Inventing Towns, Reshaping Places: Life and Death in Early Bronze Age of the southern Levant

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Why build large walls with towers and gates around a community? Why at this point in time?

Early Bronze Age Transformations

- Increasing social differentiation (individual and group) seen in mortuary practices
- Non-residential storage facilities
- Intensification of agricultural production (irrigation technology, water management, ownership, use, surplus storage and management)
- Population aggregation in walled communities

- How can we relate emergence of walled towns to intensified agricultural and pastoral production?
- How can we trace new ideas about community, property, ownership, and obligations with the invention of walled towns?

Look to connections in the land

Practice Theory and Agency Studies

Landscape and Place-making

Performance and Lived Experience
"community comes into being through enculturation of people to a local history embedded in places" (Whitridge 2004: 220-1)

“body as a metaphor for society, as instrument of lived experience, and as surface of inscription” (Joyce 2005: 140)

Experience of Living and Dying (and being studied) at Bab edh-Dhra

EB PLACES: EB II-III Town of Bab edh-Dhra, Jordan

Residential and Non-Residential Space at Khirbet es-Zeraqon
EBA sites with olive and grape fruit, pits, or wood

Large deposit of grapes at Numeira

EB Olive oil processing site in Wadi Ziqlab, northern Jordan

Water management at Jawa

Deflection wall

Water collection pools

Irrigation systems

Collective Civic Projects

Irrigated fields

Water collection pools

Large deposit of grapes at Numeira

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Large deposit of grape...

Early Bronze Age sites on the southeastern Dead Sea Plain (c. 3150 - 2000 BCE uncal)

2 walled town sites (Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira)

4 cemeteries (Bab edh-Dhra’, Feifa, Safa/Naqa, Kh. Khanizar)

Publication ongoing: Numeira is current focus

Early Bronze Age Occupation on southeastern Dead Sea Plain

EB IA: c. 3150-3050 BCE
- Shaft tombs and campsites at Bab edh-Dhra’
- Shaft or cist tombs at Feifa and Safa/Naqa

EB IB / early II: c. 3050-2900 BCE
- Village, shaft or cist tombs, circular or mortuary, circular or mortuary structures at Bab edh-Dhra’, Numeira, and Bab edh-Dhra’

EB II / III: c. 2900-2300 BCE
- Walled town, charnel houses at Bab edh-Dhra’
- Walled town at Numeira

EB IV: c. 2300-2000 BCE
- Village, shaft or cist tombs at Bab edh-Dhra’, stone shaft tombs at Kh. Khanizar

Shifting Settlement and Mortuary Practices: Social Memory, Identity, and Changing Ideas about Community and Place

EB IA Campsites >> Shaft or Cist Tombs

EB IB / II Village >> Bab tombs, Circular Channel Houses

EB II / III Walled Town >> Charnel Houses

EB IV Village >> Stone Shaft Tombs
EB IA  MORTUARY PATTERNS AT BAB EDH-DHRA

- Shaft tombs: 1-5 chambers per shaft
- MNI: 5-25 individuals
- Secondary practices: skeletal elements sorted, placed on matting
- Ceramic and stone vessels placed to right of entrance
- Beads and other goods placed in and amongst vessels

EB IB/EARLY II Transitions at Bab edh-Dhra

- Transitional ritual landscapes:
  - Above and Below
  - Primary and secondary burials

EB IB/early II cemetery at Safi/Naq'a

- EB IA life expectancy: 21.36 yo
- Average male/female heights: 164 cm/154 cm
- High infant mortality: 47% deaths before 15 yo
- Trauma uncommon
- Infectious diseases: TB (n=2) and brucellosis (n=4)
Charnel Houses at Bab edh-Dhra:
- Libraries of the Dead
  - Visible & Visitable
  - Secondary Mortuary Ceremonies
  - Emphasis on Membership and Collective

**Differentiation in Bab edh-Dhra Charnel Houses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Area (m²)</th>
<th>MNI No.</th>
<th>No. of Vessels</th>
<th>Weapons</th>
<th>Stone Palettes</th>
<th>Costume Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Charnel Houses</td>
<td>15.1-15.5</td>
<td>Unk.</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Beads: stone and bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger Charnel Houses</td>
<td>35.3-120.9</td>
<td>41-200</td>
<td>46-783</td>
<td>Maceheads and Metal Daggers, Knives, Axes</td>
<td>1-4 found in four charnel houses</td>
<td>Beads: metal, ostrich egg, faience, alabaster, carnelian, lapis, crystal, calcite, shell, stone, bone, and gold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Larger charnel houses contain larger MNI, greater numbers and types of local and non-local goods
- Tendency >> evidence for social differentiation of groups with fluid “border”

**EBA Transformations: Durability, Visibility, and Place**

- “made-to-order” body libraries for groups
- Visible and visitable
- Differing access to resources represented in grave goods by charnel house
- Secondary mortuary rituals (until final use of A22)
- Reshaping of landscape and making different kind of Place
• Change in living places accompanied by change in places for the dead
• Shifts between visible (above-ground) and less visible (subterranean) burial contexts
• Moderately increasing social differentiation with invention of towns (group and individual scales)
• Membership in groups tied to where you are buried (kinship in EB IA contexts)
• In some ways, health of EB II-III town dwellers decreases (both male and female)
• MANY QUESTIONS LEFT!

• How can we relate emergence of walled towns to intensified agricultural and pastoral production?
• How can we trace new ideas about community, property, ownership, and obligations with the invention of walled towns?

Look to connections in the land
Material Wealth, Resources, and Property

Immaterial Wealth, Resources, and Property

Who are your dead and your living?

Which and how many human and material resources do you / your group members claim or control?

How are these relationships inscribed on the physical and social landscapes?

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