

Late Bronze Age Settlement Patterns North of the az-Zarqā' River

Introduction

In 2000 John Strange published an article discussing the Late Bronze Age in Northern Jordan in the light of the finds at Tall al-Fukhār. In this publication he contends that the northern part of Jordan was densely inhabited with people during the Late Bronze Ages. At the same time, he agrees with Nelson Glueck that the southern part of Jordan was only inhabited by nomads (Strange 2000: 476). Since Strange published his valuable article, more excavations have been conducted in the northern part of Jordan, especially in the vicinity of Irbid, e.g. Ya'amūn, Tall Juḥfiyya and Tall Zar'a in the Wādī al-'Arab. Moreover, several surveys and soundings have been recently conducted in the area of al-Mafraq producing Late Bronze Age sites such as Riḥāb (Husan 2002). In addition, new information from the area overlooking the eastern side of the Jordan Valley has been derived from the sites of Tall Abū al-Kharaz (Fischer 1999, 1997, 1996, 1995, 1994, 1993, in press) and Ṭabaqat Faḥl (Pella) (Bourke 1997). More tomb sites such as Qafqafā (Tall Jubayra) (Harahsheh: PC) and Saḥim (Fischer 1997) have been found in the north of Jordan and have to be added to the LB site list.

The writer's MA thesis (Kafafi 1977) discussed the Late Bronze Age Pottery from Jordan. Most of the LB materials included in this thesis were found in tombs rather than settlements such as at Quwayliba, Irbid and al-Ḥuṣn. The present paper aims at studying all the excavated and surveyed sites dated to the Late Bronze Ages and found in the area located to the north of the az-Zarqā' River.

All these excavated sites added more information to our knowledge about the settlement patterns in the north of Jordan during the LB periods.

Sites: Settings and Distribution

The most extensive exploration of Jordan was car-

ried out by Nelson Glueck between 1930 and 1947. After studying his collected pottery he came to the conclusion that the area south of the River az-Zarqā' was basically nomadic during the period from ca. 1900 to 1300BC. After some modifications on his theory, he presents the idea as follows: "during most of the following MBII period and much of the LB period, both in the Jordan Valley and in Transjordan, there seems to have set in a sharp decline of permanent sedentary settlement accompanied by a lessening and a centralization of sedentary population at a comparatively few mixed and strongly fortified points. In north Gilead and in the Jordan Valley, this decline seems to have been taking place mainly between the 18th and the 15th centuries BC, while in the rest of Transjordan south of the Wādī az-Zarqā' it seems to have extended between the 20th and 13th centuries BC. Available evidence confirms these inductions" (Glueck 1951a: 423, 1951b).

Albright agreed with Glueck concerning the gap. He also argued that there was a rapidly declining population density during that period (Albright 1961: 82).

W.F. Albright carried out extensive work in the south of the Levant; he conducted soundings and expeditions in the area of Moab (Albright 1924: 2-12, 1934: 13-18) and mentioned collected pottery sherds from the al-Karak area that he dated to the end of the LB period (ca. 1300BC) (Albright 1924: 11). Albright's work at the site Tall Bayt Mirsim in Palestine is still considered standard, because the pottery came from well-stratified contexts. Actually, Glueck uses this as dating basis.

H. Franken argues that the conclusion drawn by Glueck is defective and misleading. He notes that Glueck based his conclusion on biblical data and his interpretation lacks both chronological and his-

torical precision (Franken 1970: 7, 9). In addition, Franken argues that the pottery of the east side of the River Jordan can not be tied chronologically to the Palestinian repertoire, as Glueck does (Franken and Power 1971: 119, 123).

It has been noted that the decline in population, and density of the LB settlements, in the south of the Levant has been reflected in the results of many studies (Bienkowski 1989; Knapp 1992, 1989a, 1989b). Bienkowski argues that the main causes of this decline in the of the Levant were the diversion of resources to the Egyptian by the Canaanite city-states and the Egyptian control of international trade (Bienkowski 1986: 136-155). Knapp argues that the Egyptian conquest, and especially Thutmose's III administrative and military policy, was the reason for this collapse.

Since Glueck's explorations, a large number of archaeological surveys and excavations have been conducted all over Jordan (Palumbo 1994). As a result of this fieldwork, it may be concluded that the Glueck's theory is no longer acceptable. Also, a reliable description of the patterns of settlement during the LB period in Jordan has already been discussed (Strange 2001: 295-299). However, Strange (2000) approves Bienkowski's claim (1992) that Glueck's view still reflects the reality for the southern part of Jordan.

It ought to be mentioned that very little material from stratified excavations has been published from the LB Age except for preliminary reports. However, parts of the excavations conducted at the sites Ṭabaqat Faḥl (McNicoll *et al.* 1992, 1982), Tall as-Sa'īdiyya (Pritchard 1985, 1980), Dayr 'Allā (Franken 1992; Van der Kooij and Ibrahim 1989) and the Baq'a Valley (McGovern 1986) have been published in final form. The final report on the Middle and Late Bronze Ages of the town of Tall Abū al-Kharaz in the Jordan Valley is close at hand (Fischer *in press*).

In addition to the Jordan Valley tells, archaeological excavations have already been conducted at major LB sites located on the mountainous region of Jordan such as Tall Irbid (Lenzen 1992), 'Ammān Citadel (Dornemann 1983), Saḥāb (Ibrahim 1989) and recently at Ya'amūn (Najjar *et al.* 2001).

As a result of the surveys conducted in Jordan, it has been argued that there were some changes at the end of the Middle Bronze Age including a decrease in the number of settlements. The published

registered sites by Palumbo's JADIS project indicate that the number of the LB sites registered from Jordan is 295 sites (this exceeds the number of the MB sites, 290, by five sites).

Palumbo cited 117 LB sites in the northern part of Jordan. TABLE 1 shows a list of 15 excavated sites to the north of the az-Zarqā River; 7 of them are dated to the LBI and were occupied from the MBIII period; 6 dated to the LBIIA; 10 to the LBI-IB and 11 considered to belong to the transitional period from the LBIIB to the Iron 1A.

In addition, it is agreed upon that the period ranging from ca. 1550 to 1200BC was a dry period (Sauer 1986; Rosen 1995). This relative drought is thought to have affected the marginal areas to the east and to the south most severely and caused a change in settlement patterns and an economic decline (Strange 2001: 293). Nevertheless, it should be stated that this assumption, the reduction in the number of settlement during the LB compared with the other periods, is perhaps due to the small number of excavated LB sites.

This paper is restricted to a discussion of the settlement patterns in the area located north of the az-Zarqā' Valley. Table 1 indicates that this area has been continuously occupied from the Middle Bronze through the Iron Ages.

Late Bronze Age I Settlement Patterns (ca.1550-1400BC)

Ten sites located to the north of the Wādī az-Zarqā' are excavated and produced archaeological material dated to the Late Bronze Age. Unfortunately the excavated layers and material do not help scholars to attribute them either to cities, towns, villages or hamlets. However, the situation is different at the site of Abū al-Kharaz which has been described as a Late Bronze Age "walled town" by the excavator (Fischer: *in press*). Fischer argues that "there are at present no clear or well-established criteria for the terms "city", "town", "village" etc. And even if we all agreed on a list of criteria which would then create an equivalent between a certain term and the nature of an occupied area, we cannot compare urban settlements in the Southern Levant with, for example, those in Syria or Mesopotamia, because there would be only one site in the Southern Levant (Hazor) which is comparable with the large urban centres in Syria and Mesopotamia" (Fischer: *in press*).

However, it may be deduced that the sites of Tall

TABLE 1. shows specific information about the main excavated LB site to the north of the az-Zarqā' River.

Site Name	MBIII	LB I	LBIIA	LBII B	LBII/Iron 1
Dhahar al-Madina	Chocolate-on-White	Chocolate-on-White		Pottery Settlement	
Dayr 'Allā	Pottery (Yahudiyyeh and Chocolate-on-White)	Pottery (Chocolate-on-White, bichrome)		Pottery Architecture Settlement	Temple, inscribed tablets, Tauwsert Cartouch, Pottery
Al-Ḥuṣn	Pottery	Pottery	Pottery	Pottery Tomb	Pottery
Irbid	Pottery	Pottery	Pottery (Tomb D)	Pottery (cultic objects) Architecture Settlement	Pottery
Jarash	Pottery (Chocolate-on-White; White Slip Ware)	Pottery: (Chocolate-on-White; White Slip Ware)			pottery, floor fragments
Al-Juhfiyya				Pottery Architecture? Settlement	Pottery Architecture?
Katārat as-Samrā		Pottery (Tomb)	Pottery (Tomb)	Pottery Tomb	
Qafqafā				Pottery (Tomb), seal stamp (unpublished)	
Quwayliba		Pottery (Tombs 13 and 14)	Pottery (Tombs 13 and 14)		
Rihāb	Pottery (Chocolate-on-White, Tall al-Yahudiyyeh)	Pottery (Chocolate-on-White, Tall al-Yahudiyyeh)		Pottery Architecture? Settlement Tomb	Pottery
Saham (tomb)		Pottery ?	Pottery (and other items)	Pottery (and other items)	Pottery (and other items)
Ṭabaqat Faḥl (Pella)	Pottery (Tombs 1,62,91,94, 95 Areas III and XXV	Pottery (Tombs 20, 21, 62, 91,94,95 Areas III and XXV	Pottery Architecture (Shelters)	East Cut: Area IIIN Architecture Settlement	East Cut: Area IIIN, Governor's Residence
Tall Abū al-Kharaz	Pottery (Chocolate-on-White, Jordan Valley Bichrome), domestic structures, city wall Phases IV/1 and 2	Pottery (Chocolate-on-White, Jordan Valley Bichrome, Cypriote White Slip) city wall, casemate systems, commercial complex (bakery), domestic structures Phases V and VI	Pottery, Cypriote White Slip II, City wall, casemate systems, domestic structures, temple (!), Phase VII	Beginning of period: Pottery, domestic structures, city wall, casemate system Phase VIII	?
Tall al-Fukhār	Pottery (Chocolate-on-White)	Pottery (Chocolate-on-White) and Cypriot White Slip II "milk bowl")	Pottery	Pottery (Mycenaean) Fortification and a Palace building? Settlement	Pottery
Tall as-Sa'idiyya				Pottery (Mycenaean) Settlement Tombs	Governors Residence, Pit burials
Tall Zar'a				?	?
Ya'amūn	Tomb 1	Tomb 1			Architecture?

al-Fukhār and Tall Dayr ‘Allā attest to the presence a very short gap of occupation before they were reoccupied during the LB period. For example at Tall Dayr ‘Allā the excavators noticed the remains of a big fire that could have ended the MBIII occupation. At Tall al-Fukhār the excavator made no mention of any MBIII remains at the site. However, it has been claimed by the excavators of both sites that Chocolate-on-White pottery of the MBIII/LBI tradition has been encountered at both sites.

The site Tall al-Fukhār, situated on the eastern side of Wādī ash-Shallāla about 15km to the northeast of the city Irbid, was excavated by a Scandinavian expedition in 1990-1993 and yielded rich layers from the Late Bronze Age (Strange 2000: 477). The Late Bronze Age I archaeological remains consisted of pottery sherds and straight and circular walls were found on the middle part of the tall. In addition to the LBI remains, others dated to the EBI-III, MBIIA, LBII, LB/I1, I1a, I1b, I2c, and Hellenistic periods were found (Strange 1997). Unfortunately, the excavated LBI layers and materials at Tall al-Fukhār did not help the excavators to clearly establish the nature of settlement during this period. Apparently only LBIA Chocolate-on-White, and other pottery sherds assigned to the LBIB/LBIIA, were found [with other artifacts] in the debris of the destruction level of the LBII public building (Strange 1997: 402).

At Ṭabaqat Faḥl just below the surface of Area XXV, the excavators recognized a stratum dated to the MBIII and the LBIA. Actually, the excavated pottery from this deposit has been dated to the late 18th century and the 16th or 15th century BC. Remains of a poorly preserved domestic architecture with a mud brick floor were exposed during the early nineties excavations and no LBI *in situ* artifacts were excavated (McNicoll et al. 1992: 37). However, during the later seasons of excavations, several walls, a courtyard with thick reddish-yellow plaster floors, and rooms containing Chocolate-on-White decorated pottery pots belonging to the LBI have been registered (Bourke 1994).

In addition to Area XXV, several tombs excavated at Ṭabaqat Faḥl yielded material culture ascribed to the LBI period. This may help in explaining the nature of the settlement at the site during this period, which may have served as a town or a city.

The site of Tall Abū al-Kharaz was occupied

during the Early Bronze Age IB (Phase I), Early Bronze Age II (Phases II and III) and after an occupational lacuna during the MB II/III (Phases IV/1 and 2).

Other LBI sites such as Dhahar al-Madīna, Rihāb, Irbid and Tall Abū al-Kharaz showed continuation from the MBIII to the LBI. The excavations conducted at those sites produced considerable amounts of Chocolate-on-White pottery objects; the sites of Tall Irbid (Lenzen 1992; Lenzen *et al.* 1985: 153-155) and Abū al-Kharaz yielded other structural installations such as domestic structures, defensive systems and temples. For example, during the LBIA Irbid was defended by a basalt wall that was first built during the Middle Bronze Age and continued in use during the LBII.

The sites of Quwayliba, Irbid, Tall al-Ḥuṣn, and Katārat as-Samrā yielded LBIA, LBIB and LBIIA pottery pots excavated in tombs. The first three sites are located in the same natural region, while Katārat as-Samrā is located in the Jordan Valley, just 6km to the southwest of the site Tall Dayr ‘Allā.

To sum up, the published information from the excavated LBI sites in north of the Wādī az-Zarqā’ do not provide us with a clear idea about the nature of settlement during this period because the excavated area at these sites is extremely limited. In addition, only the excavator of the site Tall Abū al-Kharaz has stated how large the inhabited areas were during the LBI period (Fischer: in press).

However, we present below general remarks about the LBI settlement patterns:

1. The LBI sites were mostly located in areas overlooking wadis or/and very close to perennial water sources.
2. It may be estimated that they were small in area.
3. Only two types of settlements are recognizable:
 - a. Small cities or towns such as Tall al-Fukhār, Tall Irbid, Ṭabaqat Faḥl, Abū al-Kharaz and Tall Dayr ‘Allā.
 - b. Tomb sites such as al-Ḥuṣn and Katārat as-Samrā.

Late Bronze Age II Settlement Patterns (ca. 1400-1200BC)

Scholars have identified two sub-periods within the LBII: LBIIA (ca. 1400-1300BC) and LBIIb (ca. 1300-1200BC).

New terms	Earlier terms	Kings	Dynasties
MB:			
MB III	(MB IIC)	Hyksos	15-17
LB:			
LB IA	LB IA	Ahmose–Thut. III (22)	18
LB IB	LB IB	Thut. III (23)_IV	18
LB IC	LB IIA	Amen. III–Haremhab	18
LB II	LB IIB	Ramses I–Tewosret	19
LB II	LB IIB	Setnakht–Ramses III	19/20

Below we present a study of each period:

LBIIA Settlement Patterns (ca. 1400-1300BC)

Seven excavated sites located in the north of the Wadi az-Zarqā' produced archaeological material belonging to the LBIIA.

Unfortunately, there is insufficient information from LBIIA settlement sites from the northern part of Jordan. It may be argued that, first, the surveyors never separated the LBIIA from the LBIIB while studying and publishing their collected material and, second, in their studies archaeologists concentrate on the intermediate or transitional periods from the MBIII to the LBI and from the LBIIB to the Iron Ages.

However, the Egyptian literary sources from this period, such as the Amarna letters, point to the presence of City-States (e.g. Ṭabaqat Faḥl) in this part of the country. Unfortunately, the excavated archaeological remains from Ṭabaqat Faḥl, dated to the LBIIA period, do not give the impression of a large city. The architectural remains found belonging to this period consisted of only post-holes cut into the plaster, and stake-holes cut between them that may indicate the erection of shelters. In addition to Ṭabaqat Faḥl in the Jordan Valley, the site of Tall Abū al-Kharaz continued to be occupied during the period from the LBI to the LBIIA.

It seems that the LBIIA people in north of Jordan continued using the caves to bury their dead. Four of the eight excavated sites (Quwayliba, Irbid Camp, al-Ḥuṣn and Katārat as-Samrā) are tombs. It is only the Irbid Camp LBIB/LBIIA tomb that may be connected with the Tall Irbid settlement, while the status of the others is still unclear.

To sum up, our study has shown that, the published information about the LBIIA period is scant.

This may be due to the change of settlement patterns or to the smaller number of excavated LBIIA sites in the north of Jordan. In other words, it may be argued that this period witnessed a decline in occupation in this part of the country. Only six LBIIA sites have been excavated in north of Jordan, namely, Quwayliba, Tall al-Fukhār, Irbid Camp, Tall al-Ḥuṣn, Abū al-Kharaz and Katārat as-Samrā. Four of them are tombs (cf. TABLE 1). Actually, this may contradict the Egyptian literary sources which stress the city-state system.

LBIIB Settlement Patterns (ca. 1300-1200BC)

During the thirteenth century BC, the northern part of Jordan witnessed an enormous increase in the number of settlements. Strange (2001: 297) argued that this may not necessarily reflect an increase in population, but may represent a spread of inhabitants from central sites to other ones. Large cities attributed to the LBIIB period such as Tall al-Fukhār, Tall Irbid, Ṭabaqat Faḥl, Ya'amūn, Tall Abū al-Kharaz (in the mountain ranges), Tall as-Sa'idiyya, Tall Mazār and Tall Dayr 'Allā (in the Jordan Valley) and Riḥāb (in al-Mafraq area) have been registered. In addition, tomb sites such as Irbid Camp, Saḥm and Qafqafā were also found. Sites, which served as hamlets (e.g. Tall Juḥfiyya) were dated to the transition from the LBIIB to the Iron I, were also found. Private and communal buildings have been excavated at the city sites. For example a massive fortification and a large public structure containing imported pottery vessels and a scarab belonging to the nineteenth Dynasty in Egypt were encountered (Strange 1997: 402).

In addition, Irbid was a city during the period ranging from 1300 to 1150BC. This is evidenced by a temple building, a basalt city wall as well as major structures and tombs (Lenzen 1992, 1986; Lenzen *et al.* 1985; Dajani 1964).

The Jordan Valley LBIIB sites must be easily attributed to cities. For example, a temple and a Governor's residence were excavated in the East Cut: Area III N at Ṭabaqat Faḥl (Bourke 1997), the same could be reported from Tall as-Sa'idiyya (Tubb *et al.* 1996; Kafafi 2003). In addition, a temple dated to the LBIIB containing a cartouche belonging to Queen Tawsert from the Twentieth Dynasty and imported Mycenaean pottery vessels have been excavated at the site of Tall Dayr 'Allā (Franken 1992).

Most, if not all, of the LBIIB sites excavated in

the northern part of Jordan reflected a continuation of occupation through the beginning of the Iron Age periods. However, many of these sites, such as Juḥfiyya and Ya‘amūn, have recently been excavated. Future excavations may provide us with more information about the settlement patterns from the period assigned to the LBIIB/Iron I. The excavators of Juḥfiyya argue that the site served as a hamlet during this period (Lamprichs and Al-Sa‘ad 2003). It must be mentioned that this site had connection with other contemporaneous sites located in the same vicinity such as Tall al-Ushay‘ir, Tall Bayt Yāfā and Tall Irbid (Lamprichs and Kafafi 2001).

In the al-Mafraq region, two tomb sites have been reported. The first one is published by Piccirillo (1976: 27-30) and dated to the transitional period LBIIB/Iron I. The second tomb has been recently excavated by Abdel Rahim Hazim (PC: Unpublished) from the Department of Antiquities and is still unpublished. However, the excavated archaeological material from the last tomb may be dated to the LBIIB period.

The excavator of Tall as-Sa‘idiyya noted that the LBIIB inhabitants of the site buried their dead either in pits or in jars. The pit burials consisted of a simple pit that was dug into the thick silt deposit overlying the Early Bronze Age context and sometimes lined-up with small stones or mud-bricks. The published objects found in the Tall as-Sa‘idiyya cemetery include imported Mycenaean pottery vessels, local pottery, jewelry, scarabs and seals (Tubb 1997, 1990, 1988; Tubb and Dorrell 1994, 1993, 1991; Tubb et al. 1996; Pritchard 1980).

Another type of burial, which was also uncovered at Tall as-Sa‘idiyya and dated to the LBIIB, is the structural tombs. These consist of chambers that were built by horizontally laid and bonded two parallel rows of mud-bricks. The excavator argues that the roof was corbelled (Tubb 1988: 60).

Tall as-Sa‘idiyya produced another type of burial, in which the dead person was put inside a large jar. Infants (including fetuses) and adults were buried inside those jars but in different ways. Infants or fetuses, which were wrapped in a piece of cloth, were put inside one single jar sealed with a bowl or the base of another jar sometimes with funerary objects such as jewellery pieces. Adults required double pithoi, i.e. two large jars joined shoulder-to-shoulder after the removal of the necks and sealing the junction with large pieces of another jar or with

stones. The excavator of Tall as-Sa‘idiyya argues that this type of burial custom may be connected with the Sea People while the city was under Egyptian domination (Tubb 1997: 453).

Conclusion

After studying the results of the excavated and surveyed LB sites in Jordan, it should be concluded that two different types of settlements were practiced during this period. First, people dwelt in cities spread all over the Jordan Valley, e.g. Ṭabaqat Fahl, Abū Al-Kharaz, Tall as-Sa‘idiyya and the mountain region such as at Tall Irbid, ‘Ammān and Saḥāb. Second, Bedouins represented by the *Ap/biru* and the *Shasu* spread all over the al-Bādiya, especially in the southern part of Jordan. This claim agrees completely with what was proposed by Bienkowski and Strange. Literary sources stated that Thutmose II is known to have campaigned against the *Shasu* people. This name, that was found written in the documents of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties, refers to the nomads of southern Syria, Palestine and Jordan (Weippert 1974).

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