

INTRODUCTION

The results of the excavations at Tell el-Dab^ca, in the Eastern Nile Delta (Fig. 1) have completely altered our understanding of the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt and the Middle Bronze Age in the Levant. The identification of Tell el-Dab^ca as Avaris (ancient capital of the *heqa khasut*), and the intensive archaeological excavations at the site since 1966 have verified the historical accounts of the Hyksos phenomenon (BIETAK 1975; 1979; 1989; 1991; 1994; 1996; 1997; BIETAK, DORNER, JÁNOSI 2001, HEIN and JÁNOSI 2004; BIETAK and FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2006). Tell el-Dab^ca, pre 18th Dynasty, has produced a rich and diverse collection of Cypriot wares, to the extent that there are very few examples of classic Cypriot types of this era *not* found at Tell el-Dab^ca. These discoveries have not only brought the chronology of Cyprus and the Levant into much sharper focus but also suggest that traditional interpretations of Cypriot trading activity in the Middle Bronze Age could be revised.

To date, Tell el-Dab^ca has produced the largest collection of Cypriot Middle Bronze Age pottery found abroad.¹ It is part of the extensive distribution of Cypriot pottery in the East Mediterranean at this time. Cypriot pottery is found as far east as Crete, as far north as Kültepe in Anatolia, and at over 40 sites

along the Syro-Palestinian coast. In total, approximately 1100 pieces of exported pottery have been identified.² Just over one third of this collection remains unpublished. The largest assemblages of Cypriot (MCII-LCI) assemblages are at Tell el-Dab^ca (390),³ Ras Shamra, Syria (c. 200) and Akko, Israel (c. 200).

Prior to the discovery of the Tell el-Dab^ca collection, our interpretations of exported Cypriot pottery as evidence of Cypriot foreign relations, were harnessed to the succeeding Late Bronze Age distributions of White Slip, Base Ring and Red Lustrous Wheelmade Wares (MERRILLEES 1968; PORTUGALI and KNAPP 1985; KNAPP 1988, 1990). This form of retrospective analysis while providing a broader viewpoint perhaps masked “individual situations that in their specific detail are unique” (TRIGGER 1989, 27). The Middle Bronze Age distribution of Cypriot pottery, for example, was considered precursory to the Late Bronze Age “opium trade” or “copper trade”.

From around 1890 onwards, Cypriot Middle Bronze Age pottery distributions were important because of their chronological significance and intensive deliberation on dates available from external sequences often overshadowed the historical sig-

¹ This research, the Cypriot pottery at Tell el-Dab^ca, was instigated by Professor Manfred Bietak, Institute of Egyptology, University of Vienna and Professor Edgar Peltenburg, Department of Archaeology, University of Edinburgh. The Cypriot pottery excavated between 1966 and 1985 is catalogued in my MA Dissertation *The Middle Cypriot Pottery from Tell el-Dab^ca, Egypt*, Edinburgh 1986. The research was extended to incorporate comparative material from the Levant with the support of a scholarship from the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, (BSAJ) for one year 1986–1987, which culminated in my PhD thesis, *The Circulation of Cypriot Pottery in the Levant*, Edinburgh 1991. The BSAJ also presented an award to enable me to prepare this manuscript (1995–6) for publication.

² As noted above, the data collection for this project was completed in 1990. In the ensuing years many new discoveries have taken place, especially in Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt (BOURRIAU and ERIKSSON 1997) and have yielded yet more examples of Cypriot pottery from the Middle

Bronze Age, or Cypriot material from older publications such as Alalakh, have been fully published (BERGOFFEN 2005), but, regrettably, it has not been possible to update either this manuscript or the catalogue to accommodate these new discoveries.

³ 390 pieces appear in the catalogue for Tell el-Dab^ca but over one hundred pieces from Area A/II which was excavated in 1998 by FORSTNER-MÜLLER (2002) have not been included in this total or this publication but have been studied by the author. Similarly, a substantial corpus of Cypriot pottery from context L81 from F/II (BIETAK and FORSTNER-MÜLLER 2006) will be published at a later date. Later Cypriot material from H/III and H/VI has been published by FUSCALDO (2003, 2007). Other Cypriot material from ‘Ezbet Helmi has been published by BIETAK and HEIN (2001) and HEIN (1994a, b, 2001, 2007) and will be published in full at a later date. The material from A/V has also been published (HEIN and JÁNOSI 2004; MAGUIRE 2004) but it is also included in this publication.

nificance of the distributions. Cypriot pottery was used extensively to establish relative and absolute chronological links with Syria, Palestine and Egypt (ÅSTRÖM 1957/1972, 1987, GJERSTAD 1926, JOHNSON 1982, MERRILLEES 1977, MYRES and OHNEFALSCH-RICHTER 1899, SALTZ 1977). The ultimate aim was to create an internal chronological sequence for Cyprus: Cypriot pottery, if tied in with the Palestinian and Egyptian cultural and historical sequences, could lend absolute dates to the Cypriot relative chronological sequences (which are almost entirely dependent on pottery typologies).

A Cypro-centric perspective may have tailored interpretations of the export of Cypriot pottery. The Cypriot pottery in the Middle Bronze Age was the first evidence for any systematic contact with the Mediterranean world and by its very nature signified that Cyprus was trading with its neighbouring countries and, therefore, engaged in “foreign relations”. These foreign relations according to certain scholars were directly responsible for the growth of Cypriot east coast towns (CATLING 1973) and, likewise towns flourished along the Syro-Palestine coast because of the trade in Cypriot pottery or possibly Cypriot copper of which Cypriot pottery was a by product (ARTZY and MARCUS 1992, 108).

Yet the discovery of Cypriot pottery at Tell el-Dab^{ca} has forced us to re-examine the current interpretations of the export of Cypriot pottery. The pattern of Levantine exports to and from the Hyksos capital highlights the international significance of Tell el-Dab^{ca} in the East Mediterranean. The discoveries at ‘Ezbet Helmi indicate that the inhabitants of the area were also closely linked with the Aegean world (BIETAK 1992). The results of the excavations at Tell el-Dab^{ca} show in graphic detail the social, religious and economic make up of the populations living in a bustling capital with impressive palatial complexes and rambling suburbs. Cypriot pottery, circulating in the East Mediterranean, therefore, must be considered in light of the new discoveries at Tell el-Dab^{ca}. It must be viewed from a global Mediterranean perspective and not overshadowed by the chronological significance to Cypriot internal chronologies by the discovery of Cypriot pottery in historically dated deposits.

This study is an attempt to present a composite picture of the Cypriot pottery from Tell el-Dab^{ca} in the context of the circulation of Cypriot pottery in the East Mediterranean. It also attempts to address the problems of Cypriot pottery classification and chronology which have come to the fore in studying this body of material. The term circulation has been deliberately introduced in order to set aside connota-

tions of directional “trade” via overloaded descriptions such as “exports/imports” or socio-political relations via “Cyprus” or “Cypriot foreign relations”. Cypriot pottery was moved around the Levant but how it came to reach its final destination can only be surmised. Various routes could be proposed, e.g. from Cyprus to Egypt directly or Cyprus to Egypt via Syria and/or Palestine overland or along the coast. Similarly, any party from any of the neighbouring countries, as well as Cyprus could have instigated the movement from Cyprus to Syria, to Palestine and Egypt.

In observing the circulation of the Cypriot pottery, traditional methods of identification and classification are examined in Chapter 4. The identification of Cypriot pottery types requires an insight into the tradition of classification which exists in Cypriot ceramic studies coined “The Swedish System” (FRANKEL 1991, 246). Since it is essential in this type of study to provide accurate identifications of the Cypriot pottery in circulation while maintaining valid reference points, the existing classification has been extensively used. The Swedish Cyprus Expedition (SCE) descriptive terminology has been used to maintain consistency in referencing various types and styles, but the chronological succession of the Ware types (denoted by numerical divisions in Roman numerals) is not as easily replicated and has been used in moderation; the succession of Wares has been ascertained through observation of stylistic variables, uncalibrated by relevant stratigraphic data. At present, there are no universal alternatives to the SCE Roman numerals but the success of independent recording systems (FRANKEL 1974; BARLOW 1991; VAUGHAN 1991) are positive indications that analyses using independent variables (BAIRD 1991) can currently complement the traditional SCE classification system.

It is also important to go beyond the established typological and chronological structures and extract information about pottery production, regionalism and distribution on the island in order to shed light on its circulation abroad. Likewise any chronological information obtained from external links must be accurately filtered into established internal dating sequences which are almost entirely constructed from pottery typologies at specific style and Ware level (MAGUIRE 1991, 1992).

The Tell el-Dab^{ca}/Cypriot connection has attracted particular attention in Cypriot chronological studies since it has been advocated that as Tell el-Dab^{ca} is linked to the Egyptian Dynastic sequence and, theoretically, to calendrical dates, extrapolated dates from an Egyptian historical sequence can be used to refine the relative, and more importantly, absolute

sequence in Cyprus. The Egyptian connection is all the more poignant since Cypriot pottery was only previously found in substantial numbers in Palestine and hence less directly linked: the absolute dates of the Palestinian cultural sequence were devised through the presence of Egyptian artefacts in Palestine or Levantine artefacts in Egypt. It is a tantalising objective to calibrate the Cypriot relative dating sequence to an Egyptian constant but an element of caution must be introduced. Since the material from Tell el-Dab^{ca} comprises sherds in occupation deposits and not exclusively whole pots from sealed burial units we must be aware of the limitations in extrapolating dates and applying them to Cypriot chronology. Similarly, any tentative dates can only be applied to the Cypriot relative chronology where the exported Cypriot styles are found in secure stratigraphic sequences in Cyprus. Indeed, the methodology of using pottery to establish or calibrate relative chronologies has to take into consideration the taphonomy of sherds in occupational debris as well as the possibility that the classification sequence can be complemented by multi-variate analyses which could enhance our knowledge of the specific pottery communities that existed at this time (MAGUIRE 2009). The well-established and referenced classification system can be expanded and modified using objective multi-variate analyses where possible.

The substantial assemblage of primarily Cypriot Middle Bronze Age pottery from Tell el-Dab^{ca} is presented here as a catalogue. The catalogue also includes comparative material from over 40 sites in the Levant. This catalogue is not a definitive *distribution* of Cypriot Middle Bronze Age wares in the Levant.⁴ It is an indication of the extensive circulation of Cypriot pottery in this period and provides a substan-

tial context for the interpretation of Cypriot pottery at Tell el-Dab^{ca} in the Second Intermediate Period. The unpublished material from Claude Schaeffer's excavations at Ras Shamra, currently located in the Antiquités Orientales, the Louvre, and the Musée National St. Germain-en-Laye (studied by R.S. Merrillies pers. comm.) will be published by the Ras Shamra Mission (M. Yon, pers. comm.).

Several sherds of "Late Cypriot" wares have been included in the catalogue from Tell el-Dab^{ca}. They have been included in this study since their occurrence has an important bearing on our interpretations of the nature of Middle Bronze Age Wares abroad but these pieces and the "Late Cypriot" pottery from ^cEzbet Helmi (BIETAK and HEIN, 2001; HEIN 1994b, 2001, 2007, forthc.) will be comprehensively studied and published by Professor Irmgard Hein in the context of the early New Kingdom deposits. Cypriot pottery from H/III and H/VI has already been published (FUSCALDO 2003, 2007). The location and stratum of each piece of Cypriot pottery has been listed in the catalogue with its unique Tell el-Dab^{ca} register number but the archaeological contexts are published in detail by the excavators (e.g. A/II BIETAK 1991; A/V HEIN and JÁNOSI 2004).

In the following chapters it will be demonstrated that the discovery of a substantial corpus of Cypriot pottery from Tell el-Dab^{ca} has radically altered our understanding of Cypriot pottery, and its circulation in the Levant in the Middle Bronze Age. Chapters 1 and 2 will present details of the excavations at Tell el-Dab^{ca} and the nature of the Cypriot assemblage. The significance of its distribution in the Levant will be discussed in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 will examine the classification of the pottery and its use as a dating tool in relative and absolute frameworks.

⁴ See above note 2.