

Natufian Article Summary by James Lloyd

F.R. Valla's article entitled "Sedentism, The 'Point of No Return', and the Natufian Issue. An historical perspective" tries to depict how the Natufian society of the Near Eastern Levant region developed their hunting techniques from the typical hunter-gatherer civilistaion into one that utilized sedentism in addition to the typical hunter-gatherer lifestyle. This development occured roughly 11,500 years ago and has had a major impact on how societies have evolved since this time period. This society was also a key part of the Fertile Crescent, a major route for societal development Throughout this article, Valla references a whole range of viewpoints from various archaeologists who have carried out work on this ancient culture, such as Dorothy Garrod and Jean Perrot.

Even though the main topic of this article is discussing Natufian sedentism, it is clear that this article heavily critiques how archaeological interpretation can have a great impact on how different finds are interpreted and seen. For example, the author mentions how Dorothy Garrod interpreted sickle blades as being "evidence of agriculture". It is also clear that Garrod avoided using the word 'culture' in her work, which the article author interprets as her being cautious incase her views of her findings turn out to be incorrect. Valla also mentions this where he talks about how even Garrod's co-worker himself opposed this opinion, when he stated how animal domestication usually precedes agricultrre, which is different to what Garrod's findings suggested. He also mentions how she was relying on the most "controversial manner" (Valla, 2018), which suggests further that he has opposing views to what Garrod's findings said.

Another archaeologist that carried out work on the Natufians whom has been criticised by Valla is Jean Perrot. His work has been criticised for many reasons. For one, Garrod was forced to use Perrot's interpretations alone to base her work off of, rather than using it to help support other evidence that had been found previously. This means that if he interpreted his evidence as more important than it was, her findings would have also been falsely written, meaning that the little data we have from the site at Ain Mallah would be incorrect. Perrot also focused mainly on graves when writing about his evidence, meaning he ignored some aspects that could be seen as valuable pieces of information, in order to mention something that isn't as useful, such as the "exposure of some rows of stone" (Valla, 2018) which could suggest the building of some houses. Perrot also intended to make a link between Natufians found at el-Wad and Neolithic societies found at Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB) Jericho. However, he was unable to do this as the links he was intending to make- such as the walls found during excavations- turned out to be misguided. These links, however, were later made by other archaeologists (Stekelis and Yizraely, 1963).

It is quite clear that the sedentism of the Natufian society has come under vast amounts of scrutiny regarding it's origins and the origins of other agricultural societies, as seen throughout this article which discusses the works of various archaeologists whom have carried out work on this communtiy, such as Braidwood, while others disregard it's relevance due to the

lack of ambiguous archaeological evidence (Edwards, 1989). Valla also mentions how it was never really difficult to demonstrate actual sedentism during the Natufian period to specialists in both the field and in laboratories, despite the difficulties that he had previously mentioned. However, he also mentions towards the end of this article how it is rather difficult to define the word 'sedentism', and he states how it is rather difficult to have a viewpoint or make an interpretation of the word without knowing its true meaning.

Reference List

- P.C. Edwards (1989), Problems of recognizing earliest sedentism; the Natufian example. *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 2,1: 5-48.
- M. Stekelis and T. Yizraely (1963) Excavations at Nahal Oren: Preliminary Report. *Israel Exploration Journal* 13.1: 1-12.
- F.R. Valla (2018) 'Sedentism, The 'Point of No Return', and the Natufian Issue. An historical perspective', *Paléorient*, vol. 44.1, pp.19-33.