**A Late Bronze Age Pottery Assemblage from Tel Esur**

**Abstract**

A Late Bronze Age Stratum (B1-2) was discovered in Area B1 at Tel Esur. Late Bronze Age graves and pottery vessels had been discovered in excavations and surveys in the vicinity of Tel Esur in the past. However, prior to the discovery of Stratum B1-2 the only evidence for the existence of a Late Bronze Age settlement at Tel Esur were pottery sherds. The main architectural find in Stratum B1-2 is a domestic structure whose contents were extraordinarily preserved in several of the rooms. The assemblage is dated to the end of the Late Bronze Age Ib and the early Late Bronze Age IIa, and reflects primarily the first half of the fourteenth century BCE. Tel Esur was a small rural settlement during the Late Bronze Age. Since most of the information about the pottery vessel assemblages from this period comes from relatively large and central sites, Tel Esur allows us an exceptional glimpse into an early fourteenth century BCE assemblage of complete vessels from the rural domain. This assemblage, containing dozens of complete vessels, displays several unique phenomena such as an extraordinary amount of pithoi, Egyptianizing pottery vessels from the rural sphere and decorations. All these can teach about the cultural characteristics of the Tel’s inhabitants. Clarifying the Late Bronze Age chronology at Tel Esur will enable a better understanding of the road alongside the Tel and the suggestion of identifying Tel Esur as “D-f-tj” which is mentioned in a text describing Thutmose III’s voyage to the Land of Israel.

**Tel Esur**

Tel Esur is situated at the entrance to the Iron Valley (Wadi ‘Ara), about 10 km northeast of Hadera (coordinate point 1605/2103, New Israel Network) and about 13 km east of the Mediterranean (illustration 1). It covers an area of c. 22 dunam and it rises to a maximum height of 11 m above the surrounding area (Dothan 1993:426; Zertal 2003:10).

**Illustration 1**: The location of Tel Esur

**Research history and site identification suggestions** – the Palestine Exploration Fund survey (Conder and Kinchener 1882:69) was the first to mention the site. In April 1922 William Foxwell Albright visited and surveyed the site. He accepted Alt’s (1914) suggestion to identify it as *Yaḥam* which is mentioned in the Thutmose III texts as the place where the general council assembled before attacking the Canaanite coalition near Megiddo. This identification is based on Egyptian topographic descriptions (Albright 1923: 9-10). Following a reassessment of the Egyptian texts, difficulties arose regarding this identification. These difficulties stemmed from a mismatch between the location of the Tel and the road network described in the text. Alt subsequently changed his mind and identified the site with the Biblical city of *Aruboth* (I Kings 4:10). Alt assumed that King Solomon’s third precinct, with which *Aruboth* is associated, was in the Sharon area and based the identification on Josephus’ account that the distance between *Caesarea* and *Narbata* is c. 60 ris (12 km). Also, *Aruboth* is mentioned in one of the versions of the *Septuagint* as part of the *Dar* precinct and a *Toparchia* (district) in the coastal plain (Alt 1932:31). This identification of Tel Esur as *Aruboth* was abandoned when surveys clarified that the site was not settled during the Iron Age (Zertal 1984:74). In 2000 Zertal claimed that in 1976 he had already suggested that Tel Esur should be identified as *jft (D-f-tj)* of the Thutmose III texts (Zertal 2000: 24). It seems that this suggestion was accepted by Ne’eman (1982: 184, 216), Gonen (1989: 106) and others. Prior to the current excavations Zertal’s suggestion suffered from the same problem as the *Aruboth* identification – aside from pottery, there were no strata which could be associated with the Late Bronze Age. The new excavations discovered a structure from this period which supports Zertal’s suggestion. Further surveys were conducted by various surveyors and excavators in the region, though they do not contribute much to clarifying this issue (see Yannai 2006:5-6 for a summary of additional surveys in the region).

**Late Bronze Age Tel Esur** – No significant Late Bronze Age features were discovered during Zertal’s excavations (2001-2002), though pottery vessels which could generally be dated to the Late Bronze Age IIa were found. A few of the sherds were found in Area B, though most originated from Area C. Additional finds, such as a cylinder seal and figurines, may also date to the Late Bronze Age (Zertal 2003).

**Illustration 2**: Tel Esur excavation areas

In the framework of the renewed excavations, directed by Dr. Shay Bar since 2010, Area B was extended westward to an area called B1 (illustration 2). In this area, c. 20 cm below the surface, the foundations and bases of a structure were discovered. A destruction layer was discovered within the structure’s rooms and in the surrounding open areas, which included a large assemblage of pottery vessels, many of which were complete. Bones, limestone and basalt stone tools, figurines and a scarab from the time of Amenhotep III were found as well. The rich destruction layer, the preservation quality and its proximity to the surface all add to the uniqueness of the structure. The only features which could be dated to a later period than the structure are Iron I pits. These pits were therefore defined as Stratum B1-1 and the Late Bronze Age stratum with the structure was defined as Stratum B1-2.

In the other areas of the Tel, which were excavated within the framework of Bar’s excavations (Areas A and E), no architectural features which could be dated to the Late Bronze Age were discovered. It seems, therefore, that the Late Bronze Age settlement extended over only part of the Tel and its size was c. 10 dunam. The size of the site, the poor architecture, the finds’ characteristics and the size of the structure in Area B1, are all characteristics of a rural settlement. These characteristics are not the focus of this study and will be discussed in a future paper.

**Illustration 3**: A general plan of Stratum B1-2, including the rooms, courtyards and other areas

**Stratum B1-2** – The general outline of the main structure in Stratum B1-2 is unclear. The finds and the economic activity which they reflect are characteristic of the period’s common courtyard houses. The structure has seven distinct areas which reflect the activities that took place within it – room 22, room 24, room 25, room 26, room 33 and courtyards 1 and 2. Each of these areas, defined as rooms or courtyards, has at least one delineating wall which stratigraphically belongs to the structure. All the areas had restorable assemblages, living surfaces between 64.15 m to 63.90 m which abut the middle of the stone walls, thus forming a separation between the foundation trenches and the wall bases. There are additional areas which belong to the same stratum, though their relation to the structure is unclear - Courtyard 3 and Areas 46, 55 and 70 (illustration 3). We found several complete vessels in each of the areas, though Area 70 is the only one in which we found a large restorable assemblage which undoubtedly reflects the activities that took place within it.

The structure’s character, as reflected by the finds in the rooms and courtyards, is unclear, even whether it is indeed a single structure. There are two characteristics, however, which are evident for the entire construction: 1. Poor architecture which included thin walls, a compact earth floor and no evidence of a second level; 2. Simple finds which include few luxury items, very few imported vessels and relatively few decorated vessels (relative to the amount of decorated vessels in other Late Bronze Age assemblages). These characteristics led us to conclude that the structure belonged to common people and not to the elite. It is worth noting that the structure is in a relatively small settlement. The Tel’s size is 22 dunam and Late Bronze Age remains were found on only half of it.

**The Tel Esur Late Bronze Age Pottery Vessels**

**Methodical notes** – there are multiple methods for defining pottery types. A “type” may include many variants with some resemblance, or alternatively, each “type” may include only a small number of variants with a great degree of resemblance between them. The latter method will result in a very detailed typology and the former in a less detailed one. In this study we chose to use a very detailed typology for three reasons. The first is for future research, since it is likely that the resolution of typological divisions in the future will be greater. Although the division into many types is cumbersome and difficult, it allows for the grouping of types in the future. Separating types retroactively, on the other hand, is a difficult or impossible job (depending on the number of illustrations of specific vessels published for each type).[[1]](#footnote-1) The second reason stems from the fact that this is the first comprehensive publication of this period at Tel Esur, and all future Late Bronze Age publications will be dependent on the typological system presented here. The third reason is the size of the assemblage. Since the assemblage of complete vessels is relatively small (fewer than 100 vessels), it was easily possible to create a detailed typology. For the above reasons we found it advantageous to define a large number of types even if some are represented by only a single vessel.

In addition, since the vessels are all complete, the division between the types can rely on the morphological variations of many of the vessels’ attributes, such as the size of the vessel (height, width), the rim, and the shape of the body and base. Therefore, certain vessels are defined differently despite their resemblance due to slight differences or sizes. These definitions required that we find parallels which are well-matched to all parts of the vessel. That is to say, it is not sufficient that the rim be identical since the body and base need to be similar as well. This prerequisite meant that there were types for which we could not find any parallels in the sites we examined.

The types were defined only by vessels with at least 80% of the profile, though some items with less preservation were included as well, provided that they originated from a primary context. Generally, the order of presentation of the vessel types is as follows: bowls, kraters, cooking pots, juglets, jugs, amphoriskoi, jars and pithoi.

**Sites with Parallels –** the sites with which we sought parallels were chosen according to several criteria: (1) stratigraphic sites which were relatively well dated; (2) sites which include strata from the entire Late Bronze Age (table 1); (3) sites in which relatively recent excavations were conducted or where the old excavations are still “key” for understanding the Late Bronze Age; (4) sites representing different regions in Canaan. These sites are (from north to south) – (1) Tel Batash strata X-VII from: Panitz-Cohen and Mazar 2006; (2) Tel Aphek strata X14-X12 from: Gadot and Yadin 2009; (3) Tel ‘Ara graves from: Gadot, Ilan and Uziel 2014; (4) Tel Megiddo strata IX-VIIB from: Loud 1948; (5) Tel Beth-Shean strata R-2-R-1a from: Mazar and Mullins 2007; (6) Tel Hazor strata 2-1A from: Yadin *et al.* 1958; 1960; 1961; Zuckerman 2003.

**Table 1**: Strata and dates according to the site excavators

We also compared several sites which did not meet the above mentioned criteria, as well as to other typological studies. The first site is the Tel ‘Ara graves in which complete Late Bronze Age pottery vessels were found. The proximity to Tel Esur and the importance of Tel ‘Ara in the region compelled us to include it in the comparison outline. In addition, there are several comparisons to Tel Qashish (Ben-Tor, Bonfil and Zuckerman 2003). As stated, there are also comparisons to several typological studies. The first is Amiran’s study (1970), which still constitutes the basis for any typological division in our region. The second is Pedrazzi’s typology (2007) which focused on Levantine storage vessels and created the most detailed typology of jars and pithoi in our region. The third is Cohi’s study (2016) which created a detailed typology of Late Bronze Age decorations. We used additional sources to find parallels for some of the special vessels such as the Egyptianizing vessels. References will be to Martin’s study (2011) or to various sites in which Egyptianizing vessels were discovered. A complete list of references is presented in the tables accompanying the typological plates (and will therefore not be mentioned in the text).

**Typology**

**Bowls – B** – eleven complete bowls were found in Stratum B1-2; only two of them were defined as the same type. The most noticeable differences are their sizes. The initial division relies therefore on the size of the bowl. There are large (BL – Bowls, Large), medium (BM – Bowls, Medium) and small bowls (BS – Bowls, Small). Following the initial division by size, the bowls were divided into types according to the base of the vessels, and each type was divided into sub-types according to their rim (for quantities, see Table 2; for drawings of the vessels, see Illustration 4 and parallels in Table 3).

BL1 are large Egyptianizing bowls and are divided into two sub-types. BL1a has a ridge under the rim on the outer side. This bowl is coarsely made and belongs to the Egyptianizing bowls typical of Late Bronze Age assemblages (Martin 2011: 41, Type BL5c). Martin (2011) demonstrated that the earliest contexts in which this bowl was found date to the Late Bronze Age Ib, while the latest date to the Late Bronze Age IIb (Ibid: Table 26). This bowl continues to be found also in later strata of the Late Bronze Age IIb. The BL1a bowl rims are the most common in the sherd assemblage (not included in this study). The only complete bowl that was discovered had a hole through its center. It seems that the hole is a result of wear and not breakage. A similar hole in the base of a large bowl was also found in one of the two Type BL1b bowls. These bowls differ from BL1a by their truncated rim. These are also Egyptianizing bowls, and are typical of Late Bronze Age assemblages (Martin 2011: 26, Fig. 2, Type BL5a). We could not find identical parallels to BL1b in the sites we examined, although there is a very similar bowl from Stratum X at Tel Sera (Ibid: Pl.54:20). BL2 are also large bowls though they are characterized by a ring base.

The medium bowls are characterized by a diameter of 20 to 30 cm and a depth of 6 to 8 cm. BM1a is a medium bowl with a ring base, slightly rounded walls and a simple rim. Simple bowls were widespread from the Middle Bronze Age until the end of the Late Bronze Age (Amiran 1970: Pls. 26, 38). This type is similar to several of the variants of Type BL 50a from strata X-VII at Batash. However, this type is more common in the earlier strata (Panitz-Cohen 2006a: 31). Type BO1 from Aphek has parallel variants, though the greatest resemblance is to a variant which was discovered in an early Stratum – X14 (Gadot 2009b: Fig.8.2).

**Table 2**: Bowls – Quantities

**Illustration 4**: Bowls

**Table 3**: Bowl Parallels

BM1b is a medium bowl with a ring base, slightly carinated walls (on the lower part) and an inverted rim. The stratigraphic sites which we examined did not yield an identical parallel for this bowl - in other words, a bowl with a ring base, a carination in the lower section and an inverted rim. However, each of these features in itself has many representations in a variety of Late Bronze Age bowls. We note the low carination of the Late Bronze Age bowls in Amiran (1970: Pl. 38: 4–5, 10, 13, 16–18, 20, 21), and the incurving rim style was found, for example, at Beth-Shean (Mullins 2007: [BL5d, BL6d] Fig.5.1) and Tel Batash (Panitz-Cohen 2006a: [BL 53a2] Fig 1). Nevertheless, a very similar, though not identical, parallel was found in the ‘Ara tombs. This vessel was red slipped. BM2 also does not have an identical parallel in the sites we examined. However, each of the bowl’s individual features (base, body and rim), is represented in a variety of Late Bronze Age bowls. The upper carination was found, for example, at Beth-Shean (Mullins 2007: [BL12a] Fig.5.2; [BL12b] Fig.5.2). The flat base was also common during this period and its appearance may have been influenced by the Egyptians.

Three types of small bowls (BS) were defined in the assemblage and divided into two sub-categories - BSR (Bowls, Small, Rounded) and BSC (Bowls, Small, Carinated). BSR1 is a small bowl with a flat base, round walls with a slight low carination and a simple rim. The inner side of the rim has a “lipstick decoration” red line. This bowl may actually be an Egyptianizing bowl, since it resembles Martin’s Type BL1a-b (2001). According to Martin this type is popular mostly during the Late Bronze Age IIb, though similar vessels appear already in earlier strata (Table 2). An additional similarity to Egyptianizing vessels is noticed when comparing Type BSR1 to Type BL70c at Beth-Shean (Martin 2009: 435). The red decoration on the rim exists in the Canaanite repertoire, but characterizes the Egyptian bowls as well (ibid: 441).

It is difficult to use the carination angle of the carinated bowls as a clear chronological indicator within the sub-periods of the Late Bronze Age (Panitz-Cohen 2006a: 40). Type BSC1 is a small bowl with a prominent carination in the center of the body, a ring base and a simple rim. This shape was discovered in Stratum X14 at Aphek (Gadot 2009b: Fig.8.21). Moreover, this type was not discovered later than Stratum VIII at Batash (see Table 2). BSC2 is a medium bowl with prominent “Cyma” shaped walls, a ring base, a simple rim and one horizontal handle. Identical parallels were not found, though there are vessels with similar features of a rounded carination or a horizontal handle from Batash (Panitz-Cohen 2006a: Pl.34: 9; Pl.38: 19) and Hazor (Yadin *et al.* 1958: Pl.LXXXVII: 7).

Cooking Pots (CP) – Nine complete cooking pots were found in the Stratum 2 assemblage in Area B1; they were divided into six types (for quantities see Table 4, drawings in Illustration 5 and parallels in Table 5). One of the common features of the Late Bronze Age cooking pots is the absence of bases. In other words, the bases of the pots are a rare find compared to the rest of the vessels’ parts. Anderson (1988) attempted to explain this absence by the fact that the pots’ bases received direct heat and as a result cracked and disintegrated before the pots’ bodies (ibid: 220). Despite the absence of most of the bases, it is clear that the common base shape of the cooking pots during this period was round. Despite this, two of our sole cooking pots whose bases were preserved demonstrate a flat base shape. However, it seems that this does not reflect on the rest of the assemblage. All the cooking pots found in Stratum 2 of the Late Bronze Age are morphologically similar. All have round lower sections (besides the bases), reach a maximum diameter at about two-thirds of the height, begin narrowing with a sharp carination, and have everted rims. The cooking pots can be divided into types according to the differences in the shapes of the rims and bases and the size of the vessels. There is a difference of 12 cm between the largest cooking pot mouth’s diameter and that of the smallest one. Between these two extremes the cooking pot sizes vary, and a clear division of types according to sizes is impossible. This is why the vessels’ size is a criterion for type division only in exceptional instances when there are substantial size differences (as in the case of CP1 and CP5, where the rims are identical but the size and base differences are substantial). In the following typology, when speaking of the size of the vessel, we are referring to the cooking pot mouth’s diameter. The large cooking pots have a diameter ranging from 26 to 30 cm, medium cooking pots have a mouth diameter ranging from 20 to 25 cm, and the small cooking pots have a mouth diameter of less than 20 cm.

In most of the sites chosen as “parallels” the division of the cooking pots into types is generalized and contains many variants. It seems that the reason for this typology is a prevalent notion that it is impossible to use the small differences between the cooking pots as chronological indicators (which would allow for a greater dating resolution or lead to other meaningful results). In our opinion the archaeological research is still far from understanding the cooking pot phenomenon, and so it is advisable to sort and study the cooking pots at a great resolution.

Type CP1 is a medium to large cooking pot with a triangular flaring rim. This type is divided into three sub-types. CP1a has a folded outward rim, which created a groove under the rim on the outer side. Amiran defined such cooking pots with a triangular rim as being “in their purest shape” (Amiran 1970: 140, Pl. 42: 15, 17) which she claimed were common mostly during the Late Bronze Age III. CP1b, on the other hand, has a short everted triangular rim. It usually appears as if the rim was “pinched” in its center, creating a concavity in the rim’s profile. CP1c has a triangular rim, with its lower outer section slightly inclined outward; on its upper section (the triangle’s vertex) is a small bulge which creates a depression on the inner side (Illustration 5.5). The pot’s rim is short and everted, without a neck. In most typological systems this rim shape is not treated separately.

**Table 4**: Cooking pots – Quantities

**Illustration 5**: Cooking pots

**Table 5**: Cooking pot parallels

The main difference between CP1 and CP2 is that CP2 has a flat base. It also has a shorter rim without a neck. In addition, the clay from which the pot is produced is pale (as opposed to the common black clay) and is not burnt. This feature is shared also by Type CP3, which has a flat base and pale unburnt clay that sets it apart from all the other cooking pots. Although these vessels resemble the cooking pots from a morphological point of view, they may have actually functioned as kraters. We did not find identical flat-based parallels, though pots of a similar size and rim were discovered, for example, at Batash (Panitz-Cohen 2006a: Pl.15: 6. Str. X; Pl.22: 1. Str. VIII; Pl.56: 7. Str. VI) and Beth-Shean (Mullins 2007: Pl. 68: 13. Srt. R-1-b).

CP3 is a cooking pot with a small elongated triangular rim which is set apart from CP1 by its smaller size and flat base. Only one Type CP3 cooking pot was found. This pot is the most complete one found in the Stratum B1-2 assemblage. As previously stated, the clay from which the pot was produced is pale (pinkish) and not the regular black which was common among the cooking pots. It is possible that this vessel served as a krater. There are no identical parallels which have a flat base, though pots of a similar size and which have a similar rim were discovered for example at Batash (Panitz-Cohen 2006a: Pl.28: 7, 8, 9; Pl.22: 1. Str. VIII; Pl.56: 7. Str. VI) and Hazor (Yadin *et al.* 1960: Pl.CXXX: 3. Str. 1B). CP4 is a medium cooking pot with a simple everted rim and a rounded profile. According to Amiran this rim style appears during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (Amiran 1970: Pl. 42:1, 2, 7, 8; Pl. 30: 5). Although the sole fragment of this pot type was relatively large, it may actually belong to an earlier stratum.

**Juglets (JT)** – Only two juglets were found in the Stratum 2 assemblage in Area B1; each was defined as its own type (Illustration 6 and parallels in Table 7). JTD1 is a dipper juglet with a slightly thickened incurved rim, a narrow neck whose upper part thickened and an oval body (the maximum diameter is found in the vessel’s midsection). JTD2 is a dipper juglet with a slightly pinched and thickened incurving rim.

**Jugs (J)** – 13 jugs were found in the Stratum 2 assemblage in Area B1; each was defined as its own type (quantities in Table 6, drawings in Illustrations 6-7 and parallels in Tables 7-8). The jugs were divided into two groups: jugs, General – JG, and Jugs, Biconical – JB. JG1 has a jar-like body and was divided into two sub-types. JG1a is a large jug with a pseudo-oval jar-like body (see more about the pseudo-oval body shape in the “jar” section). Since handless jars of this size are unknown, it seems that this is a jar-like jug. No satisfactory parallels for this type were found. JG1b is a jug type with a carination between the shoulder and the body, a ridge between the shoulder and the neck, a handle on the shoulder and a pointed and almost straight base. JG2 is a jug type with a rounded squat body and a ring base. There are no identical parallels for this type, but a similar one was discovered at Batash (Panitz-Cohen 2006a: Pl.14: 1. Str. X). The vessel from Batash, however, is much larger and has a decorated disk-shaped base.

**Table 6**: Jugs – Quantities

**Illustration 6**: Juglets and jugs

**Table 7**: Juglets and jugs parallels

Type JG3 is a large decorated jug with an oval body, a thick everted rim, a handle connecting the shoulder to the neck and a disk-shaped base. The jug is decorated on the shoulder, handle and rim. The neck has stripes which divide it into *metopes;* one of them contains a tree (Choi 2016: sub-type 1-1/5: T-date-palmA5). This jug has parallels from Hazor, though they are not identical. One of them (Yadin *et al.* 1958: Pl.CXL: 12) has a great resemblance to Type JG3 but is smaller and has a different decoration. Other examples from Hazor are morphologically similar but are not decorated (Table 7). The parallel from Megiddo resembles Type JG3 as well, but is not an identical parallel. Type JG4 is a wide-necked jug with gentle ridges, a handle connecting the shoulder to the edge of the upper neck, a slight carination between the shoulder and the body and a ring base. Most of the parallels have a disk-shaped base and not a ring base. Very similar jugs were found at Megiddo and the Tel ‘Ara graves, but there is one significant difference between them – the jugs from Megiddo and the Tel ‘Ara graves’ are decorated (except for one jug from the Tel ‘Ara graves which is not decorated). Type JG5 is a jug with a slight carination between the shoulder and the body and an almost flat base.

**Jugs, Biconical – JB** – Type JB1 is a biconical jug, with even proportions (its width and height are almost identical), an outward sloping rim and a ring base. It can be divided into two sub-types. Jug JB1a stands out because of its horizontal handle, which is not typical of biconical jugs or any undecorated vessels. The short neck and wide mouth resemble the shape of a krater. The integration of a krater and biconical jug, without a decoration and with a horizontal handle and a wide neck, make this jug unique. Indeed, no satisfactory parallels were found. Horizontal handles usually appear on well-made decorated kraters (see examples in Amiran 1970: Pl. 41: 3, 7, 11). At Tel Batash horizontal handles were found on three decorated bowls (Panitz-Cohen 2006a: Photo 15; and see further discussion about these handles under "Cultural aspects of the Canaanite pottery assemblage"). Perhaps JB1a should have been defined as a krater, but the great morphological resemblance to the biconical jugs, as well as the single handle, led us to define it as a biconical jug. Type JB1b is set apart due to its vertical handle which is connected directly to the rim and the bichrome decoration ('Geometric-frieze Design Type C [Zigzag]’ after Choi 2016).

JB2a is unique because its rim has two ridges. This rim style is not common among jugs and kraters, and not even one parallel could be found for this jug. In addition it has a horizontal handle connecting the shoulder base to the rim, as well as a ring base. Similar to JB1a, also the wide mouth of this type affords it a krater-like shape. Also JB2b has a double-ridged rim and a vertical handle, though it is also decorated. It seems that the upper body part of JB2b was divided into *Metopes* by straight and wavy stripes, in a similar fashion to JB1b and JG3 (Decoration motif 'Type 46-1: Mgd=Pb Wavy line' structured as 'Geometric-frieze Design Type C [Zigzag]' after Choi 2016).

Type JB3 is a biconical jug with a bichrome decoration and elongated proportions (its height is greater than its width), a handle situated in the body’s upper part which connects under the rim, and an overhanging rim. The decoration is located on the upper part of the body, the handle and the rim. Also Type JB4 is a decorated jug, though the decoration is monochrome. As opposed to JB3 is seems that it had even proportions (its width and height were almost identical). The decoration was all done in red color and was located on the upper body part. A drawing of a tree and an unidentified animal were drawn within the *metopes*. Despite the many tree drawings presented by Choi, he does not have even one exact parallel to this tree which includes shoots and was drawn by using stripes and dots. The best parallel is Type T-date-palmA7: Sub Type 1-1/7. Choi claims that this decoration was popular especially during the Late Bronze IIb, even though the two drawings which most resemble the JB3 drawing (including dots) are in fact from the Late Bronze Age IIa (Choi 2016: Fig. II-8b: 11, 15). The depiction near the tree resembles a porcupine, and does not have a parallel in Choi. If this identification in correct, this would be the first representation of this animal on Late Bronze Age painted vessels in Canaan.

**Illustration 7**: Biconical jugs

**Table 8**: Biconical jugs parallels

**Amphoriskoi (AM)** – Two amphoriskoi sherds were discovered in the Stratum 2 assemblage from Area B1, though they didn’t have rims (parallels in Table 8 and drawings in Illustration 7). Both of the amphoriskoi are defined as the same type (AM1) and both have a ring base and handles connecting the shoulders to the base of the neck. Amphoriskoi of this type were found at Batash and the Tel ‘Ara graves, but there is one difference between them – the amphoriskoi from Tel Esur do not have any decoration while those from Batash and the Tel ‘Ara graves are decorated. Such amphoriskoi are generally common in the Late Bronze Age I and II, especially in funerary contexts (see examples in Gadot, Ilan and Uziel 2014: Table 5.61).

**Storage Jars (SJ)** – 37 complete jars were found in the Stratum B1-2 assemblage (quantities in Table 9, drawings in Illustrations 10-11 and parallels in Tables 10-11). The jars are divided into two main groups: the standard storage jar and the Egyptianizing jar. Each group is divided into sub-types. An important criteria in the typological division is the shape of the jar’s body. Since there is no agreement among scholars regarding the definitions of the various body shapes, and in order to clarify the current typological division, below are our shape definitions and criteria (Illustration 8).

**Illustration 8**: Jar type morphology

* **Oval jar**: The maximum diameter is located near the midpoint of the jar (near the lower end of the handle or below it); rounded shoulder and body.
* **Pseudo-oval jar**: The maximum diameter is located in the upper part of the jar (two-thirds from the bottom); a rounded shoulder without clear carination between the shoulder and the body; a narrow and slightly rounded base.
* **Carinated pseudo-oval jar**: The maximum diameter is located in the upper part of the jar (two-thirds from the bottom); a diagonal and nearly straight shoulder; a slight carination between the shoulder and body; a narrow and often thickened base.
* **Jar resembling an upside down triangle:** Themaximum diameter is located in the top quarter of the jar; a straight and slightly diagonal shoulder and a clear carination between the shoulder and the body; a very narrow and thickened base.
* **Upside down triangular jar:** A straight and horizontal shoulder; the maximum diameter is located at the height of the shoulder; a sharp, strong and clear carination below which the straight-walled jar narrows down to a pointed and thickened base, thus creating a triangular shape.

Type SJ1 is a pseudo-oval jar with an outward folded everted rim, sometimes with a square profile. Tel Esur’s Type SJ1 is parallel to Sub-Type 1-2-1 (belonging to Type 1-2) in Peddrazzi’s typology (2007: 52). She claimed that this type had the greatest presence during the Late Bronze Age I (Ibid: Fig.4.1). Aston (2004) studied the jars which were imported from Canaan to Egypt. Type SJ1 is parallel to his Type A1, which he dates to the period between Aḥmose and Thutmose III (Aston 2004: Fig.1). SJ1 has two sub-types. Type SJ1a is a large jar with a simpler and slightly everted rim and a “collar” decorated with impressions (does not appear in the plates). SJ1b is smaller, has a simpler rim and no collar decoration. This type is also characterized by decorations (Illustrations 10.2, 10.3). The decorative motifs are typical of the Late Bronze Age, and one of them (Illustration 10.3) is an unidentified drawing resembling the sun. Type SJ1b resembles the house jars depicted in Amiran (1970: Pl. 42: 2, 5, 7). Amiran defines their outline as a “rounded egg”. Type SJ1b’s body is not as rounded as Amiran’s house jars, but rather preserves an elongated outline without clear carination.

Despite the differences between the various jars types in the assemblage, there are also some similarities, especially in the rim design style and the decorative motifs. Type SJ1c is, however, unusual in terms of both of these aspects. Its rim has a unique style - the graduated neck creates a protruding ridge and a substantially thickened rim. As for the decoration, the relatively thick stripes are drawn haphazardly (Illustrations 9, 10.4) and do not have parallels in Choi’s typology. Despite the fact that there are no exact parallels for this jar, Pedrazzi (2007: 88-89, and see additional examples there) mentioned a similar rim on Type 2-1-6. The difference is worth noting since despite its uniqueness, the only jar belonging to this type is of local origin from the Sharon region (Shalvi 2016).

**Illustration 9**: The jar Type SJ1c decoration

SJ2 is a pseudo-oval carinated jar with a folded thickened rim. Both complete jars of this type had incisions. Some of the incisions seem to form three letters in the middle of the jar, and there is a round imprint on the handle. Additional incisions on the shoulder look like stripes (Illustration 10.5). An additional characteristic of the jars with such incisions is a small perforation in the jar’s body which is hidden by the handle. The perforation was done prior to the firing and its location makes it clear that it was not intended to serve as a spout. It is clear that this perforation prevented filling the jar above the height of the middle of the handle. However, the exact purpose of the strange perforations is unclear. Parallels for such a perforation were not found. SJ2a is a sub-type of SJ2 and is set apart from it by its decorations. There are two jars of this type, one with a stripe decoration (Illustration 10.6; Simple-stripe Design in Choi 2016) and one with an ibex decoration (Illustration 10.7; Sub-Type 3-1/2: Q-horned2-r in Choi 2016) and a slightly rounded base.

**Table 9**: Jars – quantities

**Illustration 10**: jars

**Table 10**: jar parallels

Type SJ2b are small carinated pseudo-oval jars (diameter of 30 cm) with a slightly everted folded rim, handles on the body, a slight carination between the body and the shoulder, and a thin, narrow and flat base. SJ2b resembles Jar SJ2, though they differ in size. Also SJ3 resembles Type SJ2, with the main difference being SJ3’s emphasized shoulder carination as well as a slightly different rim. The upward jutting handles of Type SJ3 emphasize the upside-down triangular outline. The handle has an incision of a longitudinal line with two shorter transversal lines cutting through it.

Type SJ4 is a pseudo-oval carinated very wide jar (diameter 45 cm), with a triangular everted rim. Type SJ5 is a jar with an oval outline characterized by different proportions than other typical Late Bronze Age jars. The maximum diameter of most of the jar types is at the line where the shoulder and body meet; the walls then narrow towards the pointy base. In most instances the upper part of the handle connects to the point where the body and shoulder meet. The place where the shoulder and the body meet is not easily identified, however, in Type SJ5, and the central diameter line is located below the height of the handles. A similar jar was discovered in a Late Bronze Age Ib context at Beth-Shean (Mullins 2007: (SJ1) Pl.59: 15. Str. R-1b). Type SJ6 is a very small jar characterized by oval proportions and a white slip with painted decorations. This jar is parallel to Type 12-4-1 in Pedrazzi’s typology (2007: 119, and see further references there in document 3).

**Storage Jars, Egyptianizing (SJE)** – Type SJE1 is a drop-shaped large jar with an everted folded rim (Illustrations 11.5, 11.6). SJE1 resembles Martin’s Type JR6 (2011: 64-65) but has different proportions. Martin’s Type JR6 is a wide vessel (c. 30 cm) without a neck while SJE1 has more elongated proportions (a width of c. 23 cm) and narrows towards the rim (somehow resembling a neck). These proportions actually more closely resemble Martin’s small Egyptian jar JR2a (Ibid: 59). In other words, SJE1 is similar to JR6 in terms of size, but more closely resembles the small Egyptian jars in terms of its shape (Martin’s Type JR2a). Martin demonstrated that Type JR6 appeared during the Late Bronze Age IIb (Ibid: Table 49) and Type JR2a appeared during the Late Bronze Age Ib (Ibid: Table 40). It seems that Tel Esur’s Type SJE1 is an intermediate type which imitates the small Egyptianizing jars, albeit not accurately. Additional support for this assumption is demonstrated by the vessels’ rims. SJE1’s rim does not resemble the typical rims of the Egyptianizing jars, which are usually simple and everted or thickened and folded inward. On the other hand, SJE1’s rim (Illustration 183: 1) resembles the Canaanite jar rim tradition (see, for example, the rims of SJ1 and SJ2 which are the most common rim types). SJE2 is a small drop-shaped jar which resembles Martin’s Type JR2a (2011: 59). As stated above, Martin demonstrated that Type JR2a first appeared during the Late Bronze Age Ib (Ibid: Table 40).

**Illustration 11**: Jars

**Table 11**: Jar Parallels

**Pithoi (P)** – Eight complete pithoi were found in the Stratum 2 assemblage from Area B1 (quantities in Table 12; Illustration 12). P1 is the most common type of phithos; it has a thickened rim with rectangular proportions, a long neck and a shallow collar-like groove at the base of the neck. There is a “sloppy wave-like” decoration on the pithos’ shoulder. The bottom of the pithos is slightly narrower than the neck diameter and it has a straight and usually disk-shaped base. Four totally complete pithoi of this type were found alongside a lower half body of an additional pithos.

**Illustration 12**: Pithoi

It seems that there are no identical parallels to these pithoi. In general it seems that pithoi are relatively rare in the early fourteenth century BCE and become more common only during the 13th century BCE. During the earlier stage pithoi appear in the large northern Tels – Hazor, Dan and one from Beth-Shean. Later more pithoi are found at various sites in the Galilee and even in the Shephelah (Tel Burna; see further discussions about pithoi at the end of this chapter). The northern pithoi are very different than the ones from Esur. The pithoi from Hazor, for example, are thick and usually have a designed rim and designed ridges where the vessel curvature changes; most have a slightly rounded or pointy base (see for example Yadin *et al.* 1960: Pl.CXXII). At Esur the pithoi walls are thinner, they have a simple rim which is typical of the Late Bronze Age, a flat base and a decoration which resembles the Cypriot Wavy-Band (but is sloppy and careless).

The only pithos in the Canaanite region which may resemble the Esur ones comes from Hazor (Yadin *et al.* 1960: Pl.CXXII: 1). The Hazor pithos resembles the Type P1 pithoi in its dimensions, mouth size and simple rim. However, its ridge decoration is different, as well as its thickness and base. The closest parallels to the Esur pithoi come from Ugarit and Cyprus. The resemblance is expressed in the relatively narrow neck (compared to the Hazor and Tyre pithoi), a flat base, simple rim and a decoration above the maximum diameter line ([though they have ridge decorations and not waves] Pedrazzi 2007: Fig.3.96: a-c, e; 3.97: a; 3.98: c).

The main difference between P1 and P1a is the size; P1a is smaller. In addition, P1a does not have a wavy or any other decoration. In fact, the complete absence of decorations is not typical of pithoi and is practically unknown in Canaan. This absence characterizes also Type P2. P2 has a thickened everted rim with a ridge on its lower part and an accentuated “collar” on the lower neck. The pithos’ body narrows towards the bottom and the base is flat. There are rope marks on the pithos which are probably related to its production process. The shape of the rim is typical of the period and so is the ridge on the lower part of the neck. This rim shape was found for example at Beth-Shean (Mullins 2007: PT1b. Pl.52:5. Str.R-2), as well as on a variety of pithoi from Hazor. P3 is different from all other pithoi because it has a relatively rounded body with handles, and its base is slightly rounded. The only pithoi of this type has rope marks and light scratching below the height of the handles. These marks are probably related to the production process.

**Table 12**: Pithoi – quantities

**Discussion**

**Chronological aspects.** Table 8 summarizes all the contexts in which the pottery vessel parallels were found. We notice that the earliest period shared by all the pottery vessels is the Late Bronze Age Ib. The only unusual vessel is an Egyptianizing large jar (SJE1). Nevertheless, we have already established that this jar has a different shape than the common large Egyptianizing jars which are typical of the Late Bronze Age II and that, despite its size, its shape more closely resembles the small Egyptianizing jars which appear at many sites as early as the Late Bronze Age I. Moreover, it seems that most of the vessels don’t have parallels which can be dated to a later period than the Late Bronze Age IIa. Finally, although the Tel ‘Ara vessels do not derive from a stratigraphic context, all the parallels from this site are vessels whose dates span from the Late Bronze Age Ia (or earlier) until the Late Bronze Age IIa, according to the excavators (Gadot, Ilan and Uziel 2014: Fig 5.65). There is only one parallel for a type which did not exist later than the Late Bronze Age Ia; this is Type BO4 which resembles Tel Esur’s Type BS1.

Finally, the parallels to Aston’s typology (parallel to Types SF1, SJ2 [Aston 2004]) and Pedrazzi’s typology (parallel to Types SJ1, SJ1c, SJ3, SJ6a, P1 [Pedrazzi 2007]), fit well with a date between the Late Bronze Age Ib and the Late Bronze Age IIa.

**Table 8**: The contexts in which the pottery vessel types were found

We can determine that the structure began being used during the Late Bronze Age Ib (1,479 to 1,375 BCE), and existed for at least part of the Late Bronze Age IIa (1,375 to 1,300 BCE) (Panitz-Cohen 2014: 542). To improve our accuracy we need to examine additional finds which may provide chronological hints. One of the finds which may be of assistance is a scarab from the days of Amanḥotep III (Illustration 13), who ruled in 1391-1353 BCE (Berman 2001: 1). The scarab was not noticed during the actual excavation but rather within a dirt bucket removed from a room in Stratum B1-2’s central structure. Despite the fact that it is impossible to know the exact context from which the scarab originated, there is no reason to assume that it is not related to the structure’s assemblage of finds. Therefore, this scarab can serve as a *Terminus post quem.* This does not mean, or course, that this stratum began during the reign of Amanḥotep III, but that at least part of the time in which the stratum existed overlapped with his reign. Moreover, it is likely that this scarab arrived several years into his reign when the distribution of scarabs was greater. Combining the results, therefore, fixes the date of Stratum B1-2 to the end of the Late Bronze Age Ib and perhaps even to the beginning of the Late Bronze Age IIa. In other words, between c. 1,425 and 1,350 BCE.

This dating does not allow the identification of Stratum B1-2 with the site named *jft* in Thutmose III’s texts. Nevertheless, an earlier stratum was discovered during the final excavation season (B1-3), which may actually be the aforementioned *jft*. This recently found stratum is currently being studied and will be published in the future.

**Illustration 13**: A scarab from the time of Amanḥotep III

**Regional aspects**. Most of the regional discussions will take place in the framework of the petrographic analysis, though there are regional phenomena which are reflected in the typology and deserve mentioning here. One of the most conspicuous phenomena, from a regional point of view, is exhibited by the storage vessels. On the one hand, a large quantity of Canaanite jars was found in Area B1, and the greatest quantity of parallels for these jars comes from Tel Batash. It seems that these jars are found in very small quantities in the north (when compared to the south). At Hazor, for example, hardly any jars known as “Canaanite Storage Jars” were found, while the most common jars are those known as “House Jars” (Zuckerman 2003: 155). It seems, therefore, that in terms of jars, Tel Esur belongs to the southern region. On the other hand, Tel Esur had many pithoi, which are clearly a northern phenomenon recorded at Hazor and to a lesser extent also at Tel Dan, Beth-Shean and the northern Galilee (Gonen 1989: 130; Amiran 1970: 143 ; Gilboa 2001), as well as in Lebanon and Syria (Pedrazzi 2007: 146–159). In fact, besides Hazor, Tel Esur had more pithoi than any other Canaanite site during this period. This actually connects Esur to the northern Canaanite region. These opposing phenomena situate Tel Esur in between both regions. The first question to ask is, what could be the meaning of these phenomena? Do they attest to a cultural difference, or perhaps a difference in the economy? At Tel Batash, for example, the assemblage is very similar to the one from Tel Esur’s Stratum 2. It is likely that there are two reasons for this – the first is the similar preservation state of the finds in both of these sites, and the second is the domestic contexts in which they were found. We may ask then why were pithoi not used at Tel Batash? We may assume that the residents knew of their existence and were even able to produce such vessels themselves. From all other aspects, the assemblages of both sites demonstrate a surprising similarity, including the large quantity of jars. This probably means that the decision not to use pithoi was cultural. It is worth noting that the Tel Batash structure’s plan resembles a four-room house, an architectural style which reflects a different cultural concept. Perhaps the storage practices in these homes was different as well (see Gilboa, Sharon & Zorn 2014: 68–71). It is also worth noting that despite the resemblance between the Tel Esur and Tel Batash jars, Batash had four-handled jars while Esur did not yield a single jar of this type (see for example Panitz-Cohen 2006a: Pl.29: 1, 2).

An additional regional aspect worth mentioning is the similarity between the assemblages of Tel Esur and the Tel ‘Ara graves, and the striking differences between them and the Megiddo assemblage. The greatest resemblance is between the Tel Esur vessels and those from the Tel ‘Ara graves, not in terms of the quantity of parallels but definitely in terms of their quality. We can explain the fact that there are not more parallels between Tel Esur and the Tel ‘Ara graves by the differences in the excavated contexts. While a domestic context was excavated at Tel Esur, graves were obviously excavated at the Tel ‘Ara graves. We should therefore not expect similar assemblages. Nevertheless, the similarity between the parallels we identified should not be surprising, due to the proximity of the sites. On the other hand, it is evident that there is a difference between Tel Esur and Megiddo in both the quantity and the quality of the parallels. The Megiddo excavations were wide-scale excavations and a large quantity of pottery vessels from various contexts were found. We must identify the reason for the lack of parallels. Perhaps the Carmel ridge, and its southern extension of Ramot Menashe towards Samaria, constituted some sort of cultural obstacle as well as a geographical one. We must, however, be wary of jumping to conclusions before a more thorough examination of large assemblages is conducted. The Tel Esur assemblage may actually have a resemblance to the assemblages of strata K-10 and K-9 at Megiddo, which have not yet been published.

**Egyptianizing Vessels** – another phenomenon which can easily be noticed in the Esur pottery vessel assemblage are the Egyptianizing vessels. These pottery vessels constitute the earliest evidence for the appearance of Egyptianizing vessels in the rural domain. This advent has many implications which cannot be discussed in this paper. Two types of Egyptianizing vessels were found at Tel Esur – bowls and jars. Among the bowls it seems that the BL1 Type is the most common. This assumption stems from the fact that Type BRL1 rims were found in the greatest quantities. Rims of similar jars were discovered also at Tel Batash, constituting the only Egyptianizing vessels found there. Panitz-Cohen (2006a) wondered why, of all the different Egyptian vessel shapes, this particular bowl shape arrived at Batash. In addition, she mentioned that the bowls were found in smaller quantities (ten sherds were found in strata X-VII) and in a relatively early stratum. Since these are large massive and open bowls, Panitz-Cohen suggested that they were used for crushing or as a lower grinding surface for food preparation, especially Egyptian-style food. This suggestion is supported by the Tel Esur finds, because as opposed to most of the bowl sherds of this type found in Canaan, Tel Esur yielded a bowl with a complete profile and a hole for grinding in its center. If this bowl was used as a working surface, it should demonstrate much wear and tear. Indeed, as stated above, this type yielded the greatest quantity of rim sherds. This is not the only bowl which was used as a lower crushing or grinding surface; bowl Type BL1b also had a hole in the center of the base.

Type SJE1 is an Egyptianizing jar with slightly different features than the common Canaanite jars. On the one hand it has similar proportions to the small Egyptianizing jars (Martin’s Type JR2a; 2001). On the other hand its size more closely resembles the large Egyptianizing jars (Martin’s Tpe JR6; 2011). The jar’s rim is different than the typical Egyptianizing jar rims found in Canaan, and actually resembles the common Canaanite jar rims. This led us to the conclusion that the Type SJE1 was produced by a Canaanite potter who imitated the Egyptian style. The assumption is that the same potter combined the two types of common Egyptianizing jars, and designed the rim in the typical Canaanite style. This may be the identifying mark of the Canaanite potters. In his discussion about the Egyptianizing pottery vessels as ethnic markers, Martin (2009) claimed that the Egyptianizing vessels were produced by Egyptian potters. He based this suggestion on the fact that the Egyptianizing vessels disappear when the Egyptians leave the country. Were they produced by Canaanite potters, we would expect their continued production. In addition, Martin claims that there are hardly any “hybrids” and that the Egyptian-style vessels’ typological, technological and decorative features prove that they were produced by Egyptian potters (Ibid: 465). Although this lone artifact from Tel Esur cannot refute these claims, there may have been more variability than previously thought. We accept Martin’s opinion that most of the potters who produced Egyptianizing vessels were Egyptian, but it seems that there were also Canaanite potters who imitated or learned from the Egyptians how to produce Egyptian vessels. In addition, we suggest that the Egyptianizing vessels disappeared when the Egyptian control of Canaan ceased, due to the cultural role they played (which suddenly lost its significance) and not because the potters were not Canaanite.

**Summary**

A domestic structure dating to the end of the Late Bronze Age Ib and the early Late Bronze Age IIa was excavated in Stratum B1-2 at Tel Esur. The Tel Esur ceramic assemblage allows us a glimpse into the rural domain of the Sharon region at the beginning of the fourteenth century BCE. The structure’s date does not allow us to identify the stratum with *jft*, which is related to Thutmose III’s voyage to Canaan. Nevertheless, an earlier Stratum (B1-3) was recently discovered which, according to its dating, may be the site which Thutmose III refers to as *jft*. This stratum will be published in the future. The Tel Esur pottery vessels demonstrate a surprising resemblance to distant sites such as Tel Batash in the south and Tel Hazor in the north. There are, however, substantial differences which are manifested, for example, in the pithoi. Pithoi do not appear in Batash and the ones from Esur are different than the northern ones but actually resemble the pithoi from Syria. The large quantity of pithoi may be one of the characteristics of the rural domain which necessitated wide-spread storage of agricultural produce. This assumption can be proved only when additional assemblages from the rural domain are published. The pithoi have a wavy decoration which is sloppily done; this decoration joins other motifs such as the horizontal handles which were adopted from nearby cultures but adapted to fit the production style of the local pottery vessels.

The Egyptianizing vessels at the site constitute the earliest evidence for such vessels in the rural domain. The complete vessels with the hole in the center allow us to corroborate the assumption that these bowls served for the grinding of food. They may have been used in order to prepare Egyptian-style foods. The Egyptianizing jar type which merged an Egyptian-style body and a Canaanite style rim demonstrates that there were Canaanite potters who tried to imitate the Egyptian vessels which they saw. Perhaps such imitations were common only in the rural domain, since a similar merging of features is not known from the urban centers.

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1. Since a “type” can include a wide range of variants, the comparison to types can lead to incorrect chronological conclusions. For example, Tel Esur’s Type BM1a resembles one of Tel Aphek’s Type BO1 variants. Type BO1 was found in strata X14 to X12. However, the specific variant parallel to BM1a was found only in Stratum X14. Therefore, a comparison with the general type may lead to the conclusion that the vessel was in use from the Late Bronze Age Ia until the Late Bronze Age IIb. However, a comparison with a specific variant belonging to this vessel type reveals that the vessel was probably in use at Tel Aphek only during the Late Bronze Age I. That is to say, the comparison to specific types enables a greater chronological resolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)