

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR

This study by Aren Maeir fills a long desideratum within the SCIEEM 2000 research programme – to tie together the evidence from different sites after many years of excavations and research in this region. It also serves as a companion to the joint study of Peter Fischer, Stephen Burke and Gerrit van der Kooij on the Chronology of the Jordan Valley in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.¹ Aren Maeir's study on the development and chronology of the Middle Bronze Age in the Jordan Valley is based on his dissertation on the central Jordan valley, which with the present volume have now been extended to cover the entire Jordan valley.

Differing from previous studies, a fascinating picture on the spread and re-urbanisation of inner Canaan emerges. It appears that Susan Cohen's² suggested model for a commencement along the coast and spreading inland, does not sufficiently explain the cultural development of the Middle Bronze Age Culture. It is evident that in the Jordan Valley there was no delay in the cultural colonization, and sites as Tel Dan/Tell el-Qadi (Laish) and Pella show that the spread of the early Middle Bronze culture most likely derived from inner Syria, reaching the northern and central parts of the Jordan Valley in an early stage of the Middle Bronze Age. The study also adds to our perception of the political development of the Jordan Valley. From an early stage of this period, Dan/Laish and Pella were the most important towns, including some of the earliest known fortifications in the Levant. From the early MB II onwards Hazor and Pella dominated the entire region and most likely, two large polities were created, which led to a scenario that no important towns could develop near those sites. In MB III, however, one sees the appearance of medium to large fortified towns such as at Tel Kinrot in the north and Tell Abu el-Kharaz and Tell Deir ʿAlla in the central part. Significant is also the

strong fortification of existing places such as Jericho, Tell Nimrin and Tell el-Hammam. It is the question if all those sites, except Tell Kinrot, were dependent on Pella or if they represent emerging independent centres. There are also indications that the land use in MB III was more intense than ever and that many new settlements were developed.

Still obscure is the end of the Middle Bronze Age and the transition to the Late Bronze Age. Seeing Egyptian military involvement as the main reason for the end of the MB in the Jordan Valley is not a convincing explanation anymore. Different agents must have been at work. The impressive fortifications do demonstrate that there was an increased awareness of new threats and security risks. It becomes more and more clear that the transition took place only some time after the beginning of the New Kingdom and that the transition may vary regionally. Some sites are abandoned, others terminated by destruction, and others destroyed and subsequently resettled, while others display a smooth transition.

The site of Hazor plays a key role in the discussion of the chronology of the Middle Bronze, as this site links the world of the Middle Bronze Age in Canaan with Mesopotamia and Egypt alike. The connection with Egypt can be established through comparisons of pottery types appearing in Hazor and Tell el-Dabʿa. The connection with Mesopotamia is evident from the Mari correspondence, where Hazor is mentioned repeatedly, and from the cuneiform tablets from Hazor which are connected to Mari – unfortunately in secondary contexts. Amnon Ben-Tor presented this evidence in 2004.³ He argued that only “Greater Hazor”, which he dates from MB II onwards, after the completion of the most important construction works, could have been the focus of the Mari letters. There is some room for a debate of this point, as Aren Maeir discusses in the present volume,

¹ P.M. FISCHER (ed.), *The Chronology of the Jordan Valley during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages: Pella, Tell Abu el-Kharas and Tell Deir ʿAlla*, with contributions by Stephen Burke, Rachael Sparks and Maria Schroder for Pella, Peter M. Fischer for Tell Abu el-Kharas and Gerrit van der Kooij for Tell Deir ʿAlla, Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 12, Vienna 2006.

² S.L. COHEN, *Canaanites, Chronologies and Connections: The Relationship of Middle Bronze Age IIA Canaan to Middle Kingdom Egypt*, Winona Lake 2002.

³ A. BEN-TOR, A. Hazor and Chronology, *Ägypten & Levante* 14 (2004), 45–67.

but the difference of the positions is only within a limit of 20–30 years.

Of particular importance is the contribution of Ezra S. Marcus in Appendix B on the radiocarbon determinations. There he discusses the available short-lived samples from the Middle Bronze Age Jordan Valley. He shows that the results from the earliest phase are more or less the same as those of the same phase at coastal sites, repeating the conclusions obtained by Aren Maeir. The beginning of this culture in Canaan in the littoral and in the Jordan Valley can be assessed at approximately from 1920 BC onwards in both areas. This would fit very well with the archaeological/historical date of the earliest imports of the Middle Bronze Age Culture to Egypt.⁴ The later phases of the MB need more samples. We also need more samples from the end of the Middle Bronze Age which according to results from Jericho date to the second half to the end of the 16th century BC.

I hope that this study by Aren Maeir will be well-received in the international community of scholars on the archaeology of the Ancient Near East, and that similar studies will soon fill the gaps regarding the coastal Middle Bronze Age, in the south, in the central and the northern parts of the Levant.

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First Speaker of SCIEM 2000

⁴ M. BIETAK, Relative and Absolute Chronology of the Middle Bronze Age: Comments on the Present Stage of Research, 30–42 in: M. BIETAK (ed.), *The Middle Bronze Age in the Levant, Proceedings of an International Conference on MB II A Ceramic Materials in Vienna 24th–26th of January 2001*, Contributions to the Chronology of the Eastern Mediterranean 3, Vienna 2002. IDEM, Towards a Middle Bronze Age Chronol-

ogy, 121–146 in: P. MATTHIAE *et al.* (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Colloquium From Relative Chronology to Absolute Chronology: The Second Millennium BC in Syria-Palestine, Rome 29th November–1st December 2001*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome 2007.