

**REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTEXT OF A LATE DYNASTY 0  
EGYPTIAN COLONY IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT:  
INTERPRETING SOME EVIDENCE OF NILOTIC MATERIAL  
CULTURE AT SELECT SITES IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT  
(CA. 3150 BCE – CA. 2950 BCE)**

ELIOT BRAUN  
*Israel*

**THE BACKGROUND**

Since the discovery of the first Egyptian *serekhs* of Narmer at Tel Erani (YEIVIN 1960), scholars have become aware of a significant degree of Nilotic imports and Egyptian-influenced objects, particularly pottery in the Early Bronze Age, primarily in the region of the Gaza Strip and south-central Israel (Fig. 1). While early works were somewhat less than specific as to the time span when the mass of Egyptian-related material appeared in the archaeological record, more recent research (YEKUTIELI 1991; 2001; BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998) has shown the phenomenon to be associated with late phases of Early Bronze Age I (REGEV *et al.* 2012: 526), but mainly at select sites within a limited geographical region.

The appearance and quantification of Egyptian-related artifacts in the Early Bronze Age, as presently understood from the archaeological record, has suggested a four-tiered hierarchy (BRAUN 2004: 512-514) of Egyptian associations. Tier 1 sites are defined as those likely to have primarily been peopled by Egyptians<sup>1</sup>, while sites defined as Tiers 2-4, have yielded, respectively and in descending order, significantly less, very little, or no evidence of Egyptian material culture. All this intensified activity appears, on the basis of a number of *serekhs* found at sites in the southern Levant, to date to the reigns of Ka and Narmer (VAN DEN BRINK & BRAUN 2002), sometime at the end of the fourth millennium (BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998; DEE *et al.* 2013) or late Dynasty 0 to early Dynasty 1<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This term (which may probably be characterized as “ethnic”), refers to immigrants from the Nile Valley and its Delta in Egypt, who brought with them a material culture quite distinctive and distinct from that associated with contemporary inhabitants of the southern Levant.

<sup>2</sup> These reigns are considered by different scholars to be either the next to last (Ka) and last reign (Narmer) of Dynasty 0, or alternately the last reign of Dynasty 0 and the first of Dynasty 1.

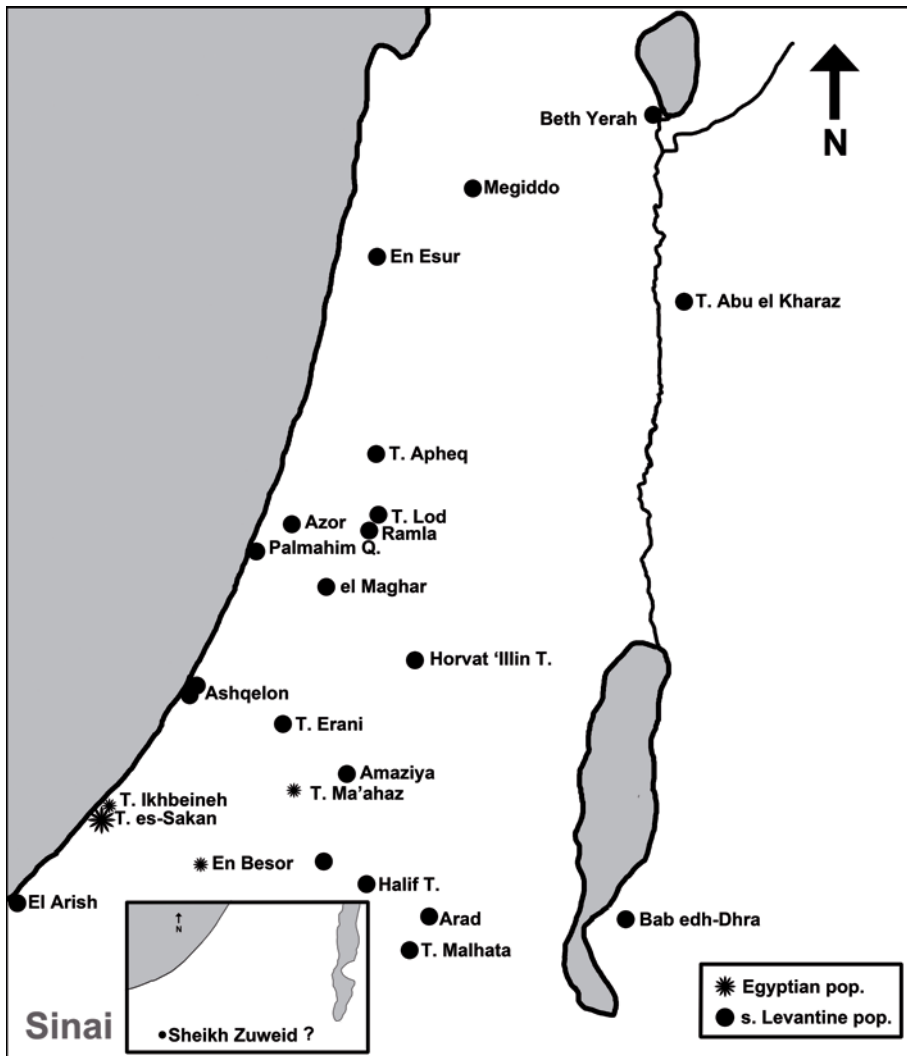


Figure 1. Map of the southern region of the Southern Levant with principal Early Bronze Age I sites cited in the text; most with Egyptian associations. Tier 1 sites with primarily Egyptian populations are marked with an asterisk. Tier 2 sites include Tel Erani, the Halif Terrace and Tel Lod. Tier 3 sites are Amaziya, Horvat 'Illin Tahtit, Arad, Small Tel Malhata, el Maghar, Azor and possibly part of the Afridar complex in the Ashqelon Littoral cluster of late Prehistoric sites. Tier 4 sites are represented by Bab edh Dhra, Tel Apheq, En Esur, Megiddo, Tell abu el Kharaz and Bet Yerah.

### EGYPTIAN IMPORTS

For purposes of the present discussion I believe that it is vitally important to distinguish between true Egyptian imports, *i.e.* objects transported from the Nile Valley and “Egyptianized” objects, *i.e.* artifacts of recognizably Egyptian mien, but which were fashioned locally

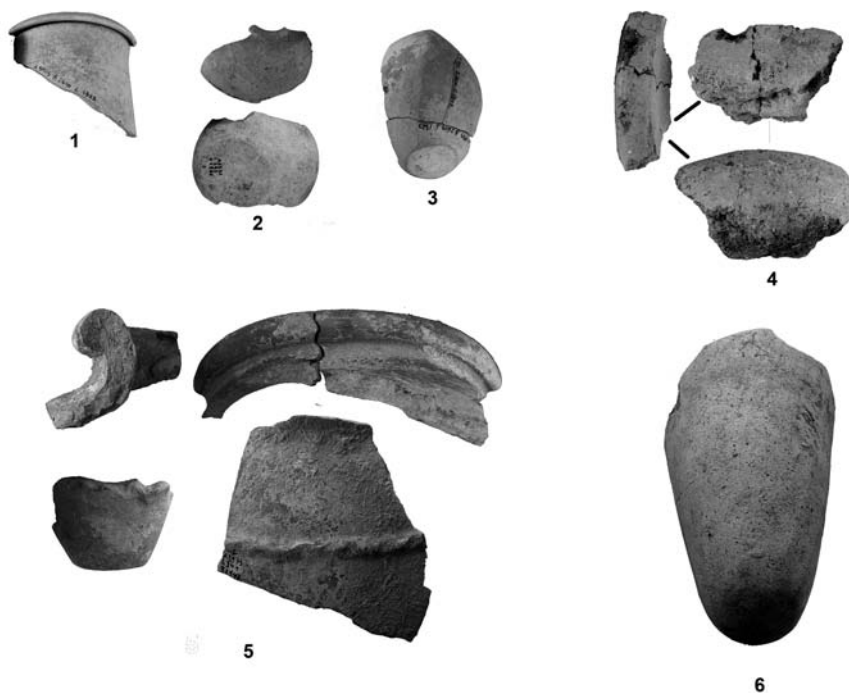


Figure 2. Representative collection of Egyptian and Egyptianized pottery from Amaziya, a Tier 3 site: 1. Cylinder vessel fragment; 2. Fragments of small bottles; 3. Fragment of lentoid bottle; 4. Fragment of baking tray; 5. Fragments of wine jars; 6. Base of small jar.

of indigenous materials (BRAUN *in press*). That distinction is made because of logistics involved in transporting objects, in particular fragile ceramic vessels (and their contents) from the Nile Valley (Fig. 2) over long distances to sites in the southern Levant in the context of the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. Unfortunately, often definitive identifications of the Egyptian origin of such objects are impossible without the help of pure scientifically-based criteria, such as petrographic studies, which, because they are labor intensive and somewhat costly, may only be done on a limited scale.

#### THE NATURE OF EGYPTIAN IMPORTS

Egyptian imports include prestige items such as specific types of fine ware ceramic bottles and cylinder vessels, stone palettes, a single, exquisitely fashioned ripple-flaked knife and a cylinder seal. Several of these were associated with tombs (*e.g.* BEN-TOR 1975) but numerous additional examples of similar ceramic containers as well as “wine jars” and lentoid-shaped bottles have been found in settlement contexts at Tel Erani (BRANDL 1989: fig. 9), En Besor (GOPHNA 1990: fig. 8:16-17) and Amaziya (MILEVSKI *et al.* 2012: fig. 67:3).

Possibly some calcite mace heads, most of which are probably to be considered prestige objects (BRAUN 2011a) were also Egyptian in origin. Additional imported objects include a small quantity of imported Egyptian flint objects, knives and arrowheads.

### EGYPTIANIZED OBJECTS

In addition, there are vessels of Egyptian morphology, generally fashioned of extremely coarse fabrics with significant quantities of vegetal inclusions, some of which may have been imported, although most are thought to have been fashioned locally (generally from loessy clays). Such items as baking trays, (aka “bread molds”), “lotus bowls” and granary jars, mostly of extremely coarse fabrics (“rough ware”), found at some locales in great quantities, suggest Nilotic foodways were associated with some elements of the late EB I population in the southern Levant. Egyptian style bullae, clearly administrative paraphernalia, made locally (SCHULMAN 1976; 1980; 1992; LEVY *et al.* 1997) and obviously related to goods, presumably foodstuffs, were apparently used by Nilotic peoples sojourning in the southern Levant.

The sum total of documented pre-dynastic and proto-dynastic, Egyptian-associated objects found in the southern Levant to date is truly impressive, with the overwhelming bulk of them dated to late phases of Early Bronze Age I (ca. 3100-3000 BCE; REGEV *et al.* 2012)<sup>3</sup>. They are correlated, based on parallels from their homeland and *serekhs* found in the southern Levant (Fig. 3), with the reigns of Ka and Narmer (VAN DEN BRINK & BRAUN 2002; DEE *et al.* 2013).

### AN EGYPTIAN COLONY IN A LATE 4<sup>TH</sup> MILLENNIUM CONTEXT

When the mass of Egyptian and Egyptianized finds in late Early Bronze Age I contexts became known, scholars were wont to interpret them as evidence of permanent settlements of Nilotic peoples in the southern Levant, designated as a “colony”. Until the discovery of Tell es-Sakan (see below), I (BRAUN 2002) was somewhat dubious of that characterization, and thought such occupation might have been confined to enclaves of Nilotic peoples within primarily south Levantine population centers. I now fully accept the existence of an Egyptian colony independent of south Levantine communities, albeit with reservations concerning its scope (see below).

Scholars’ characterizations tended to “paint pictures” of that colony with very broad brushes and, I believe, to exaggerate the degree and nature of the Egyptian colonial episode. Their interpretations also purportedly indicated quite distinct territorial limits for the colony and even some rather precise descriptions of its socio-political and military activities. Following is a brief review of the more detailed characterizations available in the literature, with my most recent interpretations of available evidence.

<sup>3</sup> Mass importation of Egyptian objects and the appearance of Egyptianized objects seem to begin sometime after the Erani C Phase (BRAUN 2011a). Egyptian involvement in the southern Levant is emphasized by the appearance of two *serekhs* found on local south Levantine storage jars with Egyptian morphological features (BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998). Rare examples of Egyptian imports during the Erani C Phase are fragments of jars with wavy line decoration of a type found in Tomb U-j at Abydos, Ashqelon, Barnea (GOPHNA 1974: fig 15:3,4; GOLANI *this volume*).

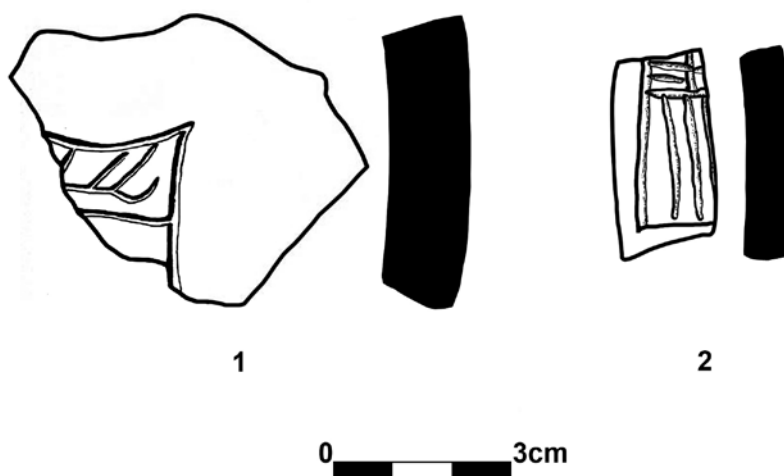


Figure 3. Renderings of two fragmentary *serekhs* from the Early Bronze I site of Tel Lod:  
1. *Serekh* with symbol of Ka; 2. *Serekh* with symbol of Narmer.

#### TIER 1 SITES WITH PRIMARILY EGYPTIAN-ASSOCIATED MATERIAL CULTURE

Three, or possibly four sites in the southern Levant, all in the central, southwest fertile zone (the Mediterranean Littoral and the northern extremity of the Negev<sup>4</sup>) seem to have been populated by immigrants from Egypt's Nile Valley. That hypothesis is extrapolated from the evidence of material culture at a handful of sites, which seems to have been predominantly Egyptian-associated, with little evidence of local south Levantine material culture. One site seems to have been central to the Egyptian colonial enterprise, while two or possibly three others were apparently its satellites. There may have also been a fifth site associated with the Egyptian colony, but information on it is equivocal (see below: 5).

1. *Tell es-Sakan*: The discovery of the early levels of Tell es-Sakan (DE MIROSCHEDJI & SADEQ 2005) with their wealth of Egyptian and Egyptianized material culture that apparently predominated at the site in four of the earliest strata, offers great credence to the idea of a permanent Egyptian community planted in the southern Levant. Strategically placed adjacent to possible anchorages on the Mediterranean coast and not far from the border of the arid, northern Sinai land route (known in historical times as the Way[s] of Horus), Tell es-Sakan was an ideal location for a south Levantine colonial enterprise. The relative size of that occupation, as well as its associated massive fortifications, proclaim it the central site of Egyptian activity in the southern Levant in that time span.

<sup>4</sup> This region of the Negev is on the fertile, generally well-watered verge of a semi-arid zone and should not be confused by some scholars' use of the term "Negev Desert" for the entire region bearing that name.

2. *En Besor*: This diminutive site has been excavated virtually in its entirety. Stratum III, dating to late EB I, has yielded a wealth of Egyptian and Egyptianized material culture<sup>5</sup> (GOPHNA 1995), including scores of bullae fragments. The excavator described the site with its single structure as a small staging post for transference of commodities; a scenario entirely in sync with the evidence. In any hierarchy, Tell es-Sakan would have been the likely administrative center in control of this small site's activities.
3. *Tel Ma'abaz*: Unfortunately, little is known of the site of Tel Ma'ahaz. Based on extremely limited fieldwork, AMIRAN (1977; AMIRAN & VAN DEN BRINK 2001) suggested the occupation there was in the nature of a campsite. However, the wealth of looted ceramics (BEIT ARIEH & GOPHNA 1999) from the site argues for a more sedentary type of settlement as well as suggesting it too was largely, if not exclusively, populated by Egyptians.
4. *Taur Ikbbeineh*: This site, due to its very close proximity to Tell es-Sakan, seems a likely candidate for a contemporary Egyptian settlement, but unfortunately it too has been only sounded in a very minute area and so little of it is known. It is likely it was some sort of satellite to the larger community occupying the fortified site nearby.
5. *Locale of Sheikh Zuweid, Northern Sinai?* (Fig 1: inset): Five intact Egyptian storage jars (VAN DEN BRINK *pers. comm.*), four of which are published (GOPHNA 1970; VAN DEN BRINK & GOPHNA 2004), purportedly from a locale near Sheikh Zuweid on the Wady el-Arish (located east of el-Arish where they were purchased) in northern Sinai, may, if indeed such a site existed and these vessels derive from it, indicate additional Egyptian activity at the very border of the southern Levant. As these objects were looted in modern times, and acquired on the antiquities market, there is no surety of such an archaeological provenience. If such an Egyptian settlement actually existed there, then that site might have been associated with activity in more eastern regions, perhaps as a way-station on the way to copper sources at Timna and Feinan.<sup>6</sup>

#### SITES WITH PRIMARILY SOUTH LEVANTINE MATERIAL CULTURE (TIERS 2-4)

Other sites that have yielded significant quantities of Egyptian-associated artifacts seem to have material culture that is predominantly south Levantine (*i.e.* Tier 2 type sites). Tel Erani is the largest of these, and excavation of the late EB I occupation there has yielded significant quantities of Egyptian-associated artifacts as well as much material of local traditions as is known from available literature (YEIVIN 1961; BRANDL 1989; ANDELKOVIĆ 1995: figs. 14-17). Unfortunately, there are no definitive excavation reports available and at present it is difficult to characterize the true nature of the Egyptian complement at the site beyond noting that Egyptian-associated material is abundant in

<sup>5</sup> In addition to published materials there is a wealth of curated objects at the Israel Antiquities Authority's storage facility at Beth Shemesh, making a very sizable Egyptian and Egyptianized complement.

<sup>6</sup> A suggestion by E.C.M. VAN DEN BRINK that these jars, all intact, were looted from a tomb or tombs and hence not from a site of constant human activity, seems unlikely, as one would not expect a mortuary-related locale to be greatly distant from a settlement.

late Early Bronze Age I levels (BRAUN 2011b). Renewed excavations there by the Institute of Archaeology of Jagiellonian University, Krakow and Ben Gurion University of the Negev will hopefully be able to offer some more detailed information on the Egyptian episode at the site.

Tier 2 type sites are those that have yielded sufficient quantities of Egyptian-associated artifacts to suggest they may have, in addition to their local inhabitants, harbored Nilotic populations as either frequent visitors or long-term residents. That could also explain the presence of Egyptian baking bowls at some sites, which may be viewed as limited evidence for the practice of non-local foodways. By contrast, Tier 3 sites are those that have yielded only minute quantities of Egyptian-associated material culture, while Tier 4 sites are devoid of any such objects.

### SCHOLARS' CHARACTERIZATIONS OF AN EGYPTIAN COLONY

N. PORAT (1986; 1989; 1992), who did the first scientifically based studies on identifying imported Egyptian pottery, used her results to claim that a large portion of the southern Mediterranean Littoral of the Levant, up to the area of Tel Aviv (including the Gaza Strip and a large region in southern Israel), was administratively an integral part of an Egyptian Dynasty 0 polity.<sup>7</sup> In PORAT'S paradigm Egyptianized bullae from 'En Besor (SCHULMAN 1976; 1980; 1992) were understood as evidence of Egyptian administration and political hegemony.

B. BRANDL'S (1992) intensive research into Egyptian and Egyptianized objects, stemming from his work on the Egyptian-associated complement of material culture from Tel Erani (BRANDL 1989), offered the first major overview of the mass of material derived from the archaeological record on which the colonial model was based. Based on those observations he suggested the presence of an Egyptian colony within a clearly defined region, primarily in the southwestern region of the southern Levant.

The weakness of BRANDL'S paradigm is in its failure to consider more than a single explanation for the presence of Egyptian associated material culture. His model is primarily based on a single problematic assumption, that the presence of Egyptian and Egyptianized objects, in any quantity at sites in some relative proximity, are evidence for Egyptian political hegemony. Thus, he viewed a map showing the dispersion of such evidence at sites in the southwest region and drew a border of a purported colony around them (BRANDL 1992: 444, map) from Rafiah to the Yarqon River.

His model not only failed to take into account quantitative analyses of Egyptian versus local artifacts, but it also ignored the possibility of Egyptianizing objects being other than the products of Nilotic immigrants. The possibilities of imitations made by, and possibly even

<sup>7</sup> This interpretation of the archaeological evidence suggests a specific region in the southern Levant had an Egyptian status analogous to that of a pre-independent, French Algeria, which despite its physical separation from European France, was considered to be a *department* of that country on a par with its continental administrative regions. There is, of course, no historical evidence to indicate such a relationship, especially in a relatively early, formative period of the Egyptian state.

for locals, and the development of hybrid types over time, all of which drawn inspiration from Egyptian prototypes, but were not directly associated with Egyptians (BRAUN 2011c; *in press*), was not considered. The idea of local polities within the same region independent of an Egyptian colony was not considered, although with three exceptions all the sites within the area allotted by Brandl to his colony yielded primarily local, south Levantine material culture.

B. ANDELKOVIĆ'S (1995) Egyptian colonial paradigm closely followed BRANDL'S interpretation but further embroidered it. Although the former's work admirably documented virtually every known find of Egyptian association to that time, it did not consider that significant regions of the purported colony were occupied by large aggregations of indigenous peoples clearly identified from the overwhelming mass of associated (*i.e.*, late southern EB I) local material culture. ANDELKOVIĆ'S (2012: 70) more recent work suffers from a severe "Egyptocentric" bias; one that supposes the southern Levant to have been suffering from a "cultural, political and social gap" with Egyptians clearly importing a "superior" and more sophisticated culture. Accordingly, his work greatly exaggerates the importance of Egyptian-related artifacts in south Levantine contexts.

In ANDELKOVIĆ'S paradigms, south Levantines are assumed to have lived in "small" villages and been: "not particularly wealthy native 'customers' (ANDELKOVIĆ 2012: 794). This pejorative approach, in discussing an economic model of interaction, allowed ANDELKOVIĆ to feel justified in suggesting that only a small military complement would have been needed to maintain control over a large region of the southern Levant. In that same work he once again meticulously enumerated, albeit not always with accuracy<sup>8</sup>, Egyptian-associated finds, offering them as evidence of Egyptian social control, even when they are only a handful of newly discovered objects at far-flung sites; some well outside the obvious Egyptian sphere of activity.

ANDELKOVIĆ'S overall colonial paradigm, according to whichever of the model's he suggests might depict it, is based on an inaccurate evaluation of south Levantine society at the end of Early Bronze Age I. Suffice it to note here that his descriptions of small, impoverished villages does not do justice to centuries of occupation and development during the Early Bronze Age I and the reality of it during the time span of the Egyptian colonial episode. It does not take into account the fortified sites of Tel Aphek (YADIN & KOCHAVI 2000) and Arad (BRAUN 2011b), a cluster of large settlements at Ashqelon (BRAUN & GOPHNA 2004; GOLANI 1997; 2004; 2008; GOLANI & NAGAR 2011), large villages at Palmahim Quarry (BRAUN 2000), Lod (VAN DEN BRINK & BRAUN 2002), Pto<sup>9</sup> (MILEVSKI & BAUMGARTEN 2008), Ashqelon (GOLANI & NAGAR 2011) and a large-scale occupation at Tel Erani that could possibly have been urban-like in character (MILEVSKI *et al.* 2012).

<sup>8</sup> His (ANDELKOVIĆ 2012: 791) characterization of the Egyptian-associated assemblage of Lod as "less than 10% greatly inflates the quantity of that material. While that material represents a significant complement in and of itself, it should be noted that in relative terms of the entire assemblage of contemporary objects, it would have to be cited as some fraction of 1%. Thus, the material culture of EB I Lod was overwhelmingly local in nature, albeit with a significant Egyptian element.

<sup>9</sup> This site, ca. 2.5km directly east of Tel Erani, and excavated over a vast area, yielded several strata of the Erani C horizon, but only a single Egyptian object, a fragment of a stone vessel (I. MILEVSKI *pers. comm.*).



Neither does it take into account evidence from regions farther to the north.<sup>10</sup> In addition, something of a less than depressed economic status of the south Levantine inhabitants of the region may be discerned from imports into Egypt found in the royal Tombs U-j and U-k at Abydos (HARTUNG 1993; 1998; 2001), dating prior to the establishment of a colony, as well as the wealth of pottery and other prestige (some Egyptian imports) objects known from numerous Early Bronze I tombs throughout the southern Levant.

C. DE MIROSCHEJJI'S & SADEQ'S (2005) paradigm offers some very specific boundaries for what they consider to have been an Egyptian colony. Their map (*ibid.*: fig. 19.10) indicates a "core" area of Egyptian permanent installation (*i.e.*, a physical extension of "Egypt" into the southern Levant) similar to Porat's characterization, as well as a "colonial" area farther north up to the Yarqon River, and suggestions of "seasonal" activity beyond. The evidence for this last remains to be enumerated, but presumably considers small quantities of Egyptian imports at Assawir and Megiddo (Fig. 1).

D. YEKUTIELI (2004) refined DE MIROSCHEJJI'S and SADEQ'S idea of a core area and suggested the existence of a "contact zone" where Egyptians and south Levantines met. He further argued, on the basis of the fortified occupation at Tell es-Sakan, for a highly developed, even urbanized Egyptian polity operating in the southern Levant under the auspices of the Egyptian State.

Those scholars' interpretations of the archaeological record, either implicitly (*e.g.* BRANDL) or explicitly (ANDELKOVIĆ, DE MIROSCHEJJI & SADEQ, and YEKUTIELI) hypothesize some form of Egyptian settlements and political hegemony over large tracts of the Mediterranean Littoral and the piedmont (Shephela) to the east. I have significant reservations concerning those scholars' hypotheses, based on my understanding of the archaeological record, especially on consideration of the logistics involved in establishment of a colony of types suggested by them.

### INTERPRETING THE EVIDENCE

Nearly nine decades of excavation and survey have yielded abundant evidence for scores of late Early Bronze Age I sites contemporary with the Egyptian colony (BRAUN 2011a). They include large and medium-sized agglomerations of populations with stratified social systems that may be termed urbanized or urban-like (BRAUN 2011c; 2013: Chapter 7). Not a few of those settlements are fortified and of those, most are in more northerly regions, well away from the sphere of Egyptian activity and influence. Thus, the Egyptian colony was not planted in an unpopulated wilderness, rather it was located in a region somewhat densely populated by peoples who inhabited large and thriving communities, and who had inherited several millennia of architectural traditions (including mudbrick construction that did not seem to arrive in Egypt until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium). They represent continuity in occupation and development of sophisticated social organization that may be termed urban-like. By late Early Bronze I south Levantines had created monumental

<sup>10</sup> While the merits of this argument may be easily dismissed in light of the sophisticated late EB I south Levantine occupations at Megiddo (BRAUN *in press*; especially Chapters 5 and 7) and Bet Yerah (GREENBERG *et al.* 2006), such a discussion lies beyond the scope of this paper.

architecture in free-standing buildings, such as the Megiddo J2-J4 temples (FINKELSTEIN *et al.* 2006), and massive fortification systems such as those at Tel Apheq, Bet Yerah (GETZOV 2006) and Jericho (HOLLAND 1986; PARR 2000).

Select communities had large concentrations of populations with highly developed, complex social systems. One of those appears to have been Tel Erani, which if it may be shown to have attained such status in the Erani C phase (BRAUN & VAN DEN BRINK 1998; BRAUN 2012; MILEVSKI *et al.* 2012), would indicate such developments likely occurred prior to major Egyptian activity in the region. If we may extrapolate from knowledge of the massive quality of fortifications at some sites, then we suggest late EB I was a politically unstable time, which may have witnessed some form of internecine warfare that demanded such protection. That is the context in which the Egyptian colony was planted in the southern Levant.

#### *Tell es-Sakan – An Engima*

By location and size Tell es-Sakan appears to be the central site in Egypt's earliest attempt at foreign colonization. As such it would also appear to be the key to understanding the nature of Egyptian colonization. According to the excavators there is an overwhelming quantity of Egyptian-associated objects of material culture representing an ethnically Egyptian population. After an initial period of settlement, in its second phase of activity the site was fortified by a sizable mudbrick wall which, in two succeeding strata, was added onto by accretions with the possible association of a tower or bastion.

Was that massive, mudbrick construction, built up over time (during three occupation strata) a response to the bellicosity of south Levantines? Or was it an Egyptian initiative prompted by a desire to imitate local traditions in order to create the perception of power? The evidence strongly suggests that whatever the reason, the idea was borrowed from not so poor indigenous peoples, especially as this fortified site is the earliest evidence in the presently known archaeological records of the Nile Valley and the southern Levant, for “Egyptian” fortifications.

Judging from the size of this massive structure, it must have taken considerable manpower to create. That observation then brings into question the logistics of its construction and the size of the Egyptian ethnic community at the site? Who actually designed the fortifications, made the bricks and laid them in place. Were there enough Egyptians to supply necessary manpower or were locals involved in the construction of the fortifications? Suffice it to note here, that more than one scenario can be used to explain the information available.<sup>11</sup>

How can we understand the role of Tell es-Sakan within its greater, regional context? It is clearly the center for administration of Egyptian colonial activity, with En Besor and probably Tel Ma'ahaz and Taur Ikhbeineh performing supportive functions, some of which are likely related to contacts with south Levantine communities (MILEVSKI *et al.* 2012). Possibly sites such as Lod and Tel Erani had Egyptians in constant contact or even residing within primarily south Levantine populations. However, in the absence

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the logistics involved see BRAUN *in press*.

of historical documents, we may only surmise the nature of the relationships between these Nilotic immigrants and indigenous peoples. Whether or not south Levantines might have come under the sway or rule of an Egyptian colonial polity probably can never be discerned solely from the archaeological record of mute artifacts. It is valid to offer such scenarios, but I feel that for them to be seriously considered, they require global overviews that especially take into account the state of social and political developments of the indigenous peoples of the southern Levant. Accordingly, such models and scenarios when suggested, should be couched in conditional terms and not, as some scholars' have done, as historical realities.

#### *Understanding the Meaning of Egyptian – Associated Artifacts*

At sites where Egyptian and Egyptianized artifacts represent the bulk of material culture it seems clear their populations were primarily immigrants (Fig. 1). However, at sites where such artifacts have been found in much lesser proportions to objects of material culture of local traditions, the presence of Egyptian and Egyptianized artifacts should be understood as evidence of trade (direct or down-the-line) or some alternate mechanism resulting in transfer of exotic artifacts to local communities. Scenarios apart from trade, such as gifting associated with social rituals (*e.g.* dowries, bride prices, visiting, votive offerings, bribery, etc.) and looting, may as well explain the presence of such exotic artifacts at sites peopled primarily or solely by south Levantines. Thus, the presence of such objects does not, then, *ipso facto*, signify definitive evidence of direct rule or even direct contacts with an Egyptian polity.

#### **THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT FOR A COLONY IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT**

Intrinsic to understanding Egyptian ability to establish a colony in the late 4<sup>th</sup> millennium is comprehension of the nature of social organization in the contemporary Nile Valley. Although the late Dynasty 0 and early Dynasty 1 kings' tombs offer glimpses into developments overtaken Egyptian society, it is only more recent work at such sites as Tell el-Farkha in the Nile Delta (CHŁODNICKI *this volume*; CZARNOWICZ *this volume*), where the pulse of development of an Egyptian polity may be measured by evidence for increases in communal social institutions in the archaeological record (*e.g.* CIAŁOWICZ 2004; BUCHEZ & MIDANT-REYNES 2007; CHŁODNICKI & CIAŁOWICZ 2008; KÖHLER 2008).

What appears to be a considerably greater degree of advancement in social organization in the Delta than previously understood, helps in understanding the ability of an Egyptian polity to mount such a considerable colonizing effort in a distant region, PORAT'S, DE MIROSCHEJJI'S & SADEQ'S, and ANDELKOVIĆ'S interpretations aside. The Delta (and particularly the major site of Tell el-Farkha) is strategically placed to allow relatively easy access to the southern Levant from the Nile Valley, either by the land route of northern Sinai or by sea along the coast. As noted above, Tell es-Sakan would have been a convenient starting point for such a foreign adventure. If the four strata at Tell es-Sakan attributed to this time span are any indication of the duration of this colonial enterprise, then it is likely to have lasted for several generations.

### WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EGYPTIAN COLONY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LATE 4<sup>TH</sup> MILLENNIUM?

In the absence of historical records, with reliance solely on the archaeological record, the degree to, and manner in which the Egyptian colony was integrated into the economic and social life of the southern Levant, cannot be definitively understood. The evidence is too sparse for such characterizations, especially as it is based solely on artifacts serendipitously unearthed in partial excavations of sites. How may we understand the presence of such objects? Do 20 Egyptian associated ceramic vessels at Amaziya, including fragments of baking trays amongst many hundreds of local vessels imply Egyptians lived there? Is a pot or other type of artifact sufficient evidence to indicate definitively identify political hegemony? In that context, can we unconditionally accept ANDELKOVIĆ's militaristic scenario of a small Egyptian force dominating a large region populated by so many south Levantines, especially in light of the number of contemporary, south Levantine fortified sites? Indeed, beyond that scholar's suggestion, is there any real evidence for such a political reality?

DE MIROSCHEJJI'S and SADEQ'S map of an Egyptian colony shows an elongated tract of "permanent Egyptian installation" contiguous with the Nile Delta thrust into the southern region of the southern Levant. In my opinion that depiction offers a somewhat misleading and greatly aggrandized impression as to the size and likely relative importance of Egyptian activity at such a distance from the Nile Valley. Neither does it, I believe, offer any convincing evidence for Egyptian rule over the portions of the southern Levant indicated on it.

While Egyptians may have maintained control over the northern Sinai land route, the large tract along the Sinai coast should not be considered as an area of "permanent installation", if by permanent, is meant sedentary occupation. The archaeological record of that region has yielded mostly evidence for campsites in the relevant period and no indication of permanent structures (OREN 1989; YEKUTIELI 1998: I-XXIII). Thus, the Sinai "extension" on DE MIROSCHEJJI'S and SADEQ'S map, a relatively barren region, was interpreted in such a way as to allow Tell es-Sakan to be considered integrally contiguous with the Nile Delta; in essence, a part of Egypt itself. In fact it is physically separated from true permanent Egyptian settlements and it is an integral part the southern Levant.

That interpretation further allowed DE MIROSCHEJJI and SADEQ to interpret a well-defined area to the north of Tell es-Sakan (including a swath of the Mediterranean Littoral and the Shephela {piedmont}) as part of an Egyptian colony. However, only one Egyptian site, Tel Ma'ahaz, is located there, while most sites are Tier 2 and 3 (Fig. 1), which have yielded evidence of predominantly south Levantine material culture. Regions to the north as far as Megiddo, and to the east as far as Jericho on that map are depicted as areas of "Egyptian seasonal expansion", all presumably on the basis of small quantities of Egyptian associated artifacts found at En Esur (YANNAI & BRAUN 2001) and Megiddo (BRAUN 2013: pl. 64).

By contrast, YEKUTIELI'S (2004) characterization of the Egyptian colony sees Tell es-Sakan as the central site, with other related sites within a 40km radius, seems more grounded in available information and less speculative as to the meaning of artifacts. He understands the episode as part of the lengthy and continuing process of Egyptian unification. I am in basic agreement with his evaluation, which suggests much greater limitations on the information derived from Egyptian and Egyptian-associated artifacts found in late EB I contexts.

### THE EGYPTIAN COLONY IN CONTEXT

The Egyptian settlements were planted within a limited region, the southwestern portion of the southern Levant) which had been previously settled by indigenous peoples at sites such as Tel Erani, Amaziya, Lachish, Ptora, Ashqelon, Taur Ikhebeineh (OREN & YEKUTIELI 1992). However, the Egyptians appear to have, at least at Tell es-Sakan, founded their settlement on virgin soil. Once founded and apparently prospering over several generations, the Egyptians may have enlarged the sphere of their activity, perhaps creating satellites and even establishing communities within south Levantine settlements.

The *raison d'être* for this colonial episode, which appears to have been royally sanctioned, if not directly instigated by the nascent Egyptian state, seems, on the basis of the archaeological record, to have been economic. Possibly Egyptians were seeking commodities to import into the Nile Valley, wine, grain, pulses, olive oil, asphalt, resins, wood, cattle and caprines, copper, and perhaps even human labor (slaves).

Unfortunately, it is impossible to ascertain the nature of relations between the Egyptians in the colony and locals at different sites, but judging by the differentiation in quantities of imported and Egyptianized artifacts, it seems likely that there may well have been relations of different degrees with local communities. Trade may have been on equal and/or unequal bases and direct, or down the line.<sup>12</sup> Other types of relations might have involved tribute or plunder, but once again the archaeological record cannot, presently, supply sufficient information to ascertain the validity of such paradigms. Hopefully further investigation will yield answers to some of the questions on what is the nature of an Egyptian colony in the southern Levant in late phases of the Early Bronze I.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to E.C.M. VAN DEN BRINK for his critical comments on an early version of this work and for providing information on the jars purportedly from Sheikh Zuweid. I also wish to express my appreciation to RAM GOPHNA, teacher and friend, who helped me to remember some details of Egyptian and Egyptianized material found in the southern Levant.

<sup>12</sup> A likely example of this type of activity is found in three Egyptian vessels in large assemblage of local pottery in an Early Bronze Age I cemetery at Ramla (AVRUTIS 2012: 116, 117, figs. 4.29-4.31).

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:****AMIRAN R.,**

1977 Excavations at Tell Ma'ahaz 1976, 1978, *Israel Museum News* 12: 63-64.

**AMIRAN R. & VAN DEN BRINK E.C.M.,**

2001 A comparative study of the Egyptian pottery from Tell Ma'ahaz, stratum I, in: S.R. WOLFF (ed.), *Studies in the Archaeology of Israel and Neighboring Lands in Memory of Douglas L. Essé*, Chicago-Atlanta: 29-58.

**ANDELKOVIĆ B.,**

1995 *The Relations Between Early Bronze Age I Canaanites and Upper Egyptians*, Belgrade.

2012 Hegemony for beginners: Egyptian activity in the Southern Levant during the second half of the fourth millennium B.C., *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology, n. s.*, vol. 7/3: 789-808.

**AVRUTIS V.W.,**

2012 *Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age I Remains at Nesher-Ramla Quarry*, Haifa.

**BEIT-ARIEH I. & GOPHNA R.,**

1999 The Egyptian Protodynastic (Late EB I) site at Tell Ma'ahaz: a reassessment, *Tel Aviv* 26/2: 191-207.

**BEN-TOR A.,**

1975 Two burial caves of the Proto-Urban period at Azor, 1971, *Qedem* 1: 1-54.

**BRANDL B.,**

1989 Observations on the Early Bronze Age strata of Tel Erani, in: P.R. DE MIROSCHEJJI (ed.), *L'urbanisation de la Palestine à l'âge du Bronze ancien: bilan et perspectives des recherches actuelles, Actes du colloque d'Emmamius (20-14 Octobre 1986)*, BAR IS 527, Oxford: 357-388.

1992 Evidence for Egyptian colonization in the southern coastal plain and lowlands of Canaan during the EB I period, in: E.C.M. VAN DEN BRINK (ed.), *The Nile Delta in Transition: 4<sup>th</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C.*, Tel Aviv: 441-477.

**BRAUN E.,**

2000 Post Mortem: a late prehistoric site at Palmahim Quarry, *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 17: 17-28.

2002 Egypt's first sojourn in Canaan, in: E.C.M. VAN DEN BRINK & T.E. LEVY (eds.), *Egypt and the Levant: Interrelations from the 4<sup>th</sup> through the Early 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BCE*, London & New York: 173-189.

2004 Egypt and the Southern Levant: shifting patterns of relationships during Dynasty 0, in: S. HENDRICKX; R.F. FRIEDMAN, K.M. CIAŁOWICZ & M. CHŁODNICKI (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins. Studies in Memory of Barbara Adams. Proceedings of the International Conference "Origin of the state. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt", Kraków, 28<sup>th</sup> August – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2002*, OLA 138, Leuven: 507-517.

- 2011a South Levantine Early Bronze Age chronological correlations with Egypt in light of the Narmer serekhs from Tel Erani and Arad: new interpretations, in: R.F. FRIEDMAN & P.N. FISKE (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins 3. Proceedings of the International Conference „Origin of the State. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt”, London, 27<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008*, OLA 205, Leuven: 975-1001.
- 2011b Of pots and towns: old and new perspectives on EB I of the Southern Levant, in: M. CHESSON (ed.), *Daily Life, Materiality, and Complexity in Early Urban Communities of the Southern Levant: Papers in Honor of Walter E. Rast and R. Thomas Schaub*, Winona Lake: 265-280.
- 2011c Early interaction between peoples of the Nile Valley and the Southern Levantin, in: E. TEETER (ed.), *Egypt before the Pyramids: The Origins of Egyptian Civilization*, Chicago: 106-122.
- 2012 On some South Levantine Early Bronze Age ceramic „wares” and styles, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 144/1:5-32.
- 2013 *Early Megiddo on the East Slope (The “Megiddo Stages”). A Report on the Early Occupation of the East Slope of Megiddo. Results of the Oriental Institute’s Excavations, 1925-1933*. Chicago.
- in press Little pot who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee?, in: B. BADER, CH.M. KNOBLAUCH & E.CH. KÖHLER (eds.), *Vienna 2. Ancient Egyptian ceramics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of Vienna 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> May, 2012*, OLA, Leuven.
- BRAUN E. & GOPHNA R.,**  
2004 Excavations at Afridar-Area G, *’Atiqot* 45: 185-242.
- BRAUN E. & VAN DEN BRINK E.C.M.,**  
1998 Some comments on the late EB I sequence of Canaan and the relative dating of Tomb U-j at Umm el Ga’ab and graves 313 and 787 from Minshat Abu Omar with imported ware: views from Egypt and Canaan, *Egypt and the Levant* 7: 71-94.
- BUCHEZ N. & MIDANT-REYNES B.,**  
2007 Le site prédynastique de Kom el-Khilgan (Delta Oriental). Données nouvelles sur le processus d’unification culturelle au quatrième millénaire, *Bulletin de l’Institut Français de Archéologie Orientale* 107: 43-70.
- CHŁODNICKI M. & CIAŁOWICZ K.M.**  
2011 Tell el Farkha (Ghazala), *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* XX: 153-170.
- CIAŁOWICZ K.M.**  
2004 Tell el-Farkha 2001–2002: excavations at the Western Kom, in: S. HENDRICKX; R.F. FRIEDMAN, K.M. CIAŁOWICZ & M. CHŁODNICKI (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins. Studies in Memory of Barbara Adams. Proceedings of the International Conference “Origin of the state. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt”, Kraków, 28<sup>th</sup> August – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2002*, OLA 138, Leuven: 371-388.

**DEE M., WENGROW D., SHORTLAND A., STEVENSON A., BROCK F., GIRDLAND FLINK L. & BRONK RAMSEY C.,**

- 2013 An absolute chronology for early Egypt using radiocarbon dating and Bayesian statistical modelling, *Proceedings of the Royal Society, A. Mathematical, Physical & Engineering Sciences* 469: 20130395.

**FINKELSTEIN Y., USSISHKIN D. & PEERSMANN J.,**

- 2006 Area J (The 1998-2000 Seasons), in: Y. FINKELSTEIN, D. USSISHKIN & B. HALPERN (eds.), *Megiddo IV: The 1998-2000 Seasons*, Tel Aviv: 29-53.

**GETZOV N.,**

- 2006 *The Tel Bet Yerab Excavations, 1994-1995* (IAA Reports 28), Jerusalem.

**GOLANI A.,**

- 1997 New salvage excavations of the Early Bronze I period in the region of the Ashqelon Marina, in: *Twenty-third Archaeological Conference in Israel: Abstracts of Lectures*, The Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem: 16
- 2004 Salvage excavations at the Early Bronze Age Site of Afridar, Ashqelon-Area E, *'Atiqot* 45: 9-62.
- 2008 The Early Bronze Age site of Ashqelon, Afridar-Area M, *'Atiqot* 60: 19-52.

**GOLANI A. & NAGAR Y.,**

- 2011 Newly discovered burials of the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age I in Southern Canaan: evidence of cultural continuity, in: J.L. LOVELL & Y.M. ROWAN (eds.), *Culture, Chronology and the Chalcolithic: Theory and Transition*, Oxford-Oakville: 84-96.

**GOPHNA R.,**

- 1970 A Protodynastic Egyptian jar from Rafiah, *Bulletin of Museum Haaretz* 12: 53-54.
- 1974 *The Settlement of the Coastal Plain of Eretz Israel During the Early Bronze Age*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Tel Aviv University (Hebrew).
- 1990 The Egyptian pottery of En Besor, *Tel Aviv* 17: 144-162.

**GOPHNA R. (ed.),**

- 1995 *Excavations at 'En Besor*, Tel Aviv.

**GREENBERG R., EISENBERG E., PAZ S., & PAZ Y.,**

- 2006 *Bet Yerab: The Early Bronze Age Mound. Volume I. Excavation Reports, 1933-1986* (IAA Reports 30), Jerusalem.

**HARTUNG U.,**

- 1993 Importkeramik aus Grab U-j, in: G. DREYER (ed.), *Umm el-Qaab: Nachuntersuchungen im frühzeitlichen Königsfriedhof 5./6. Vorbericht. MDAIK* 49: 48-62.
- 1998 Importkeramik, in: G. DREYER (ed.), *Umm el-Qaab I: das prädynastische Königsgrab U-j und seine frühen Schriftzeugnisse*. Mainz: 92-107
- 2001 *Umm el-Qaab II. Importkeramik aus dem Friedhof U in Abydos (Umm el-Qaab) und die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 4. Jahrtausend v. Chr*, Mainz.



**HOLLAND T.A.,**

1986 Jericho and the Proto-Urban Period. *Alesco II, Studies in the History and Archaeology of Palestine*, Aleppo: 17-25

**KÖHLER E.CH.,**

2008 The interaction between and the roles of Upper and Lower Egypt in the formation of the state, in: B. MIDANT-REYNES & Y. TRISTANT (eds.), J. ROWLAND & S. HENDRICKX (ass.), *Egypt at its Origins 2. Proceedings of the International Conference „Origin of the State. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt”*, Toulouse (France), 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> September 2005, OLA 172, Leuven: 515-544.

**LEVY T.E., ALON D., SMITH P., YEKUTIELI Y., ROWAN Y., GOLDBERG P., PORAT N., VAN DEN BRINK E.C.M., WITTEN A.J., GOLDEN J., GRIGSON C., DAWSON L., HOLL A., MORENO J. & KERSEL M.,**

1997 Egyptian-Canaanite interaction at Nahal Tillah, Israel (ca. 4500-3000 B.C.E.): an interim report on the 1994-1995 excavations, *Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research* 307: 1-52.

**MILEVSKI I. & BAUMGARTEN Y.,**

2008 Between Lachish and Tel Erani: Horvat Ptora, a new late prehistoric site in the Southern Levant, in: J. CÓRDOBA, M. MOLIST, C. PÉREZ, I. RUBIO & S. MARTÍNEZ (eds.), *Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East: Madrid, April 3-8 2006*, vol. II, Madrid: 609-624

**MILEVSKI I., BRAUN E., VARGA D. & YISRAEL Y.,**

2012 A newly-discovered Early Bronze Age settlement and silo complex at Amaziya, Israel. *Antiquity* 86, vol. 331,  
<http://www.antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/milevski331/>; last access on 29.01.2014.

**DE MIROSCHEJJI P.R. & SADEQ M.,**

2005 The frontier in the Early Bronze Age: preliminary soundings at Tell al-Sakan (Gaza Strip), in: J. CLARKE (ed.), *Archaeological Perspectives on the Transmission and Transformation of Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Oxford: 155-169.

**OREN E.D.,**

1989 Early Bronze Age settlement in northern Sinai: a model for Egypto-Canaanite interconnections, in: P.R. DE MIROSCHEJJI (ed.), *L'urbanisation de la Palestine à l'âge du Bronze ancien: bilan et perspectives des recherches actuelles, Actes du colloque d'Emmamiis (20-14 Octobre 1986)*, BAR IS 527, Oxford: 389-405.

**OREN E.D. & YEKUTIELI Y.,**

1992 Taur Ikhbeineh: earliest evidence for Egyptian interconnections, in: E.C.M VAN DEN BRINK (ed.), *The Nile Delta in Transition: 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C.*, Tel Aviv: 361-384.

**PARR P.J.,**

- 2000 Proto-Urban Jericho: The Need for Reappraisal, in: L.E. STAGER, J.A. GREENE & M.D. COOGAN (eds.), *The Archaeology of Jordan and Beyond: Essays in Honor of James A. Sauer*, Winona Lake: 389-398.

**PORAT N.,**

- 1986 Local industry of Egyptian pottery in southern Palestine during the Early Bronze I Period, *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 8: 109-129.
- 1989 *Composition of Pottery: Application to the Study of the Interrelations Between Canaan and Egypt during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C.*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- 1992 An Egyptian colony in southern Palestine during the Late Predynastic/Early Dynastic period, in: E.C.M VAN DEN BRINK (ed.), *The Nile Delta in Transition: 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C.*, Tel Aviv: 433-440.

**REGEV J., DE MIROSCHEJJI P.R., GREENBERG R., BRAUN E., GREENHUT Z. & BOARETTO E.,**

- 2012 Chronology of the Early Bronze Age in the Southern Levant: new analysis for a high chronology, *Radiocarbon* 54/3-4: 525-566.

**SCHULMAN A.,**

- 1976 Egyptian seal impressions from 'En Besor, 'Atiqot (English Series) XI: 16-26.
- 1980 More Egyptian seal impressions from 'En Besor, 'Atiqot (English Series) XIV: 17-33.
- 1992 Still more Egyptian seal impressions from 'En Besor, in: E.C.M VAN DEN BRINK (ed.), *The Nile Delta in Transition: 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C.*, Tel Aviv: 395-418.

**VAN DEN BRINK E.C.M. & BRAUN E.,**

- 2002 Wine jars with *Serekhs* from Early Bronze Lod: Appellation Vallée du Nil Contrôlée, but for Whom?, in: E.C.M. VAN DEN BRINK & E. YANNAI (eds.), *In Quest of Ancient Settlements and Landscapes: Archaeological Studies in Honor of Ram Gophna*, Tel Aviv: 167-192 .

**VAN DEN BRINK E.C.M. & GOPHNA R.,**

- 2004 Protodynastic storage jars from the Area of Sheikh Zuweid, northern Sinai: another entrépot along the Way[s]-of-Horus?, in: S. HENDRICKX; R.F. FRIEDMAN, K.M. CIAŁOWICZ & M. CHŁODNICKI (eds.), *Egypt at its Origins. Studies in Memory of Barbara Adams. Proceedings of the International Conference "Origin of the state. Predynastic and Early Dynastic Egypt"*, Kraków, 28<sup>th</sup> August – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2002, OLA 138, Leuven: 487-506.

**YADIN E. & KOCHAVI M.,**

- 2000 Area A: Stratigraphy, Architecture and Tombs, in: M. KOCHAVI, P. BECK & E. YADIN (eds.), *Aphék-Antipatris I-Excavation of Areas A and B: The 1972-1976 Seasons*, Tel Aviv: 134-167.

**YANNAI E. & BRAUN E.,**

- 2001 Anatolian and Egyptian imports from late EB I at Ain Assawir, Israel, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 321: 41-56.

**YEIVIN S.,**

- 1960 Early contacts between Canaan and Egypt, *Israel Exploration Journal* 10: 193-203.  
 1961 *First Preliminary Report on the Excavations at Tel "Gat" (Tell Sheykh `Ahmed el-`Areyne): Seasons 1956-1958*, Jerusalem.

**YEKUTIELI Y.**

- 1991 *The Early Bronze I A of Southwestern Canaan: Settlement, Economy and Society*, M.A. Thesis, Tel Aviv University (Hebrew).  
 1998 *The Early Bronze Age I of North Sinai-Social, Economic and Spatial Aspects*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Ben Gurion University of the Negev (Hebrew with English summary).  
 2001 The Early Bronze Age IA of Southwestern Canaan, in: S.R. WOLFF (ed.), *Studies in the Archaeology of Israel and Neighboring Lands in Memory of Douglas L. Esse*, Chicago-Atlanta: 659-688.  
 2004 The Desert, the Sown and the Egyptian Colony, *Egypt and the Levant* XIV: 1-9.