

death) excavated at Bab edh-Dhra. These are again single-room broadhouses, in which the floor is lower than street level and is approached by several steps. Such tombs have yet to be discovered in western Palestine.

The double temple first appears in the Early Bronze Age I, at Megiddo. There is no way of knowing whether this indicates the worship of a pair of deities, perhaps male and female. In any case, the large double temple at Arad bears a close resemblance in plan to the Early Bronze Age I double temple at Megiddo: in both cases the rear wall of the temple adjoins the temenos wall, making it quite thick, which is also the situation in the Early Bronze Age I shrine at Jericho and in the Chalcolithic temple of En Gedi. At Arad as at Megiddo, a small annex (probably a storeroom) lies between the two structures. In both cases entry to the temple is from the east. The principal difference between the temples of Megiddo and Arad is that in the former the platform (altar) is within the sanctuary, opposite the entrance and abutting the rear wall, whereas in the latter, it appears that the sacrifices and libations required by

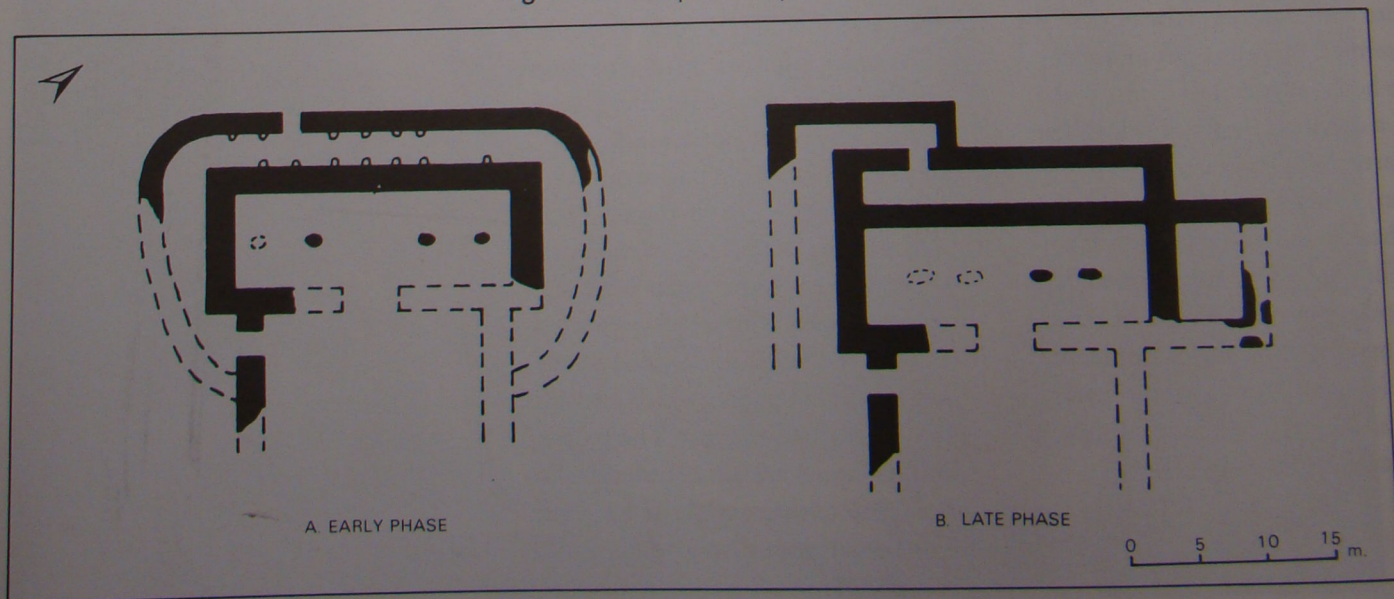
the cult were performed in the court east of the temples themselves, as evidenced by the basin and altars found outside both the large and small double temples. The benches built along the walls of the Arad temples are also absent at Megiddo.

Another important temple was discovered at Ai. It is a monumental building of fine stone construction, situated at the highest point of the site, hence its name, the Acropolis Temple. This temple had a long span of existence; it was founded in the Early Bronze Age II and abandoned some time during the Early Bronze Age III. During this extended period a number of changes were made in the structure, though the building remained fundamentally the same throughout. It is a solitary temple (as opposed to the double temples discussed above), designed as a single-roomed broadhouse of impressive dimensions, with the entrance in the east. An annex (storeroom) was later added to the main structure. The principles so well known from Arad and Megiddo are thus repeated here. Yet the Ai temple differs in some features from those structures, particularly in the organization of the courtyard or sacred area east of the structure. It is

bounded, at least for a time, by two walls jutting out of the east wall of the temple proper, which function as antae of a megaronlike structure (cf. the Megiddo temples). Likewise, the rear wall of the temple is not, in this case, part of the temenos wall, as in the temples of Jericho, Megiddo, and Arad; rather, a narrow corridor separates the temple from the temenos wall. The main hall of the sanctuary contains a number of stone pillar bases, and it is devoid of any cult installations. It has been suggested that a sacrificial altar be reconstructed in the courtyard east of the structure, as at Arad. The Acropolis Temple was abandoned after a fire some time in the course of the Early Bronze Age III, and the cult, along with the cult objects, removed to a lower building north of the acropolis, adjacent to the town fortifications.

The new temple was no more than a dwelling house converted for use as a temple. The house was the last in a series built on that spot since the Early Bronze Age I, and it was the only one that served a religious function. This explains why the structure so little resembles other known temples (though it is a broadroom structure, with two

Fig. 4.15. Acropolis Temple at Ai



units in file, the rear one containing the altar), to the point that some scholars have denied its being a temple at all.

A most important group of temples was discovered at Megiddo. After the double temple of the Early Bronze Age I went out of use, the sacred character of the area was maintained. The still extant monumental remains of the Early Bronze Age III temples prevent a clear understanding of the character of the area in Early Bronze Age II. However, toward the end of that period a round stone platform 10 meters in diameter and 1.5 meters high, with a flight of steps leading to the top from the east, was constructed. Ashes and remains of sacrificial victims found in large quantities near the platform indicate that it served as an altar. Nothing else like it has

so far been found in Palestine. Shortly after the construction of the platform, a temple was built nearby, and the platform was encircled by a temenos wall adjoining the temple. Some time later two more temples were built. The entire array—the three temples and the platform—served for a while and then gradually went out of use, so that by the end of the Early Bronze Age only the platform and the first temple remained, having undergone many changes.

This array of cult structures is the most magnificent and complex in Early Bronze Age Palestine, presenting several intriguing issues. The singularity of the platform has been noted; to this should be added the problem of the orientation of the temples. A clear preference for an eastern orientation of cult structures

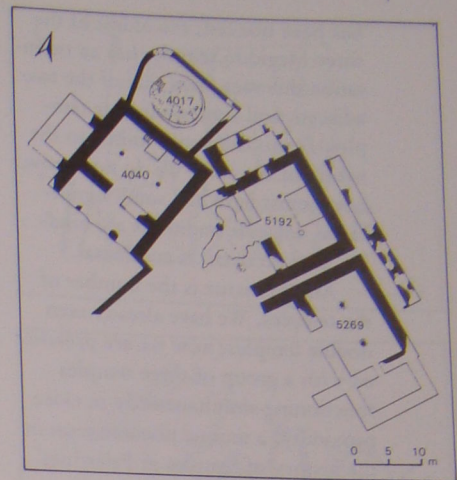


Fig. 4.16. Early Bronze III temples at Megiddo

Fig. 4.17. Cult platform in Megiddo sacred area



has been noticed; the oldest of the three Megiddo temples has an orientation different from that of the two adjacent and somewhat later temples. Is this difference linked to the nature of the cult? We do not know, but it must have had some significance, for cult traditions are binding, and no detail is accidental.

Another issue is the number of the temples. We have already seen double temples; now we are presented with a group of three temples functioning simultaneously in close proximity, a unique phenomenon in the history of temples in Palestine. Whether three deities were worshiped cannot be known, no more than we can know whether two were worshiped in the double temples, for not only are there no written texts of the period but the temples themselves were empty of any finds indicating the nature of the cult practiced within them. In addition to the round platform in the temenos courtyard outside the temples, each temple had a platform adjoining its rear wall, opposite the entrance. This sets the Megiddo temples apart from those of Arad and Ai and firmly within the tradition of the double temple in Early Bronze Age I Megiddo, and perhaps even that of the Chalcolithic period, as evidenced in the En Gedi temple.

Finally, the plan of the temples, especially of the two later temples and their temenos wall, reveals a clear resemblance to the Acropolis Temple at Ai. The Ai temple may be regarded as a precursor of the Early Bronze Age III temples at Megiddo and as a link between the concepts governing the organization of the sacred area at Arad and at Megiddo. The temples of Megiddo and Ai are single-roomed broadroom structures. At both sites an annex was attached to the main hall. The plan of the Ai temple approached that of the megaron, and the three Megiddo temples are undoubtedly structures

of this type. The megaron, whose origin lies in Greece or Asia Minor, is a longroom structure with an entrance porch bordered by extensions of the two long walls of the hall. The extensions are termed in classical architecture *antae*. The precise source of this plan is a matter of dispute, but such structures appear in the early third millennium in Asia Minor and Greece, and they belong undoubtedly to public structures—palaces or temples. Over the years the plan was confined to temples and often served as the core of the classical temple. The megaron no doubt came to Palestine as a result of relations with the north, for examples of such structures have been discovered in various sites in Syria-Lebanon (such as Byblos and Tell Chuera). In the process of adopting it, the temple builders at Megiddo made one significant alteration: the principle and tradition of the broadroom was so deeply ingrained in Palestine that the builders turned the megaron, a typical longroom structure, into a broadroom structure.

**OTHER PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND TOWN PLANNING.** The most impressive public building in Early Bronze Age Palestine was excavated at Beth Yerah and dates to the Early Bronze Age III. It is a structure of great size (30 × 40 meters), with walls nearly 10 meters wide. The building is not well preserved, having sustained extensive damage as a result of later construction. Nevertheless, enough of the structure has survived so that its plan may be almost fully reconstructed. The circles set in the thick walls should be reconstructed as silos of a cylindrical or conical form, in which grain was stored in bulk. It was therefore a public granary of enormous capacity, possibly exceeding the production capability of the town of Beth Yerah. If such was the case, the

granary must have served as a depot for the harvest of the entire region, the town and its rural hinterland, with all the political and social implications of such a function. Interestingly enough, similar structures of the same period appear in Egyptian wall paintings and on a stone model dated to the late third millennium, discovered on one of the Aegean islands. The public granary of Beth Yerah is so far the only one found in Palestine. Whether it was unique or whether more will yet be discovered, and whether its builders were influenced by the designs of similar buildings in neighboring countries, yet remains to be seen.

Further evidence of public works are two water supply systems, one of the Early Bronze Age II at Arad and the other of the Early Bronze Age III at Ai. In Arad a reservoir, situated at the lowest point in the town, was excavated in the soft Cretaceous limestone, apparently reaching the water table but in any case serving to collect the runoff from town slopes. The structural remains adjacent to the reservoir differ in character from the dwelling houses, and they clearly were connected with the administration and upkeep of these central public works, on which the welfare of the entire population depended. The reservoir at Ai was also built at the lowest point in the town. It was lined with stone slabs and caulked to retain the floodwaters efficiently, and its capacity is estimated at 2000 cubic meters. There can be little doubt that more water systems of this type await discovery in other Early Bronze Age sites.

In most Palestinian sites, the Early Bronze Age levels are hidden deep beneath the debris of later eras. This greatly impedes the broad exposure of Early Bronze Age strata, so that these are usually reached only in narrow trenches. Such nar-

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row exposures provide but scanty information, especially where issues such as that of town planning are concerned. Hence the great importance of sites such as Arad, where the third millennium strata are not covered by later remains and wide areas of the Early Bronze Age strata may be cleared. And indeed at this site the outlines of the town plan may be followed.

The town occupies the slopes of a natural, saucerlike depression, with the wall set along the rim of the saucer at its highest point. A main street crosses the town from east to west, and peripheral alleys follow the course of the wall, with allowances made for topographical variations. Public buildings (the temple, palace, and water system) are in the center of the town, adjoining the main street.

Features of town planning were also observed at Tell el-Far'ah North. From the beginning and throughout the existence of the Early Bronze Age II town, two main streets bisected the town, one running east-west and the other north-south. Another street wound parallel to the town wall. A drainage system was built along the main streets. In time a new wall was built along the north side of the town, inside the previous wall; concurrently, in a wide-scale planned operation, house levels were changed to facilitate drainage through a new sewer running under the wall. Urban planning is also attested in the layout and delimitation of the sacred area at Megiddo and in the organization of access to it from other parts of the town. The sites just described are no doubt illustrative of the situation at other sites, where broad exposure is barred.

#### POTTERY

The ceramic assemblage of the Early Bronze Age II-III is, in the main, a continuation and development of the assemblage of the first phase of the Early Bronze Age. The Early Bronze Age I assemblage is, however, largely a tomb assemblage, whereas most of the Early Bronze Age II-III vessels in our possession originate in occupation levels, though tomb vessels play an important role. Thus, the assemblages differ significantly in that the majority of the known vessels of the first part of the period are small votive vessels, while those of the two phases here discussed are generally vessels for everyday use. Among the votive vessels, Kenyon's Proto-Urban C group now disappears entirely. The distribution of her Proto-Urban A and Proto-Urban B groups also declines radically, though some types, particularly of the Proto-Urban A family, continue to exist and even to develop and influence ceramic forms, particularly in Early Bronze Age II. The characteristic band slip of the Early Bronze Age I is also no longer present in Early Bronze Age II-III, though the vessels decorated in this fashion continue to exist. Continuity is also evident in a number of forms, such as storejars, neckless cooking pots (holemouths), and various types of bowls, and a great deal of continuity is seen in details such as the ledge handle, so characteristic of the entire Early Bronze Age, and in ceramic technology: most vessels are handmade, though as time goes by the number of wheel-made vessels increases. At Tell el-Far'ah North, for example, about 20 percent of the vessels were made on the wheel in the Early Bronze Age I and some 35 percent in Early Bronze Age II. The quality of the clay improves as well; its preparation is more meticulous, and the bonding materials are well

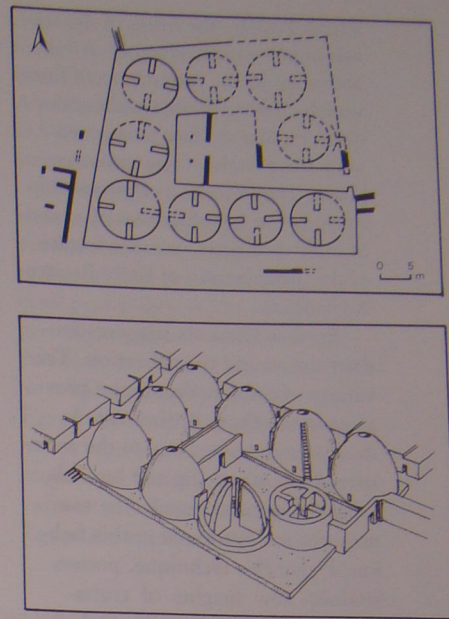


Fig. 4.18. Public granary at Beth Yerah: plan and suggested restoration

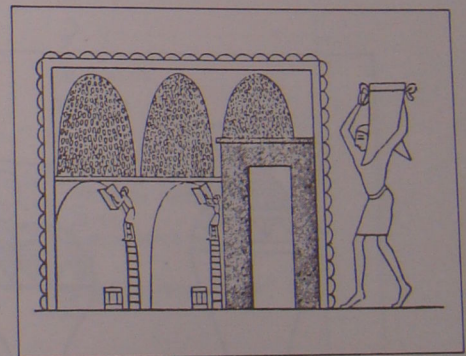


Fig. 4.19. Egyptian wall painting portraying granary

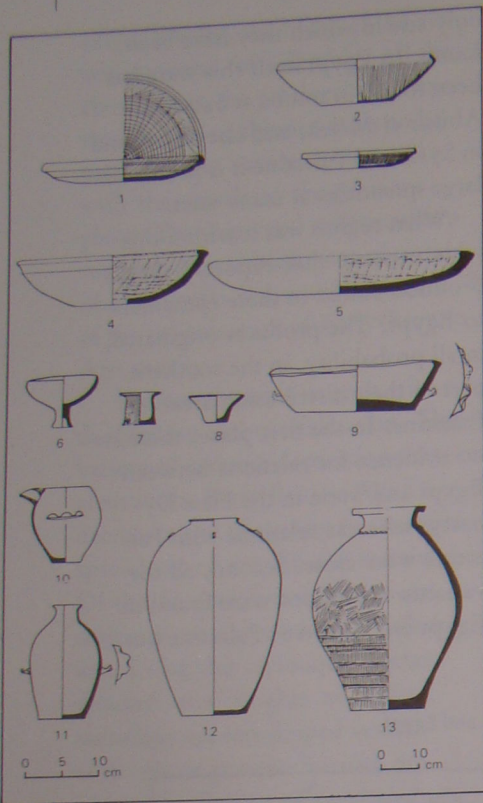


Fig. 4.21. Burnished and combed metallic-ware vessels

not in Syria; this is true especially of the decorated store jars, which have been found in Egypt and Palestine (Arad) but not in Syria. Finally, chemical analysis shows the clay of the vessels found at Abydos to be almost identical to that of the vessels found in Palestine.

The Arad excavations have provided the most conclusive evidence regarding the absolute chronology of the Early Bronze Age. Abydos ware does not appear in Egypt in tombs ascribed to the period of the first two kings of the First Dynasty, Narmer and Hor-Aha, but only during the reign of the third king, Djer. Similarly, at Arad, in stratum IV of the Early Bronze Age I, where an Egyptian vessel bearing the *se-rekh* of Narmer was found, Abydos ware does not yet occur; it appears only in stratum III of the Early Bronze Age II, which must therefore be dated from the reign of Djer onward. Finally, Abydos ware had a rather long lifespan in Syria-Palestine, and it continued to be produced there long after its importation into Egypt had ceased. Certain changes occurred during the Early Bronze Age III: jug bases became elongated, juglets grew more common, and the painted decoration disappeared.

**METALLIC WARE.** This term has been applied to a class of exceptionally well fired vessels. The higher the firing temperature, the harder, stronger, and more durable a pot becomes; it takes on a reddish hue and gives off a high-pitched metallic sound when struck with the finger. The firing temperature of this ware is about 900°C, much hotter than the 500°–700°C characteristic of the ware of the previous phase. Improved kilns and firing techniques were hallmarks of the Early Bronze Age II–III ceramic industry, and the number of highly fired vessels steadily increases, until they constitute

one fifth of the Early Bronze Age III assemblage at some sites. The vessels thus treated include chiefly store jars, jugs (including a large proportion of the Abydos ware vessels), and large, flat bowls called platters. The store jars are of particular interest, being the largest group in the metallic-ware assemblage. Palestinian agricultural produce, particularly wine and oil, was stored and traded in these jars. To fulfill this function, the jars would have had to meet certain standards, and it appears that they did so admirably. Vessels made with aluminum-calcite clay (the majority of those produced up to this time) are not resistant to acidic liquids such as wine. Furthermore, such vessels are more porous and tend to sweat, in the manner of Middle Eastern water jars, in which water is stored and kept cool by the evaporation of the moisture on the exterior of the vessel. In wine jars such a process would cause the wine to ferment and spoil and therefore had to be avoided. Analysis of metallic-ware jars has revealed that most were made of aluminum-silicate clay; they were thus resistant to acids and did not sweat. The vast majority of the metallic-ware jars were not decorated, except by combing. The widespread combing decoration was performed before firing when the vessel was at a leather-hard stage. A toothed, comblike instrument was used to incise groups of parallel lines on the vessel exterior. So-called pattern combing was produced when the line groups were short and ran in different directions. Combing may have been intended merely for decoration, but it seems more likely that another function was served. In some cases, particularly on jars found in hill and Shephelah sites (Ai, Lachish, Yarmuth, and others), the exterior of the vessel shows traces of a white lime wash, possibly related to waterproofing, insulation, and mainte-

nance of a fixed temperature, which improved the preservation of the liquids in the vessel. The wash did not always adhere well to the vessel, and many of the vessels found without it may have originally been covered with it.

The open metallic-ware vessels—mostly platters, as well as bowls and saucers—were not, of course, meant to carry liquids and were not shipped abroad as containers. They were vessels for local, domestic use, and in some the potter's art is revealed at its best, the vessels being red slipped and burnished with star or net patterns.

**BETH YERAH WARE.** Beth Yerah ware presents a phenomenon entirely different from that of the two groups just described. The latter consist chiefly of closed vessels intended for the storage of liquid products; they have been found in Egypt, and they range in time over the entire length of the Early Bronze Age II–III. Beth Yerah ware vessels are, in the vast majority, open forms, certainly not intended for the storage of liquids; they have not been found in Egypt, and they appear only in the Early Bronze Age III. In view of the considerable degree of continuity between the assemblages of the Early Bronze Age II and III phases, the presence of Beth Yerah ware often serves as an important criterion for the attribution of a given assemblage to the Early Bronze Age III.

Beth Yerah ware consists mainly of bowls, saucers, and cups, which make up over 90 percent of the finds in this group. There are also a number of utensils not encountered in other ceramic groups; these include lids and pot stands. Profiles are soft and sinuous, and the bases very small in proportion to the diameter, so that the vessels are unsteady, which explains the widespread use of pot stands. The vessels are never

wheel-turned; the clay is poorly levigated and mixed with large grits and straw. All the vessels are covered with a thick slip, which may be either red, black, or bichrome. In the latter case, the interior and upper exterior surfaces are red, and the rest of the exterior is black. Finally, the entire vessel is highly burnished and thus provided with a brilliant sheen. The play of colors was induced by a change in the firing atmosphere in the kiln: during firing, the potter passed from an oxidizing atmosphere, which produced red hues, to a reducing atmosphere (an oxygen-poor atmosphere produced by allowing smoke to enter the firing chamber), which resulted in shades of black. This unusual and striking finish, though serving primarily as decoration, enhanced the impermeability of the vessels, which would otherwise have been kept quite low by the poor levigation of their clay.

The vessels are also often decorated in relief, some with ribbing, others with nipplelike protuberances and circles. The thick, burnished slip covers these decorations as well. A few of the vessels, particularly lids and pot stands, bear incised decoration, which sometimes takes the form of a human face.

In each of these features—the profiles, details of form, hand-forming, poor levigation, poor firing, thick slip, and bichrome coloring—Beth Yerah ware stands out as completely alien to the ceramic traditions of Palestine. In contrast to Abydos ware and metallic ware, which were deeply rooted in local traditions both in form and technique, Beth Yerah ware appears suddenly and disappears as suddenly, leaving no trace.

This class of pottery was named Beth Yerah ware (or Khirbet Kerak ware) after the site of Beth Yerah (Khirbet Kerak), near the Sea of Galilee, where it was first identified

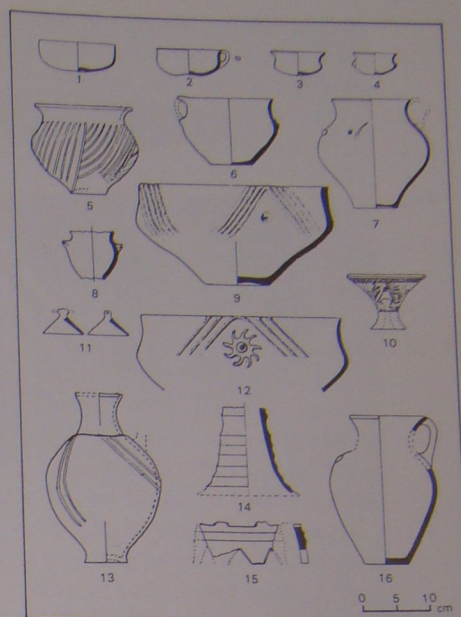


Fig. 4.22. Beth Yerah (Khirbet Kerak) ware typology



Fig. 4.23. Beth Yerah ware: bowl (height 24 centimeters) and mug (27 centimeters)

and defined. The ware is found mainly in the valleys—the Jezreel, Jordan, and Beth Shean valleys—at sites such as 'Afula, Beth Yerah, and Beth Shean. From these sites Beth Yerah ware comprises a significant part of the Early Bronze Age III assemblage. Far smaller quantities of Beth Yerah ware are present at sites such as Hazor in the upper Galilee, Jericho in the lower Jordan valley (often regarded as an extension of the northern valleys), Ai in the hill country, Yarmuth in the inner plains, and Tel Nagila in the northern Negev, which marks the southernmost extent of its distribution.

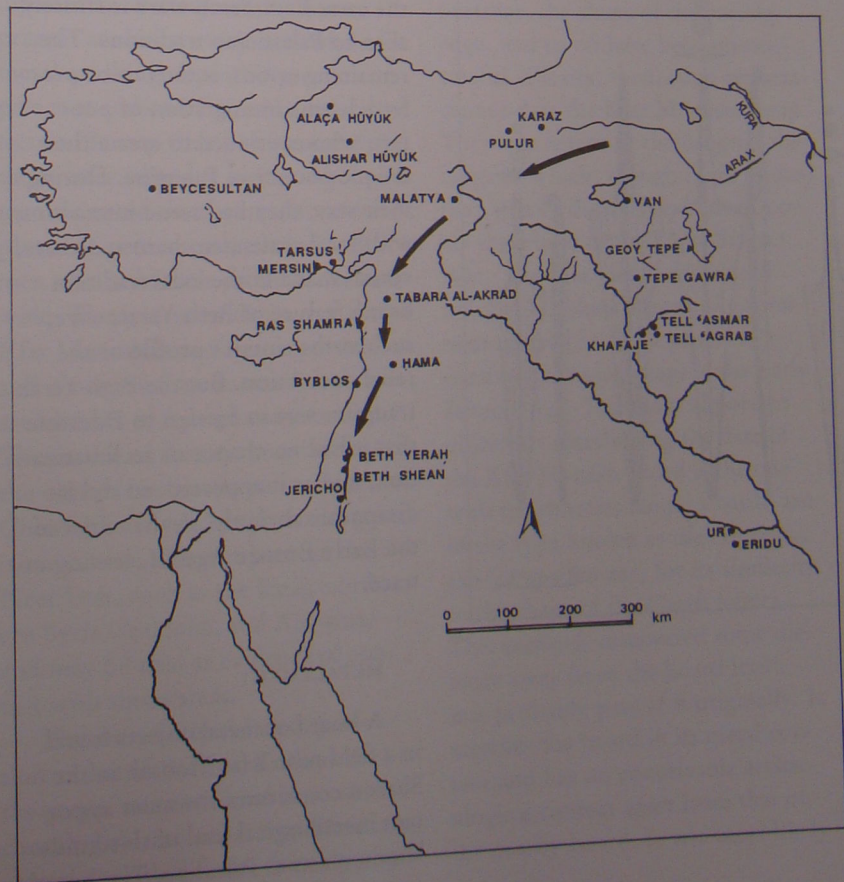
The Beth Yerah ware phenomenon as a whole requires explanation. How did these vessels reach Palestine? (That they are alien to local pottery traditions is obvious.) Did they arrive through trade? Were they the property of an invading population arriving at the beginning of the Early Bronze Age III, or did only a few foreign potters arrive in Palestine at this time? In this context the existence of Beth Yerah ware north of Palestine should be noted. In Syria the ware is also found chiefly in valley sites, for example, in the Orontes and Amuq basins. The Beth Yerah ware found in these regions is identical to that found in Palestine and constitutes a considerable proportion of the ceramic assemblage where it occurs. Beyond Syria, the resemblance to Beth Yerah ware diminishes. In the Anatolian plateau vessels akin to Beth Yerah ware were found, but the resemblance is less vivid than that of the Syrian and Palestinian wares, with the exception of one type: the pot stand of Anatolia is identical to those found in Syria and Palestine. Another region apparently connected with the Beth Yerah ware family lies between the Caspian Sea and the Turkish border. Here, in Armenia and Georgia, many Bronze

Age sites were discovered with pottery bearing familiar features: S-shaped profiles, small bases, highly burnished decoration, and some patterns of ribbed and relief decoration that appear in Beth Yerah ware. Again, these vessels are not identical with the ware of Syria and Palestine, but a certain bond no doubt exists.

The forms and ware of Beth Yerah vessels made them unsuitable for trade and inconvenient to transport, and it may be assumed that they were produced locally. Chemical analysis of the clay has revealed beyond doubt that the Beth Yerah ware found in Palestine was not imported and that the bulk of it was produced in the sites where it was found. However, as its presence is alien to Palestine (and to Syria), we must look northward for its sources of influence and inspiration. Such influence could have arrived in one of three ways: population move-

ments (the vessels were the property of immigrants), the immigration of potters who came from somewhere in the north and continued to produce pottery in the traditions of their homeland, or importation of ideas (local craftsmen producing pottery under foreign inspiration). Opinion is divided over these possibilities, but the second seems the most plausible. On the one hand, there is no evidence of massive migrations into Palestine in the Early Bronze Age III, though a migration not accompanied by hostile acts and destructions is difficult to trace. On the other hand, it is hard to believe that a local potter would abandon everything he was accustomed to in favor of an imported concept. If Beth Yerah ware was created by local potters, one would expect to find hybrid features, reflecting the coexistence of local traditions with foreign characteristics. This is not

Map 4.3. Suggested migration route of bearers of Beth Yerah culture





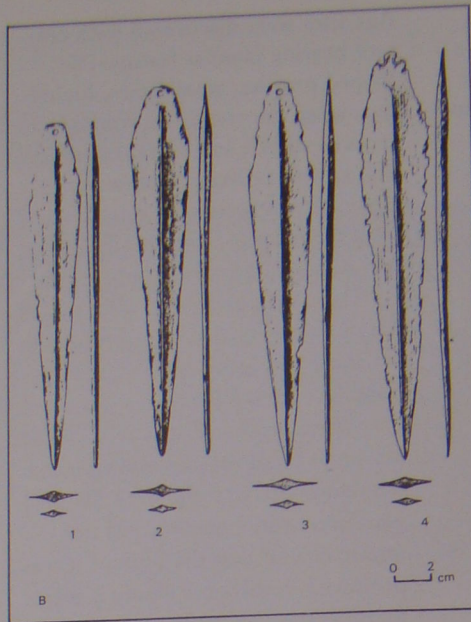
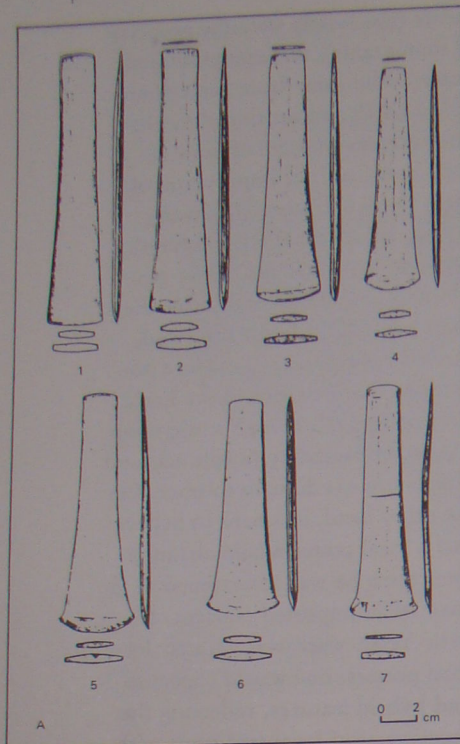
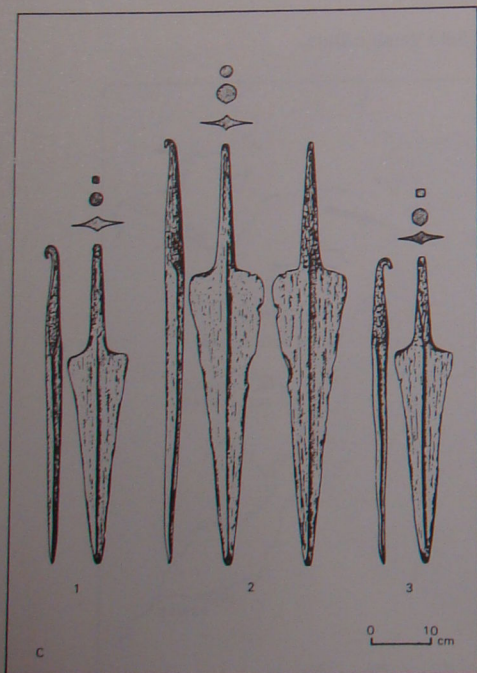


Fig. 4.24. Kfar Monash hoard: axes and adzes (A), daggers (B), spearheads (C)



the case; Beth Yerah ware is entirely alien to Palestinian traditions. The remaining option is thus to be preferred—the immigration of potters, who continued to create their unique pottery in Palestine. During their stay, they had some interaction with local craftsmen; here and there, vessels made in the local tradition bear a feature of Beth Yerah ware, such as the sinuous profile or the relief decoration. But the Beth Yerah tradition was so foreign to Palestine that it had no chance of acclimatization, and as it appeared, so did it disappear: abruptly, in the midst of the Early Bronze Age III, leaving no trace.

#### METALLURGY

A hoard of metal objects found in a field near Kfar Monash in the Sharon constitutes the most important metallurgical find of third millennium B.C.E. Palestine. The hoard

contains a large number of artifacts, most of them weapons and tools, including six axes, eleven adzes, three chisels, a saw, two long knives with curved ends, four spearheads, four daggers, a knife, a macehead, a stake, a crescent-shaped object, a few hundred copper plaques, fragments of a silver mirror, and a number of carnelian beads. The most important questions regarding the so-called Kfar Monash hoard are: How may we explain the findspot of the hoard, far from any ancient site? What was the precise function of the implements, some of which (especially the spearheads) are exaggerated in size, exceeding that of any other known tools? Were these implements made in Palestine or were they imported? If they were made locally, what is the source of the metal? Finally, what is the date of the group?

There are no data relating to the first question. The Sharon was

sparsely settled in the Early Bronze Age, and it is generally assumed that it was covered by swamps and dense thickets. The only explanation thus far offered for the odd location of the hoard is that of S. Yeivin, who believed the hoard to be the equipment of a detail of Egyptian troops (four soldiers and an officer) who came to the Sharon to fell timber and send it to Egypt. For reasons unknown—perhaps a surprise attack, or the need to be rid of the heavy burden to ease their retreat—the soldiers had to bury their gear. Needless to say, such a theory cannot be verified, and as things stand, the first question must remain unanswered. Yeivin's theory assumes an Egyptian origin for the implements, and a date in the days of Narmer, in the early First Dynasty (this date was first advanced by the original publishers of the hoard). We will here attempt to show that both the Egyptian origin and the Early Bronze Age I date are highly improbable.

The most problematic of the implements, in regard to function, are the giant spearhead, 66 centimeters in length and 2 kilograms in weight, and a group of 800 thin copper plaques, measuring  $5 \times 11$  centimeters each. It has been suggested that the spearhead was the head of a battering ram (the metal point attached to a long wooden pole intended to batter walls) and the copper plaques pieces of scale armor, which would have been sewn onto a leather garment. Neither suggestion seems plausible: battering rams and scale armor appear hundreds of years after the latest date possible for the hoard, the supposed scales have no eyelets that would allow them to be sewn to the garment, and the battering ram is of a material too soft to batter a wall. It would therefore be best to leave the question of the function of these implements open as well.

As for the question of origin, comparative typological study (the comparative study of the forms of the various artifacts) does not point to any of Palestine's neighbors as a likely source for the objects. The unique objects, whether those mentioned above or objects such as the two long knives with the curved ends, have no parallel in or out of Palestine, while most of the remaining implements are typologically at home both in Palestine and in the neighboring lands. It must be kept in mind that tools and weapons throughout the eastern Mediterranean have much in common. The forms of metal implements may be said to be more international and the number of variations much smaller than, for example, among ceramic wares, no doubt because the scarcity of raw material and the technical difficulties involved in obtaining and working metal resulted in there being far fewer metal-working centers than there were pottery-producing centers. Pottery centers were present at almost every site, whereas metal working depended on the presence and coexistence of several factors. It may thus be assumed that there were itinerant smiths who manufactured their wares in various places or permanently settled craftsmen who sold their products far and wide. There is no evidence that the Kfar Monash hoard was imported, and it need not be assumed that the artifacts are of foreign manufacture. The source of the raw material for the objects has also been studied. Chemical analysis has shown that it came from different parts of the Near East, such as the Sinai, northern Syria, Anatolia, and Armenia, and may be seen as evidence of contact with those areas.

The most hotly debated question is that of the hoard's date. As the group was not found in an archaeological site and is not related to ceramic or other finds, the only way

to date the artifacts is by comparative typological study with objects discovered in datable contexts. The main difficulty with this method is that the valuable and durable metal implements are slow to change, and an artifact type may have a lifespan of hundreds of years, as opposed to pottery, in which typological change is relatively swift and serves as a convenient chronological indicator. Usually, when the tools and weapons indicate a broad temporal range, a more precise date may be provided by the context in which they are discovered; this, as noted, cannot apply to the Kfar Monash hoard. The axe and adze group, the largest group in the assemblage, excepting the copper plaques, is the most difficult to date. These simple tools are of so basic a form that they may be paralleled in assemblages ranging from the Chalcolithic to the second millennium, a period of 1500 years. All attempts at a subdivision of this artifact into types according to proportions, the shape of the cutting edge, and so on have been unsuccessful. Clearly, then, such artifacts cannot date the Kfar Monash group. The same is true of the daggers, the range of which, though more limited than that of the axes and adzes, covers the whole of the Early Bronze Age. The spearheads are indeed unique, but their shape and prominent midrib seem to point to a relatively advanced stage in the Early Bronze Age. The most important object for determining the date of the Kfar Monash hoard is the one with the shortest range: a battle-axe of the type known as the crescentic axe (or epsilon axe, for its similarity to the shape of the Greek letter). This axehead, discovered some distance away from the hoard itself, was probably part of it originally. It matches the hoard in its metal content and has no conceivable archaeological context apart from that of the nearby hoard. It was most likely

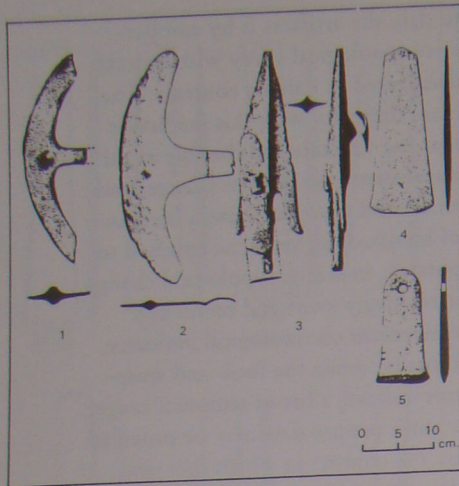


Fig. 4.25. Axe from Jericho (1), axe (2), spearhead (3), and adzes (4–5) from Tell el-Hesi, Early Bronze III

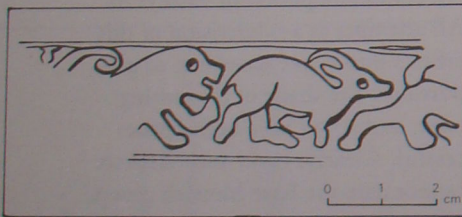


Fig. 4.26. Cylinder seal impression depicting animal procession, from Jericho

dragged across to its findspot when the field was plowed. Similar axeheads have been found in Palestine, but in Early Bronze Age III contexts. The Kfar Monash axe is a prototype of these axeheads: it lacks the small knob in the middle of the blade and is of somewhat poorer workmanship. A date somewhere toward the end of the Early Bronze Age II is thus indicated. This date is, in effect, a mean between the (late?) Early Bronze Age I date proposed by R. Hestrin and M. Tadmor, who first published the find, and the Early Bronze Age III date proposed by several other scholars.

Apart from the crescentic axe discovered at Kfar Monash, three such objects have been found at Tell el-Hesi, Jericho, and Bab edh-Dhra. At the latter two sites, the axeheads clearly come from Early Bronze Age III contexts, and this appears to be the case at Tell el-Hesi as well. The crescentic axe belongs to the family of tanged axes. The middle and longest of its three tangs served to fix the axehead firmly in place when inserted through, then twisted round the haft. This was the first step toward the development of a socket for the attachment of the axehead to the haft, a development evidenced in the fenestrated axes of the Middle Bronze Age I, and is a further indication of the relatively late Early Bronze Age date of the crescentic axe. Another improvement is the knob in the middle of the blade, which prevents the penetration of the axehead too deeply into the haft with repeated blows. The knob is lacking in the Kfar Monash find, hence the earlier date proposed for it. Crescentic axes have been found outside Palestine. At Byblos a mold for casting crescentic axes was discovered, identical in every detail to the axes discovered in Palestine, though unfortunately in an undatable context. Similar axes have been found in Anatolia and

Mesopotamia, but the resemblance, though great, is not as great as that between the Byblite and Palestinian examples. We have, therefore, a phenomenon somewhat similar to that encountered in the case of Beth Yerah ware. The source of inspiration is somewhere in the north, perhaps in Upper Mesopotamia, and thence the concept migrated to the Levant. Syria and Palestine present an identical variant, the outcome of a northern influence on both lands.

Metal objects have been encountered in nearly every site where Early Bronze Age II–III layers have been excavated. They include daggers, which are usually short and have rivet holes in their bases; adzes, similar in every way to those of Kfar Monash; pins, awls, and hammers. Unique objects include a probably ceremonial spearhead of the Early Bronze Age II, partly plated with silver, from Megiddo; a spearhead, apparently of the Early Bronze Age III, found with the crescentic axe and a number of adzes at Tell el-Hesi, which also seems to bear a resemblance to objects from Syria (Amuq, Ugarit); and a small saw, of the Early Bronze Age III, found at Hazor. Metal jewelry—rings, bracelets, pins, and beads—was generally made of copper, but fragments of a silver mirror from Kfar Monash, gold beads from Lachish, and a gold brooch from a tomb near Kinneret have also been found.

No workshops have yet been discovered, but examination of the artifacts themselves has shown that some (especially the daggers and pins) were fashioned by hammering and annealing, and others were cast in open molds, as evidenced by the planoconvex section of most of the adzes and by two such molds discovered at Megiddo (Early Bronze Age III). Some of the objects, such as the spearheads and daggers with the prominent midrib from Kfar Monash and the crescentic axes with

the central knob, were probably cast in closed molds.

The principal raw material was copper; far smaller amounts of gold, silver, and lead (a by-product of silver) are also represented. Unfortunately, only a few chemical analyses of the various objects have been conducted, and there is little data available regarding the source of the copper. Analyses have revealed that some artifacts were made of Sinai copper, including those made of copper with no nickel content (if part of the Kfar Monash hoard was indeed made of copper from Sinai, it would support the dating of the hoard, as there is no evidence for the utilization of the Sinai mines before the Early Bronze Age II). Some objects were also found to be made of copper that apparently originated in Anatolia and Transcaucasia, as indicated by the high nickel and lead content. The same source may be indicated by the arsenic content in some of the Kfar Monash artifacts. This does not necessarily testify to the importation of the objects themselves from those regions; it is just as reasonable to assume that only the raw material was imported and that the objects were manufactured in Palestine.

#### ART AND CULT

The number of art objects of the Early Bronze Age found in Palestine is very small. Evidently, the carving of seals was the principal mode of artistic expression, and the seals and seal impressions form the principal group of art objects found to date in Palestine. They number more than a hundred finds, almost every excavation or survey of Early Bronze Age sites having produced a few. Of the two types, stamp seals and cylinder seals, the latter are the more numerous.

Stamp seals, which appear in great numbers in the northern coun-

tries (Syria and Mesopotamia) are rare in Palestine, for reasons yet unknown. Stamp seal impressions have been found on a jar from Tell el-Far'ah North dated early in the Early Bronze Age II. The impressions were evidently produced by wooden seals and were repeated a number of times to create the illusion of a cylinder seal impression. One seal portrays a snake and the other an animal with long horns, apparently an ibex. Both are depicted rather schematically in low, flat relief. The snake and the horned animal are known as symbols of fertility and are often portrayed in ancient Near Eastern art, particularly in countries north of Palestine, either separately or together. The inspiration of the Tell el-Far'ah North seals is therefore northern, close parallels having been found at Byblos, at various sites in North Syria and on the borders of Mesopotamia, and even in distant Elam. One stamp seal of local limestone was discovered at Arad and dated, like the Tell el-Far'ah North seals, to the Early Bronze Age II. It is larger than average ( $3.5 \times 8$  centimeters) and of rather crude workmanship. Its pattern resembles two large eyes and has good parallels both at Byblos and in upper Syria. As at Far'ah, northern inspiration may be sought for this locally made seal.

The cylinder seals include a stone seal from Arad, a seal from Megiddo, a bone seal from Jericho, and some stone seals whose precise provenance in Palestine is unknown. The scene on the Arad seal consists of highly schematic animals and a geometric pattern; the remaining seals bear linear geometric patterns. The seals all share an Early Bronze II date (this is less than certain in the Arad and Jericho seals) and, like the stamp seals, draw their inspiration from northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia.

The vast majority of Palestinian cylinder seals are represented only by their impressions on ceramic vessels. The seals themselves were apparently made of wood, as attested by the flat relief and the crude linear outline of the patterns, and have not survived. The custom of decorating ceramic vessels, particularly jars, with cylinder seal impressions seems to have originated in Palestine, where it is especially widespread. It has also been observed in some parts of Syria, in Greece, and in isolated cases in Mesopotamia and Elam. It is not clear whether it developed independently in each place or whether one region influenced the others.

One class of impressions is characterized by scenes of animal processions, generally consisting of alternating lions and horned animals. Such impressions have been discovered at Jericho, Hazor, and Dan. In none of these sites have they been discovered in Early Bronze Age strata, and thus their precise date within the Early Bronze Age is open to doubt. The impressions closely resemble cylinder seal impressions from Byblos; some designs are almost identical. This site has produced the largest number of seal impressions and the largest number of variants of this group. It is thus probable that the concept of the Palestinian seals, if not the seals themselves, came from Byblos. Unfortunately, the stratigraphic attribution of most of the Byblite impressions is not clear either, and while some certainly belong to levels of the Early Bronze Age II, it is not clear to what extent, if at all, the production and use of these seals continued into Early Bronze Age III. Not one of the impressions of this type from Palestine can with certainty be ascribed to Early Bronze Age III levels. Rather, the levels have provided a wealth of seal impressions of different types. It is

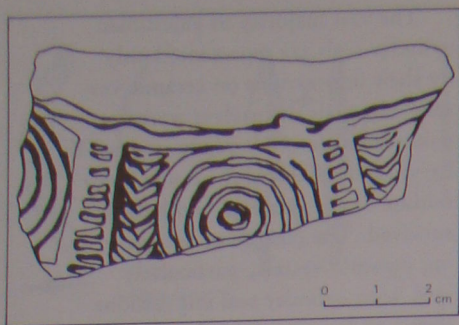


Fig. 4.27. Geometric cylinder seal impression from Hazor

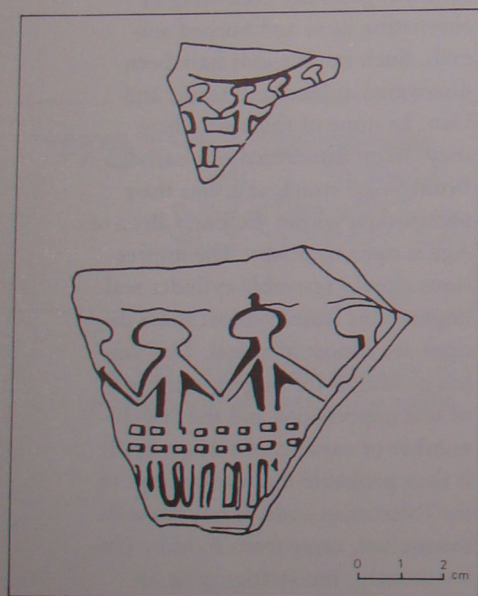


Fig. 4.28. Cylinder seal impressions depicting cultic scenes from Rosh Ha-Niqra and Beth Yerah

therefore probable, though not certain, that the impressions showing animal processions are to be dated, at least in Palestine, to the Early Bronze Age II.

Two main classes of cylinder seal impressions belong to the Early Bronze Age III. The first bears geometric patterns, and the second cult scenes. In broad terms, these two classes of seal impressions have much in common with those portraying animal processions. All three classes were produced by wooden seals that have not survived; they exhibit low relief and a schematic representation of the figures and were used to decorate store jars.

Geometric seal impressions are the most common, having been found in considerable quantities in the Golan Heights, Tel Dan, Beth Ha-Emeq, Beth Yerah, Tel Qashish, and elsewhere. The seals are variously composed of herringbone, net, lozenge, and spiral patterns. It is a homogeneous class, with a great degree of uniformity and resemblance among the seals from various sites. It is also particularly characteristic of Palestine and was probably produced by local craftsmen. Few geometric seals are known from Syria; their patterns are usually different from those common in Palestine, and any connection between the seals of the two lands must have been minimal. However, a large group of geometric cylinder seal impressions was found at the site of Lerna in Greece. The impressions were produced by wooden seals larger than those common in Palestine, but their similarity to the geometric patterns of Palestine is great. It is not clear whether this similarity between the two centers of geometric seal production (Greece and Palestine) is accidental or whether there was some sort of contact, and the impressions from Greece are the result of Palestinian influence. The practice of decorating

vessels with wooden cylinder seals has a much longer history and a wider distribution in Palestine than in Greece, so that if the impressions of Lerna (and a small number of impressions from other Greek sites) are related in some way to those of Palestine, it is likely that the direction of influence was from Palestine to Greece and not the other way round.

The most interesting class of cylinder seal impressions is that bearing cult-related scenes. Such impressions have been found, among other places, at Rosh Ha-Niqra, Tel Dan, Beth Yerah, and Bab edh-Dhra. The scenes are composed of human figures holding hands and apparently dancing, a long-horned animal generally standing on its hind legs, and a net pattern in the form of a building facade. In the latter detail, windows and paneled construction appear, typical of temple architecture, and this is how it is often portrayed throughout the ancient Near East. Some impressions show all three components; others contain only two, usually the human figures and the temple facade. Of all the seal impression scenes discussed here, these tell the most revealing tale. What exactly this tale may have been can only be surmised, in view of the lack of written sources for the period in Palestine. Similar scenes, where human figures appear next to temples, are known from many art objects discovered in Syria and Mesopotamia. They are most common in glyptic art, from which we learn that the subject was a favorite one among seal carvers. In most cases the human figures appear to be engaged in a cult dance near the temple, in front of it, behind it, or on its roof (in Syrian seals). The strong bond between the horned animal and the fertility cult is often expressed in ancient Near Eastern art. The appearance of long-horned animals on the seals may show that

the cult was a fertility cult. In some scenes the horned animals stand on their hind legs; their stance suggests that they are not really animals but masked human figures. In one of the impressions from Har Rabi (near Sepphoris), the animal appears seated on a chair. A human figure in the guise of a horned animal, shown dancing near a horned animal or a temple, clearly appears on stamp and cylinder seals found in North Syria and Mesopotamia. Palestinian seal impressions showing scenes related to cult are therefore a local variant of a scene common in areas north of Palestine: they portray a cultic dance, related apparently to fertility, performed near a temple, with the participants sometimes shown in the guise of horned animals.

The vast majority of the seal impressions come from northern Palestine; the Jezreel valley marks the southern reaches of their distribution, and only a handful of finds come from sites south of this line. Jericho and Bab edh-Dhra, despite their southern location, should be seen as northern sites or extensions, via the Jordan valley, of northern culture. The concentration of the vast majority of the finds in sites of northern Palestine reflects the strong bond and close resemblance between the scenes portrayed in Palestinian seals and those depicted in seals of regions to the north, from Byblos to northern Syria.

The one hundred and more seal impressions in the Palestinian assemblage, though falling into three major classes—animal processions, geometric patterns, and cult scenes—share many features (raw material and carving technique) and reveal a strong family resemblance. The uniformity is remarkable, considering the long existence of these groups, spanning the entire Early Bronze Age II–III (more than 500 years).

This indicates considerable conservatism on the part of workshops or seal cutters, who must have been few in number.

Another group of Palestinian art objects, the ivory bulls' heads, is quite small: one bull's head was discovered at Beth Yerah, a second at Jericho (where a similar object made of stone, possibly a model for the ivory bulls' heads, was also discovered), and a third at Ai. Another head from Ai and two from Bab edh-Dhra have been reported but have not yet been fully published. This class of objects also reveals a high degree of homogeneity. All the objects are dated to the Early Bronze III, and all resemble one another in technique and form. The resemblance is so great that all may have been produced by one artist (possibly at Jericho) or one school of artists. What these objects decorated, whether furniture, scepters, or the like, is not known. Neither has their origin been established. The lack of such finds outside Palestine suggests that they were local productions, but whether their concept was local or foreign is not known. A number of Mesopotamian objects bear some resemblance to the bulls' heads, particularly in the triangular design on the forehead. If the Palestinian artist was influenced by an extra-Palestinian source, the northern regions must again be considered.

The single most important art find of the Early Bronze Age in Palestine is undoubtedly the cultic stela from Arad. This plaque, made of local limestone and standing about 24 centimeters high, was found near one of the temples in the Early Bronze Age II town. Two figures, human and nearly identical in form, were crudely but distinctly incised on the plaque. One is shown lying flat within a rectangular frame (a bed?), and the other stands beside it. The most interesting feature is



Fig. 4.29. "Dumuzi" stela from Arad (height 24 centimeters)

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Fig. 4.29. "Dumuzi" stela from Arad (height 24 centimeters)

the head of the two figures, which is not human but rather takes the form of a plant. R. Amiran, the excavator of Arad, is no doubt correct in stating that the scene described is related to the myth of Dumuzi (Tammuz), as reported in Mesopotamian texts. The summer heat, when all things wither and dry up, represents the death of Dumuzi, the vegetation god. His death must be mourned ("there sat the women bewailing Tammuz," Ezek. 8:14), and his resurrection—and with it, that of plant life—prayed for. The precise interpretation of the Arad stela is not entirely clear. Is Dumuzi here shown in two states, those of death and resurrection, or does the plaque portray the act of mourning for the dead god? Neither is the local name of this deity known, in the absence of texts ("Dumuzi" is a Sumerian name, "Tammuz" a later Babylonian name). These questions, however, are secondary; what is certain is that the scene relates to the cult of the god of plenty, here in his capacity as vegetation god.

An apparently related cult object was found in Sanctuary A at Ai. It consists of fragments of a stone vessel shaped like a waterskin. Sumerian texts tell us of the goddess Bilulu, who was accused of killing Dumuzi and was sentenced to become a waterskin. The object from Ai may thus represent the Bilulu aspect of the Dumuzi cult. It is one of a group of vessels of the early part of the Early Bronze Age II, which were originally part of the Acropolis Temple assemblage at Ai. The cult may have survived into the Early Bronze Age III, for when the Acropolis Temple was abandoned, the objects were removed to the new cult place of that phase.

Dumuzi was responsible for the fertility of the flocks as well as that of the fields. Perhaps the figures in the guise of horned animals depicted in the seal impressions described

above represent a cult of the fertility of the flocks, parallel to the vegetation cult depicted in the Arad stela and no doubt present in other sites in Palestine.

The continuity evident in the plans of cult structures has been noted, beginning with the Chalcolithic temple at En Gedi, through the temples of the Early Bronze Age I (Megiddo), the Early Bronze Age II (Arad), and the Early Bronze Age III (Megiddo, Ai). It is quite probable that the cult practiced within these structures exhibited a similar continuity; lacking texts, however, the only evidence is circumstantial, based on the interpretation of silent finds. If this is indeed the case, then fertility occupied a central, if not solitary, position in the Palestinian cult at least from the Chalcolithic period to the end of the Early Bronze Age. Paralleling the development of the economic substructure from a pastoral economy in the Chalcolithic to a Mediterranean economy based on a combination of pastoralism and agriculture in the Early Bronze Age, the fertility cult developed from a cult connected with the fertility of the flocks and with milk products in the Chalcolithic to one connected with the fertility of both fields and flocks in the Early Bronze Age.

#### FOREIGN RELATIONS

The network of relations between Egypt and Palestine begun and established in the Early Bronze Age I continued in the Early Bronze Age II. Those settlements of southern Palestine in which a wealth of Egyptian pottery had appeared—Tel Erani, Tel Halif, and others—continued to flourish. The seal impressions of Egyptian officials found on clay stoppers at En Besor indicate uninterrupted activity at the site nearly until the end of the First Dynasty. These settlements should be

viewed as Egyptian trade stations, where Palestinian export shipments to Egypt were prepared. Goods were transported along the main road between the two countries, which passes through northern Sinai. A large number of way stations that protected and provided for the caravans have been discovered along the highway. The ceramic finds at the way stations reveal a predominance of Egyptian pottery at some and of Palestinian pottery at others. Evidently it was in the interest of both the Egyptians and the inhabitants of Palestine to maintain this important trade route. When the network of relationships between Egypt and Palestine collapsed during the Second Dynasty, in the latter half of the Early Bronze Age II, the way stations were abandoned, and the road remained unused for hundreds of years.

The difference in political organization between the two countries (which can only be inferred from what is known of later periods) leads one to assume that Egyptian trade was far more centralized than that of Palestine and that those engaged in it were the representatives and officials of the central authority (the royal court). This may explain the serekh-bearing Egyptian vessels found in Palestine and the sealed stoppers from En Besor. Palestinian trade was probably freer than Egyptian trade, and the merchants citizens or representatives of various city-states.

Import and export are directly related to the natural resources of the land on the one hand and the standard of living of the population, or of select groups within it, on the other. In the absence of mineral resources, apart from Sinai copper, agricultural produce and its by-products formed the main export potential of Palestine. The lack of written documents and the perishability of the organic agricultural goods impedes the compilation of a



list of Palestinian exports. Nevertheless, such a list may be reconstructed, mainly by inference from later texts (of the first and second millennium) that mention exports and also by tracing the pottery vessels that contained some of the export products. Another factor influencing Palestinian trade involves ways and means of transport. Because of the difficulties attending long-distance transport, the most lucrative trade was in products of the smallest weight and volume, such as spices, gold, silver, and the like. As these were not produced in Palestine, Palestinian trade could not have been very profitable. Exceptions to this rule were cosmetic items such as scented oils and resins of various kinds, and they were among the luxury products of the land. A further limitation of Palestinian trade was that it was exclusively land-bound; not one port is known to have existed before the second millennium, and all trade to and from Early Bronze Age Palestine went overland. This severely limited the size and weight of the cargoes, precluding, for example, the export of wood from Palestine, a product in great demand in Egypt.

Palestine exported mainly wine, oil, and date honey, shipped in jars of the type described above; cosmetic products such as scented oils, shipped, apparently, in jugs and juglets of Abydos ware; and materials such as bitumen (extracted from the Dead Sea and exported perhaps via Arad) and resins used for sealing and embalming. Invisible exports (organic products packed in perishable containers such as sacks, baskets, or skins) would have included small amounts of wheat, barley, and vegetables (chiefly pulse), dried fruit (dates, figs, and raisins), textiles, and perhaps (by inference from later periods) some livestock (sheep and cattle) and slaves.

What did Palestine import from

Egypt? Most of the Egyptian vessels found in Palestine are not suited to serve as containers, and the few Egyptian jars that have been found were probably brought by the Egyptian merchants and officials living in Palestine for their own use. It would appear that Egypt did not grow crops that were in demand in Palestine. Ancient lands were for the most part economically self-sufficient, except in metals, and most of the trade was intended to supply the demands of the governing classes—kings, ministers, high officials, priests. The imports required by the higher classes of Palestine, which were limited in number and in means, were few, consisting mainly of luxury items such as Egyptian stone vessels of alabaster or granite (for example, those of the Ai temple treasures) or jewelry made of gold, silver, and semiprecious stones, which was presumably stolen over the years or melted down and recast, leaving no trace in the archaeological record. Invisible imports, which may have comprised the greater part of the import trade, could have included exotic items from Africa, like those echoed in the tales of the trade with Ophir and the visit of the Queen of Sheba—spices, monkeys, parrots, animal hides, ostrich feathers, and the like. None of course have survived.

Signs of a decline in relations between Egypt and Palestine are observable in the course of the Early Bronze Age II. Canaanite vessels in Egypt occur for the most part in First Dynasty contexts and are rare in Second Dynasty ones. It is not known what caused this decline, but by the end of the Early Bronze Age II the process had run its course, and the network of trade relations between Egypt and Palestine had utterly collapsed.

One of the probable causes of the disruption of relations was the

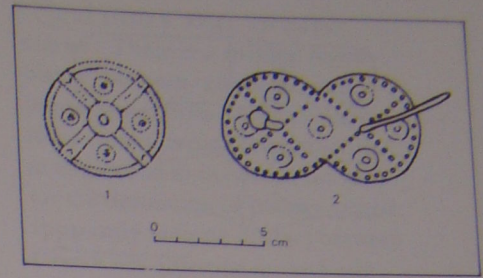


Fig. 4.30. Gold disks from Kinneret (1) and Anatolia (2)

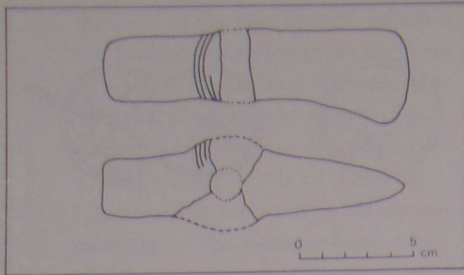


Fig. 4.31. Stone ceremonial axe from Ai

increasing demand for wood in Egypt. This demand brought merchants to the coast of Syria and Lebanon, where they found both wood in quantity and the great port of Byblos. The wood, the port, and perhaps also the rise of a central authority in Syria—the kingdom of Ebla, which provided stability and security—may have all combined to make the region attractive to Egypt. Once Egypt's relations with Syria-Lebanon were established, it began importing from that country all those agricultural products that had previously been imported from Palestine, a shift attested to by the vessels in which the goods were shipped, quantities of which have been found in Egypt in Old Kingdom assemblages. Despite the resemblance of the vessels to metallic-ware jars of Palestine, their more northerly origin is noticeable.

As trade with Egypt had been limited, its interruption did not have a particularly harsh effect on the economy of Palestine, though it may have been a decisive factor in the decline of towns such as Arad and Tel Erani and in the abandonment of the miners' settlements in southern Sinai and the stations on the North Sinai caravan route. In most of the towns of Palestine, however, the Early Bronze Age III, characterized by a complete absence of relations with Egypt, was a period of prosperity.

The foreign relations of Palestine were now directed northward. This was not a novelty; it is possible that northern immigrants in the Early Bronze Age I brought with them new ideas and objects, and there were relations in the realm of glyptic between Syria-Lebanon and Palestine. In broad terms, though the bulk of Palestine's economic contacts were with Egypt as the main market for its produce, the source of spiritual-cultural inspiration remained always in the north. There is

a marked correlation in the ceramic assemblages of Palestine and the north, true both of the common wares and of the three families, Abydos ware, metallic ware, and Beth Yerah ware.

Metallurgy provided a further impulse for relations with the north. The origin of at least some of the copper used in the tools and weapons of Palestine lay in Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Armenia. There is also a family resemblance among the tools found in Palestine and in those regions, best evidenced in the crescent axe, which has close parallels in Lebanon and Asia Minor.

It seems as if these longstanding relations with the north were intensified in the course of the Early Bronze Age III and spanned ever greater distances. Apart from the pottery and metal artifacts just mentioned, there are six object assemblages of clear northern origin, all of the Palestinian Early Bronze Age III:

**A GOLD PLAQUE.** The finest third-millennium gold object so far found in Palestine comes from a burial cave near Kinneret, belonging apparently to the settlement at Beth Yerah. The plaque is made in a technique identical to that used in creating gold objects of the same period found in Asia Minor, such as the brooches from the royal tombs at Alaca Hüyük. This resemblance, as well as mounting evidence that Anatolia was at this time an exporter of gold, strongly suggests that the gold plaque found in Palestine was imported from Asia Minor.

**CEREMONIAL AXES.** Two axes made of greenish stone were discovered in the Ai temple. As the stone is foreign to Palestine and as great numbers of similar axes have been discovered in Asia Minor, there can be no doubt that that country is

the source of the axes found in Palestine.

**IVORY BULLS' HEADS.** This group has been mentioned in the preceding section, "Art and Cult," and the possibility of its foreign, perhaps Mesopotamian, inspiration has been noted. In contrast to the gold plaque and the ceremonial axes, which were physically imported, these objects suggest the importation of a concept.

**MODELS OF CULT BEDS.** The same process is suggested by a group of small model beds made of fired clay, which seem to have had a cultic purpose. Such objects have been found at Ai, Beth Yerah, and elsewhere. It is not likely that they themselves were imported, but the

discovery of similar objects in North Syria and Mesopotamia seems to indicate those regions as the source of the concept.

**CARVED BONE HANDLES.** At some sites, among them Ai, Jericho, and Beth Yerah, bone handles with incised decoration were discovered. Their function is not known. Identical handles have been found in Syria, Asia Minor, and the Greek Islands. The distribution of this class of finds over so wide an area, the same area through which objects such as the axes and the gold plaque passed, is of great interest. If these carved handles were not physically imported, the inspiration for their production must be sought somewhere in Asia Minor or the Aegean.

**CYLINDER SEAL IMPRESSIONS.** There is a striking resemblance between geometric seal impressions from Palestine and those from Greece. The similarities in motifs and in the use of the seals for the decoration of pottery vessels apparently indicate contact between Greece and Palestine in the Early Bronze Age III, as do other finds, such as the gold plaque, the ceremonial axes, and the bone handles.

The relations with Syria and, through Syria, with more northerly regions characterize the international relations of Palestine in the Early Bronze Age III. However, even when actual imports are identified (the gold plaque or ceremonial axes), it cannot be determined whether an import trade existed or

Fig. 4.32. Ivory bull's head from Jericho



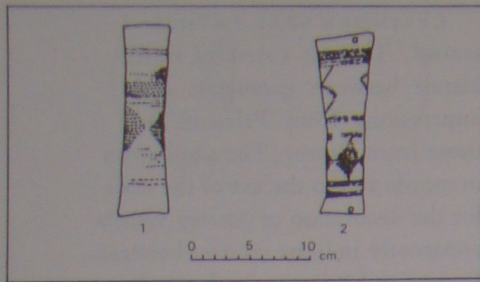


Fig. 4.33. Decorated bone handles from Jericho and Ai

whether all or most of the objects represent contacts of a different sort—the exchange of gifts, personal property of foreigners in Palestine, or the like. If actual trade relations did exist, we do not know what it was that Palestine exported. If it was agricultural produce, it was not of the sort shipped in pottery containers, as vessels of Palestinian origin have not been found in the north; we must therefore assume it was invisible exports, such as textiles or food products shipped in sacks or skins.

#### CHRONOLOGY

The date of the beginning of the Early Bronze Age II is closely linked to that of Narmer, the first king of the First Dynasty. Abydos ware, characteristic of the Early Bronze Age II, appears in Egyptian tombs that date, at the earliest, to the reign of Djer, the third king of the First Dynasty. The year 3000 has here been taken as the approximate date of Narmer's accession; Djer and the appearance of Abydos ware in Egypt must therefore be dated about 2950-2900 B.C.E. The importance of Arad for the chronology of the Early Bronze Age I-II must here be reaffirmed: the vessel bearing the incised serekh of Narmer appears in stratum IV, dated on ceramic grounds to Early Bronze Age I; Abydos ware appears in stratum III at Arad. The table below sums up this Palestine-Egypt synchronism.

The disruption of contacts between Palestine and Egypt during the Early Bronze Age II makes the chronology of the end of this period and of the Early Bronze Age III difficult to establish. At this stage the Egyptian synchronisms are still the most reliable data points in Early Bronze Age chronology. Many Egyptian objects bearing names of Old Kingdom rulers of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties have been found at Byblos (no Third Dynasty objects appear there, however); unfortunately, most of these were not found in context, nor has a comparative study of the ceramic assemblages of Byblos and Palestine yet been performed. Despite these difficulties, there are sufficient grounds to ascribe stratum III at Byblos to the Early Bronze Age II, and strata IV-V (and perhaps part of stratum VI) to the Early Bronze Age III. This synchronism is of the greatest importance, as there is much in common between this rich site and the assemblages of Palestine.

Albright proposed a three-part division of the Early Bronze Age III based on the presence of Beth Yerah ware: a phase preceding its introduction, a phase in which this ware flourishes, and a post Beth Yerah ware phase. More recent research suggests that the phase preceding the appearance of Beth Yerah ware cannot be substantiated, whereas the phase following the disappearance of this ware should probably not be included in Early Bronze Age III.

The date of the beginning of

	Palestine	Egypt
<i>Early Bronze Age I</i>	Arad IV; Narmer <i>serekh</i> No Abydos ware.	Narmer founds Dynasty I No Abydos ware.
<i>Early Bronze Age II</i>	Arad III; Abydos ware first appears.	Reign of Djer; Abydos ware first appears