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The Early Bronze

The Rise and Collapse of Urbanism

by Suzanne Richard

The Early Bronze Age (around 3400–2000 B.C.;¹ abbreviated as EB) marks the first urban era in the southern Levant, an era graphically portrayed by the fortified cities and towns of the Early Bronze II to III periods in Palestine. A concomitant of the urbanization process was the growth of more complex socioeconomic and political (that is, “state”) institutions. The emergence of the “state” in the Near East represents the culmination of processes dating back to the late Upper Paleolithic period (approximately 15,000 B.C.), when the incipient stages of domestication and sedentarization become apparent in the archaeological record. Around 10,000 B.C. throughout the Near East established early village communities were beginning to foreshadow the ongoing evolution toward cultural complexity that would ultimately lead to the first city-states.

The remains dating to the Early Neolithic period (around 8500–6000 B.C.) at Jericho (the earliest walled town in the world), Beidha, and ʿAin Ghazal illustrate that Palestine was as advanced as any area in the Near East. Soon thereafter, however, Palestine began to lag behind its northern neighbors in the progression towards complex societies. Indeed, it was a land of small, regional, village and pastoral societies at a time when major advances toward the development of the city-state system in Mesopotamia were underway (sixth to fourth millennia B.C.). This factor bears on one of the still-debated issues concerning the transition from the “proto-urban” period to the urban Early Bronze Age: Is urbanism an in-

trusive or indigenous phenomenon in the land of ancient Palestine?

Palestine has always been considered something of a hinterland, backwater, or at best a land bridge between the great empires of the ancient Near East. Although toward

The Early Bronze Age in Palestine saw a 750-year urban age encompassed by a preformative period at the outset and a period of regression toward the end. How are we to understand these two dramatic episodes of sociocultural change?

the end of the Early Bronze Age Palestine was indeed a hinterland, during periods of urbanism the country became a strategic crossroads of inter-regional trade and communication. This position benefited Palestine culturally and economically, yet it also rendered it vulnerable to the political and economic vicissitudes of neighboring urban systems.

In Mesopotamia by the mid-to-late fourth millennium, most of the landmarks of urbanism, such as sophisticated irrigation technology, sociopolitical hierarchies, craft specializations, far-flung trade, writing, monumental structures, and huge cities, had appeared. Although demographic estimates are notoriously difficult, the estimated population of Uruk was 10,000 at around

3100 B.C. and was 50,000 at 2700 B.C. (Adams and Nissen 1972; Adams 1981). In Palestine (excluding Trans-jordan and the Negeb), however, at around 2700 B.C. the entire population has been estimated at only approximately 150,000 (Broshi and Gophna 1984). Urbanism in Palestine during the Early Bronze Age is not comparable to that of Mesopotamia. Nonetheless, whether Palestine should be called a provincial or secondary “state,” a demonstrable “complex” society (so defined in Wenke 1984 and Redman 1978) existed at that time. It is the emergence of the “state” in Palestine and its subsequent collapse that I hope to illumine in this article.

Though its traditions owed a great debt to the more advanced cultural spheres on its borders, Palestine throughout the Early Bronze Age exhibited its own unique cultural configuration. In stark outline it had a seven-hundred-and-fifty-year urban age encompassed by a preformative period (rise) at the outset and by a period of urban regression (collapse) toward the end. How are we to understand the two dramatic episodes of sociocultural change that mark the shift to urbanization and later a shift to deurbanization? Are they to be seen as abrupt changes caused by outside forces or as more gradual indigenous adaptations? Not surprisingly, scholars are divided on this issue for both the forepart and the end of the period.

History of Research

The term *Early Bronze Age* was adopted by William F. Albright and other early archaeologists in the

Age

Archaeological Sources for the History of Palestine



Vessels from EB II known as Abydos Ware are either red polished or painted with a decoration of bands of triangles filled with dots. The jugs shown above are from Arad. Photograph courtesy of the Israel Exploration Society. The drawing below is from Amiran and others 1978.

Approximate Date B.C.	Palestine	Egypt	Mesopotamia
3400–3100	Early Bronze I	Predynastic	Protoliterate
3100–2700	Early Bronze II	First and Second Dynasties	Jemdet Nasr/Early Dynastic I
2700–2350/2300	Early Bronze III	Third through Fifth Dynasties (Old Kingdom)	Early Dynastic II–III
2350/2300–2000	Early Bronze IV	Sixth through Eleventh Dynasties (Old Kingdom–First Intermediate)	Akkadian/Ur III

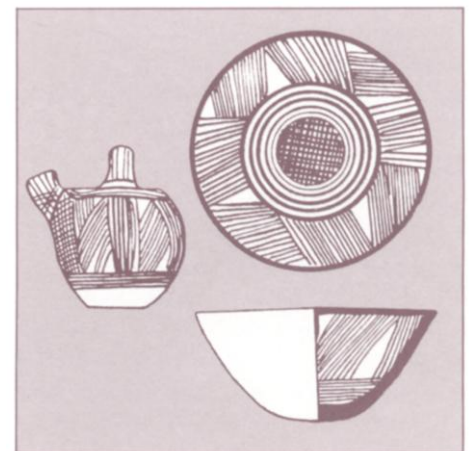
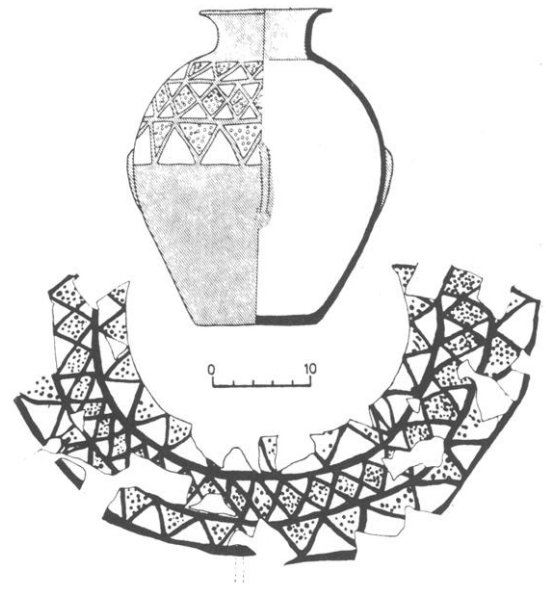
1920s. Thus, third-millennium deposits in Palestine were correlated with the roughly contemporaneous Early Helladic (Greek) and Early Dynastic (Mesopotamian) periods, and the Three Age System of Stone, Bronze, and Iron as used by Old World archaeologists was still maintained. Since copper was the metal primarily used during the Early Bronze Age, we are left with a tacitly accepted misnomer for the period. Bronze metallurgy became common only in the Middle Bronze Age (around 2000 B.C.), although recent research indicates that the technology was introduced during the Early Bronze IV period (Stech, Muhly, and Maddin 1985).

It was Albright's student, G. Ernest Wright (1937), who first undertook the task of systematically analyzing the entire corpus of excavated materials dating to the Early Bronze Age. By utilizing data from Megiddo, Beth-shean, Jericho, Ai, Bâb edh-Dhrâc, and other sites, he subdivided the age into four stratigraphically defined cultural periods – Early Bronze I to IV. Despite the less-than-rigid application of strati-

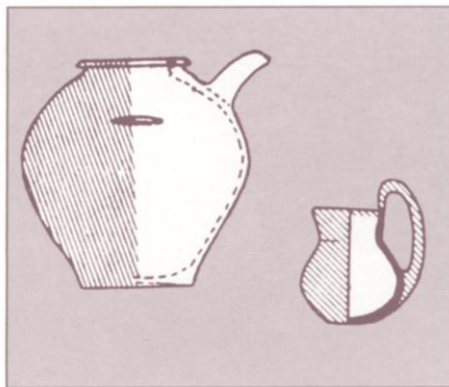
graphic principles by early archaeologists and the inevitable mixture of pottery, his stratigraphic and ceramic typological study, with minor revisions, has stood the test of time.

Since then the acceleration of archaeological activity, excavation, and, particularly, survey in the region has, uncovered, hundreds of sites dating to the Early Bronze Age. A recent work lists some 888 sites (Thompson 1979), though this includes ephemeral sherd scatters. The actual number investigated is around 100. The dates of 3400 to 2000 B.C., based on correlations with Egyptian materials and recent carbon-14 determinations, reflect the trend to a higher chronology for the beginning of the period (Dever 1982; Weinstein 1984a). There is general agreement that the end of the Early Bronze and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Ages should be coeval with the nascent Twelfth Dynasty of Middle Kingdom Egypt, around 1991 B.C.

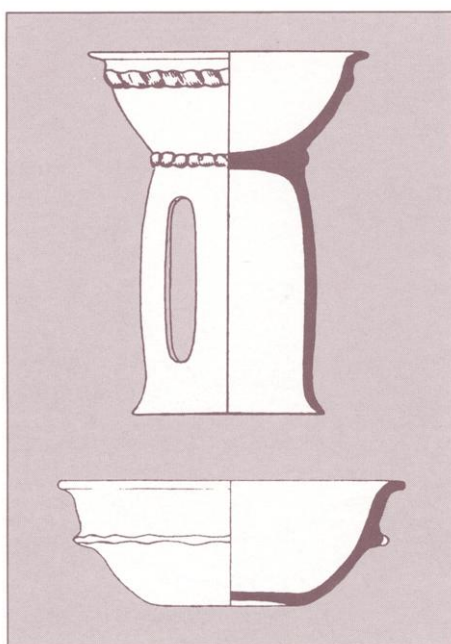
The term *Early Bronze* is commonly used, except by the Israeli school, a few of whom prefer the term *Early Canaanite* (Dothan 1985). This latter usage has provoked much dis-



Examples of red painted pottery, with distinctive basketry designs, from the EB IB/PUB period. Drawings courtesy of Ruth Amiran.



Examples of pottery from the EB IA period
Above: red burnished pottery of Kenyon's PUA: spouted vessels and high-looped handled cups were popular forms. **Below:** gray burnished Esdraelon ware of Kenyon's PUC; a series of knobs or molded decoration is characteristic. Drawings courtesy of Ruth Amiran.



cussion, most of it concerning the inherent problems in utilizing ethnic-related terms to describe a period, especially in the absence of written records. We do not know the ethnic mix in Palestine at that time because no epigraphic remains have yet been found. We do know that the Amorites or westerners (*MARTU/Amurru*, that is, west from the point of view of Mesopotamia) comprised an important ethnic element in Syria and, in light of close cultural and religious correspondences, probably in Palestine as well (Liverani 1973). Although several references to Canaanites exist in Egyptian texts dating to the Old Kingdom (de Vaux 1971;

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Drower and Bottéro 1971) and in texts from Ebla (Viganò and Pardee 1984), it is probably more accurate to describe the Early Bronze Age population as proto-Canaanite. Linguistically and culturally, Canaanite civilization manifested itself in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.

Despite the wealth of archaeological materials at hand, the problems that confronted Albright (namely, conflicting views on terminology and sociocultural change) still defy resolution today. Perhaps most confounding to scholar and lay reader alike is the perplexing array of terms used by various scholars for the forefront and end of the age. Both periods are transitional in nature and by definition lend themselves to various interpretations. The perennial debate over foreign invasion versus indigenous cultural continuity highlights the difficulty in explaining change in the archaeological record. These and other issues that dominate the scholarly literature will be examined below. (For other perspectives on the Early Bronze Age the reader is referred to the following surveys: Hennessy 1967; Lapp 1970; Amiran 1970a; Wright 1971; de Vaux 1971; Kempinski 1978; Kenyon 1979; Rast 1980; Ross 1980; and Ben-Tor 1982.)

Early Bronze I (3400 to 3100 B.C.)

Issues. Whether scholars utilize the *Early Bronze IA–B–C* of Wright (1958, 1971) and Lapp (1970) or Kenyon's term *Proto Urban A–B–C* (abbreviated as PU; see 1960, 1979), both sides agree that the period was proto-urban in the sense that it preceded the urban city-states that appeared at the transition from Early Bronze I to II. The terminology of *Early Bronze I*,

however, implicitly suggests stronger continuity with what followed, while the term *Proto Urban* correlates Palestine cross-culturally with the Protoliterate and Predynastic periods in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Whatever the terminological preference, the real issue is the growth of urbanism. Was urbanism in the Early Bronze II and III periods a local development, or was the tradition brought in from Syro-Mesopotamia? On this point, there is a growing trend to view urbanism as primarily an indigenous development (Amiran 1970a, 1985, 1986; Miroshedji 1971 – his *pré-urbaine* period; Schaub 1982). I will illustrate below through a comparative analysis of material culture and sites that the urban city-states did evolve from indigenous urbanization processes in Early Bronze I.

A related question concerns the relation between the inhabitants of Early Bronze I and the preceding Late Chalcolithic peoples. Again, the current trend shows a shift from a preoccupation with new population groups in favor of indigenous continuity (Callaway 1972; Miroshedji 1971; Schaub 1982; Amiran 1985). It now appears that most Palestinian traditions of the Early Bronze I period (burial practices, burnished and painted pottery, lithics, temple and domestic architecture) are at home in the southern Levant; that is, they are a development from the local Late Chalcolithic.

Finally, at issue is the chronology of three different types of pottery traditions that appear during the transitional period: red burnished (EB IA or PUA), red painted (EB IB or PUB), and gray burnished Esdraelon ware (EB IA or PUC). Although de Vaux believed that PUA/PUC pottery belonged in the Late Chalcolithic period, most scholars follow Wright and Kenyon in situating these wares after this period. At numerous sites the PUA/PUC wares are clearly contemporaneous and are earlier than the painted PUB pottery tradition. Schaub (1982) has shown that there

is a general agreement that the painted pottery tradition (EB IB/PUB) played a critical role in the origin of urban culture in the following phase.

Until recently, scholars generally agreed that the standard repertoire of red-slipped and burnished pottery forms of Early Bronze IC (Kenyon's EB I) was the hallmark of the Early Bronze Age and that fortifications were introduced at that time (Lapp 1970). It is gradually becoming clear, however, that EB IC does not exist as a separate phase, since it cannot easily be separated from EB II traditions (Schaub 1982; Dever 1982; Esse 1984). In light of this new trend, virtually all the late EB I fortified sites must now be dated to the EB II period.

Archaeological record. The Early Bronze IA period is known best from numerous excavated cemeteries, although some settlement occupation is attested. Burial traditions during this phase, however, point to a significant pastoral-nomadic element whose population becomes less visible as sedentarization progresses. Disarticulated (secondary) burials in large, natural caves or chamber tombs west of the Jordan (but in shaft tombs in Transjordan—Bâb edh-Dhrâc and probably Jericho too) characterize the group. Generally the skulls were lined up next to a central bone pile. This reverence toward the skull dates back to the Neolithic period when throughout the Near East a type of ancestor veneration characterized burial customs. Associated pottery vessels, probably filled with food and drink, may also point to a belief in an afterlife.

Although burial traditions changed later with permanent settlement in EB II, it is important to remember that the shaft-tomb tradition continued throughout the Early Bronze Age in Transjordan. Whether or not this tradition signifies the perpetuation of the customs of a fringe group, the tradition climaxed in the Early Bronze IV period and is then found throughout Palestine-Transjordan. Concurrently, pastoral-

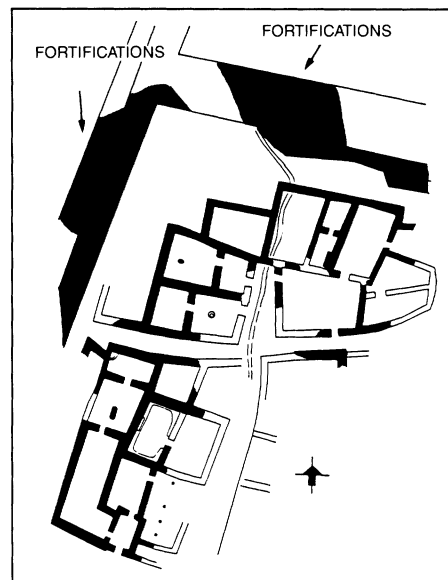
At sites such as Tell el-Farâh North and Bâb edh-Dhrâc, the open, unwalled villages of EB IB continued without interruption into EB II, at which time fortifications were erected and general expansion ensued.

ism and nonurban settlement peaked. Oscillations along the sedentary-pastoral or urban-nonurban continuum were endemic to the Near East and thus played a role in culture change in nearly all periods.

A look at a few sites will demonstrate the indigenous development from Early Bronze IB (not EB IC) into Early Bronze II. Schaub (1982) has synthesized much of the material from the sites with greatest horizontal exposure and has shown that at Bâb edh-Dhrâc, Ai, Tell el-Farâh North, and Arad there were open, unwalled villages that continued without interruption into the next phase, at which time fortifications were erected and general expansion ensued. Even the classic, bench-lined broadroom house of Early Bronze II and III, which was interconnected with other houses and grouped around a courtyard, has its antecedents in Early Bronze I (in fact in the Late Chalcolithic), although it had not yet been standardized. Schaub has also shown continuity in pottery forms, despite different decorative techniques of burnish, paint, or slip. And he noted stratigraphic and cultural continuity in burial traditions—from shaft tombs, to round, mud-brick houses with stone-lined entryways, to the classic charnel-house tombs of Early Bronze II and III at Bâb edh-Dhrâc.

Although we lack adequate published data, settlement patterns in Early Bronze I suggest some economic/political interdependence between large and small sites—that is, at least a two-tiered ranking system. A recent study even reveals some vertical integration among large (10 to 20 acres), medium (2.5 to 10 acres),

Top: The well-laid-out blocks of rectangular houses within fortifications at the EB II site of Tell el-Farâh North make it clear that town planning was practiced. From Kempinski 1978. **Bottom:** A female figurine found at Bâb edh-Dhrâc in a tomb (F 2) dating to the EB IA period. With its birdlike face, pierced ear flaps, upraised arms, and stomach projection, it typifies a genre of mother goddess or fertility figurine found in the Near East. It is about 15 centimeters tall. Photograph courtesy of Walter E. Rast.



and small (under 2.5 acres) sites (Joffe 1985). The numerous small sites dating to Early Bronze I, such as Malhata (2 acres) in the vicinity of Arad (22 acres), suggest a developing hierarchical organization (Amiran 1985). A similar relationship probably existed between Bâb edh-Dhrâc and the smaller sites of eš-Şafi and



Feifeh in the southern Ghor (Rast and Schaub 1974). More thorough analysis of settlement patterns would probably uncover such relationships near most of the big sites like Tell el-Farah North, Ai, Tell Gath, Megiddo, Jericho, Beth-yerah, Dothan, Tell Aphek, and Beth-shean.

In addition to the picture of unwallled villages, we have evidence of so-called temple-towns or centers that in terms of community organization immediately precede the city-state stage (see Redman 1978). A "twinning" temple at Megiddo (stratum 19) was separated from a residential area by a walled courtyard. Two large broadrooms contained an altar on the long side opposite the door. Human and animal cultic drawings, incised on stones, were found on a platform. As has been noted (Kempinski 1978), the size and general plan suggest that Megiddo served as a central shrine for the area. Differentiation of public and residential areas attests a growing social stratification. Tell Gath (Tel Erani) likewise has revealed urban development in stratum 8, where a large building (function unknown) with substantial stone walls exhibits the continuous development of a public area through several phases (Kempinski 1978). Although the stratification of the site is difficult, it appears that within the Early Bronze I period a defensive wall surrounded a large settlement that included a distinct public area. The site of Jawa in northeastern Jordan, where a large fortified site with a sophisticated hydraulic technology in evidence has recently been excavated, should also be noted (Helms 1981). Jawa appears to date to the Late Chalcolithic/Early Bronze I period, although we must await final publication of the pottery and associated architecture for confirmation.

As regionalization receded in Early Bronze I, site distribution reflects the choice of more defensible areas close to water sources that promoted agricultural development (Jordan Valley Jezreel Valley, Galilee,

and Shephelah). This shift to the more highly cultivable areas can be correlated with the development of horticulture, especially the grape, date, and olive (Stager 1985). The agricultural practices established at this time (cereal cultivation, horticulture, goat- and sheepherding) represent the beginning of a Mediterranean, mixed economy that remained characteristic of Palestine throughout this and succeeding eras.

The most striking development in Early Bronze I was the dramatic increase in commerce and the beginning of what became an intricate web of relations with Egypt that would last through three millennia. Throughout its history Palestine was a country whose stability waxed and waned in reaction to the political situation of that giant at its southern border. Although trade with Egypt is evidenced in the Late Chalcolithic period, the floruit for these interrelationships was the Early Bronze I and II periods. This topic will be discussed as a unit below, but it is important to note here that strong cultural influences from the north are also apparent at this time (Amiran 1970a; Hennessy 1967). Pottery, artifacts, seals, the broadroom house, religious architecture (and thus traditions) demonstrate that culturally, and probably ethnically, Palestine belonged within the cultural sphere of greater Syro-Mesopotamia.

Thus, the general archaeological picture in Early Bronze I appears to indicate a sociopolitical patterning similar to that of the preceding Late Chalcolithic period, but with important distinctions. Levy's (1986) analysis shows that the inhabitants at that time, although still strikingly regionalized, had already reached a certain level of cultural complexity in terms of production, craft specialization (particularly metallurgy), and intra- and interregional commercial relationships. He has argued effectively that these developments and, especially, a two-tiered site settle-



ment pattern imply a ranked social ordering that we may term a *chiefdom* (see Service 1962). This model describes a movement from egalitarianism (tribal society) to a pre-state ranked society where managerial authority based on kinship rested in the hands of a leader who ruled from a particular center.

The chiefdom model generally fits the archaeological record of Early Bronze I, although a distinction may be made in the degree of intensification and stabilization of a Palestinian society whose economy was founded more on agriculture and trade. The underlying process—urbanization—is apparent in the following areas: development toward a three-tiered (or state) hierarchy of sites; expansion of agriculture and thus food surplus; growth in intra- and interregional trade; less regionalization in site settlement and craft specializations (ceramics, metals); and indications of developing social stratification in the differentiation of public and residential areas. The general picture in Early Bronze I is one of growing sociopolitical complexity, as Palestine's economy was linked with neighboring regions in an interregional trade network.

In summary, the data suggest that in Early Bronze I, urbanization processes—anticipated in the Late Chalcolithic period—gained momentum and steadily evolved into the urban city-state institutions at the transition from Early Bronze I to II.

When a society reaches a certain level of growth in trade, technology, population, and complexity, the development of an infrastructure (the state) to support its administration tends to occur (Trigger 1972). A correlative of this development (though not evidenced in Palestine) is usually an institutionalized hierarchy with centralized secular or religious leadership (a prince or priest). Therefore, one need not, as in the past, explain the development of urbanization processes or the construction of urban fortifications by the arrival of new peoples. With trade routes to guard, inevitable competition among major centers, the ever-present threat of pastoral-nomadic groups on the borders, and political stability to maintain, defensive measures were necessary.

Early Bronze II (circa 3100 to 2700 B.C.)

The city-state. The fully emerged city-state system is in evidence by shortly after 3100 B.C. About half the population was distributed throughout the hill country of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea—the areas of highest agricultural return, particularly olive oil and wine production. Analyses of settlement data (Joffe 1985; Broshi and Gophna 1984) indicate a clear three-tiered ranking system in the distribution of site sizes, implying a more centralized organizational network. Sites generally range from large (20 acres or more) and medium (10 to 20 acres) cities and towns to small (2.5 to 10 acres) and very small (less than 2.5 acres) villages and hamlets. Size alone suggests that an



This fenestrated incense stand, dating to EB III, was found at Ai. From volume 1 of the *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977).



Zoomorphic alabaster vessel found in the sanctuary at Ai. Reconstructed, it is in the shape of a waterskin. The identity of the animal depicted is uncertain, although it has been suggested that it is a hippopotamus. Note the knotted band moldings on the neck and legs. A complete "hoof" is found on the extant right leg. Photograph from Amiran 1970b. Drawing from Callaway 1978.

The large number of small villages during EB II indicates that there was still a significant social component of sedentary/pastoral peoples in the rural areas whose nonurban traditions ran counter to those of the urbanites.

intermediate administrative organization operated between the large rural agricultural producers and the urban redistribution centers.

It is significant that small villages, especially hamlets (less than 2.5 acres), are proportionately the most numerous. This is an important statistic because it underscores that there was still a significant social component of sedentary/pastoral peoples in the rural areas whose nonurban, more kinship-based traditions ran counter to those of the urbanites. In times of centralized political authority, these groups could be controlled by the urban principalities. At other times these loosely confederated tribal groups were relatively autonomous, as is evident in the Early Bronze IV period.

Although elements of city planning can be discerned at numerous sites—Bâb edh-Dhrâc, Jericho, Dothan, Beth-yerah, Beth-shean, Megiddo, Taanach, Aphek—I will concentrate on those sites with the greatest horizontal exposure: Ai, Arad, and Tell el-Far'ah North.

Ai. Situated in biblical Ephraim, the 28-acre site of Ai (Callaway 1972, 1980) already epitomizes in phase 3 the classic urban center of Palestine. Occupying the acropolis is a large broadroom building that appears to be a temple. Surrounding the city is a 4-meter-wide wall cut by a series of 1-meter-wide openings (gates), which were defended by nearby huge towers (elliptical and round). Within the fortifications appear typical broadroom houses that include hearths, ovens, and domestic appurtenances

such as storage jars, querns, and grinding stones. Following a violent destruction, phase 4 saw the rebuilding of the acropolis structure (clearly a temple in this phase) and especially the strengthening of the fortifications. Whether caused by earthquake activity or attack by enemies, destruction layers, as at Ai, characterize the cities of the Early Bronze II and III periods. In fact, the fortifications at Jericho underwent seventeen rebuilds.

Arad. Our best picture of city planning comes from the northern Negeb site of Tell Arad (strata 2 and 3). Fourteen seasons (Amiran and others 1978; Amiran 1980) have revealed a wide horizontal exposure of the 22-acre site, which is surrounded by a 2.4-meter-wide wall fortified at intervals by semicircular exterior towers. Social stratification is witnessed clearly by a series of monumental buildings (sacred precinct and "palace") at the center of the mound (although not on an acropolis) as well as the differentiation of domestic houses in several areas just within the fortifications. Evincing continuity with earlier cultic practices, the sacred precinct includes a "twinning" temple, along with a *bamah* (sacrificial altar) and *favissa* (a repository for discarded cultic objects) in its courtyard. Other large public buildings near a reservoir point to municipal control of the water administration. Whether a religious or civil authority was in control is unknown, but based on the preeminent position of the sacred precinct at Arad (and other sites), it would seem that, as in Mesopotamia, a religious elite exercised considerable control.

The layout of strata 2 and 3 also shows planning in its system of streets and blocks of houses. Major streets parallel the outer perimeter wall, and transverse streets radiate like the spokes of a wheel from the center city or agora. The courtyard house, still found in the Middle East today, is exemplified by a series of interconnected, bench-lined broadroom

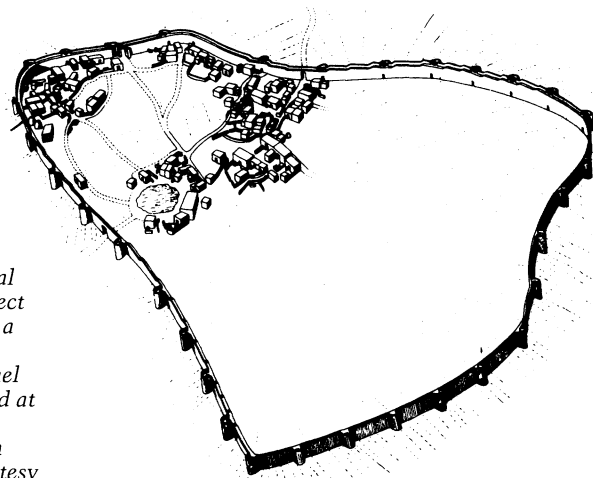
houses arranged around a courtyard where domestic work took place. Larger compounds possibly indicate differences in wealth, although this may simply reflect the extended family that appears to have been the basic domestic unit. Paleobotanical remains indicate a typical Mediterranean, mixed economy. Barley was the dominant plant, but einkorn, emmer, and bread wheat were also cultivated. Legumes, lentils, peas, linseed, olive stones, and vine pips, as well as sheep, goat, and cattle bones were also recovered.

Tell el-Far'ah North. Six phases at Tell el-Far'ah provide another glimpse of urban planning in Early Bronze II (de Vaux 1971). In the earliest phase, one of the best-preserved gates in Palestine was discovered. Two chambered, brick towers about 10 meters long (still preserved to approximately 4 meters in height) flank a wide passageway through the city-wall. The town plan is already clear in this phase. Intersecting, paved streets divide blocks of interconnected, rectangular houses, some with benches and rows of bases to support roof pillars. Two pottery workshops and a two-story kiln were found, attesting to the beginning of the mass production of pottery throughout Palestine at this time. Excavation uncovered a temple with an open hall and sanctuary, although it apparently was located in the midst of a residential block. At this site the defenses were also strengthened throughout Early Bronze II, including the addition of a glacis (or earthen embankment).

These archaeological data generally equate with political authority probably centralized at the city-state level. But it is doubtful whether, as in Mesopotamia, any of the independent city-states ever acquired hegemony over other major centers, although the series of destructions at some sites may reflect internecine competition. The data also point to an economy based on intensive agriculture and an international network



Tell Arad gives us our best picture of city planning in the Early Bronze. The city-wall, towers, and private dwellings excavated in the southern section can be seen in an aerial of the site. Courtesy of Pictorial Archive. An isometric reconstruction of the fortified city from EB II shows the separation of public areas, in the center, from residential areas, along the wall. Radial streets connect the two areas, and the site is encircled by a wall fortified with bastions. Drawing by Lane Ritmeyer is used courtesy of the Israel Museum. The ceramic house model, found at Arad, reveals the typical rectangular or broadroom house of the third millennium B.C.E. with the door on the long side. Courtesy of the Israel Museum and David Harris.



of trade and a redistribution system (discussed below). Differentiated urban sectors presuppose a complex social stratification elevated beyond kinship ties, and the centrally located temples suggest a cultic uniformity indicative of a priestly elite. Most apparent, though, the striking uniformity of the material culture and city-state design throughout Palestine is a sign of an integrated society. In summary, during Early Bronze II there existed cities, towns, and villages with a fully integrated society among which there were complex interrelationships and interdependencies.

Foreign Relations with Egypt in Early Bronze I and II

The nature of foreign relations with Egypt (that is, whether the archaeological data indicate trade or political domination—Yadin 1955; Yeivin 1960) has been a debated issue for some time. This topic was recently the subject of an article in *BA* (Wright 1985), where an excellent review of the problem and of the con-

troversial materials is contained. As Wright (1985), Weinstein (1984b), Ben-Tor (1982, 1986), Amiran (1974), Beit-Arieh (1984), and Ward (1969) have all argued, there is no compelling reason to infer that Palestine was at this time under Egyptian political domination. And the intensification of interregional trade helps to explain the steady evolution toward those state institutions that are needed to carry out trade effectively.

I have already noted that as early as the Late Chalcolithic period, numerous contacts between the two regions reflect a growing relationship. Egyptian materials in Palestine include slate cosmetic palettes, flint knives, gold and other semiprecious beads, maceheads, stone bowls (including alabaster), seals, and pottery. In Egypt the presence of pottery—especially ledge-handled jars and types of jugs known as Abydos Ware—testifies to the steady importation of agricultural products, olive oil, and wine (see Ben-Tor 1982 and 1986 for specifics and references).

At southern coastal sites such as Tell Gath and ^cEn Besor, where Egyptian pottery is said to predominate in the ceramic assemblages (Yeivin 1960; Gophna 1976), it is clear that Egyptians were living in the country. In the Early Bronze I cemetery at Azor, located up the coast, skeletal remains identified as African have been found (Ben-Tor 1975). The combined evidence, especially the sixty-four Egyptian seal impressions found at ^cEn Besor (Gophna 1976; Schulman 1976, 1980), suggests that Egypt established trading communities to facilitate the export and import of trade goods. The discovery at Arad and Tell Gath of sherds bearing the incised *serekh* (royal insignia) of Narmer, the traditional first king of the First Dynasty, provides a means to synchronize Palestinian and Egyptian material culture and chronologies at about or just before 3100 B.C.

The discovery of 110 sites along the northern Sinai coast (Oren 1973a)

Petrographic analyses of pottery have shown a direct link between Arad and several nearby sites in EB II, indicating that Arad had control over the mining and distribution of copper in the region.

strongly supports the view that interregional trade flowed between the two countries along the most important caravan route—the Via Maris (Way of the Sea), known from Egyptian sources as the Way of Horus. The main road followed the coast before turning inland toward the Esdraelon Valley and points north, as far as Syria. Although Egyptian finds are rarer in the north, objects at Azor, Gezer, and Megiddo demonstrate that trade continued up the Via Maris. The agricultural produce from the more highly cultivable lands in the north probably passed through the entrepôts of the south prior to shipment to Egypt.

Arad appears to be the regional center of her own trade network. About forty related sites dating to Early Bronze II were discovered in the copper-mining area of southern Sinai (Amiran, Beit-Arieh, and Glass 1973). Nebi Salah and Sheikh Muhesein, among six excavated sites (Beit-Arieh 1981), were relatively small and generally comprised a series of subrectangular houses interconnected probably as a defensive measure. Petrographic analyses of pottery have proven a direct link between Arad and these colonies, indicating that Arad had control over the mining and distribution of copper. From the copper implements (axes, chisels, awls) and clay crucibles found at Arad, the site appears to have been a manufacturing center as well. Clumps of bitumen (an important adhesive) found in several rooms may indicate another raw material the city exported. Presumably these products were traded within the region and also to Egypt, although whether directly or indirectly through the intermediary Egyptian entrepôts like

Tell Gath and ^cEn Besor is uncertain.

The above sketch serves to underscore the effect of intraregional and interregional trade in the development of urbanism in Palestine, and gives us a glimpse of the high level of specialization and complexity that characterized the urban centers. Although we do not have texts to describe the complex social context the archaeological record manifests, we do know that trade is a highly specialized activity. A high order of division of labor and a centralized authority is required to procure raw materials, manufacture goods, and oversee transport, storage, financial and legal services, distribution, and numerous administratively related activities.

Early Bronze III (circa 2700 to 2350/2300 B.C.)

The zenith of urbanism. At the beginning of the Early Bronze III period, the urbanization process revitalized itself. The number and size of the urban centers in this period show that urbanism in Palestine had reached its zenith. These sites feature the most massive fortifications yet seen in this age. Lacking texts to inform us of the basis for this growth, we are at a loss to explain the impressive city-states. Similarly, the causes for the collapse of all these prosperous urban centers by the end of Early Bronze III remain somewhat enigmatic.

The new prosperity coincided with significant regional shifts in settlement patterns. Numerous sites were abandoned at the end of Early Bronze II and not reoccupied: Tell el-Far^cah North, sites in the Golan and Sharon Plain, Tell Gath, ^cEn Besor, Arad and its satellite sites, and the northern Sinai coastal sites. Concurrently, the north was eclipsed as the center shifted to south-central Palestine, where a cluster of urban centers dominated the landscape: Tell el-Hesi, Lahav, Tell Yarmut, Lachish, Jericho, Ai, Aphek, and Bâbedh-Dhrâ^c. New sites were founded



in the south in Early Bronze III: Tell Beit Mirsim, Bethel, Beth-shemesh, and Numeira. On the basis of the pottery, the south-central sites appear to have survived longer than those of the north (Dever and Richard 1977).

This period of urban growth in Palestine coincided with flourishing urban centers in Syria. Increased trade with prospering EB III cities like Ugarit, Byblos, Hama, and Ebla—which at that time was rising to the zenith it would reach in Early Bronze IV—is indicated. Northern elements become more apparent: temple and palace architecture; numerous Syrian-style cylinder and stamp seals (Ben-Tor 1978); carved ivory bulls' heads from Jericho, Beth-yerah, Ai, and Bâb edh-Dhrâc; as well as a new ceramic tradition (the Khirbet Kerak ware). And, as I noted earlier, there is generally a commonality in ceramics and metals (Hennessy 1967), which demonstrates close relations and shared traditions with the greater Syro-Mesopotamian cultural sphere.

Similarly, the Early Bronze III period in Palestine generally equates with the Old Kingdom period in Egypt, the brilliant flowering of the Pyramid Age. With the establishment of a powerful centralized government at the beginning of the Third Dynasty, Egypt extended its interests beyond its northern borders (see Drower and Bottéro 1971 for details). This expansion is reflected in the Wadi Maghara in central Sinai, where stelae depicting the pharaoh "smiting the Asiatic" have been found. At the beginning of Early Bronze III, Egypt assumed control of the turquoise and copper mines in central Sinai, in all probability a factor in

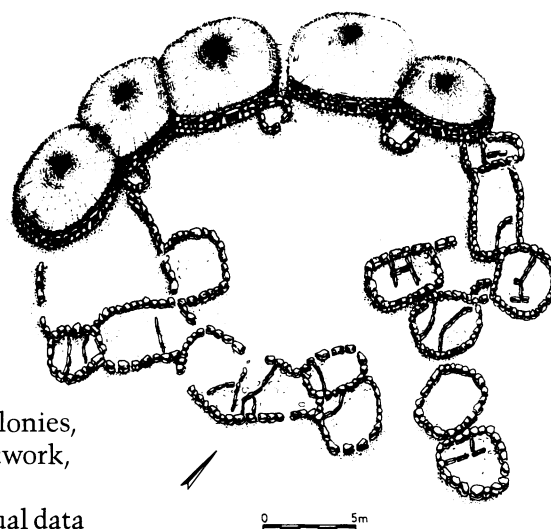
the abandonment of Arad's colonies, the disruption of the trade network, and the collapse of Arad.

Inscriptional and artifactual data also illuminate Egypt's increased relations with Syria, as it established a trading colony in Byblos with its

Egypt had abandoned or downgraded its overland trade route along the north coast of Sinai by the end of EB II, and its trade with Palestine during EB III was minimal.

own temple to Hathor. Egypt had apparently ceased to use, or had downgraded, the overland route in favor of maritime trade, a policy shift that led to the abandonment of the string of caravan sites along the north coast of Sinai by the end of Early Bronze II (Oren 1973a). Given the paucity of Egyptian materials in Palestine (and vice versa), it appears that trade between the two was minimal during Early Bronze III.

That such a blow to the economy of Palestine did not result in its total collapse is a measure of a highly specialized urban system that is supported by a diverse economy. Apparently the city-states were not solely dependent on trade with Egypt to support the system. Increased trade and influences from Syria at this time (Hennessy 1967; Rast 1980), migration of peoples from abandoned sites and rural areas, and probably increased intraregional trade combined to revitalize the economy and



Unit A at Nebi Salah, one of the satellites of Arad during EB II. Photograph and drawing from Beit-Arieh 1981.

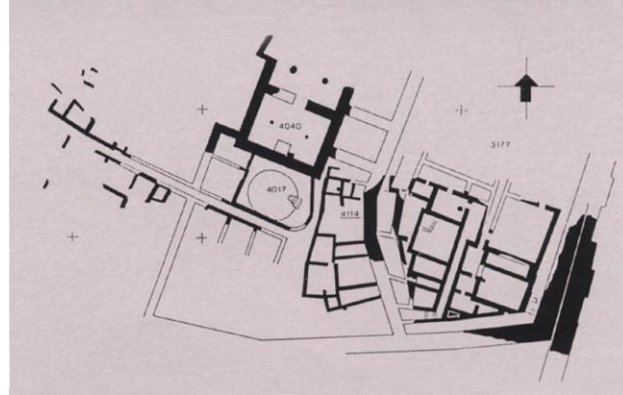


The ivory bull head found at Beth-yerah. This luxury product, which measures 4.4 by 3.4 centimeters and which dates to EB III, may have functioned as a ceremonial or cultic object. Courtesy of the Israel Museum and David Harris.

precipitate renewed urban growth. **The sites.** A wide exposure at Megiddo on the summit of the mound reveals a view of what must have been a flourishing city-state (Kempinski 1978; Kenyon 1979). In stratum 16 there appears a new style in temple design, with parallels in northern regions. This so-called megaron temple consists of a broadroom house to which a pillared porch was appended. But, as in earlier periods, the altar is positioned in the broad-



Outdoor altar ("high place") at Megiddo from EB III. Made of unhewn stone, it was used for animal sacrifices. From Kenyon 1979.



Stratum 16 (EB III) at Megiddo: the sacred precinct, with megaron temple (4040), altar (4017), and possible priestly residence (4114), is separated from the large northern-style multiroomed palace (3177). From Kempinski 1978.

room on the long side opposite the doorway. In the courtyard behind the temple a huge circular stone altar with a staircase was also uncovered. This outdoor high place constructed of unhewn stone was used for the sacrifice of animals. In form and tradition this sacred precinct foreshadows Canaanite and later Israelite cultic practices. A residential area, perhaps for priests, separates the temple area from the lower terrace, where excavation uncovered the largest palace yet found. It is in the typical northern style, consisting of multiple rectangular rooms, corridors, and interior courtyards. In stratum 15 the sacred precinct comprises three megaron temples, which now appear clearly to have been founded in Early Bronze III (Kempinski 1978) rather than Early Bronze IV (Kenyon 1958).

An Egyptian-style granary, where vast agricultural surplus was stored, was found at the huge (50-acre) site of Beth-yerah (called Khirbet Kerak today—Maisler, Stekelis, and Avi-Yonah 1952). The building measures 30 by 40 meters and includes 9 round silos built around an inner court. A new Anatolian-style lustrous pottery, named Khirbet Kerak ware, was first identified at the site. For some time it was thought that this new pottery represented invaders; however, today it is generally believed that the Khirbet Kerak people were a group of migrants who settled in the country and were gradually assimilated to the native population (Hennessy 1967; for an opposing view, see Amiran 1986). Whether designating a new

group of people or simply a trade-ware, which was thereafter produced locally at Beth-yerah and exchanged at nearby sites, this pottery tradition demonstrates cultural contact with northern areas. The repertoire of vessels is unique, not only in form but in firing technique, which produced a partly black and partly red surface. Khirbet Kerak vessels are distinguished by a cyma profile, deeply grooved decorations, and knobs and appendages of various sorts.

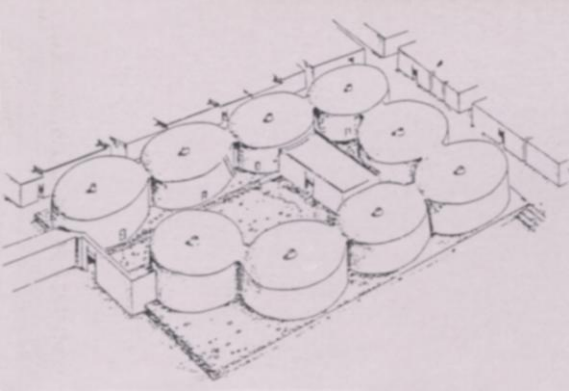
Whether the product of invaders or immigrants, or simply a tradeware whose manufacture was adopted at Beth-yerah, Khirbet Kerak ware demonstrates cultural contact with northern areas in EB III.

Although northern cultural influences are more evident at this time, contacts with Egypt are still apparent. For instance, Egyptian combs and a cosmetic palette were found at Bâb edh-Dhrâc (Rast 1980), and I have already mentioned the Egyptian-style granary (Currid 1986), although it may have derived from Anatolia (Amiran 1965; Kempinski 1978). Evidence for Egyptian influences are particularly clear at Ai where, as at Megiddo and Beth-yerah, a new city plan emerged following the destruction of the city during



This bowl from Beth-yerah is a fine example of Khirbet Kerak ware. The inside and the bands around the rim and base are red, while the central section has been smoke-blackened. Dating to EB III, it is 24 centimeters high and 47 centimeters in diameter. Courtesy of the Israel Museum and David Harris.

Early Bronze II. Modifications to the rebuilt temple include various construction techniques known in Egypt at that time (Callaway 1978). These include sawed column bases, hammer-dressed stones laid in the manner of mudbricks, and a sophisticated plastering technique used to decorate the walls as well as the floor and pillar bases. At the beginning of the Early Bronze IIIB the temple was converted to secular use and a new sanctuary, consisting of a courtyard and holy of holies, was established in a former residence along the citadel wall. A cache of Egyptian alabaster vessels—probably heirlooms from Early Bronze II (Amiran 1970b) that apparently had been removed from the broadroom temple—was found mixed with Khirbet Kerak ware and other northern-style cult objects in this sanctuary. According to the excavator, the downgrading of the Egyptianized temple



The public granary at Beth-yerah during EB III. The partitioned circular storage areas or silos, each measuring 7 to 9 meters in diameter, were sunk slightly into a pavement. The entire complex covered an area 40 meters by 30 meters. From Kempinski 1978.

coincided with lessening Egyptian influence (Callaway 1980). These organizational changes also coincided with the expansion of the city-wall from 4 to 8 meters in phase 7.

A similar picture of prosperity and massive fortifications in Early Bronze III could be shown at Beth-shean, Taanach, Tell el-Hesi, Tell Yarmut, Lahav, and Jericho. Massive fortifications, rebuttressed repeatedly during the period, characterize these sites. Current excavations at Tell Yarmut are gradually uncovering a monumental complex called the white building, which may be a temple or palace because it is clearly separated from the residential areas. During Early Bronze III the fortifications reached a width of 37 meters, including an inner wall, stone glacis, and outer wall (Miroschedji 1984).

In Transjordan—where numerous sites dating to the Early Bronze Age are known from survey but few have been excavated—a similar picture of urbanism is emerging. Massive defenses of stone and mudbrick and residential areas divided by streets characterize the urban center of Bâb edh-Dhrâc and nearby Numeira (Coogan 1984). Recently, on the high southwest side of Bâb edh-Dhrâc, a sacred precinct with a broadroom temple and a possible outdoor circular altar of the Megiddo type were discovered (Rast and Schaub 1980). Recent exposure of massive fortifications at Mughayyir dating to Early Bronze III (Mittmann 1986) and sur-



*Charnel houses or funerary buildings are characteristic of the EB II and III periods at Bâb edh-Dhrâc. **Above:** Bones, skulls, and pottery pushed against a brick wall of charnel house A 55. **Below:** A 55 as it appeared after about 60 burials and 120 pottery vessels had been excavated. Photographs courtesy of Walter E. Rast.*

veys that show Tell el-Huşn to be the largest Early Bronze Age site in Transjordan indicate that urbanism was as widespread there in EB III as it was to the west of the Jordan River. Regional differences between the two areas seem limited thus far to some pottery types and to burial traditions. Two-story, mudbrick, broad-room houses with steps down to the interior are used for burial at Bâb edh-Dhrâc. These charnel houses contain several layers of burials. Elsewhere during Early Bronze III, caves

The tradition of multiple primary burial during EB III reflects the practices of a dense and highly nucleated population.

or chamber tombs were the rule. Both, however, shared the custom of multiple primary burial. This tradition reflects the practices of a dense and highly nucleated population, where communal burials appear to be the norm.

It is generally held that social stratification is most often indicated by differences in wealth—that is, status objects (often imports) found in certain graves. This does not appear to hold true generally for our region during the urban Early Bronze II and III periods, where pottery and an occasional metal implement constituted the common grave goods. Status vessels are, however, attested at a few settlement sites and cemeteries (for details see Hennessy 1967). The sanctuary at Ai included numerous Egyptian vessels and objects: alabaster bowls, jars, and figurines;



objects in bone, such as cups, combs, and a knife handle; and two small Mesopotamian votive beds as well as votive cups. Two copper hoards have been discovered, one at Tell el-Hesi (Bliss 1898) and the other at Kfar Monash (Hestrin and Tadmor 1963). At the former site a crescentic axe-head was found along with a number of spearheads and adz blades. The Kfar Monash hoard includes types paralleled in both Syria and Egypt and has been variously dated to Early Bronze II (Ben-Tor 1971) or III (Watkins 1975). It comprised thirty-five pieces, including a variety of tools and weapons along with fragments of silver leaves and small copper plates, thought by some to be armor breastplates. Bâb edh-Dhrâc has produced a number of metals in Early Bronze III levels—9 daggers, 1 javelin head, 2 crescentic axeheads, and 4 chisels (Rast 1980). In general, however, metals as well as other status objects were not abundant in Palestine during the urban Early Bronze II and III periods.

Urban collapse. By 2350/2300 B.C., the city-state system had collapsed and all the tells were abandoned; urbanism in Palestine no longer existed. Paradoxically, it was during the Early Bronze III period that the system seemed strongest; in fact all the data seem to suggest that political control was more firmly established at that time. The monumentality of the public/religious sectors shows an intensification of social stratification and presumably greater control by a political elite. The size and continued rebuttressing of defensive works could only have been organized by a highly centralized political authority with control over a significant labor force. The massive food-storage facilities discovered in this period, the size of the major centers, and the evidence that many of these sites were occupied to their capacity imply an increase in urban population. Urban growth in Early Bronze III was characterized by highly nucleated urban centers. As these centers absorbed a growing population, smaller sites were depopulated or abandoned. Indeed, some data suggest a corresponding decline in sedentary village settlements (Fargo 1979). I have already noted above that at the end of Early Bronze II numerous sites were abandoned.

A similar phenomenon has been noted in Mesopotamia, where settlement surveys show that when urban centers became highly nucleated, the population of outlying areas receded (Adams and Nissen 1972; Adams 1981). A concomitant of this appears to be lessening political control by urban centers and expanded autonomy for tribal societies of pastoral nomads. That such a situation existed in Early Bronze III in Palestine is suggested by the archaeological record in the subsequent Early Bronze IV period, when, in the absence of centralized authority, we see a shift towards greater sociopolitical autonomy. Increased autonomy for tribal elements may have resulted in hostilities between

the urban principalities and the tribal groups.

We are far from being able to explain definitively the collapse of the urban centers at the end of Early Bronze III, although there are some clues in the archaeological record that allow us to speculate. Although urbanism reached its zenith during this time, the period was apparently not a tranquil one. The massiveness of the fortifications, their continued rebuttressing, and especially Egyptian inscriptional and pictorial evidence of raiding emphasize the high

The massive fortifications of EB III suggest constant hostilities, which disrupt trade, inhibit agriculture, and place undue demands on the labor force and army. These stresses may have led to the breakdown of the urban system by the end of the period.

level of militarism in this period (Callaway 1978; de Vaux 1971).

Throughout the Old Kingdom (the Third through Sixth Dynasties), that is, Early Bronze III and the first part of Early Bronze IV, Egyptian raids against "the Asiatics" are attested (Drower and Bottéro 1971). The best evidence comes from the tombs of Dishasha and Saqqara, where fortified towns, some with towers, are shown under siege by Egyptian troops. The people who are besieged are depicted clearly as Asiatics. There are other references to expeditions against fortified towns in a "land of figs and vines," and to a defeat of "the Asiatics, Sand-dwellers," and the Shasu—a term later known to apply to the nomads of our region. Thus the textual references to continual raiding by Egypt may explain the monumental fortifications of the period, and it would also provide

one rationale for immigration to the cities as the more sedentary-based rural peoples sought protection. Others presumably would have opted for the more mobile life of pastoral nomadism.

It is known that constant hostilities disrupt trade, depopulate the areas around cities, inhibit agricultural productivity, and place undue demands on the labor force and army.

Such stresses, if they occurred, may have led to social unrest, political upheaval, and the final breakdown of the system by the end of Early Bronze III. It should also be noted that a shift to drier conditions, for which there is some climatological evidence (including textual documentation for drought slightly later in Egypt) may have also played a role in the process of deurbanization (Butzer 1970; Bell 1971; Horowitz 1974). The precise reasons may never be known. I must stress, however, that there is no evidence to posit, as has been done in the past, a nomadic invasion as explanation for the collapse of the urban city-state system (see Kenyon, Bottéro, and Posener 1971).

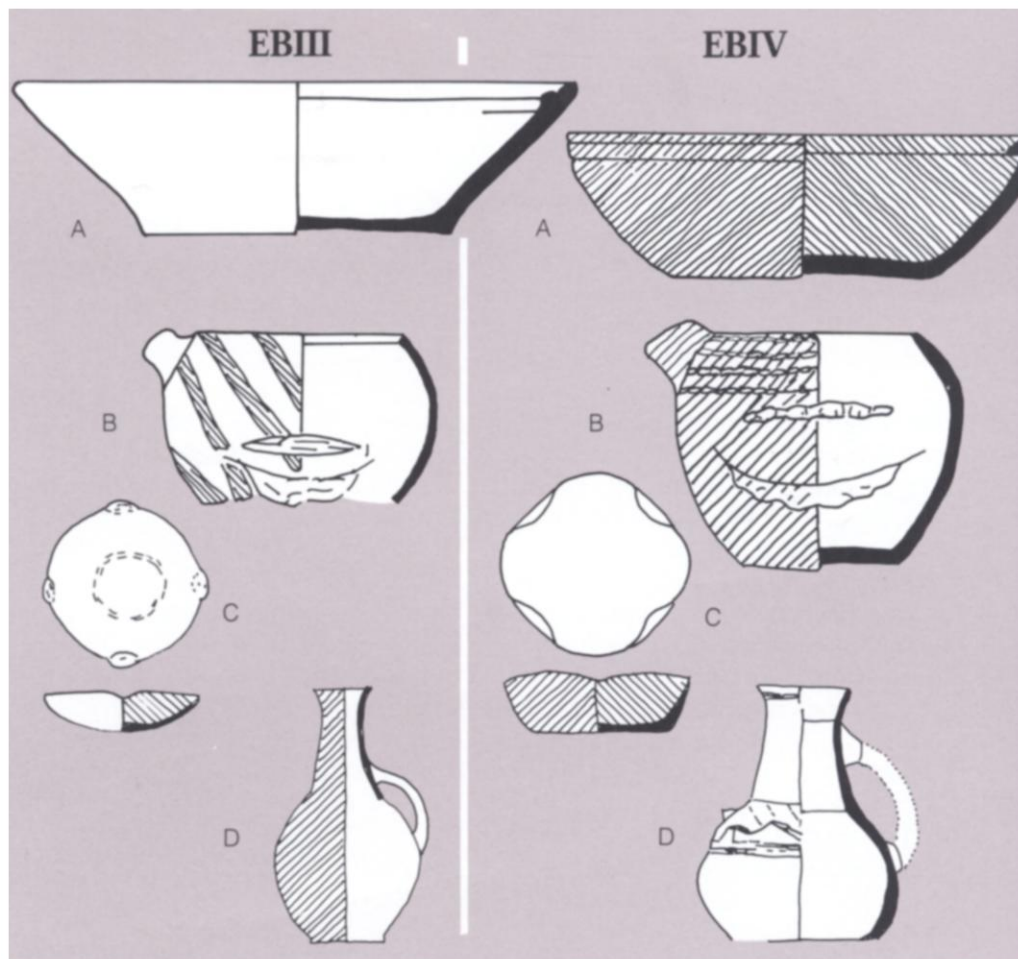
Early Bronze IV (circa 2350/2300 to 2000 B.C.)
Urban regression. Although current anthropological views on culture change place greater emphasis on isolating internal mechanisms in order to explain processes of change, earlier scholarship tended to view abrupt change in terms of "invasions of new peoples." In the face of such abrupt sociocultural change at the end of Early Bronze III, where urbanism was succeeded by nonurban settlement and nomadism, it is no surprise that invasion theories were appealed to as an explanation for these dramatic events. The most enduring has been the Amorite hypothesis. Although first espoused by Albright in the 1920s, it was Kathleen Kenyon who revitalized this theory in the 1960s as a result of her excavations at Jericho (see the most complete treatment in Kenyon,

There is no compelling evidence to suggest that Palestine was invaded in EB IV or that town and village life was eradicated.

Bottéro, and Posener 1971). There she discovered 346 shaft tombs with varying traditions, which she presumed indicated several different incoming tribal groups. She connected these data with movements of Amorite pastoral nomads who are documented in late-third- and early-second-millennium Mesopotamian texts and who eventually superseded the Sumero/Akkadian dynasties in the early second millennium B.C. In this view, then, the Amorites swept into Palestine, destroyed the urban centers, and precipitated a period of nomadism (EB IV) in the area. The archaeological record appeared to confirm this view, since previously Early Bronze IV had been attested principally only by large isolated cemeteries and ephemeral settlements.

In light of newer data and current scholarly trends, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that there was an invasion; that Amorite nomads from Syria overran the country; or that town/village life was completely eradicated. Indeed, the growing evidence for cultural continuity between Early Bronze III and IV supports our contention that the collapse of the city-state system and the subsequent adaptation to non-urban and pastoral subsistence strategies were a result of gradual internal processes (for an opposing view see Amiran and Kochavi 1985).

The end of Early Bronze III in Palestine coincided with the destruction of numerous sites throughout Syria. Whereas the highly urbanized culture to the north, closely tied to widespread prosperity throughout Mesopotamia, continued and indeed flourished in Early Bronze IV (Ebla's apogee), this new and dynamic cultural horizon in Syria did not



These drawings illustrate the typological development and continuity between the pottery of EB III and EB IV: (A) inverted-rim bowls, (B) "teapots," (C) four-spouted lamps, and (D) ledge-handled jars.

encompass Palestine, except peripherally. Political upheaval toward the end of the Sixth Dynasty led to sociopolitical disintegration, as Egypt entered its own Dark Age (the First Intermediate Period, the Seventh through Eleventh Dynasties). The presence of over 400 settlements in the Negeb and Sinai in Early Bronze IV testifies to an internally weakened Egypt unable to protect its frontiers. The lack of prosperity in Palestine must be viewed against these larger international currents, particularly a weakened Egypt.

In this period Palestine was indeed a hinterland with less complex sociopolitical systems and a less specialized subsistence economy, although some intra/interregional commercial relations are attested. The uniformity of Levantine metal objects in Palestine, as well as the presence of a few Syrian imports, indicates the continuation of some trade in this period. The ceramic corpus, however,

shows a more regional cast (as in Early Bronze I), although there is a great deal of overlap. In terms of political organization, the highly integrated culture of Early Bronze II and III, which occurred contemporaneously with urbanism, no longer existed. A loosely integrated society comprising a large pastoral population, small agricultural communities, and a few regional centers (small towns) reflects a readaptation to a level of political autonomy probably best explained by the chiefdom model (discussed above).

History of research. In the late 1960s and early 1970s great strides were made in research on the Early Bronze IV period. Amiran brought order into the corpus of Early Bronze IV (her Middle Bronze I) pottery by subdividing it into "three families" (1960). Dever later elaborated the regional nature of this corpus by distinguishing five (1971) and later six "families" (1980). Prag showed that a

A sedentary component existed in Transjordan during EB IV, and the ceramic repertoire exemplifies both continuity from local traditions and a foreign element.

sedentary component existed in Transjordan at this time and that the ceramic repertoire exemplified both continuity from local traditions and a foreign element (1974). A new horizon of degenerate red-slipped and burnished pottery at Bâb edh-Dhrâc likewise showed continuity from the Early Bronze III and could be compared with ceramic types west of the Jordan (Schaub 1973). Dever (1973) termed this pottery the "missing link" between Early Bronze III and the "classic" Middle Bronze I of Palestine and suggested renaming the resultant phases of the period (Early Bronze IVA, IVB, and IVC). Thus the case for the continuity of indigenous traditions during Early Bronze IV began to grow (Oren 1973b), along with a preference for the Early Bronze IVA–C terminology and a call for the abandonment of the Amorite hypothesis and invasion theories in general (Richard 1980; Dever 1980).

Since there is no consensus yet on the proper terminology for the period, the various terms previously adopted and still found in the scholarly literature should be noted. They are: *Early Bronze IV* (Wright 1937); *Middle Bronze I* (Albright 1932); *Intermediate Early Bronze/Middle Bronze* (Kenyon 1951); *Intermediate Bronze Age* (Smith 1962; Lapp 1966); *Early Bronze IIIC/Early Bronze IV/Middle Bronze I* (Albright 1965); and *Early Bronze IV/Middle Bronze I* (Dever 1970). The most often used terms are *Early Bronze IV*, *Intermediate Early Bronze/Middle Bronze*, and *Middle Bronze I*. The term *Middle Bronze I* is still used by those who believe that continuity in form exists with the following Middle Bronze Age pottery. Recent analyses have shown, however, that this alleged continuity is ephemeral at best (Gerstenblith 1980; Dever 1985a). In Syria also, at least at Ebla (Mazzoni 1985), the Middle Bronze Age assemblage represents a transformation "not to be linked with Early Bronze tradition." Unlike the Early Bronze III to IV transition, a com-

parison of Early Bronze IV/Middle Bronze Age materials reveals that the differences far outweigh the similarities. Most scholars who use Kenyon's term *Intermediate Early Bronze/Middle Bronze* today concede that significant continuity does exist with the Early Bronze III and that the period is not the "interlude" Kenyon envisioned. (For a recent defense of the term *Intermediate Bronze Age*, see Amiran and Kochavi, 1985.) Thus, the current trend is to describe Wright's original Early Bronze IV (partially reassigned to Early Bronze III; Dever and Richard 1977) and Albright's original Middle Bronze I by the term *Early Bronze IV* (2350/ 2300–2000 B.C.), often divided into phases A, B, and C. Note that the term *Early Bronze IV* has now been adopted for Syria (Matthiae 1981; Dornemann 1979).

Pastoralism. An important step forward occurred when a new anthropological model of pastoral nomadism, in contrast to Kenyon's conception of nomadism, was suggested by Dever (1973, 1977, 1980) as a means to understand the socioeconomic context of transitory archaeological remains of Early Bronze IV. Pastoral nomadism is an important socioeconomic institution throughout antiquity, although excavation has not concentrated on small seasonal sites. Then, as today, pastoral nomadism was a very important institutionalized alternative in semiarid or steppe zones, where desert and cultivable lands converge. Pastoralists must be seen as necessarily co-existent with agricultural society with which they trade, labor, and sometimes war. There is an "economic interdependence" between the two because each has a need for the

other's products (Spooner 1973). Their mobility naturally brings them into contact with neighboring regions, suggesting one possible conduit for cultural exchange. Both modern ethnographic research (for example, the Rwala bedouin of southern Syria—Johnson 1969) and the documentation of relations between sedentists and nomads in the texts of Mesopotamia (Rowton 1980 and earlier references cited there; Buccellati 1966; Luke 1965; Matthews 1978) suggest that pastoral nomadism is a good explanatory model for a certain component of society during Early Bronze IV (particularly in the Negeb and Sinai—Dever 1985b).

The first complete plan of a seasonal village dating to Early Bronze IV has been discovered at Be'er Resisim, and we can now say much more about the socioeconomic organization of pastoralists. Some eighty curvilinear structures arranged in clusters have been excavated at this site in the western Negeb highlands (Dever 1985b). The size of these huts suggests that they were only used for sleeping quarters. The processing of foodstuffs and tending of animals took place in open areas between the buildings. There is no evidence for social stratification; rather the picture is one of an egalitarian, tribal society. These houses appear to be the seasonal habitations of transhumant pastoralists who subsisted on goat- and sheepherding, some dry farming, and trade. Large cemeteries with similar pottery found some 80 miles away in the hills around Hebron (Jebel Qa'qir) may suggest their migratory route. Surveys have discovered some 400 nonurban settlements similar to Be'er Resisim throughout the Negeb and Sinai. These data may illuminate several Egyptian texts of the First Intermediate period (for example, The Instruction for King Merikare and The Admonitions of Ipuwer) that relate the attempts of Egypt in the First Intermediate period to stem the tide of Asiatics into Egypt.

Pastoralists necessarily coexist with agricultural society, with which they trade, labor, and war. There is an “economic inter-dependence” because each has a need for the other’s products.

Sedentism. The discovery of sedentary sites in Transjordan has over the past fifteen years or so revolutionized our thinking about Early Bronze IV society. Whereas previously it was thought that the area was inhabited solely by nomads, it is now clear that permanent settlements existed and that urban traditions continued into the Early Bronze IV period.

It is now clear that permanent settlements and urban traditions existed in the Transjordan in EB IV. A similar level of sedentism may be discovered in western Palestine. Indeed, surface surveys indicate that small agricultural villages did exist.

With this view from Transjordan, it is probable that a similar level of sedentism will be discovered in western Palestine, and indeed surface surveys indicate that small agricultural villages do exist (Esse 1982; Zori 1962, 1977). At the present time, however, evidence of settlement in western Palestine—aside from the seasonal sites in the Negeb and Sinai—has been excavated at only a few of the major tells (for example, Hazor, Megiddo, Jericho, Beth-shean). The evidence for continuity in permanent settlement and the diffusion of burial and ceramic traditions into Palestine (Dever 1985a) demonstrates that Transjordan played a pivotal role in Early Bronze IV, but for reasons as yet not entirely clear.



Some eighty curvilinear structures dating to EB IV have been excavated at Be'er Resisim. The inset shows one of these huts as it was reconstructed with beam, chalk-slab, and plaster roof (only one segment completed). Courtesy of Rudolph Cohen and William G. Dever.

Thus our picture of sedentism comes primarily from Transjordan, where excavations at Bâb edh-Dhrâc (Schaub and Rast 1984), Aroer (Olávarri 1969), Iktanu (Prag 1974), Khirbet Iskander (Parr 1960; Richard 1986), Ader (Cleveland 1960), Tell abu en-^cNiaj (Steven Falconer, personal communication), Tell Umm Hammad (Helms 1986), and current excavations at Tell el-^cUmeiri (Geraty and others 1986) have revealed various levels of permanent multiphased settlement, from small agricultural villages to small towns with strong urban traditions. Survey has uncovered dozens of other settlement sites in Transjordan of the Early Bronze IV period; these sites will undoubtedly fill out the picture already emerging of a greater level of social complexity than hitherto conjectured for this period.

A detailed look at Khirbet Iskander will suffice to demonstrate the strong connections with the Early Bronze III that we have mentioned above (Richard and Boraas 1984, in press; Richard 1986). Khirbet Iskander is a 7.5-acre site surrounded by a 2.5-meter-wide perimeter wall with reinforced corners

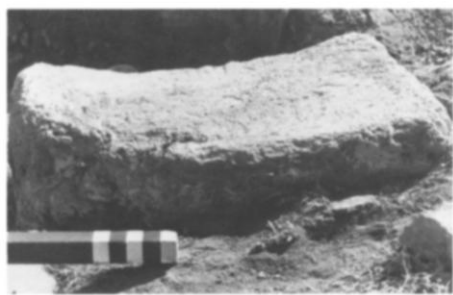
that appear to be square towers. At the southeastern corner of the site a two-chambered, bench-lined gate has also come to light. These fortifications are the first and, thus far, the only such defenses known in the Early Bronze IV period. A wide exposure just within the northwestern fortifications has revealed a series of interconnected broadroom houses (one with a bench) grouped around a courtyard. *Tabuns* (cooking ovens), huge saddle querns, mortars, grinders, flint sickle blades, and storage areas all underscore the agricultural base of the community. It appears at this point that there are five major phases to this domestic complex. In one phase some fifty whole or restorable vessels (the largest corpus of intact domestic vessels found at an EB IV sedentary site) were recovered in a storeroom of pottery. Some vessels contained the remains of carbonized grain and one included the complete skeleton of a mouse! Two large cemeteries in the vicinity complete the picture of a well-defended, permanently established agricultural community. On a smaller scale, Khirbet Iskander mirrors the town planning we have described at Early



A chamber of an EB IV shaft tomb at Khirbet Iskander containing the multiple disarticulated burial of at least three people, along with seven ceramic vessels.



Two domestic installations excavated at Khirbet Iskander. **Above:** A tabun, or cooking oven. **Below:** A large saddle quern used for grinding grain.



The last standing menhir, or commemorative marker, at Khirbet Iskander. Although their specific purpose is not known, menhirs are generally considered cultic objects because they have been found associated with cemeteries and sanctuaries.

Bronze Age sites such as Arad, Ai, Tell el-Far'ah North. Additional excavation is necessary to determine whether there is a separation of domestic and public buildings, and if a sacred area exists at the site.

That some regional centers included a sacred area is now confirmed by the recent discovery of a cultic structure at Bâb edh-Dhrâc (Schaub and Rast 1984). In light of this discovery, a reuse of the Megiddo sacred precinct (at least temple 4040) in this period, and likewise an Early Bronze IV date for the menhir-temple at Ader now seem plausible. Har Yeruham is also said to have a small sacred area.

Burial traditions and material culture. Other components of the Early Bronze IV culture reflect similar continuities with Early Bronze III: shaft-tomb, pottery, lithic, and metal traditions. As I have noted, the shaft-tomb tradition (known in Trans-jordan since Early Bronze I) is found throughout Palestine in Early Bronze IV. The tomb generally consists of a round or square shaft, 1.0 to 2.5 meters in length, connected to one or more round or square chambers of various dimensions with domed roofs. Following interment a blocking stone was set at the entrance and the shaft was filled in.

Both primary (usually single) and multiple, disarticulated (secondary) burials are attested. The variety of tomb-types—cairns, built tombs, and dolmens are also known—and burial practices (Kenyon, Bottéro, and Posener 1971) is a good indicator of a loosely integrated society of politically autonomous groups whose customs reflect kinship-based patterns.

The metal industry displays both local and new Syrian types, and the pottery has a peculiar hybrid quality that is still a point of contention among scholars: Do these new elements represent the presence of new peoples or simply foreign influences? As we have noted in the Early Bronze I to III periods, traditions current in Syria very shortly thereafter were diffused into Palestine and such was



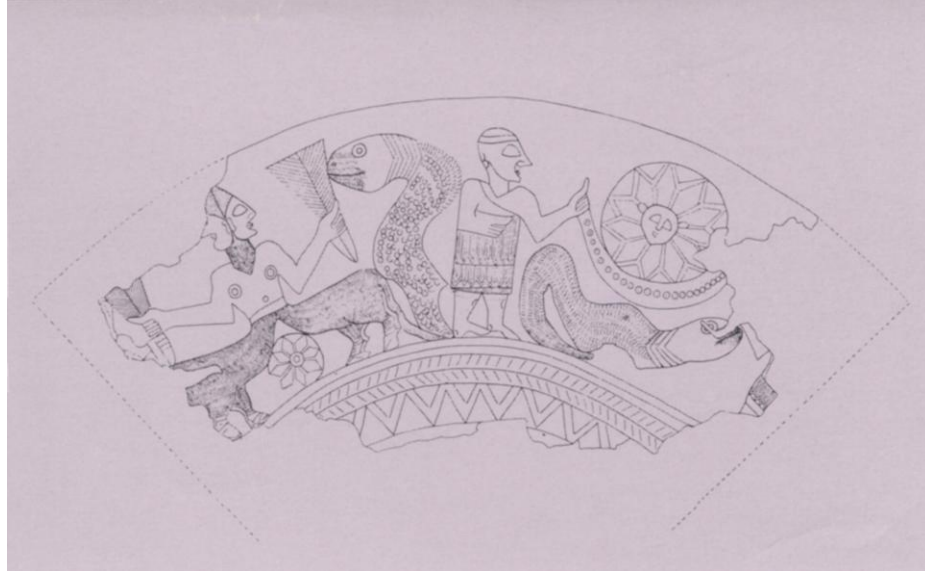
Intact vessels found in the storeroom at Khirbet Iskander.

the case in Early Bronze IV as well. Syrian imported pottery (wheel-made, gray teapots and painted and incised cups), a beautiful silver cup from Ain es-Samiya bearing Mesopotamian mythological scenes, and new metals and innovations in ceramics all underscore continuing trade with Syria, although on a relatively small scale.

The basic red-slipped and burnished Early Bronze III repertoire of platters, bowls, jugs, and jars exists in Early Bronze IV, although in degenerate form and showing decorative motifs, such as a rilled exterior, adopted from a type of decoration in vogue in Syria at this time. The influence, probably derived from trade and cultural contact between the



Silver cup found in an EB IV shaft tomb at Ain es-Samiya. Clearly an import, it is decorated with scenes employing Mesopotamian mythological motifs. Photograph and drawing courtesy of the Israel Museum.



two areas, is restricted to decoration, a few new forms, and—in the later well-fired buff pottery—technological advances current in Syria (Dever 1973; Richard 1980; Mazzoni 1985). The new look to the pottery merely reflects concurrent ceramic changes in Syria; however, because in Palestine these ceramic innovations coincided with sociocultural change, their uniqueness has in the past been overly stressed.

The most obvious new element among the metal types is their quantity in comparison with earlier periods. They are mostly found as tomb offerings (Dever 1972), although examples are known from domestic contexts (Be'er Resisim). The quantity of metals and the evidence for local manufacture (ingots at Be'er Resisim and elsewhere in the Negeb, and analyses evidencing true bronze metallurgy) point to a high level of craft specialization in this industry and to trade. The recent discovery of settlement pottery from Early Bronze IV near the Wadi Feinan copper mines (Knauf 1986) in southern Transjordan indicates that the mines may have been worked during this period.

Sociocultural change: a reevaluation. Our perspective on the Early Bronze IV period has changed radically in

Culture change in Palestine between EB III and IV was once viewed as a bipolar shift from sedentism to nomadism. In reality the shift was from urban to nonurban and pastoral adaptive strategies: from specialization in mode of production to a multi-resource, less specialized economy. This was a natural adaptation following the demise of the urban centers.

light of the growing evidence for permanent sedentary sites. These sites and their material culture illustrate sociocultural continuity with Early Bronze III, and thus support a model of culture change, especially for Transjordan, which is less abrupt than hitherto believed. Small towns and villages, agriculture, and pastoralism are indigenous elements in Early Bronze III. Sociocultural change at the Early Bronze III/IV horizon (in this case greater pastoralism and village life as opposed to urban settlement) is better understood as a change in emphasis of production and organization in response to irreversible stresses on the urban system, rather than as an abrupt

shift to a new sociocultural phenomenon (see Salzman 1978). The most telling evidence for this new view on sociocultural change lies in the archaeological record of Early Bronze IV, where the actual transitions and continuities from Early Bronze III are manifest. In this view, then, there is no need to posit foreign migrations from Syria (Prag 1985).

Culture change between Early Bronze III and IV has in the past been viewed as a bipolar shift from sedentism to nomadism, whereas in reality the shift was from urban to nonurban and pastoral adaptive strategies—that is, from specialization in mode of production to a multi-resource, less specialized economy as a natural adaptation following the demise of the urban centers. Recent research suggests that specialization-despecialization is a more adequate perspective from which to view Early Bronze IV adaptation in Palestine-Transjordan (Long 1986; see Bates and Lees 1977).

This new perspective on Early Bronze IV is totally in concert with newer anthropological conceptions of society, sociocultural change, and the processes of sedentarization and nomadization (see Adams and Nissen 1972; Nissen 1980; Adams 1978, 1981; Salzman 1978, 1980a, 1980b). To understand change, it is important to view society—a complex set of organizations, institutions, customs—as fluid rather than rigid. Within this society, there is a range of life-styles and institutionalized al-

ternative strategies (for instance, urbanism, village life, and pastoralism) upon which there is greater or lesser stress depending on circumstances (Salzman 1980a). In Early Bronze IV there was an emphasis on nonurban (village and town) and pastoral subsistence strategies in the absence of centralized political control. This fluidity in subsistence strategies (cultural adaptation) along the urban-nonurban continuum provides the mechanism for sociocultural change. Change becomes apparent in the archaeological record when the aggregate of subsistence strategies shifts, as happened in Early Bronze IV.

Sedentarization/nomadization oscillations do, however, occur. They can be documented in the ethnographic present (Salzman 1980b) and in antiquity, as texts and surveys illuminate the movements of nomads into the towns and back to pastoralism, depending on the political and economic climate (Rowton 1980 and earlier works; Buccellati 1966; Luke 1965; Matthews 1978; Adams and Nissen 1972; Adams 1981). Such oscillations must be viewed, however, as part of a larger urban-nonurban process that is cyclical throughout antiquity. Indeed, at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, as a result of flourishing Egyptian and Syrian cultures, there was a swing back to urbanism in Palestine.

Conclusion

This survey has attempted to illustrate the fundamental adaptability of the indigenous population in the rise and collapse of urbanism in the Early Bronze Age. The view that Early Bronze civilization represents one cultural continuum from Early Bronze I to IV is not new: G. Ernest Wright drew the same conclusion in 1937 almost solely on the basis of ceramic continuity. What I have attempted to do, in light of the wealth of data available today, is provide a theoretical framework within which to understand some of the processes underlying sociocultural continuity

and to illuminate change—growth and decline—as a necessary dynamic in cultural evolution.

Note

¹Recent evidence suggests that 3200 B.C., the traditional date of the beginning of the Early Bronze Age/end of the Chalcolithic period should be raised to 3400 B.C. See the section in this paper entitled "History of Research."

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