

## Egyptian-Type Pottery / Mario A. S. Martin

One of the less spectacular testimonies to the Egyptian New Kingdom presence in Late Bronze Age Canaan is pottery of Egyptian type. Despite its lack of glamour this pottery provides us with much insightful data, for instance, on the nature of Egyptian involvement in the region and on the precise chronology of certain archaeological contexts. The pottery can be divided into two groups – imported Egyptian vessels and vessels in Egyptian form that were produced in Canaan. The latter account for the vast majority of the extant corpus and are generally referred to as Egyptian-style pottery.

Egyptian imports are most common in contexts of the Ramesside Period (Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties), when they mainly take the form of cream-slipped and burnished wares (Egyptian “Marl D” or “Mixed clay”). Larger transport containers are most prominent; their preponderance at coastal sites suggests that Egyptian commodities, which were stored in such vessels, were brought in by ship to be traded on the Canaanite market and to supply Egyptian bases inland. Smaller vessels, such as small-handled cups that might have contained honey, have also come to light.

Egyptian-style pottery includes mainly coarse, mass-produced household wares. Among them, simple serving bowls constitute the overwhelming percentage, while closed forms, mainly handleless jars, are rarer. The most characteristic closed form is the “beer jar,” exhibiting a flat-bottomed shape with an ungainly appearance, including a heavily ribbed body and finger imprints around the base that the potter did not bother to obliterate. Beer jars often had perforated bases, arguably playing a role in the beer production process. Noteworthy is the virtual absence of Egyptian-type cooking vessels (see below).

Egyptian-style assemblages of considerable size and shape variety have only been retrieved from sites that have been interpreted as Egyptian strongholds and administrative centers, where a strong Egyptian influence is recognizable in other elements as well, such as architecture. These sites mainly include Beth Shean, Tell es-Sa‘idiyeh (Jordan), Aphek, Jaffa, Tel Mor, Ashkelon, Tell el-Ajjul, Deir el-Balah, Tel Sera, and Tell el-Farah (South). Egyptian-style pottery is most prominent at Beth Shean in the north and at Deir el-Balah in the south, where it accounts for more than half of the local ceramic assemblage in certain periods (fig. 17). Up to a third of these types were recorded at Aphek, Tel Mor, Ashkelon, and Tel Sera.

The temporal distribution of the Egyptian-style ceramic collections reflects the main historical stages of Egyptian involvement in Canaan. Virtually absent until the time of Thutmose III (founder of the Egyptian Empire in western Asia), during the Eighteenth Dynasty (Late Bronze Age I–IIA), such collections appear only in a small number of sites, in small quantities, and in a limited variety. This corroborates the notion that there was no large-scale, permanent physical Egyptian presence in Canaan during this early period. With the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty (Late Bronze Age IIB), a marked change occurred; the assemblages are now much larger and appear at more sites – often forming significant shares of the local ceramic assemblage – and in a much greater repertoire than before. This increase mirrors the more aggressive Asiatic policy of the Egyptians at this time; it confirms a scenario according to which incomparably larger Egyptian contingents of military and administrative personnel were sent to Canaan than before – and on a more permanent basis.

The mass-production of Egyptian-style vessels in Canaan continues well into the Twentieth Dynasty (Iron Age IA), remaining undiminished or even higher than before. Again, this goes hand in hand with the historical picture: while the Egyptians seem to have lost part of their Canaanite possessions to the invading Sea Peoples, the administration in the remaining regions stayed intact, and Egyptian garrison personnel continued to be stationed in the country. It seems that at least during the reign of Ramesses III the Egyptian grip – wherever maintained – was even tighter than before (for example, there is evidence for taxation). However, coinciding with the end of Egyptian hegemony over Canaan sometime in the second half of the twelfth century BCE (ca. Ramesses VI), the ceramic evidence changes decisively, with the production of locally-made Egyptian household types ceasing abruptly at all the sites.

The combined evidence strongly suggests that the Egyptian-style pottery, appearing mass-produced and in a considerable variety of types, as attested in the Ramesside Period, is a valid ethnic marker, pointing to a physical Egyptian presence of administrative and military personnel at the above-mentioned sites in Canaan. It can be asserted that not only the users but also the creators of this pottery were Egyptians, brought into the country by the Egyptian administration; at the very least, they were locals trained by Egyptian potters and thus intimately familiar with Egyptian modes of pottery production. This is supported by the fact that the locally produced Egyptian household types imitate



their Nile Valley counterparts not only in shape, but also in all technological aspects – fabric properties (e.g., the admixture of large amounts of chopped straw as temper), manufacturing techniques, and decorative styles.

For the reconstruction of a cultural scenario at the various Egyptian garrisons and bases, it is significant that local, south-Levantine and Egyptian-style pottery was always found together in the same contexts. Therefore, it seems evident that such sites were inhabited both by Egyptian and Canaanite population components. That both Canaanite and Egyptian-style pottery was found in the same houses may underline the daily interaction of the two cultures at these sites. The virtual absence of Egyptian-

type cooking vessels vis-à-vis an ubiquity of the generic Canaanite cooking pots might then suggest that the cooking was done by Canaanite women; food preparation was primarily the domain of women in the ancient world, while the Egyptians stationed at

the Egyptian strongholds must have been mainly male administrators and soldiers. Could the contextual association of Canaanite and Egyptian pottery forms in the same house in general and the evidence related to cooking in particular point to a scenario according to which Egyptian personnel lived under the same roof in marriage with Canaanite women?

It has been suggested by several scholars that the unprecedented quantities of Egyptian and Egyptian-style artifacts appearing in Canaan during the

Ramesside Period does not necessarily attest to a sizable physical Egyptian presence (“direct rule”), but may partly also be the result of a desire of the Canaanite elites for things Egyptian (“elite emulation”). This may account for the appearance of certain prestige goods, such as scarabs, amulets, jewelry, and stone vessels, or provide an explanation for sites at which the signs of Egyptian involvement are less pronounced. However, it simply beggars the imagination that mass-produced Egyptian-style household pottery was manufactured in a purely Canaanite ambience. Associated with a low social prestige, such wares were simply not likely to be desirable items for local Canaanite elites. Moreover, as mentioned above, the production of locally made Egyptian forms ended abruptly with the end of the Egyptian hegemony over Canaan. If Canaanite potters had indeed been emulating Egyptian pottery for their elites, they would not have stopped doing so suddenly after the Egyptians retreated.

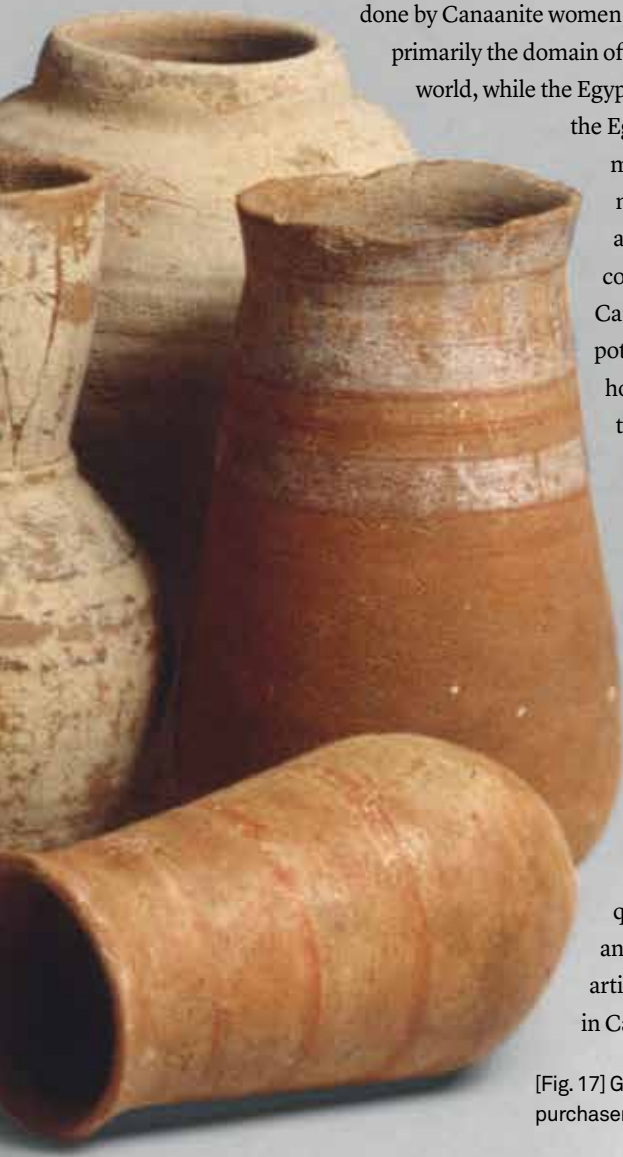
#### References:

Higginbotham 2000; Killebrew 2005; Martin 2011; Mullins 2006.

### Egyptian Stone Vessels in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age / Andrea Squitieri

When Canaan came under Egyptian dominion in the Late Bronze Age, a large quantity of stone vessels produced in Egyptian workshops reached the region. Most were made of calcite, a form of calcium carbonate, white to yellow in color, translucent and often banded, and sometimes referred to in literature as Egyptian alabaster or travertine. In Egypt, the abundance of geological sources for this material along the Nile stimulated the intense production of calcite vessels since the time of the Predynastic Period. Such vessels were used in a wide variety of contexts, such as temples, private tombs, and royal burials.

The Egyptian origin of the calcite vessels found in Canaan is inferred from their shapes, because these are closely paralleled by vessels discovered in Egypt. However, it has been suggested that Canaanite workshops may have produced some of the calcite vessels found in Canaan. In support of this hypothesis, it is worth mentioning the recent discovery of a calcite deposit near Jerusalem. It is not clear, however, whether this deposit was exploited during the Late Bronze Age. Moreover, it should be noted that, although it is possible that Canaanite workshops replicated some Egyptian calcite vessels, this production does not seem to have left direct archaeological evidence,



[Fig. 17] Group of Egyptian-type pottery from Deir el-Balah. IMJ, Gift of Laurence and Wilma Tisch, New York, purchasers of the Dayan Collection