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## Social Identity in the Jordan Valley During the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages: Evidence from the Tall as-Sa'idiyyah Cemetery

### Introduction

The cemetery at Tall as-Sa'idiyyah in the Jordan Valley provides a rich set of archaeological data with which to examine changing aspects of social identity in death between the terminal Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Ages (*ca* 1250-800 BC). This paper focuses on 'personal' assemblages from the cemetery, particularly clothing attachments, jewellery and beads associated with individuals of different age, gender and status groups and examines aspects of identity expression over time. What might these items indicate about changes and variability in population, economy and lifestyle across the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages?

This paper is particularly relevant to the 'Changes and Challenges' theme of the conference proceedings, as there were major social, economic and political upheavals that took place between the Late Bronze and the Early Iron Age in the Southern Levant and the wider Mediterranean/ Near Eastern world (Ward and Joukowsky 1992; Gitin *et al.* 1998; Bachhuber and Roberts 2009). In the Southern Levant, Late Bronze Age traditions extended well beyond the disruptions of the early 12th century BC, in part due to the revival of the Egyptian-led military and administrative system of the 20th Dynasty, particularly prevalent in the central and northern valleys of Palestine and Transjordan until the withdrawal of the mid to late 12th century BC (Weinstein 1992). The Egyptian sphere appears to have extended as far south as Tall as-Sa'idiyyah, as suggested by the presence of utilitarian Egyptian-type pottery in the Period 1 cemetery and settlement (Green 2011; Tubb, Dorrell and Cobbing 1996: 31-32, 1997: 67-69; Pritchard 1980: 3-4, Figs. 46A:1-6). However, the precise nature of political and economic relations with the Egyptian sphere, and the garrison at Baysan/ Beth Shan, remains unclear.

Van der Steen (1999, 2004: 255, 284-293) suggested that the mid-12th century withdrawal of the Egyptian-led infrastructure had a major impact on the local economy of the Jordan Valley, resulting in the abandonment and / or decline of many settlements after having destabilized centres in the Dayr 'Allā area and on the Transjordanian plateau. During and after this decline during Iron I, mixed populations went through a process of re-sedentarization within the Jordan Valley. These people may have included displaced farmers, traders, craftsmen and semi-nomadic groups who coalesced within new or previously abandoned settlements. The subsequent period of settlement recovery and regeneration in the Jordan Valley from late Iron I and Iron IIA (late 1st-10th centuries BC) has not, however, received much attention in archaeological syntheses to date (but see Finkelstein 2002).

Although population change and migration may explain some of the changes across the LB-Iron Age transition, the ability to identify or differentiate between specific ethnic groups using archaeological evidence is notoriously problematic. Various explanations along ethnic lines have been offered for changes (or continuities) in material culture, building types and burial customs across the LB-Iron I transition, with reference to groups attested in Biblical and extra-Biblical sources, including Canaanites, Midianites, Edomites, Philistines, Egyptians, Sea Peoples, Israelites and Hittites (e.g. Dayton 1972; Faust 2006; Kempinski 1979; Tubb 1995). Objects such as pottery, jewellery or seals are unlikely to serve as direct one-to-one signifiers of ethnic identity. It is rather the way in which individuals and groups might use objects that leads to the creation of regional or community traditions. In turn, 'traditions' might become signifiers of ethnicity for self-identifying groups and external 'oth-

ers' (Barth 1969; Jones 1997). Jewellery and accessories, as extensions of costume and dress, are sometimes considered expressive markers of social identity, that can in turn relate to ethnicity and cultural identity (Wobst 1977; Eicher 1995; Sparks 2004). Direct evidence for clothing and textiles that may have contributed to perceptions of ethnic difference, are not usually preserved, leaving jewellery and ornaments as surviving accessories that may or may not have been emblematic at the ethnic level. In addition, dress and personal ornaments may be ethnically or culturally ambiguous if signifying other aspects of identity, such as gender and age (Barnes and Eicher 1992; Sørensen 2000), life stages including puberty or marriage (Hockings 1979: 152-163; Hodder 1982: 77-83), or protection from perceived supernatural harm (Schwartz 1979: 25-6). These aspects may cross-cut ethnicity, or even mask expressions of ethnicity and cultural identity. Because of these ambiguities, this paper does not attempt to identify ethnic identities at as-Sa'idiyyah, but rather examines variability and change in the distribution of 'personal' grave-objects that could relate to cultural affiliation, lifestyle and vertical status expression in death. By examining objects directly associated with the body, especially ornaments, as well as personal items or bodily extensions such as cosmetic vessels, tools, weapons and dining equipment, it may be possible to explore ways in which status, identity and personhood were represented, constructed and reproduced in the funerary arena.

### Tall as-Sa'idiyyah Cemetery Background

Two major excavations campaigns have been undertaken at the double-mound of Tall as-Sa'idiyyah: the first by James Pritchard of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology between 1964 and 1967 (Pritchard 1980, 1985); the second by Jonathan Tubb of the British Museum (BM) between 1985 and 1996 (Tubb 1988, 1990; Tubb and Dorrell 1991, 1993, 1994; Tubb *et al.* 1996, 1997). Extensive excavations on the upper *tall* (not the focus of this paper) reveal a long settlement sequence from the LBA to the Roman period. The lower *tall* has yielded an EBA settlement and the foundations of an early Islamic *khan*. The lower *tall* was used as a cemetery from the LBA, cutting into EBA ruins and fills. Several cemetery phases can be discerned from the excavation of approximately 500 individually

numbered burial installations, providing one of the largest and most important mortuary datasets in Jordan and the wider Southern Levant (Green 2006, 2009). The final report on the BM cemetery excavations is currently in preparation. I am grateful to Jonathan Tubb, for permission to publish these preliminary findings, and to the White-Levy Program for Archaeological Publications for funds that have allowed me to carry out vital publication work on the cemetery. I am also extremely grateful to the Department of Antiquities, Jordan and the staff of the Dar al-Saraya Museum in Irbid for access to collections from the site.

Common burial types include pit graves, double-pithos burials, mud-brick and stone-lined cists, and infant jar burials. The cemetery was founded late in LB IIB and continued into Iron IA (collectively 'Period 1' in this paper). An apparent gap or decline in cemetery use was followed by extensive re-use in late Iron I and Iron IIA ('Period 2' in this paper). Later periods of cemetery use (beyond the scope of this paper) include Iron IIC-Persian to early Hellenistic periods, and the late Ottoman period.

The variability of grave-objects for both periods permits statistical analysis of cemetery data, taking into account the functional and material diversity of individual tomb assemblages (Green 2006, 2010). Scores were calculated for each tomb, which were then used as a starting point for examining social differentiation. It is noted here that tomb-scores are unlikely to clearly represent status distinctions that deceased individuals may have held in life. Instead, each grave assemblage is an idealised, situational and potentially distorted representation of the preserved collective efforts of living mourners who prepared the funeral. Tomb-scores and assemblages therefore represent a set of purposeful strategies and actions of people who wished particular social messages or traditions to be expressed during the funerary ceremony. The body of the deceased (whether adorned or unadorned) played a central role in the communication of these messages through ritual performance.

### Period 1 (LB IIB-Iron IA)

The overall picture of cemetery use at as-Sa'idiyyah in its earliest phases has been discussed elsewhere (Green 2009) and is briefly summarised here. Of the sample of *ca* 74 Period 1 tombs, most were simple pit graves usually containing single primary adult inhumations orientated west-east (head to

west), set out in north-south rows or small clusters. Double-pithos and infant jar burials made up just under a fifth of all Period 1 burials. A small number of installations were elaborated with stone and / or mud-brick linings forming shallow cists (e.g. T.102, T.117). One large pit grave was elaborated with a central inner clay kerb (T.46).

The earliest burials were initiated in LB IIB, indicated by small quantities of Mycenaean and Cypriote imported wares and an imported Egyptian cup or ointment container (Pritchard 1980: Fig. 46A/B, Types 19, 22, 23, 29, 41, 45). These finds were restricted to the north side of the lower *tall* (Pritchard 1980), suggesting it may have been a 'founders' area. Graves in the central area (BM: BB100-600) have not yet yielded such imports, and may post-date the earliest north area tombs, suggesting a southwards shift over time. The ceramic repertoire typical of the central area includes small bowls with S-shaped profiles, painted juglets, ovoid storejars, locally made Egyptian-type bowls and local imitations of imported Aegean stirrup jars (e.g. Tubb 1988: Fig. 48A.14).

Period 1 tomb-scores suggest a hierarchical arrangement of a small number of high-scoring tombs (less than 10% of the sample) compared to a much larger group of mid- to low-scoring tombs. High scoring tombs are characterised by the presence of imported wares and their imitations, multiple bronze vessels (wine-sets), Egyptian-type stone vessels, ivory objects and precious metal jewellery, giving an overall impression of prosperity. The small number of tombs associated with these rich assemblages were larger and more carefully constructed (lined with mud-brick or stone) than the more common pit graves, implying a higher investment in both ceremony and tomb construction. Individuals from the high-scoring group underwent unusual treatment such as the pouring of bitumen over the body (T.102, T.117), or face-down placement in the grave (e.g. T.46). Mid-scoring tombs make up around half the sample, and often contained a weapon or tool, bronze bowl and / or stone vessel, alongside ceramic vessels. Lower scoring tombs contained either no objects, or one or more ceramic vessels.

A hierarchical profile is suggested by the tomb-scores, with potential differences between 'haves' (a small number of 'elite' funeral ceremonies), 'have-somes' and 'have-nots'.

Of the Period 1 personal ornaments, beads were

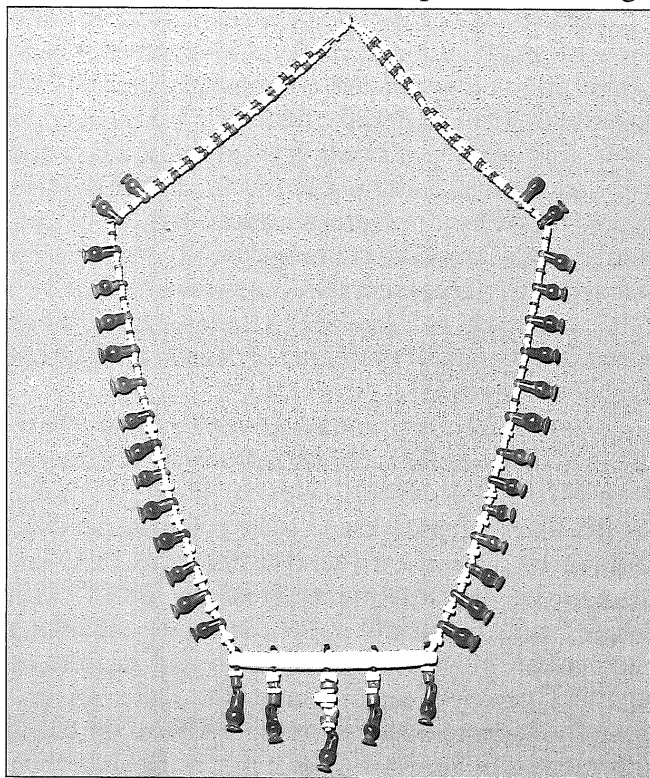
the most common find, often in large quantities within single or multiple strings. They are found in around a quarter of tombs in the sample, across varied tomb-scores. Where osteological sex was identified, beads were found only with female individuals, in addition to children and adults of indeterminate sex. No clear examples of beads or bead-strings were found with osteologically-sexed males. This indicates a degree of gendered asymmetry in personal ornamentation between men and women. These findings could be extrapolated to burials that lack osteological data from Pritchard's excavations. For example, the pair of 'bitumen' tombs found side-by-side (T.102, T.117) included rich assemblages of Egyptian-type pottery and bronze items. Pritchard distinguished the burials according to his preconceptions (1964: 7, 1980: 21): the individual with a sword, arrowheads and dagger, but without beads, was a male 'warrior burial' (T.102), whereas the individual with beads but without weapons was female (T.117). Although Pritchard's interpretation can be criticized on methodological grounds, it can actually be supported after incorporating the more widely observed patterns and osteological data from the much larger BM cemetery sample.

Amongst the beads and pendants, the most common are small cylinders made of blue, green, black, white and yellow glazed composite materials. Of these composite materials, faience is the most common, followed by a small proportion of glass and very occasional occurrences of blue frit (Egyptian blue). Stone bead materials consist largely of carnelian (semi-translucent orange to red) with smaller occurrences of rock-crystal, limestone, steatite and other materials in barrel or cylinder-shapes, often worn in combination with small beads made from composite materials.

Beads were found within several primary burials in sequences that can be partially reconstructed (e.g. FIG. 1: T.46; FIG. 2: T.355B, T.232, T.136B). Small, alternating dark-and light-coloured beads in faience or glass were found at the ends of a few strings (i.e. towards the back of the neck), with larger beads, pendants or spacer-beads enhancing the central 'display' section that rested in front of the neck or upper torso. Composite materials (especially faience) make up around 90% of all beads represented in Period 1 (BM sample). Despite their high frequencies, these beads are often very small and do not stand out alongside larger semi-precious

stones within single strings. For example, the elaborate necklace found in the grave of a young adult female (T.46) included 471 tiny faience beads which were mostly ‘fillers’ for the 42 carnelian beads and lotus-seed vessel pendants which were much more prominent (FIG. 1). Most small faience beads were mass-produced by shaping tubular lengths of paste around stems or strings and pressing them into soft clay moulds before firing (McGovern and Swan 1993). They were likely to have been of relatively low value compared to stone beads, which would have required more labour-intensive production techniques (Stocks 1989).

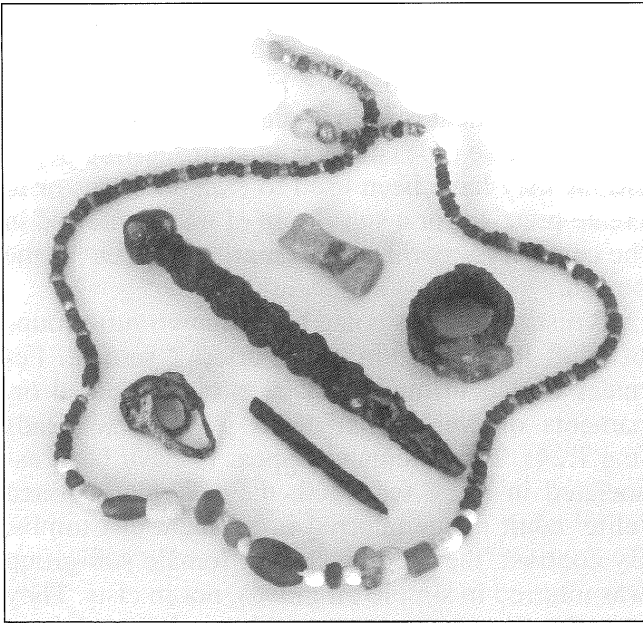
The role of Egyptian or Egyptian-inspired fashion is particularly relevant to the Period 1 cemetery, especially in relation to the cross-cutting nature of vertical status, cultural affiliation and gender. Stone vessels for holding cosmetics or unguents appear to have been a female-gendered object type at as-Sa‘idiyyah (through association with osteologically-sexed females). Interestingly, locally produced stone vessels exhibiting Egyptian-style features were associated with higher scoring tombs compared with local-style stone vessels associated with lower scoring tombs. This suggests a connection between Egyptian fashions, expressions of high



1. T.46 (Period 1) necklace with carnelian lotus-seed vessel pendants.

status and female-gendered identity (Green 2010: 771). Beads and pendants with diagnostic Egyptian New Kingdom parallels include a necklace of lotus-seed vessel pendants found with young adult female T.46, mentioned above (FIG. 1; Tubb 1988: Fig. 48B; Wilkinson 1971: 152) and scaraboid beads found in T.117 (Pritchard 1980: Fig. 21.20-23) and T.355B. These Egyptian-type amulets, beads and pendants occur in a handful of Period 1 necklaces, and hint at close cultural affiliations with the Egyptian sphere for some women buried in the cemetery. However, this affiliation was not necessarily linked to Egypt’s political or military domination of Canaan during the 19th or 20th Dynasties. A long-standing influence of Egyptian fashions can be demonstrated in the southern Levant from the Middle Bronze Age onwards, through the presence of Egyptian-type cosmetic vessels, ornaments, jewellery and scarabs throughout the region (Eggler and Keel 2006; Sparks 2003: Fig. 2; Sparks 2007). Therefore, Egyptian-type ornaments and cosmetic items at as-Sa‘idiyyah in the late New Kingdom could equally relate to long-established local traditions that accepted, embraced and integrated Egyptian-inspired fashions.

Very few metal body ornaments were associated with Period 1 burials. Earrings, bracelets and finger rings were found in 13 of the 74 tombs in the sample (around half co-occurred with beads). Bronze earrings (of a simple ‘boat-shaped’ or loop type: FIG. 2) and finger rings were common, but bracelets and anklets were almost absent. One bi-metallic finger ring (two bronze outer rings with central iron ring) was present in this period (T.355B: FIG. 2), associated with the left hand. This appears to be a long-lived type of ring: an example of a gold ring with a central iron inlay was recently discovered in the MBA necropolis at Sidon (Doumet-Serhal and Kopetzky 2011-12: 39, Burial 102). Only one male sexed burial, T.331, included clearly associated body ornaments, *viz.* three gold earrings at the right side of the head and a gold scarab-ring. One probable female burial was associated with a silver scarab-ring (T.117), showing that this was not a specifically gendered ornament. These precious metal scarab rings were worn on the left hands. They could indicate relatively high status positions for these individuals. In summary, gendered appearances may have been demarcated *between* adults through different ornament ensembles-with many females wearing bead-strings and occasion-



2. T.355B (Period 1): ornament assemblage including bead necklace (with carnelian scaraboid at centre), bi-metallic bronze and iron finger ring, fused bronze earrings, toggle pin and additional broken pin.

ally finger rings, and a small number of males wearing earrings and finger rings, but apparently not bead-strings.

#### *Tomb 101: Dressed for Death*

T.101 was a deep mud-brick lined cist tomb with a single adult interment and a rich assemblage including a bronze wine-set, ivory cosmetic containers and ceramic vessels (Pritchard 1980: 10-14). It is difficult to assign T.101 to either Period 1 or Period 2; parallels for the wine jar found in the tomb suggest an Iron I date range, rather than the late 13th century as suggested by Pritchard (1980: Fig. 3.1; cf. Raban 1988: 288-294). Pritchard suggested an elite or royal identity for the tomb occupant (1964: 2) and a possible association with a coastal Sea Peoples group on the basis of the bronze wine set and wine jar (1968).

The interred individual was adorned with a heavy necklace of several hundred granulated electrum, carnelian and ivory beads, probably arranged in double and triple strands as indicated by the presence of multiple perforated spacers (Pritchard 1980: Fig. 19.11-18). Two electrum toggle-pins and a pair of electrum plaque-pendants attached with a chain were found on the chest (Pritchard 1980: 10, 13, Figs. 3.11-13). Pritchard suggested the toggle-pins probably secured a garment at the left shoulder

(Pritchard 1980: 11). Both arms were flexed into a V-shape, with both hands resting on the upper abdomen, indicating a non-constricted body and supporting the view that T.101 was dressed rather than wrapped in a shroud. This position may have highlighted elements of a ceremonial costume. It is also tempting to associate the unusual arm position with common images of nude females (so-called 'Astarte' plaques) that hold out or present the breasts (Keel and Uelingher 1998: 97-98). Perhaps the individual had a close affinity with a female deity. The jewellery ensemble and clothing attachments on the body may have been worn during life, as well as in death-indirectly suggested by the use of electrum which is more hard-wearing than gold (Andrews 1994: 105). The wearing of toggle-pins was likely to have been an overt but low-level feature of personal display, perhaps expressing 'local' cultural identity in death, in contrast to the more common Egyptian-style amulets and bead-strings of Period 1. The only Egyptian-style object from the tomb is an ivory cosmetic 'swimming girl' spoon (Pritchard 1980: Fig. 3.9). By the time this burial took place, Egyptian involvement in the region may have already ceased, or was in decline. Local elites in this setting may have no longer felt it necessary to identify with or emulate Egyptian fashions, instead re-fashioning local identities and looking towards emergent centres on the Levantine coast.

#### **Period 2 (Iron IB-IIA)**

The initiation of the Period 2 cemetery is marked by the construction of several mud-brick lined cists on the lower *tall*, particularly in the central area (BM: BB100-600), which truncated many Period 1 pit graves. One corbelled cist built from boulders was also attested (T.404). Most of the cist tombs were intended for re-use, containing human remains that exhibit a mixture of primary (also orientated west-east) and secondary treatment, as well as successive multiple primary use and secondary manipulation of earlier decayed remains (gathering of skulls and longbones). It is unclear whether the mud-brick cists were visibly marked above ground in antiquity, although their successive re-use indicates they could be located and re-opened. Erosion in the upper levels of walls and capping of some tombs suggests partial exposure and visibility in antiquity (e.g. T.24, T.172). The mixed ages and sexes of individuals in several of the larger cists (e.g. T.282) sug-



gest they were built for use and re-use by families, whereas others were intended for single inhumation (e.g. T.34). Pit graves and double-pithos burials continue in this period, exhibiting a similar mixed pattern of primary, multiple and secondary usage as the cist tombs (but within smaller spaces). More infants and young children are represented than in Period 1, partly due to their preservation within more commonly attested jar burials.

The pottery has close parallels at Dayr 'Allā and Baysan/ Beth Shan. Types include the 'ridge-necked' storage jar, red slipped and hand-burnished sack-shaped pyxides and long-necked juglets (Franken 1969: Figs. 62.30, 70.50-1; James 1966: Fig. 64.10, Pl. 61.5). 'Hippo-jars' were often used as infant burial containers, differing slightly from the less baggy 'ridge-necked' jar (Alexandre 1995). A small number of black-burnished juglets and pyxides are present (Pritchard 1980: Fig. 60.5-6), which are clearly assigned to Iron II traditions.

Approximately 135 individually numbered burials are assigned to Period 2. The quantitative analysis of grave-assemblages was also applied to a sub-sample of 76 'better preserved' burials within this group. The findings suggest less variability between individual grave-scores than Period 1, with fewer objects per individual and generally less diverse assemblages. Typically, an individual was accompanied with a single ceramic pyxis or juglet by the head and / or a few ornaments. This might suggest a less-hierarchical, kinship-based society with fewer social inequalities. Burials therefore appear to be materially 'poorer' than in Period 1. Cemetery users may have had restricted access to specialist products or imports, or they may have chosen instead to invest in materials that would not have been preserved archaeologically, such as wood, reeds, woven mats and skins. A significant reduction in ceramic serving vessels could be explained by a shift towards wooden bowls. These would not be preserved at as-Sa'idiyya, but are present at the Early Iron Age cemetery at Wadi Fidan 40 (Levy *et al.* 1999: 299-302). Given the more muted status expressions in Period 2, body ornaments and beads are increasingly relevant and stand out amongst the assemblages. Gender and age associations appear to be more strongly marked, with an association of beads and metal body ornaments (particularly anklet pairs) with adult females, as well as infants and young children. Adult males do not appear to be associated with body ornaments, but instead

were found in a few instances with drinking and dining paraphernalia, such as bronze vessels (e.g. T.32 wine set: Tubb 1988: Fig. 50) and remnants of feasts or meat offerings (cattle, sheep / goat remains). These types of sacrificial or feasting depositions may have been used to express status or to create prestige for a sub-group of males interred in the cemetery – perhaps the emergent 'elites' of the period.

A distinction was noted between two sub-groups of adult females within the Period 2 sample. Females buried in mud-brick cists either lacked ornaments or were found with just a few beads (e.g. T.24). These females appear to have been associated in some way with the above-mentioned 'elite' adult males interred in adjacent cist tombs. By contrast, the 'adorned' adult female sub-group was interred in simple pit graves, not in cists. They were found wearing bead necklaces, bronze bracelets and/ or bronze anklet pairs. Beads and anklet pairs, in addition to other ornaments, appear to have been a female-gendered jewellery ensemble in this period (Green 2007). Parallels for anklet-wearing female burials are found at Pella (Bourke and Hendrix 2001: 80, Fig. 4) and Wadi Fidan 40 (Levy *et al.* 1999: Fig. 7; Levy *et al.* 2004: Fig. 8). Beads, miniature bracelets and anklets were also found within infant jar burials at as-Sa'idiyyah (e.g. T.63: FIG.3; Green 2007: 287- 295). An increase in size and thickness of the metal ornaments in relation to age suggests adornment from early infancy (perhaps also female-gendered?) and substitution for progressively larger ornaments throughout childhood and into adulthood (Green 2007: Fig. 13.2, Table 13.1).

The difference between the two adult female sub-groups may in part relate to differences in body preparation or presentation prior to burial, or it could indicate that anklet-wearing women (and their children) belonged to a different, perhaps lower, socio-economic group compared to the 'elite' women interred within mud-brick cists. The wearing of anklet pairs, bracelets and beads may have been a way of expressing a socio-ethnic or lifestyle difference for the other female sub-group.

In their study of the Early Iron Age 'Shasu' nomad cemetery at Wadi Fidan 40, Levy *et al.* (2004: 84-88) are cautious in identifying the female individuals wearing metal ornaments as high status individuals, despite the fact that more objects are associated with these individuals than others in the



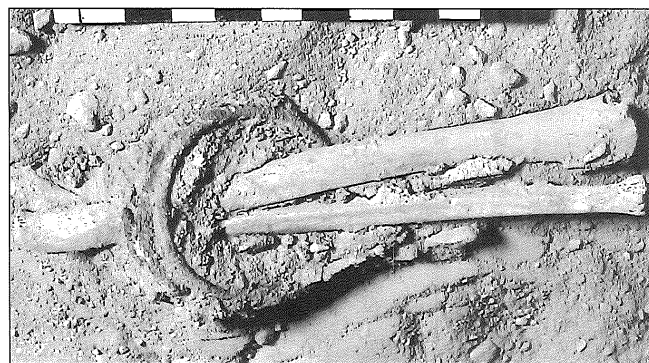
3. T.63 (Period 2) jar burial containing two sets of infant remains, one wearing *in situ* bronze bracelets and anklets (beads around skull fragments obscured by fill).

cemetery (e.g. Grave 92). It might be tempting to suggest that the beads and body ornaments at as-Sa'idiyyah were associated with a particular subsistence mode or lifestyle, such as pastoral nomadism. However, it would be difficult to distinguish between range-tied pastoral nomadism or land-tied sedentism on this basis, especially as boundaries between such lifestyles are fluid and difficult to identify archaeologically (LaBianca and Younker 1995). It is suggested that a general concern for basic survival and subsistence for sedentary *and* semi-nomadic populations may have led to the accumulation of 'wearable wealth' as a safeguard against times of drought or famine. Metal ring ingots, similar in form to anklets and bracelets but heavier, were probably used as a form of currency in the Eastern Mediterranean at this time (Lassen 2000: 241-3), reinforcing the likelihood that this

monetiform jewellery was being worn. In rural communities of modern Africa and Asia, the wearing of wealth can still provide essential security for individuals and families. Times of plenty may lead to the accumulation of jewellery, land, cattle and food-stocks, whereas vulnerability can lead to the distress sale of these resources (Fafchamps 1999: 16-18). Therefore, an increased occurrence of metal ornaments in burials could indirectly suggest that cemetery users were able to acquire, accumulate and display 'wearable wealth' and dispose of it below ground with their owners, rather than retain and circulate items above-ground.

Iron ornaments and bi-metallic ornaments continue to be present in Period 2. For example, a fused bronze and iron bracelet was found on the right arm of a child (T.33A: FIG. 4), and a bronze and iron fused triple ring with an adult (T.123, Pritchard 1980: Fig. 27.16). Iron bracelets are also attested as unfused single ornaments (e.g. T.61A). Iron body ornaments, including rings and bangles were also common in Baq'ah Valley Cave A4, dating to the Early Iron Age (Notis *et al.* 1986: 272-278; McGovern 1986: Pl. 29). Iron and bronze may have been substitutes for silver and gold (of a similar colour and sheen). However, the bi-metallic gold and iron ring from Sidon (mentioned above) suggests that iron should be considered a highly valued material in its own right, rather than as a substitute for silver. Interestingly, the use of iron ornaments at Sa'idiyya is more clearly associated with the upper body (fingers and arms) than the lower legs (more commonly adorned with bronze or bead anklets). Perhaps the of wearing iron on the arms and hands was linked to its greater perceived value compared to bronze, and an increased ability to display this material within social settings?

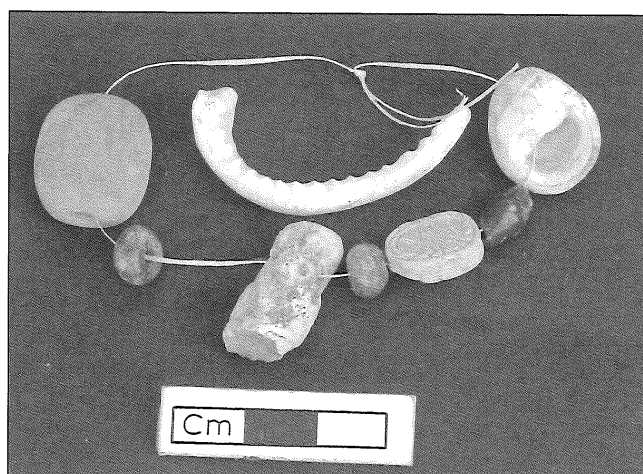
Beads, largely worn as necklaces, are common



4. T.33A (Period 2): fused bi-metallic bronze and iron bracelets around lower right arm of child.

in Period 2, as are anklets and bracelets. Composite materials dominate the bead assemblage, making up around 80% of the total number of beads, with roughly 15% stone (mostly carnelian) and 5% shell and bone beads. Preliminary observations indicate that faience is still the most common composite material, although glass beads were more common than in Period 1. Glass beads are typically barrel-shaped in opaque monochrome streaky dark blue or yellowish-green colours, and less commonly as polychrome 'eye', bichrome-banded or 'wave' beads. Blue frit (so-called 'Egyptian blue') occurs in a few strings in the form of elongated segmented cylinders (e.g. T.335).

Faience amulets (FIGS. 5 and 6) featuring lion or cat-headed Egyptian deities, (commonly associated with Sekhmet or Bastet), and one seated nursing goddess amulet (commonly identified as Isis with Horus), occur with infants or very young children (T.335, T.51, T.288). According to Carol Andrews, in Third Intermediate Period Egypt (and earlier), images of Sekhmet and Bastet "served as fertility amulets worn primarily by women; although they could be also associated with festivity and intoxication" (1994: 32-34). Recent research highlights the multifaceted role of the Egyptian goddess Mut, a divine wet-nurse and protectress of the dead, in the Iron Age Southern Levant. It is possible that many of the cat or lion-headed amulets found actually represent Mut or a hybrid of Sekhmet-Mut (Hayes 2012). The amulets at as-Sa'idiyyah were associated with infants and children, and were not clearly associated with adult females. Keel and Uehlinger suggest that amulets depicting a range of Egyptian deities in the Iron Age Southern Levant were associated with concepts of creation and regeneration (1998: 350), which would be consistent with their association with infants and young children. Another common bead type at as-Sa'idiyyah is the

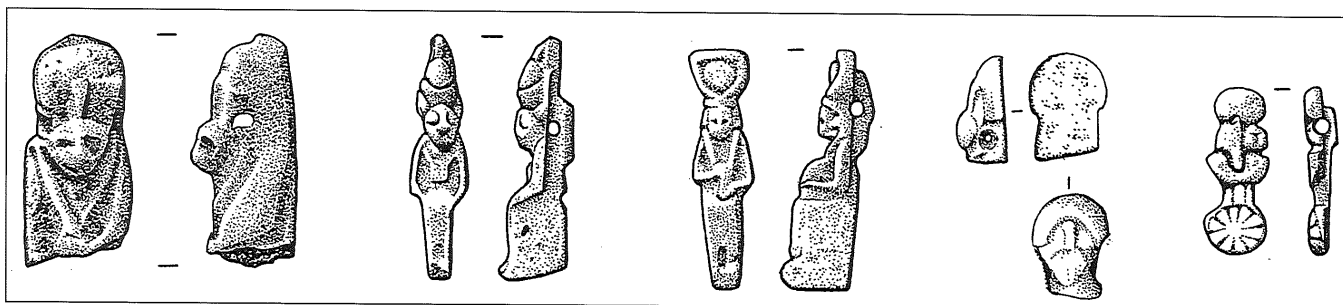


6. T.282 (Period 2): 'amulet' string, including broken amulet, shells, worn scarab and MBIIB scarab.

axe-shaped or conical stone pendant, often represented in mixed bead-strings, either as a centre-piece or amulet of unknown symbolism (perhaps as axe or loom-weight?). Alternatively, rather than central drop-pendants, they may have served as toggles for securing the two ends of a bead-string.

Shell beads and pendants include common species of *Conus* whorl and *Cypraea annulus* (Cowrie shells: e.g. Pritchard 1980: 23, Fig. 25.3), amongst other species (to be published in a chapter for the final report of BM cemetery excavations by C. R. Cartwright and D. Reese).

All cowrie shells had their backs removed, making the eye or vulva-shaped opening stand out strongly against dark skin or clothing. Where found *in situ* at as-Sa'idiyyah, cowries were strung either as bracelets and necklaces (e.g. T.321, T.335), and were not mixed with other beads within the same sequence or string. This suggests they had a special significance, or that they were sewn onto garments or leather. An increase in the presence of cowrie shells in Period 2 appears to be paralleled in the



5. Faience amulets (Period 2) depicting lion- or cat-headed figures and a seated nursing goddess. Left to right: 282.9, 288.2, 288.3, 51.5, 335.11. Illustrations by Ann Searight. Scale 1:1 (height of second from left: 25 mm).



Baq'ah Valley Caves (Cave A4: Reese 1986: 331). Their presence attests to long-distance overland connections between the Jordan Valley and Red Sea, perhaps via intermediaries involved in the copper and/ or incense trade.

Recycling and re-use of beads of earlier periods was fairly common in Period 2. Bead recycling is suggested by bead groups of mixed production quality and/ or the presence of chipped or broken beads alongside well-preserved ones within otherwise undisturbed contexts (e.g. T.24). Mixed materials and shapes on strings may have been acquired and curated differently to symmetrical, balanced or more standardized arrangements. Bead recycling in the Early Iron Age could suggest that tombs of earlier periods were raided for ornaments, indirectly suggesting a decline in the availability of newly produced stone-beads.

Mixed groups of beads could also be called 'amulet strings', as they can include faience amulets (some broken), worn stamp-seals, and/ or scaraboid beads, and 'heirlooms' such as an MBIIB scarab (FIG. 6: T.282: Eggler and Keel 2006: 378-379, No. 24). Another 'amulet string' consists of six glazed steatite stamp-seals alongside varied stone and glass beads forming a child's necklace (T.65: Tubb 1988: 65, 71, Fig. 51; Eggler and Keel 2006: 372-375, Nos. 13-18). To summarize, there appears to be continuity in the use of Egyptian-style stamp-seal amulets and bead types in Period 2, although their role may have shifted towards protection of infants and children from perceived harm, and away from the high-status associations observed for Period 1 adults.

## Conclusions

This paper presents initial findings and interpretations related to the distribution of personal items, especially ornaments, within the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age cemetery at Tall as-Sa'idiyyah. In terms of cultural affiliations, there are clear indications that Egyptian-type amulets and ornaments were important in the cemetery, but these do not assist in the identification of ethnicity. Precious metal scarab-rings were used to signify high status for some men and women, and a selective range of amulet-beads (lotus-seed vessel pendants and scaraboids) may have had high status associations in Period 1. The elaborately adorned interment in T.101 with electrum toggle-pins, plaques and a heavy bead necklace may be a representation

of 'de-Egyptianized' local or coastal elite female identity. In Period 2, Egyptian-type amulets tend to be associated with infants and children, and are no longer clearly associated with adults. This suggests a shift towards personal protection in the Early Iron Age and away from their more common role as status-markers in the Late Bronze Age.

Age and gender were particularly important markers of social identity in death, especially through the intersection of social status as expressed through additional grave-objects and tomb elaboration. Although the Period 2 cemetery appears to exhibit more muted expressions of status, hinting at underlying egalitarian notions (also see Levy *et al.* 2004), there are major distinctions between male and female expressions of identity. This could relate to changes in kinship structure, perhaps with a shift towards a more patriarchal society in the Early Iron Age (Green 2007: 303-4). The sub-group of females (and children) found with metal ornaments and beads can be contrasted with male burials which contain few personal items, except for rare status symbols such as animal offerings, bronze vessels and perhaps iron knives/ weapons. It remains unclear whether these adorned females represent a different socio-economic group amongst the cemetery users, a specific socio-ethnic group or simply variations in the way familial or personal wealth was curated on the body in life and death. It is also impossible to know if the quantities of ornaments found in graves reflect the range of ornaments in circulation above ground. Continued research could utilise archaeological data from houses, non-mortuary ritual deposits and accidentally killed individuals found in collapsed buildings, in order to build up a wider picture of personal ornamentation over time and space.

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