

Themes from the Ancient Near East BANEA Publication Series, Vol. 1

An Offprint from
FORCES OF TRANSFORMATION
THE END OF THE BRONZE AGE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

*Proceedings of an international symposium
held at St. John's College, University of Oxford
25–6th March 2006*

Edited by
CHRISTOPH BACHHUBER AND R. GARETH ROBERTS

OXBOW BOOKS
British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology (BANEA)

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PART 4

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

– CEMETERIES, CITADELS AND LANDSCAPES

FORCES OF TRANSFORMATION IN DEATH: THE CEMETERY AT TELL ES-SA'IDIYEH, JORDAN

John D. M. Green

Studies to date focussing on the end of the Late Bronze Age in the Mediterranean and Near East have highlighted major disruptions and migrations, cataclysmic destructions, and other events leading to social and political upheavals – with a less overt emphasis on continuity and revival in the subsequent Iron Age (*e.g.* Ward and Joukowsky 1992; Gitin *et al.* 1998). Recent studies of post-collapse regeneration emphasise the cyclical rise and fall of social complexity, in contrast to the traditional unilineal progression of social evolutionary studies (Schwartz and Nichols 2006). Within such frameworks, one can incorporate human responses to crisis, examining the ways in which societies and individuals reconstitute group and personal identities in such periods of social flux. In this paper, I apply these principles of social transformation to the contextually rich cemetery at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh (Jordan), comparing features of continuity and change from the thirteenth to tenth centuries BCE. This spans a period of prosperity within the Late Bronze Age (henceforth LBA), followed by a period of fragmentation in the twelfth century, and a subsequent period of recovery in the subsequent Early Iron Ages (henceforth EIA).

Far from reflecting conservative attitudes and beliefs, a ritual approach to death and burial provides an opportunity for examining some of the small scale human actions not only reflecting social concerns, but also contributing to the formation and transformation of social identity and social structure (Morris 1992; Voutsaki 1997; 1998). In this paper, I present my analysis of the Sa'idiyeh cemetery, alongside socio-political models for the period and region, with a focus on the Central Jordan Valley. The findings from Sa'idiyeh provide important insights into aspects of ethnicity and cultural identity, changes in the expression of vertical status in death, shifting attitudes to the body, and aspects of gendered identity. It is argued that funerary rituals formed important social arenas in which 'forces of transformation'

were being actively played out; not only reflecting social changes, but also contributing to future outcomes.

Tell es-Sa'idiyeh: background and chronology

Tell es-Sa'idiyeh is located 1.8 kilometres east of the River Jordan, roughly equidistant between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea (Fig. 10.1). The Jordan and the Jezreel Valleys were both important in terms of trade and communication in these periods, not only between coast and hinterland, but also within neighbouring highland regions. The central positioning of Sa'idiyeh in the Central Jordan Valley close to a crossing point of the River Jordan suggests its position was strategically important in terms of east-west trading contacts (Tubb 1995, 142). Sa'idiyeh is also located within prime agricultural land consisting of fertile alluvial soils and several perennial springs and wadis (Dorrell 1988) of integral importance to the local population.

Approximately eleven hectares in area, Sa'idiyeh consists of an Upper Tell with settlement remains dating from the Late Bronze to Roman periods, and a slightly smaller and less pronounced Lower Tell at its western side (Fig. 10.2). The Lower Tell was initially the location of an Early Bronze Age settlement, with burials of the Late Bronze, Iron Age, Persian, and Islamic periods cutting into these ruins and the silted-up spaces between collapsed walls. Tomb-types are highly varied within the cemetery (Fig. 10.3). Most are simple pit-graves for individual or multiple interment, with smaller proportions of mudbrick or stone-lined cists, single jar burials (predominantly for infants), and double-pithos burials. This latter burial type consists of two large store-jars pushed together with an extended primary burial interred inside.

The cemetery has been the focus of major excavation campaigns, firstly by James Pritchard of the University

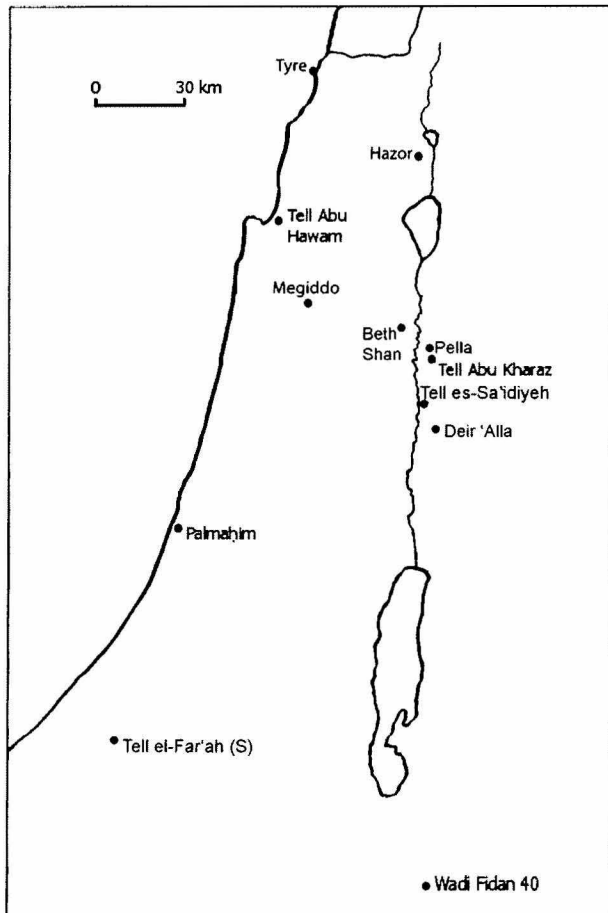


Fig. 10.1: The Southern Levant with sites mentioned in the text

of Pennsylvania in the 1960's (see Pritchard 1980), and secondly by the British Museum under the direction of Jonathan Tubb from 1985 to 1996, the results of which are published in preliminary form (Tubb 1988a; 1990; Tubb and Dorrell 1991; 1993; 1994; Tubb *et al.* 1996; 1997). My recently completed PhD thesis (Green 2006) focuses on the LBA and EIA cemetery, combining both Pritchard's published data and the unpublished records from the British Museum excavations. The Persian and Islamic burials are beyond the scope of this paper, and will be presented alongside the LBA and EIA burials in a final report on the British Museum excavations (currently in preparation).

The Lower Tell of Tell es-Sa'idiyeh is an extramural cemetery, a common feature of LBA lowland regions, especially during the thirteenth and twelfth centuries BCE in the Central Valleys (Gonen 1992, 20–21, 32–35). The spatial relationship between settlement and extramural cemetery indicates the deliberate separation of the living

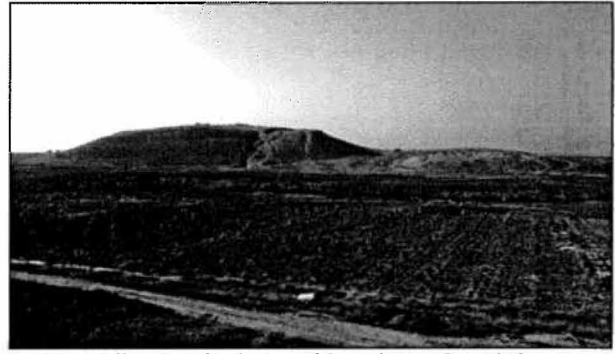


Fig. 10.2: Tell es-Sa'idiyeh viewed from the north, with the cemetery on the lower mound (right). Reproduced with the permission of Jonathan Tubb

and the dead, with the Upper and Lower Tells demarcated by a major difference in elevation. A detailed discussion of the settlement is beyond the scope of this paper, and its relationship with the cemetery is yet to be refined through post-excavation study. The Sa'idiyeh settlement is one of the few sites in this region where it will become possible to compare settlement and burial data, as strata XV–XII (and related strata 15–13) on the Upper Tell exhibit a close chronological relationship with LBA and EIA cemetery phases. For example, the substantial mudbrick storage and residential buildings of Stratum XII have been extensively excavated and are closely related to the EIA period of cemetery use.

There are several phases and areas of cemetery use on the Lower Tell, providing a diachronic and spatial dimension to the study of death and burial in the LBA and Iron Ages. Pritchard published 44 individually numbered tombs from his excavations in the north area of the Lower Tell. The more recent British Museum excavations have exposed around 450 tombs from the central BB100–600 area, and other areas to the south and southwest (BB700–1400 and DD). Approximately two-thirds (311 individually numbered tombs) are assigned to LBA and EIA periods. The remaining one-third are of later or indeterminate date.

There are three LBA and EIA phases based on stratigraphic relationships between intercutting and superimposed graves, combined with the distribution of diagnostic ceramic types, scarabs, and seals within a relative sequence. In my analysis, these three phases (1–3) are grouped into two main period samples, forming the basis for a discussion of changes and developments over time (Table 10.1). *Period 1* dates to the thirteenth to twelfth centuries BCE (LB IIB–Iron IA) and incorporates Pritchard's 'earliest' and 'intermediate' period burials, and British Museum cemetery Phase 1. A clear horizon is observed at the start of Phase 2, with the construction of numerous mudbrick cists directly over earlier pit graves. *Period 2* dates broadly to the eleventh to ninth centuries (Iron IB–Iron IIA), incorporating Pritchard's 'late'

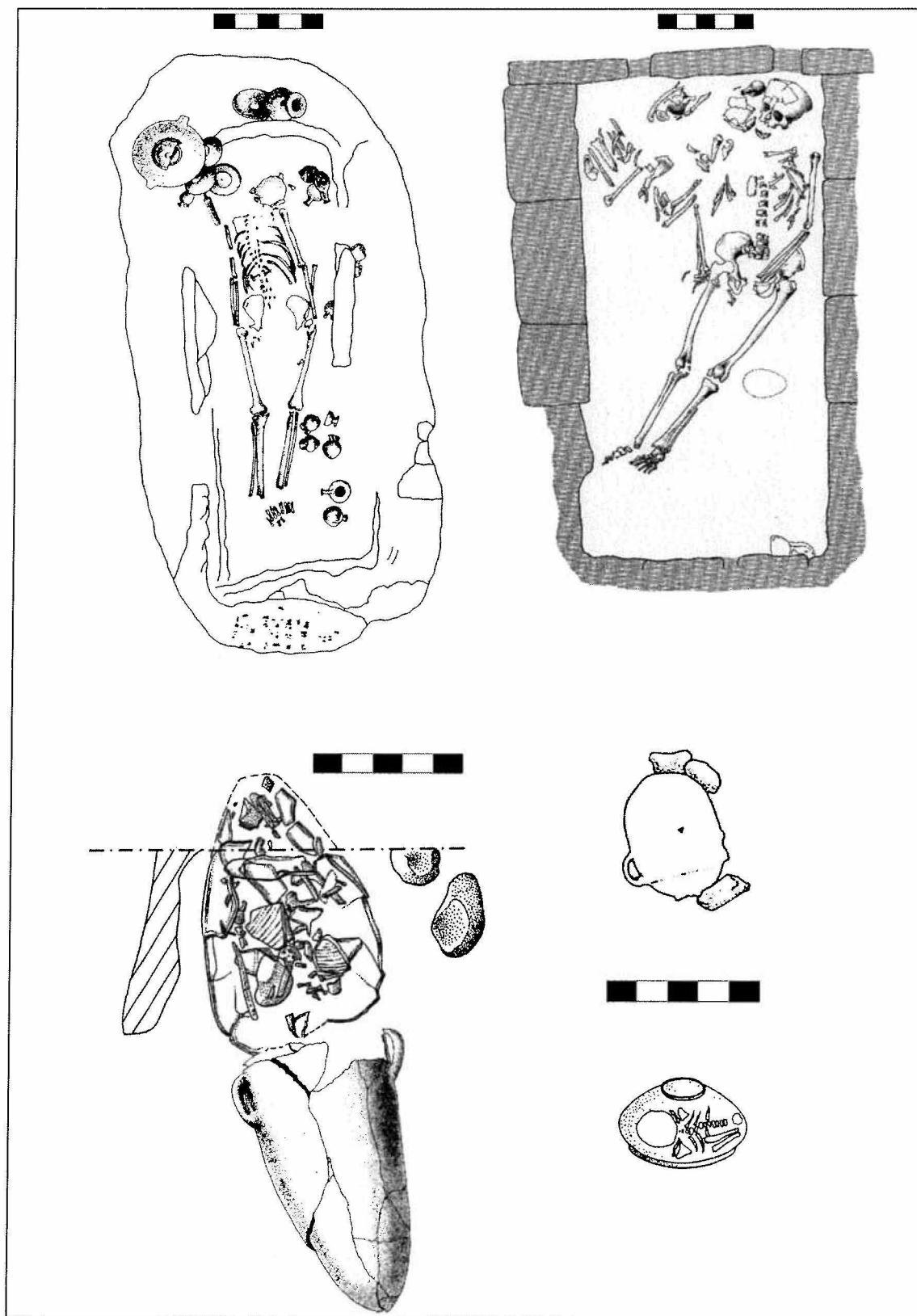


Fig. 10.3: Selected burial types at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh. Clockwise from top left: pit burial with inner clay kerb T.46; multiple cist burial T.188; jar burial T.471; bowl burial T.52; double-pithos burial T.204. Each scale represents 0.5 metres. Reproduced with the permission of Jonathan Tubb

<i>Cemetery periods in this study</i>	<i>Pritchard's periodisation</i>	<i>British Museum cemetery phases</i>	<i>Chronological Period</i>	<i>Approximate dates (BCE)</i>
Period 1	"Earliest" and "intermediate"	Phase 1	LB IIB–Iron IA	Late 13th–12th Centuries
Period 2	"Late"	Phases 2–3	Iron IB–Iron IIA	11th to 9th Centuries

Table 10.1: Periodisation of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age cemetery at Sa'idiyeh

period burials and British Museum cemetery Phases 2–3. Period 2 could potentially start as early as the late twelfth century, although there is a gap of indeterminate length after the end of Period 1. Phases 2–3 are not subdivided, as the cemetery exhibits continuity in use over time, with close similarities in ceramic types found in both phases.

Ethnicity and elite-emulation

The ethnicities of the Sa'idiyeh cemetery population were given a high priority in previous publications, with the presence of Sea Peoples, central Anatolians (Hittites), and Egyptians implicated in interpretations of grave-objects, body treatments, and burial types (Pritchard 1968; Negbi 1991; Tubb 1995; Negbi 1998). These varied ethnic interpretations were layered onto the Canaanite cultural background of the LBA southern Levant (Tubb 1998), with the Central Valleys (including the Jordan Valley) viewed as a region of Canaanite settlement in LB and Iron I periods (Singer 1994, 310–1). Hittites and Sea Peoples have often been implicated within the upheavals and migrations of populations in the eastern Mediterranean and Near East at the close of the LBA and start of the Iron Age, and their identification has heavily tempered the study of burials from Sa'idiyeh and other South Levantine sites (e.g. Dothan 1982; Braunstein 1998; Bloch-Smith 1992; Gonen 1992; Gilmour 1995; 2002).

Ethnic interpretations for Sa'idiyeh primarily focus upon the Period 1 cemetery (LB IIB–Iron IA). Although there is high potential for diversity within populations, and changes in population over time, it is difficult to pinpoint specific cultural or ethnic identities of the Sa'idiyeh cemetery users. The LBA was a cosmopolitan period, with the transmission, transformation, and modification of ideas and material culture over large distances, making the identification of specific ethnic groups difficult and obscure. Fredrick Barth (1969) and Siân Jones (1997) highlight problems in directly linking specific traits (including material culture) with ethnic identity, highlighting the complexity and multi-levelled nature of ethnicity. This can also be applied to burial evidence: there can be no direct one-to-one correlation between ethnic groups and specific burial types, grave-objects or ritual actions.

The role of Egyptian material culture in the South Levant highlights a general problem with interpreting ethnicity and cultural influences using burial data. As Susan Braunstein (1998, 311–15) found in her study of the Tell el-Far'ah South cemetery, it can be difficult to distinguish materially between burials of 'Canaanized Egyptians' or 'Egyptianized Canaanites'. Nevertheless, aspects of the Sa'idiyeh cemetery shed light upon the relationships between local and Egyptian traditions. Locally produced Egyptian-style pottery found in the cemetery includes handleless jars, 'beer bottles' and shallow bowls, occasionally found in large quantities (e.g. T.102). According to Mario Martin (2004), this combination is a feature of sites associated with Egyptian control and administration in Canaan. Other aspects of Egyptian-style material culture can be viewed as prestige-related objects, including bronze vessels, ornaments, ivory objects and stone vessels. These are objects potentially linked to status-enhancing emulative strategies, and not necessarily to a direct Egyptian presence (Higginbotham 2000).

Body treatments at Sa'idiyeh suggest intriguing Egyptian influences in death. The so-called 'bitumen tombs' at Sa'idiyeh (T.102 and T.117) show that elaborate rituals took place involving the pouring of heated bitumen over human remains wrapped within textiles perhaps representing 'attempted mummification' (Pritchard 1968, 108; 1980, 15, 20–1; Gonen 1992, 89). It is impossible to say whether those involved in the preparation of the dead intended to replicate Egyptian mummification techniques, or the degree to which they were following Egyptian cosmological concepts. A possible explanation is that Egyptian body preparation rites were actively manipulated and transformed, perhaps an idiosyncratic and emulative adaptation of Egyptian death rituals within a local setting. Other burials exhibit common features such as tight binding of the body and containment of objects within linen shrouds (preserved through mineralised textiles on bronzes), which can also be viewed as a 'partial transfer' or a local modification of Egyptian death rituals (Gonen 1992, 30–1; Tubb 1995, 141).

Other foreign populations implicated in publications to date include Aegean or 'Sea Peoples' groups. Pritchard initially proposed that Sea Peoples were present at Sa'idiyeh (Pritchard 1968) using as an example the T.101 assemblage, which included multiple bronze vessels and a tripod stand

(Pritchard 1980, 10–14, figs. 3–4). Pritchard's interpretation was based partly upon the bronze vessels, paralleled with Hector Catling's (1964) study of Aegean and Cypriote bronzes. These vessels are characterised as 'Levanto-Cypriote' by Ora Negbi (1998, 194). Further material parallels were sought with the nearby Beth Shan cemetery that contained 'grotesque' anthropoid coffins. This appeared to strengthen the argument that these coffins represent the burials of Sea Peoples mercenaries (Oren 1973; Dothan 1982; McGovern 1994), amongst other groups. A link between Sea Peoples and the Jordan Valley was further reinforced by the Biblical reference (I Kings 7:46) to already-established bronze working traditions within the region (Pritchard 1968; Tubb 1988b; 1995). This interpretation may partly depend on the premise that the Philistines and other Sea Peoples groups had a monopoly on metal-working in Iron I (Muhly 1982).

However, Aegean and Cypriote material culture influences at Sa'idiyeh provide insubstantial support for the notion of Sea Peoples settlement as far inland as the Jordan Valley, as subtle material culture features may relate to interaction and trade between coastal Levantine centres and the Northern central valleys during LB IIB–Iron I. For example, the popularity of imitation sack-shaped pyxides at Sa'idiyeh derives from Aegean prototypes; local imitations are already present from the late thirteenth century (Amiran 1969, 186), prior to the posited twelfth century migrations to Southern Levantine coastal regions by Sea Peoples (Dothan and Dothan 1992; Stager 1995).

The double-pithos burial at Sa'idiyeh has been incorporated into many migration and ethnicity-based theories. Interpretations include Sea Peoples from the Aegean sphere (Tubb 1988b; 1995), Anatolians or Hittites (Kempinski 1979; Negbi 1991; Gonen 1992, 30; Negbi 1998; Holladay 2001; Gilmour 2002, 117–18), transhumant migrants from the Transjordan plateau (van der Steen 1996, 68), and Egyptian emissaries (Wengrow 1996, 319). These conflicting interpretations are problematic, and are unresolved. Grave-objects associated with double-pithos burials at Sa'idiyeh include a mixture of local ceramic forms and Egyptian-style prestige goods including ivory objects and metal tools. The objects do not provide a clear indication of ethnic identity, but rather demonstrate the relative status of the double-pithos users within the cemetery, and a potential for Egyptian emulation.

The relatively sudden appearance of the double-pithos burial in northern Israel, Palestine and Transjordan in Iron I (Wolff 2005), and apparently not during the preceding LB IIB period, still requires explanation. Migration theories cannot be ruled out. None of the above authors have cited the Middle Assyrian cemetery at Mari (Tell Hariri) on the River Euphrates, dated to *c.* 1350–1200 BCE, and initially uncovered by André Parrot in the 1930's (Jean-Marie 1999, 42–61). Double-pithos burials are more common at Mari than any other Near Eastern site for this period,

some containing rich finds from north Syrian and Egyptian spheres. This reflects the cosmopolitan nature of Mari on a major crossroads of trade and communication, but it remains difficult to pinpoint an origin for this burial type, or a specific ethnicity for its users. The Mari evidence shows that the double pithos burial is found in regions other than central Anatolia in the LBA, and that migration theories will need to be revised to incorporate Syro-Mesopotamian regions. Possibly some groups settled in northern Palestine and Transjordan in Iron I after the fragmentation of regional exchange networks in northern Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia.

The double-pithos burial may be a special case, although as illustrated by the elite-emulation model the expression of social identity at the ethnic level need not be expressed (or detected) materially. Varied 'death-styles' and forms of ritual elaboration may actually mask the expression of ethnic identity. A disproportionate focus on ethnicity therefore needs to be balanced with an overview of other dimensions of social status – including age, gender and vertical status. By examining changes over time in the cemetery we may get closer to identifying patterns independent of ambiguous culture-historical determinations.

Late Bronze Age prosperity and status expression

The relative prosperity of the Period 1 (LB IIB–Iron IA) cemetery is clear from the diversity of types and materials deposited in the burials (*c.* 74 individually numbered tombs). For example, several of the burials excavated by Pritchard (1980 *e.g.* T.102, T.117, T.136B) exhibit a high degree of wealth and diversity, indicated by quantities of bronze vessels, imported or imitation Aegean pottery, ivory items, faience and stone vessels and precious metals. A number of British Museum tombs also contain highly valued items, including from T.232, a bronze bowl and ivory fish box (Tubb 1988a, fig. 47), and from T.46, large quantities of ceramics, bronze items, and an elaborate bead necklace (Tubb 1988a, fig. 46A–B). This sample demonstrates access to a diverse range of types and materials by the Sa'idiyeh inhabitants and their ability and desire to display and dispose of them with the deceased during funerary rituals.

In terms of burial types and spatial organisation, the Period 1 cemetery is characterised by rows and clusters of simple pit graves, with a smaller number of double-pithos burials, stone-lined cists and infant jar burials. Most tombs contain individual, primary interments; a common LBA lowland tradition (Gonen 1992). The practice of individual inhumation partly explains the spacious and regular cemetery layout in this period, noted in BB100–600. Almost all individuals in the BB100–600 area are fully extended and orientated with their heads to the west, often aligned side-by-side in distinct northwest–southeast rows, attesting to a degree of planning

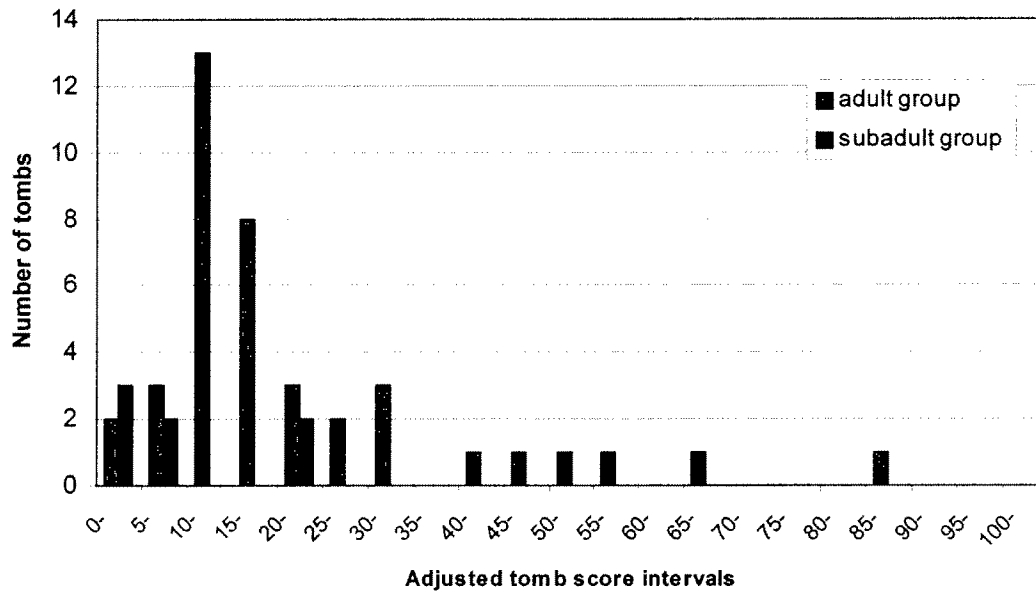


Fig. 10.4: Grave-score distribution for Period 1 tombs

in the selection, maintenance, and control of burial space over time. The presence of small segmented clusters within the rows could indicate a smaller dimension of cemetery organisation, perhaps interrelated kin-groups.

There are also potential chronological differences between the North and Central areas. Pritchard's 'earliest' burials from the North area are assigned to the late thirteenth–early twelfth centuries (Pritchard 1980, 28–29; *e.g.* T.117, fig. 21), containing imported Aegean and Cypriote pottery. The central BB100–600 area overlaps chronologically with Pritchard's (1980, 289) 'intermediate' period tombs, due to the apparent substitution of imported stirrup jars for 'local' LH IIIB imitations in the early twelfth century (Tubb 1988a, T.46, fig. 48A.14). This could indicate a change in cemetery use with the most elaborate and prestigious tombs marking the cemetery 'foundation' in the North area, followed by a gradual shift southwards over time.

A detailed analysis of the better preserved tomb assemblages (Period 1, N=64) utilises a relative scoring system derived from a co-occurrence analysis of object types and materials, in turn producing scores for individual tombs (*e.g.* Jørgensen 1987; Baboula 2000). The sample was further sub-divided into individual adult and sub-adult samples, reducing the respective sample sizes slightly (Fig. 10.4). This method allows particular objects and materials and other features to be singled out as 'rank markers' (*i.e.* highly-valued, or prestige objects) if correlated with high-scoring tombs.

This scoring method, developed from processual approaches to mortuary archaeology, does not attempt to directly link the relative wealth of the deceased with those of living individuals or living society. Status may be

masked, inverted, or over-exaggerated in death (Shanks and Tilley 1987; Morris 1992; Rega 1996; Härke 1997). A more explicit intention is to explore differentiations in tomb scores as a representation of relative material investment in the burial ceremony. Distinctions in material investment are considered to represent the wealth and status of the funeral organizers (Härke 1997; cited in Parker Pearson 1999, 84), who inadvertently contribute to the formation of an 'ideal' social structure through death and burial ceremonies (Morris 1992).

The Period 1 grave-scores are hierarchical in structure, with a small number of high scoring tombs (Fig. 4: 40+ points, 8% of Period 1 sample), and a majority belonging to low to medium scoring tombs. High scoring tombs share common attributes. They are furnished with large quantities of Egyptian-style material culture of both a prestige and utilitarian nature, including shallow ceramic bowls and multiple bronze vessels (*i.e.* wine-sets), which are either symbols or actual manifestations of food and drink provision at the funeral. Other rare items include precious metal jewellery, Egyptian-style lotus-seed vessel pendants, and scarab rings.

Imported wares or local imitations are also present, including stirrup jars, pyxides and juglets (often in multiples), and Egyptian-style stone vessels. Such items are generally thought to have contained precious oils or unguents. The most common interpretation of their contents is that they were used to perfume or clean the body (Cook 1981; Shelmerdine 1985, 141–3; Clamer 1986; Sparks 2001, 259). Although it is commonly thought that stirrup jars contained perfumed oils for use in association with the body or clothing, some may have contained wine or flavoured oils

for use in cooking or dining (Leonard *et al.* 1993, 105). Cypriote Base Ring juglets may have contained opiate-based products (Merrillees 1962). Until chemical analysis can be carried out on specific vessels, a wide range of contents should therefore be considered.

Another feature of this group is unusual body treatment; including the use of bitumen, or face-down body placement (Fig. 3: T.46). There is also a correlation between tomb elaboration and high scoring tomb assemblages, with the use of larger pits, and stone or mudbrick linings. A greater provision of space around the body within the tombs is evidence of intentionality and the structured orchestration of ritual ceremonies at the place of burial. Deliberate above-ground marking is unclear due to erosion and subsequent tomb-intercutting.

These high-scoring tombs are the closest we can get to a picture of elite burial rituals at Sa'idiyeh, showing that status expression in death was highly individualized, focused on the body, and communicated through repetitive acts involving the deposition of precious oils and symbolic food and drink offerings. A combination of elaborate exotica, repeated deposition of similar items (perhaps indicating multiple ritual participants), multiple serving vessels for food and drink, and elaborate body ornamentation and treatment, contributes to an overall impression of wealth, access to highly valued objects, and innovative rituals. In the context of death and burial, such ritualised provisions and actions might in turn enable the living to acquire a certain level of prestige, contingent upon the interpretation that funerals can be used as arenas for the creation of status, power and legitimacy by the survivors (Voutsaki 1997, 37). Furthermore, the presence of Egyptianizing material and body preparations, suggests a close relationship between elites and the Egyptian administration, reflecting the combined role of direct contacts and emulative strategies within lowland Canaan (Higginbotham 2000).

Mid-scoring tombs (10–40 points, *c.* 50% of the sample) are fairly well represented. Many tombs contain between two and three items that are considered 'highly-valued', such as a single bronze vessel, weapon or tool, an ivory object, a stone vessel, in addition to a small number of vessels representing a typical 'universal' ceramic assemblage (*e.g.* storage jar, lamp, bowl, jug or juglet). A large proportion of cemetery users had access to a few highly-valued items, especially metals, precious oil containers, and other items of specialised craft production. Low ranking groups with just a few ceramic items are under-represented in the sample. This does not appear to fit with hierarchical models, where we might expect a greater proportion of 'have-nots' compared to 'haves' in the cemetery.

At first glance, this could suggest that the cemetery population represents an incomplete social spectrum – *i.e.* those buried by poorer sectors of the population were not given as much access to the cemetery. Just as the cemetery

is unlikely to represent a complete demographic population (Leach and Rega 1996, 134), neither should it be expected to represent all social groups or classes. Alternatively, the analysis could suggest that not only elites had access to luxury goods. Perhaps an emergent and fairly affluent middle-status group actively emulated the ritual practices of higher elites through smaller-scale acts of consumption and deposition, participating within elite value systems through the deposition of such items. Such a 'trickle down' effect may on the one hand stabilize and support an inner-elite structure (perhaps through largesse). Conversely such an effect may subvert and transform relationships between lesser and higher elites (Barth 1969, 33; Peregrine 1999).

Twelfth century decline and collapse

The Period 1 cemetery provides an apparent picture of prosperity and wealth in the central Jordan Valley at the close of LB IIB and the start of Iron I. This partly fits Piotr Bienkowski's (1989) interpretation that wealth was concentrated at lowland urban centres and trade routes associated with Egyptian administration and control. This LB IIB–Iron IA regional prosperity model may also fit the posited role of Sa'idiyeh as a frontier garrison or trading outpost associated with Egyptian economic and military control (Tubb 1995, 142). However, there should not necessarily be an equation between wealth, prosperity and socio-political stability. Such concentrations of wealth can be contrasted with an impoverished picture of surrounding highland regions. Resistance to the Egyptian system from non-cooperative city states and semi-nomadic tribal entities living on the margins demonstrates the instability and asymmetry of the wider socio-political situation (Redford 1992; Bunimovitz 1995; Higginbotham 2000): not only were there disparities in wealth between lowland centres and the more isolated highland regions (Bienkowski 1989). The more nuanced picture from the Sa'idiyeh cemetery adds to existing interpretations by suggesting that social tensions between elites and non-elites were felt within lowland centres. Furthermore, it has been argued by Bruce Routledge (2004) that high-status elaborations in the use of material culture in ritual settings, in addition to more permanent symbols of power such as temples, palaces, and residencies, helped to maintain a fragile system of rule that was in 'perpetual crisis'. At the same time this reinforced socio-economic distinctions between town rulers (*hazannu*) and the peasantry (*hupšu*; Routledge 2004, 67–71, 76–77).

During the first quarter of the twelfth century, maritime trade routes between the Levant, Cyprus and the Aegean were already in decline and becoming disrupted by migrations, conflict, and destructions of key centres on the Levantine coast and Cyprus (Karageorghis 1992; Redford 1992, 241–56; Yon 1992). Despite these disruptions, the twelfth

century in the South Levant had a different trajectory due to a period of military resurgence by Egypt in the 20th Dynasty on its northern frontiers, extending the relative political, cultural and economic stability of the region well into the twelfth century (Weinstein 1981, 22–3; 1992; Bietak 1993, 301; Finkelstein 1998, 141). The finding of a small number of imported Aegean and Cypriote vessels alongside locally made Aegean-style vessels in the Period 1 cemetery at Sa'Idiyeh could suggest a continued demand for such locally made versions. Although emulative strategies played a role in the appearance of locally made Aegean-style vessels, a shift towards local production may have intensified as such imported products became increasingly scarce following a decline in Late Bronze Age maritime trade.

Eveline van der Steen (1999) suggests that the mid-twelfth century Egyptian withdrawal had a devastating impact on the local economy of the Jordan Valley, previously geared towards servicing the Egyptian-led system. The withdrawal particularly affected markets in the Deir 'Alla area (close to Sa'Idiyeh), and over-dependent Transjordan centres. Stephen Bourke (2006) suggests that parts of Transjordan, including the Pella region, had already entered into a steady but gradual economic decline from the thirteenth century due to the cumulative impact of Egyptian military campaigns. Despite this decline, as Bourke argues, there is settlement continuity in the Pella region throughout Iron I, arguing against an entirely cataclysmic interpretation for the Jordan Valley.

Partly due to a lack of textual sources for the thirteenth to twelfth centuries (such as equivalents to the El-Amarna letters), a question remains as to whether there was direct Egyptian involvement in the central Jordan Valley, or semi-autonomous political control (Savage and Falconer 2003, fig. 4, clusters 6 and 13). Regardless of whether an Egyptian withdrawal hastened a gradual decline, or caused a sudden collapse, combined disruptions and limited military support would have resulted in greater insecurity along trade routes. Prior to their decline, the inland trade routes were an important conduit through which local elites obtained luxuries and exotica through direct or indirect contacts with the Egyptian sphere, perhaps enhancing status and political power through elite emulation. If conduits of trade and their administration were disrupted, this may have led to a legitimization crisis (Peregrine 1999) and a breakdown of an already fragile social order. As Egyptian power waned from the mid-12th century BCE, semi-nomadic groups previously on the margins and listed as enemies of Egypt, including the Hapiru, Shasu, and Israel (Redford 1992), and non-cooperative Canaanite states, were able to take fuller advantage of a fragmented political landscape. Within such a scenario, a frontier trading outpost such as Sa'Idiyeh would have become highly vulnerable and potentially unserviceable, prompting an end to this period of relative prosperity.

Communality and egalitarianism in the Early Iron Age

A specific end date for the Period 1/Phase 1 cemetery remains unclear. At some point in late Iron I, numerous mudbrick lined cist tombs were constructed, marking the start of cemetery Phase 2. The stratigraphic sequence is clearest in squares BB100–200, where cists were found immediately overlaying Phase 1 pit graves (e.g. T.232 under T.41; Tubb 1988a, 64; 1990, 106–7). A series of cists (T.32, T.24, and T.42) were laid out on a west-east 'head-to-toe' alignment differing from the side-by-side pit graves in Phase 1. The Phase 2 tomb builders apparently took care not to disturb the underlying burial deposits, perhaps indicating population continuity over time, or at least a degree of respect and awareness for the earlier burials.

In material culture terms, there are several important developments. Phase 2 mudbrick-lined tombs contain new ceramic types, including the 'ridge-necked' jar with Iron IB–IIA parallels at Deir 'Alla and Beth Shan (James 1966, fig. 64.10; Franken 1969, fig. 62.30), and red slipped and hand-burnished sack-shaped pyxides and long-necked juglets (e.g. James 1966, fig. 61.5; Franken 1969, fig. 70:50, 51). Egyptian-style stamp-seal amulets (e.g. T.118, T.33, T.65) include those assigned to the 21st–22nd Dynasties (Münger 2003, 75; Egger and Keel 2006, 372–375, nos. 13–18). 'Hippo-jars' are 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 clearly assigned to Iron II traditions (Amiran 1969, 256–7, pl. 86.12–13, pl. 96).

A key finding is a decline in the quantity of grave-objects, from between five to six objects per individual in Period 1, to an average of one or two objects in Period 2. Another feature is the relative decline in the diversity of types and materials within tomb assemblages, often limited to a single juglet or pyxis, or a few bronze or iron body ornaments and beads. Bronze vessels, and metal tools and weapons have a more restricted distribution, and ivory and gold are absent. Imported precious-liquid containers such as stirrup-jars and Egyptian-style stone cosmetic containers are substituted by ceramic juglets, pyxides and local style stone-vessels. This reduction in high-value materials and imports could be partly attributed to a decline in long-distance trade networks and also a change in the local specialised craft production in late Iron I. If considering burial contents to be a general indication of the relative affluence of living society, the pattern indicates general poverty at least in material terms. This mirrors the view from nearby Tell Abu Kharaz, where a general concern with basic survival is interpreted from the EIA settlement remains (Fischer 2001, 307).

In total, 135 tombs are assigned to Period 2, of which 76 are of adequate preservation for analysis. Tomb-score distributions are lower on average (compared to Period 1)

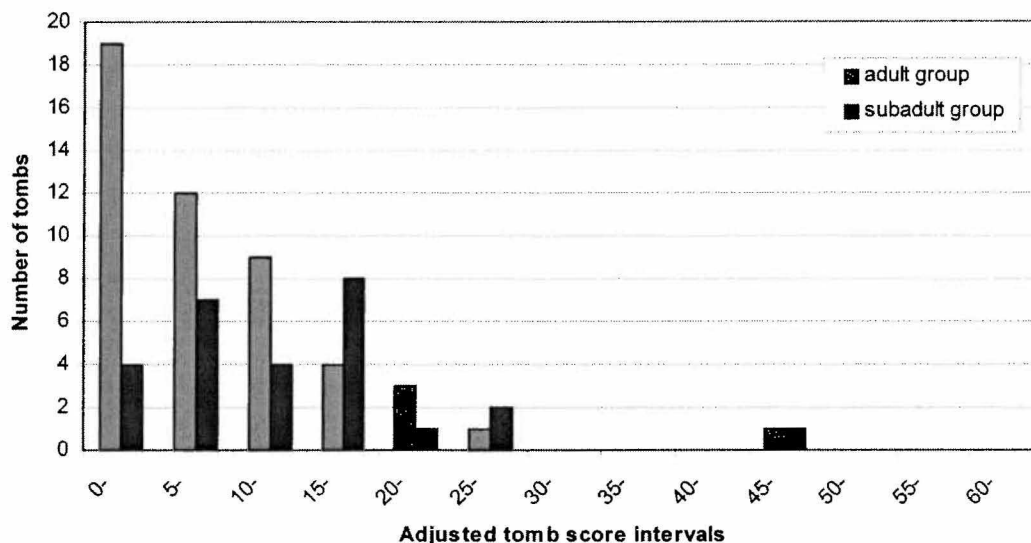


Fig. 10.5: Grave-score distribution for Period 2 tombs

and more evenly distributed across the sample (Fig. 10.5). The highest scoring tomb (T.282: 45+ points) contains up to eleven individuals, equivalent to less than one object per individual, and demonstrating the accumulation of objects after successive reuse. More limited tomb score differentiations could indicate a more egalitarian social structure with fewer vertical social distinctions being expressed in death.

Single inhumations continue, although multiple-interment becomes a common feature. Cists such as T.282 (Fig. 10.6) contain multiple interments of males, females, adults and sub-adults suggesting that 'family' tombs were now being maintained and re-used in Phase 2. This marks a change from the Phase 1 pattern of single interments within clusters or rows. Secondary treatment becomes common, with body parts such as the skull and long-bones being re-interred alongside primary burials, or within separate installations (Tubb 1988a, 61–63, fig. 44). This suggests that attitudes to death and the body were changing, with a greater emphasis on kinship relations, and a focus on elaborate death rituals involving commemorative and communal activities – including the manipulation of decayed remains after death.

An intriguing feature of Period 2 is a drastic reduction in ceramic bowls and lamps, which were common in Period 1 (in approximately 50% of tombs). Why should such a significant component of the burial assemblage no longer be emphasized? A possible explanation is an ideological change affecting the range of funerary rituals enacted. John Ribar (1973, 80–2) posits that social prohibitions in the provision of symbolic food offerings for the dead, due to the apparent reduction in ceramic bowls within mortuary contexts, may have been due to a rejection of Canaanite ideology, and 'feeding the dead'. Alternatively, there may

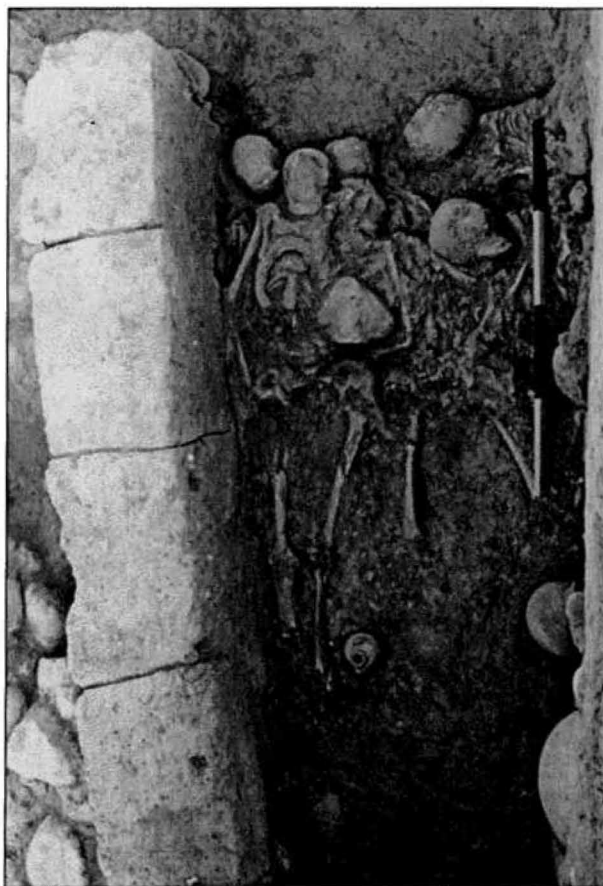


Fig. 10.6: T.282 multiple cist burial (Period 2). Reproduced with the permission of Jonathan Tubb

have been a shift in ritual arenas where food and drink is presented and consumed, *i.e.* away from the place of burial. However, it is noted that both animal offerings and

bronze bowls continue in Period 2 tombs, arguing against this food prohibition theory. More convincing explanations are sought from excavations at Wadi Fidan 40 in Southern Jordan, where EIA burials contain wooden bowls and pomegranates (Levy *et al.* 1999, 299–302). Organic remains are preserved at Fidan 40 due to the arid conditions of the Faynan district (only carbonized or mineralized organics would survive at Sa'idiyeh). Thomas Levy *et al.* (2004, 86–7) argue that ceramic bowls and lamps are less likely to be carried over long distances by nomadic groups, and therefore 'unbreakable' metal and wooden vessels are more commonly used. An absence of ceramic serving vessels at Sa'idiyeh could be partly explained by a shift towards wood or reed vessels.

The absence of ceramic bowls and lamps from tombs could indirectly suggest that some of the cemetery users were expressing a semi-nomadic lifestyle in death. This might fit with interpretations of changing settlement patterns and the re-sedentarization of semi-nomadic groups in the Jordan Valley during Iron I (van der Steen 1999). For example, the ephemeral pits, postholes, and furnaces at Iron IA Deir 'Alla are seen as evidence for seasonal activities of nomadic groups after the destruction of the LBA settlement (van der Kooij and Ibrahim 1989, 80–1). Mixed groups including displaced farmers, traders, craftsmen, and semi-nomadic groups (including 'early Israelites') may have coalesced within new settlements in the Jordan Valley during Iron I (van der Steen 1999). There does appear to be some continuity of burial populations at Sa'idiyeh, due to the implied awareness of the Period 1 cemetery users. However, a shift towards communality, reduced status expressions in death, and an ideological shift in social practices and attitudes to death could suggest a partial change in population as well as social structure during Iron I.

Early Iron Age status and gender distinctions

The apparent decline in material expressions of status in Period 2, may indicate a generally poorer society, although the potential for maintaining wealth through valued items above-ground should not be overlooked. There are some (albeit limited) manifestations of high-status in Period 2. These may include the widespread use of mudbrick lined tombs for single and multiple burials, and bronze bowls and wine-sets. For example, the T.32 wine-set includes a bronze dish with an incised cable-band and rosette net medallion (Tubb 1988a, figs. 49–50), resembling Cypro-Phoenician bowls from Iron Age Cyprus and Italy (Markoe 1985, 232 [type Cal], 242–3 [Type Cy1]). This could suggest that the bowl was an import from the Phoenician coastal sphere (although survival from LBA traditions cannot be ruled out).

Iron knives also appear occasionally in Period 2. The

adoption of iron as a prestige material (especially iron knives) increases during the twelfth–eleventh centuries in Cyprus and the Levant, prior to its more common and widespread usage in Iron II (Waldbaum 1978; Sherratt 1994a). Another indication that iron was regarded as having a greater prestige-value at Sa'idiyeh is supported by a significant increase in the wearing of ornamental iron by sub-adults (especially bracelets). An amuletic or apotropaic role of iron ornaments is also possible given their strong association with sub-adults.

A concurrent feature of the Period 2 shift to less diverse tomb assemblages is the decline of individualized elite burial traditions of Period 1. The disappearance of the traditional elite is one of the expectations noted in a cross-cultural study of collapse in early state societies by Colin Renfrew (1979, 482 ff.; cited by van der Steen 1999, 185), which could be potentially applied to this period in the Jordan Valley. Period 1 elites may have been absorbed into the local population after the Egyptian withdrawal and Iron IA decline, and were no longer able to, or compelled to, express high status death-styles in such diverse and innovative ways. Another possibility is that elites no longer chose to use the cemetery as a focus for their elaborate rituals, perhaps using alternative burial locations, or utilising burial methods that are no longer preserved or detected archaeologically.

Alternatively, destabilised elites may have physically abandoned the site (and the Jordan Valley), at the time of Egyptian withdrawal. Which social groups might be continuing to use the cemetery after this time? A number of ritual features common to the Period 1 low- and mid-scoring groups include the bending or breaking of weapons and tools, and occasional depositions of bronze bowls, are also found in Period 2, suggesting local continuity in ritual practices. This could indicate that some Period 1 non-elites continued to use the cemetery in Period 2, filling a power vacuum left by the departed traditional LBA elites. This resulted in the transformation and modification of somewhat muted and associative high-status practices within a new socio-political setting.

Changes in the nature of animal offerings are also implicated in this new setting. Priscilla Lange's (in preparation) analysis of faunal remains demonstrates the deliberate selection of specific species and age-sets. In Period 1, most depositions consist of discrete butchered animal parts such as the forelimb of a young sheep or goat (lamb or kid; (e.g. T.204), fish (T.232), and a collared dove (T.204), usually found in the grave-fill immediately overlaying the upper body. This is tentatively identified as a 'closure ceremony', a ritual stage occurring after the deposition of the body and associated objects (see Aubet 2003, 61–3 for examples at Tyre al-Bass). This practice is also apparent at LBA coastal cemeteries at Palmahim and Tell Abu Hawam (Gonen 1992, 86, 92). In Period 2, continuity in forelimb depositions is accompanied by a

marked change within some of the mudbrick cists, where the whole carcasses of sheep, goat, and young cattle are deposited (e.g. T.32, T.34, and T.41). These are frequently larger than lambs or kids, some nearing adult maturity. This is a notable change from Period 1 'closure ceremonies', with these substantial meat offerings in close bodily association. This suggests that the deposition of meat and related feasting rituals became more important at EIA funerals. The removal of specific meat cuts at Sa'idiyeh also indicates a range of 'above-ground' ritual activities, perhaps involving communal feasting by mourners during the funeral.

Gender distinctions are marked in Period 2, and may also be divided along status lines. In the Period 1 cemetery, prestige-objects are found with both males and females, with some of the highest scoring assemblages belonging to female interments (e.g. T.46). The gender dichotomy in Period 2 is indicated by the finding of several females (but no males) with bronze body ornaments and beads (e.g. T.92, T.123A, and T.218A). A greater degree of ornamentation of both women and children could also be significant in terms of 'wearing wealth' in both life and death (Green 2007). Also in Period 2, animal offerings, iron knives and/or bronze vessels are found within a small group of tombs containing adult male interments (e.g. T.32, T.34, and T.41/97), suggesting that feasting and elaborate food and drink depositions were restricted to relatively high-status males. This may fit with Avraham Faust's (2002) interpretation that gender divisions became heightened in the period leading up to Iron IIA, as public feasting ceremonies were confined to males, with women's roles becoming more narrowly focused within domestic settings. If, as Justin Lev-Tov and Edward Maher (2001, 106) suggest, animal offerings in tombs served as 'an economic rite of inheritance', such rituals may have reinforced patrimonial lineages.

Summary

The Sa'idiyeh cemetery provides an opportunity to examine subtle and marked changes in the negotiation of status, cultural identity, and gender in death across the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition. At the close of the LBA, the Sa'idiyeh population was closely integrated with the Egyptian economic, cultural and political sphere. This was a fairly prosperous and cosmopolitan society with access to a range of high value material objects including imports and valuable metal items. Their death-styles were innovative and individualistic, indicative of a syncretised Egyptian and Canaanite cultural *koiné*. This system was dependent upon links with the Egyptian sphere, and unstable partnerships between local elites and Egyptian emissaries and governors. It was a system inherently prone to collapse in the period leading up to, and as a consequence of, the

twelfth century Egyptian withdrawal. With the destruction of major coastal and inland urban centres and trade-routes disrupted, Sa'idiyeh's role changed irreversibly as the region became more isolated in terms of long-distance contacts. Future reassessment may shed further light on the Upper Tell sequence and its relation to the cemetery during this transitional period.

In late Iron I a different community was settled at Sa'idiyeh, perhaps including descendants of the local population, increasingly sedentary semi-nomadic groups and migrants from neighbouring regions. The emergent economic and political structure was now the coastal region of Northern Palestine and the Central Valley urban centres, including revived Canaanite polities such as Megiddo (Harrison 2004). This phenomenon is labelled by Israel Finkelstein (2002) 'New Canaan' due to the increase in the numbers and sizes of settlements re-emerging after the LBA collapse. Other socio-political entities were forming: Israel in the Samarian Highlands, Philistia in the southwest coastal plain, and Phoenicia in the Northern coastal plain. Zvi Gal (1995) posits that as Israelites expanded and occupied both sides of the Jordan Valley, Phoenicia became the dominant political and economic entity influencing lowland regions, including the North Jordan Valley. This may be reflected in features at Sa'idiyeh including 'hippo' jars, spheroid flasks, and the T.32 bronze platter. Sa'idiyeh was slowly re-integrated within trade networks, testifying to the ability of lowland settlements to return after collapse.

EIA death-styles reinforced kinship relations, with multiple family interments and rituals aimed at commemoration through secondary burial treatments and increased handling of the dead. Communal burial reinforced an ideology of kinship in death. In the absence of traditional LBA elites, modified forms of status expression developed, some looking back to the LBA (wine-sets and mudbrick cists) and others focusing on new forms of prestige and personal display (iron knives and an increased focus on animal offerings). A reduced emphasis on displays of quantity and luxury goods suggests an idealised representation of an egalitarian society in death (Faust 2004), despite the emergence of new status and gender inequalities.

In summary, there is continuity and change at Sa'idiyeh, both in the period of the LBA decline, and the subsequent EIA revival. Social identities and status distinctions were actively constructed and transformed through death-rituals in both periods. This demonstrates the way in which societies are able to respond to and survive major upheavals – reinventing themselves by blending old traditions with new ones, and dynamically reordering social relations within ritual arenas and communal activities. These developments are not only related to external factors such as migrations and settlement destructions, but also to internal societal transformations and the creation of new identities.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Jonathan Tubb (The British Museum) for permission to access the material and records from Sa'Idiyeh, and for his continued support in bringing my research to fruition. My PhD research on the Sa'Idiyeh cemetery was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Board

(now AHRC). Continued work on the final report for the Sa'Idiyeh cemetery at the British Museum (Department of the Middle East) is supported by the White-Levy Program for Archaeological Publication and the Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust.