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Early Bronze Age settlement system and village life in the Jenin Region/ Palestine : a study of Tell Jenin stratigraphy and pottery traditions

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Archaeologists' interest in settlement system analysis is increasing in the wake of tremendous amount of data provided by both surveys and excavations. Traditionally, site reports published only specific data recovered through extensive excavations. Less attention was paid to the interaction between the settlement and its surroundings. A human settlement goes through a dynamic change caused by natural and cultural factors. Evidence of cultural change will not be recognized only from remains found on a single site, but rather in combination of those from the site's surroundings. For example, the economy is a major factor that leads to a long-term process of land use continuity and change. The settlement's economy will not be identified only on the basis of the site remains, but also on an intensive survey of its surroundings. Similarly, what archaeologists may call an occupational gap may be the "creation of the researcher's mind" and not a reflection of the real settlement system itself.

All in all, Palestinian archaeologists had done little research on the subject of settlement system, although one method like site catchment analysis was first initiated in the region. Site catchment analysis can be used as an intellectual tool to understand the interaction of small-scale settlement systems with their surroundings. Small-scale settlement systems can manage their life in a more efficient way than larger systems. Warfare may disrupt as a result of competition over the control of territory especially those of high productivity. Analysis of the Jenin region settlement systems proved that small communities used the plentiful land to produce enough food surplus beyond the community needs. Because of that, these communities had a positive interaction with each other which lead to the creation of larger networks.

Each of the EBI settlement systems solved its needs by its own merits and impetus. One region would develop cultural settlements different from another. There is still, however, a general pattern that can be traced, since later on, each of the micro-systems will merge with a larger one in a gradual process to reach a global system network. In this context, a debate between those who believe in a one world system and local systems may continue. This debate does not affect much regional study, for it should be the basis for archaeological research. The two approaches at the end will complete each other. Early Bronze Age Palestine, and so the Jenin region, lies in a strategic road network connecting Bilad esh Sham (Levant) with Egypt. This makes the region open to an intensive exchange movement, and also a place which was invaded often by the imperial powers at the time. For the Egyptians, the area would be a gateway to the east but for the Syrians it was the back way. The Jenin region, standing in the middle, should fall under the effect of these contradictions. However, with such a region populated by *fellahin*, the communities' cultural change will be less effected by political changes.

Political change is rapid and revolutionary and can be reflected in power, control and wealth. Cultural change is very slow and limited. Political changes may not lead to cultural changes, but may influence them. However, it is known from recent history that urban centres fall under the influence of changing political regimes more than village communities. These latter communities live in semi-isolation and are less affected by changes surrounding them. External factors may affect them at the end but on a much slower pace. Therefore, while large political systems may collapse, village communities will

continue their life normally, in a way surviving major crises and so being capable of re-establishing themselves easily. There also will be a time difference in adopting new systems.

Village communities maintain a more traditional way of living. They keep tradition in part or whole and prefer to continue traditional life ways. In such cultural conservatism the ancestor's past exerts great force in shaping the present way of life. Moreover, village communities care for most of their daily needs, managing their ongoing life ways, and struggling to survive economic crises. To understand these communities in the past one has to follow a detailed analysis of their daily life patterns, moving from the specific to the more general. Accordingly, further research is needed to examine whether village communities may react to imperial and colonial power differently than urban centres.

The data from the Jenin region suggest that the so-called transition from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age should not be seen in terms of the classical views on the development toward urbanism in Palestine. Cultural change, being reflected in variation of settlement systems, population increases, or settlement number increase, follows a natural pattern of growth and development. The settlement system analysis will not conform with the idea that urbanism in the mountain regions was a result of a population explosion in the coastal regions leading to a migration movement. The population estimate for the period coincides with the natural growth of the region (even when assuming a cyclic growth system). Moreover, increase in settlement numbers will fit the "offspring model" where larger settlements are split into smaller ones to meet increasing economic needs. The number of small size settlements increased over the centre. This pattern remains dominant for the later periods with no major change.

Archaeologists assumed that the EBII cultural complexity emerged from the long-standing Neolithic and Chalcolithic systems. It is difficult to assume, though, that this continuity is to be explained on an ethnic basis. It could be also a

population replacement, with newcomers who had no choice except to adapt to the regional system. The Abdel el Hady case presents an example where the new tribe had to adapt to the *fellahin* system. However, it is clear that some of the old population remained in the village, but socially and spatially were separated from the newcomers. Later the family played a great role in shaping the history of Palestine, but the central fertile lands remained the core of settlement systems with a long tradition.

The natural landscape of the Jenin region had provided a fertile environment for long-term dynamic and adaptive systems. The land fertility and water resources had been a major force. The major characteristic of the region is a 'static economic pattern' represented by land cultivation with minor pastoral activities. The fertile lands had developed to a symbol of wealth. The more land owned by the peasants the more power they will have. There are social and political motivations in dividing the lands between people. Ownership may shift due to pressure from local feudal family heads. During the EBI, gaining or losing a new territory is a matter of losing control over the land resources either by warfare or perhaps also as a result of an environmental failure.

One major conclusion of the interpretation of the EBI culture in the Jenin region is its contribution toward change from farming life to urbanism. Three studies were undertaken to enlighten this issue: the particularity of the Tell Jenin archaeological remains relevant to the EBI; the reconstruction of the pottery traditions connecting the settlement to the EBI culture and to other settlements in the region; and finally the view of the changing nature of the Jenin Region cultural landscape.

First, there is little chance of success in obtaining well-defined local cultural traditions by using only the comparative method. A site-specific approach is the only means to interpret the local cultural tradition. More specifically, the investigation into the development of a cultural tradition requires carefully sampled material from a well-defined stratigraphic context.

An effort was made to separate pure loci to build the EBI stratification of Tell Jenin. The micro-stratigraphy of the site was obtained from the smallest available pieces of data. Therefore, the contents reflect an accurate analysis of the cultural history of the Tell. On this basis, Tell Jenin is a settlement which was a liveable place for many phases. Two factors contributed to its cultural history.

The first is that the settlement was occupied and then abandoned for many phases. The first occupation was during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period. The limited exposure of this stratum did not allow a detailed analysis of the type of culture, but it is more than likely that a permanent settlement was located at the site. This was a small village undertaken with the domestication of animals and plants as the major means of subsistence. An advanced flint technology was followed without the use of pottery. The settlement was abandoned because of natural factors, namely water floods, a reason that was supported by our sediment analysis. The abandonment stage lasted for few decades, before it was resettled.

A permanent settlement of the EBI was re-established. Still the major economy was agriculture. The EBI settlement was one of the largest in the region, and lasted for more than five decades before the site was abandoned once again.

The second factor outlining the Tell Jenin cultural history is that cross dating by pottery and architecture is our only means of dating the Early Bronze Age occupation. The best dates can be obtained from the Grey Burnished pottery and the apsidal houses. The apsidal house had an identical plan to that found at Tell El Mutassalim (Engberg and Shipton 1934); both houses had an entrance to the longer walls led by steps. The houses had partition walls within the paved courtyards at the apse. The houses are also of the same proto-type as houses of Northern Palestine. These houses are all dated to the early phases of the EBI.

The apsidal house is associated with Grey

Burnished tradition a pattern common to many settlements in North Palestine. As noted below, this pottery tradition was recovered from Stratum IV. On this basis, the settlement is dated from the late Chalcolithic to the end of the EBI period (3000-2900 BC). To be specific, Stratum III is associated with the Late Chalcolithic-Early Bronze Age IA (3500-3000 BC), and Stratum IV is associated with the EBI B (3000-2900 BC).

There are no clear data to finalize the reasons for the abandonment of the EBI settlement. It is likely that a human force was involved. Evidence of ash deposits followed the occupation of the platform and the apsidal houses may suggest that the town was set to fire. If so, then this provides an explanation for shifting the settlement to nearby locations (see below).

All in all, it is clear that a high risk exists, that contaminated cultural tradition would be included in a final report if a careful stratigraphic separation is not made. Thus, investigations into the pottery traditions can be achieved only after the stratigraphic separation is made. In case of Tell Jenin, the various EBI phases are a defining boundary for pottery traditions. The method involved the quantification of those traits that measure pottery tradition in each phase, in order to measure the continuity and change of each tradition.

Secondly, the technological study of the pottery from Tell Jenin produced new light on the distribution of the known three pottery traditions: the Red Burnish, the Line Painted and the Grey Burnished (See Philip and Baird 2000 (eds.) for an intensive discussion of the terminology and dating). One view is by Kenyon who proposed that these potmaking traditions reflect three consecutive ethnic groups that intruded in Palestine at the end of the Chalcolithic period. The second view proposed that these traditions reflect specialized social functions. The Grey Burnished is thought to be funeral objects associated with tomb remains, following the findings at Tell el Far'a'. However, one interesting phenomenon is the discovery of Red Burnished pottery inside a tomb near Tell Jenin, forming the main corpus of this tomb. A few

sherds of this pottery tradition were found at Tell Jenin, so these forms reflect that this tradition has also a domestic use. The same is true for the Grey Burnished tradition when revealed from domestic contexts in many settlements (Goren and Zuckermann 2000).

The above discussion offers a proof that these traditions are not to be associated with socio-economic behaviours, nor do they reflect the ethnic profile of the EBI. The issue should be addressed in terms of craft specialization and division of labour within the EBI society. If we carefully examine the ethnographic situation today, the Palestinian traditional pottery has a similar division. Specialization is noticed among various production centres. The Y'abad Red Burnished pottery is a unique case in the Palestinian traditions. A similar Grey Burnishing tradition is also found at Qusra in Nablus area, and el Jib in Jerusalem. Both these traditions were rooted through the Ottoman period and are comparable to the Red Burnished tradition of the EBI. They are associated with household pottery production of the cooking pot and other limited forms. In a similar way, the Line Painting tradition is widely found in many production centres like Sinjal and Beit 'Anan. This tradition is also associated with a specialized form, mainly the Jars.

In the wake of competition, the potter of the wheelmade potmaking method created specialized traditions, based on clay manipulation and firing techniques (See Salem 1999c, Rye 1976, 1981). The Gaza workshops produce the black pottery; the Hebron workshops produce the red pottery, while other coastal areas produce the white pottery. The forms are very similar in all these traditions, with some modification of the general shapes. They are made by similar techniques of clay preparation and forming methods. The colour reflects the adaptation to regional resources and the mastering of specific firing techniques. Therefore, based on these facts it is safe to assume that a potmaking tradition is a regional enterprise. It is modelled by the natural resources, potmaking methods, firing techniques, and finally surface treatments. Such regionalism is also found in the EBI pottery. The surface

treatment alone is not the only factor which should be considered in explaining the socio-economic status of the pottery.

It is clearly possible now that the three widely discussed potmaking traditions were used by the same population, which probably originally stemmed from the Late Chalcolithic inhabitants. The only major tradition that continues to the EBII period is the line-painting one, with the so-called "grain wash" technique. This was not a common one in Tell Jenin. Rather, what distinguishes Tell Jenin is the red slip painted pottery tradition. It is hardly can be labelled under one of the three, though it is common to North Palestine. In particular, the combination of the red slip paint with the incision dashes applied to the hole-mouth jar. It is found in sites like 'Afula, Meser, Ein Shadud and Kh. Khalidya. It is also clearly distinguished from other Late Chalcolithic and EBII traditions, which made it a hallmark of the EBI period.

Further conclusions can be made on the view of natural resources, manufacturing techniques and surface treatment of Tell Jenin pottery. It is clear that the majority of the forms are made from the same clay matrix. The tempering agents may vary from one type to another but in general, they are of a similar nature. As seen from component analysis of these resources, it is more likely that Tell Jenin pottery is made locally but by different potters. These potters appear to have had a division of labour between them based on mastering a certain potmaking technique in shaping their forms. However, the Tell Jenin inhabitants during the EBI may also have consumed pottery made by potters from workshops elsewhere in other regions.

Coiling is the main forming method. Finishing on the wheel is rarely applied to the upper part of the pot. The combination of the two techniques implies that the potters were living in a transitional period. It is known that the full use of the wheel technique was practiced toward the end of the EBI period. Furthermore, the potters continue to use the same clay and tempering resources throughout the EBI phases of Tell Jenin. The minor variations, for example

non-plastic size and quantity, are a result of adapting the potmaking techniques to certain forms. In a similar way, the surface treatment has also had a distinctive implication to pottery localities. First, a distinction can be made between decorated and non-decorated forms. Those decorated are mainly jar types and the non-decorated were bowls. Some of the bowls with red paint and dashes below rims exemplify the similar surface treatment behaviour noted with the hole-mouth jars. They are most likely a product of the same workshop.

All of these factors indicate that the social boundary between the produced types is very narrow. It is most likely that the potters had a common knowledge of potmaking methods. They all belonged to a single clan, and so had fallen under the same learning framework. The same situation is true in the case of the modern Jaba' pottery workshops.

However, without the use of the quantitative method, the frequency of a distinguished tradition cannot be defined. It appears that the Grey Burnished pottery sample is very small if compared to the red slip painted pottery. There is little space left for the argument that the former tradition originated at Tell Jenin. It can be argued that the centre of this production is Tell el Far'a, where sophisticated pottery kilns were excavated or from Tell el Husn area. The same conclusion also applies to the Red Burnished tradition, which is also found in small quantities at Tell Jenin.

Finally, the cultural location of Tell Jenin within the region proved to be of significance with respect to the general affiliation of the local pottery traditions. Clearly, the Jenin region has been continuously occupied since Neolithic times. Each settlement within the region contributes to its cultural history. The location of Tell Jenin at the southern frontier of Marj Ibn 'Amir is in agreement with the common geographic pattern of settlements having a similar cultural history. Clear examples are the excavated settlements of 'Afula, Ein Shadud, Kh. Khalidya, Tell Asawir, Tell Duthan, Tell el Husn and Tell el Mutassalim.

During the EBI the location of Tell Jenin must have benefited from the wealth of natural resources, represented by the water resources and the fertile lands of Marj Ibn 'Amir. Added to that, the moderate climate supported the growth of the farming society at Tell Jenin, which was a pre-condition to the development of urban life. The settlement was not fortified, showing a peaceful living existence during the EBI. However, this vulnerability led later to its abandonment in favour of more secure locations, like Karem Jenin and Kh. Bal'ama.

Tell Jenin is one of the settlements that contribute to clarifying the debate on the problem of urbanization in Northern Palestine and especially on the southern side of Marj Ibn 'Amir. After the settlement was abandoned, the people possibly moved to the nearby settlement of Karem Jenin, a settlement started shortly after the end of the EBI, as the pottery indicates. This proposed connection presumably carried the seeds for continuity between the later phase of the EBI at Tell Jenin and the subsequent phases. However, new traditions discontinued particularly the red slip paint tradition, the small bowls, the Grey Burnish and some of the Red Burnish. The hole-mouth jars were replaced by the round type without other decoration types. The Karem Jenin hole-mouth jars were coated with drab brown slip that was found with some EBI Tell Jenin round rim jars. The comb incision necked jars also appeared at Karem Jenin. The incurved rim bowls were now a common tradition. Some of these forms showed the net pattern paint, incision or line burnish decorations.

One way to locate cultural traditions is by identifying the pottery traditions, that is maintenance and continuation of a tradition to be found in the technology of the pottery. On the other hand, it is complicated to reconstruct regional boundaries and cultural boundaries. Innovations and change may lead to high mobility of cultural norms and spread beyond regional boundaries. No one region stands in isolation from others and so each region is subject to open cultural systems. Therefore, each single settlement is related to another in term of space and time.

Earlier well located settlements such as Tell el Muhaffer and Tell Duthan were not abandoned after the EBI. These settlements had evidence of fortifications after this period. New large settlements such as Tell Ta'annak and Kh. Bal'ama emerged out of the same regional EBI system. The majority of the new settlements were towns probably formed by the population abandoning the EBI villages, though other populations may have moved to the region.

Similarly, the survey data also suggest that the EBI traditions continue at the site of Kh. Bal'ama. It is likely that Kh. Bal'ama was a large fortified town during the EBII-III. Most of the pottery traditions showed similarities with Karem Jenin materials. The influence of the EBII is clear, as indicated by the Red Burnish net pattern tradition. Bowls of the incurved rims and net burnish and painted are common. The folded ledge handle, missing in Tell Jenin is also a typical tradition for the EBII.

Based on these data, it can be stated that the inhabitants of Karem Jenin and Kh. Bal'ama were aware of the EBI Tell Jenin settlement system. Beside that they adapted to the EBII pottery traditions. Supposedly, the Tell Jenin population did not leave the area but shifted their settlement to nearby locations. First, they moved to the site of Karem Jenin. Then they moved to Kh. Bal'ama, the settlement of a later date than Tell Jenin, where they continued their occupation throughout the 3rd and 2nd millennia.

In conclusion, it was argued that the main model usually used to explain cultural complexity is based on the idea that population tends to cluster in larger towns to protect themselves against coming danger, probably a foreign invasion. The model further states that establishing urban centres was a local necessity against invasions because the new settlements were built on the hilltops. Small settlements served as frontiers while large settlements served as urban centres. However, I conclude that by following this model alone, other explanations of the Jenin region settlement systems will be less supported. Multi- casual model is the one to be followed on the basis of the detailed analysis of

the Jenin region settlement systems presented in Chapter 2.

Ethno-historical resources propose that the social component of a settlement system is clanship. Interaction between the clan and the land is brings forward social complexity and develop them toward urbanism. Towns serve as administrative centers for the central power, i.e. being the Ottoman Empire. Large villages, like A'rrabeh and Sanur (Quara el Karasi or Thrown villages), were the local chiefdom centers which were run according to family rules.

In the analysis of the EBI system, the local resources control the territorial boundaries of the settlement system in a similar way to the Ottoman chiefdom system. The component of this system is an urban centre, a satellite villages and small encampments to protect the water resources and main roads. The natural component of wealth is grasslands and agricultural lands. Such a system is rooted in the LC cultures and continue into the later periods keeping the balance between pastoralism and farming economy.

The pottery traditions had mainly proved that trade and external interaction is a minor practice. Pottery is made to fulfill the daily needs of settlements, such as the case of Tell Jenin. External contact was kept at the minimum. This indicated by the low percentage of pottery that may came from outside.

Specialized potters may have produced certain forms, like the grey burnish and distributed to the other sites.

If this is compared to land use, then we reach the conclusion that the region produced sufficient resources to feed its inhabitants. In this case, I proposed that a peaceful co-existence found during the EBI. This allows a development of network which may be termed states form by 16 km radius. Each state produces its own resources, and what is left will be used to supply the needs of the nearby system, perhaps via trade.