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## ABSTRACT

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This volume provides an illustrated catalogue of the metalwork (weapons, personal ornaments and tools) and metalworking evidence from the later Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Periods from the key site of Tell el-Dab<sup>c</sup>a in the eastern Nile Delta. Through extensive discussion of both parallels and contrasts, the main groups of material are set in the context of the metalwork styles characteristic of both Egypt and the east Mediterranean during the first half of the second millennium BC.

Discussion of the form and technology of the metallurgical remains – moulds, ingots, crucibles, tuyeres and industrial waste – illuminates the nature of metal processing on the site, and provides evidence of the relationship between types of mould and specific products. Data on the chemical composition of a range of silver and copper-alloy artefacts demonstrates that the relationship between form and alloy is complex, and is not solely determined by mechanical concerns. The evidence highlights various characteristics of the metal industry in the Nile Delta, which render it distinctive from those of both the Levant and the Nile Valley.

Stylistic analysis highlights the extent to which metalwork characteristic of the Delta drew its ultimate inspiration from forms documented in north-west Syria during the EB IV period. This is not to argue that common styles indicate common meanings. Rather, a combined consideration of style,

technology and context facilitates discussion of the role of metal artefacts in symbolic communication. Thus metalwork is seen in terms of its place within specific local cultural practices. Given the strong connections of the acquisition of raw materials and the production and consumption of metalwork to the political economy, both stylistic developments and differential access to specific classes of artefact are seen as being implicated in the creation of social difference, through systems of elite representation, and thus to symbolic dimensions of power.

It is argued that the evidence from Tell el-Dab<sup>c</sup>a represents merely one element in a wider process which entailed the appropriation and recontextualisation in various parts of the east Mediterranean during the late third and earlier second millennia BC, of styles of elite representation originating in third millennium Syria. In the Delta, metal artefacts gained a particular significance through their linkage to specific ways representing elite male status. The reproduction over a number of generations of this distinctive local system of meaning contributed to the marked emphasis upon the deposition of elements such as warrior equipment and equids in mortuary contexts. The close similarity between metalwork produced in the Delta and that occurring in the southern Levant, if understood as connected with common modes of expressing high status, may be a material indicator of regional political networks.