# The Flint Assemblage from Ashqelon Afridar, Area N Maya Oron

## INTRODUCTION

The flint assemblage recovered from the excavation at Ashqelon Afridar Area N (see Golani, this volume) is limited in size (n = 141; Table 1) and shows general traits of Early Bronze Age assemblages, with very few exceptions characteristic of the Chalcolithic period. The assemblages of Strata III and II are presented as one assemblage, as no differences were recognized between the two.

# Raw Material

Several raw materials are present in the assemblage. The dominant raw materials are light brown and fine-grained gray flints, probably from Eocene and Senonian geological origins, also found in previous excavations at the site (Zbenovich 2004). Other raw materials are brecciated and semi-translucent flints, which were probably retrieved as pebbles from local riverbeds (Khalaily 2004:144), and a non-local striped flint, perhaps of Egyptian origin (for comparable examples from the Nile Delta, see Shirai 2010:198). Many flint artifacts (35%) were burned and broken by fire, so that their original color could not be assessed. Burning was probably not intentional, but the result of onsite activity after the flints were discarded.

## THE LITHIC ASSEMBLAGE

# Debitage and Cores

The debitage (Table 1) comprises ad hoc production of flakes and blades alongside Canaanean blade technology. The latter is represented only by end products with no indication of onsite production. The only two cores found in the assemblage are amorphous (Fig. 1:1), used in the ad hoc production of flakes. Other debitage categories, such as primary elements and core trimming elements (CTEs), can also be assigned to this reduction sequence. The Canaanean blades are fragmented and are generally thin (c. 4 mm) and narrow (c. 20 mm). Most Canaanean blades were used as sickles.



Fig. 1. Core and tools.

Table 1. The Flint Assemblage

Туре	Ν	%
Primary elements	17	12.1
CTEs	5	3.5
Flakes	26	18.4
Blades	13	9.2
Bladelets	4	2.8
Canaanean blades	6	4.3
Total Debitage	71	50.3
Chunks	12	8.5
Chips	18	12.8
Total Debris	30	21.3
Tools	38	27.0
Cores	2	1.4
Total	141	100.0

**Table 2. Tool Frequencies** 

Туре	N	%
Sickle blades	23	59.0
Microliths	3	7.7
Retouched flakes	3	7.7
Retouched blades	7	17.9
Hammerstone fragments	3	7.7
Total	39	100.0

## Tools

The tool category (Table 2) is dominated by sickle blades (n = 23), almost all made on Canaanean blades (Fig. 1:2–5), the only exception being a small backed sickle that seems to be Chalcolithic but is heavily patinated and fragmented (Fig. 1:6). The two microliths in the assemblage are retouched bladelets made of semi-translucent flint, usually found in Chalcolithic assemblages. One of the bladelets is broken at its distal end and seems to have been perforated, possibly being used as a pendant (Fig 1:7).

#### Egyptian Components

Several items made on non-local raw material were observed in the assemblage and seem to be of Egyptian origin. Two retouched blades and one bladelet with a twisted profile (Fig. 2:1–3) were made on a distinctive striped flint presently known only from the Fayum area in Egypt (Shirai 2010). Three additional blades, similar in form, were also observed: Two made on a milky beige flint from an unknown origin (Fig. 2:4), the third being too burned to assess its raw material. All five seem to be related based on their twisted morphology. Flint items of Egyptian origin have been found in EB I contexts at several sites, such as 'En Besor (Roshwalb 1981; Gophna and Friedmann 1993), Tel 'Erani (Rosen 1988; Valde-Nowak and Skłucki 2016) and Ashqelon (Golani 2018; Golani and Pasternak 2020; Goder-Goldenberg 2022).



Fig. 2. Egyptian blades and bladelets.

# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main diagnostic elements in the Ashqelon-Afridar Area N assemblage are the Canaanean blades and sickle blades, characteristic of Early Bronze Age assemblages. The three Chalcolithic items—a heavily patinated and abraded sickle and two bladelets—appear to be out of their original context and in my opinion, represent a Chalcolithic industry (cf. Rosen 1997:48); the excavator, however, is of the opinion that these items may have been holdovers from the Chalcolithic period that are known to have continued, well into the early part of EB I in this region (Golani 2013:102–103; forthcoming). The presence of Egyptian items in an early EB I context is unusual. In most reported cases, such items are found in contexts dated to the later part of EB I (EB IB). The only Egyptian flint components from early EB I were reported from previous excavations at the site (Golani 2018), and from 'En Besor Site H (Roshwalb 1981). The appearance of Egyptian items in an early context at Ashqelon may relate to the beginning of the Egyptian influence or presence in the region during the Early Bronze Age period. The twisted blades and bladelets found in the assemblage do not seem to have a clear chronological ascription within pre-dynastic flint assemblages in Egypt (Schmidt 1992; Kabaciński 2003), unlike other Egyptian typological groups such as sickle blades and knives. Thus, these items do not aid in chronological considerations.

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