

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT AND THE SOUTHERN LEVANT DURING THE LATE IRON AGE: THE MATERIAL EVIDENCE FROM EGYPT

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I. INTRODUCTION¹

The close connections that existed between Egypt and the Southern Levant during the terminal Iron age (and their political, economic and social background), is hardly a new topic of study. It has been discussed in numerous contexts and from different perspectives, relying on diverse sources of information (e.g. FREEDY & REDFORD 1970; GÖRG 1991; JAMES 1991:714–726,734–735; KITCHEN 1986; 1988; MALAMAT 1983:223–291; MITCHELL 1991a:383–409; NA^CAMAN 1991; REDFORD 1985; 1992:312–471; ROWE 1936; SMITH 1991; TRIGGER *et al.* 1983:337–348). In most studies, the material evidence discussed originated from sites in the Southern Levant (for outdated surveys, see e.g. ROWE 1936; PORTER & MOSS 1951:369–382).² In most cases, when dealing with the Egyptian evidence, such discussions dealt solely with the somewhat limited historical evidence from Egypt,³ as well as the biblical (Isa, 11:11;

Jer. 24:8; 26:20–24; 40–44 *passim*; II Kings 23:29ff.; II Chron. 36:4. For commentaries on the predominant material [Jeremiah 40–44], see e.g. CARROL 1986; HOLLADAY 1989), and extra-biblical⁴ texts which allude to a Palestinian or Judean presence in Egypt during the terminal Iron age. Even in the studies that have noted and discussed actual objects of apparent Levantine origin that have been discovered in Egypt (e.g. ASTON 1996; GRATIEN 1996; PAICE 1986–1987) and even in reports by archaeologists whose expertise is Syro-Palestinian archaeology (e.g. OREN 1984), these finds were not dealt with comprehensively and/or in their wider context. The parallels from other sites in Egypt were for the most part not mentioned and their underlying historical implications were not explicated. Though one cannot claim that the Egypto-Levantine connections during this period are the most significant and/or conspicuous aspect of the late Iron Age Egyptian culture, they nevertheless do represent an interest-

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² Since the publication of these two works, abundant *Aegyptiaca* of the late Iron age has been found in the Land of Israel, which can but demonstrate the need for an updated, comprehensive work on this subject. In the interim, material can be gleaned from J. Leclant's periodic surveys of *Aegyptiaca* found outside of Egypt in his reviews *Fouilles et travaux en Egypte et au Soudan ...*, appearing regularly in the volumes of *Orientalia*. For a recent treatment by the current author of a possible late Iron age *Aegyptiaca* from Jerusalem, see Maeir 1990 (see though GÖRG 1992).

³ On the historical sources of this period (both Egyptian and non-Egyptian), see e.g. the various studies in quoted above. Save for KITCHEN's (1989:30) somewhat tenuous suggestion (relating to a slightly earlier period) that the treasures of Shoshenq I and Osorkon I are of Judean/Israelite origin (though see REDFORD 1992:337, n. 79) and Bietak's recent identification of a "four room house" at Thebes (BIETAK 1992), there are few (if any) references to material evidence of Palestinian origin in pre-Persian, Iron age Egypt. This lacuna has been recently noted by Valbelle 1990:239–240.

⁴ The following sources can be noted: 1) Lachish Letter 3 (TUR-SINAI & AHITUV 1987:232; CROSS 1985; 2) The "Adon" papyrus, which was undoubtedly sent to Egypt from somewhere in the southern part of the Land of Israel. PORTEN (1981) has argued that the letter was sent from Mique/Eqron in Philistia; 3) An additional clear reference to this presence can be seen in *Letter of Aristaeas* 12–13; REDFORD (1985:204, n. 62), has suggested an additional allusion to a Judean presence in Egypt in *Diodorus* I 66, though in fact there is only mention of Phoenicians. For summaries of the various historical data (or lack thereof) on the Judean presence in Egypt in the late Iron age, see e.g. KRAELING 1953:42–48; PORTEN 1968:7–16; Grelot 1972:33–42; HAYES & MILLER 1977:486–488; BRIGHT 1981:346–347; BRESCIANI & PORTEN 1984:358–400; MITCHELL 1991b:429; MODRZEJEWSKI 1995:21–26.

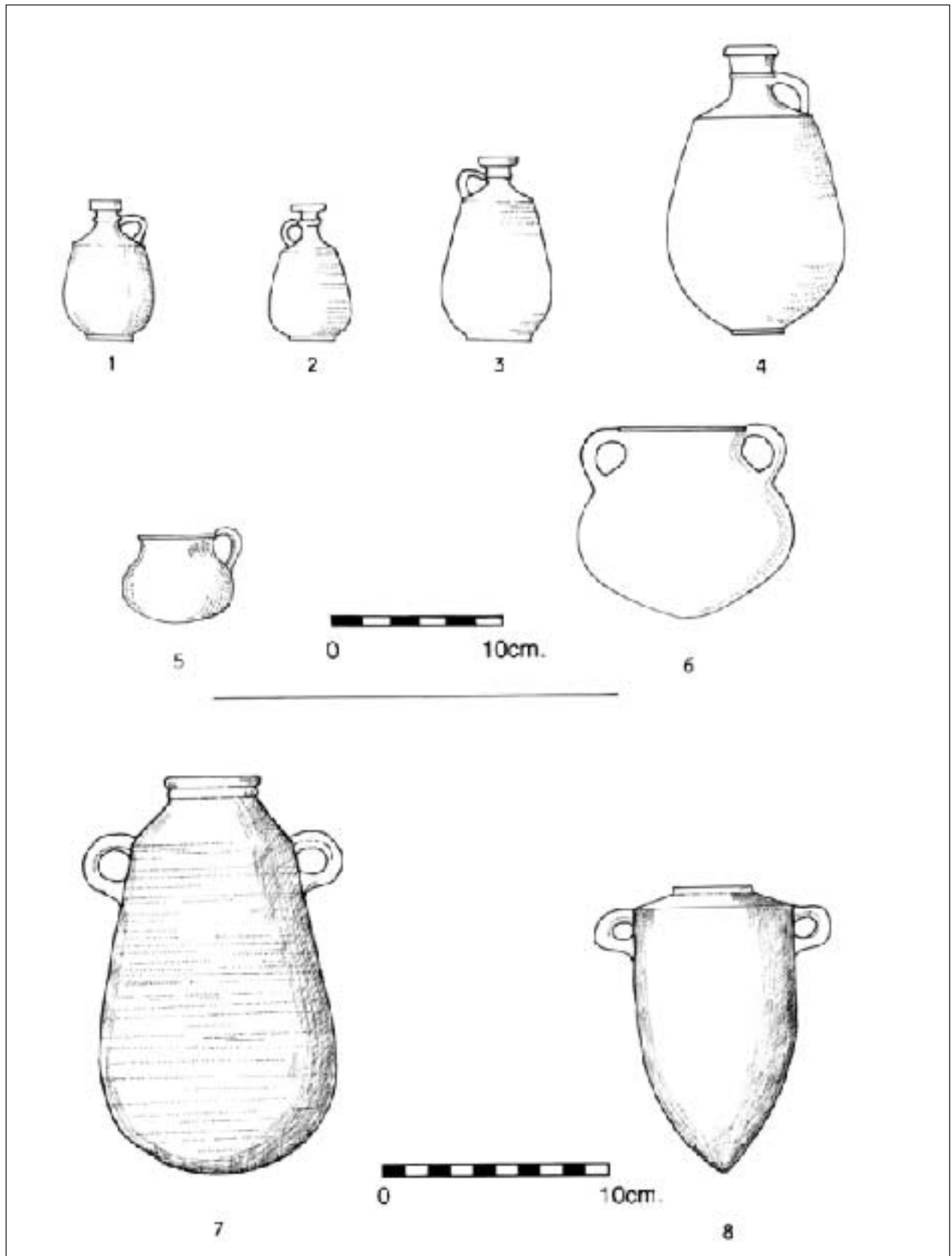


Fig. 1 Levantine Pottery from Late Iron Age (Saite) Egypt. 1) Decanter from Defenneh; 2–3) Decanters from Illahun; 4) Decanter from Kafr Ammar; 5) Cooking jug (?) from Defenneh; 6) Cooking pot from Kafr Ammar; 7) Palestinian Storage Jar (Judean?) from Defenneh; 8) Phoenician-Levantine Storage Jar from Defenneh. All vessels were redrawn from the original publications. Scales are approximate (for references see text)

ing facet of this period and one must attempt to deal with the material evidence of this phenomenon.

In this study, I will attempt to assemble a provisional catalogue of objects which appear to be either of Palestinian provenance or influence, which have been reported from Late Iron Age Egyptian sites (approximately the duration of the Saite Period, 664–525 BCE). I will then proceed to suggest possible interpretations of this evidence.

II. CATALOGUE

In the catalogue, I have attempted to assemble all objects which appear to be of Palestinian origin or display similarity to well-known Palestinian types that have been reported from late Iron Age sites throughout Egypt (and the Sudan). Several qualifying statements are required. Some of these finds are reported in earlier excavation reports and thus one can question the accuracy of the graphic description. This may be true to a certain extent, but most of the objects are on the one hand so blatantly non-Egyptian types, while on the other hand easily identified as being of Levantine origin or influence. This is confirmed by more recent photographs and/or illustrations of some of these finds (e.g. BOURRIAU 1981:80–81, ill. 156). Though I have not personally examined all these objects, and cannot determine the actual provenience of these objects (based either on macroscopic views of pastes or through various analytic provenience methods), this does not negate the discussion below. Even if some (or most) of these objects were actually manufactured in Egypt and were not imported from the Levant, they still are of interest and have significant historical and archaeological implications, since they as well would express cultural and/or physical connections. In the following list, these finds (which are primarily ceramics) are arranged according to types as found at the respective sites (see Fig. 2).

A. Palestinian “decanter” jugs

Defenneh: In PETRIE’s excavations (PETRIE *et al.* 1888) in the late 1880’s at Defenneh, identified as biblical Tahpanhes/classical Daphnae (on the identification, see e.g. ALBRIGHT 1950; JONES & FIEMA 1992), evidence was uncovered of a thriving center of the 26th Dyn. (late 7th–early 6th cent. BCE). Both Petrie (PETRIE *et al.* 1888) and later scholars (e.g. AUSTIN 1970; BOARDMAN 1980:133–134)⁵ noted the substantial amount of finds of Greek origin, and thus concluded that there was a Greek presence at the site, most likely a colony of Greek mercenaries. In addi-

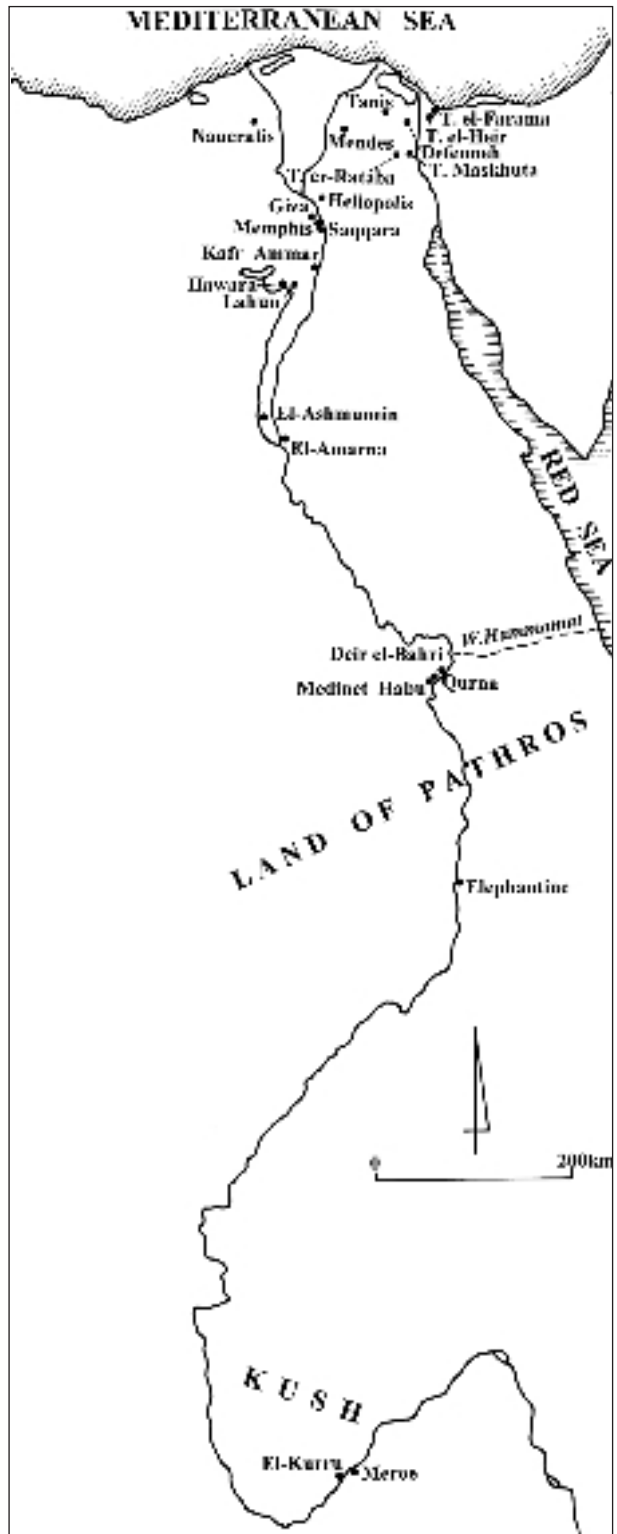


Fig. 2 Sites and Regions in Egypt and Sudan mentioned in the Text

⁵ Note though that PETRIE’s original dating of the Greek material at the site is high, and it should be re-dated to the first half of the 6th cent. BCE. This was noted already by von BOTHMER (1947:175) and more recently reiterated by BOARDMAN (1980:133–134).

tion, it was suggested that a Judean mercenary contingent resided in Defenneh as well. PETRIE (PETRIE *et al.* 1888:49–52) already had discussed the Judean presence at the site, though he did not present any material remains to prove this. Fontaine, who investigated the site in the 1940's (FONTAINE 1947:41–57), also discussed the Judean presence, but once again without demonstrating any physical evidence to this effect. Since then the Judean military presence at the site has been discussed (e.g. PORTEN 1969:8–16; OREN 1984:31–34), but nevertheless, no mention of material evidence supporting this has been produced.

Among the finds that PETRIE assumed were Greek, there is what appears to be a late Iron Age Palestinian “decanter” jug (Fig. 1:1; PETRIE *et al.* 1888:pl. XXXV:44,64).⁶ This vessel, along with several other vessels from Defenneh, was first noticed by BLISS & MACALISTER (1902:102, pl. 49:1,2,6) who though comparing it to pottery found in their excavations in Southern Palestine, did not question Petrie's suggestion to identify it as being of Greek origin. Surprisingly, in later research, this vessel from Defenneh has seemingly gone unnoticed, save for a passing remark by TUFNELL (1953:253).⁷

Illahun (Figs. 1:2–3): Two such vessels were reported from this site (PETRIE *et al.* 1890, pl. XXIV:20,23), and once again identified as being of Aegean origin. One of these decanters (Fig. 1:2) was more recently republished by BOURRIAU (1981:80–81, ill. 156), and though she did not outrightly negate a possible Aegean origin for this vessel (as suggested by the excavators), she believed that the jar was of a local Egyptian fabric. Due though to its unique Palestinian form, if in fact the vessel is of a local Egyptian fabric, this would indicate that it might have been manufactured in Egypt under Levantine influence.

Kafr Ammar (Figs. 1:4): An additional decanter was discovered in the excavations at Petrie and Mackay's excavations at Kafr Ammar, in a context securely dated to the late 25th or early 26th Dyn (PETRIE & MACKAY 1915:33, pl. XXXIV:60).

Tell el Heir: Among the “Syro-Palestinian” pottery that

Oren reported from T.21, the fortified site situated immediately to the north of Tell el Heir, there is the upper portion of a decanter of a distinct, southern Palestinian, late Iron age (7th–6th cent. BCE) class (OREN 1984:fig. 18:8; for a relatively recent discussion of such decanters, see e.g. GITIN 1990:154). The close dating (late 7th cent. BCE until 525 BCE) of these finds should be stressed (OREN 1984:28).

Saqqara: In their recent publication of the pottery from excavations at Saqqara, French and Ghaly included some material which appears morphologically quite similar to the “decanter” type jugs (FRENCH & GHALY 1991:108–109, fig. 38). One must note though that the fabric of these two vessels was defined as local Egyptian, and that the authors date the context to the early 4th cent. BCE (*ibid.*, 96–97). Due though to the similarity to the decanters mentioned above, one can wonder whether this and perchance some of the other material found in the same context (which does not seem to originate from secure stratigraphic contexts) can be dated earlier than the authors have suggested.

All these jugs (save perhaps for the Saqqara example) are, as mentioned, of distinct Palestinian style, and can be closely dated to the very end of the Iron age. Although this generic decanter type first appears in the southern Levant in the “Lachish III” ceramic horizon (pre-701 BCE), these specific subtypes are primarily representative of the “Lachish II” horizon (701–586 BCE) (see e.g. TUFNELL 1953:292–293, pl. 87:273–276; MAZAR *et al.* 1966:31–32,55, figs. 20:1–5,31:1–3; AHARONI 1975:15, pls. 44:17–18, 47:25–26; AHARONI & AHARONI 1976:73–90, 84, 86, fig. 7:8; GITIN 1990:154; ZIMHONI 1990:44–46, fig. 33:5).⁸ It should be stated that these vessels are particularly common in Judah,⁹ e.g., DOTHAN & PORATH 1982:34–35, pl. 20:10.

B. Mortaria

Tell el Heir: Among the “Syro-Palestinian pottery” from the excavations of T.21, the site adjacent to Tell el Heir, Oren reported several flat-based mortaria

⁶ Note that Petrie claimed that this jug was of Greek origin, based on the comparison to similar finds from Naucratis!

⁷ A possible reference to this vessel may be hinted to by HOLLADAY (1992:590–591).

⁸ Note that DUNCAN (1930:pl. 65:C2), though intimately familiar with Petrie's work in Egypt did not notice these parallels from Egypt while preparing his corpus of Palestinian pottery

⁹ See the parallels noted in the previous note, which are all Judean, save for the examples from Miqne/Eqron. Although Miqne is situated in Philistia, it is adjacent to the western border of the kingdom of Judah, which may explain the presence of these vessels at this site. This can be corroborated by the negligible amount of decanters at sites in the heartland of Philistia, such as at Ashdod. See DOTHAN & PORATH 1982.

bowls (OREN 1984:17, figs. 21:9–10, 31). Additional samples have been discovered in the more recent excavations at Tell el Heir (GRATIEN & SOULIÉ 1988:45, fig. 13:d; GRATIEN 1996:77, fig. 24:d [though the last example from a later context]). These bowls have long been recognized as being typical of late Iron age contexts in the southern Levant (as opposed to the ring-based type that is typical of the Persian period). Though these vessels are common in Palestine, they are reported from other regions of the eastern Mediterranean basin (GITIN 1990:210–212; BENNETT & BLAKELY 1989:196–203). Oren in fact suggested to see them as a component of the trade-related vessels at this site (OREN 1984:17).

C. Cooking pots

Defenneh: A small single handled jug (Fig. 1:5) was found in proximity to the afore-mentioned decanter. Like the decanter, PETRIE also regarded it as being of Greek origin (PETRIE *et al.* 1888:64, pl. XXXV:43). Although the inadequate drawing makes a comparison difficult, the vessel is quite reminiscent of late Iron Age Judean cooking jugs (for specimens with one handle, see e.g. ALBRIGHT 1932:pl. 57:14; TUFNELL 1953:288–289, pl. 84:175; AHARONI 1975:pl. 45:1; for specimens with two handles [which Petrie explicitly states were found with the decanter in a 6th cent. context], see e.g. TUFNELL 1953:309–311, pls. 93:447–448; MAZAR *et al.* 1966:fig. 18; AHARONI 1975:pls. 47:19; 49:4; 50:12; HERZOG *et al.* 1984:1–34, fig. 25:8). It should be stressed that this vessel is quite different from both the contemporary Egyptian pottery (see e.g. OREN 1984:13–17; FRENCH 1986;1988;1992; GHALY & FRENCH 1991), as well as the Greek pottery known from Egypt (e.g. OREN 1984:23–28), the Aegean (e.g. BRANN 1962; SPARKES & TALCOTT 1970)¹⁰ and the southern Levant (e.g. NAVEH 1962; REICH 1989; for general discussion, see WALDBAUM 1994:58–59).

Kafr Ammar: A cooking pot of a distinct Palestinian form (Fig. 1:6), was reported at this site in the same context as the decanters mentioned above (PETRIE and MACKAY 1915:33–34, pl. XXXIII:35; compare to Palestinian examples in TUFNELL 1953:93:450; GITIN 1989:44, fig. 2.13:13).

D. Storage Jars

Storage jars of diverse origin are by their functional nature much more commonly found in remote contexts. Nevertheless, a significant numbers of jars that appear to derive from the southern Levant have been reported in late Iron Age contexts in Egypt. This may reflect the close connections that existed between the two regions. Among the jars that I will note there are two generic types: 1) Jars that appear predominantly at sites in southern Israel; 2) Jars that can be defined as “Phoenician/ Palestinian” commercial jars, that may originate from a wider geographical zone.

1) Distinctly southern Levantine Jars

Defenneh: Among the storage jars that were reported from this site, one example appears to belong to a type that is very common in southern Palestine (Fig. 1:7; PETRIE *et al.* 1888:pl. XXXIII:3).¹¹ As STERN (1982:104, fig. 140; See as well RABAN 1980:84–85) has already noted, though it is a type that appears primarily during the Persian period, it has Iron age antecedents, particularly from Judah (see e.g. MAZAR *et al.* 1966:fig. 22:3–4; AHARONI and AHARONI 1976:fig. 7:5, 8:5; KELM & MAZAR 1985:114, fig. 18:9; MAZAR & MAZAR 1989:pls. 4,5; for a recent discussion of examples from northern Israel, see LEHMANN 1996:441–442, taf. 76–77). These jars are not to be mistaken with a vaguely similar Egyptian type appearing at contemporary Egyptian sites (e.g. FRENCH 1986:fig. 9.8.SJ1.1.3).

Tell el-Heir: A jar, quite similar to that described above was recently reported from the renewed excavations at this site. Apparently though, it derives from a Persian period context (GRATIEN 1996:71, fig. 16:a).

2) Generic Phoenician/Palestinian Commercial Jars

A much more commonly reported jar of presumed Syro-Palestinian origin is the ubiquitous commercial jar of the late Iron age/Persian period. These jars (which are variably called Phoenician/Palestinian/Levantine), are found throughout the Mediterranean basin and served as containers for trade. Thus, though a portion of these jars may in fact originate from Palestine, some may have arrived to

¹⁰ Despite the above, one should note that there is a limited affinity to a certain type of cooking jug, noted in late 7th to early 5th cent. BCE Aegean contexts. See e.g. BRANN 1962:55, pl. 11:210; SPARKES & TALCOTT 1970:206, pls. 76:1657–1658; 93:1933–1937.

¹¹ Note that once again, BLISS & MACALISTER (1902) already compared this jar from Defenneh to the Palestinian material.

Egypt in an indirect fashion, or perchance may derive from other regions in the southern Levant (e.g. Lebanon, Syria), while some may have actually been produced in Egypt (for a discussion of these jars, see e.g. RABAN 1980:80–83; OREN 1984:17; BENNETT & BLAKELY 1990:207–214, 222–223; LEHMANN 1994:433–440, taf. 71–76). They should thus be seen within the context of the international trade of this period (for discussions of this trade, see e.g. LEMAIRE 1987; DEVER 1985; STAGER 1996 [who stresses the importance of Egypto-Levantine connections]; GITIN 1997 [who stresses the Levantine-Mesopotamian connection]). Nevertheless, as stated above, the wide dispersal of these jars may be indicative of the close connections between Egypt and the Levant. Though clearly such jars reached many sites and those published may not represent the entire corpus, a provisional list of such jars has been collected below.¹² Included are examples from sites from Egypt and the Sudan, going from north to south. It should be stressed that examples from both the late Iron Age and the Persian period have been grouped together since it is not always possible to differentiate between them.

Farama West: CARREZ-MARATRAY & DEFERNEZ 1996:44, fig. 4:1.

Tanis: BRISSAUD *et al.* 1987:76, fig. 13:155–156.

Mendes: Several such jars were reported from this site and the excavators assumed that they originated in Palestine (WILSON 1982:20, pl. XIX:1–2; HUMMEL & SHUBERT 1991–1992:14–15, fig. 2:3–4).

Naukratis: PETRIE 1934:pls. XVI:3, LIII:46N2.

T. el-Heir (T.21): OREN 1984:17, fig. 21:2–7; GRATIEN & SOULIÉ 1988:45–47, fig. 14:a; GRATIEN 1996:figs. 7,16:b;23:b; LOUIS & GRATIEN 1990:80.

Defenneh: A single example (our Fig. 1:8) was published by PETRIE from this site (PETRIE *et al.* 1888:pl. XXXIII:4).

T. er-Rataba: PETRIE 1906:pl. 36a:7.

T. Maskhuta: PAICE 1986–1987:95–107.

Heliopolis: PETRIE & MACKAY 1915:pl. XI:34.

Giza: HASSAN 1941:118, 18–20, 21–25, D,E,26, 27–B, pl. LIII.

Memphis: CULICAN 1973:fig. 17:E.

Saqqara: SCHNEIDER *et al.* 1991:18.

Hawara: PETRIE & Wainwright 1912:pl. XXXVI:117.

Ilahun: PETRIE *et al.* 1923:pls. 55A:50m,n, 59m.

El-Ashmunein: SPENCER & BAILEY 1986:14, fig. 22:f; SPENCER 1993:46, pl. 67:type F1.

El Amarna: FRENCH 1986:167, fig. 9.20:1–3 (which is suggested as being of Palestinian origin).

Deir el-Bahri: WINLOCK 1928:26–28, fig. 34.

Qurna: PETRIE 1909:pl. L:795; MYSLIWIEC 1987:60–62, nos. 394–396.

Medinet Habu: HÖLSCHER 1954:pl. 47:F,I.

Elephantine: Several examples of this generic type, inscribed with Aramaic inscriptions were discovered at this site (HONROTH *et al.* 1909–1910:25–27, abb. 6; see also SACHAU 1911:abb. 74:3). Recently an additional jar of this type [though apparently locally made] was reported from the renewed excavations at Elephantine (KAISER *et al.* 1990:240–241, abb. 15:17).

Meroe: SHINNIE & BRADLEY 1980:107,134, fig. 37:101,103.

El Kurru: DUNHAM 1950:84, fig. 28c:1158 (for a recent discussion of the jars from Sudan, see HEIDORN 1994:124, figs. 3:k, 4:a–f).

E. Glyptics

To the best of my knowledge, glyptic finds of Southern Levantine origin dating to the Iron age have not been reported from well-controlled archaeological contexts in contemporaneous Egyptian sites. Nevertheless, three late Iron age Judean seals have been bought in Egypt, allegedly originating from Egyptian sites (AVIGAD 1997:67[no.51],112[no.203 – supposedly from Lower Egypt],155–156[no.364]). Needless to say, though one should relate to these finds with caution, the possibility does exist that some or all of them reached Egypt during the Iron age.

III. DISCUSSION

To summarize the evidence presented so far, there is quite compelling testimony of finds of apparent Palestinian origin from sites throughout late Iron age (Saite) Egypt. This includes four classes of Palestinian pottery: decanters jugs, mortaria bowls, cooking pots and jars, all which can be dated to the late

¹² Though SAGONA (1982) included Egypt in his survey of Levantine storage jars found throughout the eastern Mediterranean, his survey was far from exhaustive. Thus, quite a few more items can be added to the late Iron age/Persian period examples collected by him.

Iron Age and the early Persian period. Some of these items are reminiscent of types found throughout Syro-Palestine, while some appear to be more typical of southern Palestine. To this as well can be added possible evidence for Judean seals.

The following suggestions can be raised to interpret this data.

1) Possibly the simplest interpretation would be that these items represent evidence for the trade connections during this period, both between Egypt and Palestine (see e.g. LEMAIRE 1987; REDFORD 1992a: 435–444; STAGER 1994; TRIGGER *et al.* 1982: 329–330,339),¹³ but possibly with other areas as well (i.e. items reaching Egypt indirectly). Since a significant percentage of these vessels can be very likely explained in a trade-related context, this scenario appears quite logical. This is true to a large extent for the decanters¹⁴ and needless to say for the jars (see e.g. RABAN 1980). Accordingly, the vessels made of local Egyptian fabrics would be local imitations of these imported types.

2) A second interpretation would be that part of these finds are evidence to the presence of persons of Southern Levantine origin in Egypt during the late Iron Age and early Persian period. Accordingly, these people would have brought with them Palestinian vessels to Egypt and/or would have made these types (from the local fabrics) while in Egypt.

Paraphrasing the biblical text,¹⁵ can this be seen as evidence of *who set out to go down to Egypt* (Isaiah 30:2) (i.e. migration), or perchance *the wealth of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia* (Isaiah 45:14) (i.e. commerce)?

Reviewing the evidence presented above, I believe that on the whole, the first alternative should be preferred. Particularly in light of the fact that the majority of the ceramic types noted above do in fact appear to be trade-related. Despite this, one cannot strike out the second possibility – that in fact some of these finds may be evidence for the presence of people of Southern Levantine origin

(possibly Judeans) in Saite Egypt. I believe this can be argued for the following reasons:

1) Though most of the vessels are in fact trade-oriented, it is apparent that a large part of the parallels for the pottery under discussion (in particular the decanters and the first type of storage jar), derive from sites southern Palestine, in particular from Judea.

2) To this one can add that the presence of Palestinian cooking pots (“kitchen ware”) among these finds would seem to be of significance. As noted often in the past, “kitchen ware” can be used as a good indicator for the presence of distinct ethnic groupings. The logic being that domestic “kitchen ware” is not an inter-ethnic trade item, and would only be used by the specific ethnic/cultural group, and in domestic settings (for general studies, see e.g. SHENANN 1989; PETRIE 1996; for a recent study relating to Iron age Palestine, see BUNIMOVITZ & YASUR-LANDAU 1996). Thus, Palestinian cooking ware found at late Iron Age sites in Egypt would strengthen the claim for the physical presence of people of Palestinian origin at the respective sites.¹⁶ Even if one claims that some of these cooking vessels were made of local Egyptian fabrics, one could argue that these are Palestinian style vessels produced in Egypt for the use (and tastes) of southern Levantine immigrants in Egypt. Though one could argue that such pottery could be imitated by Egyptians as well, this would not be likely regarding the utilitarian (cooking) wares.¹⁷

In other words, the archaeological finds may, to a certain extent, corroborate the documentary evidence indicating the presence of people of Palestinian origin, possible Judeans, in late Iron age Egypt. Vessels that appear to be of distinct Palestinian origin appear not only in the eastern Nile Delta, but at sites in Middle Egypt as well (Saqqara, Illahun and Kafr Ammar; see Fig. 2). Pottery of a more general Syro-Palestinian origin appear throughout Egypt and the Sudan.

¹³ Note as well the slightly earlier biblical reference (Hosea 12:2, mid-8th cent. BCE) to the export of oil from the southern Levant to Egypt.

¹⁴The decanter-type vessel served, among other functions, for the storage and transportation of various precious liquids. This can be seen in relation to wine (e.g. HESTRIN 1973:53, no.103 [a decanter with the inscription *lyhzyhw yyn khl*]; USSISHKIN 1978:83–84; LEMAIRE 1980:92–94 [two wine-related inscriptions on decanters

from Lachish]); perfume (DAYAG-MENDELS 1989:101); and olive oil (GITIN 1989:32,34,44, figs. 2.8,2.13:17).

¹⁵ Biblical quotes from the Revised Standard Version.

¹⁶ See though SINGER-AVITZ's (1989:121) remarks on the possible existence of a limited amount of trade in cooking vessels as well.

¹⁷ Compare to the somewhat analogous situation in Early Bronze Age Canaan, e.g. BRANDL 1992.

An interesting point is the comparison between the distribution of these finds and the documentary evidence. If one compares the sites at which the finds (besides the Phoenician/Palestinian commercial jars) were discovered, there appears to be a correlation with the location of the Judeans in Egypt as related in the biblical narrative. In JEREMIAH (43:7–9;44:1) there is explicit reference to Judeans residing in Egypt, with specific mention of the following sites: Migdol (=T. el-Heir; OREN 1984), Tahpanhes (=Defenneh; PETRIE & FIEMA 1992), Nof (=Memphis; REDFORD 1992b), and the “Land of Pathros” (=southern Upper Egypt; BAKER & REDFORD 1992). In addition, although not specifically stated in the historical sources, it is apparent that the Jewish garrison in Elephantine was already established during the late Iron age (pre-586 BCE).¹⁸

It would thus seem that there are corresponding elements between the material finds, the biblical narrative, and the additional historical evidence. An

almost perfect match exists between the ceramic evidence and the biblical narrative regarding the eastern Nile delta sites (Migdol and Tahpanhes).¹⁹ Moving further south, Saqqara can be considered an integral part of Nof=Memphis, and Kafr Ammar and Illahun are not far away. As to southern (upper) Egypt though, neither material evidence, nor additional, extra-biblical sources have been reported, that can confirm a late Iron Age Judean presence in that region, as referred to in the Bible and hinted to in the Elephantine texts.²⁰

The dating of the above discussed pottery corresponds as well to this historical timeframe, i.e. from the late 7th cent. to the middle of the 6th cent. BCE.

It would thus seem very possible that the evidence presented above is testimony of the Judean segment within the multi-national matrix at these respective sites (see e.g. VALBELLE 1990:240). Just as the Aegean components at these sites have been identified on the basis of their specific material cul-

¹⁸ Although it is clear that the Jewish garrison was founded before the conquest of Egypt by Cambyses in 525 BCE (on the basis of papyrus Cowley no. 30 [COWLEY 1923:112–116]), the actual date is debated. On this, see e.g. GRELOT 1972; JAMES 1991:735; KRAELING 1953; MITCHELL 1991b; PORTEN 1968:7–16; BRESCIANI and PORTEN 1984; OREN 1984:30–38; MODRZEJEWSKI 1995:25–26. See though MACLAURIN’s (1968) opinion for a much earlier date for the founding of the Judean colony. To this one can add the opinions for an Israelite (and not Judean, and thus earlier) origin of the Jewish community in Elephantine. See e.g., von HOONACKER 1914:73–84; VINCENT 1937:360,566; VAN DER TOORN 1992.

¹⁹ It can be added that a substantial late Iron age Judean presence in the eastern Nile Delta may be mirrored in the Hexateuchal biblical narrative of the sojourn in Egypt which some scholars believe reflects, if at all, a late Iron age historical setting. See e.g. REDFORD 1992a:408–419.

²⁰ It should be stressed that to date, no material evidence confirming the presence of Judeans/Israelites in pre-Persian period Elephantine has been reported. In relation to this though one should note GOYON’s (1985) recent suggestion to date the Aramaic abecedarium from Wadi Hammamat (DUPONT-SOMMER 1947; GOYON 1959:116–117, no.107) to ca. 566 BCE, based on a nearby inscription mentioning the coregents Apries and Amasis of the 26th Dyn. Based on this dating, he suggests that both the abecedarium and the royal names were written by a Judean residing in Egypt (possibly one of the Judean refugees from late Iron age Judea) while on the road to Elephantine. Although this is an interesting suggestion, it should be treated with caution for sever-

al reasons: 1) Goyon’s dating (i.e. to the Saite period, and not to the 5th cent. BCE as originally suggested by Dupont-Sommer) is based on the proximity to the royal names, which might just be fortuitous (not to mention that the proposed coregency of Apries and Amasis is not accepted by all, see e.g. SIMPSON 1959; JAMES 1991:736; TRIGGER *et al.* 1983:281, table 4.1); 2) Paleographically, the script seems to incorporate later, rather than earlier tendencies, and there seems no reason for an early dating (See NAVEH 1972:42 who adheres to Dupont-Sommer’s original 5th cent. BCE dating, and *ibid*:15–43 for discussion of the earlier and later comparative material); 3) Even if the inscription is to be dated to the 6th cent. BCE, it is not clear why the inscription should be Judean, since the inscription is Aramaic, clearly written in the Aramaic script, and there is abundant non-Judean, Aramaic epigraphic material from contemporary Egypt; 4) If in fact the abecedarium was written very soon after the end of the Palestinian Iron age by a Judean, one would expect Judean influence in the script. One can note though, that the exact transition between the use by former Judeans, of the Hebrew, Iron age script, and the subsequently adopted Aramaic script, for the short period between the end of the Iron age (first half of the 6th cent. BCE) and the second half of the 6th and beginning of the 5th cent. BCE (as represented by the earlier Elephantine texts), is not clear due to the lack of adequate comparative material (see an example of a Hebrew word [*wnspt*] written in Aramaic script in COWLEY 1959:157, no. 52:I,5). Neither a clear-cut change or a gradual transition and influence has been shown. For comparison and general comments, NAVEH 1972; 1982:82–100.

ture, it is logical to assume that Palestinian/Judean elements can be distinguished as well. Though much less common and influential, it nevertheless is documented in the historical sources and appears to be evidenced in the material record. This presence would probably have been comprised of mercenaries, serving in the Egyptian army, or of civilian fugitives, who arrived in Egypt during various stages of the late (and especially terminal) Iron Age.²¹

IV. SUMMARY

In summary, I believe that the following points can be noted:

- 1) Throughout Egypt (and even in Sudan) there are objects of Levantine origin in late Iron age contexts.
- 2) On the whole, one has the impression that these

objects are evidence of the commercial relations between the two region.

3) Nevertheless, some of these objects may hint to the physical presence of people of Palestinian origin in Egypt during this period, possibly Judeans.

In closing, I believe it is necessary to stress that a degree of reservation should be exercised in light of the relatively small sample of finds with which we are dealing. One might expect that the evidence for both commercial relations as well as the Judean presence would have been more extensive. One can wonder whether perchance this can be partially explained as being due to a lack of attentiveness to this point on the part of scholars who have studied the pottery from late Iron age sites in Egypt (as, e.g., WEINSTEIN [1981:21–22] noted regarding NK pottery in Palestine).

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²¹ For a discussion of the contemporary Cypriote presence in Egypt, which may serve as a complimentary study to our discussion, see de SALVIA 1989.

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