

PREFACE

The present volume reports the results of a regional research project, supervised by the editor, under the patronage of SCIEM 2000 (The Synchronization of Civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C.; coordinator M. Bietak). SCIEM 2000 is a research programme inaugurated by the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW) at the Austrian Research Foundation (FWF). This venture is a “regional project” which focuses on the Middle and Late Bronze Age material culture and chronology of three of the most important sites in the Transjordanian Jordan Valley, namely, Pella, co-presented by S. Bourke, R. Sparks and M. Schroder; Tell Abu al-Kharaz, presented by the editor of this volume, P.M. Fischer; And Tell Deir ‘Alla, presented by G. van der Kooij.

The Jordan Valley between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, a distance of a little more than 100 km as the crow flies, is a fertile region and has attracted settlers during many millennia. The Jordan River runs from north to south in almost the same direction as the Mediterranean coast which is some 60 km distant in the northern part and some 80 km in the southern part of the valley. The *Ghor*, the Jordan Valley Rift bottom, several km wide and almost flat, which extends to the east and west towards the hilly regions leading up to the “plateaus” in the east and west, is very well suited for farming and grazing. The proximity of the Mediterranean harbours and access to international trade are of considerable importance in the interpretation of the cultures of this region and its intercultural relations. There are also important trading routes close to all three sites. One is the north-south trade route which connects the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea on the eastern side of the *Ghor* and which passes Tell Abu al-Kharaz and Tell Deir ‘Alla, and within a few km also Pella. Another trade route is the Jordan Valley crossing road which links, among other sites, Tell Abu al-Kharaz and Pella via Beth Shean and Megiddo with the Mediterranean Sea in the Mount Carmel area. From Pella come other trading routes towards the north into Lebanon and Syria, and towards the south and east proceeding past Tell Abu al-Kharaz onto the northern part of the Transjordanian plateau. There are

additional routes of importance as regards the connection with the Transjordanian plateau in the east: for example, the route from Tell Abu al-Kharaz directly through the Wadi al-Yabis towards the east and the northern part of the Transjordanian plateau including the regions around Irbid and Jerash, the route from Tell Deir ‘Alla through the Wadi al-Zarqa towards the Jerash region, and the route from Tell Deir ‘Alla towards Amman in the south-east. There were certainly other roads crossing the Jordan River and leading to Shechem, Jericho and Jerusalem.

It is tempting to assume that the entire region of the *Ghor*, which is topographically, geologically and climatically relatively uniform, also represents one cultural unit. Our regional study of these three sites, which are only approximately 30 km apart, will demonstrate cultural similarities but also differences.

As far as the terminology is concerned, all the authors use for the Middle Bronze Age the MB I–III terminology, and for the Late Bronze Age the terminology modified by the editor, with subdivisions into LB IA–C and LB II A–B (see Fischer’s contribution for details).

In Chapter 1, Bourke *et al.* from the Sydney University Excavations begin the presentation with Pella (Tabaqat Fahl), the most northerly of the three sites: *Pella in the Middle Bronze Age*. This presentation deals with the entire Middle Bronze Age of Pella, with a few excursions into the Late Bronze Age. Chapter 2, *The Rise and Fall of the Middle and Late Bronze Age Societies of Tell Abu al-Kharaz*, is presented by the editor (Swedish Jordan Expedition and SCIEM 2000) and covers the Middle and Late Bronze Age occupational sequence of Tell Abu al-Kharaz. This is identical with the second main occupational period (the first being Early Bronze Age) of that site, namely, the flourishing period which covers approximately the MB III to the transition LB IC/IIA. The most southerly site, Tell Deir ‘Alla, is presented by van der Kooij from the Tell Deir ‘Alla Archaeological Project (a joint venture of Leiden University, Holland, and Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan) in Chapter 3: *Tell Deir ‘Alla: The Middle and Late Bronze Age Chronology*. The presented Middle and Late Bronze Age occupational sequence

of Tell Deir ʿAlla covers approximately the MB III through LB II periods.

The presentation of the three sites' material culture and chronology is followed by a summarizing Chapter IV: *The Essence of the Studies of Pella, Tell Abu al-Kharaz and Tell Deir ʿAlla* in which the editor discusses the main issues concerning the chronology of the Jordan Valley during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, based on the individual reports. This is followed by a response by Bourke which constitutes Chapter V: *Pella and the Jordanian Middle and Late Bronze Ages*. The final summary is presented by the editor again as Chapter VI: *Résumé*.

The editor wishes to thank his colleagues S.

Bourke, R. Sparks, M. Schroder and G. van der Kooij for a very rewarding collaboration. My thanks also go to M. Bietak and the financiers of the SCIEEM 2000 project, namely the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OEAW) and the Austrian Research Foundation (FWF), for their support. It is my hope that the present publication represents a significant and useful contribution to the understanding of the Middle and Late Bronze Age societies of the Jordan Valley and adjacent cultures, and that it will serve as a basis for extended discussions and future research.

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Peter M. Fischer, editor