



TELL EL-YAHUDIEH WARE IN SIDON

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I would like to express my gratitude to Karin Kopetzky for the fruitful discussions we had in Sidon and for all her help and advice on the material as well as in making all the Tell el-Dab'a publications available to me. My thanks also go to D. A. Aston for forwarding the manuscript of his new book on Tell el-Yahudieh ware while the book was still in press. I am indebted to Ramy Yassine who worked very hard on the drawings and Tony Farraj for taking the photos used in this article.

Tell el-Yahudieh ware, first recognized in Egypt by Petrie¹ is characterized by a distinctive geometric and figurative decoration of incised lines and punctured dots filled with chalky paste. The origin of the production of this ware (Lebanon/northern Palestine², Syria³ or Egypt) has been the subject of numerous articles⁴. The discussion on whether it was first produced in Egypt or in the Levant and then introduced by one or the other into the respective areas before spreading across the Eastern Mediterranean in the MB IIA/B but mainly in the MB IIB is also still controversial, despite the undertaking of many chemical analyses. Aston⁵ compiled a list of the suggested classification of this ware, based on geography⁶, with the so-called earlier "el Lisht ware" in Egypt⁷ or Bietak's regional styles⁸ and divisions accordingly, as well as with Kaplan's⁹ typology relating to shapes. In his article, Aston examines older and newer publications summarizing all the discussions on the topic while advocating in favour of a combination of features including decorative styles together with techniques in order for it to be more relevant¹⁰. A more recent comprehensive study on Tell el-Yahudieh ware from Tell el-Dab'a¹¹ favours the Levant as the place where this style developed first.

The Tell el-Yahudieh ware from Sidon was found at the beginning of MB IIB from level 5 onwards¹² mostly in burials with the exception of wares number S/4213, S/5445, S/88833, S/1787-S/1846, S/41793, S/41102 (fig. 1, 10-13, 17, 18) found outside around the graves and S/50273 (fig. 14), a large jug found in the Middle Bronze Age temple. Handles, preserved in 7 cases (fig. 2, 4-7, 9, 15) are all double strand handles stretching from the shoulder to the neck just under the rim except for a miniature juglet (fig. 7). The body is ovoid¹³, (fig. 2, 4, 5) becoming piriform later in the MB IIB/C¹⁴ examples (fig. 8, 9) with shoulders more strongly marked. Jug fig. 15, S/2170-3940, has a tendency towards a more squat shape. Juglet S/4687 (fig. 2) with a stepped rim¹⁵ is typical of the northern Levant and very popular in Sidon's level 5. Other rims are plain everted (S/4588, fig. 5) and the kettle rim is found in the later MB IIB/C (S/3722, fig. 9). The button base (S/4588, fig. 5) of the earlier

jugs becomes more pronounced (fig. 4) and the ring base is introduced (S/3722, fig. 9). Most of Sidon's Tell el-Yahudieh ware jugs belong to Bietak's "ovoid Palestinian group"¹⁶ whereas only two examples from Sidon (fig. 8-9) have a piriform shape with a flattened shoulder¹⁷, the distribution of which stretches from Byblos to Galilee and is also found at Tell el-Dab'a. Jugs such as S/4588, (fig. 5), with a bipartite handle on the shoulder first appear in the Hyksos period after 1640 BC and are found in the greatest concentration in the Delta, especially at Tell el-Dab'a and Tell el-Yahudieh, reaching as far as Cyprus. Their distribution in southern Palestine roughly reflects the political borders and/or influence of the Hyksos¹⁸. Miniature vessels (fig. 7) are unusual because of their diminutive size¹⁹. Only one sherd (fig. 13) is part of the body of a duck vessel and is covered with a series of incised curves which appear to imitate feathers²⁰. These figural jugs date to the early Hyksos Period²¹. Out of the 11 jugs found at Sidon, 9 are decorated with geometric designs while two (fig. 1 & 15) display the running spiral and the garlands of lotus flowers with a bird.

The running spiral motif (fig. 1)

A vessel from Sin el Fil²² (MB IIA/MB IIA-B), one from Kabri²³ and two other vessels most likely from Egypt²⁴ bear spiral decoration. In Ashkelon²⁵ in an MB IIA moat deposit, a dark brown Lustrous ware, a variant of Tell el-Yahudieh ware was found decorated with crenellations and running spirals. Petrography analysis indicates a local manufacture (for Sidon, see p. 161). In Tell el-Dab'a during the Middle Bronze Age IIA a large biconical jug along with a red slipped vessel made of Levantine clay and found in str. d/1 (= G/4) around 1770-1740 BC²⁶ was decorated with two zones of running spirals²⁷. More recently Aston has classified this group as the Levantine group E1²⁸.

The garland of lotus flower and the standing bird (fig. 15)

Vessels with naturalistic designs bear patterns of lotus blossoms which are typical Egyptian motifs. Most of these, which are of Egyptian manufacture²⁹, cover a considerable chronological span in Egypt. The majority of the material was found along the Nile Valley (e. g. Tell el-Dab'a³⁰) and it is likely that most of the vessels manufactured in Egypt³¹ were also exported to Cyprus. The depiction of lotus flowers is not common on Tell el-Yahudieh ware from the Levant. One vessel with naturalistic designs was found (fig. 15) in Sidon. The incomplete jug with a squat profile, pronounced shoulders and bipartite handle bears a view of a garland of lotus blossoms flaring out from the top of a stem³² and tied together with hanging garlands together with a standing bird (fig. 15) facing 6 horizontal incised lines. The bird's feathers are emphasized by small incisions. Similar examples of decorated jugs are found in the Lebanon on a cylindrical closed pot from a grave in level 13 (MB II) in Tell Arqa³³, in Tell el-Ghassil³⁴ and Byblos. Vessels with naturalistic designs are also found at Shechem, Ashkelon, Tell Beit Mirsim³⁵ in the Levant and at Toumba Tou Skourou on Cyprus³⁶ and were, according to Bietak, produced shortly before the Hyksos period (stratum E/3

1680-1650)³⁷. The lotus motif show close parallels to jugs from Byblos, Toumba Tou Skourou and Tell el-Dab'a phase E/3 (first half of the 16th century shortly before the period of Hyksos rule)³⁸.

Geometric designs

The Sidon geometric designs are organized on two to three decoration zones except for jug S/1787/S/1846 (fig. 12) with its decoration of vertically segmented panels filled with rows of zigzag lines of punctures, a motif imported from Egypt³⁹ and jug S/4588 (fig. 5) which is not partitioned at all. On the latter (S/4588, fig. 5) the design is delineated by incised curvilinear and straight lines forming two standing and pendent triangles⁴⁰. S/5445, (fig.10) is filled as on fig. 2 & 7 (S/4687, S/4625) with large handmade punctured dots spaced⁴¹ in a different manner than the tiny combed punctured dots featured on jug S/3722 (fig. 9). At Tell el-Dab'a, Tell el-Yahudieh ware juglets with handmade incisions are found only in the late MB IIA in phases G/4 through F, while those decorated with the help of a comb are not found before phase F. Thus the latter technique is considered an MB II B feature⁴².

Jugs with three horizontal zones of decoration are mostly derived from north of the Litani river⁴³. Their decoration consists of a large upper zone of standing triangles (S/4687, S/3722) (fig. 2 & 9), or rhomboids (S/2704, (fig. 4) S/3722 (fig. 9), followed by filled-in pendent triangles, (S/4687 (fig. 2), squares, rhomboids and rectangles (S/2704, S/3722, S/41793, S/41102, (fig. 4, 9, 17, 18)). Tell el-Yahudieh ware juglets with rectangular zones of incrustations were found at Tell el-Dab'a, Ebla and Byblos⁴⁴. The combination of designs found on jug S/2704 (fig. 4) is comparable to an example from Kafer Djarra⁴⁵ in the Sidon area and the Kahun example in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge⁴⁶. The decoration consisting of an upper zone of standing triangles and a central and lower zone of pendent triangles (S/4687 (fig. 2) is comparable to Tell el-Dab'a G-F (1760-1680 BC)⁴⁷ and Sin el Fil⁴⁸. A further comparable decoration is found at Tel Kabri and they are linked both in shape and schematic decoration to the Lebanese group⁴⁹. This type, which does not appear after MB IIA (stratum F) at Tell el-Dab'a⁵⁰, is Kaplan's so-called "ovoid 2"⁵¹. There are only two examples of it and both are imports. Circles⁵² within geometric decoration are found in the Tell el-Yahudieh repertoire⁵³. The Sidon example (S/5457, fig. 3) distinguishes itself by having punctuated design circles.

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Level 5

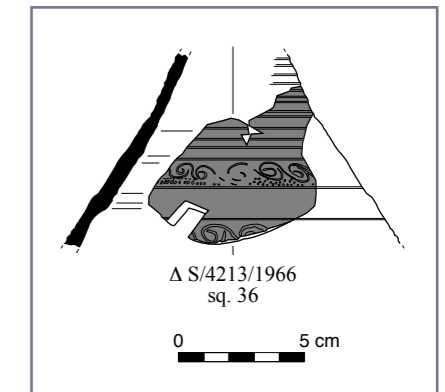
S/4213/1966 trench 36
5 YR 7/4, pink paste, reddish-brown slip, 5 YR 5/4; burnished.

Preserved height: 7.9 cm

Diam.: 12 cm

Thick.: 0.6 cm

Bands of two spirals⁵⁴ and punctured dots.



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S/4687/6056, burial 103

10 R 6/6, light red paste, red slip; horizontal burnishing on the body but not on the decorated parts.

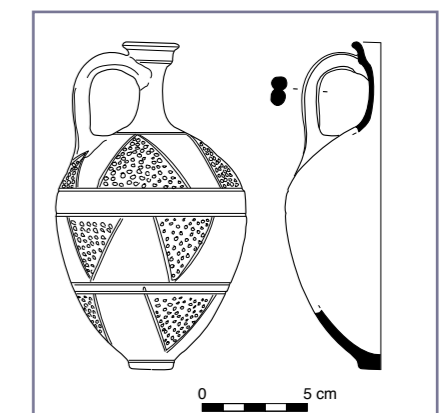
Height: 15.2 cm

Width: 8.7 cm

Diam.: 9 cm

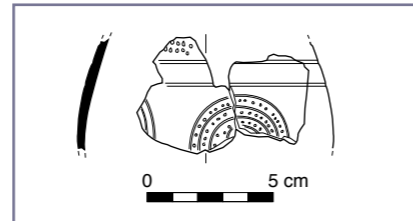
Thick.: 0.3 cm

Standing triangles on the upper zone and pendent triangles on the two lower zones. Two horizontal incised lines around the neck and two around the base. Large handmade punctured dots.





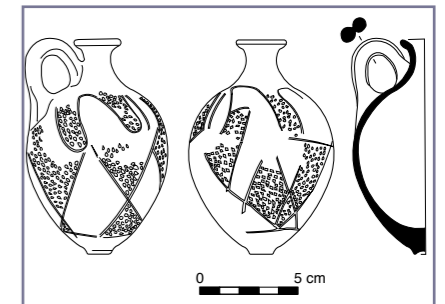
S/5457/6056, burial 103
 2.5 YR 5/2, weak red paste.
 Vertical burnishing.
 Preserved height: 4.6 cm
 Diam.: 18 cm
 Thick.: 0.2 cm
 Handmade. At least three concentric circles preserved with handmade punctured decoration with an horizontal punctured band on top. Dots filled with white paste.



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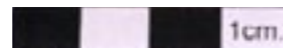
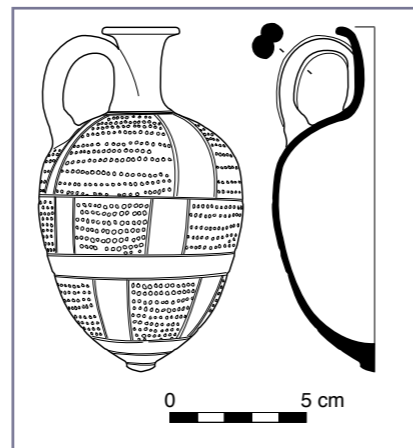
S/4588/ 6037, burial 100
 10R 5/1, reddish grey paste, burnished.
 Height: 10.7 cm
 Width: 7.1 cm
 Diam.: 2 x 2.3 cm
 Thick.: 0.5 cm
 Curvilinear and triangular shapes filled with large handmade and punctured comb dots.



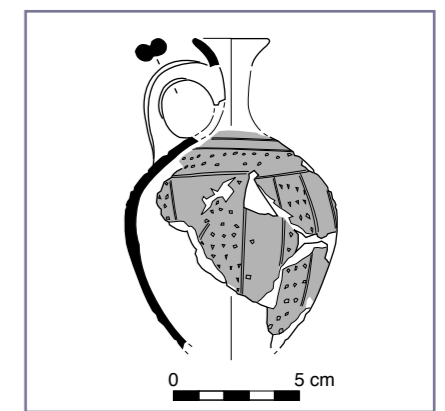
144



S/2704/1888, burial 67
 2.5 YR 6/2, pale red paste, burnished all over.
 Height: 12.6 cm
 Width: 7.5 cm
 Diam.: 2.6 cm
 Thick.: 0.3 cm
 Irregular panels of medium punctured comb dots.



S/4649/6037, burial 102
 2.5 YR 5/2 weak red paste, red slip, burnished.
 Preserved height: 12.5 cm
 Diam.: 8.5 cm
 Thick.: 0.4 cm
 Horizontal punctured band and two vertical handmade punctured dots. Two incised horizontal lines.

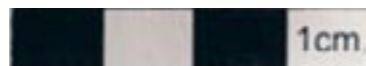
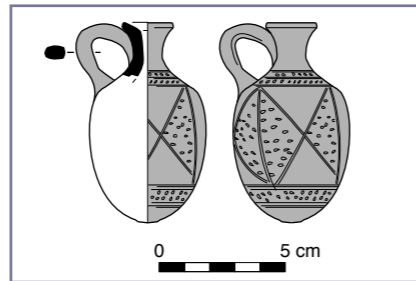


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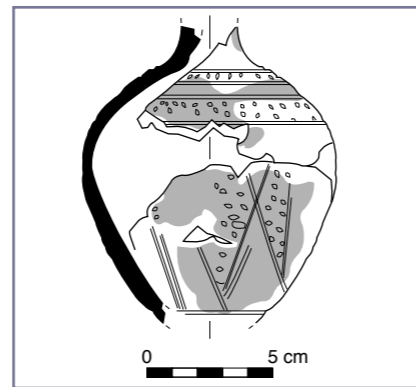
S/4625/6037, burial 102.
Miniature juglet.
2.5YR 7/8, light red paste, red slip burnished all over.
Height: 7.9 cm
Width: 4.5 cm
Diam.: 1.8 cm
Thick.: 0.2 cm
Butterfly motif in the middle surrounded above and below by two horizontal incised lines filled with comb dots.



145



S/5458/6037, burial 102
2.5YR 7/8, light red paste, red slip.
Preserved height: 7.5 cm
Diam.: 6.1 cm
Thick.: 0.3 cm
One row of incised dots around the neck with a double incised line followed by two rows of incised horizontal dots. Butterfly motifs on the body.

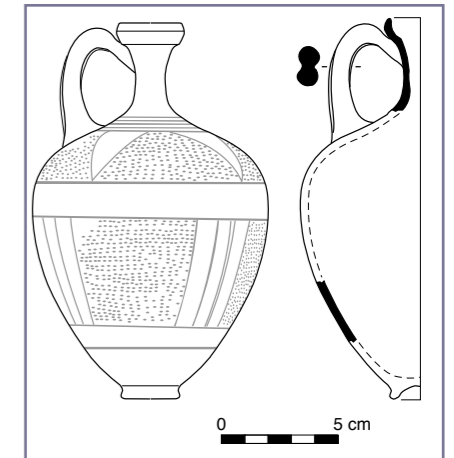


8



Level 6

S/3722/2086, burial 44
5 YR 4/4, reddish brown paste, burnished horizontally on the horizontal bands and vertically on the plain vertical bands.
Height: 15.8 cm
Width: 10.1 cm
Diam.: 2.8 x 3 cm
Thick.: 0.3 cm
Standing triangles and rhomboids. Horizontal incised lines around the neck. Comb punctured dots filled with white paste.



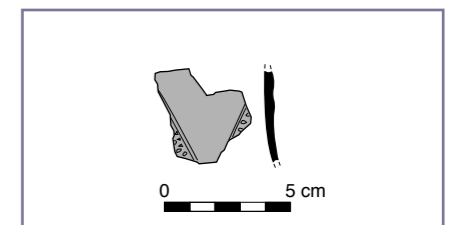
9



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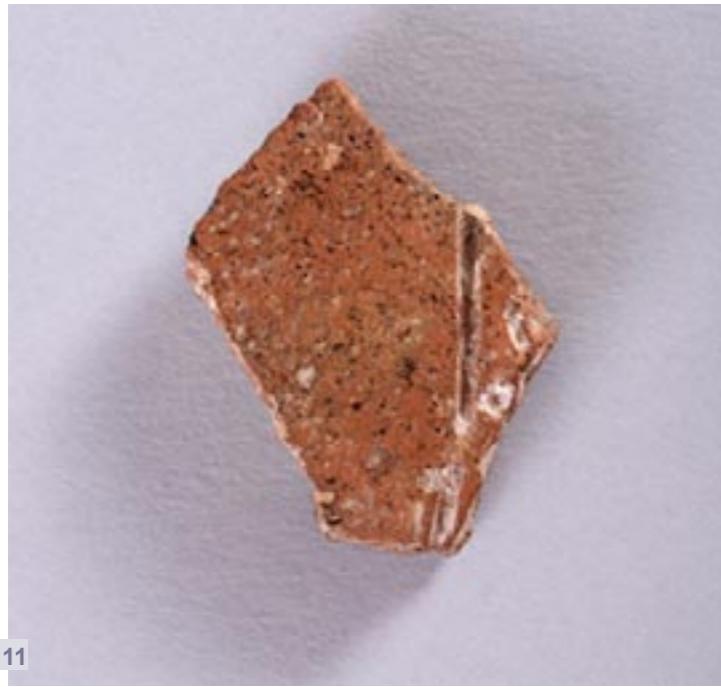


S/5445/6038, sq. 36.
2.5 YR 6/8, light red paste, red slip, burnished.
Preserved height: 4.2 cm
Thick.: 0.4 cm
Two pendent triangles with punctured handmade dots filled with white paste.



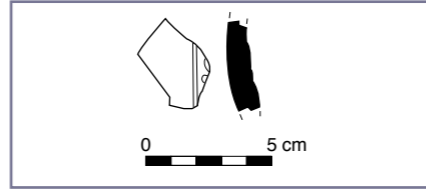
10





11

S/88833/1915.
 5 YR 5/4 reddish brown paste.
 Preserved height: 2.2 cm
 Thick.: 0.5 cm
 Handmade dots filled with white
 paste.

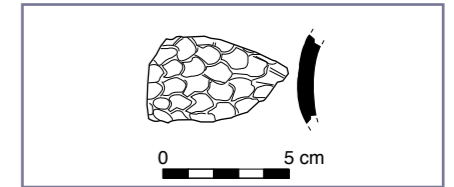


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13

S/4072/890. Sq. 3
 5YR 4/1, dark grey paste, bur-
 nished.
 Preserved height: 3.6 cm
 Thick.: 0.7 cm
 Handmade, zoomorphic motif.



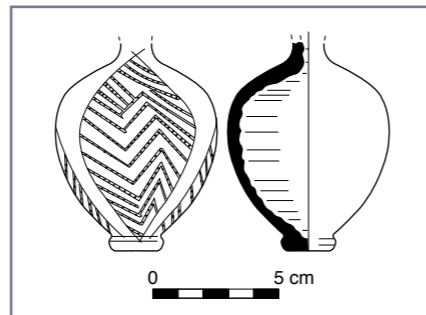
148



12

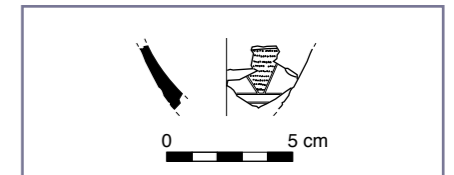
Level 7

S/1787/197/S/1846/211.
 10 R 5/1, reddish grey paste, bur-
 nished on the plain parts in
 between the dots.
 Preserved height: 8.3 cm
 Width: 6.2 cm
 Thick.: 0.4 cm
 Zigzag lines of fine punctured
 dots in between three vertical
 plain segments.



14

S/50273/4073, MB temple.
 2.5 YR 6/1, reddish grey paste,
 burnished on the non-punc-
 tured areas. Dots made with a
 comb.
 Preserved height: 5.5 cm
 Diam.: 11 cm
 Thick.: 0.8 cm
 Pendent triangles.

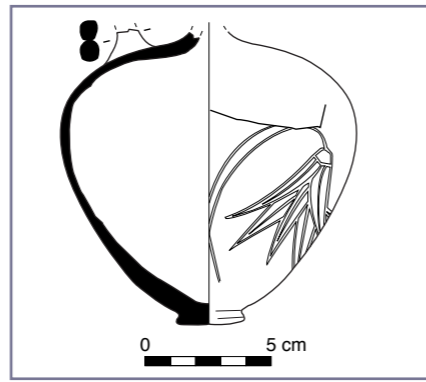


Level 8



15

S/2170 and 3940/1379.
 Burial 7/bone layer.
 2.5 YR 5/1, reddish grey paste,
 burnished.
 Preserved height: 11.4 cm
 Diam.: 11.2 cm
 Thick.: 0.5 cm
 Garland of lotus blossom flaring
 out from the top of a stem and
 tied together with hanging gar-
 lands and a standing bird facing
 6 horizontal lines.



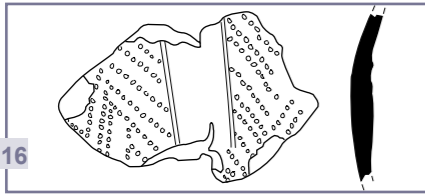
149



15

150





16

S/ 2181/1379. Burial 7/bone layer.
5 YR 5/2, reddish grey paste, bur-
nished on the plain parts in
between the dots.

Preserved height: 4. 5 cm

Thick.: 0. 4 cm

Zigzag lines of fine punctured
dots in between a plain seg-
ment.



17

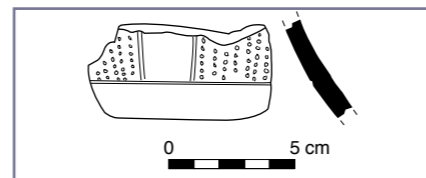
S/41793/870, sq. 4

2. 5 YR 5/3, reddish brown paste,
upper part vertically burnished
and lower part horizontally bur-
nished.

Preserved height: 2. 5 cm

Thick.: 0. 6 cm

Three rectangular panels, one
plain in the middle surrounded
on either side by a panel filled
with vertically aligned dots made
with a comb.



S/41102/859, sq. 4

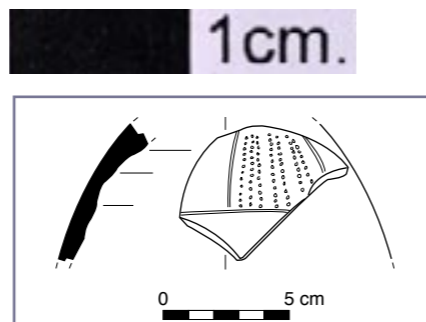
5 YR 5/3, reddish brown paste,
burnished vertically all over.

Preserved height: 3. 5 cm

Diam.: 8. 5 cm

Thick.: 0. 3 cm

Rectangular panel with vertical
rows of dots made with a comb.



18

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NOTES

1 W. F. Petrie, 1906, p. 10,
pl. VII, VIII, A-B.

2 M. Bietak, 1996, p. 55; R.
Amiran, 1969, p. 120.

3 R. Amiran, 1957, p. 118-
120.

4 M. Kaplan, 1980, p. 122.

5 D. A. Aston, 2008, p.
165-191.

6 R. Amiran, 1957, p. 91.

7 R. Merrillees 1974, p. 59-
75.

8 On a Syrian and Pales-
tinian type in 1966, see J. Van
Seters, 1966, p. 51.

9 M. Kaplan, 1980.

10 D. A. Aston, 2002, p. 51
and more recently on the impor-
tance of the ornamental aspect
for classification, D. A. Aston,
2011.

11 D. A. Aston 2011 in
press.

12 D. A. Aston, 2011, in Tell
el- Dab'a the style already
appears in the early 13th Dynasty.

13 For jugs with ovoid bodies,
small flattened disc bases and
various types of profile rims, see
U. Zevulun, 1990, p. 107.

14 D. A. Aston, 2008, p.
172; M. F. Kaplan, 1980, p. 41, the
distribution of the ovoid type is in
sharp contrast with that of piri-
form 1. It is primarily restricted to
the Levant; M. Bietak, 1996, p. 59,
"certain types of Tell el-Yahudieh
Ware, such as the ovoid ... have a
more limited distribution and
occur for the most part only in
central inland Palestine. This indi-
cates that the Middle Bronze Age
world was not unified..."; M.
Bietak, 1997, p. 91, "the ovoid
and piriform 1a jugs were as a rule
made of Levantine clays... the dis-

tribution of the earliest group of
Tell el-Yahudieh ware, the so-
called ovoid 1 juglet, is concen-
trated in the area of the Galilee
and Lebanon but it is also found
at Tell el-Dab'a", p. 94.

15 R. Amiran, 1969, p. 119.
"... The earlier forms have a pro-
filed rim ridge below the rim; in
the later juglets the predominat-
ing rim is inverted usually round-
ed and thickened and a handle is
attached to the rim or immediat-
ly below...".

16 M. Bietak, 1997, p. 94.

17 M. Bietak, 1997, p. 94.

18 *Ibid.*

19 M. Kaplan, 1980, fig. 117,
a-c.

20 M. Kaplan, 1980, fig. 122,
p. 30, 73.

21 D. A. Aston, 2011, L15.
1-1, fig. 211.

22 M. Chéhab, 1939, p. 806,
fig. 6 a.

23 M. Kaplan, 1980, fig. 40
a.

24 R. S. Merrillees, 1974, p.
63, 67 from Bernasht and in the
Ashmolean museum.

25 L. Stager *et al.*, 2008, p.
224.

26 D. A. Aston, 2002, p. 50.

27 D. A. Aston, 2002, fig.
17.4, p. 87, TD 5588.

28 D. A. Aston, 2011, fig. 70
and Group 12.1b, fig. 88 and fig.
134-135.

29 M. Kaplan, 1980, p. 65,
74.

30 M. Bietak, 1991, abb. 79,
Grab m/12, p. 123, str. E/2 and
abb. 80, Grab m/12, p. 125, n° 1,
2.

31 M. Kaplan, 1980, fig. 40.

32 M. Kaplan, 1980, fig.
126-127.

33 J.-P. Thalmann, 2006, pl.
102, 18, p. 152; H. Charaf, 2009,
p. 300.

34 L. Badre, 1982, fig. 7, p.
129; C. Doumet-Serhal, 1996, pl.
15, 2, level X (1775/1750-1650-
1640/1600 BC).

35 S. Ben-Arieh, 2004, p.
93, fig. 2.61, Tomb 510, MB IIB.

36 M. Kaplan, 1980, p. 33-
36, fig. 127-128.

37 M. Bietak, 1997, p. 94.

38 M. Bietak & K. Kopetzky,
2009, p. 29; D. A. Aston, 2011,
fig. 129, Jl. 3, fig. 130, Jl. 4.

39 D. A. Aston, 2011, fig.
139, L1.2°, fig. 140, L1.2b; K.
Kopetzky, 2008, fig. 2 (D/2-E/2) at
tell el-Dab'a, p. 197.

40 For an example from
Byblos, P. Montet, 1929, pl. CXLVI,
917.

41 For similar examples see
U. Zevulun, 1990, p. 179-181, p.
182, 51. 840; p. 183, 50. 803, 50.
805, 50. 940.

42 M. Bietak & K. Kopetzky,
2009, p. 29.

43 M. Bietak, 1997, p. 94.

44 M. Bietak & K. Kopetzky,
2009, p. 29, phase G/4 or C/1-3,
MB IIB feature.

45 G. Contenau, 1914, pl.
XI, fig. 33, p. 127.

46 M. Kaplan, 1980, fig. 28,
a, fig. 29 a.

47 D. A. Aston, 2002, p. 53;
D. Aston, 2011, fig. 94, 12. 2f with
a comparison from Sudan.

48 M. Chéhab, 1939, p. 806,
fig. 5c.

49 A. Kempinski, L.
Gershuny & N. Scheftelowitz,
2002, p. 114, fig. 5. 59, 3, p. 171.

50 I. Forstner-Müller, 2001,
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