



## A *Mnhprꜣ* SCARAB FROM TEL ABEL BETH MAACAH

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### ABSTRACT

*During excavations at Tell Abil el-Qameh, identified as the biblical Abel Beth Maacah and located in the Upper Galilee on the modern border between Israel, Lebanon and Syria, a high-quality *Mnhprꜣ* scarab was found in an Iron Age I context, just above substantial Late Bronze IIB remains. Its typology suggests it to be a product from the reign of Ramses II's. Prompted by this discovery, we examine aspects of Egyptian involvement in this region during the time of Dynasty 19. It is suggested that following the outcome of the battle of Qadesh and the destruction of Hazor sometime in the 13th century BCE, the geo-political balance shifted and the area of the Upper Galilee and the northern Jordan Valley became a buffer zone, with more of an economic, rather than a military role. Egyptian interests in this northern reach of their empire were governed by mediators, rather than by the direct rule characteristic of Beth-Shean and the area to its south.*

**T**ell Abil el-Qameh, located on the modern border between Israel, Lebanon and Syria, six kilometers west of Tel Dan and 30 kilometers north of Tel Hazor (Fig. 1), is identified with the biblical town of Abel Beth Maacah. Surveys and recently initiated excavations show that the mound was almost continuously occupied from the Early Bronze Age to the British Mandate period.<sup>1</sup> Stratified remains dating to the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, as well as to Iron Age I and II, have been uncovered in the three seasons of excavation conducted to date; among the finds is a high-quality scarab, the subject of the present paper.<sup>2</sup>

### CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SCARAB

The scarab (Reg. No. 23019) was found in Area F at the southern end of the lower mound, in Locus 2302. This locus represents topsoil just above Wall 2360, one of the stone wall foundations in a building attributed to Stratum F-1, tentatively dated to Iron I (12th–11th centuries BCE); see further below in “Discussion.”<sup>3</sup> The dimensions are 2.3 x 1.7 x 1.0 cm. The steatite piece is of excellent workmanship, deeply engraved, and pierced longitudinally, with no traces of glazing (Fig. 2). The clypeus sports five frontal

indentations and the head presents incisions for the eyes and a median line. The outline of the prothorax, the one lined suture, and the V-notches (humeral callosities) at the outer edges of the elytra, which are framed by a curving line at the bottom, are all neatly carved. The sides present notched front, middle, and hind legs, clearly separated and at various angles; the front and middle legs meet at the suture between the prothorax and elytra. The round edges of the piercing are in relief.

The state of preservation is complete on the back (with a small depression on the left elytron), but the base is fragmentary. On the upper two thirds, the base design consists of what remains of a central standing cartouche on its base, probably with two confronted rearing cobras facing it (the lower part of what remains of the left figure seems larger than the base of the right-side cobra); beneath a straight dividing line, a winged scarab is turned towards the cartouche:





Figure 1: Location map (by Ruhama Bonfil, Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

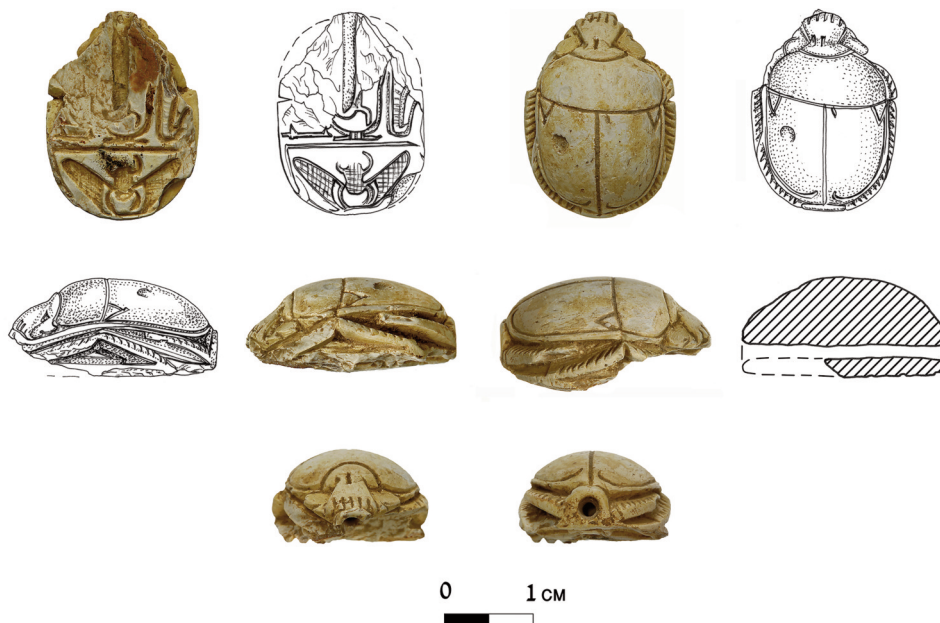


Figure 2: Photo and drawing of the scarab (photo by Gabi Laron; drawing by Yulia Rudman).

In the damaged cartouche, the lower right leg of a scarab is still identifiable.

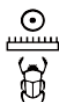
The scarab's typology is characterized by an open hour-glass head and clypeus of Tufnell's B6 type (associated with Dynasties 12–26),<sup>4</sup> elytra and prothorax of vlv type (Dynasties 13/15–26),<sup>5</sup> and the sides, with all extremities hatched, are a variant of the d6 type; the carefully feathered legs, extending past the edges and clearly visible from above, are executed in typical Ramesside fashion (though already appearing on Dynasty 18 scarabs, this feature is noted by Keel as particularly distinctive of carefully executed Dynasty 19 scarabs).<sup>6</sup>

#### DISCUSSION

The scarab should be dated to the Ramesside Period, probably Dynasty 19, reign of Ramses II,<sup>7</sup> on the basis of its typology, motifs' design, parallels with the cartouche of Ramses II instead of Thutmose III, quality of engraving, and the historical context of Egyptian scarabs found in Israel.

The base's design can be analyzed as follows:


1. A *Mnhprꜣ* cartouche: the traces of a scarab's lower right leg in the cartouche supports the view that Thutmose III's throne name (*ni-swꜣt bity* prenomen) is probably inscribed as *Mnhprꜣ*:



based on similar exemplars. The cartouche is placed vertically on a base marked with small indentations (not a valuable criterion for dating the scarab).<sup>8</sup> *Mnhprꜣ* scarabs were produced for more than a millennium after Thutmose III's death,<sup>9</sup> many of them during the Ramesside Period and the reign of Ramses II.<sup>10</sup> Their popularity may be due to a cryptographic reference to Amun, already adopted during Thutmose III's reign, based on acrophony,<sup>11</sup> or rather, substitution.<sup>12</sup> The cartouche is a solar symbol associated with kingship.

2. A pair of confronted cobras flanking a sign is a motif known since the Middle Kingdom, less frequent between Dynasties 15–19, but resurging in the Ramesside period, notably around a cartouche.<sup>13</sup> Here, the body of the right cobra is smoothly flaring and angling towards the tail. The other figure on the left has been too seriously damaged to definitely assess if it was another cobra, as proposed in our restoration, or a kneeling anthropomorphic figure (for two seated deities instead of uraei on Dynasty 19 pieces, see e.g., Jerusalem Rockefeller Museum J. 522 from Gezer,<sup>14</sup> and Jerusalem IAA I.7087 from Tell el-Far'ah South),<sup>15</sup> although the heraldic elements flanking the cartouche are usually a similar pair. The motif of cobras flanking a *Mnhprꜣ* cartouche is not a definitive dating criterion when the tails are not attached to the base of the cartouche.<sup>16</sup> Cobras with a simple solar orb (without Hathoric horns) above the

head are already attested during Thutmose III's reign,<sup>17</sup> also on scarabs,<sup>18</sup> but the presence of this feature cannot be assessed on our damaged scarab. Twin uraei on scarabs may also wear different crowns to symbolize Upper and Lower Egypt (as heraldic Two Ladies *Nhbt* and *Wꜣdt* in the form of twin cobras, a motif that appears in the iconography in the middle of Dynasty 18).<sup>19</sup> Cobras are apotropaic solar entities, often associated with the king and his attributes, and as twin deities, they may represent the fiery eyes of the sun God.<sup>20</sup>

3. A straight separation line divides the base between the upper cartouche/cobras motif and the lower winged scarab; similar pieces with the cobras, cartouche, and winged scarab beneath them may include a wavy line (representing water as the hieroglyph ) above the winged scarab or no line at all; the straight/wavy line is not a definitive dating criterion.
4. The motif of the winged scarab appears on scarabs during Thutmose I's reign.<sup>21</sup> The form of the flying scarab's wings is particularly thin and elongated and they emerge from the juncture point of the back legs with the body of the beetle, bracketing the back legs completely. They are deeply carved in a crisscross-pattern also recognizable on the body (the wings will be further discussed and compared infra). The scarab is, again, a solar symbol.

Jaeger does not specifically address the arrangement of a standing cartouche between cobras with a winged scarab beneath it in his work on the *Mnhprꜣ* scarabs.<sup>22</sup> The composition implies that the royal cartouche encircling the solar aspect of *Mnhprꜣ*/Amun is rolled by the winged beetle across the morning sky as a new sun each day reborn, under the protection of the twin cobras, for the benefit of the Two Lands.

Other pieces similar to the Tel Abel Beth Maacah scarab include:

1. BM EA 28140 (Fig. 3), a glazed steatite scarab, 1.6 x 2.1 cm, purchased in 1897 from the Giza Museum through Ernest A. T. Wallis Budge, perhaps originally from Abydos.<sup>23</sup> The back has marked elytra and humeral callosities, and based on back type, engraving, and motif, it is probably a Dynasty 19 piece. The cobras are not crowned by a sun orb, the cartouche has no base, a straight line divides the composition, and the wings of the beetle are wider than those of the Tel Abel Beth Maacah scarab, sprouting from the junction between the forelegs and the body.
2. A steatite scarab from the Peter Edwin Negus collection (UK, acquired in the early 20th century, origin unknown) (Fig. 4); probably also a Dynasty 19 piece on the basis of the same criteria.<sup>24</sup> The base has erected cobras (with solar orbs?), a wavy separation line above the winged scarab; no



Figure 3: Scarab, BM EA 28140 (© Trustees of the British Museum).



Figure 4: Scarab, Peter Edwin Negus collection (© 2015 LiveAuctioneers, 220 12th Avenue, 2nd floor, New York, NY 10001, USA).



Figure 5: Fig. 5: Scarab, BM EA 28197 (after Hall 1913: no. 1101).

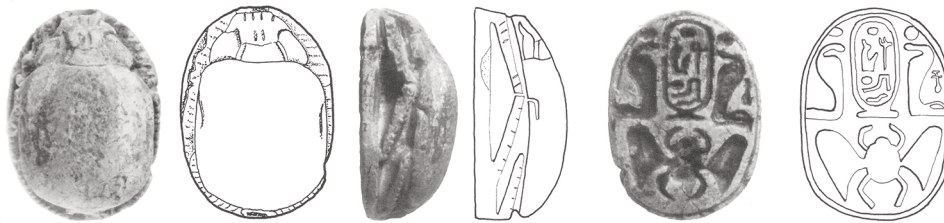


Figure 6: Fig. 6: Scarab, London Institute of Archaeology E.XIII.99/7 (after Keel 2010: 263, no. 549).

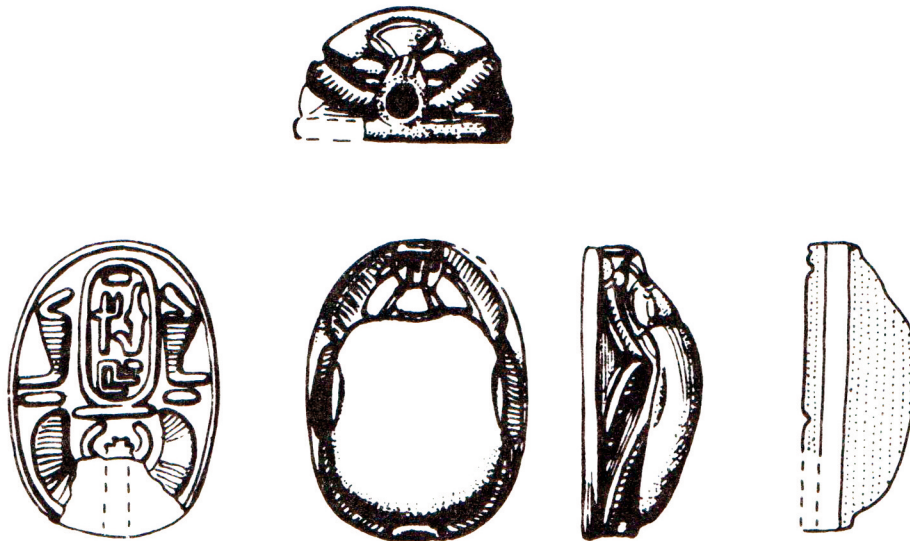


Figure 7: Scarab, Ben Gurion University inv. 296 (after Oren 1985: 188, 190, Fig. 7.8).

indentation is marked on the base of the cartouche. The wings of the Tel Abel Beth Maacah and Negus Collections scarabs are similar, being thin and diagonally elongated.

3. BM EA 28197 (Fig. 5), a longitudinally pierced oval plaque<sup>25</sup> of green glazed steatite, not a scarab, with a king worshipping an enthroned Ptah beneath a winged sun on the back, perhaps originally from Abydos, 0.5 x 2.08 x 1.52 cm.<sup>26</sup> It is dated by Jaeger to Dynasty 19 on the basis of the careful, shallow engraving<sup>27</sup> and the motif of the king in front of Ptah which is very frequently, though not exclusively, attested on scarabs during the reign of Ramses II.<sup>28</sup>

There is no dividing line, which enhances the symbolism of the winged beetle pushing the royal cartouche as it would the sun; the cobras are crowned by solar orbs. The piece is thus associated with Amun-Ra on one side and with Ptah on the other, recalling Ramses II's other associations with Ra (*Stpnr*), Amun (*Mriimn*), and Ptah.<sup>29</sup> Besides the typology, engraving, and design offered as arguments for a Dynasty 19 piece, the plaque adds a reasonable connection to Ramses II for our scarab design.

A further indication of the association of this specific design with Ramses II is provided by three Dynasty 19 pieces showing a similar arrangement on their base, but including the cartouche of Ramses II (*Wsrn3'tr Stpnr*), instead of Thutmose III.<sup>30</sup>

1. London Institute of Archaeology E.XIII.99/7 (Fig. 6), a steatite scarab from Tell el-Far'ah South, 2.0 x 1.4 x 0.8 cm.<sup>31</sup>

The cobras are crowned by a solar orb, the cartouche's base has no indentations, there is no dividing line, the scarab's wings are wider, clearly

attached to the middle of the abdomen, and there is a hieroglyph *nfr* added besides the right-sided cobra.

2. Ben Gurion University Inv. 296 (Fig. 7), a steatite scarab from Tel Sera', 2.0 x 1.4 x 0.8 cm.<sup>32</sup> The cobras are not crowned with an orb, but each has a small base under the tail, suggesting a reference to the Two Lands. There is no dividing line, and the wings of the scarab are thin and curving up to the upper part of the frontal legs.

The similar motifs and facture of both scarabs suggest a common origin (smooth backs, absence of a dividing line, less laterally elongated wings of the beetles on the bases, differing from the *Mnhprc* scarabs).

3. Turin Museum Cat. 5776 RCGE 17373 (Fig. 8), a steatite scarab of unknown provenance, 2.3 x 1.6 x 1.0 cm, with orbs above the cobras, a dividing line fused with the cartouche base (no indentations), and the beetle's wings emerging from the middle of its abdomen in the style of the Tell el-Far'ah South scarab.<sup>33</sup>

During Ramses II's reign, scarabs with the motifs described above were apparently produced either with the cartouche of Thutmose III or with that of Ramses II, perhaps in different workshops. The reigning king was creating a double parallel, between his reign and that of Thutmose III, representing the ultimate model of the successful conqueror, and between himself and Amun-Ra, the great Theban deity. Ramses II is well known for his appropriation of statuary from Middle and New Kingdoms reigns in order to enhance his own image.<sup>34</sup> He was looking, among others, to the Thutmoside family with this purpose in mind, although he did not incorporate elements of Thutmose III's protocol in his titulary, as did



**Figure 8:** Scarab, Turin Museum Cat. 5776 RCGE 17373 (© Fondazione Museo delle Antichità Egizie di Torino).

his father, Seti I.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it is well known that Thutmose III also represented a protective divinity of the dead during the Ramesside Period.<sup>36</sup>

The scarab design described above is a particularly apt instrument of propaganda, with its politico-religious overtones implying a divine, eternally revived Egyptian emporium over what the sun encircles, including the controlled region. It is certainly significant that a dramatic increase of imported scarabs in Canaan, of which those bearing the name of Thutmose III represent an important part, is noted in Late Bronze IB (reigns of Thutmose III and IV) after the king's first campaign. The second, and most important, wave of the Late Bronze scarab imports came with Ramses II,<sup>37</sup> probably including the scarabs from Tell el-Far'ah South, Tel Ser'a, and Tel Abel Beth Maacah. The high-quality Ramesside scarab from Tel Abel Beth Maacah was most likely produced in a royal or temple workshop in Egypt; from an Egyptian viewpoint, even such a small artifact conveyed a message of Egyptian cultural and political power to the beholders. The proposed dating of this scarab to the time of Ramses II, and the fact that a significant increase of imported scarabs in Israel is dated to his reign,<sup>38</sup> may imply that the scarab was originally

brought as part of Egypt's cultural expansion in Dynasty 19. However, a later import is always possible in light of the find context and the mobility of such small artifacts.

#### THE SCARAB IN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

##### THE SITE AND FIND CONTEXT

Abel Beth Maacah was a major Bronze and Iron Age city of strategic importance overlooking the main north-south thoroughfare which passed through the northern Jordan Valley into the Marj 'Ayyun Valley and Lebanese Beqa'. Particularly during the Late Bronze Age, when Egyptian hegemony extended throughout the Levant, this route was a direct line between two key inland Egyptian garrisons at important crossroads: Beth-Shean (Tell el-Husi) some 85 km (53 mi) by air to the south and Kumidi (Kamid el-Loz) approximately 47 km (29 mi) by air to the north.<sup>39</sup>

The site is called "Abel" in second millennium Egyptian documents, where it may appear in Thutmose III's topographical list as  $\text{𓆎} \text{𓆏} \text{𓆐} = iwbr$  (*Urk.* IV, 785 no. 92, and see also nos. 90 and 99),<sup>40</sup> and possibly in the Amarna letters as well.<sup>41</sup> At present, there are no known Dynasty 19 references to Abel, nor does the site figure in any accounts of Ramses II's campaigns in the region, aside from a toponym *ibwr* in this pharaoh's list in Karnak (*KRI*



Figure 9: The Iron I building above Late Bronze IIB remains; star on the left marks the find spot of the scarab.

II, 161 no. 19)<sup>42</sup> that may be related. It stands to reason, however, that his troops probably passed by here on their way to battle the Hittites at Qadesh-on-the-Orontes.<sup>43</sup>

As noted earlier, the scarab was found in Area F at the southern end of the tell, just above a wall foundation in an Iron Age I building that was constructed directly over substantial Late Bronze IIB (13<sup>th</sup> century BCE) remains (Fig. 9). The Iron I building was revealed immediately below topsoil and contained only the foundations of the walls and a few patchy floors and installations. On the level below this building and just to its south, a small silver hoard, one of the earliest yet discovered in Canaan, was found inside a jug that rested on a floor dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>44</sup>

We have no way of securely knowing whether the scarab had been kept and cherished by the inhabitants of the Iron I building, whether it was brought to the site in Iron I, or whether, as a small portable object, it “traveled” from its original Late Bronze Age location and reached its later find context unintentionally. The latter suggestion seems more likely due to the presence of ample LBIIB remains just below the shallow Iron I accumulation, where the scarab was found.

Despite the limited exposure in Area F, we were able to observe continuity between the last Late Bronze phase and the first Iron Age I stratum. There were no traces of destruction of the Late Bronze Age city or any indication of a prolonged chronological gap.<sup>45</sup> This distinguishes Abel Beth Maacah from nearby Hazor, just 30 km (ca. 18 mi) by air to the south, where a violent conflagration brought about an end to the Late Bronze II city, sometime in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

The situation at neighboring Dan is less clear. The published material shows sporadic evidence of destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Age (Stratum VIIA1), as the case with Area K,<sup>46</sup> or at the end of Stratum VIIA2 in Area B East.<sup>47</sup> Further exploration of Abel Beth Maacah is necessary to better clarify the situation during the Late Bronze and the transition to the Iron Age in the Upper Galilee-northern end of the Jordan Valley.

#### *THE UPPER GALILEE-NORTHERN JORDAN VALLEY AND THE EGYPTIAN EMPIRE*

Although a single object cannot serve as the basis for historical reconstruction, the discovery of a scarab from the time of Ramses II at Abel Beth Maacah has served as a catalyst to examine intriguing questions about the nature and extent of Egyptian involvement in Upper Galilee during the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The answer is not very clear, given the paucity of archaeological data and the lack of contemporary written sources, apart from general notices about military campaigns by Ramses II to Phoenicia and Syria, mostly during the early part of his reign.

The location of two textually documented northern outposts of Egyptian presence during Dynasty 19, namely, Kumidi in southern Lebanon and Sumur in Syria, would place Abel Beth Maacah securely within the sphere of

Egyptian control. However, this does not necessarily mean that there was a territorial and political continuum between them and Beth-Shean, the northernmost Canaanite site with unequivocal remains of intensive Egyptian presence at that time (see below).

Following what was apparently a loss (or at least a weakening) of political and military control in Syria during the Amarna period (14<sup>th</sup> century BCE),<sup>48</sup> Egypt worked to reinstate its power along the Lebanese coast and southern Syria for military and economic reasons.<sup>49</sup> This is evident from the multiple military campaigns carried out by Seti I and Ramses II against the Hittites.<sup>50</sup> A series of inscriptions left by Rameses II in the cliffs of Nahr el-Kalb, north of Beirut, are testimony to Egyptian troop movements along the northern coastal highway.<sup>51</sup>

For the most part, Egyptian activity during the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE appears to have been commercial and tied to Mediterranean maritime trade, as is evident at Byblos and Ugarit. This situation may reflect the aftermath of the battle of Qadesh, when the treaty between Egypt and Hatti brought about relatively peaceful relations for the remainder of the Late Bronze Age.<sup>52</sup> Still, it is notable that there is such a relative dearth of archaeological evidence for Egyptian military and administrative activity in the far north of Israel and southern Lebanon, particularly during the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, when one considers the importance of this area as a bulwark against Hittite encroachment in Syria, prior to the battle of Qadesh.<sup>53</sup>

There seems to be a contradiction between Egypt's vested interest to maintain its holdings in Lebanon and Syria as part of its efforts to control the lucrative Mediterranean trade from the west through Ugarit, the land trade from the east through Syria, and the transfer of timber from southern Lebanon,<sup>54</sup> and actual Egyptian military and administrative presence, which is not well attested in the northern material culture record.<sup>55</sup> By contrast, intensified Egyptian presence during Dynasty 19 is clearly evident from the Megiddo-Beth-Shean line southwards.<sup>56</sup> Testimony of increased Egyptian involvement during the Ramesside period includes buildings with Egyptian plans that also served an administrative function. Towns with such “governor's residences” include Beth-Shean and Aphek in the north and center, as well as Tel Mor, Tell el-Hesi, Tel Ser'a, Tell el-Far'ah (South), and Tell Jemmeh further to the south. Locally produced Egyptian-style pottery, as well as cultic paraphernalia and numerous other objects, attest to the actual presence of Egyptians at many of these sites.<sup>57</sup> Nothing of this nature or scope has been found in the region north of Beth-Shean, so the Dynasty 19 Egyptians may have articulated their holdings in Upper Galilee and southern Lebanon (including the coast) through different media, rather than through intensive conspicuous construction and stationing of personnel, as in the south.<sup>58</sup> This raises the question: Was this the result of a deliberate policy, or an inability to do otherwise? And if the latter, why?



At Tell Kazel (Sumur?) on the Syrian side of the Akkar Plain, only limited Egyptian evidence is known from the Late Bronze strata so far.<sup>59</sup> However, Hittite influence is apparent in the local pottery, so changing political circumstances may have forced Egypt to abandon the city at some point, especially since we know that after the battle of Qadesh, the kingdom of Amurru fell back into Hittite hands or became independent.<sup>60</sup> The situation is somewhat clearer at Kumidi (Kamid el-Loz) in the Beqa<sup>c</sup> Valley, but even here, only a limited number of Egyptian or Egyptian-style objects and pottery are known in secure Dynasty 19 contexts. This is even true in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when EA116 describes Kumidi as the seat of a *rabišu*. One possibility is that the excavators did not recognize the Egyptian-style forms.<sup>61</sup> It is also possible that the nature of Egyptian presence at those sites was such that there is little obvious trace, or that it dwindled to a minimum, especially during late Dynasty 19.<sup>62</sup>

At Tel Dan, only six kilometers from Abel Beth Maacah, a small amount of Egyptian-style pottery, as well as a few Egyptian objects (including two scarabs of Ramses II) were found in Stratum VIIA2 (LBIIB, Dynasty 19).<sup>63</sup> It has been suggested that these items arrived at Tel Dan from Sidon or Sarepta on the Lebanese coast.<sup>64</sup> The relatively small numbers of Egyptian-style objects and pottery at Dan, and the foreign origin of the latter, leads one to conclude that there was no actual Egyptian presence at Dan.

Any discussion of the northern reaches of the Egyptian empire must take the mighty Canaanite city-state of Hazor into account. Our knowledge of Egyptian involvement at Hazor is ambiguous. Most of what we know stems from the city's prominent place in the Amarna correspondence, where it appears to have had the status of a kingdom, rather than as a vassal.<sup>65</sup> However, little is known of the precise nature of Hazor's relations with Egypt during Dynasty 19. A number of the Egyptian objects from this time at Hazor appear to pre-date the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE in particular and the Late Bronze Age in general, though they might have been brought to the site as prestige gifts by the Egyptians during the time of the New Kingdom. The items that belong to the Late Bronze Age seem to reflect a city that was part of the Egyptian empire, but probably of a status that precluded direct Egyptian control and intervention, as we know from other city-states at that time.<sup>66</sup> The Syro-Mesopotamian affinity of Hazor, which was so pronounced in the Middle Bronze Age, continued into the Late Bronze Age, and was the most likely reason that Egypt did not make any apparent concentrated effort to occupy or control the city, treating it as more than a vassal, but less than an ally on equal footing.<sup>67</sup> Thus, for the most part, active material expressions of Egyptian control are limited in the Upper Galilee and the northern Jordan Valley. The destruction of Hazor and its virtual abandonment must have certainly affected how the Egyptians operated in this region, where tangible traces of their involvement remain relatively scarce.<sup>68</sup>

As our discussion of Egyptian involvement in the Upper

Galilee-northern Jordan Valley was prompted by the presence of a high-quality Ramses II scarab at Abel Beth Maacah, it may prove instructive to look more deeply at the Egyptian glyptic evidence from the neighboring regions of Lebanon and Syria. A comprehensive study by Boschloos<sup>69</sup> shows that a large number of scarabs dating to the reign of this pharaoh were found in Lebanon and Syria, though, as she notes, these are far fewer than those found in Israel, due to the greater distance from Egypt and the relative scarcity of excavations in the north. Generally speaking, the Late Bronze IIB witnessed an increase of imported Ramesside scarabs, as detailed in the first part of this article. The significance of this phenomenon, whether cultural, economic or administrative, remains open and subject to revision in light of further discoveries.

Only three seasons of excavation have been carried out at Tel Abel Beth Maacah to date, so the exposure of Dynasty 19 contexts is limited and impossible to accurately assess at this point. The abovementioned silver hoard from this period contained earrings of an Egyptian type (although they appear in gold in the Egyptian sphere).<sup>70</sup> For this reason, they cannot reveal much about Egyptian presence or influence at the site, since they could have come from afar and served as scrap to be re-melted.

Considering that this northern region (even more so, southern Lebanon and Syria), was so far from the core in Egypt and suffered from increased risk of confrontation and more complicated logistical challenges, the Egyptian strategy may have been to operate through the agency of mercenaries, such as the Maryannu, and/or local loyalist elites.<sup>71</sup> Such a power base would have been less materially visible than an actual Egyptian garrison, which might explain the apparent inconsistency between the written evidence that implies the presence of active Egyptian outposts at the various strategic sites mentioned above and the relative dearth of Egyptian material culture. The Upper Galilee and the northern Jordan Valley seem to have served as a buffer zone at this time, affording Egypt with much-needed strategic depth in times of confrontation, and with lucrative economic opportunities in times of cooperation, such as what took place after the battle of Qadesh. Such a status quo would have been eminently possible after the disappearance of Hazor from the geopolitical stage sometime during Dynasty 19, since that huge city state most likely fulfilled the role of intermediary between Syria and Egypt from the Middle Bronze Age until its destruction in Late Bronze Age IIB.

In conclusion, the *Mnhprr*<sup>c</sup> scarab from Tel Abel Beth Maacah, most likely from the time of Ramses II, comprises a tiny, but interesting block in building our understanding of Egyptian involvement in the Upper Galilee and the northern Jordan Valley during the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Although scarabs are common in Late Bronze Age Canaan and reflect various aspects of Egypto-Canaanite interaction, this particular type of high-quality scarab points to both a route and a desire for Egyptian prestige or symbolic

items to reach so far north. Abel Beth Maacah was part of a network in which such objects circulated, whether during the Late Bronze IIB (the time of the scarab itself) or the Iron Age I (the time of its find context).

<sup>1</sup> William G. Dever, "Abel-Beth-Ma'acah: 'Northern Gateway of Ancient Israel,'" in Lawrence T. Geraty and Larry G. Herr (eds.), *The Archaeology of Jordan and Other Studies Presented to Siegfried H. Horn* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1986), 207–222; Nava Panitz-Cohen, Robert A. Mullins, and Ruhama Bonfil, "Northern Exposure: Launching Excavations at Tell Abil el-Qameh (Abel Beth Maacah)," *Strata* 31 (2013): 27–42; Nava Panitz-Cohen, Robert A. Mullins, and Ruhama Bonfil, "A Preliminary Report of the Second and Third Seasons of Excavation at Tell Abil el-Qameh (Abel Beth Maacah)," *Strata* 33 (2015): 35–59. The excavations are conducted under the auspices of Azusa Pacific University of Los Angeles and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> The authors wish to thank two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

<sup>3</sup> For the comprehensive field report of the 2014 excavation season, see Nava Panitz-Cohen and Robert Mullins, "Area F Field Report—2014," <http://www.abel-beth-maacah.org/index.php/2014-excavation-report-area-f> and Panitz-Cohen, Mullins and Bonfil 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Olga Tufnell, *Studies on Scarab Seals II: Scarab Seals and Their Contribution to History in the Early Second Millennium B. C.* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1984), 32, Fig. 12; Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Einleitung* (Freiburg/Göttingen: University of Freiburg/Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995), 43, Fig. 45 and § 84, with dating based on Tufnell and a revision of Alan Rowe, *A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals and Amulets in the Palestine Archaeological Museum* (Cairo: IFAO, 1936), Pl. 32, no. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Rowe 1936, Pls. 33–34, nos. 31, 33; Tufnell 1984, 35, Fig. 13; Keel 1995: 47, Fig. 49 and 50, § 99.

<sup>6</sup> Rowe 1936, Pl. 35, no. 23; Tufnell 1984, 37, Fig. 14; Keel 1995, 55, Fig. 69 and 51, § 100.

<sup>7</sup> We thank Othmar Keel and Daphna Ben-Tor for sharing their views on the dating; Ben-Tor shared our conviction that the scarab is a Dynasty 19 production, probably from the reign of Ramses II.

<sup>8</sup> Keel 1995, § 462.

<sup>9</sup> Bertrand Jaeger, *Essai de classification et de datation des scarabées Menkhéperrê* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1982), 184.

<sup>10</sup> Jaeger 1982, 185–238, esp. 265 § 1595 and 335 n. 750.

<sup>11</sup> Jaeger 1982, 15, 94, 293 no. 215 on the basis of Etienne Drioton, "Scarabée de la collection Gurewich," *Bulletin de la Société française d'égyptologie* 19 (1955): 59–66; Erik Hornung and Elisabeth Staehelin, *Skarabäen und andere Siegelamulette aus Basler Sammlungen* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1976), 61.

<sup>12</sup> John C. Darnell, *The Enigmatic Netherworld Books of the Solar-Osirian Unity: Cryptographic Compositions in the Tombs of Tutankhamun, Ramesses VI and Ramesses IX* (Fribourg/Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg/Ruprecht, 2004), 16–17.

<sup>13</sup> Jaeger 1982, 100; Keel 1995, § 524.

<sup>14</sup> Rowe 1936, 123 and Pl. 12, no. 520; Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Katalog IV* (Freiburg/Göttingen: University of Freiburg/Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2013), 407, no. 557.

<sup>15</sup> J.L. Starkey and Lankester Harding, "Beth-Pelet Cemetery," in Eann Macdonald, J.L. Starkey and Lankester Harding (eds), *Beth Pelet II* (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt & Bernard Quaritch, 1932), Pl. 55. no. 251; Rowe 1936, Pl. 12, no. 507; Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina/Israel: Von den Anfängen bis zur Perserzeit. Katalog III* (Freiburg/Göttingen: University of Freiburg/Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2010), 315, no. 674.

<sup>16</sup> Jaeger 1982, 173–174.

<sup>17</sup> See e.g., Carl R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien: Nach den Zeichnungen der von Seiner Majestät dem Könige von Preussen Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Nach diesen Ländern gesendeten und in den Jahren 1842–1845 III* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1849–59), Pl. 78b.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g., BM EA 41981 in Harry R. Hall, *Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Etc., in the British Museum I* (London: British Museum, 1913), 86: no. 878.

<sup>19</sup> Lana Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History* (Uppsala: Boreas, 1986), 123.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Martin, "Uräus," in Wolfgang Helck and Wolfhart Westendorf (eds.), *Lexicon der Ägyptologie VI* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 866.

<sup>21</sup> Jaeger 1982, § 1178; for Hatshepsut exemplars, see Keel 1995, § 517; Catharine H. Roehrig (ed.), *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 44.

<sup>22</sup> Jaeger 1982, 79, 161–162.

<sup>23</sup> Hall 1913, no. 887.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/9806752>.

<sup>25</sup> See also perhaps BM EA 45338 in Hall 1913, 102, no. 1050, a purchased glazed steatite rectangular plaque (not personally examined by the authors).

<sup>26</sup> Hall 1913, no. 1101.

- <sup>27</sup> Jaeger 1982, 199.
- <sup>28</sup> Jaeger 1982, 199; Othmar Keel, “Der ägyptische Gott Ptah auf Siegelamuletten aus Palästina/Israel: Einige Gesetzmäßigkeiten bei der Übernahme von Motiven der Grosskunst auf Miniaturbildträger,” in Othmar Keel, Hildi Keel-Leu and Silvia Schroer (eds.), *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel II* (Freiburg/Göttingen: University of Freiburg/Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1989), 318.
- <sup>29</sup> See, e.g., the year 35 “Decree of Ptah” (Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical II* (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1979), 258–281, no. 68) and the triad Ptah—Amun-Ra—Ra-Horakhty with Ramses in the sanctuary of Abu Simbel.
- <sup>30</sup> Nir Lalkin, *Late Bronze Age Scarabs from Eretz Israel* (Ph.D. Dissertation Tel Aviv University, in Hebrew, 2008), 210–211, Fig. 41, notes Ramses II’s tendency to emulate scarab types of Dynasty 18, in which he changed the original royal name to his own (Lalkin’s examples include *Mnhpr* scarabs found in Israel, but with different bases than the ones studied here).
- <sup>31</sup> Starkey and Harding 1932, Pl. 52, no. 119; Lalkin 2008, no. 1036; Keel 2010, 263, no. 549.
- <sup>32</sup> Eliezer Oren, “Architecture of Egyptian ‘Governors’ Residences’ in Late Bronze Age Palestine,” *Eretz-Israel* 18 (1985): 188, 190, Fig. 7.8 (Hebrew); Lalkin 2008, no. 1037. We thank Eliezer Oren for his gracious permission to use his drawings.
- <sup>33</sup> Percy E. Newberry, *Scarabs: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian Seals and Signet Rings* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), Pl. 34: no. 34.
- <sup>34</sup> Peter Brand, “Usurpation of Monuments,” in Willeke Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, 2010, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5gj996k5>, 5–6.
- <sup>35</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, “The Titularies of the Ramesside Kings as Expression of their Ideal Kingship,” *Annales du Service des antiquités de l’Égypte* 71 (1987): 132–133.
- <sup>36</sup> Hornung and Staehelin 1976, 61.
- <sup>37</sup> Daphna Ben-Tor, “Political Implications of New Kingdom Scarabs in Palestine during the Reigns of Thutmosis III and Ramesses II,” in David Aston, Bettina Bader, Carla Gallorini, Paul Nicholson and Sarah Buckingham (eds.), *Under the Potter’s Tree: Studies on Ancient Egypt Presented to Janine Bourriau on the Occasion of her 70th Birthday* (Leuven/Paris/Walpole: Peeters, 2011), 203, 207.
- <sup>38</sup> Lalkin 2008, 209–210; Ben-Tor 2011, 207–209; Daphna Ben-Tor, “Egyptian-Canaanite Relations in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages as Reflected by Scarabs,” in S. Bar, Dan’el Kahn and J.J. Shirley (eds.), *Egypt, Canaan and Israel: History, Imperialism, Ideology and Literature: Proceedings of a Conference at the University of Haifa, 3-7 May 2009* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), 36.
- <sup>39</sup> Beginning with Thutmose III, the New Kingdom pharaohs established key bases at strategic locations to promote their political and economic agendas. Scholars differ concerning the number and identity of garrisons, especially since some may have been more *ad hoc* in character and changed according to the shifting circumstances; see discussions in Nadav Na’aman, “Economic Aspects of the Egyptian Occupation of Canaan,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 31 (1981): 172–185; Horst Klengel, *Syria: 3000 to 300 B.C.; A Handbook of Political History* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), 98–99; Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 203–207; Ellen F. Morris, *The Architecture of Imperialism: Military Bases and the Evolution of Foreign Policy in Egypt’s New Kingdom* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005). However, seven outposts are noteworthy: on the Levantine coast, Gaza served as the provincial capital of Canaan with additional seaports at Jaffa, Byblos, and Ullaza. Sumur (Tell Kazel?) on the Syrian side of the Akkar Plain was the northernmost Egyptian outpost located close to where the Homs Gap led one into the Orontes River portion of the Rift Valley. The inland garrisons of Kumidi (Kamed el-Loz) and Beth-Shean were chosen because they were situated in the Rift Valley on the eastern flank of territory vital to Egyptian interests.
- <sup>40</sup> Shmuel Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 45–47; Dever 1986, 211–213; Yohanan Aharoni, *Eretz Israel in Biblical Times: A Geographical History* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, in Hebrew, 1987), 131.
- <sup>41</sup> In discussing two of the cities (‘Ayānu and Yabilīma) mentioned in EA 256, Dever 1986, 213–214 proposed identifying the first city with Iyyon (Tell ed-Dibbin) in the Marj Ayyun Valley of southern Lebanon, and the second city with Abel (Beth Maacah) at Tell Abil el-Qameh. For the text of EA 256, see now Anson F. Rainey, *The El-Amarna Correspondence: A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters from the Site of El-Amarna Based on Collations of all Extant Tablets* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), 1036, line 28—*Yu-bi-lu-ma* (no attempt to identify the site).
- <sup>42</sup> Ahituv 1984, 47.
- <sup>43</sup> Morris 2005, 355; Yohanan Aharoni, Michael Avi-Yonah, Anson F. Rainey, Ze’ev Safrai, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1993), 40. Note Wimmer’s suggestion (Stefan J. Wimmer, “A New Stela of Ramesses II in Jordan in the Context of Egyptian Royal Stelae in the Levant,” paper presented at the Third International Conference on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (3ICAANE), Paris, 18 April 2002, [https://epub.uni-muenchen.de/14236/1/wimmer\\_14236.pdf](https://epub.uni-muenchen.de/14236/1/wimmer_14236.pdf)) that a route passing through the Hauran (the modern

- Syrian-Jordanian border) to Damascus might have served Ramesses II in the military campaign of his 8<sup>th</sup> year.
- 44 Panitz-Cohen, Mullins and Bonfil 2013, 39–40; Naama Yahalom-Mack, Nava Panitz-Cohen, and Robert A. Mullins, *A Late Bronze IIB Silver Hoard from Tel Abel Beth Maacah: Provenance, Typology and Context*, in preparation.
- 45 It must be noted that this conclusion is valid in the lower city, where these strata were revealed to date, so that more information is necessary to make this a secure determination for the entire site.
- 46 Rachel Ben-Dov, *Dan III: The Late Bronze Age* (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 2011), 135.
- 47 Ben-Dov 2011, 81.
- 48 James M. Weinstein, "The Egyptian Empire in Canaan: A Reassessment," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 241 (1981): 16.
- 49 Morris 2005, 344.
- 50 Anthony J. Spalinger, "Egyptian-Hittite Relations at the Close of the Amarna Period and Some Notes on Hittite Military Strategy in North Syria," *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 1 (1979): 55–89.
- 51 Wimmer 2002; Stefan J. Wimmer, "Von Nubien bis Syrien: zur ramessidischen Stele von Tell es-Shihab," *Ägypten und Altes Testament* 68 (2008): 190–196; Morris 2005, 360–362, 370; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, et al. 1993, 38–41; Kenneth A. Kitchen, "New Light on the Asiatic Wars of Ramses II," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 50 (1964): 68–69. One of the proposed identifications for Yeno'am, which figures prominently in one of the campaigns of Seti I, is Tel Na'amah in the Huleh Valley, a few kilometers south of Abel Beth Maacah, based on toponymic similarity, Nadav Na'aman, "Yeno'am," *Tel Aviv* 4 (1977): 168–177. Note also a stela fragment attributed to Ramesses II found in secondary use some 25 kilometers east of Damascus (Wimmer 2002, 9).
- 52 Trevor Bryce, *Ancient Syria: A Three Thousand Year History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 80.
- 53 Bryce 2014: 72; Morris 2005, 355–358.
- 54 Marcus Müller, "A View to a Kill: Egypt's Grand Strategy in her Northern Empire," in Shai Bar, Dan'el Kahn and J.J. Shirley (eds.), *Egypt, Canaan and Israel: History, Imperialism, Ideology and Literature: Proceedings of a Conference at the University of Haifa, 3-7 May 2009* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), 237–238.
- 55 Morris 2005: 394.
- 56 Weinstein 1981; Itamar Singer, "Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines in the Period of the Emergence of Israel," in Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman (eds.), *From Nomadism to Monarchy* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 282–338; Morris 2005; Mario A.S. Martin, *Egyptian-Type Pottery in the Late Bronze Age Southern Levant* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011); Amihai Mazar, "The Egyptian Garrison Town at Beth-Shean," in S. Bar, Dan'el Kahn and J.J. Shirley (eds.), *Egypt, Canaan and Israel: History, Imperialism, Ideology and Literature: Proceedings of a Conference at the University of Haifa, 3-7 May 2009* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), 155–189. Rainey (pers. comm.) argued that in the Egyptian mind, the Jezreel and Harod valleys were the geographical division between Lower and Upper Retenu.
- 57 Martin 2011; Amihai Mazar, "Introduction and Overview," in Nava Panitz-Cohen and Amihai Mazar (eds.), *Excavations at Tel Beth-Shean 1989–1996 III. The 13<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> Century BCE Strata in Areas N and S*. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2009), 1–32; Mazar 2011.
- 58 Morris 2005, 394 suggests that some Egyptian installations may have been smaller and not yet found in the field, or that the Egyptians chose to invest heavily only in the core of their empire rather than at the margins, due to the costs and other investments involved.
- 59 Leila Badre, "Tell Kazel-Simyra: A Contribution to a Relative Chronological History in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 343 (2006): 65–95; Leila Badre and Eric Gubel, "Tell Kazel, Syria. Excavations of the AUB Museum, 1993–1998. Third Preliminary Report," *Berytus* 44 (1999–2000): 123–203. Two Ramesside scarabs have been found in Late Bronze levels at Tell Kazel; see Emmanuelle Capet, "Tell Kazel (Syrie), rapport préliminaire sur les 9e – 17e campagnes de fouilles (1993–2001) du Musée de l'Université américaine de Beyrouth. Chantier II," *Berytus* 47 (2003): fig. 8, no. k; Maurice Dunand, Adnan Bounni, and Nassib Saliby, "Fouilles de Tell Kazel: Rapport préliminaire," *Annales archéologiques de Syrie* 14 (1964): pl. 20, no. 5. Although most scholars have accepted the identification of Tell Kazel with Sumur on the basis of its size, location, and sufficient Bronze and Iron Age sequences, the dearth of Egyptian finds is surprising, to the extent that Sader suggested that perhaps Sumur should be identified with another tell in the region, although no viable candidate has yet emerged; see Helen Sader, "Tell Kazel and Ancient Simyra," *Berytus* 38 (1990): 15–23.
- 60 Bryce 2014, 80.
- 61 See Martin Metzger, *Kamid el-Loz 8. Die spätbronzezeitlichen Tempelanlagen. Die Kleinfunde*. (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GMBH, 1993), Pl. 87:5–6; 90:10–11, 115:9–10 for possible Egyptian-style bowls; Pl. 142:5

- for a possible flower pot and Pl. 148:2 for a possible beer bottle. The prospect of unpublished bowls from Kamid el-Loz with red rims and interior splash is encouraging, since this is an Egyptian type from the time of Thutmose III through Amenhotep II (David A. Aston, "Making a Splash: Ceramic Decoration in the Reigns of Thutmose III and Amenophis II," in Ernst Czerny, Irmgard Hein, et al. (eds.), *Timelines: Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak I*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 65–74, thus providing material culture support for Egyptian presence at Kumidi during the mid-Dynasty 18, although Dynasty 19 would still remain an open question (Morris 2005, 239–240).
- <sup>62</sup> Vanessa Boschloos, "Interregional Contacts in the Bija<sup>c</sup>a Valley from a Beetle's Point of View: Egyptian and Egyptianising Scarabs at Bronze Age Kamid al-Loz (Kumidi)," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 40/2 (2013): 210.
- <sup>63</sup> Rachel Ben-Dov and Mario A.S. Martin, "Egyptian and Egyptian-style Vessels," in Rachel Ben-Dov (ed.), *Dan III: The Late Bronze Age* (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, 2011), 311–316.
- <sup>64</sup> Ben-Dov and Martin (2011), 316.
- <sup>65</sup> Anabel Zarzecki-Peleg and Ruhama Bonfil, "Hazor – A Syrian State in Mitanni's Orbit?," *Ugarit Forschungen* 43 (2011): 537–568.
- <sup>66</sup> Piotr Bienkowski, "The Role of Hazor in the Late Bronze Age," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 119 (1987): 59; Zarzecki-Peleg and Bonfil 2011.
- <sup>67</sup> Zarzecki-Peleg and Bonfil 2011.
- <sup>68</sup> Michael G. Hasel, *Domination and Resistance: Egyptian Military Activity in the Southern Levant* (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 1998), 46, assesses the possibility that the Egyptians destroyed either Hazor Stratum IB or IA, but in the end, negates both scenarios, although he notes that Hazor might have been a stop on the itinerary of Seti I during his campaign in the southern Levant, with the intention of reiterating Egyptian sovereignty in the region.
- <sup>69</sup> Boschloos (2012, 2013).
- <sup>70</sup> Amir Golani, *Jewelry from the Iron Age II Levant* (Fribourg: Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, 2013).
- <sup>71</sup> Müller 2011.