell es-Sultan and Tell el-Far’ah North (FIG. 1). These sites belonged to different trade networks (including Egypt) operating in the

northern and southern areas of the country: Tell es-Sultan took part in the Egyptian–Levantine trade because of its strategic position and proximity to raw materials of the Dead Sea basin, while Tell el-Far’ah North was the leading center in the area between the central hills and the Jordan Valley. The paper examines the Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects from Tell es-Sultan and Tell el-Far’ah North, their amount, and finding contexts, and seeks to assess their role in these early urbanized societies.

### **2. EGYPTIAN–SOUTH LEVANTINE CONTACTS IN THE EB II/ESL 4: A TARGETED INTERACTION STRATEGY**

Following the establishment of a pack-donkey route running from the Nile Delta to the southern Levant via northern coastal Sinai,<sup>1</sup> contacts between Egypt and the southern Levant gradually increased from the mid-4th millennium BCE onward. The scope

of such interregional exchanges rose throughout the EB IB/Naqada IID–IIIA period, with a peak of imported ceramics presence in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> In the late 4th millennium (late EB IB/ESL 3b/Naqada IIIB), the Egyptian demand for Levantine products and the need to organize their supply prompted an on-the-ground Egyptian presence in the southern coastal plain.<sup>3</sup> Yet, Egyptian implants were short-lived and were evacuated before the onset of south Levantine EB II. Adjacent local settlements were abandoned as well, whereas a number of fortified centers arose in the territory. While Egyptian presence withdrew, local polities exercising a stronger territorial control emerged, within a process of political realignment, settlement coalescence, and social (corporate) reorganization that affected the country.<sup>4</sup> The use of the trans-Sinaitic caravan route along the coast was also resized, alongside the intensification of Egyptian maritime activity toward the central Levant.<sup>5</sup> However, copious south Levantine ceramic imports from First Dynasty royal and elite tombs in Egypt and, in turn, Egyptian material at EB II south Levantine sites confirm the persistence of exchanges, while marking a turning point in Egyptian–south Levantine relations. Contacts did not cease after the Egyptian retreat. During the EB II, direct exploitation through on-the-ground presence was replaced by a new, targeted product acquisition strategy, likely implemented by Egyptian agents who accomplished trade and diplomatic tasks with the new local urban elites, procurers of the coveted commodities.<sup>6</sup>

Expanding maritime activity along the Levantine seaboard, moreover, intensified the exchange of commodities like coniferous resins, vegetable oils, and other,<sup>7</sup> from the northern part of the country (such as the upper and central Jordan Valley). Pottery containers were purposely manufactured to package and transport these liquid commodities via land and sea;<sup>8</sup> this is the case of well-fired jugs and loop-handled jars (some belonging to the metallic ware category<sup>9</sup>). New optical mineralogy and pXRF studies of Levantine ceramics from First Dynasty royal tombs at Abydos showed that some containers originated in northern Canaan, many of them at the site of Tel Beth Yerah.<sup>10</sup> Egyptian finds from the EB II town of Tel Beth Yerah complement this picture.<sup>11</sup> Some of the Egyptian–Levantine interactions for the trade in Levantine container-based products may thus have been centered at this site.<sup>12</sup>

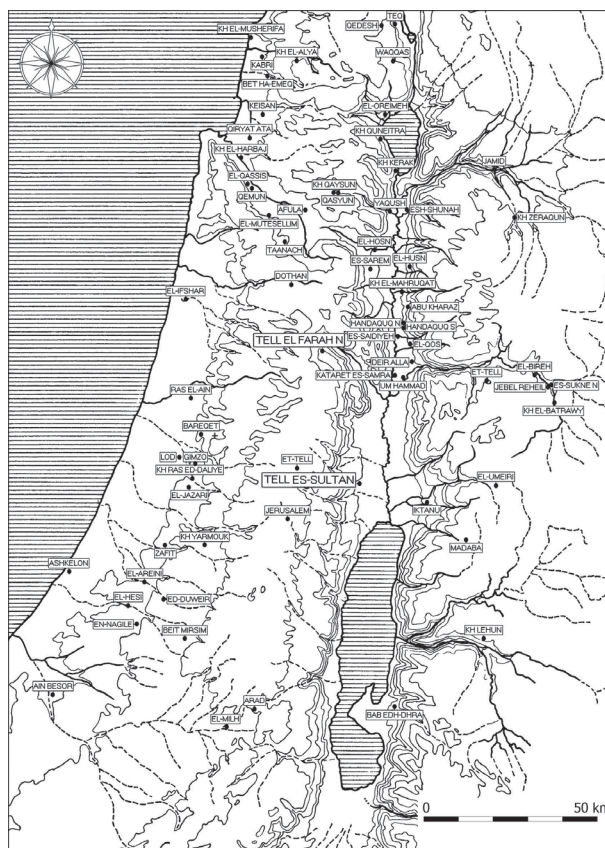


FIGURE 1: Map of EB II sites in the southern Levant (Nigro 2010, fig. 1.2).

Vessels from southerly areas (e.g., the southern hills or northern Negev) do not seem to be present in First Dynasty royal tombs. Although their presence cannot be excluded,<sup>13</sup> they were unlikely to be a significant component of imported pottery. In fact, the nature of commodities (asphalt and salt (?)) from the Dead Sea, metals, foodstuffs, and livestock<sup>14</sup>, and the modes of overland transport operating in this part of the country, probably required a different kind of containers, like bags, baskets, or panniers made of organic materials.<sup>15</sup>

What south Levantine communities received in exchange for the exported goods remains to be clarified. Egyptian prestige objects were part of the trade flow. They could be obtained by various means, such as a return for exported commodities or diplomatic gifts, not ruling out that some of them could be acquired down-the-line via merchants or inter-community exchanges. Raw materials such as shells and stones, and possibly perishable products like textiles, foodstuffs, and livestock, were also part of the trading.<sup>16</sup>



FIGURE 2: Tell es-Sultan. Plan of the EB II dwelling quarter on the northern plateau (later phase; Nigro 2010, fig. 4.45).

### 2.1. THE CORPUS OF AEGYPTIACA FROM EB II SOUTHERN LEVANT

Fine stone vessels characterize the repertoire of Egyptian prestige objects from EB II sites in southern Levant.<sup>17</sup> During the late EB IB–EB II, stone vessel manufacture in southern Levant was limited to a few rough limestone bowls (except for basalt vessels).<sup>18</sup> Egyptian stone vessels are recognizable for their material, shape, and high-quality production technique. Stone bowls dominate, imported not as containers, but for their own value. Contexts of retrieval differ, but Egyptian vessels often come from household (elite?) contexts. In the following EB III, the association with ceremonial (cultic and palatial) structures becomes prominent, as the finds from ‘Ai and Tel Yarmuth may indicate.<sup>19</sup>

Egyptian stone palettes may have been sought for their inherent meaning and function; besides their exotic value, they could reproduce Egyptian cosmetic habits. During the EB II, Egyptian prototypes inspired local artisans to manufacture palette-like objects, probably intended to satisfy local consumption by newly created urban elites. This occurrence can be observed in EB II–III

contexts at Tell es-Sultan (see below) and Bab edh-Dhra’.<sup>20</sup> Local items differ from Egyptian palettes in shape, technology, and material;<sup>21</sup> they are roughly rectangular with rounded edges, plain, with a hole drilled in the top center, and made of regional stones.

Maceheads, in local and non-local stones (e.g., marble, granite, diorite, travertine, calcite, limestone) and resembling Egyptian specimens, also occur. Originally developed for warfare, Egyptian maceheads assumed a ritual function throughout the Predynastic period and later became a symbol of power for the king and his courtiers.<sup>22</sup> In the southern Levant, maceheads were adopted as ceremonial objects and status-related insignia. Their manufacture has a long tradition dating back to the Chalcolithic; therefore, when lacking a precise identification of raw material, it is difficult to establish if these were imported or locally produced. Also, raw stones may have been imported from Egypt and worked in the country.<sup>23</sup> In some cases, Egyptian origin has been suggested on technological and stylistic grounds.<sup>24</sup>

Personal ornaments made of non-local stones and frit/faience, and Nilotic shells (used, for example, as cosmetic containers), are also attested.

### 3. EGYPTIAN AND EGYPTIAN-STYLE OBJECTS FROM EB II CONTEXTS AT TELL ES-SULTAN

The present study began with a reassessment of Egyptian imports and Egyptian-style objects from Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, attested at the site throughout the EB I–III. The rise of the EB II urban center at Tell es-Sultan may be related to various factors:<sup>25</sup> the favorable environment of the oasis, with abundant fresh water and cultivable land that produced substantial food supplies accumulation, but also the exploitation of Dead Sea resources, such as asphalt,<sup>26</sup> salt, and sulfur. Tell es-Sultan/Jericho’s strategic location, which controlled the routes along the Jordan Valley, and the site’s proximity to the raw materials of the Dead Sea basin, put it at the center of an extended trade network that included Egypt. Regional and interregional exchanges enhanced the role of the town as a trading center and triggered the development of a complex, urbanized society. A ruling elite, controlling the town, the oasis, and trade, progressively emerged, as did the ideological apparatus supporting the new organizational model.<sup>27</sup>

The attestation of *aegyptiaca* at Tell es-Sultan starts in the late EB IA, increases in the EB IB,

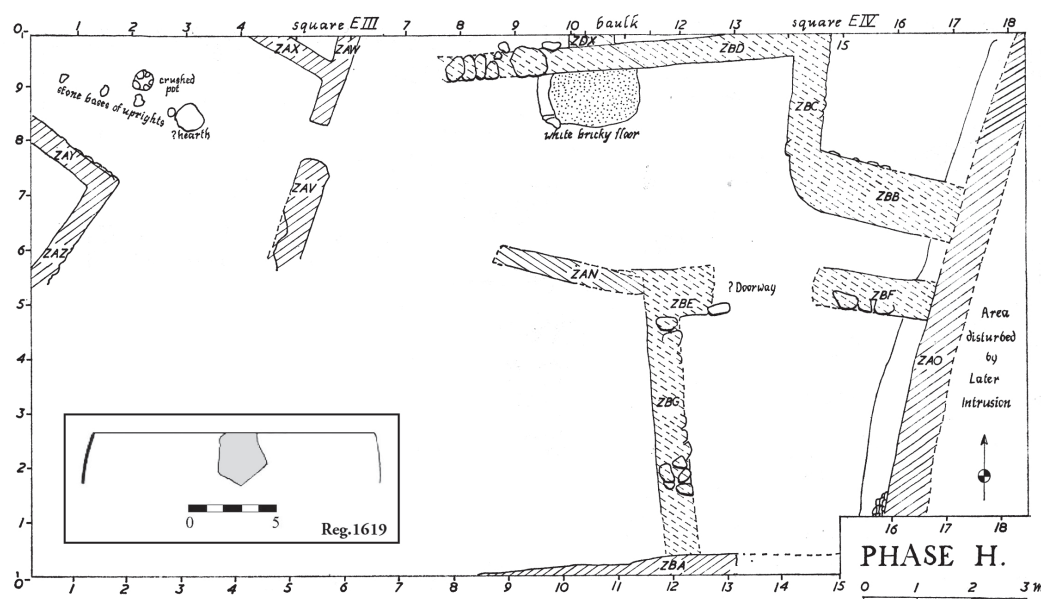


FIGURE 3: Tell es-Sultan. Plan of the EB II dwelling units in Kenyon's Squares EIII–IV (earlier phase; Kenyon 1981, pl. 316b), where stone bowl Reg. 1619 was retrieved (Dorrell 1983, fig. 229:17).

and continues in the EB II, when the imitation of Egyptian objects also began, likely to meet the demand by the emerging urban elite.<sup>28</sup> If compared to the EB I,<sup>29</sup> the presence of Egyptian material in the EB II town seems to decrease. However, it should be considered that south-Levantine EB II was a short-lived phase<sup>30</sup> and that the attestation of *aegyptiaca* continues into the EB III.<sup>31</sup>

Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects from EB II contexts come from the northern dwelling quarter (FIG. 2); in addition, an Egyptianizing palette is ascribed to the EB II occupation in Tomb D12 in the necropolis.

### 3.1. A STONE BOWL

A bowl fragment of likely Egyptian origin was retrieved during Kenyon's excavations in Squares EIII–IV, in an early stage of the EB II northern dwelling quarter (Kenyon's Phase H; FIG. 3). It consists of the incurved rim of a bowl made of fine, polished limestone (Reg. No. 1619).<sup>32</sup> Although the heirloom value of Egyptian vessels, sometimes handed down through the centuries, has to be considered, this does not seem the case for this vessel since the two superimposed EB IB and EB II settlements in Squares EIII–IV are separated by a severe destruction (Phase M):<sup>33</sup> the item would have therefore come from its primary context.

### 3.2. STONE PALETTES

No Egyptian palettes have been attributed so far to the EB II occupation,<sup>34</sup> but a group of Egyptianizing palettes was documented. Four specimens come from Kenyon's excavations in the northern dwelling quarter and the necropolis: Reg. No. 1197 from Squares EIII–IV, Phase Fi;<sup>35</sup> Reg. No. 2630 from Trench II, Phase XVI.liv–lv;<sup>36</sup> and Reg. No. 2632 from Trench II, Phase XVI.lviii (roughly finished and thicker);<sup>37</sup> Reg. No. 353 from Tomb D12. Three of these are published here (FIG. 4).<sup>38</sup> The material the palettes were made of was not recorded, but the distinctive greenish gray to gray-black stone from Wadi Hammamat used in the production of Egyptian palettes can be excluded (see note 21). Moreover, local copies exhibit a plain rectangular shape with slightly rounded edges and contrast with the Protodynastic Egyptian palettes retrieved at Tell es-Sultan itself in EB I layers, which show a sharp square or rectangular shape and are decorated with two incised lines parallel to the edge on one side.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.3. A STONE MACEHEAD

Half of a well-worked barrel-shaped macehead (Reg. No. 1449), made of an unidentified black stone, was retrieved in Squares EIII–IV, Phase K–J (FIG. 5).<sup>40</sup> Although only the analysis of the stone can settle the question of its type, the description



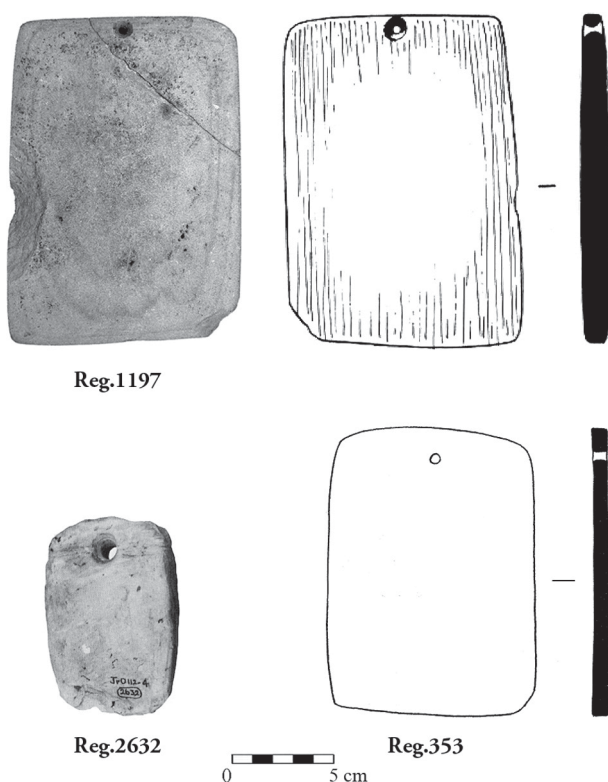


FIGURE 4: Tell es-Sultan. Three of the four Egyptian-style palettes from Kenyon's excavations: Reg. No. 1197 (Dorrell 1983, fig. 230: 12), Reg. No. 2632 (Dorrell 1983, pl. 21: c), and Reg. 353 (Kenyon 1960, fig. 40:3).

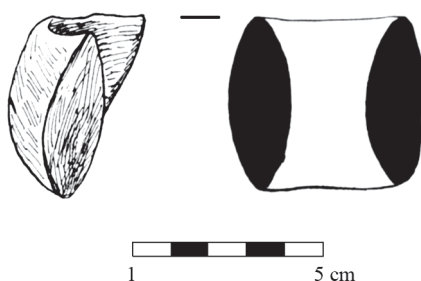


FIGURE 5: Tell es-Sultan. Half of a barrel-shaped macehead (Reg. No. 1449) from Kenyon's Squares EIII–IV (Wheeler 1982, fig. 256: 2).

may point to a material unusual for the region,<sup>41</sup> perhaps suggesting that either the macehead or the material was imported. Egyptian maceheads produced in non-local stones (e.g., marble, granite, diorite, travertine, calcite) are attested in the country throughout the EB II–III urban era. At Tell es-Sultan itself, a group of eleven maceheads can be ascribed to the EB III town; when raw material is not specified,

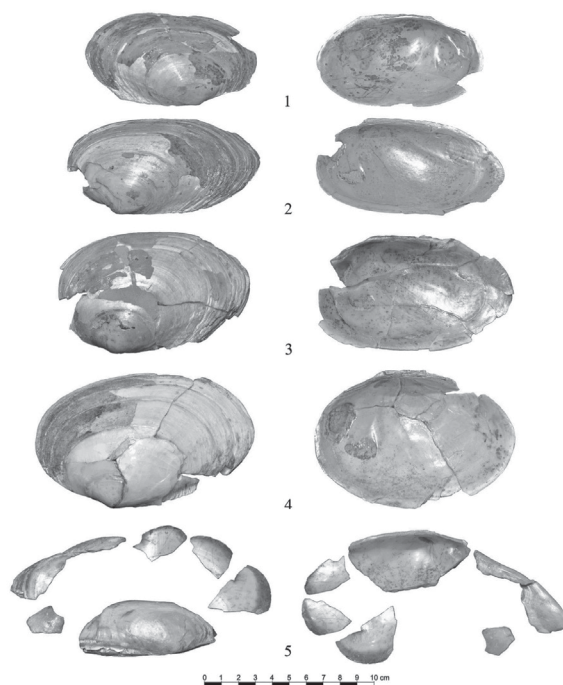


FIGURE 6: Tell es-Sultan. The five *Chambardia rubens* shells from the northern dwelling quarter (Nigro et al. 2018, fig. 7).

the style and manufacturing technique may point to an Egyptian origin or strong Egyptian emulation for most of them.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.4. BEADS

Disk and barrel-shaped beads made of frit/faience, carnelian, calcite, and rock crystal, retrieved in EB II–III tombs, may also represent Egyptian imports. This is the case of beads from EB II Tomb A127 and EB III Tombs F2 and F3.<sup>43</sup> As for carnelian and frit/faience beads, the question of provenance remains uncertain. Small carnelian and faience objects are widespread at EB II–III south Levantine sites and they should not be considered Egyptian imports unless chemical and technological evidence confirms this. Sources of carnelian were present in the country and may have provided the raw material for a local bead-making industry.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, faience production centers are thought to have existed in both Egypt and the ancient Near East during the 3rd millennium BCE.

### 3.5. ORGANIC MATERIALS: NILOTIC SHELLS

A hoard of five Nilotic shells (*Chambardia rubens*), found in an EB II domestic unit in the northern

EGYPTIAN AND EGYPTIAN-STYLE OBJECTS FROM TELL ES-SULTAN		
ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIOD	EGYPTIAN OBJECTS	EGYPTIAN-STYLE OBJECTS
mature EB IB	1 palette 5 maceheads* (4 from the tell and 1 from the necropolis) stone and frit/faïence beads	1 palette (from the latest EB IB layer in Trench III)
EB II	1 stone vessel 1 macehead five Nilotic shells ( <i>Chambardia rubens</i> ) stone and frit/faïence beads	4 palettes
EB III	11 maceheads* (10 from the tell and 1 from the necropolis) 1 pedant made of <i>Chambardia rubens</i> stone and frit/faïence beads	1 palette

TABLE 1: Summary table of Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects from Tell es-Sultan.

\* Raw materials are not always specified, but many maceheads were made of calcite or marble

dwelling quarter, represents an Egyptian import (FIG. 6).<sup>45</sup> During the EB II, specimens of *Chambardia rubens* are attested at ‘Ain Assawir (Tomb 40), ‘Arad, and Bab edh-Dhra’; numerous *Chambardia rubens* were also found in the Megiddo temple area dated to the EB I–III.<sup>46</sup> Due to their iridescent inner surface, *Chambardia rubens* shells were considered luxury goods and used both in the manufacture of personal items and as containers for cosmetics. Scanning Electron Microscopy examination revealed that the shells retrieved at Tell es-Sultan contained manganese dioxide, a substance obtained from malachite/azurite/oxidized copper (presumably quarried from mines in the Sinai), which was a basic pigment for cosmetics in ancient Egypt. The five imported shells were thus probably used as cosmetic containers. They may be related to elite individuals who were in contact with Egypt and chose Egyptian cosmetic habits as a means of demonstrating rank.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Egyptianizing palettes could be associated with Egyptian-influenced cosmetic habits. At Tell es-Sultan, *Chambardia rubens* is attested also in the necropolis in EB III Tomb F4 as a double-holed trapezoidal pedant.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.6. CONCLUSIONS

Egyptian and Egyptian-style items from EB II contexts at Tell es-Sultan hint at trade and cultural contacts with Egypt. Although Egyptian imports could have arrived through indirect or down-the-line trade, the strategic location and the access to important resources suggest direct interconnections

between Egypt and the site. Meanwhile, local artisans started a production of Egyptian-inspired objects (as attested by the Egyptianizing palettes), likely to satisfy increasing demand by high-ranking people.

The presence of Egyptian items in the EB II–III town would also point to the persistence of an exchange path between Egypt and the southern part of the country throughout the first half of the 3rd millennium BCE, while Egyptian interests moved northward. Interesting from this point of view is the recent isotopic analysis on a sacrificial donkey from an EB III deposit at Tell es-Safi providing evidence of the movement of pack animals between Old Kingdom Egypt and EB III southern Levant, and indicating that overland transport via donkey caravans across north Sinai continued somehow into the EB III.<sup>49</sup> Tell es-Sultan participated, to varying degrees, in this branch of the Egyptian–south Levantine exchange network throughout the EB I–III.

### 4. EGYPTIAN AND EGYPTIAN-STYLE OBJECTS FROM EB II CONTEXTS AT TELL EL-FAR’AH NORTH

Tell el-Far’ah North is located in the western part of the fertile Wadi Far’ah Valley, on a main thoroughfare that connected the central hills with the Jordan Valley. Thanks to the presence of two close springs (‘Ain Far’ah and ‘Ain Daleib), the proximity to agricultural areas, and the strategic position, occupation at the mound developed in the late 4th millennium BCE, until an urban center arose at the dawn of the EB II.



FIGURE 7: Tell el-Far'ah North. Plan of the EB II northwestern dwelling quarter (mid-EB II, Vaux's period 3; modified after Vaux 1961, pl. XXXIV). Loci in brackets, where Egyptian items were found, belong to different (upper or lower) dwelling reconstructions.

The central hill country underwent a period of settlement peak and intensified activity during the EB IB: the area was one of the most suitable districts for the horticulture-based economy that brought about a dramatic demographic and economic growth.<sup>50</sup> Horticulture products were produced not only for local consumption but also for export to adjacent regions, including Egypt, where the demand for wine and olive oil intensified from the Naqada IID–IIIA period onward. Intra- and interregional exchanges spurred agricultural activities and settlement expansion, and triggered the development of political and social complexity.<sup>51</sup> Tell el-Far'ah North was one of the thriving settlements in this process and became the leading town in the district during the EB II.

Palynological analysis based on the Sea of Galilee pollen record would indicate a decline in olive horticulture in the EB II; the latter has been explained as a consequence of the cessation of intensive interaction with Egypt.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, the identification of Tel Beth Yerah as a hub of interregional commodity trading, with evidence for direct contacts with Egypt (see above), points to enduring Egyptian–south

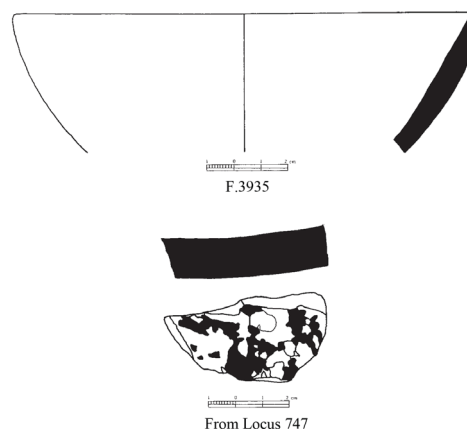


FIGURE 8: Tell el-Far'ah North. Egyptian stone vessels from the EB II town (Sowada 2009, fig. 4a–b).

Levantine interconnections throughout the EB II and centered in the northern Jordan Valley. The central hill country could be one of the procurers,<sup>53</sup> with its vineyard and olive products channeled to a network of long-distance exchanges.

The connection with Egypt is hinted by some Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects retrieved in the EB II urban center of Tell el-Far'ah North.<sup>54</sup> Items come from superimposed phases of EB II dwellings in the northwestern dwelling quarter (FIG. 7); an unfinished macehead comes from the northern sector.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.1. STONE VESSELS

Two Egyptian stone vessels were found in the EB II town (FIG. 8): a finely polished travertine bowl fragment (from L.605; F.3935), which finds parallels primarily in First Dynasty specimens, and the body sherd of a thick-walled black and white porphyry spheroidal jar (without registration number), from Trench L.747, which finds parallels between the late First and the Third Dynasty.<sup>56</sup>

#### 4.2. STONE MACEHEADS

Two maceheads made in non-local stones were found in the northwestern dwelling quarter. Despite their summary description and the need for their further scientific study, the stone types may suggest an Egyptian origin or imported

EGYPTIAN AND EGYPTIAN-STYLE OBJECTS FROM TELL EL-FAR'AH NORTH		
ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIOD	FINDS	
	EGYPTIAN OBJECTS	EGYPTIAN-STYLE OBJECTS
EB IB	1 palette (from Tomb 12) [2 maceheads]	
EB II	2 stone vessels 3 maceheads	2 (unfinished) maceheads

TABLE 2: Summary table of Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects from Tell el-Far'ah North.

raw materials. A cylindrical macehead with hour-glass perforation (F.3897) in travertine was retrieved in L.605; while a fragment of a macehead (F.4101) in diorite was found below L.628 (FIG. 7). A small pear-shaped macehead (F.4210) in hematite was found below L.651.<sup>57</sup> Two unfinished maceheads, both incompletely drilled, may represent local copies and provide evidence for macehead production: a spherical macehead (from L.638; F.4074) in white limestone;<sup>58</sup> and half of an ovoid-shaped macehead (F.62) in polished limestone(?) from Square 4, in the northern sector of the site.<sup>59</sup>

#### 4.3. CONCLUSIONS

The case of Tell el-Far'ah North is interesting for both the finds and the contexts of retrieval. The presence of Egyptian prestige objects across the EB II dwellings illustrates the wealth achieved by some segments of the population. This may hint at emerging social groups within the EB II community and may be related to the development of an urban elite. Sebag (2005) has suggested that some larger multi-room houses might be identified as elite residences ('patrician houses') in view of their size and the quality of their construction—this would point to the dwellers' higher social status and offer evidence of social differentiation.<sup>60</sup>

The surplus of horticulture products prompted intra- and interregional exchanges. *Aegyptiaca* at Tell el-Far'ah North may have arrived via mediators or resulted from internal exchanges, but they may also reveal interactions (direct or mediated) between the town and Egyptian agents based somewhere in the country.<sup>61</sup> In any case, Egyptian material reached the site within the framework of the active interconnections between Egypt and northern Canaan in the EB II.

#### 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Contrary to the literature pointing to a drop in Egyptian–south Levantine interaction during the EB I–II shift, the case studies of Tell es-Sultan and Tell el-Far'ah North contribute to the ongoing reevaluation of the topic. The two sites document the presence of Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects in EB II contexts and point to Egyptian contacts in the initial urbanizing phase.

During the EB I–II transition, Egypt's engagement in southern Levant was reorganized, aiming at a different goal both in terms of commodities and procurement modes: a two-way relationship between Egypt and its immediate northeastern neighbor was set up. Exchanges were likely achieved through the action of Egyptian agents who developed relations with local elites, possibly addressing some key centers (e.g., Tel Beth Yerah). The Egyptian–south Levantine interaction included diversified networks of both sea and land routes, in the north and south, and involved several centers located as far as the inland, depending on the different commodities Egypt was looking for.

Egyptian prestige objects were involved in the exchange mechanism. These exotic items may have been acquired by individuals of local elites. Personal equipment and bodily adornment were, in fact, one of the distinguishing features of emerging groups: the restricted access to certain forms of personal display contributed to social differentiation. Local elites likely aimed at acquiring exotic prestige goods to enhance their social status, and contacts with Egypt provided these elites some form of status involving the display of Egyptian objects.<sup>62</sup> While exporting local commodities, the elites of Tell es-Sultan and Tell el-Far'ah North may thus have acquired, among other things, exotic prestige objects, as well as exotic grooming habits, and may



have used them to emphasize their status by means of display.<sup>63</sup> The contexts of retrieval—across the dwellings of the EB II towns—seems also to indicate the request and consumption of such luxury goods by emerging social groups. Hence, although evidence is still patchy, trade and cultural relations between Egypt and the earliest urban organizations of the southern Levant are undergoing reevaluation in the light of new data. The reassessment of data from old and new excavations at Tell es-Sultan and Tell el-Far‘ah North offers new insights contributing to the ongoing investigation.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Yekutieli 2002, 430–431; Braun 2011, 108–111. Terracotta figurines of laden donkeys retrieved in EB I sites along the coastal plain (Bat Yam, Azor, Ras el-‘Ain/Aphek, ‘Ain Assawir: Milevski 2011, 187–188), as well as the high rate of equid remains from this area (Milevski 2011, 179–184, 214–215), may be related to the use of donkey caravan routes.
- <sup>2</sup> They are represented first and foremost by some 700 imported vessels retrieved in Tomb U-j at Abydos (Naqada IIIA1; Hartung 2001). The main incentive for these trade activities was the procurement of Levantine commodities lacking in Egypt at the time: wine, first of all (Müller 2014, note 14), but also olive oil, resins, timber, and copper. Already by c. 3300 BCE, these products played an important role in local patterns of elite consumption, ritual, and funerary display (Wengrow 2006, 137–140).
- <sup>3</sup> Some speak of ‘Egyptian colonial territory’ in the late EB IB, for example Miroschedji 2002, 41–44; 2015, 1018–1025; Braun 2011, 112–117; Greenberg 2019, 57–64; *contra* Kansa and Levy 2002, 199, 203–206; Hartung et al. 2015, 325–326, who point out that Egypt at that time was not yet a single territorial state, but home to many regional, probably competing, polities. Also, Czarnowicz and Braun this volume.
- <sup>4</sup> Miroschedji 2018, 110–123, 130; Greenberg 2019, 71–94. This came along with a definitive assertion of the Egyptian state and national identity in the Nile Valley. South Levantine EB II is currently considered contemporary with

- the First Dynasty of Egypt, from the reign of Djer (Sowada 2020, 153–154).
- <sup>5</sup> Miroschedji 2002, 45–46; Marcus 2002, 407–409. In keeping with the results of the north Sinai surveys that found no EB II–III remains, the pack-donkey route from southern Levant to Egypt via north Sinai was dismissed for the end of the EB I (Yekutieli 2002, 423–425). However, a recent isotopic analysis on a sacrificial donkey from an EB III deposit at Tell es-Safi proves the movement of pack animals between Egypt and the southern districts of the country still during the EB III (see below).
  - <sup>6</sup> Sowada 2009, 36–37, 241–244; Miroschedji 2015, 1026–1028. These agents could be Egyptians coming from the homeland or Egyptian traders who lived in Canaan. At Tel Beth Yerah, the presence of Egyptian emissaries directly at the site has been assumed (Greenberg and Eisenberg 2002, 214–221; Greenberg and Iserlis 2020, 43–44).
  - <sup>7</sup> In the Predynastic period, wine was presumably the main container-based commodity exported to Egypt, until Egyptians introduced wine making in the country during the Protodynastic period (Brink and Braun 2002, 168–170; Hendrickx and Bavay 2002, 70, 75; Hartung et al. 2015, 298–302). In the Early Dynastic (ED) period, coniferous resins and vegetable oils, used for ritual activities, became the dominant traded commodities (Sowada 2009, 43–44, 191–192, 198–200; Müller 2014, 244–246; Hartung et al. 2015, 324). This is confirmed by residue analyses on pottery containers from First Dynasty royal tombs at Abydos (Serpico and White 1996; Sarret et al. 2017). Recent studies on sealing practices in Egypt, however, would demonstrate that special wines continued to be imported, albeit on a smaller scale, for specific purposes (Müller 2014, 247–248).
  - <sup>8</sup> Marcus 2002, 409–411.
  - <sup>9</sup> Badreshany, Philip, and Kennedy 2020; Greenberg and Iserlis 2020.
  - <sup>10</sup> Iserlis, Steiniger, and Greenberg 2019, 1028–1036; Greenberg and Iserlis 2020, 40–44.
  - <sup>11</sup> Greenberg and Eisenberg 2002. Egyptian finds from EB II contexts include: a locally made jug bearing a hieroglyphic graffito incised after firing (Greenberg and Iserlis 2014, 66, fig. 3.43:4); an Egyptian jar, dated on typological grounds to the ED period (Greenberg and Iserlis 2014, 67, fig. 3.45:8); Egyptian jar sherds (Getzov 2006, 76) and seven faience beads (Getzov 2006, 100) from Getzov’s excavations; the fragment of a siltstone bowl (Paz 2014, fig. 6.39:204); the relief-carved fragment of a siltstone palette (although from a secondary depositional context: Greenberg, Wengrow, and Paz 2010; Greenberg et al. 2012, 96). These finds point to active contacts between the site, its urban elite, and Egypt during the EB II.
  - <sup>12</sup> Data point to the broad region (including Lebanon and Syria) for Egyptian–Levantine interactions throughout the EBA. Archaeometric analyses on ceramic imports in Egypt suggest that Egypt developed interregional contacts with both the southern and central Levant since the late Predynastic period (Naqada IID–IIIA: Hartung et al. 2015, 298–304, 322–324). A variety of procurement networks were operational during the ED period (Hartung et al. 2015, 308–322, 324–325; Iserlis, Steiniger, and Greenberg 2019, 1035–1037). At this stage, the importation of north Canaanite vessels to First Dynasty Egypt played a key role. The situation is not clear for the Second and Third Dynasties (Sowada 2014, 297); however, by the 4th Dynasty the ‘Byblos run’ became the focus of Egyptian maritime commerce and container-based products from central Levant became customary. This is confirmed by both typological observations (Thalmann and Sowada 2014, 361, 365, 369–372) and petrographic studies (Sowada, Ownby, and Wodzińska 2020).
  - <sup>13</sup> The presence of white-slipped, red-painted vessels possibly associated to local southern assemblages (e.g., from Arad: Amiran 1974) has been registered and might suggest the existence of additional ways to Egypt.
  - <sup>14</sup> Sowada 2020, 157.
  - <sup>15</sup> See, for example, Amiran 1985, 192; Milevski 2011, 190–191.
  - <sup>16</sup> Sowada 2009, 204–206; 2018a, Arnold et al. 2016; Greenfield et al. 2020, 384–386, 390.
  - <sup>17</sup> For a summary presentation: Sowada 2009, 48–50. For different items from EB II contexts: Paz 2014, 290–291, fig. 6.39:204 (Tel Beth Yerah); Loud 1948, pl. 258:1 (Megiddo); Yannai 2002, 338, fig. 22.1:21 (‘Ain Assawir); Sowada 2009, 49–50, figs. 4c, 5a (Tel Yarmuth); Amiran et al. 1978, 57, pl. 77:1–2 (Arad).
  - <sup>18</sup> Sowada 2018b, 256–258.

- <sup>19</sup> ‘Ai and Tel Yarmuth were key EB III centers in southern Canaan. At ‘Ai, in particular, Egyptian stone vessels likely represented diplomatic gifts or endowments to a temple (Sala 2008, 302–303; Sowada 2009, 104–119, 216–218).
- <sup>20</sup> Along with Egyptian palettes (two from Field XVI, Reg. 2924 and 1262, Rast and Schaub 2003, 294, fig. 10.39:2, 400, fig. 12.6:3–4; two from Charnel Houses A22, Reg. 1900 and 3364, Sowada 2000, 1529–1530, fig. 1c, 1e; one from Charnel Houses A21, Rast and Schaub 1989, 343; Wilkinson 1989, 455–456, fig. 261:7; and one from Charnel Houses A51, Rast and Schaub 1989, 384–385; Wilkinson 1989, 454, fig. 261:3; see also Sowada 2009, 96–97, fig. 18, pl. 13), some Egyptian-style items made of local stones were retrieved in the EB II–III tombs in the necropolis: three from Charnel Houses A51 (Wilkinson 1989, 452–454, fig. 261:1–2, 4) and two from Charnel Houses A41 (Wilkinson 1989, 454–455, fig. 261:5–6).
- <sup>21</sup> Besides their shape and fine manufacture technique, Egyptian-imported palettes are recognizable from the stone they are made of: almost exclusively the greenish grey to gray-black stone from the Wadi Hammamat, alternatively indicated as siltstone, graywacke, or schist (Klemm and Klemm 2008, 306–309).
- <sup>22</sup> Gilbert 2004, 35–41.
- <sup>23</sup> Czarnowicz 2014, 195–196; Sowada 2009, 232–233; 2014, 297.
- <sup>24</sup> See, for example, Fischer 2002, 330; *contra* Rowan and Levy 2011, 208. Indeed, the higher attestation of maceheads in the southern part of the country (at Tell es-Sultan itself: eleven maceheads, plus a possible specimen from Sellin and Watzinger’s excavations of the EB I remains; Sala 2012, 282–283) may suggest an Egyptian influence in the spread of these items (Rowan and Levy 2011, 210–212).
- <sup>25</sup> Nigro 2019, 80–83.
- <sup>26</sup> Historical sources indicate that asphalt was a major economic asset of the Dead Sea region. Discoveries from EB I levels at Site H/Wadi Gaza, Afridar, Small Tel Malhata, Tel Halif Terrace, Tel Erani, Horvat Illin Tahtit, Nizzanim, Palmahim, and Lod, where asphalt lumps were found, testify that export and trade of Dead Sea asphalt in the southern part of the country began as early as the late 4th millennium BCE (Nissenbaum et al. 1984; Connan, Nissenbaum, and Dessort 1992; Milevski, Marder and Goring-Morris 2002; Milevski 2011, 164–169). The export of Dead Sea asphalt to Egypt in the late 4th millennium BCE is attested from Maadi (Connan, Nissenbaum, and Dessort 1992, 2755–2758; Serpico 2000, 456). In the EB II, asphalt was possibly one of the commodities traded by the center of Arad, whose exchange network reached Egypt via north Sinai (Connan, Nissenbaum, and Dessort 1992, 2758; Sowada 2009, 44–45; and Yekutieli 2004 on the possible existence of a route connected with asphalt distribution).
- <sup>27</sup> Nigro 2010, 1–5.
- <sup>28</sup> Sala 2012, 284–285.
- <sup>29</sup> Sala 2012, 281–284.
- <sup>30</sup> Regev et al. 2012, 558–559, pp. 552–553 referring to Tell es-Sultan; *contra* Nigro et al. 2019. Considering the latter (Nigro et al. 2019, 225–227), it should be noted that no samples from late EB II (EB IIB) contexts come from the new excavations, whereas samples from Kenyon’s excavations come from unsecure contexts [BM-551], cover an extremely long-time range [BM-1783R and BM-550], or give quite different 14C ages [BM-1780N and BM-552].
- <sup>31</sup> Sala 2012, 285–286.
- <sup>32</sup> Rim diameter 16 cm, thickness 0.3 cm (Dorrell 1983, 554, 556, fig. 229:17). Conversely, the oval limestone bowl with two or three lug handles (Reg. 1507: Dorrell 1983, 554, pl. 19a) probably is of local production.
- <sup>33</sup> Possibly ascribed to an earthquake (Kenyon 1981, 325, pl. 315a).
- <sup>34</sup> Two Egyptian rectangular palettes, with two incised lines parallel to the edge, were retrieved in the EB I settlement (see note 39).
- <sup>35</sup> Dorrell 1983, 559, fig. 230:12. Dimensions: length 16.5 cm × width 11.5 cm × thickness 1.5 cm. Reg. 1197 was bigger and finely made, with a smoother, worn-down area in the center of each face.
- <sup>36</sup> Dorrell 1983, 559 (not illustrated).
- <sup>37</sup> Dorrell 1983, 559, pl. 21:c. Dimensions: length 10 cm × width 6.5 cm × thickness 2 cm.
- <sup>38</sup> Kenyon 1960, 125, fig. 40:3. Dimensions: length 14.1 cm × width 10.2 cm × thickness 0.8 cm.
- <sup>39</sup> Two Egyptian palettes belonging to this type, typical of the Protodynastic period (Naqada IIIB) up to the First Dynasty (Kroeper 1996, 74–79, 81, figs. 3–5, 8), were found in the EB I

- settlement (Sala 2012, 281–282; respectively: Reg. 3678 from Garstang’s excavations in the North-Eastern Trench, Level VII, late EB IA (Garstang, Ben-Dor, and Fitzgerald 1936, pl. XXXVI:26) and Reg. 1955 from Kenyon’s excavations in Trench III, phase XV.IIIa, late EB IB (Holland 1982, 559, fig. 226:16). The EB I contexts of retrieval are consistent with the general production date of this type in Egypt. Similar Egyptian palettes continue to be attested throughout the EB II–III period, when they were no longer produced in Egypt (on this topic see Sowada 2000, 1531–1533). They have been retrieved at Tel Beth Yerah (Paz 2014, 291, fig. 6.40), ‘Ain Assawir (Tomb 40: Yannai 2002, 338, fig. 22.1:22), Tel Halif (Jacobs 1996; Jacobs and Seger 2017, 87–88, fig. 2.B.26.), Tell el-Umeiri (Geraty et al. 1986, 135), Numeira (Sowada 2000, 1528–1529, fig. 3b), Bab edh-Dhra’ (see note 20), Umm Saysabān in the region of Petra (Hübner 2011, 162–164, fig. 14), till the recent finds from Khirbet al-Batrawy (Sala 2014, 68–69; Nigro et al. 2020, 4–5). An additional item (Reg. 1874) from Kenyon’s excavations in Trench III, from the latest EB IB layer (phase XVI.Ixi–Ixiia), represents a local palette-like object (Dorrell 1983, 559, fig. 230:13).
- <sup>40</sup> Wheeler 1982, 630, fig. 256:2. Dimensions: 5 cm × 4.5 cm. Reg. 1449 was published as a spindle whorl, together with Reg. 1116 (Wheeler 1982, fig. 256:1). Both items were later recatalogued as maceheads (Holland 1983, 811). The shape (shorter) and perforation (wider) of Reg. 1449 are quite unusual and make this artefact a variant form of barrel-shaped macehead.
- <sup>41</sup> As it happens elsewhere: see e.g., Czarnowicz 2014, 198–199
- <sup>42</sup> Sala 2012, 286. Ten maceheads from the tell (Holland 1983, 804–806, fig. 365:3–5, 7, 10–11, 13; Wheeler 1982, 630, fig. 256:1), and one from the necropolis (Kenyon 1960, 171, fig. 66:4) were retrieved during Kenyon’s excavations. To these, a pear-shaped macehead from Sellin and Watzinger’s excavations may be added (Sellin and Watzinger 1913, fig. 110).
- <sup>43</sup> Respectively (Kenyon 1960, 91–92, fig. 28; 155–156, fig. 55; 173–174, fig. 65). Actually, for a number of beads stone types are not indicated.
- <sup>44</sup> Sowada 2009, 94; Milevski 2011, 169–173; Greenfield et al. 2020, 389.
- <sup>45</sup> Nigro et al. 2018, 111–116.
- <sup>46</sup> Respectively, Bar-Yosef Mayer 2002, 131, table 7.1; Yannai 2002, note 4 (‘Ain Assawir); Amiran et al. 1978, pls. 118:2–6, 119:2 (Arad); Wilkinson 1989, 456, fig. 262:1 (Bab edh-Dhra’); Bar-Yosef Mayer 2000, 480; Bar-Yosef Mayer and Baruch 2006, 501, 503; Ktalav 2013, 1216 (Megiddo temple area, along with Red Sea shells).
- <sup>47</sup> Nigro et al. 2018, 119–121.
- <sup>48</sup> Kenyon 1960, 146, fig. 48:4, pl. VII:4 (no. 273); Bar-Yosef Mayer 2002, 130, table 7.12.
- <sup>49</sup> Arnold et al. 2016; Greenfield et al. 2020, 384–386. Given the nature of the finds, the domestic neighborhood where the sacrificial donkey was found has been associated with merchant families involved in regional and interregional exchanges (Greenfield et al. 2020, 390–391).
- <sup>50</sup> Finkelstein and Gophna 1993, 6, 9–14. In the Wadi Far’ah and the surrounding highlands of Samaria, most of the settlements were newly established during the EB I, and mainly in the EB IB phase (Bar 2014, 410–415). In this period, the exploitation of new districts (e.g., the western Wadi Far’ah) and the economic transition toward a more intensive exploitation of orchard crops took place. Settlement and demographic growth in the area might also be linked to the inroad and/or relocation of new people from the outside attracted by a favorable environment (Bar 2014, 454–455).
- <sup>51</sup> Langgut, Adams, and Finkelstein 2016, 124–125.
- <sup>52</sup> Langgut, Adams, and Finkelstein 2016, 125–127.
- <sup>53</sup> Population size and horticulture kept increasing in the central hills during the EB II (Portugali and Gophna 1993, 173–178; Bar 2014, 130–133), despite a decrease in site number.
- <sup>54</sup> As for the EB IB occupation, a travertine palette is recorded from Tomb 12 (F.2103: Vaux 1951, pl. 27b.4; Sowada 2009, 228). Two stone maceheads (both half-preserved) are also registered: one made of limestone from Tomb 3 (F.794; Vaux and Steve 1949, 108), the other one from the tell (F.1208; unpublished), but their origin cannot be determined. Finally, a number of ‘iridescent’ shells, and carnelian and frit/faience beads, were retrieved in the EB I tombs (Tombs 2, 3, 5 and 8: Vaux and Steve 1949, 108–109, 122, 126, 133–134, pls. IV,a,7–8, IV,b,17–18, VI,b,4–5; Tombs 9, 11 and 12: Vaux 1951, 572, 574, pls. XXVI,a,3, XXVI,b,17, XXVII,b,1).
- <sup>55</sup> Excavations of the EB I–II settlements at Tell el-Far’ah North, carried out by Roland de



Vaux between 1946 and 1960 on behalf of the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem (EBAF), were published only through preliminary reports. Most of the materials remain unpublished. Some Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects were identified from a preliminary survey through the original handwritten object inventories ('Catalogues des objets') kept in the EBAF archives.

<sup>56</sup> Sowada 2009, 49, fig. 4a–b.

<sup>57</sup> Registered in the unpublished handwritten inventory (EBAF archives): *Fouilles de Tell el-Far'ah, Septième campagne 1958, Catalogue des objets*, pp. 47 (F.3897), 90 (F.4101), 112 (F.4210). Hematite piriform maceheads could be Egyptian imports, although hematite was rarely used in the manufacture of maceheads in Egypt (Czarnowicz 2014, 198).

<sup>58</sup> Registered in the unpublished handwritten inventory (EBAF archives): *Fouilles de Tell el-Far'ah, Septième campagne 1958, Catalogue des objets*, p. 85.

<sup>59</sup> Registered in the unpublished handwritten inventory (EBAF archives): *Fouilles de Tell el-*

*Far'ah, Première Saison 1946, Catalogue des objets*, p. 16.

<sup>60</sup> Sebag 2005, 32, fig. 7; Miroschedji 2018, 126–127. Some of the elite dwellings yielded evidence of feasting or storage activities, such as the so-called 'Maison des Jarres' (Vaux and Steve 1947, 403–404, pls. XI [Trench V], XVII).

<sup>61</sup> An indirect or down-the-line trade in Egyptian exotica through merchants or inter-community exchange was operational in the country. However, this does not seem to be the case with the Egyptian finds from Tell el-Far'ah North, where the regional setting and complementary evidence (e.g., from Tel Beth Yerah) suggests an Egyptian connection.

<sup>62</sup> Even east of the Jordan, Egyptian objects are increasingly attested in the EB II–III period (Sala 2014), when some Transjordanian settlements achieved the status of urban centers and were able and eager to trade local commodities in exchange for exotic goods. The EB III collection of Egyptian and Egyptian-style objects found at Khirbet al-Batrawy (Nigro et al. 2020), at the edges of the Syro-Arab Desert, illustrates these interregional exchanges.

<sup>63</sup> Greenberg and Iserlis 2020, 44.

