A Home Away from Home?
The Settlement of Early Transcaucasian Migrants at Tel Bet Yeraḥ

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The paper examines new aspects of the arrival of Early Transcaucasian (ETC) migrants in the southern Levant during the 3rd millennium BCE. A contextual analysis of Khirbet Kerak Ware (KKW) pottery and related finds at Tel Bet Yeraḥ reveals patterns of continuity and discontinuity at different levels of spatial and social organization: from house and household to site and region. These patterns are related to the settlement of ETC migrants at the site, and indicate a clear segregation of locals and newcomers at the site level and differences in cultural behaviour and the use of space at the household level. Through a discussion of various aspects of food preparation, consumption habits, domestic ritual, storage and architecture, the paper examines the manner in which this behaviour was active in the preservation and construction of the ETC migrants’ identity as a diaspora community.

KEYWORDS Tel Bet Yeraḥ, Khirbet Kerak Ware, Early Transcaucasian, Migration

Khirbet Kerak Ware (KKW) is regarded by many as evidence of migration from Transcaucasia to the southern Levant during the 3rd millennium BCE (Philip 1999: 26; Greenberg 2002: 119). If this assumption is correct, pottery should not be the sole evidence for the presence of migrants; intimations of other classes of material culture such as architecture or artefacts accompanying the pottery, and at different levels of spatial and social organization—from houses and households, to site, and to the region as a whole—should also be present. The aim of this paper is to examine new aspects of the arrival of Early Transcaucasian (ETC) migrants at both the site and household levels, using a contextual approach that focuses on patterns of continuity and discontinuity. As I intend to show, the introduction of Khirbet Kerak Ware at Tel Bet Yeraḥ coincides with a rupture in both the vertical (stratigraphic) and horizontal (spatial) dimensions, as architectural sequences are interrupted and disparities emerge in the spatial patterning of material culture. These disparities testify to the segregation of locals and newcomers on
the site level, and to differences in cultural behaviour and the use of space at the household level. I wish to discuss the way in which this behaviour was active in the construction of group identity and in the preservation of the ETC migrants as a diaspora community: what made them Transcaucasian more than anything else, and what criteria other than retention of habits and material culture from their homeland can be considered the basis for a diasporic identity.

Tel Bet Yeraḥ presents a full and dense stratigraphic sequence spanning the Early Bronze Age, and relatively wide horizontal exposures that enable a comparison of contemporaneous houses from different parts of the mound. Furthermore, it is a site that absorbed the Early Transcaucasian migrants while maintaining its identity; as such, it offers an opportunity to observe the dialectic of difference and assimilation that characterizes the arrival of newcomers and their adaptation to changed circumstances.

**Method and key hypotheses**

The discussion is based on the recognition that houses represent social relations, and that households are the loci of recursive actions where personal and group identities and interests interact and may influence and shape the course of broader socio-political processes in the community (e.g., Netting *et al.* 1984; Roseberry 1988; Smith 1987). The domestic sphere is, therefore, active in the cultural identification of migrants and their positioning in the new environment (Tolia-Kelly 2004: 327). Differences between migrants and indigenes should be evident not only in the typological and functional composition of the household assemblages, but also in the time-space routines within the households, in the use of space and in the manner in which food is prepared and consumed. A comparison between houses with indigenous material culture and those dominated by the newly introduced material culture may reveal how households define and reflect social differentiation and interaction within Tel Bet Yeraḥ.

**Identifying houses of Early Transcaucasian migrants at Bet Yeraḥ**

According to Batiuk (2005: 237), the spread of the ETC can be attributed to “a series of chain migrations initiated by a process of lineage segmentation that occurred along the traditional routes of communication across a large portion of the Near East”. In such long distance chain migrations from a restricted area of origin, migrants at different points along the route maintain their original ties of kinship. It is therefore probable that the ETC migrants who arrived in northern Israel and at the site of Bet Yeraḥ around 2800 BCE were families rather than individuals.

A starting point for identifying the presence of the ETC migrants, or ‘Khirbet Kerak People’, as a distinct group at the site of Bet Yeraḥ is the production and use of KKW and of the portable hearths (andirons) accompanying this ware (Greenberg 2007; Iserlis, this issue). Previous publications (Greenberg *et al.* 2006; Greenberg 2007) have pointed to an intriguing distribution pattern of KKW, illustrating the migrants’ entry to the site and their integration with the local population. This pattern, detailed below, is reinforced
by the results of the new excavations at Bet Yerah during 2003 and 2007. Architectural features such as plastered floors and benches, ritual installations or central fixed hearths typical of ETC houses in Transcaucasia and Anatolia (Sagona 1984; Kushnareva 1997; Kohl 2007) are absent at Bet Yerah and other southern Levantine sites. However, the KKW assemblages have a distinct typological and functional composition that produces recognizable patterning in ceramic distribution on floors and in refuse areas. Some observations can be made regarding these assemblages and artefacts related to them and, to some extent, regarding architectural aspects of the houses in which they were found.

The distinction between the social and ethnic entities of migrants and locals was never absolute. Due to the daily interactions on the site, local pottery types are always present to some extent in the KKW-rich assemblages. Therefore, the association of specific houses with migrants or indigenes does not rely on the existence of a hermetic and complete ‘package’, but rather on evidence of certain recurrent dispositions that might set apart the newcomers from the locals. Identifying how they differ and where they overlap or what they share, as well as viewing changes over time, may help us understand the extent and mode of the integration of the migrants with the local population.

Unfortunately, due to methodological and other constraints of the various excavations conducted at the mound between the 1930s and 1980s (Greenberg and Paz 2006), there are only a few complete ‘household assemblages’—encompassing the categories of architecture, ceramics, tools, flora, fauna, etc.—from Early Bronze Age Bet Yerah as a whole, and none from EBIII houses associated with ETC migrants. We must therefore make do with partial datasets; in this sense, this study must be understood as preliminary.

**Households and Khirbet Kerak Ware distribution**

At the beginning of EBIII, the distribution of KKW at the site is noticeably uneven: while it comprises 25–30% of the total volume of pottery, some assemblages include over 50% KKW and others hardly any at all (Greenberg 2007: 259). During the course of EBIII the distribution of KKW becomes more even throughout the mound. The unequal distribution of KKW at the beginning of the EBIII has been clearly attested in Areas EY, MS and BS (and probably GE) in the southern part of the mound, Area UN at its centre, and Area SA in the north (see Fig. 1). In the following, I will focus on Areas EY, BS and SA, which have provided the most instructive evidence for KKW distribution patterns at the site in the first stages of its presence.

**Area EY**

Area EY, in the southern part of the mound, was excavated in 1981–1986 by E. Eisenberg and O. Yogev and produced the finest sequence of stratified assemblages excavated to date at Bet Yerah (Eisenberg and Greenberg 2006; Greenberg and Paz 2006: 11, Table 1.1). In the early part of EBII (Local Strata 9A–9B) several conjoined architectural units appear to comprise a single, somewhat isolated, residential compound (Eisenberg and Greenberg 2006: Plans 8.6, 8.7). In the following strata (8–7) the compound fissioned into separate households while open areas around the compound began to be built up
Settlement of early Transcaucasian migrants at Tel Bet Yera (Fig. 2a). Streets and passages were created between some of the houses. The central house, however, maintained its continuity with earlier phases by consistently establishing its external walls atop the mudbrick stumps of previous ones. Local Stratum 7 ended in a partial destruction, resulting in large amounts of pottery and other finds deposited on some floors (Eisenberg and Greenberg 2006: 361; Greenberg 2007: 259). At the beginning of EBIII (Local Strata 6A–6B, Fig. 2b–c) the central structure, EY 435/427, was rebuilt directly over its predecessor, as were the houses to its north and east (Eisenberg and Greenberg 2006: 361, 368–371, Plans 8.10, 8.11; Greenberg 2007: 259). The buildings lying west of the street and in the southern part of the area, however, were abandoned at the end of the EBII, and domestic and construction refuse representing Stratum 7, possibly
originating from the renovation of the central house, was discarded in them (Greenberg 2007: 259). Some of the openings were blocked, and the houses were evidently unoccupied for a while (Eisenberg and Greenberg 2006: 372). Refuse pits (EY 459, EY 165) were dug in the southwest corner (ibid.).

Ceramic finds on the floors of the central house, EY 435/427, included—especially in the later phase (6B)—a considerable number of restorable vessels in local ware, mainly platters and cooking-pots (Eisenberg and Greenberg 2006: Fig. 8.88–89). In both phases of this structure, KKW comprised a negligible component, represented by only a few stray sherds (see Fig. 2b–c).

By contrast, Phase 6A deposits in the abandoned area to the west contained large quantities of KKW (30–50%) (Eisenberg and Greenberg 2006: 374; Greenberg 2007: 259), as seen in Fig. 2b. The finds include mostly KKW kraters and bowls as well as stands and fragments of andirons. The field records of the excavator show a patch of pebble pavement in the southwest corner, where two small stone bowls and a deer antler were found. The nature and distribution of the finds suggest that the area was not simply abandoned and used for refuse disposal, but might have been inhabited by squatters who lived in the ruined house for a while. They might have constructed some light shelter there that was not preserved.

![Figure 2](image-url)  
**Figure 2** Area EY in the transition from EBII Stratum 7 (2a, above) to EBIII Strata 6A (2b, above opposite) and 6B (2c, below opposite), with the distribution of Khirbet Kerak Ware (KKW) and local common ware (CW).
In Stratum 6B (Eisenberg and Greenberg 2006: Plan 8.11) a new structure, EY 133/138, was built over the abandoned structures in the southwest part of the excavated area. This building is markedly different in plan from the central square, multi-roomed structure. Though only partly excavated, it evidently consisted of larger spaces with fewer inner divisions. Room EY 133 contained a stone-lined hearth, a stone work table, KKW kraters, bowls, lids and andirons, as well as fragments of local holemouth cooking-pots, bowls and platters. These indicate that this space was used for cooking and eating. The adjacent room, EY 422, containing several local closed vessels and only a few KKW sherds, seems to have been a storeroom. House EY 551 (568 in the previous phase), re-paved in the southeast corner of the excavated area, seems to follow a similar plan, with one small and one large space. Both of these houses as well as the open area between them yielded large quantities of KKW (about 55% of the diagnostic sherds) (Fig. 2c).

The distribution of KKW is thus clearly patterned, concentrated in certain rooms within houses lying west and south of the main house. While the houses in the centre and northeastern part of Area EY represent a clear continuity from EBII to EBIII both in architecture and in the almost exclusive presence of locally produced pottery, houses in the southern part of the excavated area and west of the alley were abandoned at the end of the EBII and, after a period of disuse, were newly built and settled by the producers and consumers of KKW.

**Area BS**

In Area BS, excavated by P. Bar-Adon in the 1950s, the picture is somewhat different. After the abandonment of Local Stratum 12 (Greenberg and Eisenberg 2006: Plans 5.6, 5.7), representing the last phase of the EBII, the architectural sequence was interrupted. Mudbrick walls collapsed on the street pavement and pits were dug into the remains (ibid.: 129, Fig. 5.18).

Following that, the area seems to have been partly settled at the beginning of the EBIII on a completely revised plan, with houses built around an open area approached by an alley (BS 045) (see Fig. 3).1 The open area (BS 039) served as a midden and possibly for various communal activities as well; its 0.3–1.1 m thick accumulation contained ash, organic remains and other refuse, including local EBIII pottery alongside substantial amounts of KKW, which accounted for up to 50% of the total assemblage (ibid.: Figs. 5.84–5.86). The nearby gate passage was blocked at this stage (Greenberg and Eisenberg 2006: 134).

In the following phase the earlier houses were repaired and new ones built in the open area, on top of the midden (see Fig. 4). A new examination of the field diaries and plans suggests that the structure in the centre of the area (BS 040) and BS 041 to its south should be considered as parts of one domestic unit, the walls of which were not fully identified by the excavator. The southern space contained a wealth of finds related to food

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1 In the Tel Bet Yerah Report Local Stratum 11 is described as merely a midden with no architecture. Following it, Local Strata 10A and 10B are presented as two separate phases. A re-examination of the field plans, section drawings and provenance of finds led me to bring some of the Stratum 10A architecture to Stratum 11, and then combine the remaining Stratum 10A features together with 10B, thus creating a single Stratum 10 phase, as will be presented here.
Figure 3  Area BS Local Stratum 11, revised.

Figure 4  Area BS Local Stratum 10, revised.
preparation and storage: a millstone, work table, mortar, stone-lined hearth, a complete cooking-pot (ibid.: Fig. 5.87: 11) and a group of smashed vessels, including a Metallic Ware pithos, an almost complete large local jar, a twin vessel and other storage vessels (ibid.: 134–135, Figs. 5.25; 5.88: 4, 9; 5.89: 2). Some KKW sherds may also be attributed to this room. Room BS 040 contained a mixed KKW and local assemblage, including a large KKW stand found near the southern wall (ibid. Figs. 5.24; 5.90: 14), several large fragments of KKW bowls, a complete local platter (ibid.: Fig. 5.87: 9), an amphoriskos and a pithos with lime-slip (ibid.: Fig. 5.88: 1, 13).

The picture that emerges from Stratum 10 is rather similar to that of the KKW-rich houses built at the same time in Area EY: While the local houses in Area EY represent the tendency towards smaller houses starting at the end of EBII, and suggest a growing focus on the nuclear family as the basic social and economic unit, the KKW-rich houses in both Areas EY and BS present houses with larger spaces, and may imply a more communal approach and the retention of larger kinship units.

**Area SA**

Area SA, in the northern part of the mound, was first excavated in 1945–1946 by Mazar, Stekelis and Avi-Yonah, and in 2003 and 2007 by the Tel Aviv University expedition. During the last phase of the EBII this large area included dwelling quarters defined by a well-planned orthogonal network of paved streets built on a north-south axis (see Paz 2006: 69, 80–81). Parts of houses and floors belonging to this phase were excavated in Phases 4–early 3 of the 1946 ‘Deep Cut’ in the western part of the area (ibid.: 83–84, 94–95, Plans 3.8–9). Several other walls and a series of floors of domestic character were revealed during the 2007 excavation season under the EBIII Circles Building, immediately beneath the pavement of Circle VI in the southern platform of the building (ibid.: Plan 3.3). It thus appears that the construction of the carefully conceived Circles Building required the evacuation of an entire ‘city block’ on the eastern side of the north–south street, while houses on the western side of the street were rebuilt or repaved.

The construction phase of the Circles Building produced exclusively local EBIII pottery, thus implying that the structure was planned and founded at the beginning of the period by the local inhabitants. However, a careful analysis of the building has shown that, soon after its construction, the building was remodeled and converted into a small-industry precinct, including possible KKW ceramic production. Finds related to this phase include many KKW vessels in a large variety of types (ibid.: 71–78, 81, Figs. 3.26–28). It seems, then, that the producers and users of the KKW pottery entered the unused and perhaps unfinished public building during early EBIII and carved it up to serve their own needs.

In contrast to the obvious discontinuity in domestic life marked by the construction of the massive public building on the earlier houses, the domestic area located west of the Circles Building was rebuilt by the beginning of EBIII, demonstrating a relative continuity from the EBII both in architecture and the local character of the finds (Greenberg and Paz 2004; Paz 2006: 94–98). Thus, this area presents another case of continuity in houses.

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2 The new excavations are conducted as part of the Tel Bet Yeraḥ Research and Excavation Project (TBYREP), headed by Raphael Greenberg.
inhabited by indigenous people of the city in the transition from EBII to EBIII, alongside a gradual entrance of the ETC newcomers into an abandoned area that they altered and used for various industrial activities.

**Continuity vs. change in domestic areas at Tel Bet Yeraḥ**

The case studies presented here all show a clear discontinuity in the parts of the site inhabited by the ETC migrants—abandoned neighbourhoods (Area BS), vacant houses within occupied neighbourhoods (Area EY) and abandoned public buildings (Area SA). The contrasting phenomena of continuity and change in the domestic quarters of Bet Yeraḥ during the EBII–III attest to the ongoing processes of negotiation between different groups of people that inhabited this urban walled community.

During the EBII at Bet Yeraḥ there is evidence of considerable continuity—and to some degree uniformity—in domestic architecture, even as the settlement’s population grew and the living quarters became increasingly crowded. In spite of the tendency towards inner subdivision of houses into small units, the general outline of houses was maintained, and some houses were rebuilt and reused over several strata. Those that survived the transition to EBIII may be seen as the backbone of the local urban community.

Patterns of recurrent construction have been identified at several tell sites in the Near East and interpreted as part of the habitual commemorative behaviour involved in the construction of site-wide social memories (Hodder 1998; Tringham 2000: 127, Fig. 6–4; Hodder and Cessford 2004; Dürring 2005; Cutting 2006). Continuity in residential complexes through several phases of renovation has also been identified in several Early Bronze Age walled sites in Israel and Jordan (Chesson 2003: 90–91; Ilan 2001). Maintaining the house as a physical frame ensured the continuous existence of the household through time, and helped affirm the identity, authority and legal entitlement of households over generations (Chesson: 2003: 91). This was especially important against the background of demographic, economic and social changes like those involved in the transition from EBII to III.

Identities and relationships would have been structured by the physical space in and between the houses. At Bet Yeraḥ, building houses with their outer walls back-to-back against already existing neighbouring houses, using streets as boundaries between households, and the use of inner or adjacent courtyards within the household complex all point to an emphasis on bolstering specific house identities in contrast to others (cf. Chesson 2003). The material remains found in these houses expressed their continuity: though several obvious changes in the ceramic assemblages occurred in the EBII–EBIII transition, some of the signature types continued to be manufactured and used, and the local ceramic industry of the EBII continued to exist in EBIII.

The need for continuity and maintenance of household identities became even more crucial when, after a crisis and partial abandonment of the city, new inhabitants arrived. These people, producers and consumers of Khirbet Kerak Ware, gradually occupied the vacant or abandoned places within the site and lived alongside local households and residential compounds that continued to exist. Their houses demonstrate a clear discontinuity both in form and nature, and more noticeably in the material culture. While
the local houses are subdivided into small spaces and seem to operate as nuclear units, the migrants’ houses present a plan with open spaces and a focus on communal activity areas between neighbouring houses. The differences suggest disparities in daily activities such as food preparation and consumption and in time-space routines at the household level, as well as the neighbourhood, community and site levels.

The distinction between houses and areas with prominent KKW components and those with primarily indigenous ceramic assemblages is not unique to Tel Bet Yerah. G. Novacek, who studied the small site of Tel Yaqush in the Jordan Valley south of Bet Yerah, noticed a similar phenomenon there. At Yaqush, KKW was introduced to the ceramic assemblages at the very beginning of EBIII (Stratum II) alongside local pottery types. The distribution of KKW in this phase was noticeably uneven (Novacek 2007: 552–553, 563–569) and in areas where no KKW was found there was a strong continuity of local ceramic tradition from the EBII (ibid.: 570). Sites in other areas of the ETC dispersal show similar patterns. At Arslantepe in Anatolia, the excavator identifies some form of residential segregation between locals and newcomers (Frangipane 2001). Batiuk (2005: 234), who surveyed data from vast areas of the ETC dispersal, notes that when the ETC migrants settled, they did so in a pattern of co-residency with various indigenous groups, both on a regional level, and in some cases at a site level as well.

**Maintaining migrant identity**

Several strategies appear to have been employed by the incoming communities to maintain their separate cultural and ethnic identity, at least in the earlier stages of the EBIII. These strategies involve both the reproduction of traditions from the homeland and appropriation of local traditions, tempered by the experience of migration and by elements absorbed in other regions associated with ETC migration.

**Food preparation I: the Early Transcaucasian cooking-pot**

It is commonly argued in the anthropological and archaeological literature that foodways are a good indication for identifying cultural and ethnic groups (e.g., Barthes 1979; Voss 2005; Atalay and Hastorf 2006; Oyangen 2009), and they are most likely to be preserved and practiced by migrants when arriving and settling in new places. It is therefore interesting that the KKW-rich assemblages at Bet Yerah included many local holemouth cooking-pots, suggesting that cooking was done in the local available common ware adopted by the migrants. The burnished KKW kraters, considered by some to be cooking vessels, show no signs of being exposed to fire and seem to have been used for serving and possibly storage.

The use of local cooking-pots should not be taken as evidence against migration. Assemblages from ETC sites in Georgia and Armenia and Anatolia all present a clear distinction between burnished Kura-Araxes types and the cooking ware, which is commonly made of coarse material and lacks the decorations, colours and polish of the former (M. Iserlis and R. Greenberg, personal communication). An assemblage from a dwelling at Anushavan, Armenia, consists of various Kura-Araxes pottery types alongside
coarse plain pottery, and fragments of hearth stands (andirons) with anthropomorphic decorations (Badalyan and Avetisyan 2007: 37–40, Pls. II–III). At Karnut I in Armenia a similar picture emerges: Assemblages from several household compounds include fixed hearths and portable decorated hearths (andirons), highly decorated Kura-Araxes storage vessels, table and ceremonial ware, together with coarse undecorated kitchen ware which is described as plain and not standardized (ibid.: 137–140, Pls. II, IV–IX).

Such mixed assemblages have also been identified at Arslantepe in Anatolia. In his discussion of the ceramic assemblages from several complexes and residential units Palumbi mentions cooking ware as a separate group that appears alongside burnished wares (Palumbi 2003: 84–85, 87–91, Figs. 5–10). The same might be true at Sös Höyük VA, which yielded different ceramic groups including burnished ware with strong Kura-Araxes affinities alongside rather coarse pottery which he refers to as ‘drab ware’ and which is fairly common in northeastern Anatolian Late Chalcolithic contexts (ibid.: 91). In the assemblages from domestic units, in which fixed and portable hearths were discovered, these types are found together (e.g., Locus 3780, ibid.: 93, Figs. 15–16). These examples suggest that the choice of plain or coarse local vessels used by the ETC people for cooking is consistent throughout the area of their dispersal. It was not the pot itself that brought cooking into the migrants’ cultural orbit, but rather a ‘cooking ensemble’, as explained below.

Food preparation II: portable hearths, cooking and domestic ritual

The portable hearths or andirons accompanying KKW are perhaps the most obviously foreign component in the set maintained by the ETC migrants at Bet Yerah. Clearly reminiscent of the fixed and portable hearths found in many ETC dwellings, as described above, andirons usually do not bear colour or burnish, but are often decorated with geometric or anthropomorphic designs closely related to the ETC prototypes, as seen in Fig. 5 (for description of the characteristics of ETC andirons, see, e.g., Shimelmitz 2003; Smogorzewska 2004). While some small and burnished andirons may have been used merely as symbolic objects, several of the large Tel Bet Yerah andirons have soot marks clearly indicating their use in fire, and they were possibly used to support cooking-pots (ibid.: 263). Topped by the conical lids unique to the KKW assemblage and supported by andirons, the locally made cooking-pots were thus brought into the migrants’ traditional cultural space (Greenberg 2007: 263; see Figs. 6–7).

As specially crafted objects designated for use in the hearth, the traditional heart of the ETC household, the andirons could have been used for the everyday function of cooking as well as for performing domestic rituals (Amiran 1989; Takaoğlu 2000; Smogorzewska 2004). The faces rendered on some andirons are thought by some to represent deities or idols (Smogorzewska 2004: 163–164). I believe the schematic faces may represent

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3 The cooking vessels are not represented in the plates, which include only a selection of Kura-Araxes examples, and are typological rather than contextual.

4 The use of andirons for cooking was suggested by various scholars (e.g., Hood 1951; Lamb 1954; Diamant and Rutter 1969; Miroshchidji 1984, 2000; Amiran 1989; Takaoğlu 2000; Smogorzewska 2004).
ancestors, who in that manner became present and involved in the daily life of the family and could have symbolically protected the hearth—the hub of the household. The hearth and fire played a major role in cooking, sharing meals and performing rituals, and therefore could be seen as a symbol of life and home (ibid.: 162–164). Thus, andirons were a palpable, ever-present reminder of the origins of the household, serving to maintain its cultural identity in the most intimate domestic context (cf. Burmeister 2000; Yasur-Landau 2002; Greenberg 2007: 266).

**Consumption habits**
Alongside cooking and domestic ritual practices, consumption and serving habits of the Khirbet Kerak 'people' also display significant traditionalism. Novacek (2007: 577–578) points out an interesting pattern at Tel Yaqush: the assemblages from KKW houses of the early EBIII (Stratum II) present a complete absence of the local platters that comprise...
**Figure 6** The 'cooking ensemble' of the ETC migrants at Tel Bet Yerah: portable hearth (andiron), local holemouth cooking-pot and a KKW lid.

**Figure 7** Suggested reconstruction showing the use of the 'cooking ensemble'.
a significant element in the local assemblage. Later in the EBIII (Stratum I) KKW is found in large quantities in all houses at the site, and Novacek believes it was inhabited entirely by Khirbet Kerak people. Platters, which were used as a main vessel for serving communal meals in the EBII–III local households (Chesson 2000; Novacek 2007: 577), completely disappear from the Yaqush assemblages. At the same time, there are increasingly larger quantities and varieties of large, heavy KKW kraters and bowls (Novacek 2007: 577–578, 582).

Figure 8  KKW kraters and bowls from Tel Bet Yerah: 1–2, small red bowl; 3, small red and black sinuous bowl; 4, large red bowl; 5, krater from Circles Building; 6, large decorated krater; 7 (opposite), cylindrical jar from the Circles Building.
It seems plausible, then, that large KKW vessels were used in the migrants’ household as serving dishes at communal meals (rather than as drinking vessels as suggested by Bunimovitz and Greenberg 2004: 22; Greenberg 2007: 266). The foods served in them would have differed in their consistency and texture from the ones served on the large, flat local platters—for example soups or stews. In this manner it is the serving dishes rather than the cooking-pots that testify to the different food-ways of the migrant and indigenous households.

As Atalay and Hastorf (2006: 284) have noted, cooking and eating can create and evoke communal memories of tastes and smells and may encapsulate peoples’ histories and experiences. The decorated KKW presentation vessels (e.g., in Fig. 8) probably had substantial communicative qualities, enhanced by their close affinities to the ETC pottery (Greenberg 2007: 261). In the context of shared meals, these vessels were used for transmitting the symbolic values embedded in them and maintaining traditions. Such shared meals could have been held as special feasting events of the larger community in the male-dominated public sphere (ibid.: 266), or as part of everyday life within the household. Some of the architectural and spatial peculiarities associated with the arrival of KKW, such as the use of communal space for food preparation and consumption in Areas BS and EY, can be associated with communal meals that served to enhance a sense of kinship and community extending beyond the nuclear family.
Storage and non-portable elements

One of the ETC ceramic types absent from the KKW assemblages is the large storage vessel or pithos. Philip, who noted this, claims therefore that the presence of KKW pottery at a site could more likely be attributed to a group ‘opting out’ of the standard economic structure than to migration (1999: 46). Batiuk (2005: 228–229) suggests that storage vessels in the migrants’ houses might have been made of perishable materials, and therefore poorly preserved. In the KKW-rich houses in Bet Yeraḥ there are local metallic ware jars and pithoi, clearly used for storage. This implies (pace Philip) that the migrants at Bet Yeraḥ were involved in the economic activities and relations at the site. But why prefer the local storage vessels over the production of KKW pithoi? Indeed, some technical arguments can be made: the local storage vessels were stronger, well-made and durable, while the production of large KKW vessels was a complicated, time consuming process. However, the KKW potters did manufacture some very large, elaborate vessels, such as the decorated kraters or the unique cylindrical jar found in the Circles Building (Fig. 8.7). It therefore seems that the decision to use local storage jars and pithoi, rather than reproducing ETC types, was an ideological decision.

Clearly, the migrants brought and chose to reproduce only specific portable elements of the material culture, while architectural and other non-portable elements were left out of the ‘package’. Therefore, many of the features characterizing ETC houses in their places of origin are not found in the places they inhabited along their migration route. The migrants avoided replicating architectural elements such as plastered floors and benches, did not build fixed hearths that are common in ETC houses, and did not produce and use the larger non-portable storage vessels typical of their homeland.

‘House’ and ‘home’: Early Transcaucasian migrants as a diaspora

The choices made by the ETC migrants to exclude non-portable domestic features from their houses at the places of arrival and to maintain practices using only smaller portable objects suggest that, though settling at various sites, constructing houses and establishing connections with the local population, the migrants never really ‘made themselves at home’. Studies of migrant communities often consider domestic objects as stores of cultural narratives and biographic memories (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Boym 1998; Lambert 2001; Tolia-Kelly 2004). In the case of the ETC migration, some elements of material culture were carefully chosen to recall their way of life in the place of origin, and to represent and serve the ideas, habits and practices that preserved and defined their cultural and ethnic identity; others were left out.

In processes of migration the notion of ‘home’ is not fixed in one locus, as people experience different places, and artefacts have ‘multiple provenances’ (Parkin 1999: 309; Tolia-Kelly 2004: 315). Thus, the material objects created and used by a community of migrants bear not only memories of the place of origin, but are also symbols of shared experience of displacement. It is possible therefore that objects could have the same significance throughout the areas of the migrants’ dispersal, but at the same time it may vary according to the place of origin, routes of migration and places of settlement (Tolia-Kelly
In that sense, the absence of certain elements from the ‘package’ brought by the ETC migrants is as meaningful as the presence of others, as it represents the notion of being a diaspora community. Following Anthias (1998: 565, and see references there), we may define diaspora as a social condition and a social process created by movement and the attempt to be from one place and of another. Diaspora identity is constructed through difference, but also engages in cultural accommodations and sometimes syncretism and hybridity. The ETC migrants display the most essential attributes of diaspora, being dispersed within foreign hosting communities, while actively maintaining memories of the homeland (Safran 1991: 83; Clifford 1994: 304–310; Cohen 1997: 21–29; Lilley 2007: 291).5

The links of the ETC migrants were therefore not only to their distant past at the place of origin, but also to their more recent experience of migration. This experience created new traditions that became actively involved in shaping their identity along the routes of migration and at the places of arrival.

Conclusion

The nature and causes of the crisis that occurred at the end of the EBII and resulted in complete or partial abandonment of various sites in the Jordan Valley are unclear. It is clear, however, that the ETC migrants were not responsible for it, as they arrived afterwards. The crisis and, following it, the need for urban renewal, seem to provide the ‘pull’ factor for the settlement of ETC migrants: they identified the gaps in the fabric of local settlement, entered unoccupied or partly abandoned settlements and became integrated in the economic systems. At Bet Yerah, the migrants might have been invited into the city by its leaders in order to take part in the regeneration of the internally weakened urban system and its institutions.6

It is possible to assume that neighbourhoods of households prior to the crisis were inhabited by local people linked through kinship and economic bonds, as has been suggested regarding other sites (Ilan 2001; Chesson 2003: 85–92). But when these bonds were to some degree damaged, new ones had to be formed. The renewed EBIII city, comprising both local inhabitants and newcomers, was therefore different from the EBII city in fabric and social organization, though houses remained a basic and important unit. And while several important characteristics of the EBII settlement were maintained, major changes eventually led to the formation of a more complex and hierarchical social organization at Bet Yerah as an urban centre. In the process of re-defining the character, organization and distribution of power in this city, both the continuity in local households and the changes brought by the newcomers played a central role.

Though some degree of relationship and commitment to the homeland are also considered a characteristic of diasporas, it seems to be less crucial (Lilley 2007: 291).

This echoes with Yekutieli’s suggestion (this issue) regarding the Zohar Ascent, where the ETC migrants were not responsible for the destruction of Arad, but were invited to southern Canaan as mercenaries hired by a regional administration to help control traffic and trade in the region.
The ETC migrants left their signature at various levels of material culture at EBIII Bet Yeraḥ. In this paper I chose to focus on identifying migrants’ houses and households, which were a main locus for daily social interactions. The everyday practices which took place within the household were important factors in constructing and defining individual and group identities of both migrants and indigenous people of the city. Thus, a group of ETC migrants entered the extant urban site of Bet Yeraḥ at the beginning of EBIII, introducing a cultural package that included a highly visible ceramic repertoire as well as other elements. The migrants maintained practices and habits which played an important role in preserving and manifesting their cultural and ethnic identity, in contrast to the strong continuity of traditions displayed by the indigenous population that had long inhabited the site. Cultural behaviours originating in the homeland together with the attributes and behaviours related to their migration experience were the basis for the identity of ETC migrants at Bet Yeraḥ as a diasporic community.

Taking a broader perspective, a more robust understanding of the ETC presence at Tel Bet Yeraḥ will contribute to a better appreciation of the 3rd millennium ETC migration and settlement as a whole. The characteristics of this community of migrants identified in the domestic and intra-site contexts of TBY should be compared and linked to wider contexts of social interaction in which migrants act—the region, neighbouring sites, other places along their route of migration and ultimately their places of origin. The manner in which the migrants coped with the stresses and contradictions inherent in their position as newcomers may help us to gain insight into the nature of the dispersal of bearers of the ETC culture to the far corners of the Ancient Near East.

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