

FOREWORD

This study, a revised and updated version of my PhD thesis (submitted and approved in 2016 at the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel), deals with the transregional interaction of the Near East in the 6th millennium calBC. The 6th millennium calBC remains a rather poorly understood period of the Ancient Near East, and a systematic analysis of the individual cultural entities and their interaction is lacking; only few research projects have focused on this chapter in Near Eastern history since the definition of its dominant cultural groups in the early- and mid-20th century.

I posit that there are several reasons for this. First, the Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic periods fall between more well-established areas of research: they do not fully belong to Prehistory, yet they also pre-date the core interests of Biblical Archaeology. Second, modern academia encourages specialization in a single region and period, to insure sufficient in-depth familiarity with the data. Comparative studies that consider data from broad geographic spheres are at risk of being superfluous, as it is challenging for one researcher to achieve the required degree of familiarity with the material culture of multiple regions. Third, transregional studies have to disregard modern day political and cultural boundaries. Doing so requires considerable persistence and, at times, optimism. Transregional works are nevertheless essential, both for understanding developments over wide geographic regions, and to situate the interpretation of local finds and regional trends within broader contexts, on the background of the usually better understood local developments and continuities.

I therefore aim to contribute to current academic debates about the period and region as follows: I will establish a firm chronological framework for the entire region between northern Mesopotamia and Lower Egypt in the 6th millennium calBC. Dating discussions are included in the syntheses I provide, for the material culture assemblages of the period, each of which contains a comprehensive description of the four cultural entities that are normally recognized: the Halaf culture of northern Mesopotamia (Chapter 4); the Amuq C strata of the northern Levant (Chapter 5); the Wadi Rabah culture of the southern Levant (Chapter 6); and the Neolithic phases of the Delta and Fayum in Lower Egypt (Chapter 7). While each of these four chapters stands on its own, each also follows a consistent structure, thereby forming a coherent corpus. This modular structure is intended to provide subsequent researchers with the opportunity to draw upon the information discussed in this work for their own purposes, and to foster further debate in light of transregional interpretations.

But the main purpose of this work is to examine evidence of transregional interactions, including the exchange of raw materials and finished products, but also the common stylistic factors that influenced cultural development across the region. I therefore examine patterns in the dispersal and intensity of imported material and its influences, and propose possible modes of interaction based on the data available at the time of writing. I hope that this study will be of value to a wide variety of readers, providing them with a systematic presentation of the material culture and a synthetic overview of the 6th millennium calBC in the Near East.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Barbara Horejs, Prof. Julia Budka and Dr. Felix Höflmayer for including my study in the series *Archaeology of Egypt, Sudan and the Levant*. I would then like to convey my appreciation to many friends and colleagues, without whom this study could not have been completed. I am grateful to my PhD advisor Prof. Yosef Garfinkel, who encouraged me to

start my own excavation project at Ein el-Jarba, where I became familiar with the material culture of the 6th millennium calBC. I would further like to thank Dr. Eli Yannai for his continuous guidance and practical advice during all phases of this project. Further, I wish to thank Dr. R. Gareth Roberts, who meticulously edited my English and provided me with valuable feedback on form and content in many instances. Finally, I thank my parents, Vladimir and Eva Streit, who encouraged me to choose my studies based on my passion and interest and taught me to pursue them with dedication. All figures were drawn by the author based on the indicated sources.