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Anthropoid Clay Coffins from a Late Bronze Age Cemetery near Deir el-Balah

(PRELIMINARY REPORT II)

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THE excavations and survey in the cemetery of Deir el-Balah have enabled us to consider the rich assemblages of coffins and associated finds in context and to approach their study with more confidence.¹ The present preliminary report deals with the fifty anthropoid clay coffins discovered so far and the assemblages that can be related to them.² We shall try to fit them into their Egyptian background and to follow their development and sequence of appearance in Canaan.³

THE COFFINS

The cylindrical coffins range in height from 1.6 to 2 m, with a circumference of about 1.7–2.2 m at the widest part. They taper towards a rounded or square flat base which

¹ Trude Dothan: Anthropoid Clay Coffins from a Late Bronze Age Cemetery near Deir el-Balah (Preliminary Report), *IEJ* 22 (1972), pp. 65–72, Pls. 9–13. Trude Dothan & Y. Bet-Arieh: Rescue Excavations at Deir el-Balah, *Qadmoniot* 5 (1972), p. 26 (Hebrew).

² The author wishes to express her utmost gratitude to Mr. M. Dayan for his unflinching assistance in tracing this material and for his help in everything connected with its publication. Mr. Th. Kollek has also been greatly helpful regarding the pieces of jewellery published herewith. The scarabs attributable to Deir el-Balah will be published by Prof. R. Giveon of Tel Aviv University. The Israel Museum has kindly permitted the author to publish the following lids: No. 7 — I.M. 71.10.212; No. 9 — I.M. 71.10.219; No. 11 — I.M. 71.10.218; No. 12 — I.M. 71.10.217; No. 13 — I.M. 71.10.214.

³ These problems have already been dealt with briefly by the author, see Trude Dothan: The Cemetery near Deir el-Balah and Burial in Anthropoid Sarcophagi, *Qadmoniot* 5 (1972), pp. 21–25 (Hebrew). They will be treated fully in the final publication on the Deir el-Balah excavations and the revised English translation of *The Philistines and their Material Culture*, Jerusalem, 1967 (Hebrew).

in some cases protrudes to accommodate the feet (Pl. 33:A). The upper part is closed by a removable lid on which the facial features, hair, arms and hands of a man are modelled in high relief. The lids are from 0.4 to 0.9 m high and from 0.5 to 0.8 m wide. The lid is equivalent to the face or bust and does not extend down to the base (as in the stone or wooden prototypes, or in later developments of the pottery coffin).

The coffins were built up by the coil technique, often used in the making of large vessels. The lid was cut out of the leather-hard clay before firing and hence fits the opening perfectly (Pl. 33). In some cases a row of small round holes was pierced along the back and a round opening cut in the base. Some coffins have a round aperture at the top of the 'head' rising to a moulded pithos-like rim (Pls. 40–41); in others a round hole is cut (Pl. 42),⁴ while still others (Pls. 33–39: B) are completely closed at the top. All the coffins are very large, brittle and hard to transport and were thus made locally, as has also been proven by chemical analysis of their material by Prof. I. Perlman.⁵ The coffins were fired in an open fire at a low temperature, which would account for the sometimes crumbly and mottled material. There is no doubt, however, that far greater care was devoted to the firing and finish of the lids than of the bodies. Many of the lids may have been fired or refired separately at a higher temperature.

In a few cases traces of paint survive on the bodies. The surface of the lids varies, the painted decoration being poorly preserved in most cases. On some lids a heavy red slip covers all or part of the features; on others a heavy white stucco-like slip serves as background. A yellow gold-like paint appears on one lid. Black paint is used to accentuate hair, eyes and nostrils, while traces of red survive on cheeks and lips. On one coffin a wide lotus-petal collar in yellow and greyish-black paint survives — a feature typical of Egyptian anthropoid coffins.

Two main groups, A and B, can be distinguished by the shape and outline of the coffins.

Group A (Pls. 33–38), a variant new in Canaan and dominant at Deir el-Balah, is mummy-shaped and delineates head and shoulders in various proportions and silhouettes. The shape follows the traditional concept of Egyptian anthropoid coffins and, though seldom encountered in pottery, is well known in wood, cartonnage and stone. Certain coffins (Pl. 42) have such slight indications of head and shoulders that they are intermediate between groups A and B.

Group B (Pls. 39–41). These coffins do not show head and shoulders. There are only five examples at Deir el-Balah, though this is the dominant shape in pottery coffins from Egypt. In Canaan it was hitherto the only shape known to us from Tel Sharuhen (Tell el-Far'a — south), Lachish and Beth Shean.

⁴ The rows of small holes were explained by A. Rowe as drainage of the effluxes of the corpse. See A. Rowe: *The Topography and History of Beth Shean*, Philadelphia, 1930, p. 39. The round aperture at the top has been tentatively suggested as a 'Seelenloch'; see: G. Steindorff, *Aniba II*, Hamburg, 1937, p. 72.

⁵ See below, pp. 147–151.

ICONOGRAPHY OF THE LIDS

The coffin lids differ very much in style, technique, shape and workmanship. The group excavated (tombs 114, 116, 118)⁶ suggests that lids of diverse types can be more or less contemporaneous and that differences in type do not necessarily indicate a difference in time. Two basic iconographic approaches can be seen in the face-lids; for convenience we shall use the terms 'naturalistic' and 'grotesque'.⁷ At Deir el-Balah the naturalistic type is dominant.

The basic distinguishing feature of the 'naturalistic' lids (Pls. 33–37) is the clearly-marked outline of the face, which in some cases is almost like sculpture in the round. The size of the face mask varies from smaller to larger than life-size. The face mask was usually modelled separately and then applied as a unit to the lid, with ears, wig, lotus-flower or beard added in appliqué; details were indented, incised or painted.

In the 'grotesque' lids (Pls. 40–42) the eyes, eyebrows, nose, mouth, ears and beard were applied separately to the surface of the lid, and there is no delineated facial outline. The fact that the lid is the face gives a somewhat bizarre and perhaps caricature-like effect.

In both the 'naturalistic' and 'grotesque' groups there are numerous variations in the stylization of wigs, ears, arms, hands, lotus-flower and Egyptian 'Osiris beard'. The emblems held in the clenched fists of some coffins are degenerate and misunderstood Egyptian religious emblems.

The coffins can also be divided into types on the basis of common features, style and treatment. Some coffins, so similar as to be almost identical, were surely made in the same workshop or even by the same hand. Representative members of each type of coffin and coffin-lid will be given, arranged according to the above-mentioned two groups, A and B. (This is an auxiliary criterion only, since coffins of the same type may have different outlines.)

Group A

No. 1 (Pl. 34:A). Lid. Height 0.8 m. Light brown pinkish clay, grey core, tempered with straw. Traces of heavy white slip. Black paint on wig and eyes. Raised, indented band (which also occurs on No. 13) and decoration of red and black stripes on left arm. Lotus flower on forehead, suspended over wig.

This lid expresses the original Egyptian concept at its best, follows the canons of Egyptian iconography and recalls Egyptian anthropoid coffins and mummy-cases in stone, wood and cartonnage. The lid is statuesque, rendering the head and entire upper body in natural proportions. Only in the group represented by this lid do we find both crossed arms and clenched fists, the latter vigorously and naturalistically rendered in high relief. The face is framed in a long spreading wig in low flat relief.

⁶ Trude Dothan, *IEJ* 22 (1972), p. 71.

⁷ First coined by C. Fisher in *Museum Journal* 14 (1923), p. 234 and followed ever since, though the terms are not entirely satisfactory.

No. 2 (Pl. 34:B). Lid. Height 0.89 m. Red clay, tempered with straw. Lotus flower on forehead, suspended over wig. Grooves around eyes.

This cylindrical rounded lid, stylistically related to No. 1, but giving quite a different effect, has a broad face and thin, refined, well-proportioned features. The upper part of the arms are not shown — only the crossed forearms and hands, which seem to emerge from the mummy-wrappings.

No. 3 (Pl. 35:A). Complete coffin. Circumference 1.8 m, height 1.61 m, height of lid 0.53 m. Red clay, well fired. White incrustation. Lotus flower on forehead. Grooves around eyes and eyebrows.

This lid belongs to a reconstructed coffin (see Pl. 33:C) which is smaller than the rest. The proportionately small face-mask, moulded separately in high relief, has extremely lifelike features and a cleft chin. The long narrow flaps of the wig extend down the front, and the crossed clenched fists are stylized in a way well known from Beth Shean as well as from Egypt and Nubia.⁸

No. 4 (Pls. 33:A; 35:B). Complete coffin. Height 1.95 m, height of lid 0.72 m. Red clay, well fired. Red-painted lips, black-painted eyes. Traces of paint along sides of coffin. Small holes along back of coffin.

The enormous, impressive face is modelled almost in the round, and is in the monumental style of Egyptian sculpture. The wig, in very low relief, disappears behind the small crossed arms. The reconstructed coffin shows the disproportion in size between the large face and almost shoulderless body.

No. 5 (Pl. 36:A). Complete coffin. Height 1.8 m, circumference 2.15 m, height of lid 0.67 m. Red clay, well fired. Even red slip on lid.

The head is modelled almost in-the-round and the outline of the lid is essentially the outline of the head. The flaps of the wig, in low relief, are drawn close beneath the chin like a collar. The ears are depicted as in No. 6 with an internal division. The arms and hands are in very low relief and almost meet on the chest. This lid looks like a human death mask. The toothless mouth has fallen open and the eyes seem closed in death, with no traces of the usual painted or moulded pupils.

No. 6 (Pl. 36:B). Complete coffin. Height 2.17 m, circumference 2.17 m, height of lid 0.74 m. Coffin made of red clay, lid lighter in colour and better fired. White heavy stucco-like slip. Traces of red-brown paint on face.

This extraordinary face has very large features, a projecting upturned nose and misplaced ears. The long depressions from the nose to the corners of the mouth, meant to suggest wrinkles, are unique on coffin lids. There are clefts beneath the nose and

⁸ Trude Dothan: *The Philistines and their Material Culture*, Jerusalem, 1967 (Hebrew), p. 213, Photograph 108, p. 236, Fig. 76:2, Fig. 79:1-2. See also: A. Rowe: *Beth Shean I*, Philadelphia, 1930, Pl. 39:1. E. Naville & F. Griffith: *The Mound of the Jew and the City of Onias — Antiquities of Tell el-Yahudiyeh*, London, 1890, Pl. xiv:2. G. Steindorff et al.: *Aniba II*, Hamburg, 1937, Pl. 39:d, e.

in the lower lip. Holes in the earlobes may be designed to be seen recumbent, in which case the distortion would not be so evident.

No. 7 (Pl. 37: B). Lid. Height 0.59 m. Red clay, traces of white slip.

This scarcely human, lemur-like lid recalls in a debased way certain features in Nos. 5 and 6. The outline of the very low-browed head is but faintly indicated; only the flaps of the wig are shown and the head looks bald. Great saucer eyes dominate a small face merging into a massive body. Arms and hands are reasonably well proportioned. The whole effect is far removed from Egyptian canons; in some respects it foreshadows a coffin from the Philistine tombs at Tel Sharuhen (see below). The workmanship of this lid may be unskillful, but the impact of the huge wide-open eyes seems calculated, not accidental.

No. 8 (Pl. 37: A). Lid. Height 0.59 m. Face painted yellow to represent gilding. Knob on centre of wig and below crossed hands. Traces of red paint on eyes.

This lid is so far unique. Its heart-shaped face has an 'Osiris beard', features moulded in high relief and a tripartite fluted wig. The exaggerated, elongated outline of the eyes successfully conveys the long, kohl-rimmed Egyptian eye. The arms are stylized and the outspread fingers imitate the fluting of the wig. The knobs above the wig and below the palms were doubtless used as handles for moving the lid, like the knobs on the Lachish lid⁹ and the handles on the coffin from Saḥāb.¹⁰

No. 9 (Pl. 38). Lid. Height 0.7 m. Red clay, grey core. Tempered with straw. White slip over the whole lid except the face and ears, which are painted crimson. Pupils and indented headband painted black. Fingers incised.

The features of this crude lid are irregular, the face flat. The pupilled eyes, fully open, slant in the same direction, the mouth is thin-lipped, the ears large and projecting. The lack of sophistication in the features is heightened by the white background and blotches of red colour on cheeks and ears. The wig closely follows the outline of head and shoulders, its shallow fluting faintly echoing the Egyptian wig in No. 8, though the total effect is far from Egyptian canons. The arms are shown in low relief, the hands held one above the other.

Group B

No. 10 (Pl. 39: A). Lid. Height 0.61 m. Red clay, well fired.

This is one of three identical lids. The upper part of this lid has been repaired, but to judge by the complete duplicate found in tomb 116, there was originally a round opening in the top of the head and a slight parting in the wig on the forehead.¹¹ The

⁹ Dothan, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8), Photograph 125.

¹⁰ W.F. Albright: An Anthropoid Clay Coffin from Saḥāb in Trans-Jordan, *AJA* 36 (1932), Pl. XI: 1, 2.

¹¹ Dothan, *IEJ* 22 (1972), Pl. 9: C. A mask of this group was published by Ruth Hestrin: Two Anthropoid Pottery Coffins, *Bulletin of the Israel Museum* 9 (1972), pp. 65-66, Fig. 1.

face-mask was made separately and the very high relief suggests that it may have been cast in a mould. The distinctive features are the high curved forehead, well-arched eyebrows and eyelids, wide upturned nose with deeply indented nostrils, plump cheeks and protruding chin, with a misunderstood and almost indiscernible attempt at the 'Osiris beard' slanting inwards from chin to chest. The long simple wig is moulded in low relief and only the bottom edges are indented. This indentation is repeated in the very crudely stylized crossed arms, which are much curtailed and debased.

No. 11 (Pl. 39:B). Lid. Height 0.65 m. Reddish clay, grey core, tempered with straw. Traces of crimson paint on the face.

This lid has an incurving, narrow-flapped wig concealing the ears, flat wide face, indented dimpled chin and 'Osiris beard'. The extremely crude, stick-like arms end in withered hands, each of which holds a completely misunderstood version of one of the Egyptian emblems — *heqa* (ḥqꜣ) and *nekhekh* (nhḥ).¹² There is a striking discrepancy between the feeling and art with which the face is moulded and the quite perfunctory treatment of the arms and hands.

No. 12 (Pls. 40–41). Lid. Height 0.58 m. Pinkish-brown clay, grey core, white slip. Round opening cut in top of head with two wide red bands around it. Incised wig.

This lid is placed in group B, though there is a slight indication of shoulders. The 'grotesque' undemarcated face, the 'Osiris beard' and stick-like arms carry us over to lid No. 13. The treatment of the wig, shown by grooves and wavy lines, is unusual.

No. 13 (Pl. 42). Coffin. Height 1.94 m, height of lid 0.65 m. Pinkish-brown clay, grey core. Traces of heavy white slip on lid and coffin. Long-stemmed lotus flower with traces of red paint. Red-painted cheeks, arms and area beneath beard. Details of lotus flower and wig incised.

This lid is well executed and intentionally grotesque, with emphasis on the pronouncedly Egyptian eyes. The head rises to a pithos-like opening.

The distinctive, misunderstood wig continues the line of the eyebrows, and the fringe is vestigial. Raised indented bands on both sides of the lid are continued on the coffin, and another raised band runs around the coffin, just below the lid opening. This decoration can be understood as an imitation of mummy bands (see No. 1 above). The rectangular arrangement of the arms combines with the crown of the head to form a striking and artistically satisfying whole.

The coffins from Deir el-Balaḥ display a wider spectrum of types than any other group of pottery coffins known from Egypt — the home of anthropoid burial — or from Palestine. The small number of examples discussed here can hardly convey the impact of the whole.

¹² A. Rowe: *A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs in the Palestine Archaeological Museum*, Cairo, 1936, No. 663: ḥqꜣ — crook of rule; No. 749: nhḥ — emblem of royal dignity.

The more elaborate lids follow Egyptian iconographic canons and keep close to their more costly prototypes in wood, cartonnage and stone. Other lids show different degrees of deviation from the original concept, with resulting misinterpretation and debasement of the original traits. All the coffins were made locally, some by trained craftsmen well versed in Egyptian tradition, others by potters lacking tradition and skill. Despite all differences in style, technique, shape and workmanship, it seems from the three excavated tombs that coffins of diverse types can be contemporaneous. However, we lack the conclusive evidence which would enable us to arrange the large number of coffins from unofficial excavations in chronological order and relate them to the other objects from the cemetery.

ASSOCIATED VESSELS AND OTHER OBJECTS

The vessels and objects from the cemetery at Deir el-Balah are among the richest and most varied ever found in Israel. However, the finds are still dispersed and probably not all of them have been traced. They parallel and complement what was found in our excavations; the latter showed us how the objects were arranged in and around anthropoid coffins, or in association with plain burials. We shall here confine ourselves to a short account of the main groups represented.

Pottery (Pl. 43). The common vessels are a typical Late Bronze Age assemblage of local Palestinian ware with Cypriote, Mycenaean and Egyptian imports, as well as local imitations of the latter. The local ware (notably storage jars, flasks, bowls, dipper-juglets and lamps) is rather crude in workmanship, with very little painted decoration, and is on the whole rather indistinct. It dates predominantly from the thirteenth century, with a possible extension to the very beginning of the twelfth century B.C.¹³

An impressive group of Mycenaean vessels includes stirrup jars, pyxides and unusually large piriform jars (Pl. 44:C). Most of the vessels are of Mycenaean III B type (thirteenth century B.C.) with a few of Mycenaean III A (second half of the fourteenth century B.C.). Outstanding in size, decoration and finish are the large piriform jars with three loop-handles, of the type found standing near the coffin in tomb 114.¹⁴ The handles bear incised signs in the Cypro-Minoan syllabary. These large piriform jars, originating in the Argolis, are well known from centres of Mycenaean culture such as Mycenae itself, Rhodes and Cyprus.¹⁵ The local imitations of Mycenaean vessels display hitherto unknown details of decoration.

The comparatively few Cypriote imports include milk bowls, which we found used as lids in a number of cases,¹⁶ base-ring ware jugs and their more common local

¹³ See the article of Prof. I. Perlman, below, pp. 147–151.

¹⁴ Dothan & Bet-Arieh, *loc. cit.* (above, n. 1).

¹⁵ Perlman, see below, p. 151.

¹⁶ Trude Dothan, *IEJ* 22 (1972), Pl. 9:A.

imitations. White shaved juglets are abundant and were found during our excavation sinside the large storage jars.

There are a striking number of Egyptian vessels, most of them evidently imported. They include large vessels like the handle-less bag-shaped jars and tall, white-slipped, bulging-necked storage jars — the latter an Egyptian adaptation of Canaanite jars.

Smaller vessels include handle-less jars of diverse outline, 'flowerpots' and heavy flat bowls, as well as a more delicate group of small high bulging-necked jugs and flasks covered with heavy white burnished slip.

All these vessels belong to the New Kingdom repertoire of Egyptian pottery,¹⁷ examples of which have also been found in excavations in this country (e.g. Tell el-'Ajjul, Tel Sharuhen, Lachish, Megiddo and Beth Shean).¹⁸ These, as well as the Deir el-Balah examples, are predominantly from the Late Bronze Age (thirteenth century B.C.) with some types continuing into Iron Age I (twelfth century).¹⁹

Alabaster vessels. This is one of the richest and most varied groups of objects connected with the Deir el-Balah burials, ranging from miniature cosmetic jars and cosmetic bowls (Pl. 44:A) to large and complex vessels. Traces of painted decoration are still clearly visible, i.e. open rosettes on lids or suspended lotus chains, and lotus petal decoration as seen on the lotus-shaped goblet (Pl. 44:B).²⁰ The vessels are of Egyptian alabaster, and Egyptian shapes and decorations predominate.²¹ Some types are already known in Canaanite contexts (e.g. Megiddo, level VIIA);²² other types from the New Kingdom alabaster repertoire are new in Egyptian imports to Canaan.

Jewellery. There is a large collection of jewellery, including carnelian beads both plain and elaborately carved in dominant Egyptian shapes: the lotus-seed vessel pendant (Pl. 45), the Horus-eyes, the Bes and plain scaraboids. An astonishing feature is the large quantity of gold beads and the remarkably beautiful gold spreaders with elaborate embossed decoration, an example of which is the Hathor head shown in Pl. 45:B. All are clearly of Egyptian origin, and are of types known in New Kingdom contexts.²³ In Canaan similar groups have come from Tell el-'Ajjul, Tel Sharuhen, Beth Shean and Tell es-Saidiyeh.²⁴

¹⁷ G. Nagel: *La Céramique du Nouvel Empire à Deir el Medineh I*, Cairo, 1938.

¹⁸ F. Petrie: *Ancient Gaza I*, London, 1931, Pls. XLIII: 32 H2, H7, H8, K3, K4; XLIX: 34 E2; II, London, 1932, Pl. xxvii: 3c, 9Q. J. L. Starkey & Lankester Harding: *Beth Pelet II*, London, 1932, Pl. XLIX: pottery from Tombs 915, 924, 926. G. M. Fitzgerald: *The Four Canaanite Temples of Beth-Shean, Part II, The Pottery*, Philadelphia, 1930, Pls. xli: 1-3, xlii: 30, xlv: 1, 6, 7.

¹⁹ Dothan, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8), Fig. 72: 17, 18.

²⁰ A similar goblet comes from tomb 118, Trude Dothan, *IEJ* 22 (1972), p. 70.

²¹ Fr. W. von Bissing: *Steingefässe* (Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire), Vienna, 1907.

²² G. Loud: *Megiddo II*, Chicago, 1948, Pls. 259-261, from level VIIA.

²³ Alix Wilkinson: *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery*, London, 1971, pp. 91-147.

²⁴ Petrie, *op. cit.* (above, n. 18), *Ancient Gaza II*, Pl. III: 23, 34, 35. Starkey & Harding, *op. cit.* (above, n. 18), Pl. XLIX: Beads from tomb 922.

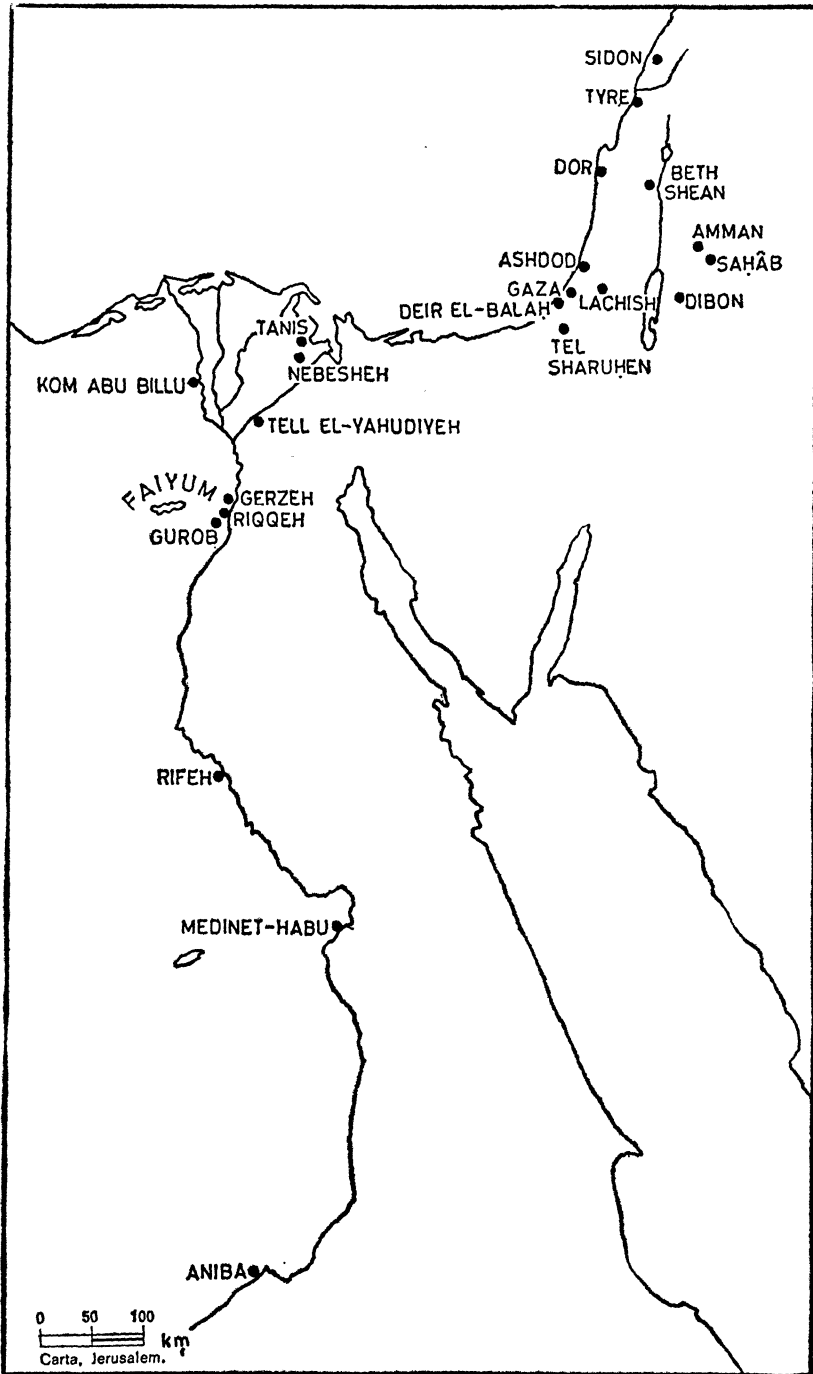


Fig. 1.

Scarabs. There is a very large group of scarabs, including a series of royal scarabs with the names of Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, Amenhotep IV and his queen Tiye, Sethi I (?) and Ramesses II. The name of Ramesses II predominates. There is one scarab of Ramesses IV (mid-twelfth century B.C.).²⁵ The scarabs reflect the long period of Egyptian domination in Canaan.

Special finds. These are pottery Ushabti figurines (Pl. 44:D),²⁶ which are rare in Canaan, and four small Egyptian burial stelae of local kurkar sandstone.²⁷

All the above material, and the assemblages connected with the three excavated tombs, give us a more comprehensive picture of the burial gifts associated with the anthropoid coffins of Deir el-Balaḥ. The finds indicate that the cemetery was in use from the fourteenth to the very end of the thirteenth century B.C., with a possible extension into the twelfth century. The emphasis is, however, on the thirteenth century, the period of Ramesses II. The cemetery as a whole reflects the cosmopolitan nature of the period but the Egyptian element predominates, both in the small finds and in the practice of burial in anthropoid coffins.

Deir el-Balaḥ provides us with the earliest known example in Canaan of anthropoid coffin burials. Other Canaanite sites yielding contemporaneous and later examples are the cemeteries of Beth Shean, Lachish and Tell Sharuḥen (see Fig. 1), which range in time from the thirteenth down to the eleventh century B.C. A later, tenth to seventh century B.C. extension (not to be dealt with here) comes from three sites in Trans-Jordan: Saḥâb, 'Amman and Dibon.²⁸

There can be no doubt that the custom of burial in anthropoid coffins originated in Egypt.²⁹ Anthropoid coffins and mummy-cases first came into use in the Middle

²⁵ As kindly communicated by Prof. R. Giveon of Tel Aviv University, who is preparing the scarabs for publication.

²⁶ For Ushabti (Shabtis) figurines in Egypt see I.E.S. Edwards: *A General Guide to the Egyptian Collection of the British Museum*, London, 1964, pp. 153-7. In Palestine they are known from the northern cemetery at Beth Shean where they were found accompanying anthropoid clay coffins (see below, n. 39).

²⁷ To be published by R. Ventura of Tel Aviv University.

²⁸ The Saḥâb (12 km south-east of 'Amman) and the 'Amman (Jebel el-Quşur) anthropoid sarcophagi are stylistically very close. The Saḥâb sarcophagus was dated by Albright (see above, n. 10) to the transition from the tenth to the ninth century B.C.; for the 'Amman coffin only a general dating to the Iron Age II has been suggested. See J.B. Pritchard: *The Ancient Near East, Supplementary Texts and Pictures*, Princeton, 1969, p. 381:853. The Dibon coffin (*ibid.*, p. 381:851-852; *AASOR* 36-38 [1964], pp. 58 ff., Pls. 52:2, 53:1-2) comes late in this series and is of a different type, the lid extending the whole length of the coffin. Though dated to the ninth century B.C., because of the tempting association with the dynasty of Mesha, the pottery related to the burial seems to be predominantly from the seventh century B.C. On this bathtub-shaped coffin, see S. Saller: *Iron Age Tombs at Nebo, Jordan*, *Liber Annuus* 16 (1965/6), pp. 289 f.

²⁹ For general discussions see W.C. Hayes: *The Scepter of Egypt*, New York, 1968, Part I, pp. 304-312; Part II, pp. 29-31, 69-71, 221-223, 414-420. See also, Edwards, *op. cit.* (above, n. 26), pp. 148 ff.

Kingdom, during the period of the 12th dynasty. The characteristic mummy of the 12th dynasty, with heavy bandaging and mask (sometimes gilded), became the basic form upon which coffins were modelled thereafter; coffins had previously been box-shaped. In mummifying the body and burying it in a mummy-shaped coffin, the Egyptians conformed to the identification of the deceased with the god Osiris, who was usually represented as a mummified king.

This burial custom continued in the New Kingdom. Mummiform coffins were made of wood or cartonnage (moulded linen and plaster). Stone sarcophagi were, as a rule, used only in royal burials; in the burials of the rich and noble the mummy was encased in several coffins, one inside the other.

Under the New Kingdom, burial customs which had been limited to the upper classes were extended to other sections of society. For these, mummy cases and coffins were combined, and the features (as well as, in many cases, the crossed hands) of the deceased were shown on wooden or pottery anthropoid coffins. The coffins from Deir el-Balah are clearly modelled on the pottery coffins found in Egypt from the period of the 18th dynasty onwards.

The published and illustrated material from Egypt on anthropoid pottery coffins is incomplete and thus rather inadequate. However, a study of published and unpublished material and data suggests that the custom of burial in anthropoid coffins was not very widespread. In the New Kingdom it was primarily concentrated in the Delta area³⁰ and in Nubia.³¹ To the Delta sites we can now add Kom Abu Billu, situated about 70 km north-west of Cairo. A communication on the site has been published by J. Leclant on behalf of the excavator, Dr. Shafik Farid of the Egyptian Antiquities Service.³² It is to be hoped that this recent excavation will yield clearer and fuller information about burials in anthropoid coffins and their related assemblages. At Kom Abu Billu, as at most of the other sites in Egypt, the assemblages connected with the burials were greatly pillaged in antiquity. There is enough material left, however, to give us an idea of the rich burial gifts. The pottery published is a combination of Mycenaean, Cypriote and local Egyptian vessels. There are necklaces of carnelian lotus beads, cosmetic objects such as a bronze mirror, and a wide range of royal scarabs with the names of Thutmose I, Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Sethi I and Rameses II. The whole assemblage is very similar in character to that found at Deir el-Balah (which seems to cover the same span of time) and to the contemporary sites in the Delta and in Nubia.

³⁰ The comparative Egyptian material and its implications will be discussed in the forthcoming final report on the Deir el-Balah excavations. Albright mentioned much of the relevant material, *op. cit.* (above, n. 10), pp. 305–306.

³¹ For the most important site in Nubia see Steindorff, *op. cit.* (above, n. 4), pp. 72 f., Pls. 39b–e; 40: 1–3.

³² J. Leclant, *Orientalia* 40 (1971), pp. 227–228, Pls. xx–xxix.

The finds from Egypt can be reconsidered in the light of the Deir el-Balaḥ finds. The published literature tends to see the pottery anthropoid coffins as the burials of the poor, those who could afford neither expensive mummy cases nor embalming. Yet it appears from the Egyptian evidence that pottery coffins were also used as mummy cases. Steindorff states that such coffins were used for mummified bodies, but fails to say whether any such bodies were found.³³ Engelbach states explicitly that the 19th dynasty pottery coffins from Riqqeh contained mummified bodies.³⁴ He regarded this fact, and the high quality of the amulets found with the bodies, as evidence that the burial in anthropoid pottery coffins was by no means confined to the lower classes and the poor, as had been generally assumed. It should not be forgotten

³³ See Steindorff, *op. cit.* (above, n. 4), p. 72.

³⁴ R. Engelbach et. al.: *Riqqeh and Memphis* VI, London, 1915. Apart from Deir el-Balaḥ, the Palestinian coffin burials have yielded no skeletons in coffins and no trace of mummification. In Palestine and Trans-Jordan there are only two traces of mummification. One is from the Megiddo tombs, where there is a possibility that some attempt at mummification was made in connection with two skeletons from tomb 911b. Dr. D. Barag kindly drew my attention to this reference, P. L. O. Guy: *Megiddo Tombs*, Chicago, 1938, p. 67. (The tomb should be dated to the first phase of the Iron Age and not to the LBA as suggested by the excavator, *ibid.*, Pl. 119:2-18). The other example, observed at the cemetery of Tell es-Saidiyeh, belongs to approximately the same period, see J. B. Pritchard: *New Evidence on the Role of the Sea Peoples in Canaan at the Beginning of the Iron Age*, in W. Ward (ed.): *The Role of the Phoenicians in the Interaction of Mediterranean Civilizations*, Beirut, 1968. In two tombs adjacent to the early twelfth century burial in tomb 101, each of the bodies was wrapped in cloth and then encased in a block of bitumen. This unique phenomenon seems to be a version of mummification. The finds in both the Tell es-Saidiyeh and the Megiddo tombs (which were rich in metal objects) point to influences from Egypt, Cyprus and the Aegean and link up with Deir el-Balaḥ and with some of the anthropoid coffin burials from Beth Shean (tomb 90).

Turning to the biblical evidence, it seems that embalming was never practised in the Land of Israel, see R. de Vaux: *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, London, 1961, p. 56; *Enc. Miqr.*, III, Jerusalem, 1958, col. 212 (Hebrew). In the Bible, mummification is mentioned in connection with Jacob's death (Gen. 50:2). The second mention of mummification and the only mention of a coffin (ארון) is at Joseph's death (Gen. 50:26). The Egyptians mourned Jacob for 70 days, the period of mummification in Egypt (Herodotus II:86). The word ארון meaning coffin occurs only this once in the Bible, in connection with Egypt, where Joseph the high-ranking minister was naturally buried according to Egyptian rites.

The story in Genesis 50:6-13 relates how the sons of Jacob came up from Egypt to bury their father in his homeland. In verses 10-11 we read: 'And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned . . . And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning on the floor of Atad they said: "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians", wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan'. The identification of Goren ha-Atad — Abel Mizraim is problematic. B. Mazar suggested at an archaeological congress at Jerusalem in 1973 that Abel Mizraim might refer to a central burying-ground to which Canaanite dignitaries were brought from Goshen for interment. This view gains some plausibility if we identify Abel Mizraim with Beth 'Eglayim (Tell el-'Ajjûl), south of Gaza and north of Deir el-Balaḥ, on the highway from Egypt to Canaan. For the association of Beth 'Eglayim with Abel Mizraim, see: *Enc. Miqr.* II, Jerusalem, 1954, col. 560, s.v. Goren ha-Atad (Hebrew).

that in every period there were much simpler coffins, made of wooden planks, rough mats or large pottery jars. In these the really poor found the shelter essential for their life after death.³⁵

When Deir el-Balah is compared with the published Egyptian material and with other finds in museums and collections, it is seen to fit well into the totality of the Egyptian burials of the 18th and 19th dynasties mentioned above. Its outstanding qualities are the great diversity of coffins, the large proportion of mummy-shaped specimens and the relatively high artistic level. The latter is scarcely paralleled in Egypt and is certainly far above the usual level of contemporary burial in Canaan, where no comparable mummiform coffins have ever been found. The complete and untouched burials at Deir el-Balah show what some of the Egyptian burials must have looked like before they were disturbed in antiquity. Such burials were certainly not those of the poor; they may have been associated with a certain class of officials, military or administrative, both in Egypt and in Canaan.

We have clear evidence of anthropoid coffins with assemblages foreign to Egypt from the times of the 20th–21st dynasties in Egypt, at Tell el-Yahudiyeh³⁶ and at Nebesheh.³⁷ These are related to the later extension of anthropoid coffin burial in Canaan at Tel Sharuhen and Beth Shean. It is clear that this burial custom came to be used in Egypt by non-Egyptian elements as well, and the same was the case in Canaan in the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C.

In excavations in Canaan, burials in anthropoid coffins were found at Beth Shean, Lachish and Tel Sharuhen, ranging in time from the thirteenth down to the eleventh century. A face mask belonging to a coffin lid was found on the surface of Tel Midrash (Tell el-Madrassa) near Beth Shean.³⁸

The main features of the Tel Sharuhen, Beth Shean and Lachish burials (coffins and associated finds), together with some aspects of the burial architecture, will be

³⁵ G. Posener: *A Dictionary of Egyptian Civilization*, London, 1962, p. 251.

³⁶ The anthropoid coffins were found in eight 'tumuli' in a desert cemetery near Tell el-Yahudiyeh. These tumuli are unparalleled in Egypt. They contain scarabs ranging from Ramesses III to Ramesses VI with typical Egyptian pottery assemblages of the 20th dynasty, Palestinian ceramic types and local debased derivatives of Mycenaean vessels. These assemblages are very close to those from the Philistine tombs 552 and 562 at Tel Sharuhen in which anthropoid coffins were found (below, pp. 142–3), but for the absence of Philistine pottery, see Dothan, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8), Figs. 69, 72, 77; Naville & Griffith, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8), Pl. xv.

³⁷ The anthropoid burials at Tell Nebesheh have a strong non-Egyptian flavour as Petrie recognized, see W. M. F. Petrie, A. S. Murray and F. L. Griffith: *Tanis*, Part II, London, 1888, p. 20, Pl. III. However, Petrie's eighth-seventh century B.C. dates were far too late. The finds from Tell Nebesheh date from the second part of the eleventh century B.C. and have many parallels at Beth Shean, level VI (see below, pp. 143–145), Megiddo level VIA and at Tell Qasile level X.

³⁸ The discovery of the mask as well as Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age pottery was reported by N. Tzori, *Bulletin of the Department of Antiquities of the State of Israel* 4 (1953), pp. 4–5, Pl. Ia (Hebrew).

briefly summarized here.³⁹ The continuity of the burials from Deir el-Balaḥ will be noted, as will their later extension from Iron Age I (twelfth-eleventh centuries B.C.), the period during which the custom of burial in anthropoid coffins was taken over by the Philistines at Tel Sharuḥen and Beth Shean.

Tel Sharuḥen (Tell el-Far'a—south)⁴⁰ lies 20 km to the south-east and is the nearest burial site in Canaan comparable to Deir el-Balaḥ. Two anthropoid coffins were found in tombs 552 and 562 in the '500' cemetery, and fragments of a coffin, without a lid, in rock-cut chamber tomb 935 in the '900' cemetery. The latter cemetery is dated to the thirteenth and early twelfth centuries and *no* Philistine pottery was found in it. The latest scarabs from this cemetery are of Ramesses IV, corresponding to the thirteenth century phase of the Deir el-Balaḥ cemetery and its possible twelfth-century extension. The '500' cemetery spans a period from the twelfth to the end of the eleventh century B.C. and contains the main concentration of Philistine tombs among the cemeteries of Tel Sharuḥen.

The five large rock-cut chamber tombs from which the two coffins came stand out from the rest of the tombs in the '500' cemetery in architecture, size and abundance of Philistine pottery. Hence they were termed by Petrie 'the tombs of the lords (*seranim*) of the Philistines'. They are cut in a row and all face westward. They were disturbed by robbers in antiquity but there are no intrusive burials: each tomb contains a homogeneous assemblage of finds, and the tomb as a whole spans a period from the mid-twelfth to the eleventh century B.C.

It seems most probable, as proposed by Jane Waldbaum,⁴¹ that this tomb architecture, consisting of a stepped dromos leading into a rectangular rock-cut chamber tomb, reflects Mycenaean burial customs. The two tombs in which the coffins were found have special features designed for the accommodation of large, breakable clay coffins, e.g. the arrangement of the steps, and the wider-than-usual passage from the main chamber to the rear chamber in tomb 552.

The ceramic assemblages of tombs 552 and 562 represent a combination of three different spheres of ceramic tradition: pottery characteristic of the local Canaanite

³⁹ The attribution of the first appearance of anthropoid burials to the Late Bronze Age is based on finds from Deir el-Balaḥ (see above, n. 3) and on a renewed study of the material from the northern cemetery of Beth Shean in the University Museum at Philadelphia, undertaken by the kind permission of Prof. J.B. Pritchard. This material has been prepared for publication by Dr. E. Oren, who has kindly allowed me to read and refer to his manuscript, in which a thirteenth century initial date for anthropoid burial at Beth Shean is clearly established.

⁴⁰ Dothan, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8), pp. 221–230. F. Petrie: *Beth Pelet* I, London, 1930, pp. 6–8, Pls. XIX–XXIV.

⁴¹ Jane C. Waldbaum: Philistine tombs at Tell Fara and their Aegean Prototypes, *AJA* 70 (1966), pp. 331–340. W. H. Stiebing, Jr.: Another Look at the Origins of the Philistine Tombs at Tell el-Far'ah (S), *AJA* 74 (1970), pp. 139–143, tries to show that this type of tomb is not a new feature but has a long local history. However, he does not succeed in refuting the very strong argument brought forward by Jane Waldbaum.

tradition, which continues into the early Iron Age; a large and representative group of Philistine vessels including Egyptianizing long-necked Philistine jugs; and a group of locally-made vessels imitating Egyptian pottery forms. The Egyptian element in the pottery fits in with the Egyptian custom of burial in anthropoid coffins.

The Tel Sharuḥen coffins are of the Group B type with no delineation of shoulders and no opening at the top. The lids belong to the 'grotesque' style with 'Osiris beard', and show a lack of artistic ability, quite unlike the deliberate exaggeration of the Beth Shean 'grotesque' lids (see below) but foreshadowed by certain examples from Deir el-Balah.

The homogeneous groups of clearly Philistine assemblages associated with the coffins — the abundance of pottery, seals, bronze and iron objects (the latter among the earliest known examples), as well as the chamber tombs themselves, which most probably derive from Mycenaean prototypes — all proclaim the eclectic nature of the Philistine culture. The Egyptian influence, exemplified in the very custom of burial in anthropoid coffins, is especially strong.

*Beth Shean.*⁴² About fifty anthropoid coffins were discovered in eleven burials spanning a period from the thirteenth to the eleventh century B. C. in the northern cemetery at Beth Shean. Most were scattered and only a small proportion could be reconstructed. Unfortunately, the burials had been robbed and badly disturbed in antiquity, and much material was found discarded, since the Hellenistic and Roman inhabitants of Beth Shean reused the tombs.

All the coffins are of the cylindrical type (Group B above); none has the mummy-shaped outline (Group A above), which so far is confined to Deir el-Balah. The majority of the lids at Beth Shean are 'naturalistic'. There are a few 'grotesque' lids but there is a much sharper difference between the two styles at Beth Shean than at other sites, such as Deir el-Balah.

'Naturalistic' lids first appear at Beth Shean in the thirteenth century and continue into the Iron Age (twelfth-eleventh centuries), thus partly overlapping with the last phase of the Deir el-Balah coffin group. Most of the Beth Shean 'naturalistic' lids have analogies at Deir el-Balah, but the former are much more limited stylistically.

The five coffins with 'grotesque' lids from Beth Shean come from two chamber tombs (one from tomb 66 and four from tomb 90) showing architectural affinities with the Aegean, as at Tel Sharuḥen. Nothing like these five coffins is known either in Canaan or in Egypt. The facial features are boldly stylized and naively exaggerated, yet the exaggeration and apparent crudity are the result of intentional stylization rather than of artistic ineptitude. No clear representation of a beard has been found on any of the Beth Shean coffins, though the 'Osiris beard' is a common feature in the coffin groups at Deir el-Balah, Tel Sharuḥen and Lachish.

The feature that singles out the Beth Shean 'grotesque' lids is the appliqué headdress consisting of plain horizontal bands, rows of knobs, zigzag patterns arranged in var-

⁴² See above, n. 39.

ious combinations, and vertical fluting. It is possible to identify this unique headgear (for which no analogies have been found on anthropoid coffin lids in Canaan or Egypt) by comparing it with the headdress composed of a cap, a diadem and leather strips or hair worn by the Peleset, the Tjekker and the Denyen in the wall-reliefs of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu in Egypt.⁴³ The headbands or metal diadems worn by members of these groups of the Sea Peoples are decorated in different ways, as in the diadems modelled on the Beth Shean coffins. It is possible that these differences indicate either military rank or membership in tribe or clan.

The headgear provides decisive evidence for the identification of those buried in the 'grotesque' coffins at Beth Shean with the Sea Peoples, specifically the Philistines. From the Bible (1 Sam. 31:8–13; 1 Chron. 10:8–12) we know that Beth Shean was occupied by the Philistines and on its walls the bodies of Saul and his sons were displayed after their defeat at the battle of Gilboa in the last quarter of the eleventh century (*ca.* 1025–1000 B.C.).

The dating of these coffins to the period of Saul is supported by archaeological evidence. The most complete representation of the headdress on a 'grotesque' lid comes from a clear-cut Iron Age context in tomb 66. Here a debased version of the Philistine strainer-spouted jug, typical of the last phase of Philistine pottery, helps to date the tomb to the second half of the eleventh century, when Philistine pottery was already on the wane. (See below, late level VI on the mound.) The other four 'grotesque' coffins were found in tomb 90, which was first used in the Late Bronze Age but is predominantly of the Iron Age. That these coffins were interred in the Iron Age, in the second half of the eleventh century B.C., is clear from a photograph⁴⁴ showing two of the 'grotesque' coffins *in situ* with a globular Iron Age flask beside the lid of one of them and clearly belonging to it. The flask is typical of the second half of the eleventh century and has close analogies at Beth Shean (late level VI), Megiddo (level VIA) and Tell Qasile (level X).⁴⁵

There remains the problem of the scarcity of Philistine pottery at Beth Shean. From Francis James' publication of the Iron Age material it can be gathered that Philistine pottery, though scarce, does exist at Beth Shean, and that by late level VI (second half of the eleventh century, corresponding to the interment of the 'grotesque' coffins), Philistine pottery was already degenerate and assimilated into local ware.⁴⁶ This seems

⁴³ See above, n. 3, *The Philistines and their Material Culture*, Fig. 64:A. For a discussion of this group of the Sea Peoples, their representation and differentiation, see G. A. Wainwright: Some Sea-People, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 47 (1961), pp. 71 ff.

⁴⁴ Ruth Hestrin: *The Philistines and the Other Sea Peoples* (The Israel Museum, Catalogue 68), Jerusalem, 1970, Fig. 30.

⁴⁵ Frances W. James: *The Iron Age at Beth Shean; A Study of Levels VI–IV*, Philadelphia, 1966, Fig. 51:11; G. Loud, *Megiddo II*, Chicago, 1948, Pls. 80:2; 81:16. B. Maisler (Mazar): The Excavations at Tell Qasile, *IEJ* 1 (1950), p. 135; A. Mazar: Excavations at Tell Qasile, 1971–1972, above, p. 69.

⁴⁶ James, *ibid.*, Fig. 24:1—a body fragment decorated with typical Philistine decoration of elongated triangles in red and black on a light wash. More debased variants are a strainer spouted jug, Fig. 2:4,

to bring us nearer in date to the biblical references to Beth Shean. The pottery fits in well with the Canaanite-Philistine level at Megiddo VIA and level X at Tell Qasile, both of which were probably destroyed by King David.

It is now clear that the custom of burial in anthropoid coffins reached Beth Shean in the thirteenth century B.C., *before* the Philistines settled in Canaan, so that its first appearance there cannot be attributed to them. The first anthropoid burials at Beth Shean start during level VII on the mound and continue throughout level VI, i.e. from the thirteenth down to the end of the eleventh century. The first to introduce the custom were probably Egyptian officials or mercenaries stationed in the Egyptian stronghold of Beth Shean. The 'grotesque' coffins show that here, as at Tel Sharuhen, this type of burial was taken over by the Philistines.

Lachish.⁴⁷ Two anthropoid clay coffins come from a disturbed tomb, No. 570, which (with the adjacent tomb, No. 571) was cut into the side of the Middle Bronze Age fosse. The two coffins have crudely modelled lids in the 'naturalistic' style. One of the coffins bears a painted hieroglyphic inscription and crude depictions of the Egyptian deities Isis and Nephthys. Egyptologists have concluded that the inscription is a string of pseudo-Egyptian hieroglyphs, written by an unskilled scribe trying to imitate the time-honoured formulae. This is the one and only Canaanite example of an inscribed coffin, though painted decoration occurred at Deir el-Balah. Despite the great similarity between the assemblages of tombs 570 and 571, a number of crucial differences necessitate placing tomb 571 somewhat earlier than tomb 570. Most of the ceramic contents of tomb 571 correspond to Fosse Temple III. The contents of tomb 570, on the other hand, while still preserving something of the Late Bronze Age ceramic tradition, have none of the Late Bronze Age types found in tomb 571.

Tomb 570 very probably corresponds to a habitation level following the destruction of stratum VI and Fosse Temple III; it may belong to an elusive and more limited occupation level of the twelfth century.⁴⁸ Evidence for the existence of such a level includes, *inter alia*, Philistine sherds, a scarab of Ramesses III and numerous pits whose ceramic contents recall Tell Beit Mirsim stratum B1.

Thus the Lachish tomb overlaps the very last phase of the Deir el-Balah tombs, corresponds to some of the Beth Shean tombs and extends to the Tel Sharuhen tombs.

Such a conclusion would agree with one of the two theories concerning the destruction of level VI. This theory dates the end of level VI to a raid just before Ramesses III's victory over the invading northerners (about 1190 B.C.) and attributes the coffins to officers in the Egyptian garrison.

and a decorated bowl, Fig. 50:17, which has an exact parallel at Megiddo level VI (see Loud, *op. cit.* [above, n. 45], Pl. 85:2). See also the undecorated bowl with horizontal handles, Fig. 52:21, and vessels with debased Philistine decoration, e.g. a jug, Fig. 56:2, and krater fragment, Fig. 49:15.

⁴⁷ Olga Tufnell: *Lachish III, The Iron Age*, London, 1953, p. 219, Pl. 126; *ibid.* IV, London, 1958, pp. 36, 66, 68, 131, 248-250, Pls. 45, 46. See Dothan, *op. cit.* (above, n. 8), pp. 231-235.

⁴⁸ Trude Dothan: Review of *Lachish IV*, *IEJ* 10 (1960), pp. 62-63. A late 13th century B.C. date was suggested by G.E. Wright, *BA* 22 (1959), p. 66.

The earliest known appearance of anthropoid burial in Canaan (fourteenth to the end of the thirteenth century B.C.) occurred at Deir el-Balaḥ. Its last phase overlaps the early group of anthropoid burials at Beth Shean, and leads up to the transitional Late Bronze Age — early Iron Age burials of this type from Tel Sharuḥen tomb 935 and Lachish tomb 570. In the Philistine tombs of Tel Sharuḥen as well as in the Beth Shean coffins with 'grotesque' lids showing the headgear, we see a continuation of anthropoid burials into the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C. In these two instances we have conclusive evidence that anthropoid burial was in use among the Philistines. The origin of this custom was in Egypt, where the burials more or less parallel the Canaanite ones both chronologically and in their contents. The Egyptian anthropoid pottery coffins, though doubtless not burials of the very rich, were definitely not burials of the poor, as shown by the occasional mummified body and the rich burial gifts. The mostly pillaged remains of the latter still contain a combination of Mycenaean, Cypriote and Palestinian pottery types (of the fourteenth-thirteenth centuries B.C.), as well as native Egyptian elements. Although this combination is typical of the cosmopolitan Late Bronze Age in the eastern Mediterranean, it is nevertheless striking to see how often it is associated with anthropoid burials of the period. It reflects a more than casual link between the cultural backgrounds of those buried in Egypt and those buried in Canaan.

The predominance in Egypt of foreign (i.e. non-Egyptian) elements becomes apparent when we enter the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C., at the tumuli of Tell el-Yahudiyeh and at the Nebesheh burials. The burials and assemblages at Tell el-Yahudiyeh parallel those of Tel Sharuḥen, while at Nebesheh these assemblages are related to the 'grotesque' coffins at Beth Shean and to the late phase of level VI on that site. Chronologically, this tallies well with the biblical references to the Philistines at Beth Shean.

The burials at Deir el-Balaḥ and Tel Sharuḥen, taken as a unit, display the same pattern and stages of development as those at Beth Shean, where two chronological groups are distinguishable. The earlier, 'naturalistic' one (end of the thirteenth century continuing into the twelfth) parallels the last phase of the Deir el-Balaḥ coffins and tomb 935 at Tel Sharuḥen as well as tomb 570 at Lachish. All these are most probably attributable to Egyptian officials or garrisons stationed in Canaan.

The later group (twelfth-eleventh centuries B.C.), consists of the 'grotesque' coffins from Beth Shean and the Philistine burials at Tel Sharuḥen. These show that the burial custom was adopted by the Sea People, the Philistines, who were probably first settled as mercenaries in Egyptian strongholds in Palestine by Ramesses III after he defeated the Sea People, *ca.* 1190 B.C., in the battles depicted on the walls of his temple at Medinet Habu.

The anthropoid burials stand out against the background of the unsophisticated burial customs of Canaan, on their own merits, as well as by virtue of the rich assemblages associated with them.