

3. A CASE STUDY FROM ANCIENT EGYPT

While the development of material culture in Egypt and Nubia (Fig. 3) shows certain parallels and is instructive to the current case study, the currently available sources for the Egypto-Nubian cultural contacts are predominantly mortuary in nature and therefore only of limited value as an analogy to the settlement of the late Middle Kingdom in the north-eastern Nile Delta.³¹⁶ The contextual information from handmade pottery made according to the Nubian cultural tradition and found in the fortresses and their surroundings suggests a more colonial nature of these co-occurrences and their further development, which does not seem to apply to the settlement of the late Middle Kingdom in the north-eastern Nile Delta (Area A/II). There some social stratification can be noticed but certainly not any unequivocal evidence for an asymmetrical power balance as there is no evidence for fortifications of any kind or buildings that might be interpreted as prisons, communal sleeping quarters or barracks in the widest sense of the word.

Comparison with other contemporary settlements of the late Middle Kingdom³¹⁷ exemplifies the unique character of this settlement in Area A/II, which is the only hitherto preserved self-organised settlement in this period as opposed to those confined by topographical circumstances such as Elephantine or the pre-planned settlement type in other parts of Egypt. The latter mostly show orthogonal layouts built for specific purposes presumably commissioned by the central administration of the pharaoh (e.g. Lahun, Qasr el Sagha). This is not to say that no other self-organised settlements existed (e.g. on the river banks of the Nile), but there is a genuine blank in the archaeological evidence because such areas close to the Nile were covered either by metres of sediments and/or by modern settlements so that archaeological research is extremely difficult and can currently only be explored by augering/coring if at all.

The frequent allusions to, and discussions of, burials of Nubian and/or ‘Asiatic’ individuals within Egypt are not followed up here in detail (e.g. the burial of a woman in the Asasif,³¹⁸ frequently referred to as Nubian, because the grave goods also contained Nubian style pottery³¹⁹) because the above discussion already highlighted the problematic nature of such evidence and would go beyond the scope of this work.

3.1. TEXTUAL AND PICTORIAL SOURCES

The distinction between ancient Egyptian people and the abstract ‘the other’ was most effectively achieved by showing phenotypical differences expressed as fossilised ‘ethnic markers’ in the form of artistic conventions (icons) such as certain hairstyles, dress and skin colour in pictorial evidence and

³¹⁶ Work at Elephantine provides an interesting glimpse on the ‘Nubian’ pottery component of the settlement assemblage, but the overall frequency was on average 1% of the assemblages: Raue 2018, 226. Thus, it will be interesting to see how this component influenced the practice in the settlement. That “Hybridprodukte” [hybrid products] existed has been stated in Raue 2012; Raue 2018. The types of entanglement as well as frequency and distribution are interesting research subjects.

³¹⁷ Bader 2015b.

³¹⁸ Petrie 1909; Bourriau 1981. See also Roehrig 2005, 16, reporting that recent scientific determination led to the result that the woman had spent her childhood in Egypt.

³¹⁹ Cf. Roehrig 2005 for a recent discussion of this burial.

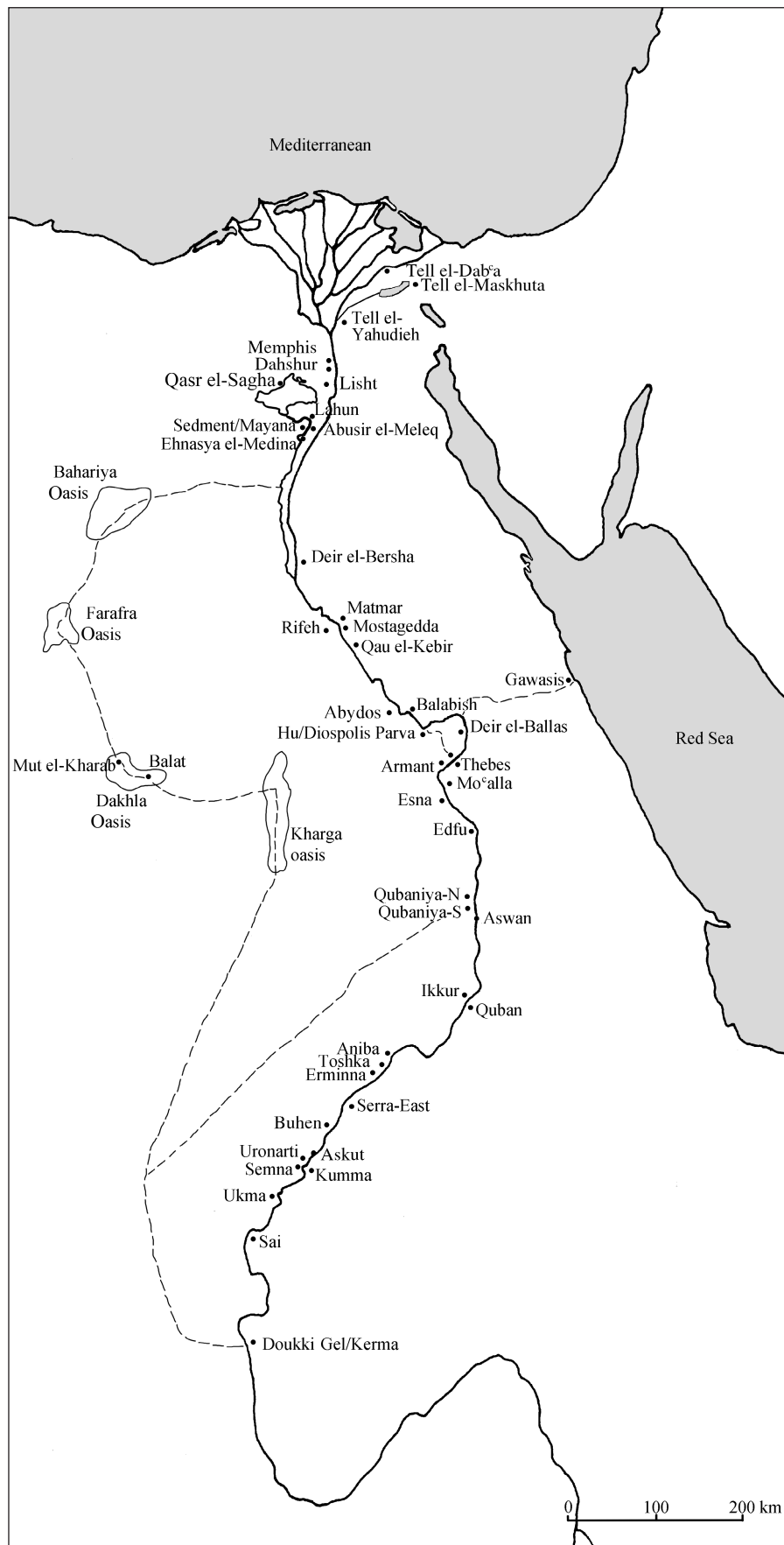


Fig. 3 Map of Ancient Egypt (drawn by B. Bader, after Baines and Málek 1980, 41)

certain epithets in texts mentioning non-Egyptians.³²⁰ Thus, the Egyptian world view created ethnic stereotypes in a very striking way in pictures as well as in texts.³²¹ Initially, the Egyptian world order (topos) comprised the opposition between the pharaoh (*Maat* – justice) and his enemies (*Isfet* – sin).³²² Although Egyptians from Upper and Lower Egypt³²³ were included in this system for some time, the development in the topical sphere of the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ idea led to a more visible position of ‘foreigners’ in certain parts of Egyptian art. Recent analyses of ancient Egyptian texts in search of the identity of Egyptians resulted in a more balanced view towards local identities (towns),³²⁴ instead of an Egyptian one in a ‘national’ sense, as well as a more differentiated view of enemies who were also considered to be human.³²⁵ It is necessary to recognise that all of these points are opinions/views of the Egyptian side through Egyptian eyes and there is no independent statement of counter opinion available during this time, which would be necessary for a self-definition of a non-Egyptian identity as explained above.³²⁶ This is the reason why there is no certainty as to whether these ascriptions are driven by the need to create an antithetic identity to the Egyptian people for political, ideological or religious reasons. However, the possibility exists that the Egyptian administration defined identities in a top-down manner in order to classify its subjects of Egypt’s practiced colonial rule as has been done in modern colonial situations.³²⁷ The most famous pictorial source for ‘Asiatics’ is a scene of a group of 37 ‘Asiatic’ individuals³²⁸ from the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan (Tomb no 3, reign of Senwosret II), which was often taken out of the larger context of the composition of the depiction on the wall. This particular wall of the tomb shows the activities of the tomb owner which included the reception of this group of people, which most probably relates to his office as administrator of the Eastern Desert.³²⁹ For a long time this depiction was mistakenly used by past and current scholarship as a stereotypical illustration of a wide variety of identities as shown recently by Susan Cohen, who ably deconstructs the use of this source in past scholarship, e.g. as a biblical picture book, and warns of uncritical interpretation.³³⁰ The title *ḥkꜣw ḥꜣswt* appears here accompanying the leader of the group. The meaning of it very likely differed from its later use in the 15th Dynasty, when it was combined with the Egyptian royal titulary to designate the rulers of the 15th Dynasty.³³¹

Texts used to explain the archaeological situation found in the late Middle Kingdom settlement at Tell el-Dab^a, namely the presence of ‘acculturated Asiatics’ in the north-eastern Nile Delta, include the 12th Dynasty report-like and administrative texts. These mention bringing back prisoners of war (annals of Amenemhet II, stela of Khusobek, inscription of Ahmose son of Ibana [18th Dynasty]) and include lists of ‘Asiatic’ servants and workers assigned to the estates of Egyptian members of the elite (the Lahun papyri, p. Brooklyn 35.1446),³³² as well as individuals and their professions shown to be of non-Egyptian descent. This latter group only includes individuals with known names, which seems to constitute a percentage of 10% in the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period in ancient Egypt. Moreover, as Thomas Schneider pointed out,³³³ individuals too far removed from their

³²⁰ Bader 2012; Bader 2017a.

³²¹ Smith 2003; Smith 2007; Smith 2015.

³²² Loprieno 1988; Smith 2007; Smith 2015.

³²³ Cf. Bader 2017a with bibliography.

³²⁴ Schneider 2003a, 322; Moers 2015.

³²⁵ See Moers 2005, esp. 264.

³²⁶ See Grimal (1981) for an example of the 25th Dynasty.

³²⁷ Jones 1996, 69–70; Jones 1999a, 224–225; Smith 2007; Liszka 2012, 72–76. But it is unlikely to be manifest in Egyptian literature as used by Burke 2019, 72–74, who ignores Antonio Loprieno’s and Stuart Smith’s fundamental work.

³²⁸ These are mentioned in the inscription; only 13 women, men and children are actually shown.

³²⁹ See Kamrin 2013.

³³⁰ Cohen 2015. See also discussion in Bader 2017b.

³³¹ Candelora 2017.

³³² See Bader 2015a, 4, for examples and bibliography; see also Bader 2017b.

³³³ Schneider 2003a, 322–325, 335. But note that Schneider uses Tell el-Dab^a as an example of an environment where acculturation was not necessary because the infrastructure catered for the ethnic Syro-Palestinians in the form of Syrian temples. This singular feature is part of a more complex development which also includes Egyptian temple traditions, for example. Cf. Bader 2013a; Bader 2015a and cf. below the summary of cultural features at Tell el-Dab^a in the Stage table (Tab. 1).

original descent are not recognisable as of non-Egyptian descent any more.³³⁴ Thus, this body of evidence for the late Middle Kingdom is not complete and mostly pre-dates/or is contemporary with the settlement under discussion, which covers the very late 12th and early to mid-13th Dynasty (as seen from a Memphite standpoint, where the 13th Dynasty may have lasted the longest). While the sources mentioned above provide a background for the discussion of the late Middle Kingdom settlement, they do not help in interpreting the current archaeological evidence, especially as the socio-economic status of the majority of the inhabitants of Tell el-Dab'a remains largely unknown, and pressures to adapt to the Egyptian way of life are suggested, especially for those aspiring to higher social status.³³⁵ However, a differentiated discussion of social status would exceed the scope of this work by far and social status can therefore only be discussed for Area A/II (see below).

The mimetic view on non-Egyptian people is less well represented in the textual evidence but it was demonstrated in Nubia that in daily life non-Egyptian³³⁶ people were probably not considered as “wretched” enemies in contrast to the stereotyped ‘foreigners’ as shown on temple walls.³³⁷

The use of ‘literary’ texts³³⁸, such as the Admonitions of Ipuwer, and the Prophecies of Neferti³³⁹ to achieve an informed view of the real-life situation of Egyptian and non-Egyptian people suffers from a basic dating problem and deficiencies in clarity.³⁴⁰ Conventional, older translations in wide distribution³⁴¹ have been replaced by others, which highlight the uncertainties and semantic problems of those texts more than was done previously.³⁴² Moreover, the older translations, deeply rooted in the culture-historical paradigm, were influenced consciously or unconsciously by the then current historical narratives.³⁴³ These may also be seen as part of a belated *topos*.³⁴⁴

3.2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

The only other settlement connected with ‘Asiatic foreigners’ in (late) Middle Kingdom Egypt is the planned orthogonal complex at Lahun (see Fig. 3). The idea that ‘foreigners’ of ‘Asiatic’ origin lived there is derived from finds of papyri mentioning lists of workers’ names. Unfortunately the contextual information of isolated finds of material culture used in the identification of the inhabitants is lacking due to the early excavation of the site by Petrie at the end of the 19th century. Thus, ‘Asiatics’ were

³³⁴ The same, of course, holds true for those people who were not covered by any lists. Thus, the estimated number of unreported people is likely to be higher. Still, as there are few estimates of the overall population of Egypt at that time are readily available it remains hard to qualify such a statement. Trigger, Kemp et al. 1983, 62 estimate the overall population in Egypt to about 1 to 1.5 million people. Considering such a number the known instances of foreign people would not appear very high.

³³⁵ Schneider 2003a, 323. Examples of such would be those individuals inhabiting the large mansion and occupying the elite cemetery in Area F/I in Phase G/4, cf. Schiestl 2009.

³³⁶ The inclusion of non-Egyptian people in social constructs was researched by diachronic analysis of texts: cf. Moers 2004; Moers 2005.

³³⁷ Smith 2007, 230–233.

³³⁸ About the problems with the term ‘literary’ see Moers (2013a), and the entire volume edited by Moers.

³³⁹ Quirke 2004, 135–139. For the Teaching of Merikare see Quirke 2004, 112–120.

³⁴⁰ Moers 2013a.

³⁴¹ Such as the translation used by Burke 2019.

³⁴² Cf. Quirke 2004.

³⁴³ Cf. Lichtheim (1973) with the translations of Quirke (2004).

³⁴⁴ Neglected by Burke (2019) who compares the inhabitants of Tell el-Dab'a to Assyrian merchants present in Anatolian Kanesh. Indeed, the relationship of merchants to their hosts would be a very interesting case study. What seems striking in the Kanesh case is that the presence of foreign merchants was not at all visible in the material culture of the host city according to the current scholarly opinion. Cf. Burke 2019. Lumsden 2008 was kindly made available to me by the author (pers. comm. 2 April 2020). It seems that a detailed study of material culture of that site has been neglected, so that the statement that the material culture does not reflect the presence of the Old Assyrian merchants in the archaeological record can currently not be exactly qualified.

suspected to have lived there due to these texts and the finds of a torque,³⁴⁵ and one wooden tool probably for weaving (part of a horizontal loom?) with five incised marks previously suspected to be proto-Sinaitic that is probably an inscription of sorts but not proto-Sinaitic.³⁴⁶ Minoans were also supposed to have been present at Lahun because some products classified as Minoan-style pottery have been found there.³⁴⁷ That these finds can only be taken as hints for contact situations that can now only be fragmentarily reconstructed due to the general lack of information has been exemplified in detail elsewhere.³⁴⁸

3.3. THE CHOICE OF THE SETTLEMENT OF THE LATE MIDDLE KINGDOM IN AREA A/II AS A CASE STUDY

The settlement in Area A/II at Tell el-Dab'a (Fig. 4) dating to the late Middle Kingdom was chosen to test the strength of purely archaeological evidence (without any inscribed finds) to support the arguments and ideas derived from historiographic traditions, briefly described above, which are currently adhered to. These ideas implicitly direct research and the site was also chosen to see if the application of theoretical frameworks can actually contribute to a better understanding of the identities, life realities and deaths of ancient individuals, c. 3800 years ago. Moreover, no self-organised (not orthogonal), sufficiently published settlement of the late Middle Kingdom is currently available to achieve a 'calibration' of a north-eastern delta settlement with another one somewhere else in the delta or the Nile Valley³⁴⁹ in order to pinpoint any differences or similarities in layout, architecture, foodways, subsistence strategies as well as type range, quantity, frequency distributions and use of material culture. We simply do not know how to define a 'normal settlement' and what it contains in the late Middle Kingdom.

Furthermore, it appeared to be a good opportunity to illustrate the problems of separately relating 'culture', general historical texts and migration to archaeology and to point out the non-straightforward connection between historical texts and ethnic identity as well as that between ethnic identity and material culture. All of these connections can be considered as problematic as they are only indirect and these problems are hardly ever highlighted in great detail. In addition, the archaeological evidence at Tell el-Dab'a is usually not seen as a long-lasting regional development of cultural expressions in a liminal area/borderland but is often conceived, it seems, as a monolithic proven enclave of 'Asiatics' that can

³⁴⁵ The Lahun torque was made of bronze with an atypically high amount of tin: cf. Gilmore 1986, 451. While G.H. Gilmore resists the temptation to assign it therefore to a non-Egyptian production place taking into account little comparable data, Anna-Latifa Mourad jumps to conclusions: cf. Mourad 2015, 70; see also Sparks 2004. Nevertheless, even if the torque had been made outside of Egypt, this does not have to mean that the owner must have come from the same place as the metal. Note further that similar jewellery, among other things, was also found at Mostagedda, tomb 3120 cf. Brunton 1937, 116, pl. LXXIV. There, the owner was thought to be Nubian. Such torques need to be scrutinised for their *chaîne opératoire* in order to appreciate whether differences in the way they are made would justify the assumption that they are either imported or have some other meaning in this context. The same holds true for the bone inlays of small wooden boxes with concentric circles. Such items have been found in Qubbaniya in southern Egypt, Sedment and the Levant. Thus, it seems very rash to assign any ethnic identity to owners of such items. The intriguing question would be to which ethnic identity?

³⁴⁶ See Gallorini 1998, 241–249, 253–254, for this find and recent discussion. Sass 1988, 104, does not interpret these marks as Proto-Sinaitic, as Dijkstra 1990 and Petrik 2011 do, both of whom neither refer to nor refute Benjamin Sass. Moreover, Meindert Dijkstra refers to possibly contemporaneous potmarks of the 12th Dynasty but also does not rule out an 18th Dynasty date. Gallorini 1998 covers all of this terrain and rejects a connection of these marks on the heddle jack to the potmarks. The fact that non-native wood was used for this object does not necessarily prove that this was an implement taken from abroad to Egypt with the intent to use it for a craft there. It could have been made of previously imported wood fallen out of use: cf. Cartwright et al. 1998.

³⁴⁷ Alessandro Sanavia, a specialist in Minoan pottery, denies a direct connection of most of these pot sherds to Minoan pottery. For him, they are recognisably non-Minoan: cf. Bader 2017b, n. 67. Cf. also Kemp and Merrillees 1980, 57–77, for the actual Minoan imports at Lahun Fitton et al. 1998 analysed the Minoan and Minoan-style pottery found at Lahun. Petrik 2011 follows an untenable pots = people approach covering all imports into Lahun.

³⁴⁸ Bader 2017b for examples and bibliography.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Bader 2009 for a comparison of material culture in settlements of the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period with the small section at Memphis, which lacks complete house layouts. For a brief comparison of the late Middle Kingdom house layouts as well as settlement features at Kom Rabi'a and Tell el-Dab'a, see Bader 2018a; Bader 2018b.

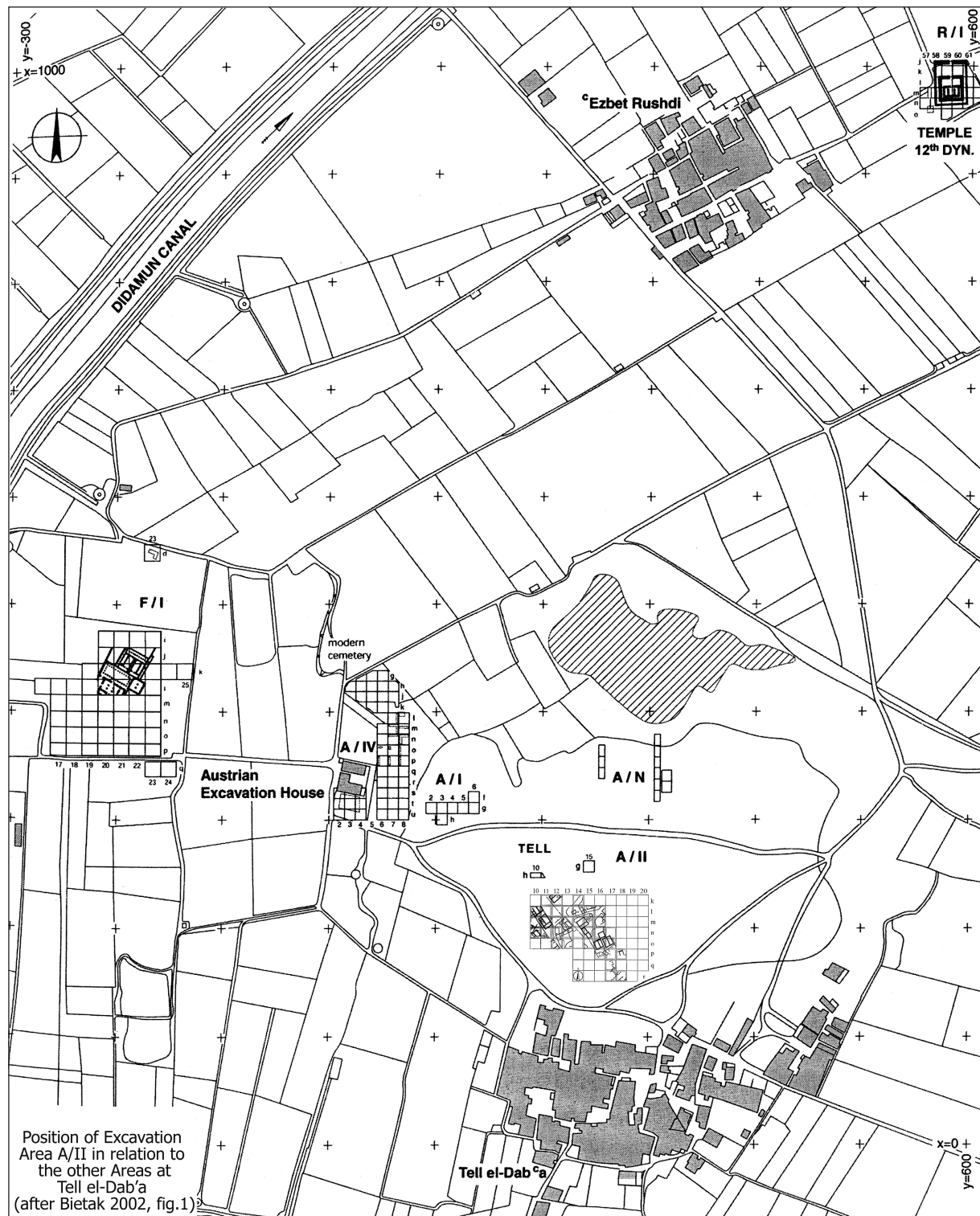


Fig. 4 Position of excavation Area A/II in relation to the site (after Bietak 2002, fig. 1)

be used as an illustration for a narrative that needs no questioning. However, the careful approach to the archaeological finds in their contextual environment shows that there are many lacunae. Some questions can simply not be answered from the evidence available.³⁵⁰ The oft repeated phrase “the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence” needs to be constantly kept in mind. Thus, the limitations need to be addressed in a clear way, so that more integrated research between textual, pictorial and archaeological evidence can be undertaken.

3.4. DATA FORMING THE BASIS FOR RESEARCH

In some sectors of global archaeology, research on the material culture used by ancient people has already ceased to draw much interest, mainly because bio-archaeological remains, among other things, ancient DNA analyses offer other – scientific – research avenues in order to obtain more general information on the origins, kin relations, movements and mobility of ancient people as do certain branches of isotope analysis of individual’s teeth and environmental samples.³⁵¹ While it would be, of course, an asset, to be able to fall back on data from material culture and scientific analysis, both these scientific methods mentioned before are not at the disposal of this study due to a lack of abundant human remains and can hence only be achieved perhaps at a later stage and on a limited scale (see below).

Whilst Area A/II only included the remains of nine individuals in the latest Phase G/3–1³⁵² (three of which were small children, whose bones could not even be measured), there are other contemporary excavation sectors with more interments³⁵³ as well as other archaeological differences (see below).³⁵⁴

Settlement remains and tombs in Area A/II were excavated from 1966 to 1985³⁵⁵ and the final results of the physical anthropological analysis were published in 1991.³⁵⁶ Human remains found at Tell el-Dab’a are, in general, in a bad state of preservation due to the wet soil conditions of the site. In order to keep the skeletons articulated, the bones had habitually to be prepared by means of gypsum plaster

³⁵⁰ While Candelora (2017) is probably right in her opinion that the title *ḥkꜣ ḥꜣswt* is a self-ascribed one, it needs to be explicitly ascertained that the identification as Hyksos cannot be transferred to the individuals in the settlement of Tell el-Dab’a of Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 because they lived several generations earlier (approx. 100 to 150 years earlier according to current chronologies of the site) than the first attestation of this title at the site itself (out of context) and there is no indication for elevated status situations in the settlement Area A/II dating to the late Middle Kingdom.

³⁵¹ E.g. Buzon et al. 2007.

³⁵² Bietak 1991b; Forstner-Müller 2008.

³⁵³ Hein 1992; Kopetzky 1993; Müller 2015a; Müller 2015b.

³⁵⁴ Bader 2011a.

³⁵⁵ Bader 2011a; Bader 2015b; Bader 2020; Bader forthcoming-d.

³⁵⁶ Winkler and Wilfing 1991, 43–44, 56–57, 63, 67, 74, tab. in app. I for osteometric measurements. Only three individuals from Phase G/3–1 were sufficiently preserved for measurements to be taken at all. In one case a skull was described as squashed and deformed but nevertheless included in the craniometric study. These three individuals were then used as a representative sample together with those from all the other Phases (F to D/2 – in total 35 individuals with sufficient measurements of 257 individuals found) to represent the characteristic inhabitants of the site, assuming a priori that they were of homogeneous origin. Renewed work on the anthropological material promises to look into this question, cf. Maaranen et al. 2019a, 346. Since the 1980s many other individuals have been found at Tell el-Dab’a and it would be very interesting to combine data from these with the data from earlier remains and to investigate this data to see how consistent a clustering would result within the site. Unfortunately, the human remains from Areas F/I, H/VI (Ramesside) and the more recent excavations in R/IV remain unpublished, so that no comparative study is yet possible. A personal communication of physical anthropologist J. Gresky, which was cited in Matić 2017, n. 29, expressed doubt about the usefulness of craniometry as the skulls are generally in a bad state of preservation at the site “and it would make no sense”. Note that in British Archaeology the connection of ethnic identity with physical “races” has been firmly refuted, cf. Halsall 2007, 450, with further references. Also criticised by Brather 2004, 190, n. 270: “Schädelmessungen haben als rassenklassifikatorisches Mittel längst ausgedient.” [Craniometry is considered to be an outdated method to classify ‘races’.] Cf. Schiestl 2009, 200, n. 1929; Evison 2014 for a history and critique of using anthropomorphic measurements. Evison 2000, 279–280, 287–288, is critical of the validity of measurements for the differentiation of ‘races’. He also states on 289 that “variation in culture is a character one and not genetically encoded”. Nevertheless, metric methods are still used but as a descriptive tool rather than for race determination, cf. Zakrzewski et al. 2016, 209–210.



Fig. 5 Plan of Area A/II in Phase G/3-1 (after Bader 2018a, fig. 1)

and some chemical treatment before lifting out of the ground. Without such treatment, the human bones would immediately start to crumble when extracted from the surrounding ground.³⁵⁷ After the human remains in question had been analysed using the methods current at the time, most of them were reburied at the site.³⁵⁸ Renewed study³⁵⁹ of the remaining material yielded some new insights also for Phase G/3-1 (see below).

Nevertheless, this study is based on the enormous number of archaeological records and finds covering three strata of settlement in Area A/II (Phases H, G/4 and G/3-1, see Fig. 5) relating to the late Middle Kingdom (c. 1800-1700 BC).

Whilst we have seen that the circumstances of social conditions influence social behaviour and neither ethnic identity (not primeval) nor genetics do that, the interpretation of the archaeological remains of Area A/II at Tell el-Dab'a is at our disposal mainly to provide an insight into the social environment in the late Middle Kingdom.³⁶⁰ Overall, the great majority of the archaeological records and materials found during these excavations were available for renewed study and c. 90% of the archaeological objects were indeed re-recorded and re-analysed by the author, which included re-drawing, photographing and at least macroscopic identification of raw materials.³⁶¹ Archaeofauna was to a certain extent collected

³⁵⁷ Engelmayer and Jungwirth 1968; Satzinger 1969.

³⁵⁸ Winkler and Wilfing 1991, 13, 16.

³⁵⁹ Maaranen et al. 2019a, 346; Maaranen et al. 2019b, 316, overviews and methodological considerations have been published so far. The latest isotopic study in Stantis et al. 2020a, tab. S1, includes the list of samples with five from Area A/II, Phase G/3-1, see below page 83.

³⁶⁰ See Bader 2011a.

³⁶¹ Bader 2013b; Bader 2015b; Bader 2015c; Bader 2016; Bader 2018a; Bader 2018b; Bader 2020; Bader forthcoming-d, for some results.

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE PHASES	DATE B.C.	EGYPT RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY	TELL EL - DAB ^C A GENERAL PHASES
	1410	Dyn.	
LB I	1440	AI	
	1470	XVIII H TIII	C / 2
	1500	TII ITI AI	C / 3
MB II C	1530	AHMOSE	D / 1
	1560	XVII HYKSOS	D / 2
	1590		D / 3
MB II B	1620	XVI XV	E / 1
	1650	KING DOM AVARIS	E / 2
	1680	NEHESI	E / 3
MB II A-B	1710		F
MB II A	1740	XIII	G/3-1
	1770		G / 4
	1800	ISo IA IV	H
	1830	A III	I
	1860	XII IS II S III	K
	1890	A II	L
?	1920		M
	1950	SI	N/1
MB I	1980	AI	N / 2-3
	2000	XI	
	2050	X	

© modified after Bietak (2011) and adapted by Czerny (2015)
absolute dates for the 12th Dynasty after Kitchen, 2000

Fig. 6 Chronological chart of Tell el-Dab^a (adapted from Bader 2009, fig. 397)

in the earlier years of the excavation and analysed and published by Joachim Boessneck and Angela von den Driesch³⁶² and their results were incorporated into the study as far as possible to highlight eating habits at this time, which may show cultural peculiarities between different housing units that, in turn, might relate to social units in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II.³⁶³

Whilst Egyptian archaeology is often revered for its “better” sources, by which the interplay of archaeological and textual sources is meant, the delta settlement of the late Middle Kingdom is left without material of this kind, with the exception of several scarabs with names and a few mud sealings,³⁶⁴ as organic materials (including papyrus) or clay tablets³⁶⁵ are not preserved.

Missing from the basic data set in the present case are seal impressions as a whole object group because, due to the *communis opinio* during the period Area A/II was excavated, it was not thought possible to recover unfired mud sealings from the wet subsoil. Only many years later, after various trials of careful drying and sieving of the excavated spoil, did it transpire that this much more labour-intensive procedure enabled mud sealings to be recovered even from the wet delta soil.³⁶⁶ While this, certainly, is a loss of information on the mode of administration of the settlement and its supply routes and sources, such seals relate less securely to individuals at the receiving end of such supplies than to the institutions which provided them with such commodities. It would have been very interesting to see if there actually were any seal impressions attesting to the continued reception of commodities from anywhere, as it is thought that exactly during the time span covered by the settlement in Area A/II such supplies ceased and finally stopped. A further point of comparison would have been the nature of sealings from the self-organised settlement at Tell el-Dab^a with those from planned, rectangular settlements on the one hand and with those from fortresses, for example, in Lower Nubia to see if a difference in architectural layout and town planning is connected to the administrative

³⁶² Boessneck 1976; Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992.

³⁶³ Cf. Smith 2003, 113–121; Smith 2007, 233–234.

³⁶⁴ Bader 2017b.

³⁶⁵ For the entirely different situation at Kanesh II and Ib see Lumsden 2008. In his interpretation he relies on texts as the material culture seems still understudied.

³⁶⁶ Sartori 2009; Reali 2012–2013.

organisation of the supply of these settlement units and would be reflected in the sealings.³⁶⁷ Whether an inner-A/II settlement supply system would also have used clay sealings is a point that cannot now be considered as neither sealings nor seals have been found (excepting the tombs of Area A/II, see below). However, in general, very little information is available about places where commodities were opened and what happened to the seals removed and discarded in secondary or even tertiary refuse deposits (?) and places where commodities were sealed, and in which spatial relationship they were situated. Evidence from Abydos and Edfu, for example, shows that a great number of sealings from opening objects (not doors) may be found at a site (probably in refuse deposits), while no or few seals came to light in connection with it.³⁶⁸ Thus, one might conclude that places where packages/commodities were opened were not close to public/administrative places where commodities were sealed. Moreover, more infrastructure, such as prepared/processed sealing clay and an area to process it, should be preserved in order to assign an excavated space to such an activity, as well as special ground plans of buildings different from domestic housing.³⁶⁹ Another point of discussion would be the following: to what extent might a self-organised settlement, probably housing a medium to lower stratum of social status, have yielded seal impressions in the settlement detritus.³⁷⁰

3.5. SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE LATE MIDDLE KINGDOM SETTLEMENT IN AREA A/II (PHASES H, G/4, G/3–1)

“... history consists of action ... and how unimportant beside this is the question of writing or not writing, how wholly immaterial beside the facts of doing and making, is the word that describes them.”
(Ratzel 1896, 5)³⁷¹

Before outlining the results of the case study for the identity debate as well as the conclusions and the outlook for further research derived from a Middle Bronze Age settlement in ancient Egypt, the limitations of the findings must be clearly addressed:

1. The archaeological sources in the delta are heavily biased against organic materials because they are just not preserved due to the waterlogged soil conditions. No written sources on organic materials (papyri, wood, textiles, baskets, mats, leather objects, etc.) are available or can ever be expected.
2. Settlement excavations are in general scarce in Egypt (Delta and Nile Valley), especially non-urban and self-organised sites.
3. ‘Rural’ non-urban settlement excavations are also scarce in the ancient Near East, especially in the Middle Bronze Age IIA period and immediately before which would provide immediate comparanda for the Area A/II settlement at Tell el-Dab’a under discussion here.
4. Most of the archaeological finds were available for re-study but not every single object. Those available were studied at first hand.

³⁶⁷ Cf. Smith 2004.

³⁶⁸ Josef Wegner for Abydos, and Nadine Moeller for Edfu, (both pers. comm. during the Metropolitan Museum’s scholar’s day in January 2016).

³⁶⁹ Bader 2018a.

³⁷⁰ It is noteworthy that in the settlement of Kom Rabi’a RAT in the Memphite ruin field, several seal impressions were found but only accidentally burnt ones. Among these were very old ones and fewer contemporary finds, not all of which bore inscriptions. Cf. Giddy 2016, 163–191. See also the review of this book: Bader 2018b.

³⁷¹ Ratzel 1896.

5. Some samples of the human remains found in the tombs in the settlement have been available for re-study in a new strontium isotope analysis.³⁷² Whether different and additional analyses will be possible and how current technology may cope with the bad state of preservation of these remains and the chemical treatments (white glue, gypsum) they received in order to be removed from the earth,³⁷³ remains to be seen. However, the majority were reported to have been re-buried by the anthropologists.
6. The excavation was conducted over a period from 1966–1969 and 1975–1985, therefore inevitably the procedures changed and some information was lost.
7. Archival material and a few participants of the excavation could be consulted, but the author did not take part in the excavation and therefore has to rely on archival records.

Whilst the first volume of the publication containing the primary data derived from the excavation of the settlement (1966–69) appeared in print,³⁷⁴ the second volume (1975–85) has been taken into account as a database exists. The final publication of Volume 2 is currently in preparation.

Continuous settlement activity over time and gradual abandonment have obscured the spatial distribution of activity areas due to the post-depositional history of the site. Since no disastrous destruction ended life at any point during the settlement's history that would be visible in the archaeological record (although historical tradition mentions the total destruction of Avaris at the end of the Second Intermediate Period, thus much later, which has hitherto not been found at Tell el-Dab'a), we have no direct account of activities and activity areas available for interpretation, only much vaguer evidence from an archaeological record that was partly destroyed by later and subsequent activities in the same place. A sudden destruction would have 'fossilised' one moment of activity in the settlement of the late Middle Kingdom, but the unbroken continuation of settlement activities during this time made sure that very few *in situ* assemblages were left to analyse. An exception is the possible collapse of the roof of a building with the *in situ* deposition of numerous archaeological finds in one room of Compound 1.³⁷⁵

3.5.1. Architecture

Phases H and G/4 are unfortunately not particularly well known due to adverse circumstances during excavation seasons in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁷⁶ Mostly the high water table prevented systematic excavation to lower levels and exploration of the earliest settlement layers of the original tell Area A/II dating roughly to the late 12th Dynasty (Fig. 6).³⁷⁷ Thus, the considerations below refer in essence to Phase G/3–1 (Fig. 5), which is the best explored of the three phases comprising the largest exposure.

1. Building in Area A/II began in Phase H with very flimsy structures and apparently very simple one-room housing (interpreted as animal pens or stables by Bietak³⁷⁸).
2. A simple building scheme continued through Phase G/4, again with simple one-room housing.
3. Mud brick architecture with very few stone (exclusively limestone) elements as door sockets and one (!) column base only in Phase G/1–2 (in the largest Compound 11).

³⁷² Stantis et al. 2020a; see below page 83.

³⁷³ Engelmayer and Jungwirth 1968; Satzinger 1969.

³⁷⁴ Bader 2020.

³⁷⁵ Bader 2015b; Bader 2016 for an overview.

³⁷⁶ Bader 2020 for details.

³⁷⁷ Bietak 1991b, 25. Only in 1997, was it possible to make a small sounding down to the Gezira level (one square of 10 by 10 m), cf. Forstner-Müller 2001; Forstner-Müller 2007.

³⁷⁸ Bietak 1991a, 32. But no specific faunal remains were found to support this claim.

4. Irregular layout of housing compounds of differing sizes and with differential widths of walls.³⁷⁹
5. Walls mostly 1½ brick's width wide, sometimes 1 brick's width, rarely ½ a brick's width.
6. Overall, very simple architecture: one- and two-room houses, one more complicated (Compound 11³⁸⁰).
7. The layout and orientation of the compounds are laid down during Phase G/3–1. They differ in some points from the earlier layout, but the major thoroughfare in a north-west to south-east direction was already in place (Alley,³⁸¹ see Fig. 5).
8. The orientation of the buildings does not change up to the later phases of the late Second Intermediate Period, but the use and layout of buildings does already in Phase F.³⁸²
9. Some of the walls founded in Phase G/3–1 were continuously renewed up to Phase E/2–E/1 but not all.³⁸³
10. During the transition from Phase G/1–2 to F, evidence for two horseshoe-shaped ovens was uncovered, probably for industrial activities of an undetectable nature (two stone moulds for tools which were found neither in situ nor close to the ovens might indicate metalwork) because no unequivocal finds were reported, not even large amounts of ashy refuse.³⁸⁴
11. No specifically assigned areas for craft activities and/or craft production (such as pottery workshops or other production areas, except that mentioned under 10) were found. However, a pottery workshop, for example, would be hard to identify in the archaeological record once the turning device (as simple as a bowl and a mat) had been removed and the kilns taken down.³⁸⁵
12. Evidence for substantial local storage facilities (rounded silos, Fig. 5) as well as evidence for commodities received from the Egyptian Nile Valley (Marl C storage jars (Fig. 11³⁸⁶).
13. Seeming use of Egyptian metrological system (not conclusively proven by finds such as brick moulds or cubit rods but calculations fit well³⁸⁷) in brick sizes and house layouts.³⁸⁸

3.5.2. Burials in the Settlement of Area A/II in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1

Tombs of people interred in the settlement³⁸⁹ are still taken as proof for the inhabitants being Syro-Palestinian immigrants,³⁹⁰ regardless of the fact that burial customs in the Egyptian Nile Delta are still largely

³⁷⁹ Bader 2018a.

³⁸⁰ Bader 2018a; Bader 2020.

³⁸¹ Bader 2018a.

³⁸² Bietak 1991b, 25.

³⁸³ See Bader 2020 for details.

³⁸⁴ See Bader 2020, fig. 2.26–27, industrial ovens [M165], [M166]. Kilns/ovens of similar shape and date were found at Elephantine, presumed to be for pottery: cf. Kopp et al. 2010, fig. 5; Kopp 2016, 204–205, fig. 207.

³⁸⁵ I would like to thank Vera and Ludwig Albustin for repeated and intensive sharing of their practical knowledge and huge experience of pottery making. They also kindly drew attention (pers. comm. 14 June 2020) to ethnographic films of pottery production such as Fuchs 1971 and Luz, Lenser and Dauer 1978.

³⁸⁶ This is only valid if the hypothesis of the central production place for those jars in the Memphis-Fayoum region is tenable. Scientific analysis of Marl C-samples only included such jars from northern sites, never, for example, from southern sites (e.g. Elephantine). Therefore, I consider this question unresolved until such analysis has been conducted, although quantitative considerations certainly point to a Memphis-Fayoum origin of the fabric. See Bader 2001, 35; Bader 2009, 646.

³⁸⁷ Bader 2018a; Bader 2020, 30–31, app. 1.

³⁸⁸ Bader 2018a.

³⁸⁹ Based on the publications of Bietak 1991a; Bietak 1991b; Forstner-Müller 2008.

³⁹⁰ E.g. Bietak 2018.

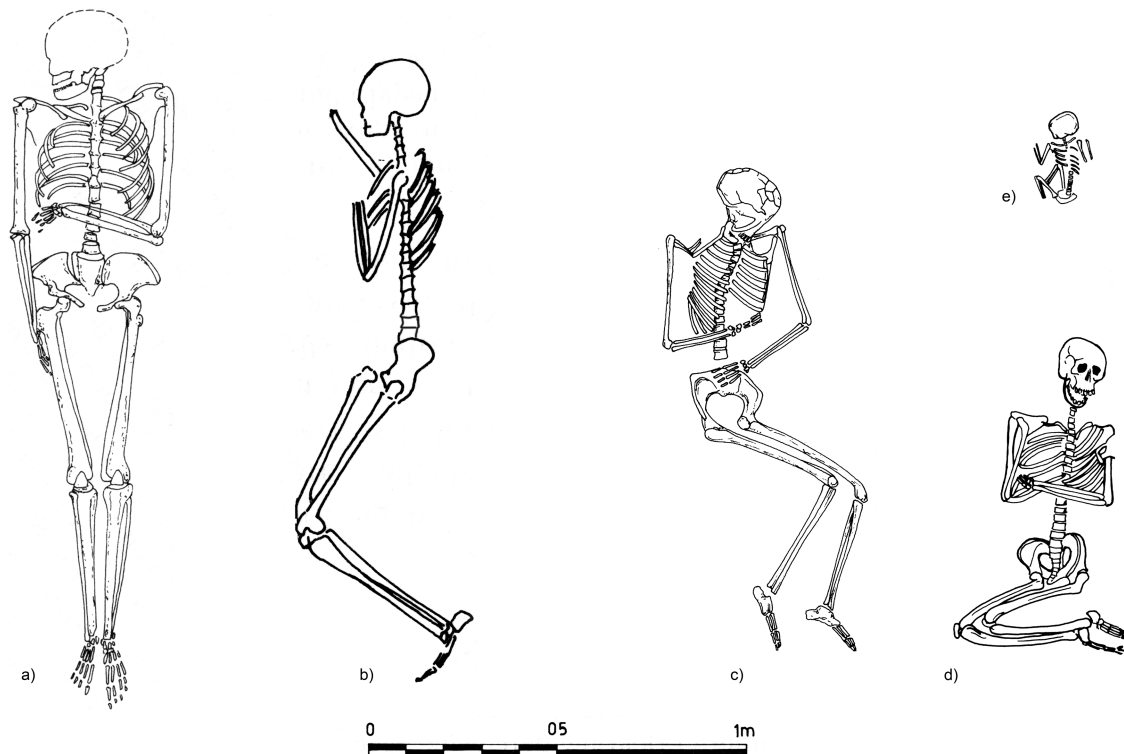


Fig. 7 Burial positions (adapted from Bietak 1991b and Forstner-Müller 2008)

unknown³⁹¹ and that children are buried in Middle Kingdom settlements throughout the Nile Valley and that even adults are sometimes buried in settlements (e.g. Elephantine³⁹²). In any case, the actual number of tombs in the early phases of the settlement in Area A/II is remarkably low, probably not mirroring the overall number of inhabitants of this ‘neighbourhood’ (if we may call it that because it is artificially created by the excavators rather than by the ancient people, see Fig. 4). In total, eight contemporary tombs were excavated in Phase G/3–1 in Area A/II (3800 m²), whereas Area F/I with a slightly smaller square metre exposure (3600 m²)³⁹³ yielded 98 for the same phase.³⁹⁴ It remains doubtful that this small number of interments in Area A/II is a representative sample of the people inhabiting that area during their lifetime. Furthermore, it remains unknown where the other inhabitants of this area were buried and why. It seems unlikely that any physical space restrictions in Area A/II could have been the reason for burying individuals in the nearby Area F/I or elsewhere because comparing the spatial situation of the two areas, there would be enough space in the courtyards and other places to bury people as the plan shows (Fig. 5). Any symbolic or cultic reason can, of course, not be ruled out but remains unknown.

The Area A/II interments may be summarised as follows:

1. six single burials, one group burial (kinship group?)
2. most of the tombs intact³⁹⁵
3. chamber tombs and pit burials, one in a stone sarcophagus

³⁹¹ Schiestl 2002, 329–330.

³⁹² Von Pilgrim 1996, 81–82.

³⁹³ Müller 2012, 14, and plan 12.

³⁹⁴ Kopetzky 1993; Bader 2011a.

³⁹⁵ Forstner-Müller 2008, 84–85.

4. one child burial without any grave goods in Phase G/3–1 in a pit
5. one child burial in a house of Phase G/4 (hitherto unpublished, Compound 1, Room 2 A/II–n/15) without burial goods and covered with heavily sand-tempered bricks
6. no children buried in amphorae in the three phases in Area A/II
7. no tombs at all in Phase H in Area A/II
8. seven female individuals, one male individual (+ three children, see above)
9. orientation and burial position not unified for all burials (Fig. 7)³⁹⁶
10. two (three?) corpses of women extended supine, one in a limestone sarcophagus with lid
11. three (four?) corpses of women supine with legs flexed to one side, i.e. both shoulders on the ground)
12. male individual with Syro-Palestinian weapons and belt, flexed position, shoulders not preserved
13. number of grave goods varies from none to thirteen items
14. contradicting ‘cultural’ affiliation: e.g. ‘Egyptian’ kohl pot with flexed burial
15. no paired equid burials in Area A/II in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 only later in this area. In F/I already earlier³⁹⁷
16. imported pottery vessels and local Egyptian pottery vessels occur together in the same tomb in roughly similar proportions
17. meat offerings consist of sheep (tomb m/15–9) and sheep and goat (n/16–2)
18. not all burials contain meat offerings
19. architecture of the tombs follows the Egyptian tradition³⁹⁸

3.5.3. Archaeological Finds in Area A/II (Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1)

Results and observations concerning the archaeological finds yielded and analysed will be listed very briefly below divided into different object categories. Assemblages are mentioned where this is deemed of importance for the interpretation of the spatial use of an area (e.g. the assemblage of Room/Space 3 of Compound 1³⁹⁹). As settlement excavations are still rather rare, no comprehensive corpus of settlement finds in context for each historical period is readily available in Egypt. Here, only those settlements are mentioned that belong to a general late Middle Kingdom temporal horizon. Other periods are not included at this stage.

3.5.3.1. Pottery

Pottery is the single most frequent object category found in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II at Tell el-Dabʿa as at most other settlements in Egypt. Again the material of Phase G/3–1 is best explored due to the extensive exposure of this phase. The material found consisted almost entirely

³⁹⁶ Forstner-Müller 2008, 36–37.

³⁹⁷ Schiestl 2009, 179–182.

³⁹⁸ Bietak 1991a, 32, 34; Schiestl 2002, 331; Schiestl 2009; Hulková forthcoming.

³⁹⁹ Bader 2015b; Bader 2016 for a discussion of this context; Bader forthcoming-d.

of sherds and complete vessels were very rare. Therefore, an assessment of application of differential levels of skill or nondiscursive knowledge within the material yielded only very limited results.⁴⁰⁰ The following gives an extremely brief overview of pertinent points for the identity debate. Details and contexts have appeared in print or are forthcoming.⁴⁰¹

1. The repertoire of vessels is quite restricted compared to Area F/I and A/IV. A reason for this difference may be seen in the different functions of, or activities in, these ‘neighbourhoods’ or perhaps different status levels. It consists of fine hemispherical cups for drinking, sometimes in high frequencies (Fig. 8a–c); larger and smaller plates made from Nile B2/C1 and C2 (Fig. 8d–f) used for consumption of foods (medium to small frequencies); so-called beer jars made from Nile C2 for the storage of liquid or small-grained dry-goods (Figs. 8j–r, 9), such as grain or legumes; three different types of storage jars made from Marl C, probably derived from the Memphis-Fayoum region, namely medium ovoid/globular jars;⁴⁰² large ovoid jars with corrugated necks⁴⁰³ and, most frequently, large storage jars with wide open mouths (Fig. 11); cooking pots – restricted bowls with folded rims (marked by sooting and smoke blackening, Fig. 10) in large quantities; small quantities of imported fine wares (Fig. 13), such as burnished juglets and jars; dipper juglets; Levantine Painted Ware; Cypriot imports (very few) as well as large quantities of imported transport containers (for some examples of amphorae see Fig. 14); and a few, perhaps imported, flat-based cooking pots (Fig. 12a). Rarer occurrences are small dishes, footed bowls (‘offering stands’) and ring stands (Fig. 8g–i).⁴⁰⁴
2. The pottery repertoire can be divided by the raw material of which they were made as follows: a) locally-produced material (Figs. 8–10); b) imports from Syria-Palestine (Figs. 13–14); c) imports from the Memphis-Fayoum region (Fig. 11);⁴⁰⁵ d) imports from southern Egypt (very few, often only body sherds).
3. A special trait in pottery production is the local high quality copying of imported pottery vessels, e.g. dipper juglets and pattern burnished dishes with in-turned lips, which may imply first-hand knowledge of the *chaîne opératoire*.⁴⁰⁶ The proportion of copied material is very low and only seems to appear in Phase G/3–1 and not before.⁴⁰⁷
4. The vast majority of cooking pottery, here referred to as Type 1, by fabric and vessel shape appears to be rooted in the ‘Egyptian’ cultural tradition⁴⁰⁸ as exemplified by its occurrence in the early levels of Ezbet Rushdi in an entirely Egyptian context.⁴⁰⁹ The shape is restricted with a usually rather massive lip folded outwards and pressed onto the shoulder (see Fig. 10 for a variety of examples). They have a white slip on the top and are of variable depth.⁴¹⁰ They were usually made

⁴⁰⁰ Budden and Sofaer 2009.

⁴⁰¹ E.g. Bader 2011b; Bader 2015b; Bader 2016; Bader 2020.

⁴⁰² Bader 2002, fig. 14, types 36a and 36b.

⁴⁰³ Bader 2002, fig. 14, type 46.

⁴⁰⁴ See Bader 2011a; Bader 2016; Bader 2020.

⁴⁰⁵ See fn. 386.

⁴⁰⁶ It is noteworthy that such dishes do occur earlier also in the Egyptian tradition. I would like to thank V. Müller for drawing my attention to that fact (pers. comm. September 2018). Cf. also Bader 2011b; Bader forthcoming-b.

⁴⁰⁷ The database contains 46 entries of dipper juglet sherds from the relevant levels: 14 are made of local Nile clay fabrics, which amounts to roughly 30% in a simple sherd count. The more accurate calculation with random sampling, which only takes the rim fragments into consideration, amounts to 0%; cf. Bader 2009; Bader 2010; Bader 2016 for a thorough discussion of quantifying methods. The overall number of relevant sherds in the three Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 is c. 68,000 sherds (rims, bases, body fragments, handle fragments), while there are c. 4000 diagnostic rim fragments used for the quantitative analysis.

⁴⁰⁸ Bader forthcoming-a for a very detailed treatise of the research history, interpretation and quantification of this pottery type as well as parallels for each cooking pot type in Egypt and Syria-Palestine.

⁴⁰⁹ Czerny 2002, 138, fig. 23, leaving no doubt about the Egyptian style of this pottery type.

⁴¹⁰ See Bader 2011a, fig. 11b (right); Bader 2013b, figs. 4a, 6; Bader 2016, figs. 1, 9e.

from Nile E2, a fabric very heavily tempered with mineral grains and fired to a dark brown colour. Technologically the lower part was coiled and turned on a turning device with the coils quite visible and obvious when examined. The rim was then added on last, probably, and also turned on a turning device/slow wheel. The connection between body and rim is usually quite visible.⁴¹¹ Unfortunately, very few vessels are represented by anything other than just a portion of the rim.⁴¹² The general form, at least, if not the fabric, can be traced back into the late Old Kingdom.⁴¹³ This cooking pot type is called a restricted bowl with folded lip. The second type of cooking pot found in Area A/II comprises very few examples of flat-based, straight-sided cooking pots (Fig. 12a),⁴¹⁴ which are influenced by a Syro-Palestinian tradition.⁴¹⁵ These were found in all three phases and their proportion in all three phases together amounts to only ~5.0–6.0% taking into account only the grand total of cooking pots as 100%, not the overall sum of pottery fragments.⁴¹⁶ The third type consists of “holemouth” cooking pots⁴¹⁷ with upright or ‘gutter’ rims (Fig. 12b–c), probably inspired by Syro-Palestinian examples (but these did not occur in the Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 in the settlement of Area A/II.⁴¹⁸) A fourth and extremely rare type of cooking pot is one with at least one horizontal handle and red slip and burnishing on the interior (Fig. 12d). Its identification as a cooking pot is derived from the general appearance of the ware rather than from observation of the sooting or smoke blackening.⁴¹⁹ Unfortunately, some confusion remains among scholars about which cooking pots are similar to Syro-Palestinian types. This is particularly problematic as they are frequently taken as proof for immigration from Syria-Palestine at Tell el-Dab’a. For example, Asaf Yasur-Landau overemphasises the flat bottom pots, which are only a very minor component in the repertoire.⁴²⁰ To sum up:

- a) Egyptian-style cooking pots, restricted bowls with folded lip – common;
- b) flat based and straight-sided ones inspired or influenced by Syro-Palestinian examples – very rare;
- c) locally-made gutter rim, hole mouth cooking pots – Syro-Palestinian (they do not yet occur much in the phases discussed for this settlement⁴²¹);
- d) handled cooking pots – extremely rare: only 2 examples in 68000 sherds.

3.5.3.1.1. Tools Made from Reused Pottery

Re-shaped and re-cut fragments of pottery vessels did occur. In addition, such tools included scrapers, sherd discs, spindle whorls and net sinkers and probably other implements such as lids, etc. were also made of disused imported vessels, such as a mortarboard (?) made from the handle of an amphora

⁴¹¹ Cf. Bader 2009, fig. 232.D65. Kopetzky 2010 does not include technological details in the drawings in her publications; the descriptions in the typological analysis of the pottery in the text are often insufficient.

⁴¹² Aston 2004, vol. 2, pl. 178–180, group 158b–c.

⁴¹³ Rzeuska 2006, pl. 2 (bottom row, centre vessel). See also 130–140 for the form in Nile B1 and pl. 141 for Nile E with a red slip. The technology is described as wheel thrown with body coiled.

⁴¹⁴ See Bader 2011a, fig. 11c (left); Bader 2015b, fig. 7b.

⁴¹⁵ See Klassen 2015 for the variety within this cooking pottery.

⁴¹⁶ The quantitative analysis of the whole settlement in all three phases is not yet finalised, thus this result must be considered preliminary. However, the absolute number of fragments will not change.

⁴¹⁷ Ultimate certainty on the body shape of this vessel type cannot be provided from the specimens found in Area A/II, Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. Bader 2009, types 96, 97, 100b and 103 on pages 394–411 for some examples. These are the cooking pots Bietak was referring to in Bietak 1991b, cf. Bader forthcoming-a.

⁴¹⁹ Bader 2009, 398–401, type 99a; represented in the settlement in K465.

⁴²⁰ Yasur-Landau 2010, 21–22.

⁴²¹ Some can be found in Area F/I in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 but in quantities below 1% of all pottery, cf. type 451 in Kopetzky 2010, vol. 2, 366–367.

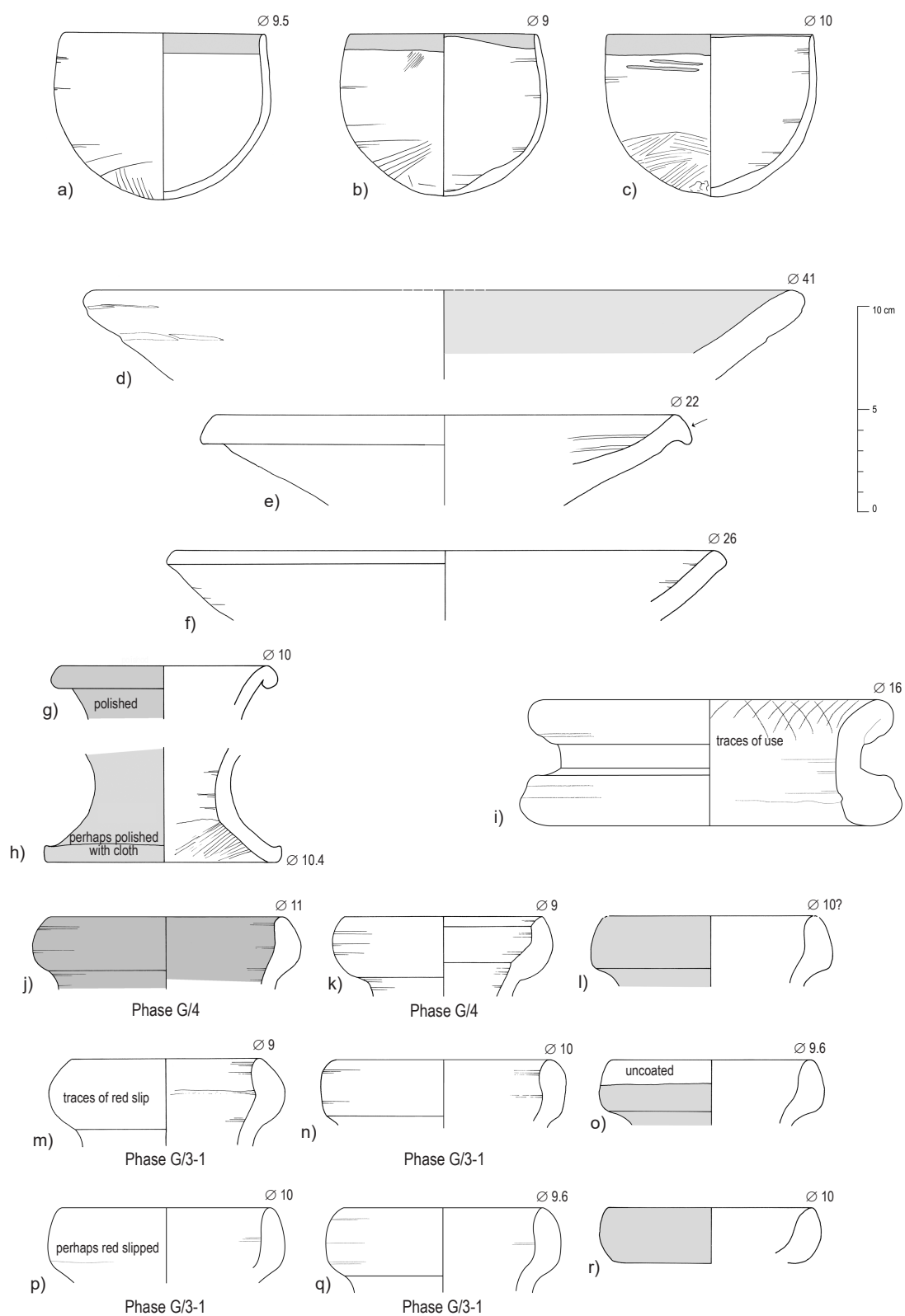


Fig. 8 Selection of settlement pottery of Phase G/3-1 (drawn by B. Bader)

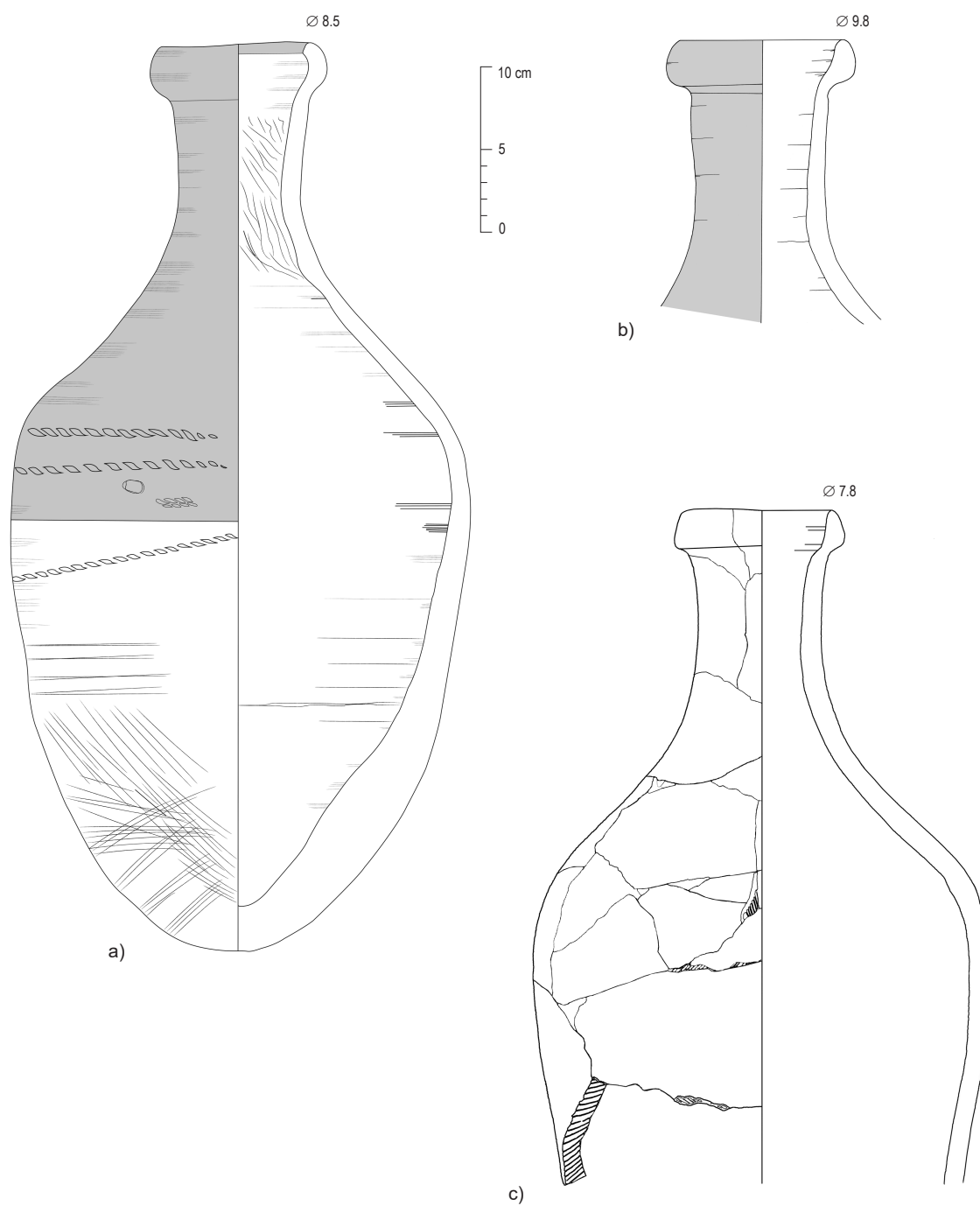


Fig. 9 Selection of settlement pottery of Phase G/3–1, storage/‘beer’ jars (drawn by B. Bader)

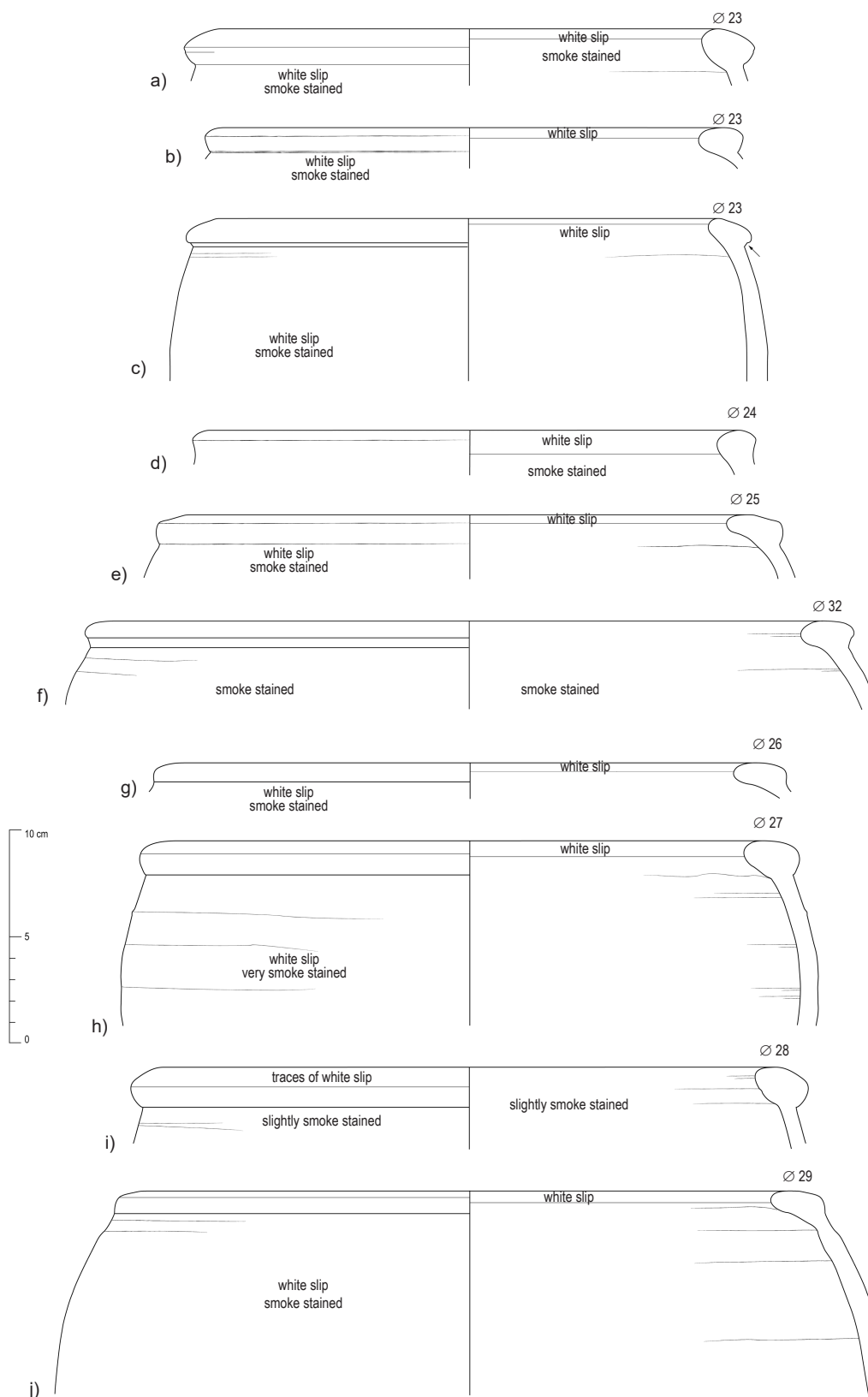


Fig. 10 Selection of settlement pottery of Phase G/3-1, restricted bowls with folded rim (drawn by B. Bader)

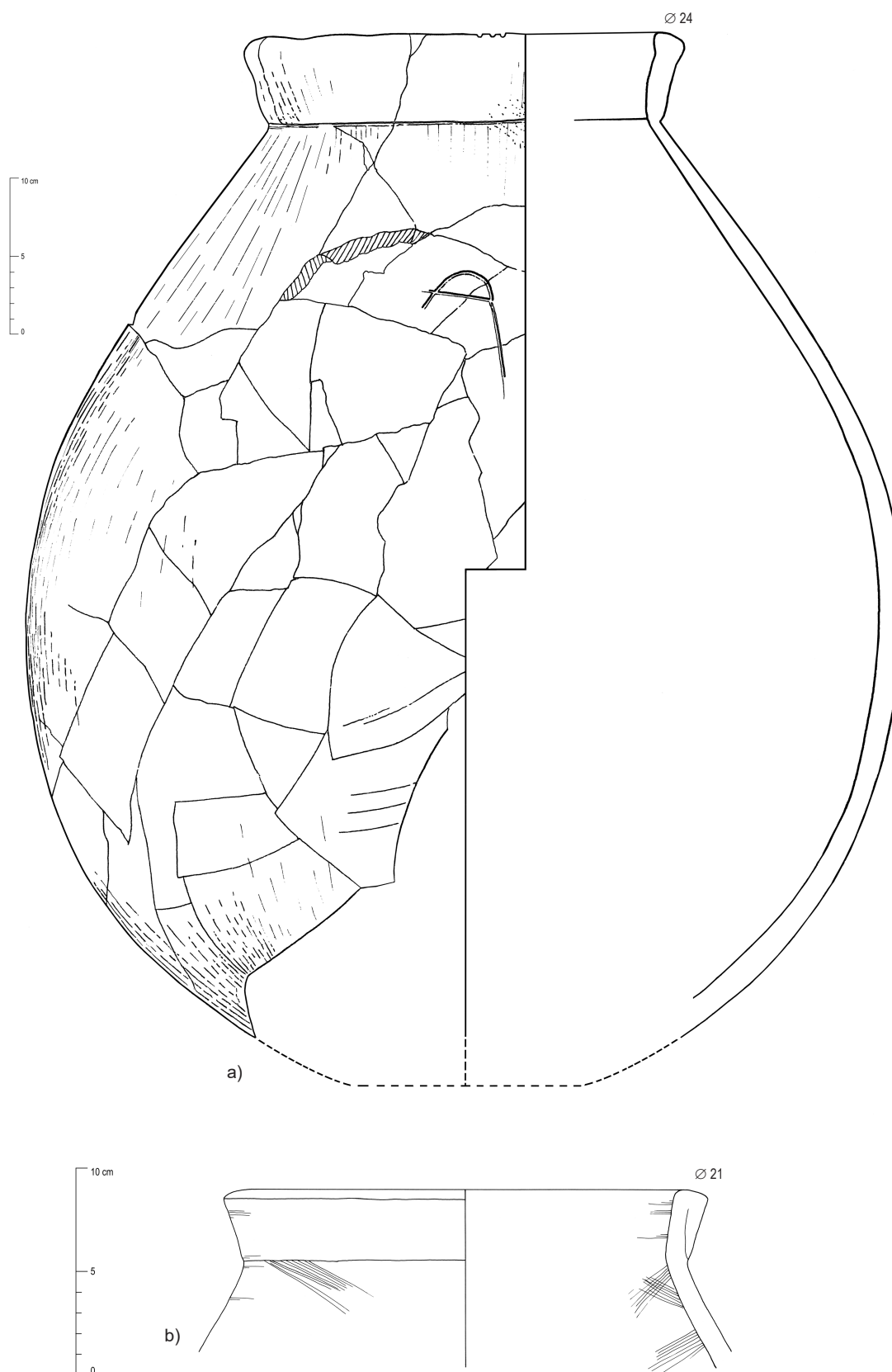


Fig. 11 Selection of settlement pottery of Phase G/3–1: storage jars with wide mouth (drawn by B. Bader)

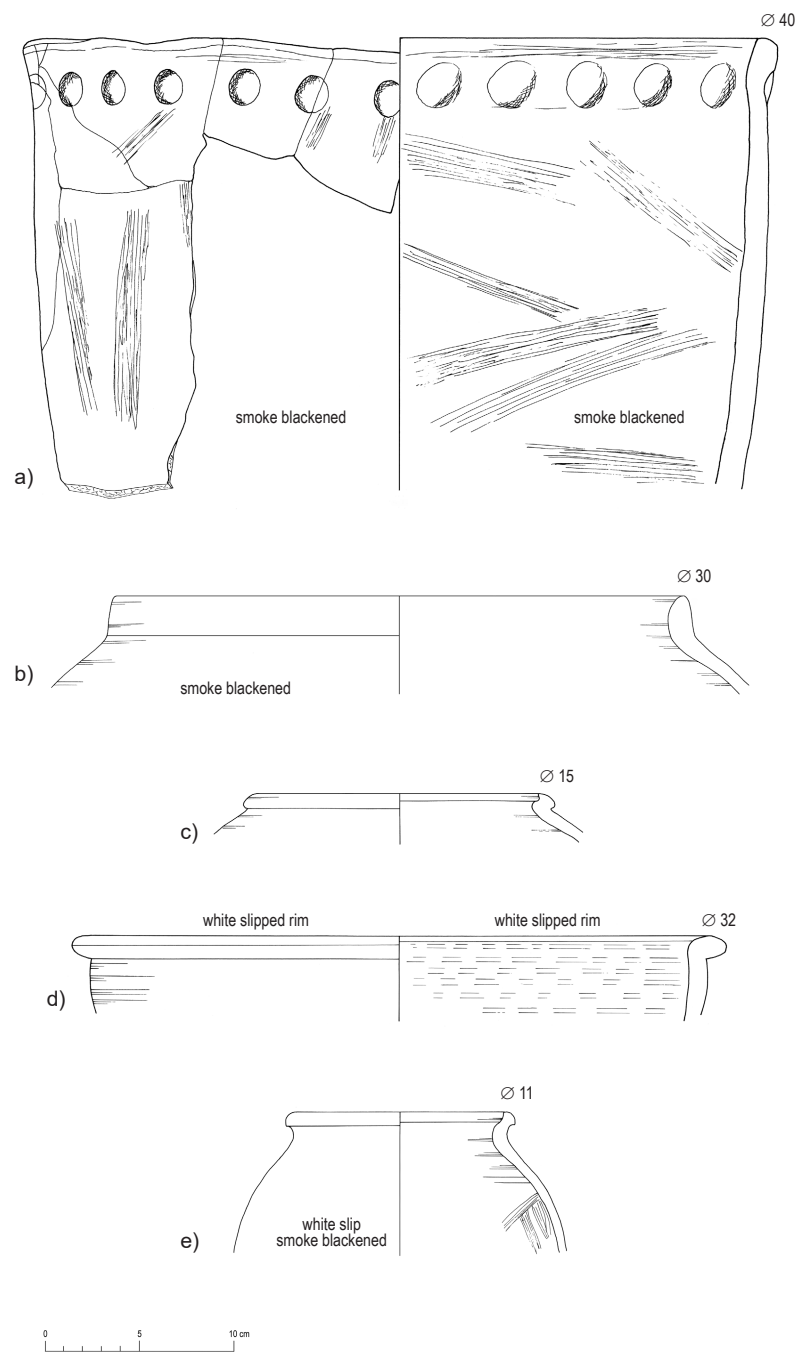


Fig. 12 Selection of cooking pottery of various phases (after Bader 2009)

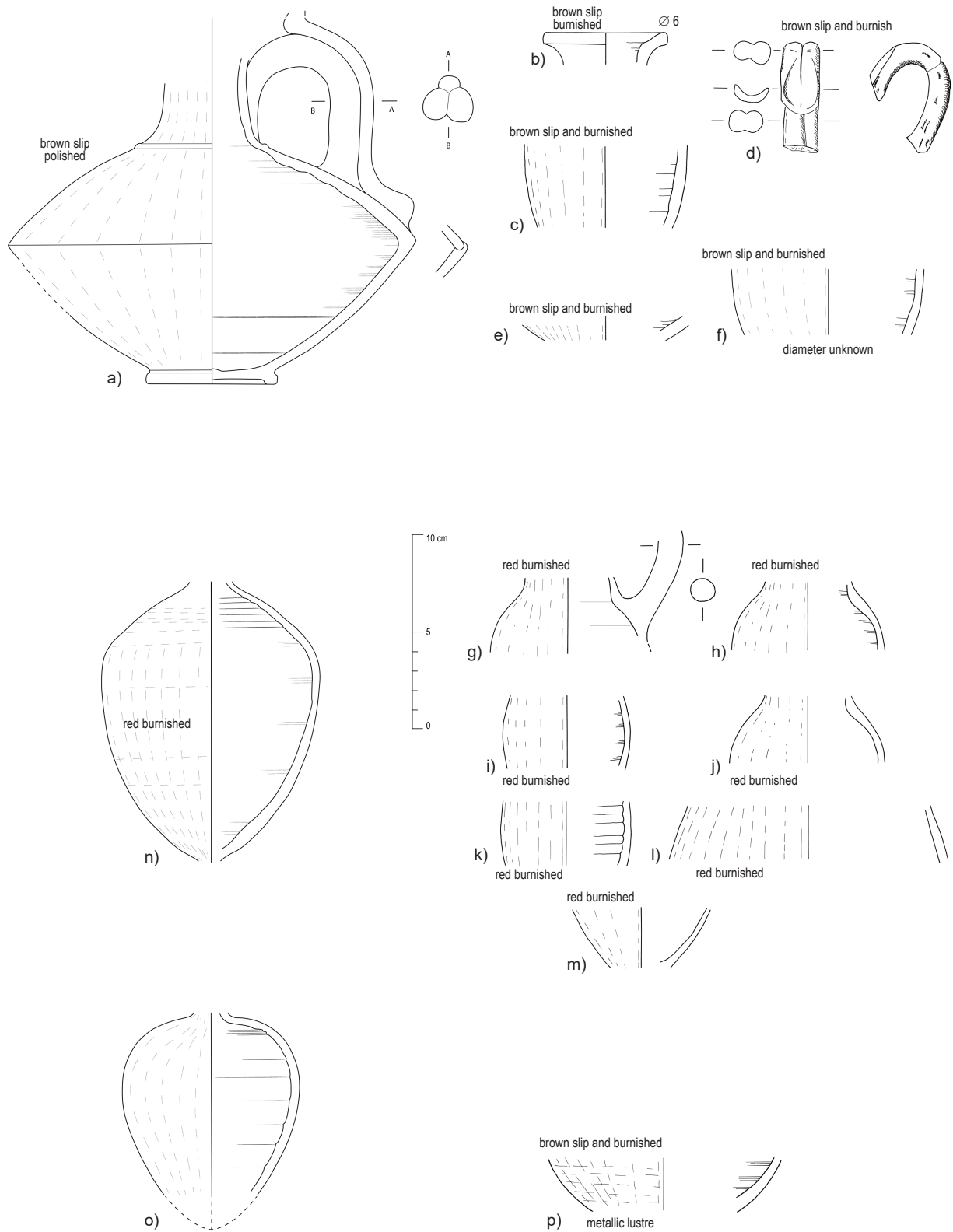


Fig. 13 Selection of imported fine wares (drawn by B. Bader)

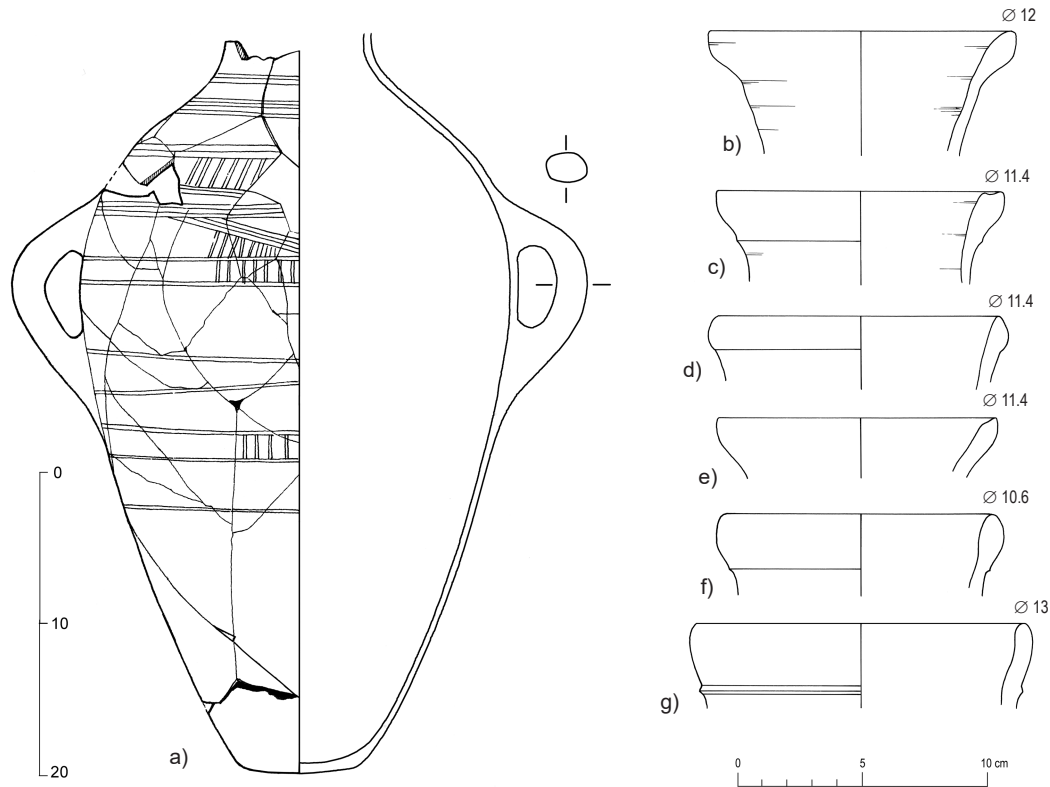


Fig. 14 Selection of imported transport amphorae (drawn by B. Bader)

(K2030-60837). As this happened after the vessels broke, it is clear that the disused materials were used by the individuals who lived at Tell el-Dab^a. The re-use of broken pottery as tools has not been published much from Syro-Palestinian sites, but recently more evidence for this habit has been appearing in publications⁴²² because the habit of recycling materials is a deeply entrenched human trait. Reused pottery fragments are certainly also recorded at roughly contemporary Egyptian sites such as Memphis⁴²³ and specialised implements such as net-sinkers at Elephantine.⁴²⁴ Personal experience at sites of the First Intermediate Period/early Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom as well as at cemeteries and temple sites suggest that this kind of material is more widespread than hitherto acknowledged.

3.5.3.2. Chipped Stone Tools

Chipped stone tools were not found in great quantities. The 35 pieces or so came mostly from refuse or floor deposits, none of them *in situ*. The range of forms includes sickle blades with silica sheen

⁴²² E.g. Falconer and Fall 2006, fig. 7.17 and app., small finds with descriptions; Bidmead 2013, 1095–1096, spindle whorls “often made from reworked sherds or lids”; Blockman and Sass 2013, 872–875, reworked sherds, interpreted as lids, not illustrated. Sherd discs found at Hazor, Intermediate Bronze Age: Ben-Tor et al. 2017, 186–187, fig. 6.13.12; Middle and Late Bronze Age: fig. 7.25.1–3, sherd discs interpreted as stoppers in Stratum XVII – MBIIb, also fig. 7.78.9, a rectangular reused sherd interpreted as a burnisher LBA; also in Yokne’am in the MBA: Ben-Tor et al. 2005, fig. II.2.42–44, sherd discs; fig. II.9.26, sherd disc; fig. II.16.12–14, sherd discs; fig. II.19.17–19, sherd disc; fig. II.19.20, base possibly reused as loom weight; and in most following later strata at this site.

⁴²³ Giddy 2016, 114–118, 207–211.

⁴²⁴ Von Pilgrim 1996, 278.

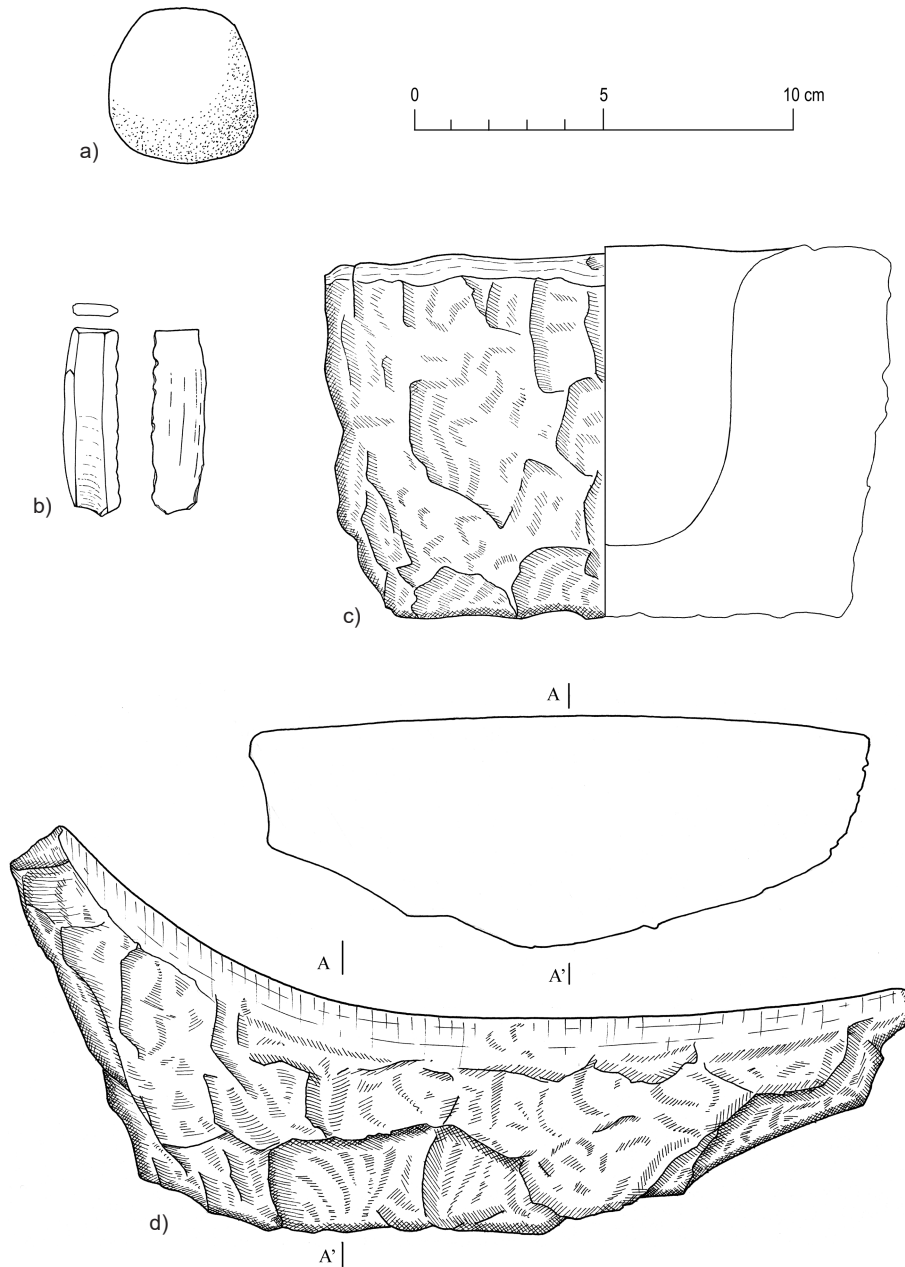


Fig. 15 Selection of objects made from stone (after Bader 2015b, fig. 8)

(Fig. 15.b), pointed tools, perhaps knives, as well as broken implements and also a few flint flakes or debitage, which seems to show that at least some of the tools were made directly at Tell el-Dab^a and not just received as ready-made items. One bi-facially worked larger knife⁴²⁵ was found built into a wall and has been interpreted as a possible foundation offering. Apart from this very remarkable piece, with much labour invested, the other tools are just that, everyday tools and fragments thereof. They exemplify a probably limited activity in the agricultural sphere as well as possible use in leather making, basketry or woodwork. As a relatively rare object class, possession of such an item might mark social elevation,

⁴²⁵ Bader 2020, fig. 6.49 with discussion.

craft specialisation or, at the other end of the spectrum, show a limited necessity for such tools although its rareness might also be related to a certain method of waste management.

3.5.3.3. Grinders/Pounders, Querns and Mortars

Grinders/pounders (Fig. 15a), which are very difficult to differentiate,⁴²⁶ were found in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in addition to a few querns: simple stone implements with a concave surface (Fig. 15d), which are seemingly universal in Egypt and Syria-Palestine. Comparable, roughly contemporary items have been found in Memphis⁴²⁷ but also at Tell el-Hayyat.⁴²⁸ In essence they all look very similar although the raw materials seem to differ depending on local availability. Two mortars (Fig. 15c) made of limestone were also found in Compound 1.⁴²⁹

3.5.3.4. Animal Bones

The animal bones, found in large numbers in the settlement's refuse, were analysed by Joachim Boessneck and Angela von den Driesch.⁴³⁰ Due to access to the original documentation kindly provided by Angela von den Driesch (†)⁴³¹, it was possible to assign the animal bones to the various contexts of the material discovered from 1975 to 1985. While the occurrence and frequency of the various species in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 are already published,⁴³² it is now possible to add information on the spatial distribution and quantity of the various species to the find contexts.⁴³³

The distribution and relative proportions of the single species are relatively similar across the settlement, without much deviation in the single contexts. Recurring are cattle, sheep/goat and pig, and cattle and sheep/goat usually dominate in turns. This pattern may be status-related. Pig is constantly present, but in small quantities. There are very few contexts in the settlement, however, where no pig bones appear at all. Fish, birds, tortoises, river mussels and equids appear infrequently and so far no clear pattern is discernible. A few of these bones bore marks of being prepared to be used as tools such as awls while others were transformed into a number of astragali, frequently suspected to have been used for playing games.⁴³⁴ Unfortunately, the find circumstances of these latter objects do not add substantial insights into who made or used them.

3.5.3.5. Archaeo-Botanic Remains⁴³⁵

Due to the waterlogged soil conditions the number of preserved archaeo-botanic remains is quite low. They were only preserved if charred by fire.⁴³⁶ The relevant work was conducted in 1984/85 in three seasons and is therefore only informative on a few archaeological features and for a more general, albeit limited, glimpse into the general environmental circumstances of the site. Three samples relate to the late Middle Kingdom settlement of Area A/II from squares A/II-m/18 and A/II-p/21.⁴³⁷ The species

⁴²⁶ Giddy 2016, 99–108.

⁴²⁷ Giddy 2016, 95–99.

⁴²⁸ Falconer and Fall 2006, e.g. 121, fig. 7.6, lower row.

⁴²⁹ See Bader 2015b for examples of querns, mortars and grinders in fig. 8a, c–d; Bader 2020, fig. 8.5–6.

⁴³⁰ Boessneck 1976; Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992.

⁴³¹ A. von den Driesch (pers. comm. 15 August 2009).

⁴³² Boessneck 1976; Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992. In Area A/II, a total of 25166 mammals, birds, fish, reptiles bones and molluscs were analysed for the 9 phases in total. The species include cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, donkeys, and dogs in quite high proportions, while cats, gazelles, African grass rats, hippopotami and rabbits were very rare. Cf. Boessneck, von den Driesch 1992, 67–68, 72–74. There were also tortoises, cf. 134, tab. 80, and molluscs: *Aspatharia*, cf. 135, tab. 82.

⁴³³ See Bader 2020 for details.

⁴³⁴ See Bader 2015b, fig. 5, as an example.

⁴³⁵ Thanheiser 1987.

⁴³⁶ Thanheiser 1987, 1.

⁴³⁷ Thanheiser 1987, 31, tab. 5, samples T3, T7 and T8.

identified by Ursula Thanheiser are the following:⁴³⁸ *Triticum monococcum/dicoccum* – emmer wheat (ein/zweikorn); *Triticum cf. aestivum* – common wheat; *Triticum* sp. – wheat, spelt; *Hordeum sativum* – barley; other grain; *Vicia ervilia* – ervil; *Lens culinaris* – lentil; *Lathyrus sativus* – chickling pea; *Pisum sativum ssp. elatius* – pea; *viciae* indet. – vetch; *Vitis vinifera* – vine; *Phoenix dactylifera* – date palm; *Chenopodium album/murale* – white goosefoot/nettle-leaved goosefoot; *Polygonum/Rumex* sp. – knotweed/dock; *Rumex* sp. – dock/sorrel; *Trifolium* type – clover; *viciae* – Gunn’s 2nd category-vetch; *Fabaceae* indet. – clover of various kinds; *Geranium/Erodium* sp. – cranesbill, storksbill; *Sinapis/Raphanus* sp. – mustard, runch; *Malva* sp. – mallow; *Hyacinthaceae* indet. – e.g. grape hyacinth; *Cyperus* sp. – flat sedge; *Schoenoplectus* sp. – triangular club-rush; *Scirpus* sp. – variant of sedge family; *Carex* sp. – sedge; *Cyperaceae* indet. – variants of sedge family; *Lolium* sp.; *lolium* type – variants of rye grass; *Bromus diandrus/squarrosus* – great brome; *Phalaris* sp. – canary grass; *Crypsis* sp. – foxtail prickleglass; *Poaceae* indet. – grass family.

Species occurring more often comprise *Triticum monococcum/dicoccum* – emmer; *Triticum* sp. – wheat, spelt; *Trifolium* type – clover; *Cyperaceae* indet. – flat sedge; *Lolium* type; *Phalaris* sp. – canary grass; *Poaceae* indet. – grass family. This selection gives evidence about the use of grain as a foodstuff in the settlement as well as the general weeds und grass types growing in the delta at the time of the settlement in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1, which may well have been used for the production of ropes, mats, and basketry.

3.5.3.6. A Group of Green Siltstone Objects

Although the collection of various green siltstone objects made of the same, or macroscopically very similar looking, material were neither found together as a single assemblage nor in their original use context but in refuse deposits,⁴³⁹ it seems worth mentioning them here because this stone type does not occur naturally in the delta.⁴⁴⁰ The raw material for the seemingly odd collection of objects (trapezoidal palettes; grinders; a tapering cylindrical object; a fragment of an open stone vessel and a cuboid weight) must have come from outside the delta.⁴⁴¹ While the Middle Kingdom settlement of Lahun contains a similar range of objects, it remains unclear whether they were made from the same raw material. Interestingly the contemporary layers of the settlement at Memphis did not yield comparable finds.⁴⁴² These objects hint at a more complicated structure of procurement of more high status objects and social stratification, but it remains difficult to bring this in accord with the remainder of the archaeological record and the layout of the houses under discussion. Due to the sturdy nature of the finds, the level of damage to some of these objects and the fact that they would probably have been continuously reused, it cannot be dismissed that objects such as these might have belonged to the earlier mansion of Phase d/1 in Area F/I and been later dispersed. Against such a hypothesis stands the fact that such finds in Area F/I are even rarer and only occur in later phases.⁴⁴³

3.5.3.7. Stone Vessels

The settlement in area A/II contained very few fragments of stone vessels; those which do exist come almost exclusively from rubbish/dumps or floor deposits, representing vessels and fragments fallen out of use. The repertoire includes a few kohl pots and fragments thereof as well as a fragment of a ‘calcite-

⁴³⁸ Thanheiser 1987, 31–32, discussion 24–66.

⁴³⁹ See Bader 2015c for details.

⁴⁴⁰ There is no natural stone resource in the delta in general.

⁴⁴¹ One of the sites known is the Wadi Hammamat and the eastern desert, cf. Aston et al. 2000, 13, 57–58.

⁴⁴² Giddy 2016.

⁴⁴³ Müller 2012, 33, trapezoidal palette “Grünstein” [greenstone], str. c; 172, muller/grinder str. b/3; 178, small unidentified object with inscription str. b/3; 287, open stone vessel fragment str. b/2; 246 palette made of “Schiefer” [slate], str. b/2.

alabaster' vase with corrugated neck, which is quite common in Middle Kingdom Egypt.⁴⁴⁴ Also, one stone lid of 'calcite-alabaster' was found.⁴⁴⁵ Whether the heavy tripod of igneous, dark greenish rock⁴⁴⁶ should be considered a vessel or rather an implement for producing something cannot be ascertained from the find context.

3.5.3.8. *Stone Implements*

The only other stone implements found comprise triangular stones with holes in the apex which were usually interpreted as loom weights⁴⁴⁷ but appear, in part, to be too heavy for weighing down warp threads (709 g and 93.4 g, respectively). Moreover the vertical loom is not attested in Egypt until quite some time later.⁴⁴⁸

3.5.3.9. *Items of Personal Adornment*

Items of personal adornment in Area A/II are very rare. Except in the tombs (see below), there are only a few singular beads of spherical⁴⁴⁹ and tubular shape⁴⁵⁰ made of faience. It is possible that due to the waterlogged soil such items were too frail to survive in larger numbers. A pear-shaped pendant made from shell with a perforation at the apex⁴⁵¹ was found as well as a small faience ring with a diameter of 7.7 cm. This latter object could have been a bracelet for a child.⁴⁵² These objects were found on the floors of houses. It is particularly noteworthy that no toggle pins or fragments thereof were discovered in the late Middle Kingdom settlement of Area A/II. Only one tomb contained a pin with an eye,⁴⁵³ but incomplete and very corroded. Also scarabs were not found in the settlement but in some of the tombs. Some of those were interpreted as having been made in a local workshop,⁴⁵⁴ which may be the indication of the beginning of a regionalisation process at this site. Another item of personal adornment whose appearance is noteworthy is the gold shell pendant in one of the tombs,⁴⁵⁵ which occurs in many Egyptian cemeteries in the Nile Valley.⁴⁵⁶ The scarcity of such finds gives the impression that jewellery was a rare item in the late Middle Kingdom settlement, carefully looked after and taken to the tomb with the deceased as a prized possession or handed down to surviving relatives.

3.5.3.10. *Artistic Production Made from Various Materials*

Objects that can be assigned to 'artistic' production in the most inclusive sense of the word are very rare and they were generally not found in particularly well-defined contexts. The modelled head of a clay statue with a finished base of the neck represents a very crude rendering of a human head.⁴⁵⁷ The head

⁴⁴⁴ See a thorough discussion of all occurrences in Egypt, Nubia and the Levant as well as an interpretation of the vessel type: Bader 2011c. The fragment found in the late MK settlement in Area A/II can be found in Bader 2011c, fig. 2d.

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. Bader 2020, fig. 6.44.

⁴⁴⁶ Bader 2020, fig. 4.21–22.

⁴⁴⁷ Bader 2020, figs. 3.8a, 3.9a, 8.5a.

⁴⁴⁸ See discussion and references in Bader 2020, 72–75.

⁴⁴⁹ Bader 2020, figs. 6.23–24 (reg.no 1703); 6.17 (reg. no 1104).

⁴⁵⁰ Bader 2020, 253.

⁴⁵¹ Bader 2020, fig. 6.32–33.

⁴⁵² Bader 2020, fig. 6.21–22.

⁴⁵³ Bader 2011a.

⁴⁵⁴ Mlinar 2004, 113–122, figs. 4.1, 6a.1–3.

⁴⁵⁵ Bader 2011a, n. 6.

⁴⁵⁶ E.g. Dubiel 2008, 154–157. See also Oppenheim et al. 2015, 240–241, cat. no 271 B, from the tomb of Senebtisi at Lisht.

⁴⁵⁷ Bader 2020, fig. 3.32–33. Incidentally, because it was found at Tell el-Dab'a, it was initially classified as the head of an 'Asiatic', although no parallels exist, and the workmanship is not detailed enough to compare it to other depictions of 'Asiatics' known from ancient Egyptian artistic production.

of an animal figure is probably represented by a white faience fragment from the fill of a room.⁴⁵⁸ The rectangular base of a small statuette made of limestone with a hieroglyphic inscription represents the only inscribed find from the settlement of the late Middle Kingdom.⁴⁵⁹ The preserved name of a female individual may be read as Te(t)j or Tjj. Most probably the statuette was intended for a tomb and ended up in a refuse deposit in a silo, either due to being broken or being robbed. Finally, at least two statues of monkeys or baboons were found in rubbish deposits of the settlement: a small and damaged one in the fill of a room and a larger one, broken into two fragments.⁴⁶⁰ The baboon/monkey statues do not include any receptacle/dish on top of their heads, as they are known from crude human figures for example from the site of Lahun.⁴⁶¹ Another figure without its head was also found, which is probably to be reconstructed as a crude human figure (and perhaps with a ‘dish’). It was found beside a silo, seemingly abandoned there. These three sculptures seem to belong to the settlement layers of the late Middle Kingdom, even if they were not found in situ. Three more statues or stands (one monkey/baboon and two crude humans) were found in later phases (F and F–E/3, and one in the later Second Intermediate Period) in Area A/II, also out of context.⁴⁶² Two of these comprise a flattened and a hollowed out top, respectively. While Irene Forstner-Müller assumed that these statues were offering stands and belonged to Phase F and the contemporary temple or the tombs (although they could not be assigned to a single tomb),⁴⁶³ it is still possible that all those crude statues/stands should actually be assigned to the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II as several similar ‘dwarf’ statues were discovered in domestic contexts in the roughly contemporary settlements at Lahun,⁴⁶⁴ Lisht⁴⁶⁵ and Memphis.⁴⁶⁶ These items might have been evidence for popular (Egyptian) household cults, which became dispersed after the settlement ceased to be inhabited and the function of the area changed fundamentally. The crude human statues, mostly interpreted as dwarfs, might have a link to the Egyptian god Bes, while the baboons were at first connected to ancestor cults, then related to border area symbolism and finally to the sun and the Egyptian god Thoth.⁴⁶⁷ Which of these aspects is relevant here is difficult to ascertain without written sources, but there seems to be a connection between the two.⁴⁶⁸

3.5.3.11. Balance Weights

Within refuse deposits of the late Middle Kingdom settlement in area A/II four balance weights have been found, three in a rectangular shape⁴⁶⁹ and one in the form of an almost perfect sphere.⁴⁷⁰ The material is a greenish, very dense stone or limestone and the balance weights are 29 g, 195.6 g, 215 g and 404 g without inscriptions. The latter 404 g balance weight must be given as current weight, as obvious damage to the object due to reuse resulted in it being less than its original weight, which remains unknown. The 29 g weight fits approximately to Jean Vercoutter’s copper standard of 27.5 g⁴⁷¹ as does

⁴⁵⁸ Bader 2020, fig. 3.13.

⁴⁵⁹ Bader 2020, figs. 8.7e–8.8b.

⁴⁶⁰ The larger statues will appear in the second volume of the excavation report, forthcoming. For the smaller one, see Bader 2020, fig. 2.13.

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Oppenheim et al. 2015, 205–206, cat no. 139.

⁴⁶² Forstner-Müller 2008, 117–119, pl. 22d, 23.

⁴⁶³ Forstner-Müller 2008, 117–119, pl. 22d, 23.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. Petrie 1890, 26, ‘dwarfs’ – the exact location of the find is not noted; Petrie 1891, 11, pl. 6.9, ‘dwarfs’.

⁴⁶⁵ Mace 1921, 12, fig. 3; both dwarfs and monkeys/baboons were interpreted as household gods. Unfortunately, the find positions and dating are not unequivocal.

⁴⁶⁶ Jeffreys 2012, 6.

⁴⁶⁷ For an overview with bibliography Winter 2006; Larcher 2016.

⁴⁶⁸ Dasen 1993, 124–125, 133, 156–159.

⁴⁶⁹ See Bader 2015c, reg. no 3258c: figs. 3e, 4c–i, 34–38, cuboid oblong weight with domed top made from siltstone; Bader 2020, reg. no 2396a–b: fig. 8.14a–b, cuboid, made of limestone.

⁴⁷⁰ Bader 2015b, K875, figs. 3b, 4a, 33–34, spherical polished object, made from siltstone. Whether this is indeed a weight as suspected cannot be proved to date.

⁴⁷¹ Vercoutter 1977; Bader 2015c, 34–38, for discussion and more bibliography.

the one weighing 195.6 g (7.1 times). The others are perhaps too damaged to be able to be calculated as multiple of the copper standard of 27.5 g. However, the existence of these weights, without going too deeply into the topic here,⁴⁷² provides evidence for some economic activity carried out in the settlement involving the proportioning of a relatively precious commodity, perhaps metal such as copper. Parallels for such weights are plentiful in Egypt in the Middle Kingdom. Pictorial scenes from the Old Kingdom also show that weighing metals in connection with metal/bronze/gold or of (semi)precious stone working were both known already at that time.⁴⁷³

The exact dating of the activity in connection with weighing cannot be ascertained as the ending up of the (reused) weights in refuse deposits provides a *terminus ante quem*. It is, thus, unlikely that they were used as weights in the phase in which they were found. It cannot be ruled out that they were used in the context of the high-status mansion of the earlier Phase G/4, but it is also possible that activities carried out in the settlement in that period were ordered from there. Several barrel- and cylindrical-shaped small balance weights of hematite came to light in a deposit close to a door in a wall in Phase G/4 in the eastern part of the settlement. This seems to be a special and unique deposit as it not only contained balance weights but also selected pebbles and very rounded, hard stone objects. Whether these objects were used for weighing or have another meaning assembled in this unusual context remains unclear.⁴⁷⁴ A possible affinity to the ancient Near Eastern weighing systems cannot be ruled out.⁴⁷⁵

3.5.3.12. What Was not Found

As already mentioned previously, no organic materials were preserved, except sometimes as a discolouration of the soil; thus, wooden coffins and reed mats could be seen and documented but were never recovered. Seal impressions were also not recovered (if they existed in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II as no obvious administrative building was excavated) because it was not realised that drying and sieving the spoil would yield even unfired items (see Chapter 3.4). Apart from these artefact classes, very little faience could be recovered,⁴⁷⁶ which might also be explained by the waterlogging of the soil. If faience is encountered, it is either completely without glaze or so frail that it crumbles away. Metal implements do not exist in the find lists, not even in the form of small fragments (in contrast to Memphis,⁴⁷⁷ for example). This may be rooted in part in the early excavation techniques, at least in the beginning, but is more likely due to a general reuse of metal items as a valuable raw material for new objects (also in connection with the two ovens found in Area A/II).⁴⁷⁸ It should be mentioned that some metal objects (belt and dagger) were only preserved in one of the tombs.

3.5.4. Summary

The case study of a sizeable part of the late Middle Kingdom settlement Area A/II and even a superficial comparison shows without a doubt that an overall generalisation should not be made even in contemporary neighbourhoods at the same site without a careful analysis of similarities and differences.⁴⁷⁹ Taking into account that overviews become more specific and complicated, they also open up the possibility of allowing for a comprehensive and ‘untidy’ picture of diverging activities and a wider spectrum of inhabitants. Without minutely differentiating between areas of settlements, I would like to repeat that the differentiation in the case of Tell el-Dab’a (Areas A/II, F/I, A/IV) is entirely due to modern excavation

⁴⁷² A more detailed discussion will be presented in Bader forthcoming-d.

⁴⁷³ Klebs 1915, 84–85, fig. 68.

⁴⁷⁴ Bader forthcoming-d for a detailed discussion of this topic.

⁴⁷⁵ Cf. Rahmstorf 2010.

⁴⁷⁶ Bader 2020, 255–256.

⁴⁷⁷ Giddy 2016, 77–89.

⁴⁷⁸ See Bader 2020, 85–101.

⁴⁷⁹ Bader 2011a.

choices and nomenclature. Based on archaeological evidence the full variety of activities and remains cannot be entirely grasped and is generalised, but more details are provided than usually.

General tasks that were carried out in the settlement in Area A/II can be summarised as follows:

- involvement in movement of contents from imported transport amphorae due to the high percentage of such vessels in many contexts recovered (on average between 10 and 25% of the pottery in many contexts though not all, in others up to 45%)
- grain probably cultivated (sickle blades with silica sheen), but it remains unknown if that was the only way of provisioning or if grain was also delivered there in containers such as the Marl C-storage jars
- production of flour/bread due to presence of grinders and querns
- available meat included cattle, sheep/goat, pigs, fish, birds, etc; thus, rearing cattle, sheep/goat and pigs, and catching the other animals was part of the daily routine
- reeds are attested in the floral remains: production of baskets, mats, sandals, ropes, etc. therefore likely
- industrial kilns and limestone moulds hint at small-scale metal tool production (more evidence in Area F/I)
- some activities with weighing of metal or (semi)precious stones but unclear if contemporary or perhaps in an earlier phase
- building most likely carried out by local inhabitants rather than by specialised work forces sent by a central administration, although all over Egypt the general proportions of housing units are congruent⁴⁸⁰

What remains unclear:

- No fragments of the typical Middle Kingdom bread moulds found in their thousands at Memphis were recorded in Area A/II, Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1. Whether this happened due to procedures during the excavation (the author never saw the body fragments that were recorded by fabric and count only) or due to the sheer non-existence of this vessel type, therefore marking a crucial socio-economic difference to other late Middle Kingdom settlements, must remain unclear. However, if body sherds had been present, the odd rim fragment would also have been preserved, thus the latter option seems more likely. Sadly, this point cannot be proven in retrospect. If the bread moulds were indeed absent, it is possible to think that bread was baked in another form, perhaps in the form of some kind of flat bread that did not require any ceramic mould. It is also possible that, for some reason, the long tubular bread mould known from contemporary tomb scenes and contemporary settlement sites (e.g. Kom Rabi'a/Memphis) were not required in this settlement area. Perhaps the resulting type of bread is to be connected to some cultic activity that did not take place in Area A/II or it was produced elsewhere, if it was required, for cultic reasons or not.
- Textile production is not proven but is likely due to the presence of some pierced sherd discs, probably spindle whorls (the so-called loom weights appear in part to be too heavy to be practical and might actually be tethering stones for small animals, or devices to stretch cords or something similar) – the vertical loom was not proven to have been used in Egypt until the 18th Dynasty.

⁴⁸⁰ Bader 2018a.

- Where did pottery production take place? In part it seems to have been local, in part vessels were imported from the Memphis-Fayoum region and Upper Egypt, probably for the sake of the content rather than the vessels. No workshops were found; industrial ovens in A/II seem too small for large-scale pottery production. Moreover, pottery production and firing are to be expected on the outskirts of the settlement, due to the emission of smoke and bad smells.
- The evidence from the chipped stone tools is not clear: too little debitage was recorded to theorise about entirely local production.⁴⁸¹ Whether this is because of differential collection modes during the excavation must remain unclear.

3.6. DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIAL CULTURE AT TELL EL-DAB^a

In the following table a step by step sketch of the development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab^a is presented (Tab. 1). The table is an attempt to visualise the slight changes in material culture over time, and to divide the changes into stages. This endeavour is being made to illustrate the subtlety of change over time in a clearer way than hitherto, although expansive illustrative material cannot be provided due to space restrictions.⁴⁸² Items with ambiguous cultural affiliations are omitted (e.g. earrings, diadems⁴⁸³) without clear parallels in either Egypt or Syria-Palestine.

This table also bears witness to the fact that deep cultural influences and cultural traits impinge upon Tell el-Dab^a from the Syro-Palestinian area to the north. These influences have been reconstructed as a more or less constant flow of Syro-Palestinian migrants coming from the northern Levant, who then settled at Tell el-Dab^a and monopolised it.⁴⁸⁴ While there is not much doubt about the influence and the presence of ‘Asiatics’ at the site (as a harbour), the modalities of cultural negotiation of the inhabitants remain one-dimensional (see discussion of identities in Chapters 1–2) as all changes in material culture are assigned to the immigration or forced settlement of ‘Asiatics’, which is not necessarily the case. As a border area between Egypt and Syria-Palestine the delta site provides the ideal circumstances to test the frontier concept with its actually materialised ‘Third Space’ in between the two geographical areas.

Aided by this Table, I would like to highlight and equate certain developmental stages to some of the concepts discussed above in order to make differences and similarities as clear as possible and to obtain another viewpoint on the people living at the site and using the material culture (see below).

Due to the preliminary state of research and publication in some areas, only Areas F/I, R/I, A/II and A/V can be included in full but not the others (F/II, R/II, R/III, R/IV). However, singular aspects could be included in as far they have been published. The dating and position of the harbour⁴⁸⁵ is not yet completely clear and more research is necessary to gain a better understanding of its circumstances and its influence on the social fabric of the site. Its existence is not doubted here, although it cannot be taken

⁴⁸¹ The extent of the information missed was fully realised during collaboration at Elephantine with Michael Brandl (pers. comm. 24 February 2020), head of the Raw Material Lab of the Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology, Austrian Academy of Sciences, who has developed a Multi-Layered-Chert-Sourcing-Approach in order to obtain more information pertaining to a deeper insight into procurement processes. In this approach, not only the actually recognisable tools are analysed, but also the debitage and cores, which are often also used as tools in antiquity. Moreover, they prove the presence of various techniques of chert knapping.

⁴⁸² Frequent misrepresentation, in part due to the still somewhat erratic state of publication of various areas and phases at the site, floats through the research literature, e.g. Staubli 2016, 53–57, which is full of wrong factual information about the admittedly very complex situation of the finds. Moreover, Thomas Staubli speaks of a definite Levantine presence in Rifeh and Mostagedda without references and without stating what he bases this assumption on.

⁴⁸³ According to Philip 2006, 220, headbands are not so unequivocally Near Eastern as a variety of headbands are also known from Egypt; however, for Schiestl 2009, 93, the simple ones are Near Eastern, while those with additional elements are Egyptian. Interesting questions are raised by special items such as the Salhiya treasure. Cf. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 68.136.1. Arnold 1995, 15, no. 9.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. Schneider 2018 for bibliography.

⁴⁸⁵ Tronchère et al. 2008.

into full account due to a current lack of data. Considering that the previous excavations brought to light many different types of contexts in various phases, it seems acceptable to rely on this information. Of course, later amendments will have to be made, when more data are published in due course. The publications which contain all the details necessary for the production of this table are Bietak 1991b; Hein 1992; Kopetzky 1993; Bietak 1996a; Eigner 1996; Czerny 1999; Bietak, et al. 2001; Mlinar 2001; Aston 2002; Schiestl 2002; Aston 2004; Hein and János 2004; Mlinar 2004; Forstner-Müller 2008; Müller 2008; Bader 2009; Bietak and Forstner-Müller 2009; Schiestl 2009; Bietak 2010; Kopetzky 2010; Müller 2012; Czerny 2015; Forstner-Müller, et al. 2015; Bader 2018a; Bietak 2019; Bader 2020; Bader forthcoming-a; Bader forthcoming-d.

The designation as ‘Egyptian’ or ‘Syro-Palestinian’ is not intended to assign a label of ethnic identification to any of the objects listed below or the people who used them. The label is supposed to note the geographical area in which most of the physical parallels were found.

Although this looks like a “trait list” approach, I argue that it is not one⁴⁸⁶ but a descriptive summary of appearance and change observable in the material culture from an archaeological point of view.

Some singular traditions are kept throughout the various stages of development derived from both cultural traditions, for example kohl pots of stone are used throughout as well as Middle Bronze Age weaponry; the habit of being buried in coffins/sarcophagi as well as supine extended (albeit rarely) (Fig. 7a) occurs sometimes even as late as in stage VII. On the other hand the supine burial position, fully on the back with both shoulders on the ground and legs semi bent and turned to one side (Fig. 7c–d) also occurs in most of the stages. Such a burial position is known, e.g., from Ashkelon⁴⁸⁷ and Jericho.⁴⁸⁸ Also truly contracted positions are found in most phases for children and young adults (Fig. 7e). Moreover, there are at least eight variations of burial positions.⁴⁸⁹ This observation alone exemplifies that a normative expectation of all burials being the same cannot be fulfilled.⁴⁹⁰

As for the presence or absence of mummification, which can unfortunately not be proven due to the soil conditions of the site, Schiestl says “Ein Fehlen der Mummifizierung ist nicht unägyptisch.”⁴⁹¹

Other traditions such as the so-called “servant” burials of young adult women only exist in Phase F and are then abandoned.⁴⁹² An intricate mix of cultural traditions and use of objects developing over time is known locally and makes the material culture of the area of the north-eastern Nile Delta unique in its composition in the Second Intermediate Period, while some elements of material culture, of course, occur in the Nile Valley, but not those that are the result of material entanglements with northern traditions. This does not mean to say that local developments, even drastic ones, did not take place in other parts of the Nile Valley during the Second Intermediate Period (due to new, as yet unpublished, results of the current project ‘Beyond Politics’, which is led by the author).

All preserved kings’ names and titularies at the site are combined from Egyptian elements and the Epithet *ḥꜥꜣ ḥꜣswt*. However, they were all found out of context.⁴⁹³

The changes in the percentages of imported pottery, local pottery and locally-produced pottery following the Middle Bronze Age corpus during the phases is not repeated in the table above as specialised studies covering this theme have been conducted.⁴⁹⁴ However, the actually imported material is mostly dominant, while the proportion of locally-produced Middle Bronze Age pottery types is much lower. For Phase G/3–1 it was found that only around ~5% were local copies of the MBA corpus and the other 23% true imports consisting of a majority of transport amphorae attesting to a considerable

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. above, 34.

⁴⁸⁷ Baker 2006.

⁴⁸⁸ Kenyon 1965, fig. 94, tomb B 48; fig. 105, tomb M11; fig. 124, tomb J54 as examples.

⁴⁸⁹ Forstner-Müller 2008, 38–39.

⁴⁹⁰ See also Bader 2011a for a chart with burial positions in Phase G/3–1.

⁴⁹¹ [A lack of mummification is not un-Egyptian] Schiestl 2009, 75.

⁴⁹² Bietak 1989.

⁴⁹³ Bietak et al. 2001, 55–59; Candelora 2017.

⁴⁹⁴ Bader 2009, fig. 395; Kopetzky 2010, 175.

Stage	Settlement (Area/s)	Cemetery	Ritual sphere	Phase	Periodisation	Traits of material culture
I	Planned settlement (F/I) stratum 'e'	Not found	Not found	N/1–3	Late 11 th / early 12 th Dynasty	No trace of non-Egyptian material culture (no commodity exchange with Syro-Pal. attested)
Ia	Planned settlement (R/I)	Not found	Egyptian Temple (R/I)	M-I	12 th Dynasty (end unclear)	Some commodity exchange (imported pottery) starts; otherwise no non-Egyptian material culture
II	Small one-room houses of low status with precinct walls (A/II); one larger house reconstructed to a Syro-Pal. middle room house; one Egyptian bi-partite house; otherwise not many structures preserved (F/I); perhaps settlement started in A/IV	No tombs in current exposure in A/II; Tomb clusters south of 'settlement' in separate cemetery, much robbed in F/I: tombs with equid, sheep, goat in pit in front; mostly single and double burials, few of more individuals; no amphora burials of children. Egyptian: tomb architecture, backing bricks (Schiestl tomb type 5b exists since OK in Egypt) layout of cemetery in F/I with tree pits and internal measurements of tombs in Egyptian cubits, sarcophagus, wooden coffins, 'Pilzkopf'-statue, scarabs, use of hieroglyphs, jewellery, play things, cosmetic items (tweezers), cattle as food offering, chipped stone knives, sand bricks 33.5–35cm long (~2/3 of Egyptian cubit of 52.5cm); supine extended burial position. Syro-Pal.: weapons (tin bronze), metal belt, toggle pin?, sheep and goat as food offering, contracted burial position pottery of both	No sacred architecture found; no temples	H	Late 12 th Dynasty	Settlement: pottery includes both local Egyptian and Syro-Pal. imported pottery, straight-walled cooking pots in v. minor quantities local and imported; Egyptian cooking pots in majority; imported pottery (commodities) in increasing quantity. In tombs: Egyptian and Syro-Pal. items are used – material culture of both traditions; these items were perhaps used differently, but they keep the traditional forms of both areas of influence; relational entanglement in equid pits with chipped stone knives; the depiction of the man with mushroom coiffure is an 'Asiatic' topic by means of Egyptian artistic canon
IIa	Small one-room houses of low status with precinct walls (A/II); high-status mansion following Egyptian plan and measured in Egyptian cubits; now houses in between the rows of tombs (F/I); settlement with bipartite houses (A/IV)	One tomb of a child in A/II in bricked pit; high status burials south of mansion in 4 rows (often robbed), with equid burials + sheep and goat, single and double burials, a few multiple burials (F/I); no amphora burials of children. Egyptian: tomb architecture, wooden coffins, sand bricks mostly 36–39 cm (~2/3 of Egyptian cubit of 52.5 cm) long; amulets, scarab with Egyptian title, cosmetic items (kohl pots), jewellery, statuette, unscripted stela, food offerings cattle, extended supine burial position. Syro-Pal.: weapons, contracted burial position, food offerings sheep/goat; pottery of both	One very small broad room temple "Gebäude. 19" (F/I); chapel over tomb (F/I); small offering pits at tombs (F/I)	G/4	Early 13 th Dynasty	Settlement pottery includes both local Egyptian and Syro-Pal. imported pottery, local straight-walled cooking pots in v. minor quantities, Egyptian cooking pots in majority. In tombs: Egyptian and Syro-Pal. items are used – material culture of both traditions: used perhaps differently, but they keep the traditional forms of both areas of influence; superstructures of the tombs are reconstructed after Egyptian models, other tomb architecture has overwhelmingly Egyptian parallels; Egyptian administrative title on amethyst scarab; stray find of hematite cylinder seals: entangled object of Egyptian manufacture with 'Asiatic' motif (Baal)

Tab. 1 Development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab'a

Stage	Settlement (Area/s)	Cemetery	Ritual sphere	Phase	Periodisation	Traits of material culture
III	Domestic architecture differentiated in size; possible use of Egyptian cubit system (A/II); reuse of large mansion for simple dwellings (F/I); settlement (A/IV); all areas include bipartite house ground plans and simple one-room houses	Few tombs of one man, women and children in A/II; continued use of Eg. and Syro-Pal. tradition in the same tombs (A/II, F/I); many more tombs in F/I – 1 equid burial; no amphora burials of children (A/II); 4 amphora burials of children (F/I); single, double and multiple burials. Egyptian: amulets, kohl pots, cosmetic items (tweezers), beads, stone vessels, jewellery; stone sarcophagus; extended supine burial position. Syro-Pal.: weapons (tin bronze), belt, toggle pins; contracted burial position; pottery of both	No temples; perhaps “Totenhaus” tradition starts (F/I); offering place L123 (A/II); small offering pit (A/II)	G/3–I	Early to first third of 13 th Dynasty	Settlement pottery includes both local Egyptian and Syro-Pal. imported pottery, straight-walled cooking pots in v. minor quantities, Egyptian cooking pots in majority, Egyptian settlement pottery starts to develop regional differences (e.g. beer jars, hemispherical cups); sporadic local production of Syro-Pal.-style pottery begins: e.g. dipper juglets, dishes with internal lip. In tombs: Egyptian and Syro-Pal. items are used – material culture of both traditions: used perhaps differently, but they keep the traditional forms of both areas of influence; Egyptian scarabs (Type I); early local scarab workshop starts to be active (Types II and III)
III	Egyptian domestic architecture in various sizes, no evidence for ‘epidemic’ (A/II); reuse of mansion for simple dwellings (F/I)	Pit tombs with victims of ‘epidemic’ (F/I); perhaps 2 such tombs in a silo (A/II), no evidence in other areas so far	No sacred architecture found; no temples	End G/I	Towards mid-13 th Dynasty	Most of these burials were not given any grave goods; they were seemingly buried quickly; hence ascribed to an infectious disease
IV	A/II not used as settlement area; settlement with increasingly different house sizes and Egyptian domestic architecture (bipartite ground plan) (A/IV, F/I)	Area A/II (Aam scarab); A/IV; F/I Some individuals buried in rectangular wooden coffins; one in stone sarcophagus without lid; some of them had equid burials in front of tombs; single, double and multiple burials; no amphora burials of children in A/II; 6 amphora burials in F/I. Egyptian: amulets, beads, stone vessels, kohl pots, cosmetic items (mirror, tweezers); faience objects; jewellery; rectangular coffin – wood; extended supine burial position probable; Syro-Pal.: weapons (tin bronze), belt, toggle pins; metal headband – simple strip; contracted burial position; beginning of locally-produced juglets; pottery of both	Temple III with Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II); “Totenhäuser” (F/I); servant burials (A/II, F/I)	F	Early SIP (= mid-13 th Dynasty)	Settlement pottery develops Egyptian local pottery corpus with obvious predecessors, regional changes happen (beer jars, hemispherical cups, use of different types), last appearance of few straight-walled cooking pots, first appearance of locally-produced gutter rim (Syro-Pal.) and (unparalleled) cooking pots in slightly higher percentage; in majority always Egyptian cooking pots; (2 imported gutter rims known at Tell el-Dab’a), imports continue (juglets, amphorae); local ceramic production of previous imports increases in types, but some imports still come in (dipper juglets, dishes with internal lips, Tell el-Yahudieh juglets, burnished juglets). In tombs: items of material culture remain true to cultural sphere: Egyptian amulets; kohl pots; beads; pottery; gold shell pendants; stone vessels; Syro-Pal.: weapons, toggle pins, some pottery still imported (juglets, amphorae), most juglets still imported, some locally made; Egyptian group of scarabs (Type I) and early local scarab workshop is active (Types II and III)

Tab. 1 continued Development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab’a

Stage	Settlement (Area/s)	Cemetery	Ritual sphere	Phase	Periodisation	Traits of material culture
V	Settlement with increasingly different house sizes (F/I) and Egyptian domestic architecture (bipartite ground plan), A/IV, F/I)	Area A/II; A/IV; F/I Amphora burials of children (A/II, F/I); equid burials in front of tombs; single, double and multiple burials. Egyptian: amulets, kohl pots, jewellery, clappers; pottery offering table; faience objects and vessels; copper mirror; extended supine burial position probable. Syro-Pal.: weapons (copper); belt; toggle pins; contracted burial position; increase in locally-produced juglets; pottery of both	Temples with Egyptian (A/II: temples I, V) and Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II: temples II and III); offering pits (A/II, F/I); “Totenhäuser” (F/I)	E/3	Early SIP (= mid to late 13 th Dynasty)	Settlement pottery develops Egyptian local pottery corpus with obvious predecessors, regional changes happen (beer jars, hemi. cups, etc.), gutter rim cooking pots continue in low quantities, Egyptian cooking pots continue to be in the majority as in all levels; imports continue (mainly juglets, amphorae); local repertoire continues (dipper jugs, dish with intumed lip, more juglets are now locally produced). In tombs: items of material culture listed (left) remain true to cultural sphere (locally-made juglets increase; amphorae); almost no dipper juglets are from now on imported; early local scarab workshop is still active (Types II and III)
VI	Settlement with different house sizes, some so-called villas (F/I); Egyptian domestic architecture with bipartite ground plan (A/IV, F/I)	Area A/II; A/IV; F/I equid burials in front of tombs; amphora burials of children (A/II); single, double and multiple burials. Egyptian: beads, pottery (only hemi. cups, medium jars, odd ‘beer’ jars); extended supine burial position probable (legs slightly bent). Syro-Pal.: toggle pins, some imported juglets still there (A/II); contracted burial position; local weapon production of bronze (moulds found in this phase)	Temples with Egyptian (A/II: temples I, V) and Syro-Pal. ground plans (A/II: temples II, III); Temple in F/I too badly preserved to judge ground plan; offering pits (A/II, F/I)	E/2	Middle SIP (= 15 th Dynasty in the delta)	Settlement pottery now starts to change more obviously; a wide range of new forms (straight based cups, range of jars, range of dishes); falling out of use of known MK types (‘beer’ jars, large Nile C dishes, most Marl C-pottery, etc.), vessel shape and surface treatments are increasingly ‘mixed’ without exact parallels in Egypt or in Syro-Pal., esp. various juglets; gutter rim cooking pots continue but rare; Egyptian cooking pots dominate by far but were made from slightly finer material – overall raw material for pottery changes, also firing technology; drop in imported pottery vessels (therefore commodities), locally produced amphorae. In tombs: items of material culture listed (left) remain true to cultural sphere; locally-made juglets further increase; Palestinian scarabs were imported (Type IV)
VIIa	Palace in F/II (unclear when it started exactly) – plan with Syro-Pal. + Egyptian influences; settlement (A/V) – Egyptian domestic architecture with bipartite ground plan	Area A/II; A/IV; F/I equid burials in front of tombs (A/II); amphora burials of children; single, double, multiple burials. Egyptian: kohl pots, stone vessels, beads, pottery (only hemi. cups); faience objects, extended supine burials. Syro-Pal.: local weapons (copper), toggle pins, headbands metal – simple strips; contracted burial position; little pottery still imported (juglets, amphorae)	Temples with Egyptian (A/II: temples I, V) and Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II: III); Temple (F/I-badly preserved); L81 (F/II); offering pits (A/II, A/V?); F/I, F/II?)	E/1	Middle SIP (= 15 th Dynasty in the delta)	Settlement pottery repertoire consolidates new forms from previous phase, no more MK types (except some Marl C-storage jars), only Egyptian cooking pots continue in finer raw material; low percentage of imported pottery continues (therefore commodities), locally-produced amphorae; appearance of Marl F pottery (probably locally produced) – vessel types similar to local new repertoire. In tombs: items listed (left) of material culture remain true to cultural sphere; juglets; most are locally made now; local pottery repertoire used; late local workshop of scarabs (Types VIa+b) active; some Palestinian scarabs imported

Tab. 1 continued Development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab^a

Stage	Settlement (Area/s)	Cemetery	Ritual sphere	Phase	Periodisation	Traits of material culture
VIIb	Palace (F/II) (unclear when started exactly) – plan with Syro-Pal. (non-axial agglutinating plan) + Egyptian (long magazines) influences; settlement (A/II; A/V) with Egyptian domestic architecture with bipartite ground plans; settlement R/III – higher density of buildings (more urban)	Few tombs (A/II); amphora burials of children (A/II; A/V); single and double burials. Egyptian: amulets, pottery (only hemi. cups), beads; supine extended burial position. Syro-Pal.: pins; local weapons (copper), metal headbands – simple strip; all juglets locally produced except Cypriot ones (rare); amphorae only for children's burials; contracted burial position	L81 (F/II); temple (F/I badly pres.); temples with Egyptian (A/II; temple V) and Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II; temple III); offering pits (A/II, A/V, F/I)	D/3	Late SIP (= 15 th Dynasty in the delta)	Settlement pottery repertoire consolidates new forms from previous phase, no more MK types (except some Marl C-storage jars), only Egyptian cooking pots continue; locally produced amphorae, low percentage of imported pottery continues (therefore commodities); more Marl F pottery (probably locally produced) – vessel types similar to local new repertoire (badly preserved). In tombs: pottery repertoire comprehensively local with few exceptions; the few non-ceramic items still adhere to their original cultural sphere listed (left); increase in local juglets; scarabs imported from Syro-Pal., Egyptian scarabs (old?); late local workshop of scarabs (Types VIa+b) with active use of Syro-Pal. motifs
VIIb	Settlement (A/II; A/V) – Egyptian domestic architecture with bipartite ground plans; R/III – higher density of buildings (more urban)	Singular tombs with one or more bodies (A/II, A/V); Amphora burials of children (some A/II, A/V). Egyptian: beads, stone vessels, kohl pots, pottery (only hemi. cups); supine extended burial position; one use of limestone sarcophagus without lid. Syro-Pal.: weapons, pins, very rare imports: juglets and amphorae; contracted burial position	Offering pits (A/II, A/V); temples with Egyptian (A/II; temple V) and Syro-Pal. ground plan (A/II; temple III)	D/2	Late SIP (= 15 th Dynasty in the delta)	Settlement pottery repertoire consolidates new forms from previous phase, no more MK types (except some Marl C-storage jars), only Egyptian cooking pots continue; locally-produced amphorae, low percentage of imported pottery continues (therefore commodities); more Marl F pottery (probably locally produced) – vessel types similar to local new repertoire (badly preserved). In tombs: pottery repertoire comprehensively local with few exceptions; the few non-ceramic items still adhere to their original cultural sphere listed (left); further increase in local juglets; late local workshop of scarabs (Types VIa+b)

Tab. 1 continued Development of the use of material culture at the site of Tell el-Dab'a

trade volume.⁴⁹⁵ As such, this cannot be taken as evidence for a community of ‘Asiatics’ present at the site. From the late Second Intermediate Period the locally-produced and materially-entangled pottery is dominant. It should be noted that this pottery was then called “Hyksos pottery”, a term which I now would like to avoid with utmost care because it evokes the wrong associations as ‘Hyksos’ is not an ethnic assignation! The types that were calculated for the Middle Bronze Age corpus at that time no longer included the ‘restricted bowls with folded rim’ cooking pots in recognition of their Egyptian cultural background,⁴⁹⁶ which is why the percentages put forward by Bietak were much higher, namely 20 to 40% of the overall assemblage.⁴⁹⁷ This rough estimate needs to be seen in context with subsequent studies of settlement pottery which updated this statement.⁴⁹⁸ However, the following quote continues to be repeated in the literature in various versions to demonstrate or even prove ‘Asiatic’ immigration into Tell el-Dab’a: “the rise in Levantine Middle Bronze Age pottery at Avaris (Tell el-Dab’a) from about 20 to 40% of the ceramic assemblage as the Hyksos cemented power in the eastern delta”.⁴⁹⁹

Often this (or similar quotes) were taken out of context and do not specify which pottery was involved (the largest amount is derived from imported transport vessels up to the late Second Intermediate Period) and in which time frame. Thus, a quick reference to the situation at Tell el-Dab’a does not justify the complicated diachronic developments at that site and should therefore be avoided.

After characterising the development of the material culture in the liminal area/borderland between territories with two different cultural traditions and various social groups the question arises as to which ‘culture contact model’ would be the most suitable to apply to the circumstances described above. The comprehensive presentation of developments covering all phases of the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period precludes an isolated view of the late Middle Kingdom settlement, its material culture and its further development.

This is even more important as the in-depth study of material culture of the internal sphere as opposed to the external sphere⁵⁰⁰ of the inhabitants of this settlement⁵⁰¹ showed that in the settlement itself no characteristics of a ‘retained identity’ of immigrants could be traced except in the very minor component of flat-based cooking pots (see above). There is currently no other evidence for the presence of Syro-Palestinian cultural traits in the settlement of the Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1 in Area A/II,⁵⁰² excepting a few of the tombs found in Area A/II⁵⁰³ which contain some items of Syro-Palestinian influence and probably even origin. Considered on its own, the settlement area could be used to say, following the culture-historical paradigm, that the inhabitants were very well ‘acculturated’ to Egyptian lifestyles, with a few individuals keeping to their Syro-Palestinian funerary traditions. But this only holds true if it is assumed that they are all Syro-Palestinian immigrants in the first place according to the historiographic tradition. And if they were ‘acculturated’ already, a ‘deep change’ would have had to take place to explain the more radical developments of the later stages (VI–VII) in the late Second Intermediate Period (see below).

⁴⁹⁵ Bader 2009, 683–685, fig. 395, calculated from the overall pottery repertoire of that phase. Kopetzky 2010, 175, arrives at a percentage of ~20% for Phase G/3–1, again ~5% constituted of locally copied material. See also Bader forthcoming-a.

⁴⁹⁶ Bader 2009, 683–686; Kopetzky 2010, 175.

⁴⁹⁷ Bietak 1991a, 38; Bietak 1997, 31.

⁴⁹⁸ Aston 2002, 43: “Despite the fact that Bietak ... clearly wrote MB IIA [pottery] types, this has entered secondary literature as of Canaanite origin, which has unfortunately led to some confusion, helped perhaps by Bietak’s later assertion that 20% of settlement material consisted of imports.”

⁴⁹⁹ E.g. Smith 2018, 135, quoting Bietak 1996, but without page number. This is not a singular occurrence, just an example. And Phase G/3–1, to which Smith refers here, has in effect nothing to do with ‘the Hyksos’ because they only come to power as 15th Dynasty several archaeological phases after Phase G/3–1.

⁵⁰⁰ Burmeister 2000; cf. Chapter 1.

⁵⁰¹ Project V 147-G21 ‘Foreigners in Ancient Egypt – The Archaeology of Culture Contact’, funded by the Austrian Science Fund from 2010–2014 and led by the author.

⁵⁰² The lack of well-excavated and published contemporary settlements in Egypt and Syria-Palestine has been pointed out several times. Most probably the picture will change with more research.

⁵⁰³ Bader 2011a.

One of the conceptual problems in this reconstruction is the culture-historical paradigm which identifies the material culture and its cultural tradition with the individual using it. If it is accepted that culture is not a closed, ‘pure’ system but permeable and fluid, it starts to matter less from our etic point of view whether an individual should be considered as an ‘Egyptian’ or a ‘Syro-Palestinian’, an opinion that person might not have personally held. A variety of cultural traditions were known at the site and they were used variably by the people living there over time, very much in the way of a reed mat woven of different (cultural) strands and coming out in ever different patterns, which could be very individual and even unique so that no two of them match each other exactly. Such ‘mats’ are the product of creativity deeply inherent in human nature and may again bring to mind the stress on the local identity from Egyptian texts pointed out by means of textual sources.⁵⁰⁴

Thus, the use of the depoliticised concept of relational entanglement would seem suitable here for items of material culture used together in a context, while it remains difficult to ascertain if the use pattern or purpose would have been any different than in the cultural tradition, where most parallels are to be found. For example, the use of kohl pots as cosmetic containers is widely attested in the tombs of the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, but it is not possible to judge at this point whether different products were contained or the use of the product or the vessel was any different to the use attested at sites in the Nile Valley. Whether the pigment contained in the cosmetic vessels might have been used to paint different parts of the body than those attested by contemporary tomb scenes found in Upper Egypt, cannot be assessed with the currently available evidence. Here more research needs to be undertaken.

The use of the concept of material entanglement is proposed for the material culture consisting of elements derived from both spheres of influence at the site of Tell el-Dab’a, namely and most obviously in the pottery corpus developing in stages VI–VII, but also in some respects for scarab production.

With regard to the spatial proximity of the two territories of what constitutes today Egypt and the southern Levant, the concept of borderlands in the widest sense of the word, without it meaning necessarily an actual frontier/physical obstacle, as a “zone of interaction” is attractive.⁵⁰⁵ Magdalena Naum describes it as “an area located between two political and cultural units that may be cut by the border. It is a zone of separation and junction helping to define the identities of places and people on either site of the imaginary or real border through the negotiations that take place at the frontier. ‘Frontier’ in such an understanding always involves at least two groups or nations that interact with each other.”⁵⁰⁶

3.7. SOCIAL IDENTITIES IN THE SETTLEMENT

Based on the briefly listed results (see above 3.5.), the possibilities of assessing the aspects of identities as outlined in the chapters above are discussed here.

3.7.1. Sex and Gender

The only unequivocal evidence for the *presence of both sexes* in the settlement is derived from the burials of male and female individuals from Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom. While there were seven female individuals buried, there was only a single male burial. Whether it is possible from this evidence to assume kinship groups inhabiting the single compounds of the settlement remains unclear, even more so as not each compound actually includes a group burial. The male burial contained a high-status weapon as well as a metal belt derived from the Syro-Palestinian cultural tradition. As the only male it

⁵⁰⁴ Moers 2015.

⁵⁰⁵ Naum 2010. Please note that although it is known in principle that in all probability there was a border of some kind (“The walls of the ruler” in the Story of Sinuhe set in the time of the early Middle Kingdom), the actual form of such a construction (“fortress”) is not at all well known.

⁵⁰⁶ Naum 2010, 103.

is possible that he was the head of the household in Compound 1,⁵⁰⁷ but the lack of other male burials would either put women forward as the heads of the other households (particularly the woman found in the stone sarcophagus in Compound 12)⁵⁰⁸ or this traditional/patriarchal approach cannot be applied, which is, in fact, likely. It is even less likely that the male individual has to be considered the founder of the whole neighbourhood of A/II because for such a status the tomb does not seem significant enough (especially compared to high status burials of earlier phases, e.g. G/4). However, it should be noted that the large Temple II was built on top of Compound 1 and in the same orientation, after a hiatus in a later phase.⁵⁰⁹ Although no real evidence exists, a foundation myth for Temple II could be proposed in connection to the male burial and Compound 1 in Phase G/3–1. This is, of course, mere speculation because Compound 1 is not even the largest house precinct in Area A/II.

The data collected for the case study do not provide additional clues for archaeological correlates of a gender-specific division of labour or other evidence which would allow such a division to be reconstructed, namely the production of agricultural surplus and full-time craft specialisation (unequivocal evidence for agricultural activity is very minor; presence of purpose-built workshops not proven but presence of kilns/furnaces). Some pottery types, esp. the cooking pottery – restricted bowls with folded rim – are so diverse in minute morphological details that a part-time manufacturing mode per household is conceivable, while the gender of the makers remains elusive. Consequently, a collaborative effort in the division of labour, perhaps on a household level, can be suspected which may not be divided strictly by gender/sex but perhaps by availability.⁵¹⁰ After all, the rather high rate of imported goods would probably require a certain quantity of workers, if not full-time at least part-time, whatever the type of work would have been like: such as (un)loading ships, distributing cargo, manipulating contents, etc.

The archaeological record of the settlement also does not give explicit information on particular uses of space for tasks considered in Egyptological circles as gender specific such as weaving, cooking and baking or similar activities, which are traditionally viewed to have been done by women in Egyptology. This opinion is influenced mainly by pictorial evidence from tomb scenes in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, where men are conducting craft production, and building, while women are often shown fulfilling household tasks. Whether this is a true mirror of life's daily reality, or if it only concerns craft production on a near industrial level, to which remuneration is attached, remains unclear. However, gender-specific division of labour has come under scrutiny and general critique as many of these ideas are derived from traditional views and limited ethnographic data, which may or may not be applicable to the current ancient Egyptian case study.⁵¹¹ Moreover, recent research reminds us that such a model of labour division, i.e. that unpaid (productive) work connected to the domestic sphere is assigned to women, has increased in importance only since the Industrial Revolution, when unpaid domestic work was devalued by the increasing importance of the capitalist system.⁵¹² Such a situation need not to be suspected for the past.

The gender dimorphism found in that settlement area has led to a supposition that indigenous women married men who had immigrated (see above). But such a hypothesis is hard to prove currently without textual evidence.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁷ See Bader 2011a; Bader 2015b.

⁵⁰⁸ Bietak 1991b, 33–34; Bader 2020, 194–199.

⁵⁰⁹ Bietak 1996a, fig. 30.

⁵¹⁰ Wright 2016. I would like to thank the discussion group Zentral-Café and esp. R. Jung, E. Weiss-Krejci and V. Müller, for inspiring hours on this topic.

⁵¹¹ Gosselain 2016.

⁵¹² Kovacevich 2016, 301–303. I would like to thank Reinhard Jung for providing and discussing this paper in the framework of the Zentral-Café in the OREA Institute (pers. comm summer 2018).

⁵¹³ Cf. Dietler 2010, 112–113, who uses textual evidence for highlighting the possible roles of native women without the possibility of verifying any of them through archaeological finds on the part of the writer.

3.7.2. Children

The presence of children in the settlement could only be ascertained by the presence of three burials of small children: one under the floor of a room (Phase G/4 – unpublished) and two in courtyards (Phase G/3–1). No obvious toys (perhaps one clay figurine of an animal?)⁵¹⁴ or specialised pottery for feeding children (spouted cups of any kind) were found. No objects that could be considered to have been made by children such as unfired mud vessels or objects of smaller size were found. For Egypt in general it remains uncertain whether the objects so often referred to as toys in excavation reports are really to be identified as such because comparative studies of household contents and children's burials are still to be undertaken. Frequently 'dolls' and similar items are with reason interpreted as ritual items.⁵¹⁵ More research is necessary, however, to get a clearer idea of how children passed their leisure time.

As an integral part of kinship-groups, children would have been part of any household production of crafts such as foraging, potting, weaving, cooking, etc. as well as the potential translators and transmitters of cultural traditions in a possible 'middle ground', although some conditions required for this concept are absent, such as the "creative misunderstanding" crucial for the creation of something unparalleled.

3.7.3. 'Profession'

Agriculture and food processing are represented by finds of rubbing stones and querns, chipped stone tools with a silica sheen and a selection of animal bones and botanical remains. Foraging activities such as some fishing, hunting and collecting of local resources, in addition to probably collecting reeds for weaving mats, and sandals may be assumed, although, none of these, of course, are preserved nor are the localities where these items may have been made or used. The same holds true for craft production using leather and animal hides, for example. The existence of workshops cannot be proved due to the unspecific nature of finds in such an area. The most likely location for craftwork seems to be the courtyard areas in the vicinity of the rather small housing units (e.g. the triangular space east of Compound 1; the space east of Compound 11 also partly enclosed by a precinct wall; the northern and southern area in Compound 12, Fig. 5).⁵¹⁶

Some evidence for industrial activity can be found at the very end of the settlement phase (Phase G/1 to F) because two horseshoe-shaped ovens were identified. Nevertheless, it remains unclear what exactly was produced there because neither any wasters nor other slag remains were found, not even much ash. Small-scale copper smelting might have been carried out there. There is the possibility that the discarded scrap metal was re-smelted as no metal finds were made at all and two moulds of limestone found within the settlement debris.

Local pottery production must have taken place at Tell el-Dab'a in the late Middle Kingdom judging from the enormous number of finds recovered. While these can be divided into imported (Syria-Palestine, Nile Valley) and locally-produced, no obvious locality of production was discovered during the 60 years of excavation. This leaves two possibilities: (a) the pottery was either made in a specific workshop or workshops on the outskirts of the settlement (not excavated) and fired there to prevent pollution of the living space by smoke and smell or (b) the pottery was made in smaller units (i.e. the households) in multipurpose areas around the compounds by members of the extended household, including children, and then fired in a communal kiln, which has not been identified although two smallish kilns/furnaces mentioned above are a possibility. These two would have been in the middle of the settlement, unless they were only used in the latest phase, when much of the area was not used for habitation anymore (Phase G–F).⁵¹⁷ Again, the subtle variations of the restricted bowls with folded rims may be mentioned here as non-direct evidence.

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Quirke 1998 for the difficulty in the identification and assessment of toys. Cf. Bader 2020, 185–187, fig. 6.15.

⁵¹⁵ Quirke 1998.

⁵¹⁶ Bader 2016; Bader 2018a; Bader 2020.

⁵¹⁷ Bader 2020, 97–101.

As the material is so fragmentary, it is very difficult to assess whether the skill levels involved are very different, in an apprentice master division, for example.⁵¹⁸ Much the same can be said about the ubiquitous “beer”/storage jars (Figs. 8j–r, 9). Most demanding in terms of skill would have been to produce the thin-walled hemispherical cups (Fig. 8.a–c), which appeared throughout of good quality in relation to the raw clay preparation, the making and the firing of the type. Only in the application of the red rim band, habitually between 3 and 9 mm width around the rim of the vessel, could it be observed that this slipped rim has not been added in a particularly straight or even way. Thus, the work process might have included a less skilled person/child/apprentice (?) in the decoration of the hemispherical cups. However, this is an etic observation, the interpretation of which is western and Eurocentric and whether this can be taken as evidence for such a supposition, remains uncertain.

3.7.4. Religion

Apart from tombs in the settlement, which hint at a close relationship of the living with the dead, nothing in the settlement specifically points to religious, magical or ritual activities. There are no traces of any cult activities close to, or on top of, the tombs be it offerings on stands or *hes*-vases, or visible tokens of remembrance of the dead. Perhaps the physical closeness of the dead and the living in everyday life was enough to achieve that. The burial customs are derived from the Egyptian religious sphere as well as the Syro-Palestinian one (see Chapter 3.6, tombs).

In this instance the displaced statues of baboons/monkeys and dwarfs need to be mentioned (see above) although they cannot be quoted as proven evidence for religious activities. Amulets, well-known from the Egyptian cultural tradition from the Nile Valley, were only found in the tombs and the domestic architecture was not well enough preserved to provide evidence about niches for private cults. The only exception to this rather sober picture of a delta settlement of the late Middle Kingdom is the suspected ‘altar’ or cultic installation in Compound 12, L [123], found with two small jars, a hemispherical cup and some animal bones.⁵¹⁹ This installation is without parallel in Egypt as well as Syria-Palestine; only a later installation at Tell el-Dab’a itself can be quoted in support of the assumption that L [123] is a cultic installation.⁵²⁰ While religious/magic practices and domestic life are always seen as closely intertwined at least in the Egyptian cultural tradition,⁵²¹ there is not much supporting physical evidence for ritual practices on this occasion. Note that the occurrence of offering pits is only known in later phases.

3.7.5. Status

Social stratification among ancient social groups may be expressed and observed in archaeology in several ways. Is there a diversity of various types of burials and in the value of the grave goods?⁵²² Are the house sizes in a settlement all the same or diverse with smaller and larger ones?⁵²³ For Egypt the thickness of the walls used for building domestic dwellings was also used to determine the social status of the owner of the house.⁵²⁴ In the settlement in Area A/II in Phases H, G/4 and G/3–1, houses of different sizes have been found⁵²⁵ which allow some inferences on the variability of social standing

⁵¹⁸ Budden and Sofaer 2009.

⁵¹⁹ Müller 2008, 316–317, but note that the hemispherical cup is not of smaller size according to the archival photos and, thus, does not point to a use as magic medium for everlasting provision. Cf. Bader 2020, chap. 6, fig. 6.10.

⁵²⁰ See square A/II–o/13 in Friedhofsbezirk IX, Bietak 1991b, 154, and plan 5, Phase E/2; one phase later an installation on the same spot in the next Phase E/1 (see plan 6) is larger and rectangular and therefore less similar. Both are lacking the small surrounding wall. The given parallel in Temple III could not be identified by means of the published plans – the altar in front of the temple is quite large and rectangular without a wall. All of these examples are later than L [123].

⁵²¹ Müller 2008, 367–375, for overview; Deir el-Medina: Weiss 2015; unfortunately not much information exists: cf. also David 1986.

⁵²² Richards 2005.

⁵²³ Bietak 1996b; Tietze 1985 for social stratification depending on house size.

⁵²⁴ Tietze 1985, 59–60.

⁵²⁵ See Bader 2018a for details appendix; Bader 2020.

of the inhabitants of Tell el-Dab'a in that area at that time. This is in stark contrast to the contemporary but simpler dwellings in Area F/I.⁵²⁶ Also, there are three different widths of walls being used for the construction of the buildings: the best and thickest walls in the settlement G/3–1 have a width of one and a half bricks, which is equivalent to c. 1 cubit (= 0.525 m). This is by far the most frequently used construction type for the main buildings of the compounds, often consisting of bipartite ground plans or variations thereof. While this width was also used for one-room dwellings, it was more usual to build those with walls with a width of one brick. The same holds true for Phases H and G/4.⁵²⁷ The equivalent measurement in Egyptian cubits is two thirds (= 0.30–0.40 m). Finally the half-brick width is only used very rarely for subordinate buildings and features such as silos and similar installations.⁵²⁸ Contrary to these habits, some walls of the palace of Phase G/4 (roughly in the early 13th Dynasty) in Area F/I, had in some places a width of up to five bricks, with many of them having a width of between two and three and a half bricks⁵²⁹ and reflect, thus, the relatively lowly nature of these contemporary buildings in Area A/II.

Concerning the finds discovered within the houses, not much can be said because it must be assumed that the most valuable and still usable things were always kept by the inhabitants as no sudden destruction took place. Thus, only the broken and no longer useful things were left behind. Noteworthy perhaps is a large Tell el-Yahudieh jug that was found broken in the largest building, in Compound 11.⁵³⁰ On the other hand, the rather high quality, hard stone objects made from green siltstone were not discovered in situ but in fills of rooms and walls,⁵³¹ for example, so that it is not possible to speculate too closely about where they actually belonged.⁵³²

The distribution pattern of pottery types and animal bones did not reveal any particular peaks of certain materials of foodstuffs such as certain fine wares or meat types in certain compounds of Area A/II.

3.7.6. Age

For determination of the age groups of the inhabitants, the only evidence comes from the anthropological study of the burials found in Area A/II in Phases G/3–1.⁵³³ Apart from three young children (infants 7 to 8 years old and 'not determined'), who could not be sexed, seven females and one male individual belonged mostly to the age bracket of 19/20 to 25 years, although one woman was late adult (31–40 years) and another woman late adult/early mature (35–45 years). One woman could not be determined. The only male individual in this area in this phase was early adult (19–25 years). No finds made in the settlement could be related to these age brackets (baby feeding pottery, orthopaedic devices, sticks, etc, even if such items would have been ambiguous).

3.7.7. Regional Diversity of Inhabitants

As discussed at length above the most challenging task an archaeologist can ever face is to prove the presence of regional diversity among people in any one place by archaeological means, especially if the culture-historical approach to objects and the one-to-one correlation between them and their uses is rejected (see Chapters 1, 2.1–4). The distinction between objects obtained during commodity exchange and items brought or locally made by immigrants (at least for longer periods of time) is at the core of the problem. The recent notion for Egypt that pottery imports (and to a certain extent technological traits

⁵²⁶ Müller 2012, plan 2.

⁵²⁷ Bader 2020, chaps. 5, 9.

⁵²⁸ Bader 2020, fig. 1.2.

⁵²⁹ Eigner 1996, 73.

⁵³⁰ Bader 2020, fig. 3.42. The shape of the parallel given in Bietak 2010, pl. 18, from Ebla is superficially similar, but details such as the single incised dots and the shape of the fields differ (probably also the attachment of the handle). Thus, it is speculative to assume production in the vicinity. Whether the fabric is similar, cannot currently be ascertained.

⁵³¹ Bader 2015c.

⁵³² Bader 2015c.

⁵³³ Winkler and Wilfing 1991, 43, 57, 63, 67, 74.

locally used) must signify the physical presence of, for example, Cypriots, Nubians and Syro-Palestinians must be considered as a return to Kossinna's simplistic and racist 'Kulturkreistheorie' ['culture area theory']. In the same light are attempts to assign cultural labels (e.g. "ethnic markers") to individuals, where the amount of change in cultural developments, including material culture, was seen as an indicator of the influence of 'foreign' people on 'indigenous' social systems. Influence of post-colonial thought also changed the concepts of ancient history and archaeology, although Egyptology as a discipline is still much of a "shrew" in need of "taming" in some respects. While in the past the migration concept including the rapid acculturation of immigrants to Egyptian culture has been repeatedly sketched and only recently critically assessed,⁵³⁴ it seems worthwhile to take a look at the material evidence and the changes set out in the stages above (Chapter 3.6) from a different viewpoint in a multi-scalar manner, rather than overly generalising in search of a "process" that is universally valid.

Especially informative for the case study presented here are the first results of a study on strontium ratios ($^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$) of five individuals buried in Area A/II, Phase G/3–1, in order to assess whether these individuals grew up locally or moved to the delta after childhood from another location (Tab. 2).⁵³⁵

Tomb	Strontium level	Sex
A/II-l/12-no. 4	0.707782	Female
A/II-m/15-no. 9, burial 2	0.707772	Undetermined
A/II-m/15-no. 11	0.707996	Female
A/II-n/16-no. 2	0.707857	Female
A/II-r/18-no. 2	0.707998	Female

Tab. 2 ($^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$) strontium isotope ratio in tombs of Phase G/3–1 in Area A/II

While the assessment of the local strontium ratios at Tell el-Dab'a has begun with six animal bone samples without exact provenance within the site,⁵³⁶ there are no comparative measurements for the Egyptian Nile Valley yet available. The result of this study suggests that human tissue with a ($^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$) strontium isotope ratio of between 0.70761 and 0.70780, which is derived from the animal baseline and a value of ± 2 standard deviations, should be considered to be derived from people who were raised locally.⁵³⁷ Regarding these five samples, the individuals in tombs A/II-m/15-no 11⁵³⁸ and A/II-r/18-no 2⁵³⁹ (marked in red in the table above) are thought to have moved from elsewhere to Tell el-Dab'a.⁵⁴⁰ While this is a highly interesting result, it does not entirely explain the cultural behaviour observed at the site.

3.7.7.1. Deep Change

Yasur-Landau in a recent treatise on the Philistines collected evidence for the migration of larger numbers of people and proposed a search for 'deep change' in all spheres of life of social groups in order to be more confident about identifying it in archaeology and avoiding a 'trait-list approach'. This is even more important as it becomes obvious with more aDNA and isotope analyses that a change in material culture, indeed, might, but does not have to, mean a group of people immigrated to an area from

⁵³⁴ See Bader 2017b; Priglinger 2018.

⁵³⁵ Stantis et al. 2020a, tab. S1.

⁵³⁶ Stantis and Schutkowski 2019.

⁵³⁷ Stantis et al. 2020a, 5–7.

⁵³⁸ Forstner-Müller 2008, 134–137.

⁵³⁹ Forstner-Müller 2008, 139–140.

⁵⁴⁰ The result of the study of 75 individuals from Tell el-Dab'a spreading over all the nine phases is particularly interesting because the strontium ratios show a continuum rather than one or more clusters. This may suggest that the respective areas, from which immigrants (roughly 50% of all tested samples) came, may be quite widely spread.

somewhere else (with differential material culture and a different “way of doing things”) and this also seriously undermines the meaningfulness of “ethnic markers” (see Chapters 2.3.2, 2.4.). The definition of ‘deep change’ in turn is not straightforward: “The more intense the interactions are and the longer the time span of the interaction is, the deeper the change that will occur in behavioural patterns of the interacting cultures and the more numerous are the influences on material culture assemblages.”⁵⁴¹ For a better definition, Yasur-Landau uses ‘interaction factors’ in order to qualify possible changes and what they might look like. These factors include the number of people involved, the duration of the interaction, the cultural distance between the cultural/social groups involved, the segment of the population involved, the power balance between the cultures involved and the level of pluralism and tolerance within the interacting societies (see also Chapter 3.7.7.1.4.).⁵⁴²

This ‘deep change’ should be visible in all possible spheres of social life which are detectable in the archaeological record, namely the domestic, ritual and funerary sphere in order to demonstrate migration with convincing arguments, but still it retains a component of arbitrariness: when is a change ‘deep’?⁵⁴³ A particularly good way of distinguishing between objects that look superficially similar is to observe in the smallest detail the production process in the *chaîne opératoire* framework. If that process is very different, the likelihood that different *habitus* and traditions are at work increases, and influences can be understood better.⁵⁴⁴ We shall concentrate on whether ‘deep changes’ might be identified in the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II.

3.7.7.1.1. Domestic Sphere

Within the domestic sphere, foodways are considered to be extremely meaningful in highlighting migration⁵⁴⁵ because food can be seen as a marker of difference.⁵⁴⁶ However, migrants, especially in borderlands, are entangled in a network of relations by means of food practices, and the relationship between the group and those practices does not remain static but develops. Migrants shape their food practices as well as being shaped by them,⁵⁴⁷ much in the way Bourdieu’s *habitus* is described. Recent research also emphasises that food practices not only convey ethnic identity but also have repercussions at other transects with identities, such as gender and age.⁵⁴⁸ The archaeological correlates of food practices are the species of consumed animals and the distribution patterns of their remains, which are important as food taboos are considered to be culturally driven. For an in-depth analysis, data are lacking from contemporary settlements in both Egypt (e.g. Memphis) and Syria-Palestine. The presence or absence and frequency of pig bones were used as an indicator for immigration from Syria-Palestine.⁵⁴⁹ Thus, the distribution shall be briefly summarised by means of available data. Pig bones are known and frequent from the early 12th Dynasty settlement in Area F/I⁵⁵⁰ as well as for the later 12th Dynasty settlement in R/I.⁵⁵¹ Whether the lower frequency of pig bones in the settlement of Area A/II⁵⁵² bears witness to a social habit reflecting ethnic origin must remain unclear. As pigs continued to exist (and were presumably eaten),

⁵⁴¹ Yasur-Landau 2010, 14.

⁵⁴² Yasur-Landau 2010, 10–13.

⁵⁴³ One of Yasur-Landau’s example is the presence of non-Egyptian cooking pots, which I cannot assess as ‘deep’ from my current point of view, set out above. Cf. Yasur-Landau 2010, 21–22.

⁵⁴⁴ For example, among the imported and locally-made dipper juglets.

⁵⁴⁵ Yasur-Landau 2010, 19, he also maintains that the domestic sphere reflects the acculturation strategy. Cf. Burmeister 2000; Smith 2003.

⁵⁴⁶ Abbots 2016.

⁵⁴⁷ Abbots 2016, 128–129.

⁵⁴⁸ Abbots 2016, 117–120.

⁵⁴⁹ E.g. Bietak 1996a, 36 argues that the absence of pig bones in a cultic environment possibly indicated ‘that Canaanite settlers already had some sort of taboo concerning the consumption of pig meat, at least as a temple offering’.

⁵⁵⁰ Czerny 1999, 310–311, the animal bones are only treated in bulk and were not divided into contexts. Thus, it cannot be ascertained if there are clusters within that settlement.

⁵⁵¹ Von den Driesch 2015.

⁵⁵² Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992, 68, 72–74, tabs. 2, 6–8.

they were not burdened with a general food taboo. Moreover, pig consumption continued throughout the later phases in Area A/II⁵⁵³ as well as in Area F/I⁵⁵⁴ although in lower percentages.⁵⁵⁵

Cooking pots as archaeological correlates, have been discussed above and the use of a small amount of cooking pots following non-Egyptian traditions can, from our perspective, not be called a ‘deep change’ as it does not coincide with a new type of hearth, for example, or special cooking installations not known from other settlements in Egypt, although it has to be admitted that the current state of knowledge about settlements in general leaves a lot to be desired.

Also relevant are subsistence patterns, namely, the existence of imported storage jars (Marl C from the Memphis-Fayoum region and foreign imports, Figs. 11, 14) shows some commodity deliveries from other parts of Egypt and Syria-Palestine,⁵⁵⁶ while round silos and finds of some tools (sickles with silica sheen) attest to a local production of foodstuffs and storage. Here, again, it remains unclear as to whether the imported materials in imported storage jars from outside of Egypt were consumed at the site (probably not in their entirety) or were transported on to other sites (although it seems not in the original containers because the sheer amount of fragments of imported transport amphorae at Tell el-Dab’a exceeds all other contemporary settlements as far as can be seen to date⁵⁵⁷).

Architecture, as a main expression of the material culture of the domestic sphere and main influencer of *habitus*, has been analysed extensively and the line of development currently hints to prototypes of entirely Egyptian traditions⁵⁵⁸ (but this may change if contemporary rural settlements in Syria-Palestine are published in greater detail).

The gender roles of women and men also remain unclear from the archaeological record of the settlement; the only evidence provided is the number of burials in Area A/II and the higher number of women compared to the one man and three children found there. This could be a hint towards the marriage patterns of immigrant men with local women although their burial customs followed varied/combined Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian cultural traditions, which is to a certain extent supported by the isotope ratio study which suggested two women came from outside the delta.⁵⁵⁹ If that were so, the small number of non-Egyptian cooking pots may be explained and also the strict adherence to Egyptian traditions (or so it seems) in the domestic sphere in almost all respects, as far as we know. The sample of burials is very small and therefore not representative; moreover other areas of the site differ.⁵⁶⁰ Under the application of the culture-historical paradigm it might be hypothesised that this hints at Egyptian predominance in Area A/II with most inhabitants buried extra-murally, while Areas F/I and A/IV were more “Levatinised”, but this interpretation does not do justice to the rich assemblage left to us.

The assessment of pottery technology, only possible by the traces of production remaining on products (*chaîne opératoire*), as no pottery workshop was found at Tell el-Dab’a, remains the last point of reference to ‘deep change’ in the domestic sphere. The pottery repertoires of Egyptian and Syro-Palestinian cultural traditions remain quite distinct in the settlement of Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom (Stage III). An emerging local development can be observed at this time but well within the bounds of what can be considered slight (or with a view to the low number of people involved). Moreover, imported materials continue to be present and remain as they were. The only point of change at this level is the beginning of the use of local copies of Syro-Palestinian pottery types in the settlement of Area A/II (Stage III). A ‘deep change’ in the pottery repertoire generally can be found in Stage VII, when many “new” vessel types start to be used and others fall out of use ‘quite suddenly, in archaeological terms’.⁵⁶¹ Still

⁵⁵³ Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992, 75–82.

⁵⁵⁴ Boessneck and von den Driesch 1992, 69–70, 84–92.

⁵⁵⁵ See also Redding 2015 for a more thorough discussion of the presence of pigs in the Ancient Near East.

⁵⁵⁶ Bader 2018a, fig. 4.

⁵⁵⁷ Arnold et al. 1995; Bader 2009, 653–662.

⁵⁵⁸ See Bader 2018a for bibliography.

⁵⁵⁹ Although the Nile Valley is expected to yield similar (⁸⁷Sr/⁸⁶Sr) strontium isotope ratios to the delta (after Stantis et al. 2020a), the possibility that some individuals with different values came from there cannot yet be entirely excluded.

⁵⁶⁰ Bader 2011a.

⁵⁶¹ Bourriau 1997.

as this ‘new style’ of Stage VII is deeply rooted in local traditions and not exactly congruent with any other known pottery tradition from abroad or from the Egyptian Nile Valley, it seems inappropriate and illogical to assign this change to migration. It should rather be seen as a (north-eastern delta) ‘regional turn’ (Stages VI–VII) in which the pottery assemblage as a whole changes towards a very local repertoire, very diversified with a lot of different open and closed vessel shapes but quite uniform in terms of fabrics, surface treatment, and manufacturing and firing technology. Very few imports from Cyprus and the Levant reach the north-eastern delta at this stage and some traits have a long history (e.g. string cut bases) and others (such as very dark red rims on open vessels) a shorter one. There are few points of contact with the rest of Egypt or the Syro-Palestinian area.⁵⁶² Research on regional developments of pottery production in the southern regions of Egypt shows that the ‘regional turn’ is not a phenomenon isolated in the delta, even if it is particularly obvious there, but that it can be observed in most regions (Memphis-Fayoum, Abydos and Thebes). While this development has been interpreted as an expression of political fragmentation, it is more likely to be a phenomenon linked to socio-economic developments. Even more so, if it is considered that other types of objects (often less frequently found, and sometimes made of materials of higher value) are still quite uniform over the whole of Egypt.⁵⁶³

3.7.7.1.2. Funerary Sphere

Whether the existence of some tombs in the settlement constitutes a real ‘deep change’ in the funerary sphere remains unclear, because it is possible that this feature is actually connected to the stoneless nature of the delta landscape. In the earlier settlements at Tell el-Dab’a (F/I stratum “e” and R/I), no contemporary tombs were laid-out within them except children under the floor.⁵⁶⁴ Again, there is the possibility that this feature might be rooted in the fact that the earlier settlements were strictly planned orthogonally and no space was available for burials except for small children under house floors. As the average size of a property is larger in Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom, it is possible that the additional space and lack of desert edge led to a very local tradition. However, an unprovable possibility exists that due to this lack of ‘desert edge’, higher lying areas outside the settlement were used as cemeteries, which have by now been destroyed by later activity. Another possibility is that this is a delta practice not well known as there is no contemporary delta settlement from the late Middle Kingdom site known or fully explored to date. While burials in settlements are known from Syria-Palestine, these are usually denser, the tombs built in a different way and usually used over longer periods and often for numerous individuals.⁵⁶⁵ Moreover, the typical Syro-Palestinian tomb could not be reproduced due to the lack of stone and cliffs.⁵⁶⁶

Whether the relative invisibility of the superstructures of the tombs in the late Middle Kingdom settlement is the result of a ‘deep change’ must also remain unclear as there is no clear line of development in the delta with which to compare it. That not all tombs in the late Middle Kingdom in the Nile Valley were visible above ground has been observed before; after all there are many shaft tombs known from that period.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶² Bader 2009.

⁵⁶³ These are results from the current research project ‘Beyond Politics’, FWF Y754-G19, led by the author. It remains to be researched more closely whether objects made from readily available and ubiquitous and cheap materials such as silex a similar development can be traced. Then the control and procurement of raw materials would be the/a crucial point of departure in the regionalisation of material culture.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. in F/I: Czerny 1999, 29–31; missing in R/I; Czerny 2015.

⁵⁶⁵ For a brief diachronic overview see Campbell and Green 1995.

⁵⁶⁶ Cf. Baker 2006.

⁵⁶⁷ Dodson and Ikram 2008, 186–208. The statement that the mud brick construction technique for single chamber tombs at Avaris “is more usually found in Mesopotamia” is without references and devoid of any basis, cf. Grajetzki 2003; Schiestl 2009; Hulková forthcoming. For the late Old Kingdom to early Middle Kingdom cf. Seidlmayer 1990, 398–412.

Finally, mummification, has so far not been attested at Tell el-Dab'a in any of the phases due to the bad conservation of human remains in the wet soil conditions.⁵⁶⁸ While neither the textiles used for bandages or any discolouration of the bones from the use of resins could be detected in these circumstances, at least one body was found (tomb A/II-1/12 tomb 4⁵⁶⁹) which might have been wrapped in something judging from the position of the bones, perhaps just mats,⁵⁷⁰ but narrow linen strips cannot be ruled out entirely, nor leather skins. To qualify this statement properly is not currently possible as the absence of evidence does not prove the absence. Once again Schiestl's quote should be remembered "Das Fehlen von Mummifizierung ist nicht unägyptisch".⁵⁷¹

3.7.7.1.3. Ritual Sphere

To the ritual sphere belongs everything that goes beyond the here and now and the direct pursuits of daily life. In short, the ritual sphere comprises funerary customs and, for example, acts performed at the grave of a relative or before meals, acts performed in order to safeguard loved ones or one's livelihood (animals, on which one is dependent for food, transport, etc.). Furthermore, included in this definition are the spaces in which ritual activities take place such as temples, chapels and similar buildings, and niches and specific rooms in domestic dwellings, where rituals took place and which housed items of importance for conducting rituals, including stelae, statues etc. The various view points of these structures ["modes of visibility"] provide some clues as to whether knowledge about them was socially restricted or not.⁵⁷²

While the presence of the eight tombs in the settlement of Area A/II in itself provides a ritual space in this domestic area, no other traces of ritual activity beyond burial were reliably identified there outside of the actual tomb. There are only two exceptions, where in each case a single pottery vessel, one of which may have been a libation vessel,⁵⁷³ was found very close to the sarcophagus L [138]⁵⁷⁴ and to A/II-m/15-tomb 9.⁵⁷⁵ While it is possible to classify this first vessel as an offering connected to a tomb, it is also an atypical feature for Area A/II Phase G/3–1 and should perhaps be considered under a different angle than the more frequent but later occurring offering pits. These pits contain either the remains of a meal or votive offerings and are a frequent feature in the Second Intermediate Period at Tell el-Dab'a in various contexts (close to temples, tombs and in houses). This practice fits well within the Egyptian cultic and ritual landscape.⁵⁷⁶ Due to the fact that this occurrence is isolated and different from later occurrences and that there is no more evidence until Phase E/3 for similar features, it may be an example of funerary cult and remembrance. No other objects such as offering stands (food offerings, burnt offerings) or any pottery that could be considered to have been used exclusively in a ritual capacity (as known from other sites or context types) were found around the existing tombs, nor were remnants of other cultic activities found which could be assigned to such activity with any certainty (*hes* vases for libations, for example). However, the buried dead so closely enmeshed in the living community gives some evidence of the mindset of the ancient people living there. In what way the dead would have been ritually involved in daily life must remain unclear, even more so as it is doubtful that the tombs were even marked on the surface. No evidence for superstructures or markings has been found, although the robbing of said tombs

⁵⁶⁸ Forstner-Müller 2008, 40.

⁵⁶⁹ Bietak 1991b, figs. 10–12; Bader 2020, fig. 4.6.

⁵⁷⁰ The use of mats for the deposition of bodies is attested in Phases E/2 and E/1, cf. Bietak 1991b, 117, 180–181.

⁵⁷¹ Schiestl 2009, 75.

⁵⁷² Barrett 1991. For a discussion of what might be entailed see Frood and Raja 2014.

⁵⁷³ Müller 2008, vol. 1, 299; vol. 2, 239–240.

⁵⁷⁴ Bader 2020, chap. 6, fig. 6.29.

⁵⁷⁵ Forstner-Müller 2008, 129–130, it is not entirely certain that the small carinated bowl was intentionally deposited at the south-western corner of that tomb as it was not complete.

⁵⁷⁶ Müller 2008. More recently large accumulations of pottery, in content very similar to offering pits, are being found by the Djehuty Project directed by J.-M. Galán, who kindly invited me to work on some of this material in 2017. Publications of this material are in preparation.

soon after interment was quite unerring. Thus, the living would have had to know where exactly the dead were buried, which as such would have been restricted knowledge.

If, indeed, the baboon/monkey and dwarf statues found out of context in Area A/II belong to the late Middle Kingdom settlement, this is evidence connecting the inhabitants to the Egyptian ritual sphere. The same holds true for the dislocated statue base found in a rubbish deposit (see above).

A very specific feature at Tell el-Dab^a, the ‘Totenhaus’ [‘house of the dead’], which was built adjacent to, or close to, domestic houses and which contained burials, only appears as separate buildings in Phase F in Area F/I, whilst dwellings or parts of dwellings from earlier Phases (G/3–1) were repurposed as a ‘Totenhaus’ later (also Area F/I).⁵⁷⁷ No parallels have yet been found in either Egypt or Syria-Palestine for this ritual connection between the dead and the living. However, no such ‘Totenhaus’ has been found in the late Middle Kingdom settlement phases of Area A/II. The only similarity can perhaps be seen in tomb A/II-n/12-no 4 (L [138]), which was dug into the floor/ground of a room behind a screen wall.⁵⁷⁸ Similar features are known from contemporary Elephantine which makes an immigration context unlikely. No formal sacred buildings solely devoted to ritual activities have been found in Area A/II for the late Middle Kingdom phases (Stages II and III). The same holds true for the entire site (at least to date). Thus, it is difficult to locate a more public or encompassing ritual sphere during this time. If such sacred spaces were located in the domestic houses themselves, such as the suspected altar [L 123],⁵⁷⁹ there are no other instances preserved. And even for L [123], there are no immediate parallels known to date in either cultural tradition. In the current state of our knowledge, no ‘deep change’ can be detected in the ritual sphere as it was hitherto explored archaeologically in Area A/II in the late Middle Kingdom. However, this might change in the future.

3.7.7.1.4. Overview of Factors Influencing Migration in the Late Middle Kingdom

Many of the push and pull factors usually cited⁵⁸⁰ as influences for movement and mobility cannot be addressed because too little published evidence exists, e.g. on demography in the delta and Syria-Palestine in general⁵⁸¹ or because such questions go beyond the possibilities the ancient sources can support. Nevertheless, an overview with questions that more modern migrations evoked helps to assess our state of knowledge for the (late) Middle Kingdom. An application of some of these factors to the case study follows below (Tab. 3). The sources are mostly well known and appear with references in the chapters above. Thus, only those that have not been used before⁵⁸² are referenced to make the table as compact as possible. Textual evidence, of course, can only be provided from the Egyptian side, albeit from an Egyptian viewpoint. The time frame considered includes the Middle Kingdom and the early Second Intermediate Period, here understood to include the period of time between the end of the Middle Kingdom, tentatively suspected to be sometime in the earlier part of the 13th Dynasty, and the beginning of the 15th Dynasty in the delta. The difficulty remains that the 13th Dynasty most probably did not end at the same time all over the country, while the beginning of the 15th Dynasty can only be conjectured at the delta site of Tell el-Dab^a but not in the Nile Valley. The connection to the archaeological record is also, however, always problematic.

3.7.7.2 *Models of Cultural Contacts*

To recapitulate, over time a number of models for the process and results of cultural contacts have been proposed. Before the ‘post-colonial turn’, acculturation models based on ethnographic studies (see

⁵⁷⁷ Bietak 1994, 41; Müller 2008, vol. 2, 253; Müller 2012, 80–83; Kopetzky 2014, 124, 127.

⁵⁷⁸ Bietak 1991b, 33–34; Bader 2020, 194–198.

⁵⁷⁹ Bietak 1991b, 32; Bader 2020, 178–179, 185–189.

⁵⁸⁰ Charsley 1974; Anthony 1990; Yasur-Landau 2010.

⁵⁸¹ This assumption relies on the fact that everyone had a burial, which does not have to have been the case, cf. Chapter 2.4., fn. 231.

⁵⁸² Most are to be found in Schneider 2003a, cat. 19–81, mostly evidence dating from the late 12th to the early 13th Dynasty.

Factors to consider	Remarks	Archaeology	Texts and pictorial evidence
Existing interaction	Yes, e.g. Byblos and other Syro-Pal. sites	Egyptian finds in the Levant	References about Lebanese cedars from Old Kingdom onwards, etc. 'Asiatics' on Egyptian ships (OK), execration texts; biographies, ^I administrative texts, ^{II} expeditions ^{III}
Presumed commodity exchange	Egyptian and Syro-Pal. products in each other's area	Egyptian artefacts in Syro-Pal.; Syro-Pal. artefacts in Egypt and Delta	Egypt: gold, stone vessels, animal skins, Egyptian linen, etc.; Syro-Pal.: copper, people, LPW ^{IV} & contents; amphorae & contents (oil, resin, wine?), wood, textiles ^V
Information flow (relatives, 'successful scouts' who went before)	Probably yes, Byblos, e.g., goes both ways	Egyptian objects in Levant; Syro-Pal. objects in Egypt	Beni Hasan group indicates that Syro-Pal. and Egyptians knew about each other; also different names for inhabitants of different areas, execration texts, etc.
Involuntary/voluntary migration	Yes, but possibility of propagandistic over-emphasis	No evidence	Stelae and inscriptions listing prisoners of war taken by Egyptians: ^{VI} e.g. Annals of Amenemhet II, Khu-sobek and others; 'Asiatics' in Beni Hasan, execration texts
Who migrates?	Unclear	In current case study unclear	No texts relating to current case study; the only info from the textual sources is that men, women and children migrate
Kinship groups	Unclear	Family burials possible but not proven	Some of the known individuals are related to each other ^{VII}
Inclusion into the social system of host-country	Unclear if these individuals were 'free' or not	No evidence ^{VIII}	Lists of names of non-Egyptians in Lahun and Thebes; ^{IX} Menunefter libates for Ameni-Senbu in Hawara ^X
Ideological reasons	Unclear, but the topos of the 'smiting of the enemies' has existed since pre-dynastic times and has continued for a very long time	No clear evidence	Egyptian pharaohs conquering areas abroad to show their prowess and expand territory and increase income; expeditions for goods, including workers, needed in Egypt ^{XI}
Age/sex structure: most likely young men migrate first	Unclear, but possible	A/II: 1 young adult male individual only F/I: 10 men (of 98) –demographic data incomplete at Tell el-Dab ^a , Delta & Levant	Texts mention women and men (p. Brooklyn 35.1446, Lahun texts mention men, women and children), ^{XII} Beni Hasan caravan shows kinship group

^I Allen 2008.^{II} Luft 1993; Collier and Quirke 2006.^{III} Černý 1935; Gardiner et al. 1952–1955, 114, pl. XXXVII; Seyfried 1981, 157.^{IV} Levantine Painted Ware.^V After Schiestl 2009, 208–211.^{VI} Schneider 2003a, 60–61, 174, 195–197.^{VII} Schneider 2003a, 291–315.^{VIII} Schiestl 2009, 213, proposed the theory that the members of the social group buried in Stratum d/1 (= G/4) were 'Asiatics', who either sought integration or were forced to integrate by higher powers into the Egyptian structure of administrative officials. From the archaeological record this cannot be proved but remains one possibility of interpretation.^{IX} Schneider 2003a, 60–61, 174.^X Posener 1957, 155.^{XI} Schneider 2003a, 199–200. Note that in most cases only the addition of the qualifying '3m to the by then Egyptian names signifies the foreign descent of 'Asiatics'. Their original name is very rarely preserved. This also includes 'Asiatic' parents, to whom children were born in Egypt.^{XII} Schneider 2003a, 195–200.

Tab. 3 Overview of factors influencing migration in the late Middle Kingdom

Factors to consider	Remarks	Archaeology	Texts and pictorial evidence
Population density: were there too many people to be supported by opportunities and environment in Syro-Pal.?	Cannot be determined from current state of knowledge	Difficult to discern; demographic data incomplete	Sinuhe story? (E.g. literary text)
Better economic opportunities	Cannot be determined from current state of knowledge	No evidence	Beni Hasan group? Commodity exchange, expeditions
Environmental circum-stances influencing conditions of food production: better growth? More water?	Possible but not enough data for period in question	No unequivocal evidence	No evidence
Distance	Short/long?	Interactions with Nubia, Levant, eastern and western desert, oases, Red Sea, Sinai	Sinuhe story, execration texts, Annals of Amenemhet II, expedition records
“Leap frogging” – distances between visible “stations” or islands	Unclear if Egyptian material can be interpreted that way because often it is pottery and may signify just commodity exchange	Gaps between traces of archaeological contacts: Tell Arqa, Byblos, Sidon; Egyptian sealings in Ashkelon, ^{xiii} in Egypt almost exclusively in the Delta	No evidence in Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period
Migration stream: well defined and known routes	Unclear	Overland W. Tumulat, but little attestation for MBIIA; ^{xiv} did the harbour exist at Tell el-Dab’a already so early?	Connection to Byblos is well known for trade of timber; Inscription of Khnumhotep III/Dahshur
Cost and duration of transport: land vs boat	Cannot be determined from current state of knowledge	Both possible; equids known; harbour at Tell el-Dab’a	Beni Hasan group with equids
High status families in the new place provide housing opportunities, etc. for kin	Not proven for case study	Domestic housing has mainly Egyptian parallels	No evidence in Middle Kingdom/Second Intermediate Period
Power structure and social complexity	Stelae mention involvement of ‘Asiatic’ individuals in many social strata from high to very low and in many different professions	A/II: man with MB Age weapons suggests high/er social rank, but his actual role in the settlement remains unclear	Titles and relations to almost all high and low offices in Egyptian society: specialists in mining, weaving, food production, administration, ship crews, scribes, metal workers, domestic servants, priests, musicians, tutors, expedition members, etc.
Return migration	Difficult to prove	Egyptian objects in Syro-Pal.? Rather traded?	For the return from Syro-Pal. Sinuhe story

^{xiii} Ben-Tor and Bell 2018.^{xiv} Middle Bronze Age IIA.Tab. 3 *continued* Overview of factors influencing migration in the late Middle Kingdom

Factors to consider	Remarks	Archaeology	Texts and pictorial evidence
Secondary flows are attracted by kinship lineages, dependence or reduction of obstacles	Unlikely to be possible to prove	No evidence	No evidence
Chain migration: successful migrants draw more individuals ^{xv}	Unlikely to be possible to prove	No evidence	No evidence

^{xv} Charsley 1974, 356.

Tab. 3 *continued* Overview of factors influencing migration in the late Middle Kingdom

Chapter 2.5.1) were the ones most commonly used, while later this was thought to be too one-sided and, in essence, colonial. It also seems the importance of acculturation theories was derived from stressing ethnic identity over the other aspects of social identity (see Chapter 2.1–2). Subsequently, a variety of contact models derived from biological, linguistic and religious backgrounds began to be adapted to describe cultural developments (see Chapter 2.5.2 for discussion of some of these concepts with reference on applicability to the current Egyptian case study⁵⁸³). The one model mostly used to date is ‘hybridity’ but often without much informed discussion of the historical and biologicistic baggage of this concept.⁵⁸⁴ While underlying hybridity as a foundation for ‘non-pureness’ of culture is essential in the discussion, the political use, the inability to measure the phenomenon and its subjectivity from scholar to scholar makes it less attractive. Most recently and most promisingly, models are being developed which take more factors into account such as materiality, agency, power relations and context applicable to a wider range of cultural phenomena, although I see a shortage of ‘new’ and ‘unencumbered’ terminology, which makes it difficult to clearly express differences between the newer models and those used in earlier scholarship. ‘Entanglement’, for example, is already used for at least two different concepts,⁵⁸⁵ while ‘appropriation’ is currently considered derogatory in the English language (see Chapter 2.5). The scholarly discussion is still active and a surge in scientific fields making contributions can be observed. In the following passages it is not intended to discuss all possible models in detail and their possible applicability to the case study, but an overview is given to point out some weaknesses in existing models and to attempt improvement. My aim with this work is to open minds and stop cultural phenomena being put into tightly defined “boxes” whereby the creative achievement and the people who created such a rich heritage are then forgotten about.

3.7.7.2.1. Acculturation

Initially, the definition of acculturation allowed for both cultural and/or social units in a contact situation changing and surviving after ‘meeting’ in whatever way (either of ideas only or of ideas that materialised in objects), but this is not usually reflected in case studies and practical applications of this concept. Often ‘assimilation’ is seen as a result of acculturation which is understood as the complete disappearance of cultural traits, even more so in an asymmetrical power balance, although acculturation strategies such as segregation/separation or assimilation or marginalisation might be pursued not least because

⁵⁸³ See also Bader 2012; Bader 2013a.

⁵⁸⁴ Lumsden 2008, 36, uses hybridity without critique as the basis of the potentially useful ‘middle ground’ model, which he describes as “the creation of a shared cultural milieu”; see also Stockhammer 2012, 1–3; Silliman 2015.

⁵⁸⁵ Hodder 2012; Stockhammer 2013.

they also fitted colonial expectations.⁵⁸⁶ In archaeological research, complete assimilation was often the chosen outcome⁵⁸⁷ and sometimes seen as an inevitable outcome of contact of social groups with the Egyptian ‘high culture’ using writing systems. This way of using the acculturation concept, including ‘Egyptianisation’, does not make it appealing as a model for the late Middle Kingdom settlement in Area A/II because it does not really match the development of material culture in the stages presented above (Chapter 3.6). Moreover, it is only possible to apply such an acculturation model usefully in a culture-historical framework and when it is assumed that “Egyptians” were at Tell el-Dab’a first and then “Asiatic immigrants” (for whatever reason, forced or not) came and these latter individuals took on “Egyptian” ways of life and “doing things”, while at the same time keeping some of their own more conservative customs, namely in the realm of the dead. But, if the culture-historical paradigm is avoided and with it the prevalence and interpretational dogma of ‘ethnic markers’ in the form of things conceived as so personal they could not be used by a person not adhering to the same set of traditional values, the situation is not so clear cut and it would be difficult to decide who was there first and who acculturated towards which culture. Liszka’s comprehensive study of textual and archaeological etc evidence again highlights one dilemma: the problem does not lie in individual “ethnic markers” but in the generalisation of the concept over wide areas and diachronically.⁵⁸⁸ This would lead to non-tenable views such as “all people with a toggle pin as a burial gift must be ethnically Syro-Palestinian, because no Egyptian would wear the respective clothes to need it”. From a different viewpoint in a liminal, fluid situation such as in the borderland of the north-eastern Nile Delta, it may be possible for individuals who are exposed to varied cultural influences to even use this kind of pin for different types of clothes or for something completely different.⁵⁸⁹ The same holds true for ethnic assignments of cooking pots in a settlement in which a diverse population lives together: neither the person who made that pot nor the one who used it needs to belong to the social group initially connected to that type of food for which that specific pot was originally necessary. The crux of the matter lies to a certain extent in avoiding generalisations which easily lead down the slippery slope to culture-historical reconstructions of the past.

Other obstacles for applying acculturation models are the rejection of the notion that any cultural tradition may at any point be ‘pure’ and the doubt about cultural homogeneity not only in borderland situations, but also for example across Egypt in the Middle Kingdom as a whole. Such homogeneity (cf. Fig. 2) is often proposed but has not yet been demonstrated stringently due to insufficient data. For example, the variety of pottery assigned to the ‘Pan-grave culture’ which is repeatedly described as difficult to classify due to its heterogeneity⁵⁹⁰ does not fit the description of unified material culture in the first place as a starting point. This was sometimes blamed on the fact that the pottery was handmade and not standardised but is instead a problem of the way ‘culture’ is defined.

3.7.7.2.2. Cultural Mixing

More fluid concepts of cultural mixing possibly useful for language studies and material culture seem better suited to accommodate the creative production of objects which lie between typologies and are neither one nor the other entirely. Influences from various different social and geographical environments intertwine by means of agency, materiality, and consideration of power relationships but without a strict processual rule of what the outcome should look like. The depoliticised ‘relational’ and ‘material entanglement’ described by Philip Stockhammer seems to be a very useful concept because it accommodates single material objects in a variety of ‘mixed’ stages as well as contexts in which objects of various traditions might be found.⁵⁹¹ Also ‘appropriation’, which in its German form of ‘Aneignung’ does not

⁵⁸⁶ Berry 2005.

⁵⁸⁷ Liszka 2012, 239–240.

⁵⁸⁸ Liszka 2012, 391, 453–455. Here it should be noted that it did not become entirely clear whether Liszka thinks Nerita shells are always ethnic markers or only in certain circumstances.

⁵⁸⁹ Stockhammer 2012.

⁵⁹⁰ Liszka 2012, 393–394. See also De Souza 2019 and his more current work.

⁵⁹¹ Stockhammer 2012; Stockhammer 2013.

implicitly convey any negative connotation, can be used to express the creative process of ‘borrowing’ and using creatively cultural traits mutually and with potentially new unparalleled outcomes.⁵⁹² Other cultural mixture concepts such as mimicry, creolisation and hybridisation carry historical and biological baggage somewhat tainting the more useful aspects of these and are unfortunately implicitly also embedded in potentially useful metaphors such as the “middle ground”. Although that concept is very specifically defined, again certain aspects may be useful to consider in the late Middle Kingdom case study at Tell el-Dab’a, in particular that ambivalent space/place – physical or virtual – where cultures and people meet in social encounters.⁵⁹³ Considering the fluidity in measuring where such phenomena start and where they end, it seems wiser to look for other conceptual backgrounds. Here, the borderland/frontier approach seems even more applicable because a colonial situation may be present but is not a necessary precondition.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹² Hahn 2005, 99–107.

⁵⁹³ Lumsden 2008, 31–32.

⁵⁹⁴ Naum 2010.