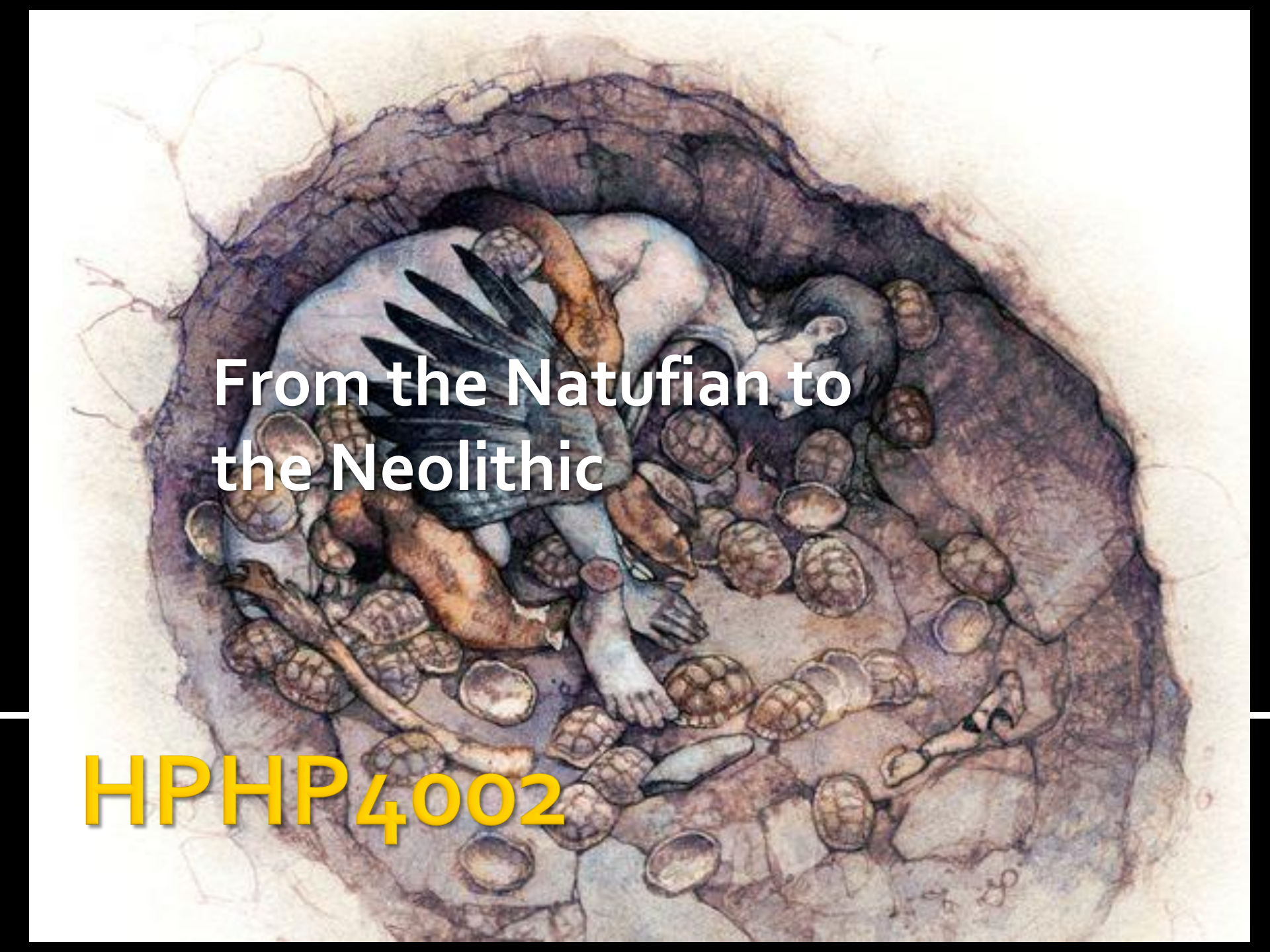




From the Natufian to the Neolithic

HPHP4002

Where and When?

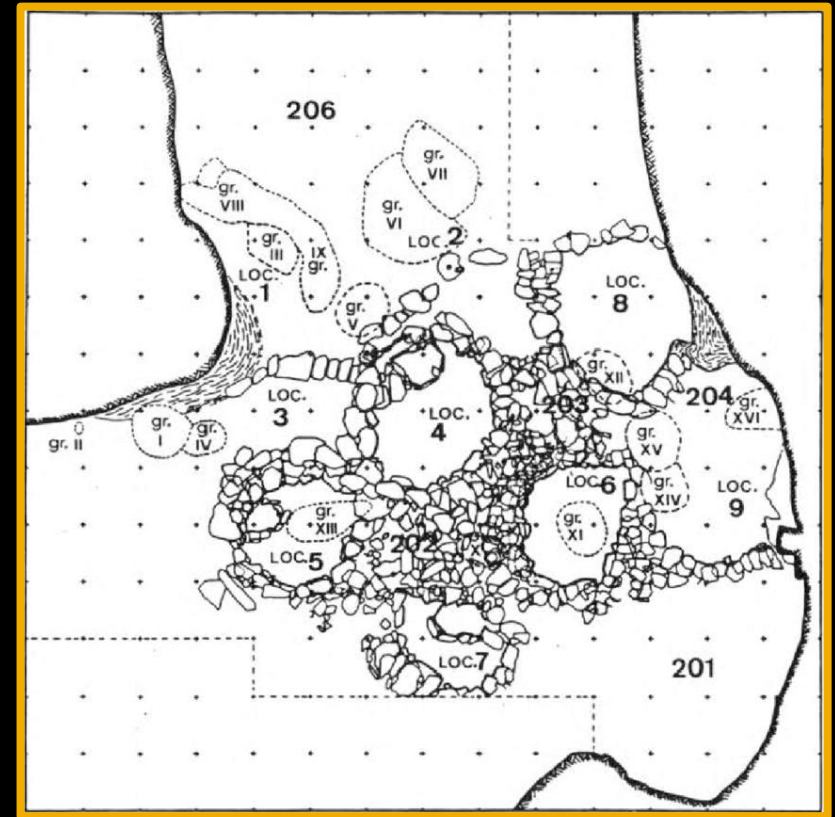
- Levant / Fertile Crescent / Near East
- Natufian:
 - 12,800 – 10,300 BP
 - Epi-Palaeolithic
 - Late Pleistocene / Early Holocene transition
- Neolithic:
 - PPNA: 10,500-9,200 BP
 - PPNB: 9,200- 5,500 BP
 - Bogonofsky (2003): c.7200-6000 BC



Map of the Levant showing Natufian & PPN sites

Natufian: Social Changes

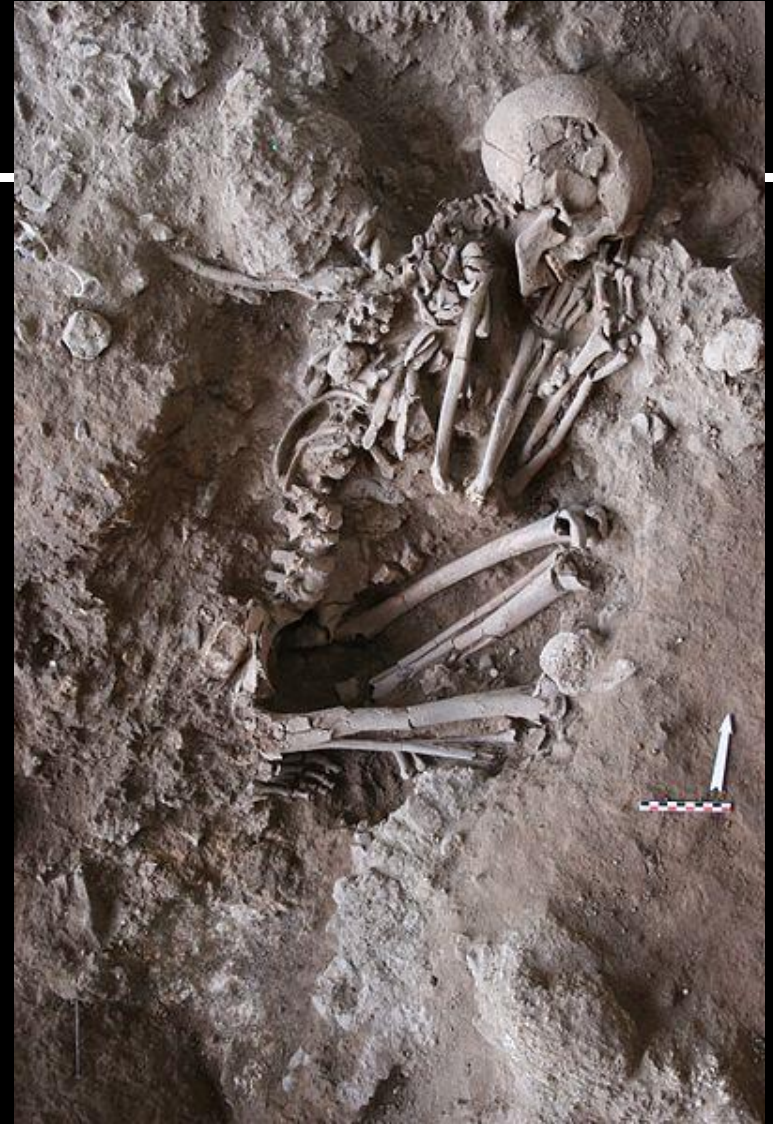
- Early & Middle Epipalaeolithic: c.19,000–12,800 BP
 - Fewer than twenty individuals from some five sites
- Natufian: more evidence for funerary practices
 - More than 400 Natufian burials identified
- Move toward regular formalised burial of members of community



Hayonim cave

Natufian Burials

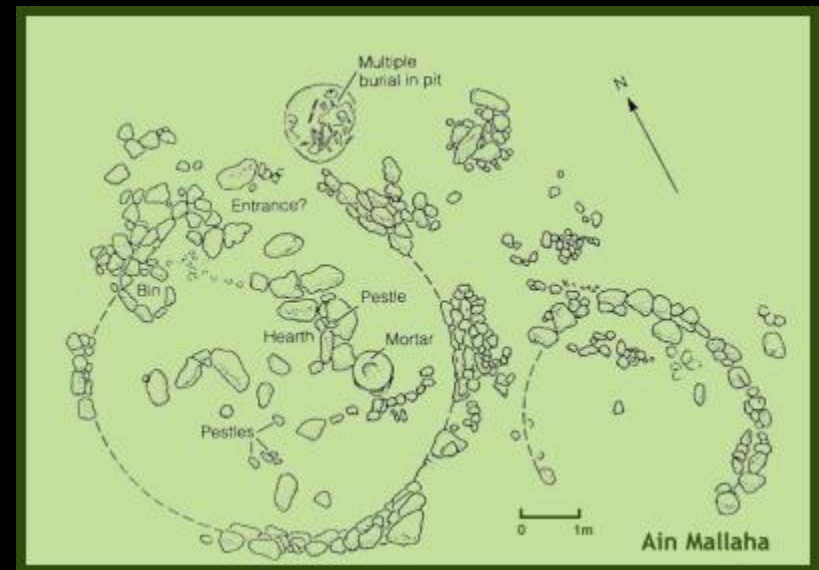
- Development of structured cultural disposal of human dead
 - Major cultural change,
 - Associated with increasingly sedentary lifestyle
- Very small % of overall population
- Development of funerary ritual, beliefs & understandings of mortality?



Raqefet Cave, Mount Carmel,

Burial Location

- Some in living space:
 - Ain Mallaha, Hayonim
- Others in specialised cemeteries:
 - Raqefet Cave, Hilazon Tachtit
- Simple pit graves, some lined with stone sealed with stone
- No patterns of orientation
 - No formalisation of burial ritual



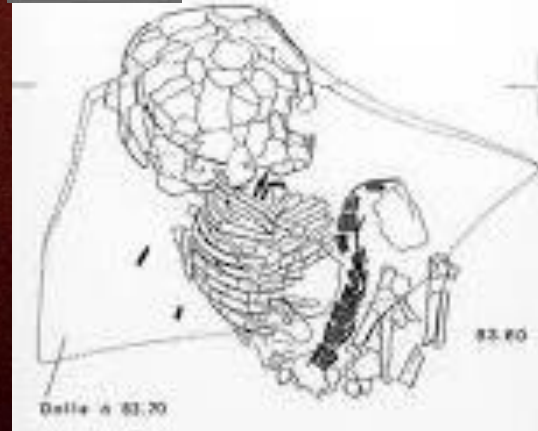
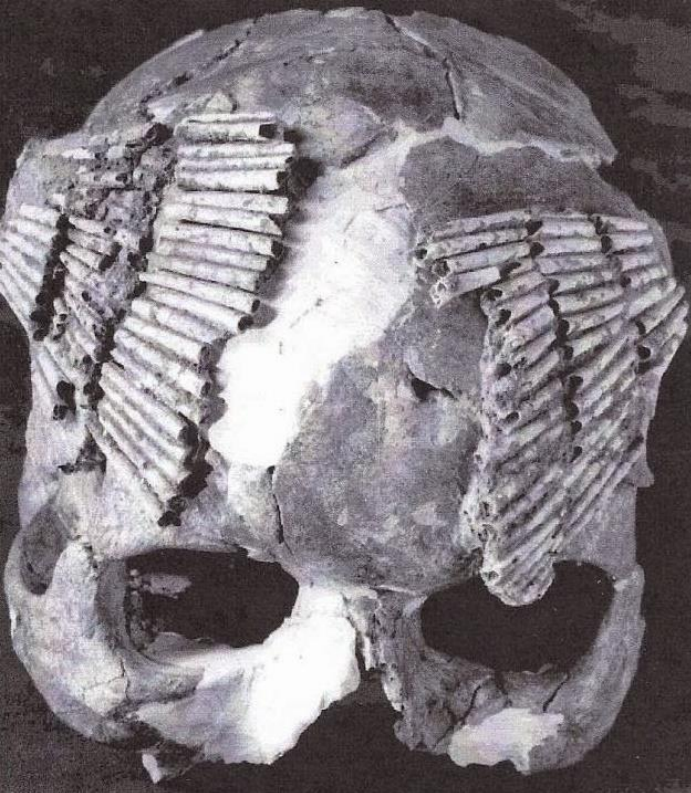
Early Natufian Decorated Burials

- Personal ornamentation:
 - Beads, made from bone, fox teeth, dentalium shell
 - Headdresses, necklaces, bracelets, belts, “garter”
- Small % of burials are decorated
- No gender or age distinctions
- Wright (1978):
 - Evidence for social stratification?
 - Restricted use of dentalium suggests special significance



El Wad burials





Human-Animal Burials

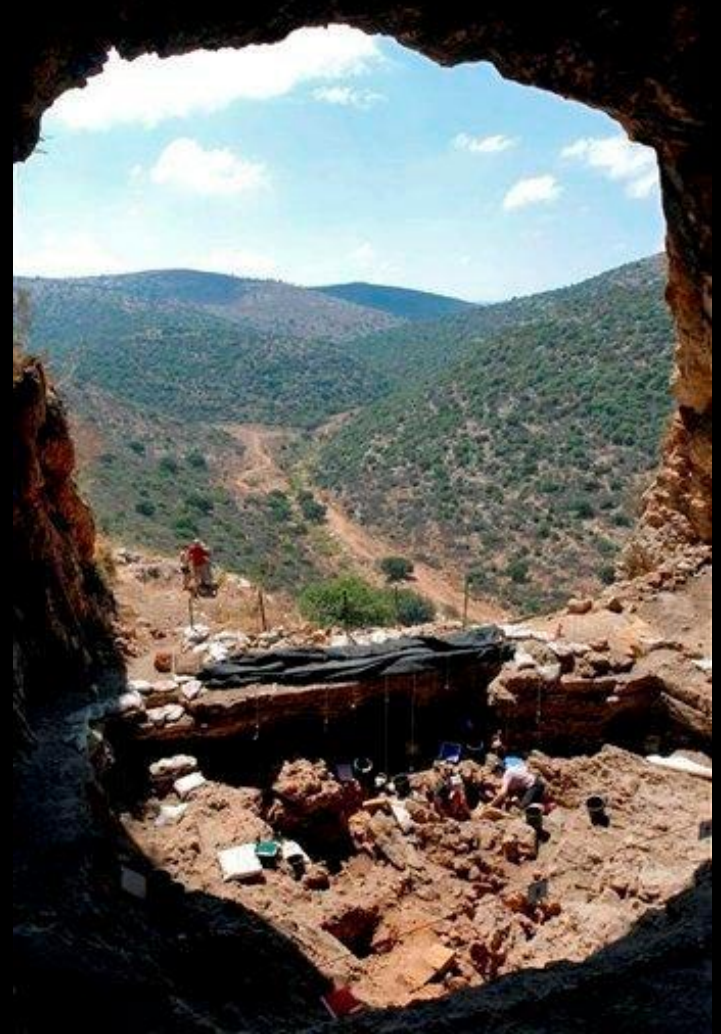
- Changing human-animal relationship...
- Animal remains frequently placed in graves but not for food
 - Gazelle horn cores, horse teeth
- Joint burials of humans & dogs at el-Wad, Ain Mallaha, Hayonim Terrace



Ain Mallaha dog burial

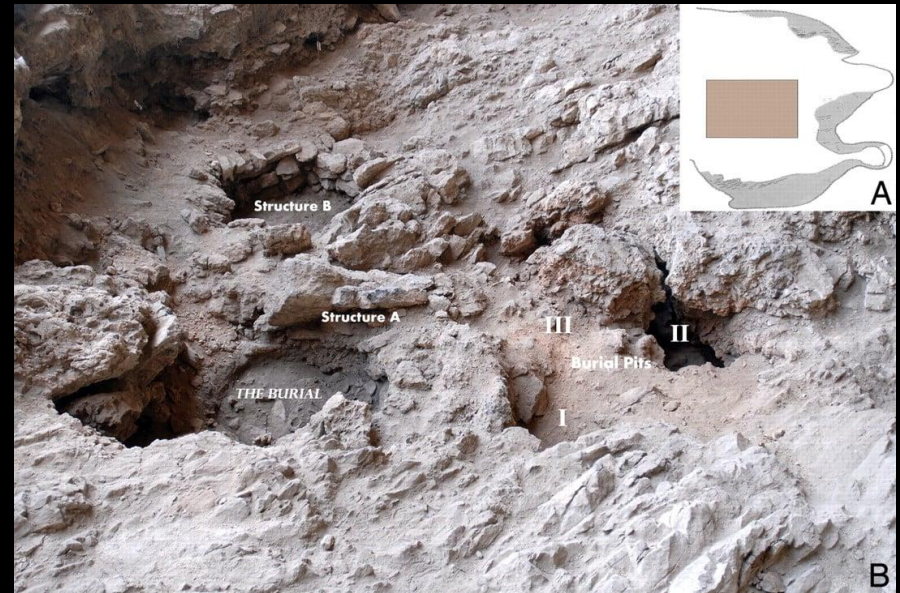
Hilazon Tachtit: Shaman's Burial?

- Late Natufian burial site:
 - 3 small burial pits containing disarticulated burials of at least 25 individuals
 - 3 single inhumations in cave



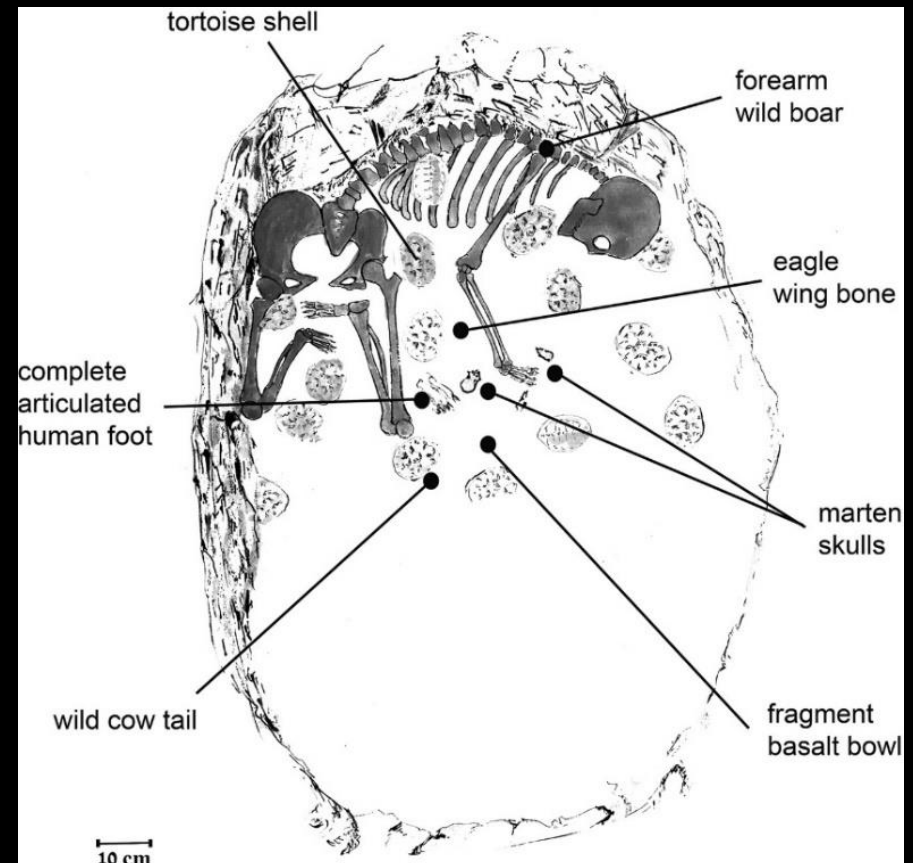
Hilazon Tachtit: Shaman's Burial?

- Earliest burial in cave: elderly female
- Limestone blocks placed over upper body
 - Great investment of time & energy in preparation, arrangement, & sealing of the grave
 - Assorted animal remains



Hilazon Tachtit: Animal Remains

- 50 complete tortoise shells
- Two stone marten skulls (buried with their skins attached)
- Wing tip of a golden eagle
- Aurochs tail
- Near complete leopard pelvis between 2 tortoise shells
- Articulated forearm of wild boar aligned with woman's humerus
- Complete, male gazelle horn core with basalt bowl fragment placed under pelvis
- Articulated human foot



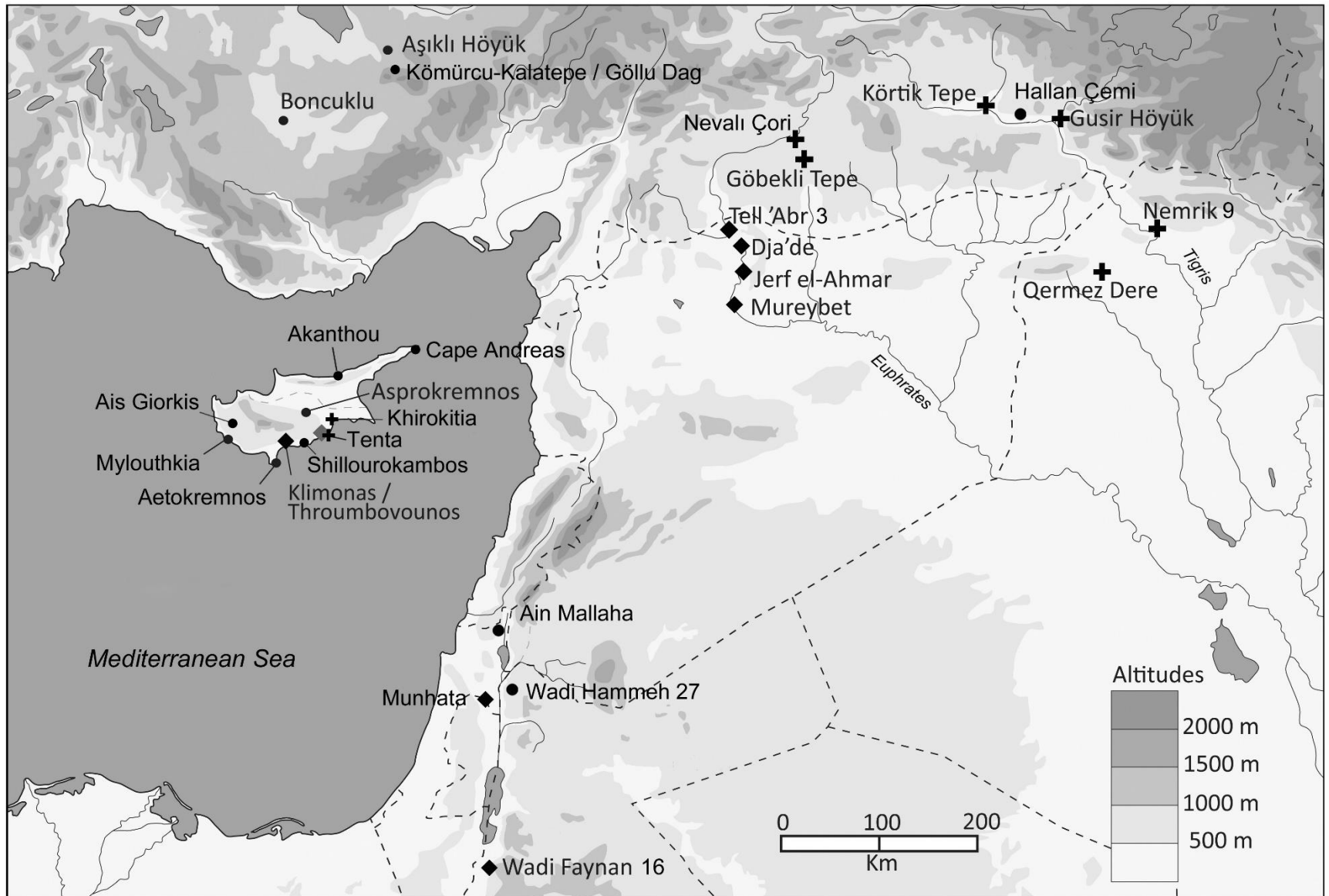
Hilazon Tachtit?

- Who was buried in the cave at Hilazon Tachtit?
- Why did she have such an elaborate burial?
- What does this tell us about Natufian communities?



Reconstruction

PPNB



PPNB

- Intramural burial in pits beneath plastered house floors
- Great variability in treatment of body:
 - Single articulated
 - Multiple secondary burials (up to 15 individuals)
 - Handling of human bones especially skulls



'Ain Ghazal: burial with cranium removed

Neolithic Skull Cult

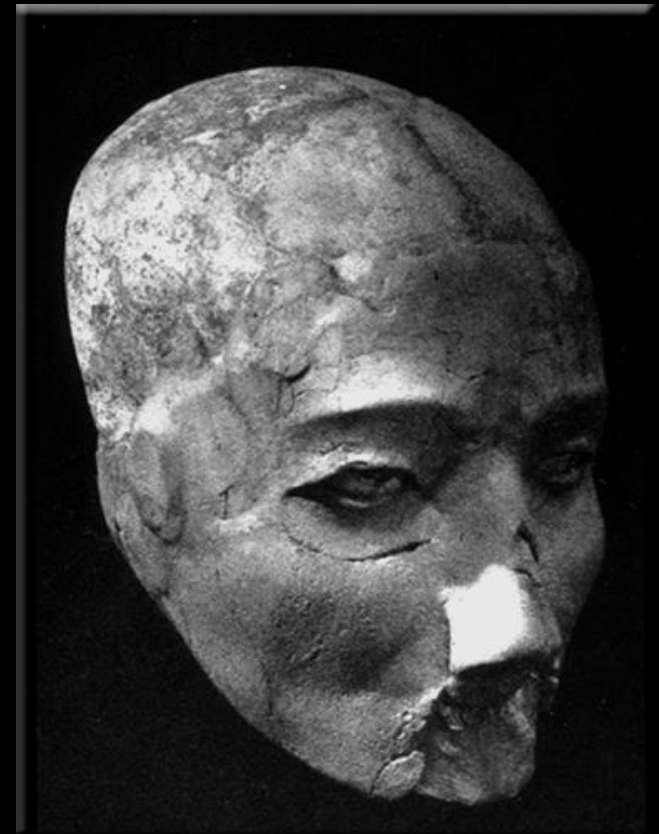
- More than 60 modelled skulls found at several sites in Levant:
 - Jericho (Jordan)
 - Tell Ramad (Syria)
 - Tell Aswad (Syria)
 - Beisamoun (Israel)
 - Nahal Hemar (Israel)
 - 'Ain Ghazal (Jordan)
 - Kfar Hahores (Israel)
- 12 modelled skulls from Late Neolithic Turkey (6000-5000 BC):
 - 11 from Kösk Höyük
 - 1 from Çatal Höyük



Skulls from Tell Aswad, Syria

Jericho

- First attested at Jericho (1953)
- First occurs in PPNA
- Most elaborate in PPNB:
 - Crania modelled with plaster & paint
- “one cannot help but feel that they are portraits, which bring the men of the earliest Neolithic astonishingly to life” (Kenyon 1953: 870)



Jericho skull

Treatment of skull

- Postmortem removal of cranium (after decomposition)
- Facial features modelled in lime plaster, marl & animal collagen
- Enhanced with use of paint & cowrie shells
 - Nahal Hemar: skull covered with asphalt & cording
- Very intimate engagement with the dead



Jericho



Nahal Hemar

Neolithic Skull Cult

- Placed singly or collected in caches
 - Beneath plastered floors or associated with plastered surfaces
 - On floors of abandoned & burnt buildings
- Some sites have no skull caches, but headless burials (eg. Beidha)
- Communal (?) ritual activity:
 - Handling & manipulation of bones (skulls & long bones)
 - Within household



Aswad

Ancestor Cult

- 2 underlying assumptions:
 - Special treatment of skulls is restricted to adult males
 - Intentional postmortem dental evulsion
- Ideally skulls belong to older members of community (the village elders):
 - Toothlessness held in esteem
- Pulled out teeth of younger men to make them appear older



Kfar Hahoresht skull

Secondary Burial

- Regular handling & removal of parts of an individual
- Primary & secondary burial:
 - Ritualised practices
 - Some form of community interaction
 - Evidence of a belief system / cosmology
 - Attitudes to mortality
 - Individuality & personhood



Tell Aswad skulls

Secondary Burial

- Ethnographies:
 - Secondary burial & skull removal a major community event
 - A means of defining, shaping & maintaining identities
 - Social cohesion, re-affirming social relations



Yiftahel skulls

Summary

- Increasing formalisation of and investment in funerary practices
- Natufian: some burials marked by elaborate personal adornment:
- Natufian: interesting relationship with animals developing....
- PPNB: specialised multi-stage funerary ritual, with particular emphasis on the skull
- What might these practices tell us about changing human relations with the dead & beliefs in the afterlife?