

NELSON GLUECK AND EARLY BRONZE AGE MOAB

by
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Effort to reconstruct the historical and chronological framework of the Levant's Early Bronze Age (hereafter EBA) has increased markedly since World War II (Callaway, 1978: 46). Major excavations of EBA remains have been conducted in Palestine at sites such as Tell el-Far'ah (North), Jericho, Arad, and 'Ai (et-Tell); less intensive investigations have been carried out at the Transjordanian sites of Ader, Khirbet Iskander, Iktanu, Ara'ir, and more recently (and more extensively) at Bâb edh-Dhrâ' and Numeira. These excavations and a large number of archaeological surveys on both sides of the Jordan River have resulted in a much better understanding of the EBA.

Particular attention has been given to the beginning and end of the third millennium and to the people movements and/or indigenous developments that are associated with these transitions. Much has been written about EB IV-MB I (Dever's EB IVA-C), especially with regard to its alleged connection with the "Amorite invasion" of Palestine (for discussion and bibliography on this issue, see Dever, 1980: 53-58; Richard, 1980: 8-12). The non-urban character of this period and its relatively impoverished level of material culture are well known. Indeed, since Palestine's urban culture came to an end during EB III, a gap existed in the archaeological record following this period, and there was little material that could be placed in EB IV even as late as 1971. This situation prompted Wright (1971: 285) to predict that this dark age would be penetrated through the exploration of cemeteries (Dever, 1973: 41-56).

In an essay written in honour of Nelson Glueck, Dever (1970: 136) emphasized the material poverty of EB IV by pointing to the few deposits of post-destruction (or post-abandonment!) period remains that were known in 1970: Tomb 351 at Jericho, Tell Beit Mirsim

Stratum J, artefacts from the soundings at Ader and Bâb edh-Dhrâ', and surface materials from the Jordan Valley, Transjordan, and the Negev. Of course, the data on EB IV are now available in greater quantity, largely as a result of Dever's research and the excavations at Bâb edh-Dhrâ', especially in the EBA cemetery (for an up-to-date analysis of the available data, see Dever, 1980). It is still interesting to notice that the early understanding of this enigmatic period pointed to the importance of Transjordanian sites (e.g., Ader, Bâb edh-Dhrâ', and Glueck's sites in Moab and Edom). Indeed, well over a decade ago Dever (1970: 136) made this suggestion:

The uniqueness of Bâb edh-Dhrâ' may be due simply to the fact that it is precisely to Transjordan and the Negev—the fringe areas of the country—that one must turn to trace the vestiges of this elusive culture, and these areas are as yet barely known.

In light of recently recovered data from Transjordan, Dever's statement raises at least three important issues. First, the pace of archaeological research in Transjordan is increasing very rapidly; perhaps most notable are those projects that are supplementing and correcting Glueck's pioneering work. Second, new data have led certain scholars to disagree with the reference to Transjordan as a "fringe area" (see, for example, Dornemann, 1970; Prag, 1974; Thompson, 1974). Third, in spite of the new evidence, archaeologists and historians still have little to say about the EB I-III culture of Transjordan. With the notable exception of Bâb ed-Dhrâ' (cf. Schaub, 1982), it is only with reference to the EB IV transition that this region is mentioned with any frequency.

A consideration of the issues mentioned above inevitably leads one to ask a number of questions concerning

EBA Transjordan. Have scholars said so little about EBA Transjordan because most of it stands outside the historical and geographical scope of the biblical narratives? Is it possible that Transjordan was such a backwater in EB I-III that there are no remains to be found in this region? Is this lack of interest in Transjordan's EB I-III culture simply the result of a lack of excavations in the territory east of the Jordan? Or, is there so little discussion about the EB I-III culture of this region because scholars, for the most part, continue to rely upon the monumental, yet outdated, surface survey that Glueck conducted in Transjordan between 1932 and 1947? More pointedly, did Glueck overlook or fail to recognize the EB I-III pottery of Transjordan, at least in the early years of his survey, and did this oversight or failure lead him to emphasize the region's "EB IV-MB I" civilization? In other words, is the emphasis that is placed on the EB IV culture of Transjordan an artefact of Glueck's early mistakes and the failure of the archaeologists and historians to note that Glueck later changed his ideas about the EB I-III occupation of Transjordan? These questions can be answered, in part, by examining Glueck's conclusions on EBA Transjordan and comparing his results with those of more recent investigators. For the purposes of this study, special attention will be given to Glueck's work in central Moab, but the same questions and perhaps similar answers are also applicable to the whole of eastern Palestine.

In his first major report on the survey of Transjordan, a report that focused primarily on Moab, Glueck (1934: 81-83) set forth five general conclusions, which read, in part, as follows:

- 1) There was a strong Bronze Age civilization in ancient Moab between the twenty-third and the eighteenth centuries B.C., when it completely disappeared.
- 2) Between the eighteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. there is an almost

complete gap in the history of settled communities in the region visited.

- 3) There was a highly developed Moabite civilization, which seems to have flourished especially between the middle of the thirteenth and the end of the ninth centuries B.C.
- 4) In general from about the end of EB II, but in many sites in Moab from about the eighth century on, there is another gap in the history of the settled communities in the regions visited.
- 5) By the fourth century B.C., the Nabataeans had swung themselves into power by gaining control of the trade routes leading northward from the Gulf of 'Aqabah.

Most scholars have concentrated on Glueck's second conclusion, the one in which Glueck postulated that there was an occupational gap in central and southern Transjordan during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. Although Glueck reiterated similar conclusions for all of Transjordan in subsequent reports, several important modifications became apparent in his later syntheses. Of particular interest are Glueck's changing opinions concerning the EBA occupation of the Kerak plateau, the territory between Wadi Mujib and Wadi el-Hasa (i.e., ancient central and southern Moab). Glueck explored the region between Wadi Mujib and the Kerak-Qatrana highway (i.e., central Moab) for approximately one week in 1933. This same area was examined in the summers of 1978 and 1979 by a survey team under the direction of J. Maxwell Miller of Emory University (Atlanta, GA).¹ The balance of this article will compare the data collected in this region by the Emory University team with Glueck's conclusions on this same section of the plateau.

In his initial report on central Moab, which was included in *Explorations in Eastern Palestine I*, Glueck made no reference to any occupation in this region

¹ Preliminary reports on the Central Moab Survey are found in Kautz, 1981; Miller, 1979a, 1979b, 1982; Pinkerton, 1979. For more discussion on the EBA sites of central Moab, see Mattingly, 1980

and the writer's forthcoming article on the EBA sites of central and southern Moab in the *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin*.

prior to the twenty-third century. As can be seen in Glueck's first general conclusion of Transjordan, he did postulate the existence of a strong civilization in Moab between the twenty-third and the eighteenth centuries. Glueck (1934: 44-63) initially listed eight sites in central Moab that yielded pottery from this broad period: el-Lejjun, Ader, Khirbet el-Medeiyineh, Balu', Rujm Umm el-Qleib, Mis'ar, Freiwan, and el-Misna'. For the basis of comparison, it is fortunate that Glueck was more specific in his dating of the pottery from Balu' and el-Misna'. He assigned the oldest sherds from these two sites to the period between ca. 2200-1800, i.e., from the end of the EBA "to the end of the first phase of Middle Bronze I" (Glueck 1934: 55, 63). If Glueck's dates for this pottery are accepted the chronology and nomenclature followed by the Emory University survey would place Glueck's sherds into EB IV, MB I, and MB IIA, with these three periods stretching from ca. 2300-1800 (Pinkerton, 1979: 27). Unfortunately, the recently collected sherds do not indicate that central Moab's sites were occupied over this specific period.² As is often noted, Glueck explained the abrupt termination of Transjordan's Bronze Age civilization by pointing to the Genesis 14 account of the invasion of the eastern kings (Kautz, 1981: 34). Regardless of the date that is attached to this episode, it is more likely that Moab's "strong Bronze Age civilization" came to an end in EB IV, perhaps ca. 2150 (Pinkerton, 1979: 71). While there may be a few Middle Bronze Age sherds in Glueck's pottery collection, as there are in the collection made by the Emory University team, it must be stressed that Glueck's early reports

recognized no occupation in central Moab prior to the twenty-third century.

In *Explorations in Eastern Palestine II* (1935: 137-140) and the first edition of his more popular work, *The Other side of the Jordan* (1940: 114-123), Glueck continued to date the earliest culture of Moab to the period between the twenty-third and the eighteenth centuries.³ By the time that he had completed *Explorations in Eastern Palestine III*, however, Glueck (1939: 268) had modified his position: "The Bronze Age civilization in Eastern Palestine south of Wadi Zerqa extends for the most part between the 23rd and 20th centuries B.C., i.e. between EB IV and MB I." Not only had Glueck accepted the "EB IV" nomenclature and chronology of Albright and Wright (Glueck, 1939: xxiii, 251; cf. Dever, 1973: 39, n. 4), but he had also acknowledged the existence of Transjordanian sites that antedated EB IV: "There is evidence that the history of some of the Bronze Age sites south of the Wadi Zerqa also precedes EB IV, and excavations would probably reveal that their history begins with EB I" (Glueck, 1939: 268). Moreover, by the writing of *Explorations in Eastern Palestine IV*, Glueck was speaking about Neolithic and Chalcolithic remains in the Jordan Valley, Western Palestine, and Transjordan (1951: 423). Glueck's recognition of pre-EB IV occupation in central Moab is even more obvious in the second edition of *The Other side of the Jordan*, in which he referred to abundant EB I-IV pottery in central Moab at the sites of Ader and el-Lejjun (1970: 149-151). In this same volume (152-153), Glueck also suggests that the history of el-Misna' and Khirbet el-Medeiyineh began in EB I.

In the second edition of *The Other*

² Pottery collected by the Central Moab Survey was read by Dr. James Sauer and/or Ms. Robin Brown. We have not examined Glueck's pottery collections. It is likely that Glueck picked up a small amount of Middle Bronze Age pottery in Central Moab, as did the Emory University team. Indeed, the Central Moab Survey found a small number of possible or probable Middle Bronze Age sherds at several of the sites that yielded large amounts of EBA pottery. In only one case were the sherds identified as MB I, and no pottery was dated to MB II. In other words, Glueck's desire to

include the MB I and MB IIA periods in his "strong Bronze Age civilization" does not seem warranted.

³ Inexplicably, on p. 148 of *Explorations in Eastern Palestine II*, Glueck assigned his sites that pointed to a "strong Bronze Age civilization" to EB III-MB I. Furthermore, Glueck had decided that Freiwan should not be on his list of Bronze Age sites, and it did not appear on the map for this period in *Explorations in Eastern Palestine III*, Map Iib.

Side of the Jordan (1970: 145-152), Glueck emphasized the possible role that agriculture could have played in the EBA economy of Moab, an acknowledgement that has enormous implications for the reconstruction of the plateau's cultural patterns. The shift in Glueck's understanding of the duration and economic base of EBA Transjordan is often overlooked, but it is precisely Glueck's willingness to modify his positions in light of new evidence that has helped pave the way for much of the current research in Transjordan.

During the 1978 and 1979 seasons of the Central Moab Survey, evidence was recovered that clearly demonstrates that this part of Transjordan was occupied throughout the entire EBA. In his 1979 thesis, a study that was based on the findings of the first season of the Emory University Project, Pinkerton (71) reached this conclusion:

A total of 289 EB I-III sherds were found at four sites whereas only 247 EB IV sherds were found at three sites. Even such preliminary results as these would suggest that a 'strong Bronze Age civilization' also existed in Moab prior to 2200 B.C... Thus the dates for a 'strong Bronze Age

civilization,' at least in the early part of the Bronze period, would seem more likely to be 3200 B.C. to 2150 B.C.

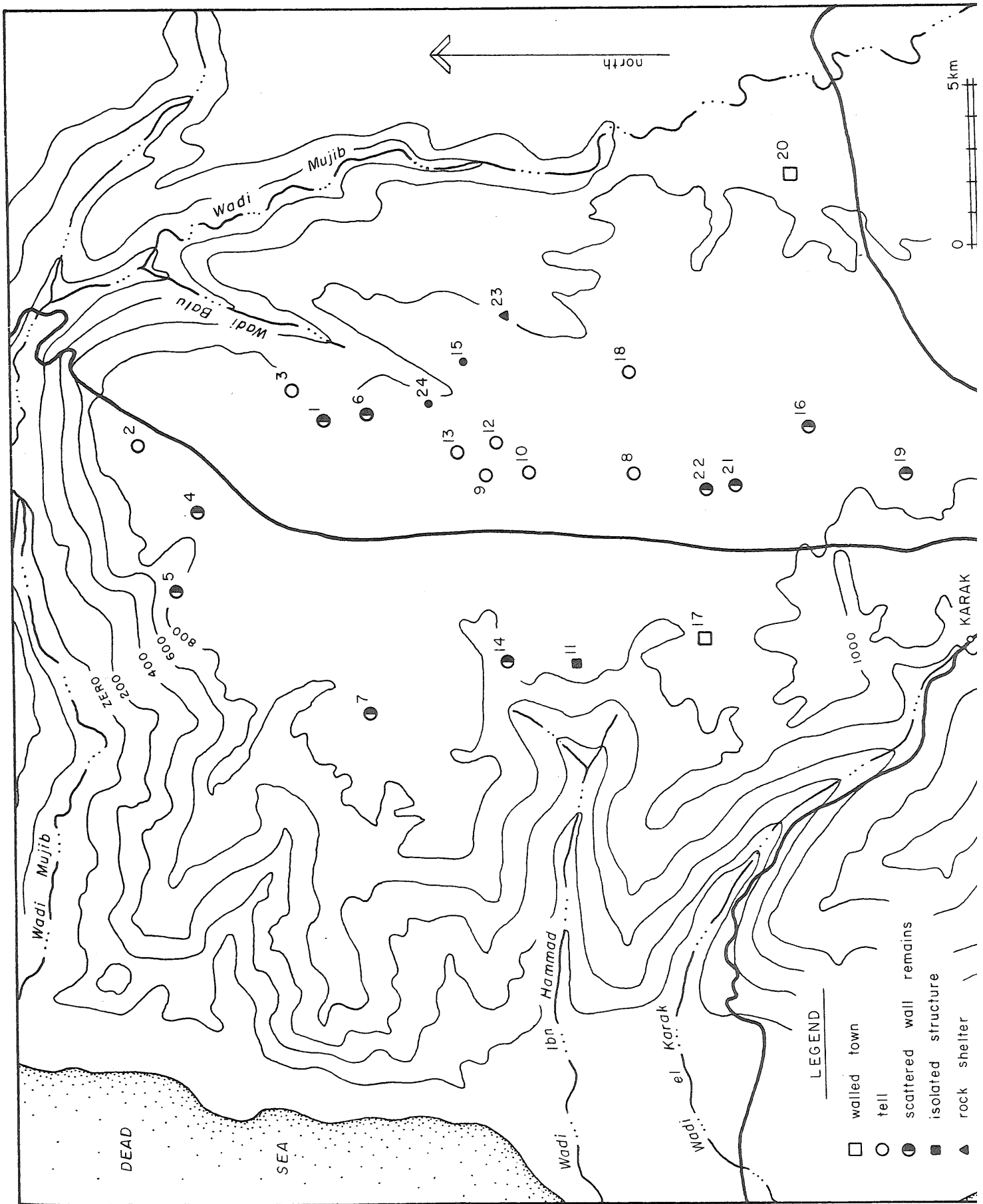
At the conclusion of two seasons of archaeological reconnaissance in central Moab, the Emory University team had recorded a total of 275 sites, twenty-four of which yielded EBA sherds. The diagnostic pottery from these two dozen sites reconfirms Pinkerton's observation by spanning the entire range of Early Bronze history.⁴ The pottery readings from these sites are provided below. Each of the central Moabite sites that yielded four or more EBA sherds is identified by a map number (which locates each site on Map 1), an English transliteration of the site's present name, Palestine Grid coordinates, the percentage of pottery from the site's total collection that dates to the EBA, and the number of diagnostic sherds from each subdivision of the EBA. Even such basic information indicates that the EBA occupation of central Moab varied in duration and density from one site to another. It should be pointed out that a collection of surface sherds does not represent an exact microcosm of a site's contents.

Pottery Readings from Central Moab's EBA Sites (Fig. 1)

1. Balu^a on the northern rim of Wadi Qurri, PG 245/860 (81% EBA): 136 EB IV
2. Rujm Umm el-Qleib, PG 233/920 (88% EBA): 7 EB I, 187 EB II-III, 95 EB IV
3. Ruins on Wadi Suwar, PG 255/879 (56% EBA): 5 EB IV
4. Mis^aar, PG 215/900 (18% EBA): 54 undifferentiated EBA
5. Rujm Umm Awarwareh, PG 190/914 (33% EBA): 20 undifferentiated EBA
6. Balu^a on the southern rim of Wadi Qurri, PG 245/855 (1% EBA): 2 undifferentiated EBA, 5 EB II-III, 1 EB IV
7. Imra^a, PG 153/845 (8% EBA): 13 EB II-III, 20 EB IV
8. el-Misna^a, PG 223/767 (15% EBA): 18 EB II-III, 15 EB IV
9. Humeimat Northwest, PG 226/803 (41% EBA): 17 undifferentiated EBA, 1 Chal/EB I, 59 EB IV.
10. Humeimat Southwest, PG 227/798 (4% EBA): 7 undifferentiated EBA, 1 EB IV.
11. Dolmen north of ed-Dimnah, PG 167/794 (61% EBA): 39 EB II-III, 1 EB IV
12. Humeimat Northeast, PG 235/799 (2% EBA): 4 undifferentiated EBA
13. Umm el-Habaj, PG 230/810 (17% EBA): 2 EB I, 3 EB II-III, 106 EB IV

A Preliminary examination of the ceramic evidence from southern Moab indicates that the full range of Early Bronze history is represented on the Kerak plateau. An additional twenty-eight

EBA sites from southern Moab brings the total number of EBA sites between Wadi Mujib and Wadi al Hasa to fifty-two.



14. Khirbet Harzia, PG 180/792 (15% EBA): 1 EB I, 6 EB II-III
15. Karyyah, PG 264/815 (61% EBA) 35 EB II-III 24 EB IV
16. Hujfa, PG 244/710 (13% EBA): 2 EB I, 5 EB II-III
17. Khirbet Birjes, PG 172/737 (82% EBA): 6 EB I, 209 EB II-III, 14 EB IV
18. Rujm Mensahalt, PG 258/773 (92% EBA): 6 Chal/EB I, 160 EB II-III, 9 EB IV
19. Ader, PG 225/685 (57% EBA): 67 EB II-III, 99EB IV
20. el-Lejjun, PG 317/719 (50% EBA): 2 Chal/EB I, 6 EB II-III, 28 EB IV
21. Muharakat South, PG 217/729 (25% EBA): 14 EB IV
22. Muharakat North, PG 216/733 (32% EBA): 5 EB II-III, 18 EB IV
23. Rock Shelter on the upper Wadi Mujib, PG 315/803 (96% EBA): 68 EB I
24. Balu^c South, POG 257/843 (64% EBA): 9 EB I, 8 EB II-III, 39 EB IV

Now that the findings of the 1978 and 1979 seasons of the Central Moab Survey have been given in synoptic fashion, it is necessary to compare Glueck's results with the more up-to-date information on the Kerak plateau's EBA occupation. Out of the eight sites in central Moab that Glueck identified as having sherds from the EBA or the EB IV-MB I period, there were two sites that yielded no Early Bronze sherds to the Emory University team, Khirbet el-Medeyineh and Freiwan. As noted above (cf. note 3), even Glueck dropped Freiwan from his list of Bronze Age sites. The Central Moab Survey found that 95% of the pottery from Khirbet el-Medeyineh dated to Iron Age I, and the other 5% of the sherds from this site came from the Early Roman period.

Of the six sites at which the Emory University team found undifferentiated EBA sherds, Glueck recognized two, Balu^c on the southern rim of Wadi Qurri and Mis^aar, as having been occupied in the Early Bronze period. The more recent survey also recovered undifferentiated EBA sherds from three other sites that Glueck did not visit, Humeimat Northwest, Humeimat Southwest, and Humeimat Northeast. The final site in the Central Moab Survey's list of undifferentiated EBA sites, Rujm Umm 'Awarwareh, was located by Glueck, but he did not mention any pottery in his description of the site, probably because he did not make the arduous climb down to its out-of-the-way location.

With reference to EB I sites in central Moab, Glueck's second edition of *The Other Side of the Jordan* assigned sherds from Ader, el-Lejjun, and el-Misna^c to this period. The Emory University team found

only one Chalcolithic/EB I sherd at el-Lejjun, while no EB I pottery was recorded at Ader or el-Misna^c. Glueck did not visit eight sites that yielded EB I pottery to the 1978-1979 surveyors (Humeimat Northwest, Umm el-Habaj, Khirbet Harzia, Hujfa, Khirbet Birjes, Rujm Mensahlat, Rock Shelter on the upper Wadi Mujib, and Balu^c South). Another site found in the Central Moab Survey's EB I list, Rujm Umm el-Qleib, was examined by Glueck, but he never assigned it to any period other than EB IV-MB I.

Of the fifteen EB II-III sites identified by the Central Moab Survey, Glueck's second edition of *The Other Side of the Jordan* agreed that Ader, el-Lejjun, and el-Misna^c had sherds dating to this period. Three sites that Glueck examined in the course of his survey, Rujm Umm el-Qleib, Balu^c on the southern rim of Wadi Qurri, and Imra^c, yielded EB II-III diagnostic pottery to the Emory University team, but Glueck never made this assignment. This is difficult to understand in light of the 187 EB II-III sherds that the recent survey found at Rujm Umm el-Qleib. More interesting is Glueck's failure to locate nine other sites with EB II-III pottery on their surface (Dolmen north of ed-Dimnah, Umm el-Habaj, Khirbet Harzia, Karyyah, Hujfa, Khirbet Birjes, Rujm Mensahlat, Muharakat North, and Balu^c South).

The Central Moab Survey found EB IV sherds at five of the sites that Glueck assigned to EB IV-MB I, el-Lejjun, Ader, Balu^c on the southern rim of Wadi Qurri, Rujm Umm el-Qleib, and el-Misna^c. On the other hand, Glueck failed to locate twelve sites that the Emory University

team identified as having EB IV occupation (Baluc on the northern rim of Wadi Qurri, Ruins on Wadi Suwar, Humeimat Northwest, Hmeimat Southwest, Dolmen north of ed-Dimnah, Umm el-Habaj, Karyyah, Khirbet Birjes, Rujm Mensahlat, Muharakat South, Muharakat North, and Baluc (South). One Glueck site, Imrac, yielded EB IV pottery to the recent surveyors, but Glueck never made this assignment.

Aside from the obvious explanations used to account for the differences between two surveys in the same area (e.g., erosion, building activity, farming, thoroughness or haste of the survey, etc.), what can be said about the different results obtained by Glueck and the Emory University team?

Although earlier geographers and explorers had published accounts of their travels in Transjordan, the major contribution toward an understanding of this region's antiquities came with the surface survey of Nelson Glueck. His four-volume *Explorations in Eastern Palestine* is a benchmark in the history of research on ancient Transjordan. Although the general reliability of much of Glueck's work has stood the test of time, various errors and biases are now known to have entered into his field methodology and analysis of the collected data (Mattingly, 1980: 74-75, n. 13).

Basically, Glueck's survey and the conclusions based on this work can be critiqued in three ways. First, given the size of the territory covered and the time allotted to this task, Glueck's survey was too superficial. Second, Glueck possessed an inadequate knowledge of Transjordan's pottery traditions. Third (and most important for the present study), too many of the theories that Glueck produced were based on what he did not find on his survey (Weippert, 1979: 28).

Glueck's own awareness of these weaknesses led him to modify many of his earlier conclusions in later publications. Much can be read between the lines in this candid statement that Glueck made in the introductory paragraph of *The Other Side of the Jordan*:

I have kept the book within the

compass of the original edition in 1940, that was reprinted in a paperback edition in 1945. I have, however, exercised the privilege of changing certain opinions and conclusions in the light of greater experience and knowledge since they were first written and on the basis of restudy of everything involved (1970: 1).

To be sure, Glueck's "restudy of everything involved" resulted in several far-reaching changes. Unfortunately, Glueck's recent positions remain unnoticed (Mattingly, 1983).

The failure to recognize that Glueck made a significant shift in his evaluation of the economic base, density, and duration of the EBA occupation in Moab has led scholars to maintain that there was a sharp dichotomy between Palestine's agriculturally-based urban society and the non-sedentary pastoral nomadism of Transjordan (Mattingly, 1980: 152-155). Glueck's early writings give the impression that there was very little population and certainly no sedentary occupation in Moab until EB IV-MB I, and this view has been followed, in one way or another, by scholars such as Van Zyl (1960: 102-103), Anati (1963: 15), Baly (1974: 93), and Aharoni (1979: 36, 137). The ethnographic evidence, Glueck's final reconstruction of Transjordan's EBA culture (1970: 145-157), data from Bâb edh-Dhrâ' and Khirbet Iskander, and the evidence recovered by the Central Moab Survey raise doubts about a theory that describes the EBA Moabite lifestyle as totally non-sedentary. As Dever (1980: 56-58) points out, this simplistic model betrays a lack of understanding about the character of pastoral nomadism. The new evidence seems to indicate that Moab's ancient population was involved in a variety of economic pursuits, an economic diversity that produced a spectrum of settlement types on the Transjordanian plateau.

Just as the culture of EBA Palestine was not the result of a homogeneous evolution from tribal bands to urban society, it is unlikely that ancient Moab was marked by a single economic activity

and lifestyle throughout its Early Bronze history. On the contrary, while certain segments of the Palestinian and Transjordanian population lived in walled towns during the EBA, other segments of the population lived in villages, isolated farmsteads, and tents. Semi-nomadic peoples wandered between the more sedentary farming communities and sustained themselves with pastoral, trading, and hunting activities. This reconstruction of a contemporaneous diversity of socioeconomic activities and the resultant continuum of settlement types is more compatible with the archaeological and ethnographic data that

are currently available on Transjordan. While this understanding of EBA Moab's culture is far removed from Glueck's early synthesis, it is harmonious with his latest reconstruction of Transjordanian history and subsequent archaeological investigation in this region, including the data collected by the Central Moab Survey. It is hoped that future research into Transjordan's EBA civilization will provide specific details for the picture that is just beginning to appear.

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