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Overland Trade in Northern Sinai: The Evidence of the Late Cypriot Pottery

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Southern Canaan and northern Sinai were under Egyptian hegemony during the Late Bronze Age, but Egypt may not have profited from this opportunity to develop an overland trade route. Pottery distributions may reflect general trading patterns and are indicators for the exchange of other, economically more important commodities, such as agricultural products, which may not be traceable in the archaeological record. The assemblages of Late Cypriot pottery from northern Sinai and southern Canaan were similar, and differed widely from that of Egypt; hence, most of the vessels must have been brought to northern Sinai from southern Canaan, and not trans-shipped to Egypt.

The distribution of Late Cypriot pottery in northern Sinai may have depended on a military supply route and on private traders who took advantage of it. The fact that the northern Sinai route was not fully exploited for overland trade reflects Egypt's primarily strategic interest in the region.

INTRODUCTION

By the time of Thutmosis III, Egypt had established a military route across northern Sinai, consisting of a chain of way stations, garrisons, and fortresses. In Egyptian documents, the route was known as “The Ways of Horus” (Gardiner 1920: 103, 113–16). Yet, in spite of the route’s importance for the understanding of Egypt’s foreign policy, prior to Oren’s surveys and excavations from 1972 to 1982, the Egyptian organization in northern Sinai was known only from the literary record (Gardiner 1920). Oren’s “North Sinai Survey,” conducted on behalf of Ben Gurion University, provided information on the types of sites in northern Sinai, their size and location. On the basis of that archaeological evidence, together with historical documents, it is now possible to explore the question of overland trade between Egypt and Asia via northern Sinai. The overland route was not a prerequisite for contact with the Levant. Although there was virtually no evidence of settlement in northern Sinai during the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom, according to the North Sinai Survey (Oren 1973: 200), relations between Egypt

and its eastern neighbors were maintained (Montet 1928: 274–79; Ward 1971: esp. 61–62; Kemp 1983: 143–47). Furthermore, neutron activation analyses of Middle Bronze Age pottery from Tell el-Dab^a, recently conducted by McGovern and Harbottle, have revealed that a number of storage jars and other vessel types were imported from southern Canaan (P. McGovern personal communication). Egypt’s foreign trade, then, even with southern Canaan, neither required nor resulted in the settlement of northern Sinai. In the Middle Bronze Age, communications between Egypt and Asia depended on sea traffic (Säve-Söderbergh 1946: 33). It is likely that considerations other than trade—specifically, concern for the security of Egypt’s eastern border—prompted the Egyptian administration to establish an overland route following the expulsion of the Hyksos (Kemp 1978: 19). “The Ways of Horus” may be viewed as an outgrowth of the long-established policy of safeguarding the eastern Delta against nomadic infiltration through a system of outposts (Helck 1971: 38–40; Ward 1971: 19–43). Once it was organized, the northern Sinai route became a vital artery for military transports in Egypt’s many Asiatic campaigns.

The overland route was also essential for communications; it allowed Egypt to monitor strictly its province in southern Canaan (corresponding, hypothetically, to the coastal plain of the Negev [Oren 1984: 53]). Control of the latter's government and resources was indispensable for the operation of the military highway. Because of the limited resources in northern Sinai, the army was probably divided up into smaller units and crossed in stages (as in later periods [Ayalon 1971: 185]). It was therefore necessary for the troops to be able to regroup in friendly territory upon arrival in Canaan, to rest, and to take on fresh provisions. For practical purposes, the administration of northern Sinai and southern Canaan should have been closely linked, particularly with regard to security and the furnishing of supplies for the maintenance of Egyptian civilian and military personnel in both areas. The distribution of Late Cypriot pottery in northern Sinai and southern Canaan reflects such an organization.

Our understanding of Egypt's administration in Canaan during the 18th Dynasty, with respect to the exchange or redistribution of goods, is based on a number of detailed studies of the Amarna letters (e.g., Abdul-Kader 1959; Schulman 1964b; Helck 1971; Several 1972; Albright 1975; Na'aman 1975); and of the annals of Thutmose III, which furnish the principal record of the types and quantities of booty or tribute obtained by Egypt's forces in Canaan (Wilson 1955: 234–41; Helck 1971: 370–427). To what extent did Egypt's administration in Canaan exploit and develop the latter's well-established trading networks with Cyprus? Certainly, the Egyptian occupation of southern Canaan did not disrupt its foreign trade. Late Cypriot vessels found in large numbers in Late Bronze I contexts in southern Canaan, particularly in the coastal town of Tell el-'Ajjul (Bergoffen 1989), increased and reached a peak of frequency during Late Bronze II (Bergoffen 1989; Gittlen 1977). The intensification of the trade in Late Cypriot pottery in Canaan, however, was not paralleled in Egypt. Moreover, neither the Amarna letters, nor the annals of Thutmose III, provide much evidence that Cypriot housewares, or goods shipped in ceramic containers, were acquired by Egypt's administration in Asia. Specifically Cypriot products were rarely mentioned in the annals, while the Amarna letters recorded direct, high-level exchanges between the king of Cyprus and Pharaoh (EA 33–40), and dealt primarily with Cypriot copper, which was received by Egypt as tribute. Viewed in the light of the historical documents, the compara-

tive analysis of the distribution of Late Cypriot vessels in Egypt, northern Sinai, and southern Canaan points to unofficial trade, carried out "on the side" by individuals who traveled with the official supply or tribute caravans.

HISTORY AND HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE "WAYS OF HORUS"

The literary and pictorial records of the 18th and 19th Dynasties emphasize the strategic importance of northern Sinai. Although the Egyptians had invaded Canaan under Ahmose, the earliest indication of military outposts in northern Sinai during the New Kingdom is the account of Thutmose III's first campaign. Because that pharaoh was able to take an army from Thebes, in the eastern Delta, to Gaza in a mere nine to ten days, it is surmised that a chain of fortresses guarding the route and serving as supply stations was in operation by that time. Moreover, the name of Gaza in the annals of the first campaign, "That-which-the-Ruler-had-Seized," suggests that the town had been captured on a previous occasion (Alt 1944: 9), possibly by Thutmose III during the reign of Hatshepsut, before his accession to the throne (Redford 1967: 60–62; Helck 1971: 252; Ahituv 1978: 94; Katzenstein 1982. Weinstein [1981: 6] proposed Hatshepsut as the conqueror). A military garrison at Sharuhin, in the western Negev in the area of Gaza, may have been founded as early as the reign of Ahmose. In any event, southern Canaan was a nexus of Egyptian power in Canaan throughout the 18th Dynasty and until the late Ramesside period (Redford 1979: 274, and n. 68).

"The Ways of Horus" took its name from the frontier outpost in the eastern Delta, later called "Thebes," which became the western terminus of the northern Sinai route. The earliest document mentioning The Ways of Horus is dated to the First Intermediate Period (Gardiner 1920: 115). In the "Story of Sinuhe," which took place in the reign of Senusert (ca. 1971–1928 B.C.), Sinuhe's return to Egypt was signaled by his arrival at The Ways of Horus, and from that embarkation point, he set sail for Lisht (Wilson 1955: 21). The Ways of Horus was also mentioned in the tomb of Rekhmire (Porter and Moss 1960: 210), but there it probably referred to the garrison and its environs, since it produced game, honey, and even wine.

The strategic importance of the eastern Delta in the New Kingdom is indicated by the siting of the Ramesside capital at Pi-Ramesse, one day's distance

up-river from Thel. In addition to benefiting from the extremely rich agricultural land in the region, the Pharaoh could quickly receive intelligence on political developments in Canaan (Gardiner 1918: esp. 195; Bietak 1979: 273). Edel (1953: 60) suggested that the base of operations of the "Overseer of northern Foreign Lands," the highest ranking official in the administration of the "northern lands," could have been at Thel, or elsewhere in the eastern Delta (Kitchen 1969: 80). The "Commander of a host of Tjeku [Thel]," who was responsible for administrative as well as military affairs, may have had jurisdiction over the fortresses and garrisons in northern Sinai (Schulman 1964a: 52, 55; Helck 1939: 25; 1971: 310). Ramesses I's appointment as "Chief of the coasts and garrison commander in Thel," during the reign of Horemheb or Ay, clearly shows that Thel was a very important posting (Helck 1939: 22). From Thel, Thutmosis III, Seti I, and Ramesses II set out on their Asiatic campaigns (Wilson 1955: 235, 254–55).

Egyptian control over northern Sinai and southern Canaan was reasserted by force in the early 19th Dynasty. The reliefs on the north wall of the Amon temple at Karnak commemorate the first campaign of Seti I in Asia. They depict the pharaoh setting out from Thel to conduct punitive expeditions against the nomadic desert dwellers in northern Sinai, the Shasu; and, in the culminating scene, his reconquest of Gaza. Fortresses, pools, and wells in northern Sinai, together with their names, were shown below the wheels of the pharaoh's chariot. The toponyms were studied in detail by Gardiner (1920: 103–4), and were compared to those in the itinerary of The Ways of Horus recorded in the satirical letter of Papyrus Anastasi I. Gardiner thus was able to identify the second-to-last town depicted in the reliefs, whose name was lost, with Raphia, and the town stormed by the Egyptians at the eastern end of the route, called "a town of (the) Canaan," with Gaza.

ADMINISTRATION AND REDISTRIBUTION IN SOUTHERN CANAAN

The Gaza region was an extension of the chain of establishments in northern Sinai, a "finger" of Egypt pointing into Canaan (Alt 1944: 14). The town and its hinterland held a key position in Egypt's administration of Canaan, not only as the terminus of the northern Sinai route but also as

Egypt's principal administrative seat in Canaan (Katzenstein 1982: 112; Alt 1944: 10; Helck 1971: 249). Its name, "That-which-the-Ruler-seized," may imply that Gaza was the property of the pharaoh. Perhaps because Gaza was a vital center of operations, the power of its governor or commissioner was limited. Two officials holding the title of *rābiṣu*, Addaya and Pa³uru, are known to have been posted there during the Amarna period (EA 285, 287, 289). When Addaya subverted troops intended for Abdihiba of Jerusalem, the latter appealed to the king to send his "general" Janhamu at the head of an army to settle the dispute (Helck 1939: 39; 1971: 250). His letter reveals that governors of Gaza did not command large forces, and were subordinate to a military official who did not reside permanently in Asia (Hachman 1982: 44–45; Helck 1971: 250) but who may have used Gaza as a base of operations; it was a site where additional forces, provided by local rulers, could be mustered (*viz.*, Taanach letter no. 6, Albright 1944: 24–25).

It was the duty of officials in charge of Canaanite towns and their lands to collect the goods necessary for the support of the local secular and religious authorities as well as for the provisioning of the Egyptian campaign forces (Schulman 1964b: 63–64; Helck 1971). The goods included foodstuffs such as grain, oil, and cattle; donkeys; horses; fodder; various types of wood as construction materials; and nonessential foodstuffs and products to improve the quality of life, such as honey, wine, and incense (Helck 1971: 370–427). Revenues were derived from taxes and corvée labor, which might be performed on royal estates (Ahituv 1978: 93–96; Na³aman 1981: 178–80), or on lands whose yield was dedicated by the pharaoh to a temple (Alt 1944; Wilson 1955: 260–61; Ahituv 1978: 95–96). The extent of the economic benefits derived by Egypt from its occupation of Canaan is disputed (Ahituv 1978; Na³aman 1981), but Ahituv has presented convincing arguments that exports were very limited; the bulk of the goods collected by officials in Canaan would have been consumed by the local administration.

Thutmosis III instigated the practice of stocking supplies for the Egyptian campaign forces in the coastal towns along the military route (Helck 1971: 38; Alt 1959: 108–9). One item received by the troops was a Cypriot specialty oil (Helck 1971: 399), which could have been contained in small ceramic vessels. Cosmetic oils were used by Egyptian soldiers (Erman 1923: 265, Papyrus

Anastasi IV) and their collective appellation, "oils of harbor," implies that they were usual items of trade (Helck 1971: 399).

Egyptian officials or vassals in Canaan were also responsible for protecting and expediting the king's caravans (EA 194, 226, 255) and occasionally, for contributing supply caravans for particular military operations (EA 295). Pintore (1973: 303) suggested that the mobile Egyptian forces, the *šābê piṭāti*, may have been used to safeguard such shipments, and would have served, at the same time, as an important vehicle for the transportation of goods, whether in Canaan or between Canaan and Egypt (EA 269, 369). On one occasion, a leader of the *šābê piṭāti*, Hanya, was sent by the pharaoh to purchase female slaves in Gezer with precious stones, silver, gold, linen garments, and chairs of ebony; and to bring the women back to Egypt under military escort (EA 369). In that instance, the army served as a vehicle for state-sponsored trade. There is very little evidence for unofficial, overland trading ventures between Egypt and Asia. However, a shipment of goods by caravan from Ugarit to Egypt, mentioned in a letter from an Ugaritian merchant, seems to have been a private undertaking (Heltzer 1978: 148–50).

The nature of Egypt's administration in Canaan is much better documented in the 19th than in the 18th Dynasty, making diachronic studies of intra- or inter-regional distribution patterns of goods very difficult. According to Oren (1984: 53), Egypt's involvement in Canaan in the 19th and 20th Dynasties (particularly in the south), "reached a degree not previously known." Ramesses III dedicated a temple to Amon in Gaza (Papyrus Harris I: Wilson 1955: 260–61; Helck 1971: 444) and during the reign of Seti II, a festival in honor of Anath was celebrated here (Ostraca Michaelides: Grdseloff 1942: 35–37; Alt 1944). A letter from Boğazköy, concerning the marriage of Ramesses II to a Hittite princess, strongly suggests that in the 19th Dynasty, the governor of Gaza, called in this document by the title *šakin māti*, had jurisdiction over the entire province of Canaan, one of the two principal administrative districts in Asia in that period (Edel 1953: 56, 60). The expanded power of the governor of Gaza, and the town's role as a religious center, may be manifestations of the new order.

During the Ramesside period, Egyptian religious institutions played an important part in the redistribution of goods in Canaan (Goldwasser 1984: 84). Hieratic, Egyptian-style bowls dated to the reign of Ramesses III have been found at Tell esh-Sharīḥa

and Lachish. These whole vessels, unlike ostraca, could also have served as votives. They may be compared to the small, inscribed bowls found in temples in Egypt (Goldwasser 1984: 84–85). The inscriptions record the collection of grain and, on bowl no. 3 from Lachish, the existence of a "harvest tax" (Tufnell 1958: 132–33; Groll 1973; Goldwasser 1982; 1984: 85–86).

The boundaries of the province administered by the governor of Gaza cannot be defined precisely on the basis of present evidence. Oren (1984) thought that its northern border might lie along Naḥal Shiqmah (which corresponds to the northern edge of the western Negev), pointing to the concentration of Egyptian-style "governor's residences" of the 13th–12th centuries B.C. south of the wadi, particularly in the Naḥal Besor-Gerar region. Egyptian influence on the material culture of that area was very marked (see Bergoffen 1989: 81–101). Unfortunately, there has been little archaeological exploration of ancient Gaza. One knows only that in the Late Bronze Age, it was a walled city (Garstang 1920; Phythian Adams 1923).

EGYPTIAN SETTLEMENT IN NORTHERN SINAI

Most of northern Sinai is a sandy plain with salt marshes and brackish groundwater that receives meager rainfall and is covered only by sparse vegetation. During the Late Bronze Age, it was of great strategic importance as the land bridge connecting Africa and Asia, but for it to be practical as an invasion or trade route, the safety of travelers had to be ensured, water sources protected, and supply points established at regular intervals. The impediments to settlement posed by the inhospitable terrain and occasionally by its nomadic inhabitants required a strong centralized government that could subdue hostile tribes, build garrisons, and provision them with grain and other foodstuffs that could not be grown in quantity locally. The location of the settlements was determined by the availability of water.

Approximately 125 New Kingdom sites, located throughout the region between Qantara and El Arish, were recorded by the team of the North Sinai Survey (fig. 1). The route of the Ways of Horus, marked by a chain of larger settlements surrounded by clusters of smaller sites, ran south of the Bardawil Lagoon and continued inland in its eastern portion (Oren 1987: 77, 79, fig. 4). The

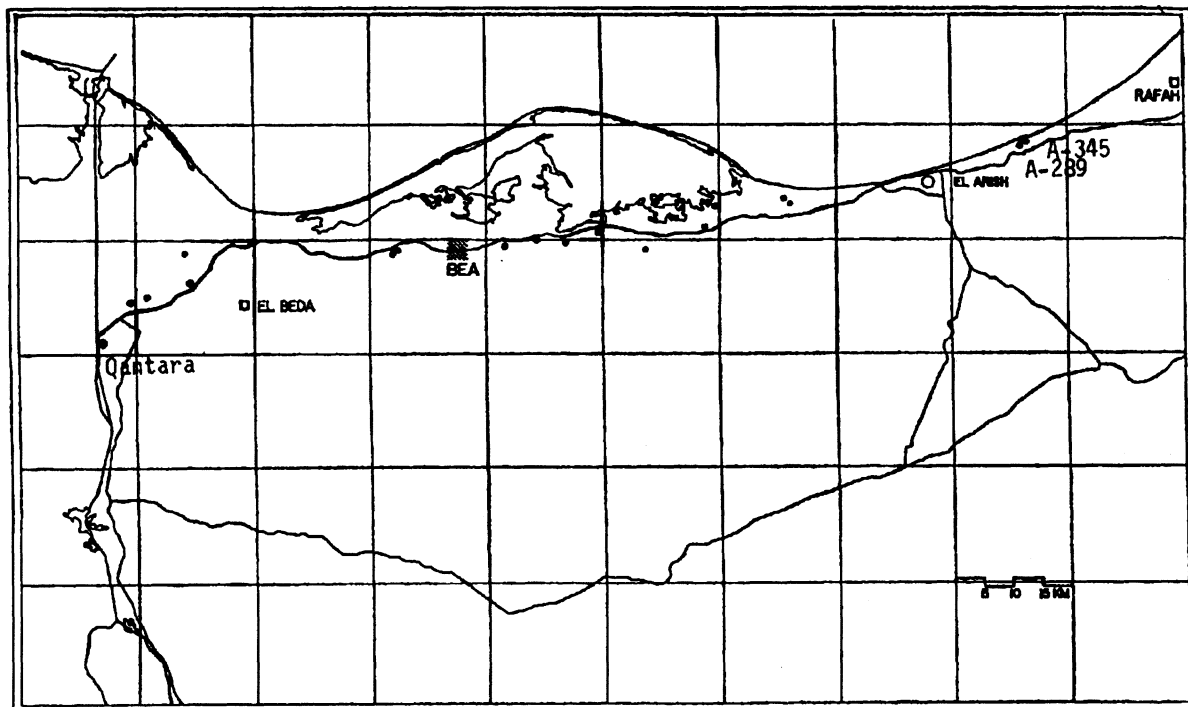


Fig. 1. Northern Sinai: location of sites with Cypriot pottery.

architectural remains provide evidence that the settlements were permanent, not merely seasonal encampments. Egyptian-style mud brick architecture and pottery and Egyptian small finds reflect the Egyptian character of the occupation. The principal sites excavated were: Site A-289, a fortified garrison with an entryway flanked by 12 × 13 m broad towers and covering an area of ca. 2500 m²; Site A-345, an unfortified settlement, possibly an administrative center, equipped with long, narrow storage rooms, a potter's workshop, and two kilns; and Bir el-Abd 10, a fortress provided with four large, Egyptian-style beehive-shaped granaries, having a capacity of 40 tons (Oren 1987: 80). Occupation in the 14th century B.C. is attested by Egyptian pottery of late 18th Dynasty types (Oren 1987: 83); but most of the archaeological remains published by Oren (1980; 1987) date to the 19th and early 20th Dynasties, when Egyptian involvement in northern Sinai and in southern Canaan was greatly intensified (Oren 1984; Singer 1988). A new fortress, approximately six times the size of the garrison at Site A-289, has been excavated in the eastern Delta at Tell Heboua, 10 km northeast of Qantara (Leclant and Clerc 1987; 1988). It has produced evidence of occupation during the Middle Kingdom, Second Intermediate Period, and

New Kingdom, including a lintel inscribed to Seti I (Leclant and Clerc 1986: 14).

Storage jars bearing the cartouches of Seti I and Seti II from Bir el-Abd 10 and A-289, respectively, indicate that northern Sinai was integrated into the Egyptian system of redistribution. An Egyptian style "beer bottle" from Site A-343, stamped with the cartouche of Seti I but made of local clay, demonstrates that there were "official potters' workshops" in the region (Goldwasser 1980: 34; Oren 1987: 84–87, 92–93). The existence of at least one potters' workshop in northern Sinai has an important bearing on the distribution of the Cypriot vessels in the region. Since there was no need to import utilitarian wares, there would not have been any large-scale shipments of pottery, no "pottery trade" that might have included fine, imported table wares. The Cypriot vessels therefore arrived in mixed shipments of goods and, judging by their numbers (below), formed only a very small part of the shipments.

The standard of living in northern Sinai in the New Kingdom was not high. In periods when the region profited from a well-developed transit trade, towns grew up along the route (Gaudefroy-Demombynes 1923: 7, n. 2); but in New Kingdom times, there were no large concentrations of

TABLE 1. Quantitative and Proportional Distribution of Late Cypriot Pottery by Ware Class

Ware	Egypt		N. Sinai		S. Canaan	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
White Painted	6	1	3	1	80	6
Black Slip	1				6	0.4
Red on Black/ Red on Red					118	8
Light on Dark					4	.2
Monochrome			6	2	103	7
Proto Base Ring					1	<0.1
Base Ring I	294	56	77	28	192	13
Base Ring II	173	34	70	25	393	27
Base Ring I or II	32	6	9	3.3	36	3
Base Ring I-II			20	7		
White Shaved	1	0.2	45	16	52	4
Bucchero					14	1
Proto White Slip						
White Slip I	1	0.2			182	13
White Slip II	10	2	49	17.5	217	15
White Slip I, II	1	0.2			12	1
White Slip IIA					5	0.3
Undefined	3	0.4				
Total	522		279		1415	

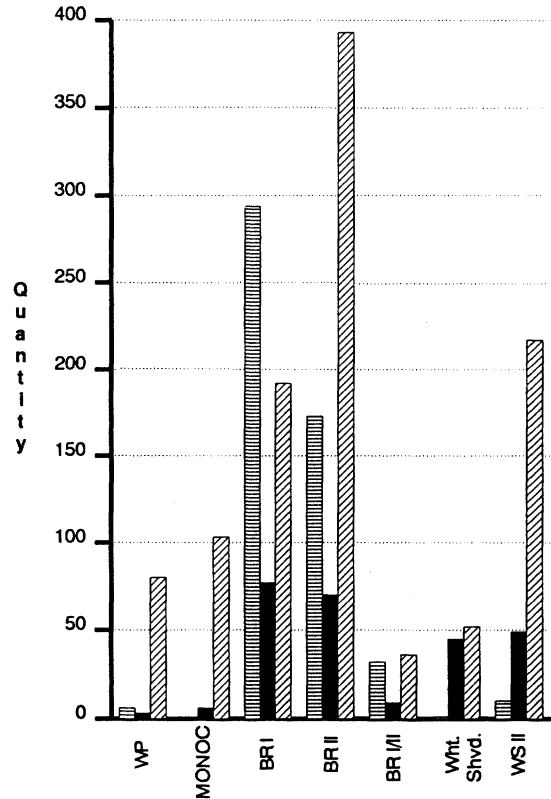


Fig. 2. Quantitative distribution of Late Cypriot wares in Egypt, northern Sinai and southern Canaan. ▨ = Egypt; ■ = northern Sinai; ▩ = southern Canaan.

settlement there. The land could not support an agriculturally-based economy and the evidence for craft specialization is limited to pottery production and weaving, the latter attested by loom weights and spindle whorls from Sites A-289 and Bir el-Abd (Oren, personal communication). The few luxury items discovered in excavations were imports, such as Egyptian faience and alabaster vessels. Elaborately decorated or unique pottery vessels were only rarely represented in the Late Cypriot ceramic assemblage and the repertoire of Mycenaean forms consisted almost exclusively of small stirrup jars and flasks (Bergoffen 1989: 47–55, 276). It is likely that the economy of northern Sinai depended heavily on the support of the Egyptian administration. The goods and “salaries” provided to the soldiers and service personnel stationed there may have been the principal source of revenue. Pintore (1973) has argued that Egypt’s military organization in Asia actually may have contributed, in some cases, to the support of local economies: Syrian princes, such as Rib-Addi, evidently welcomed the Egyptian royal subsidies, in the form of foodstuffs and manufactured goods, which were destined for the upkeep of Egyptian garrison personnel in Syria.

LATE CYPRIOT POTTERY

Some 279 Late Cypriot sherds were collected from 24 sites in the area from Raphia to Qantara, with concentrations from the excavated Sites A-289, A-345 and Bir el-Abd (fig. 1). The collection from southern Canaan comprises 1434 pieces from Tell el-Ajjul, Tell Far‘ah south, Tell el-Hesi, Tell Gemme, Tell esh-Shari‘a, Tell Haror and Tell er-Ridan (Bergoffen 1989).

The largest Cypriot ware classes from northern Sinai are Base Ring I and II (figs. 2, 3, Table 1). The quality of the Base Ring I falls short of that of the finest pieces, which are thought to represent the earliest stages of development of this ware (fig. 4). Thin walled and finely decorated Base Ring I vessels were found in both Egypt and Canaan, including unique or rare forms. The style of most of the Base Ring II vessels in northern Sinai is characteristic of the high point in its production, and there are very few clear instances of the crude forms and poor quality that mark the degeneration of Base Ring II in its latest phase (such

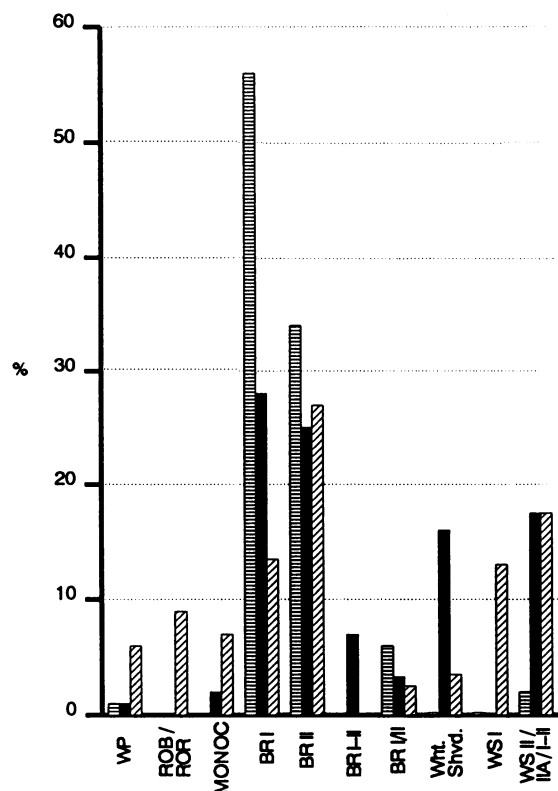


Fig. 3. Proportional distribution of Late Cypriot wares in Egypt, northern Sinai, and southern Canaan. ■ = Egypt; ■ = northern Sinai; ▨ = southern Canaan.

as the jug in fig. 5). Jugs, juglets, and bowls are the best represented shapes, in that order; one fragment of a bottle, one of a tankard, and a few of flasks were also found (figs. 6–8). Virtually all the White Slip II milk bowls (fig. 9) are of the “normal” or mature style (not of the late style associated with 13th century B.C. deposits; Bergoffen 1989: 211–23; Gittlen 1977: 427–28). The typological distribution of wares and forms is largely homogeneous across the whole area of the survey, with the exception of the White Slip ware, which appears to be concentrated at the eastern end of the route around Site A-289. White Shaved II is fairly common; White Painted V–VI and Monochrome wares are also represented.

The collection from southern Canaan is plentiful and diverse and includes a number of very finely finished and decorated vessels. The following wares were catalogued in Bergoffen 1989: White Painted III, White Painted V, White Painted V/VI, Black Slip II, Black Slip II reserved slip, Black Slip V, Red on Black or Red on Red, Light on Dark, Monochrome, Proto Base Ring, Base Ring I, Base



Fig. 4. Base Ring I juglet from Site A-345.

Ring II, White Shaved, Bucchero, Proto White Slip, White Slip I, White Slip II, White Slip I–II, and White Slip IIA (Table 1; also one sherd of coarse Monochrome ware crater, which was not catalogued). Approximately 60 percent of the Late Cypriot pottery derived from settlement contexts such as public or administrative buildings, sanctuaries or sacred deposits, and private houses. Decorated and undecorated bowls of White Slip II, White Slip I, Red on Black/Red On Red, Monochrome, Base Ring II, and Base Ring I wares, in that order of frequency, were far more common in settlement contexts than in the tombs (Table 2), where closed Base Ring vessels predominated. Juglets with low ring bases and the standard jug, type IXBId, were the best-represented shapes (Åström 1972). The decorated bowls were much more common than the undecorated varieties in settlement contexts but the two were similarly represented in the tombs. In the “Palaces” at Tell el-‘Ajjul, decorated bowls made up an even higher proportion of the total, some 67 percent. Judging by the rather small collections from the Fosse Temple sequence at Lachish and the sanctuaries of Levels XI and X at Tell esh-Shari‘a, the distribution in religious contexts was not substantially different from that in ordinary dwellings. At Tell esh-Shari‘a, closed Base Ring forms accounted for 46 percent of the total, a somewhat larger proportion



Fig. 5. Base Ring II jug from Site A-289.

than in private houses; but at Lachish, they were less well represented at 31 percent. Painted bowls made up about 33 percent and 46 percent of those assemblages, respectively.

In the combined Base Ring I and II repertoires of southern Canaan, the juglet was the most common form, followed by the jug and the bowl. Base Ring II and White Slip II vessels were more numerous than the earlier Base Ring I and White Slip I, as elsewhere in Canaan (figs. 2, 3; Gittlen 1977: 80, 378) but Tell el-ʿAjjul has yielded the largest assemblage in Canaan of both Proto White Slip—a ware rarely exported—and White Slip I (figs. 10, 11; Bergoffen 1989: 135–47; Gittlen 1977: 379, 382). Important collections, from Tell el-ʿAjjul, of White Slip I, Red on Black/Red on Red, and the predominance of the earlier style of Monochrome bowl with everted rim, in contexts datable to MB IIIC–LB I (Bergoffen 1989: 153–210), demonstrate that trade with Cyprus was well-established at the time (figs. 10–12; Sjöqvist 1940: 31–32,

TABLE 2. Distribution of Late Cypriot Pottery in Settlement and Funerary Contexts, Southern Canaan

Ware	Private houses			Tombs		
	No.	%	Form	No.	%	Form
White Painted	31	7	C	34	6.3	C
Black Slip	3	0.6	C	3	0.5	C
Red on Black/ Red on Red	31	7	O	5	1	O
Monochrome	46	10	O	23	4	O
White Slip Wares	187	39	O	41	7.6	O
White Shaved	12	2.5	C	36	6.6	C
Bucchero				13	2.4	C
Base Ring	162	34	C/O	384	71	C/O
Base Ring Forms:						
Bowls	60	37		29	8	
Juglets	46	28		163	45	
Jugs	27	16		127	35	
Undefined	29	8		65	15	
Closed		37			81	
Open		62			19	
Total	472			539		

* C = closed forms
O = open forms

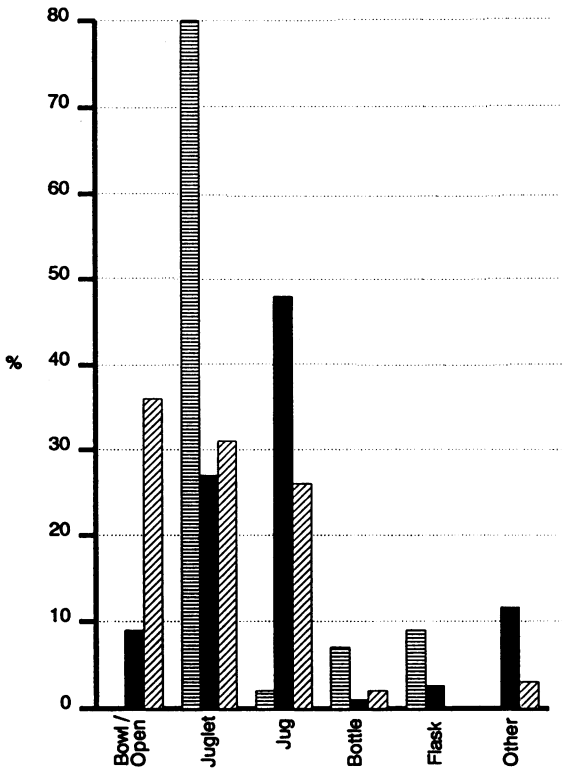


Fig. 6. Proportional distribution of Base Ring I forms in Egypt, northern Sinai, and southern Canaan. ■ = Egypt; ▨ = northern Sinai; ▩ = southern Canaan.



Fig. 7. Base Ring II bowl, jug, and juglet sherds from Bir el-Abd.

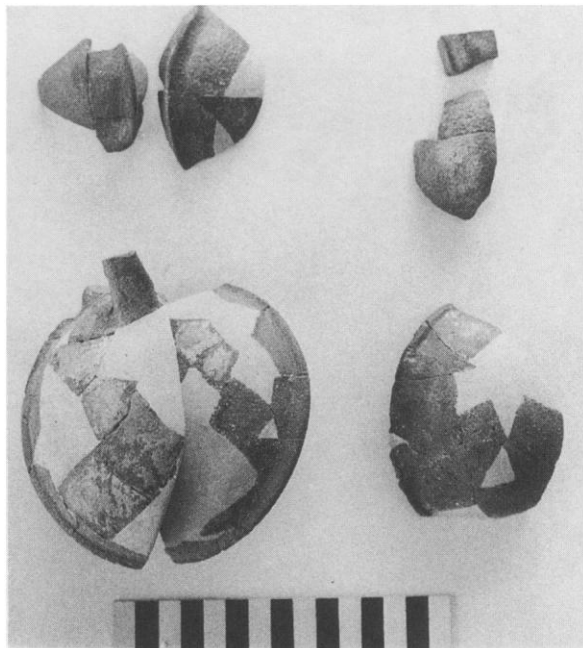


Fig. 8. Base Ring II flasks from Site C-69.

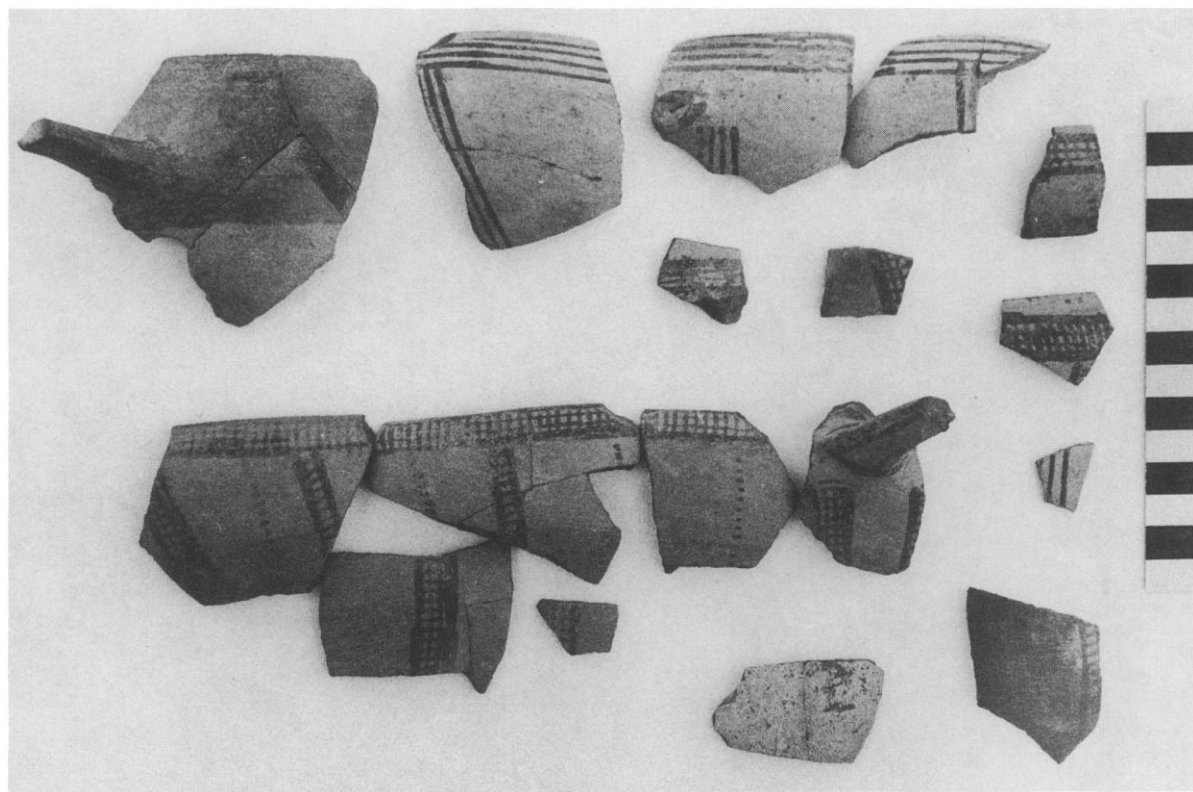


Fig. 9. White Slip II from Bir el-Abd.



Fig. 10. Proto White Slip from Tell el-Ajjul.

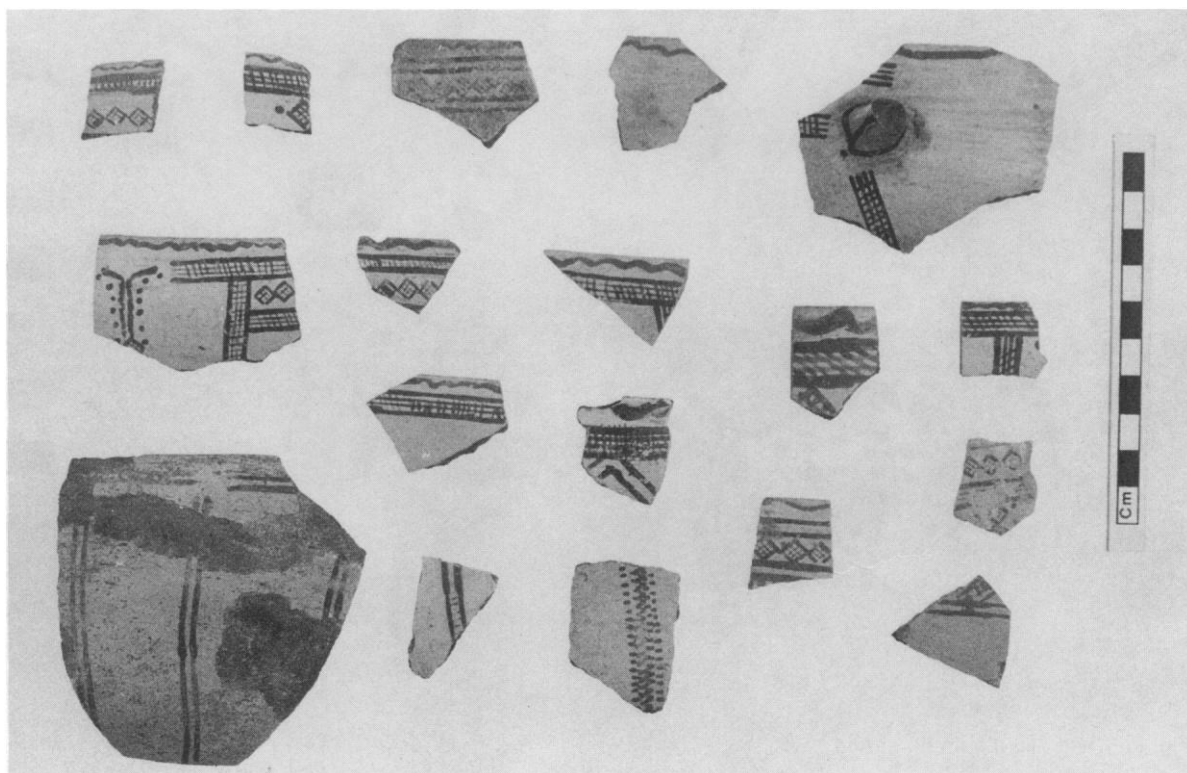


Fig. 11. White Slip I from Tell el-Ajjul.

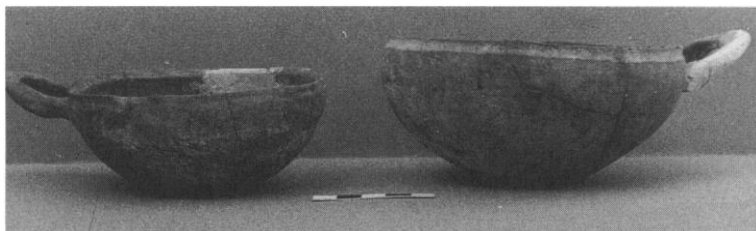


Fig. 12. Type I Monochrome bowls from Tell el-ʿAjjul.

Monochrome bowl type I; Oren 1969: 132). Indeed, the collection from Tell el-ʿAjjul (Bergoffen 1989) confirms Sjöqvist's observation that the site was the principal trading partner of Cyprus at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (Sjöqvist 1940: 162). The phase of importation represented by Proto White Slip, White Slip I, Red on Black/Red on Red and Monochrome bowls of type I, is not represented in Egypt or in northern Sinai, save by a small handful of sherds.

Of the 513 Cypriot vessels published by Merrillees (1968) from known contexts in Egypt, roughly 70 percent were found in tombs from Nubia to the eastern Delta, and the majority of those, some 70 percent, were Base Ring I juglets. Most of the Base Ring II vessels (about 66 percent) came from settlement contexts at Tell el-Amarna, but the distribution of forms at that site paralleled that from the country as a whole; at Amarna, closed vessels account for some 92 percent of the sample assembled by Merrillees and Base Ring II bowls were hardly represented. The remainder of the collection consisted of White Slip II bowls. The typological distribution at Amarna was therefore essentially the same in funerary contexts throughout Egypt (Marsa Matruh excepted), in contrast to southern Canaan. The collection of Late Cypriot pottery from Egypt was composed almost exclusively of Base Ring I and II wares, especially juglets (65–70 percent of the total, figs. 3, 4, Table 1). White Slip ware, common in both northern Sinai and southern Canaan, is negligible—some 2 percent of the Egyptian assemblage. In contrast to northern Sinai and southern Canaan, Monochrome ware has not been found in Egypt and White Shaved ware is scarce. In addition to four White Shaved juglets from Marsa Matruh (White 1985: 76), one was found at Qantir (D. Aston, personal communication), and one juglet with a handle piercing the wall of the vessel, from Tell el-Amarna, is probably Cypriot White Shaved ware (Peet and Woolley 1923: 17, pl. 51: 40/258, from a private house; it was not listed in Merrillees

1968). The Base Ring jug and the bowl, so common in northern Sinai and southern Canaan, are rare (fig. 6). According to Merrillees' sample, there was a decline in importation from Base Ring I to Base Ring II, marked not only by smaller quantities of the later ware (which could be due to the accident of discovery), but also by a proportional decrease in the average number of vessels per site. In funerary contexts (leaving aside the material from Tell el-Amarna, since there are no comparable collections from 15th century B.C. settlement contexts in Egypt), 37 sites yielded an average of 7.7 Base Ring I vessels each, while 19 sites produced an average of only 3 Base Ring II vessels each. Although in both cases the distribution was thin, Late Cypriot pottery was extremely widespread, from the Delta to Nubia. In southern Canaan, there was an important increase in the frequency of Base Ring II over Base Ring I, while in northern Sinai, the quantities either remained essentially unchanged or possibly decreased slightly. Base Ring II was more plentiful than Base Ring I throughout Canaan (Gittlen 1977: 77, 80).

The overall concentrations of Cypriot imports in Egypt were smaller than in southern Canaan. That is demonstrated by a comparison of the relative frequency of Cypriot vessels in 184 simple burials in southern Canaan and 177 in Egypt (fig. 13). Egyptian tombs rarely contained more than one Cypriot vessel, but in southern Canaan, burials with two or three vessels were quite common.

The contextual distribution of vessels in both areas indicates that they were of only moderate value and not prestige objects. In southern Canaan they were used by rich and poor alike; but in Egypt, as Merrillees pointed out, tombs containing Cypriot imports belonged to the "middle class"—including the tombs of six professionals—but not to the wealthiest or to the poorest segments of the population nor, with very few exceptions, to the ruling class (Merrillees 1968: 160). In southern Canaan, elegantly constructed and richly equipped tombs that held single burials might contain only

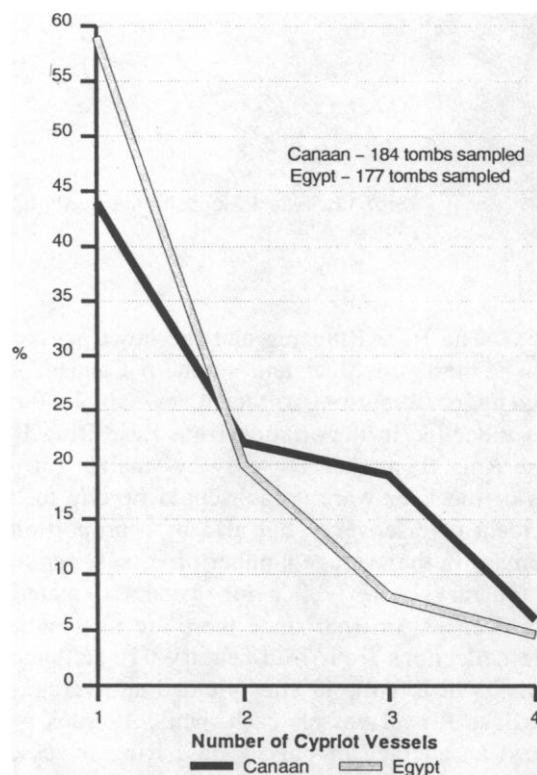


Fig. 13. Distribution of Late Cypriot pottery in simple burials.

one Cypriot vessel (e.g., Tell el-ʿAjjul Tombs 1149, 1037, and 1080, Petrie 1932: pls. 57, 58; Bergoffen 1989: Catalogue nos. 1230, 733.919, 808.1707), while multiple burials in such tombs did not necessarily contain more Cypriot wares per interment (e.g., Tell el-ʿAjjul Tomb 1166, twelve burials and four Cypriot vessels and Tomb 1514, more than three burials and seven Cypriot vessels, Petrie 1932: pls. 53, 54; Bergoffen 1989: 220, n. 39, Catalogue nos. 830–32, 975, 856, 883.1704, 829, 654, 659, 968, 829; Tell er-Ridan Tomb 6, seven burials and ten Cypriot vessels, Bergoffen 1989: nos. 1649, 1650, 1656–59, 1663, 1665, 1667). Gonen suggested that the elaborate tombs belonged to a “wealthy social group . . . probably a military aristocracy buried with its weapons” as well as to wealthy merchants (Gonen 1984–1985: 73; Gonen in press). At Tell el-ʿAjjul in the 18th Dynasty and Lower Cemeteries, several of the “built” tombs lay near one another in the midst of the main cluster of burials. This spatial distribution supports the idea that class or kinship ties existed between those groups of tomb owners (e.g., Tombs 1037 and 1080, Tombs 419, 1514, and 1663, respectively, Petrie 1932: pls. 52, 64).

TABLE 3. Distribution of Late Cypriot Pottery in Simple Burials, Southern Canaan

Ware	Tombs with Cypriot and local pottery		Tombs with Cypriot pottery only	
	No.	%	No.	%
White Painted	13	5	2	3
Black Slip	1	0.4	1	1
Monochrome	10	4	1	1
Base Ring bowl	10	4	2	3
Base Ring juglet	86	35	32	42
Base Ring jug	60	24	20	26
Base Ring flask	21	8	11	14
Base Ring bottle	3	1	1	1
Base Ring other	4	1.4	1	1
White Shaved	11	4	2	3
Bucchero	2	3	3	4
White Slip I,II,IIA	25	10.5		
Total	246		76	

Tombs containing only Cypriot vessels and no local pottery did not contain more imported wares than did simple burials equipped with both (Table 3). The distribution of Cypriot wares and forms is similar, and the nonceramic grave gifts were neither more numerous nor richer. Thus, the inclusion of Cypriot vessels in a burial was not a mark of elevated social status, and the vessels (or their contents) were not used in larger quantities by the elite than by less wealthy individuals. They were not collected or hoarded, as were objects of high intrinsic value.

The distribution patterns of Base Ring pottery in northern Sinai and southern Canaan share certain features that are not paralleled in the assemblage from Egypt:

- Jugs (Base Ring I and II) were a very important part of the assemblages, even more common than juglets in northern Sinai, but they were hardly attested in Egypt;
- Bowls (Base Ring I and II) were well represented in both regions but were rare in Egypt;
- Bottles were uncommon in southern Canaan and northern Sinai but fairly common in Egypt;
- There was a comparable proportional increase of Base Ring II flasks over Base Ring I in northern Sinai and southern Canaan, in contrast to a decrease of those vessels in Egypt;

- Base Ring II vessels were more numerous than Base Ring I in southern Canaan and nearly as common as the earlier wares in northern Sinai while in Egypt there was a marked decline in imports from Base Ring I to Base Ring II.

The proportion of White Slip II and related wares (White Slip I–II, IIA) in the total Cypriot assemblage is the same in northern Sinai and southern Canaan and very much higher than in Egypt, where they were rare (figs. 2, 3; Table 1). Monochrome and White Shaved wares, both represented in northern Sinai and southern Canaan, are very poorly represented in the Egyptian assemblage.

CONCLUSION: MODES OF EXCHANGE

The development of the northern Sinai route was the outcome of Egypt's policy of securing its eastern border against invasion, and of the organization of an Egyptian administration in southern Canaan, where Egyptian troops rested and regrouped after the desert crossing. Both regions were integrated into the Egyptian administrative system, probably from the time of Thutmose III, and may have been governed from the eastern Delta. The power of the commissioner of Gaza, capital of Egypt's province in southern Canaan, was limited and could be controlled through the military intervention of a high official in the Egyptian army, who commanded a large force.

Foodstuffs and other goods required by Egyptian personnel stationed in northern Sinai and by Egypt's mobile forces, could not have been produced in sufficient quantities locally, but must have been imported, either from the eastern Delta or from southern Canaan. The local economy of northern Sinai, in later periods based on the transit trade, was not well developed in the New Kingdom: there were no towns in the region. The garrisons, fortresses and administrative centers depended on the Egyptian redistributive organization for their subsistence. In view of the lack of landing places on the northern Sinai coast, and the inland location of the New Kingdom settlements, supplies must have arrived by caravan.

The storage jars stamped with the pharaonic cartouche, discovered at Site A-289, provide evidence that some goods came from Egypt. It is well known, however, that Egypt maintained its administration in Canaan and was able to stockpile provisions for its campaigning armies in the coastal

towns along the principal invasion route, through a system of taxation and *corvée* labor. Revenues were also supplied by "crown lands" in the Gaza region, which were owned directly by the pharaoh. For reasons of military strategy, and because it was the principal administrative seat in Canaan (as well as the seat of an important religious institution in the 19th Dynasty), it is logical to assume that Gaza was a major redistribution center. It also is very likely that supply caravans, destined for the maintenance of the Egyptian settlements in northern Sinai, were assembled there. With the exception of shipments of "luxuries," such as the weaving women acquired by Hanyu on behalf of the pharaoh (EA 369), most of the goods collected in southern Canaan would have been consumed by the administrative personnel in that region or in northern Sinai, or set aside for the campaign forces. In any case, overland shipment of bulk commodities is difficult, slow, and costly, and would rarely have been used for exports to Egypt.

A comparison of the distribution of Late Cypriot pottery from Egypt, northern Sinai, and southern Canaan confirms that those items arrived in northern Sinai from southern Canaan and not from Egypt. Wares and forms found in southern Canaan and northern Sinai were not represented in the Egyptian assemblage. Had Egypt benefited from the northern Sinai route as a means of importing Late Cypriot wares, the collection from northern Sinai would be expected to account for and reflect the typological distribution in Egypt; and, had the pottery arrived in northern Sinai via Egypt, it would be surprising if the radical decrease from Base Ring I to Base Ring II there did not produce a marked effect on the availability of Base Ring II wares in northern Sinai. Decreases in quantities or in the proportional representation of individual forms in Egypt were not reflected in the assemblage from northern Sinai. On the other hand, changes in the repertoire from Base Ring I to Base Ring II, observed in southern Canaan, were paralleled in the collection from northern Sinai. It would appear that the distribution of Late Cypriot pottery in northern Sinai depended upon its availability in southern Canaan. The residents of northern Sinai clearly did not have first pick of the imports, and the quantity overall is small, relative to southern Canaan. Very few elaborately decorated vessels were found in northern Sinai; rather, they remained in southern Canaan. There was no steady fall-off from the point of origin, however, as normally occurs when goods are sold or traded

"down-the-line" (Renfrew 1972: 465–66; 1975: 46–48). In terms of quantities, wares, and shapes, the Late Cypriot pottery in northern Sinai was fairly evenly distributed. Perhaps the pattern resulted from intraregional trade, fostered by some specialized local production, such as the pottery manufacture at Site A-345.

Trade between southern Canaan and Cyprus was well established at a time when Red on Black/Red on Red, White Slip I, type I Monochrome bowls, and White Painted V–VI were in vogue. Those wares occurred in Palaces I–III and Cities I–II at Tell el-ʿAjjul and may be dated to the end of the Middle Bronze and to the early Late Bronze ages. They were not found with Base Ring I (three Base Ring I sherds were associated with Palace I, while only one occurred in City II). Since, as Oren (1969) has shown, Base Ring I does not appear in quantity before the time of Thutmosis III, and the local pottery from ʿAjjul City II is late Middle Bronze to Late Bronze I in style (Bergoffen 1989: 153–210), the Cypriot assemblage should probably be dated to the earlier part of LB I. Given that the Late Cypriot pottery in northern Sinai derived from southern Canaan, the absence of the earlier assemblage may signify that the mechanisms governing the distribution of goods from southern Canaan to the garrisons and fortresses in northern Sinai, had not yet been implemented.

In Egypt, Late Cypriot pottery was not a prestige item; open forms were hardly attested and the contents of the vessels were probably of greater interest than the pottery itself. Some of the Base Ring juglets contained opium (Merrillees 1989). Others may have contained a specialty oil, such as the one mentioned in the annals of Thutmosis III (Helck 1971: 399). Although Late Cypriot pottery was available to people of modest means, its comparatively thin distribution suggests that either it was not very popular or it was not regularly available. Base Ring II ware was much less common in Egypt than Base Ring I, in contrast to the case in southern Canaan where there was a marked increase in the quantities of Base Ring II vessels over those of Base Ring I. The broad spatial distribution of the Base Ring juglets in Egypt, small quantity overall, and apparently low value, point to a trade that was not officially regulated. The period of maximum importation coincided with the years of active campaigning in the Levant under Thutmosis III and his immediate successors. Perhaps a number of the Base Ring juglets were brought back to Egypt by soldiers and other army person-

nel. During the 19th Dynasty, when Egyptian military intervention in southern Canaan resumed, Late Cypriot ceramic imports were considerably rarer there and consequently, much less readily available to members of Egypt's forces.

The army's role in expediting caravans is documented in the Amarna letters, and it is very likely that it also was involved in the transport of provisions to the military outposts in northern Sinai. The trade in Late Cypriot pottery in northern Sinai was made possible by the existence of that official supply system, the vessels traveling "piggy-back" in the shipments. Middleton (1979; 1983) has described and illustrated that mode of distribution in several case studies dealing with the distribution of pottery in Roman Britain and the Rhineland. There, too, grain and other provisions were collected in the form of taxes from regions rich in agricultural output—in this case southern France—and shipped in bulk to garrisons in the border areas of the empire (Middleton 1979: 88, 91; 1983: 81). Epigraphic evidence reveals that the activities of "civilian boatmen and shippers" were tied in with official military transports, and private trade in goods not essential to the army, or of little importance in the general economy, was permitted to "ride on the back of official cargoes" (Middleton 1979: 85, 90; 1983: 79–81). In the Rhineland, the distribution of a type of terra sigillata produced in southern France was dense in zones that received provisions from Gaul but sparse in Alsace, a largely self-sufficient area (Middleton 1979: 87). Both the epigraphic and the archaeological evidence show that the pattern of distribution of imported terra sigillata in the Rhineland illustrates the operation of private trade depending upon the regular shipment of supplies for the army, and the transport facilities the latter afforded (Middleton 1979: 90; 1983: 81–82). This secondary trade was permitted, or rather disregarded, by the military authorities (Middleton 1983: 79).

The literary sources of the Late Bronze Age record the existence of an officially organized system of supply, supported through taxation, for the maintenance of the Egyptian campaign forces and permanent garrisons in Canaan. That system probably operated in northern Sinai as well, with provisions furnished principally by Egypt's province in southern Canaan. The Late Cypriot pottery in northern Sinai derived largely from southern Canaan and that nonessential item of moderate value would have arrived in the wake of the official supply caravans. The important differences

in the patterns of distribution of Late Cypriot pottery in Egypt on the one hand, and in northern Sinai and southern Canaan on the other, demonstrate that the distribution of Late Cypriot pottery was neither an integral part of the process nor a by-product of long-distance trade between Egypt and Canaan. Instead, the sale of those wares in northern Sinai would have been unofficial, running parallel to, and depending on, official trade involving the redistribution of goods to military establishments. This model of a form of private trade, operating within the Egyptian sphere of influence, has not been described elsewhere.

Late Cypriot vessels probably circulated freely because they were only of modest value. The large quantities of such wares in Egypt's province in southern Canaan signals a brisk trade in those items, but not necessarily important economic benefits. The importation of vital commodities, however, such as copper, no doubt was under the close supervision of the Egyptian administration. The literary evidence does not reveal whether

Canaanite merchants in Egyptian-controlled areas were able to amass private capital to the same degree as their contemporaries in Ugarit (Sasson 1966: 134–37; Heltzer 1978: 123; 1984: 171–72, 175; Liverani 1979) or whether Cypriot or other groups of foreigners, residing in Gaza, could obtain royal charters to engage in local and foreign commercial ventures, as they did in Ugarit (Astour 1970: 113–27; Heltzer 1978: 152; Knapp 1983). The standard of living in northern Sinai was not high, and Gonen's study of urban development (1984), as well as the quality and range of artifacts from Late Bronze Age sites in southern Canaan, suggest that the general level of prosperity there was far below that of Ugarit. On the other hand, the major part of the region's wealth may have been concentrated in its port cities, Gaza and Ashkelon, and as the Late Bronze Age occupations of those sites are hardly known, any judgment on the scope of private trade in southern Canaan in that period would be premature.

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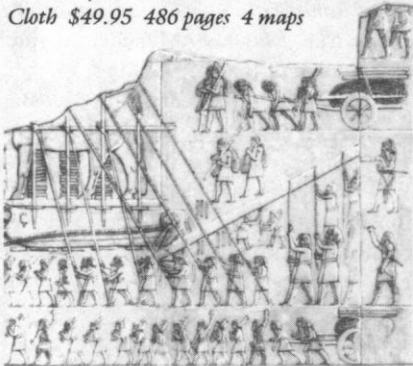
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