



News & Notes

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Highland Village Life in Palestine some Three Thousand Years Ago

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Editor's Note: Mr. Stager, who wrote his Ph.D. thesis with distinction at Harvard University on "Ancient Agriculture in the Judean Desert: A Case Study of the Buq'ah Valley in the Iron Age", was director of a survey of ancient agricultural terraces (Hebron to Samaria), and has done other archaeological field work in the Near East. He published an article, among many others, on "Farming in the Judean Desert During the Iron Age". In press is "Highland Villages in 12th-11th Centuries B.C. Palestine." He is continuing research on a long-term project dealing with agrarian society in Palestine from 3000 to 500 B.C.

Throughout the Levant, excavators have in the past concentrated on the urban sites and rarely recorded, let alone excavated, nearby village sites. Fortunately, this bias is being corrected; and in the near future, it should be possible to make more than impressionistic comparisons between the highlands and lowlands of Palestine, which I offer here.

By 1200 B.C. the number and density of permanent settlements in the Hill Country of Palestine increased dramatically from 23 Late Bronze (1550-1200 B.C.) sites to 114 Iron Age I (1200-1000 B.C.) sites in a survey area of 4200 square kilometers. Translated into population figures, there were just under 14,000 and over 38,000 people for the respective periods (assuming 200 persons per hectare). Coupled with the establishment of close to 100 new settlements—the trend can hardly be ascribed to natural growth within the highland zone itself. Clearly, there was a sizable influx of people into the highlands of Palestine about 1200 B.C. But where were they coming from?

In the second millennium, the lowlands were a crazy quilt of small autonomous kingdoms or city states, concentrated either in major valleys or in the coastal plains. The boundaries of each petty kingdom probably fluctuated, depending on the ability of the ruling elite to attract or coerce allegiance from the rural population, a pool from which the kingdom drew taxes, state labor, and military conscripts. At times, these obligations grew too oppressive, forcing some of the villagers into default. From the Kingdom of Ugarit, for example, some of the peasants fled to border villages, defected to other kingdoms, or

moved to frontiers beyond the reach of any kind of centralized authority. They took with them a few draft oxen as well as sheep and goats. The peasant farmers of Palestine probably, also, kept donkeys and cattle for work and transport. A few groups raised horses for military use, but this was an animal better suited to charioteers in the plains than to the foot soldiers in the hills. One option open to the peasant was to convert what capital he had into more movable assets, such as livestock, and become a pastoral nomad. By emphasizing animal husbandry, these peasants-turned-pastoralists had greater physical mobility and adaptability to some of the more marginal zones of the frontiers.

Another alternative was to move lock, stock and barrel into the hills. In sharp contrast to the intensely urbanized lowlands with sizable tracts of cultivable land, stood the mountains to the east, an obstacle and a refuge - a frontier of freedom.

Of all the technologies and techniques available to the Iron Age farmers who moved to the hills, none served them better than agricultural terracing. With it, they transformed the natural slopes, partially deforested by now, into a series of level steps - artificially flattened surfaces, or "fields" - suitable for farming. Terrace soils were anchored in place by retaining walls built of dry-laid stones. The terrace walls, usually built on the natural contours at right angles to the slope, counteracted soil erosion and, to a lesser degree, induced sedimentation. These walls also altered the natural drainage patterns by retarding the flow of run-off water, thereby giving time for adequate absorption into the terrace soils. At the same time, surplus water that could have super-saturated the soils was drained off through the interstices of the dry laid wall. Terracing was a highly successful adaptation to the highlands; it still remains the best prescription for many villages in the Near East in balancing economic needs and ecological concerns.

The standard house in the Iron Age I period was a small rectilinear building with one, two, or three rooms set off by a row of pillars and

(cont. on page 2)



Raddana, south slope. Ancient terrace platforms are covered with lithic wastes. Iron I quarries are visible in scarp above the road. Iron I village sits atop the ridge.

Highland Village Life in Palestine some Three Thousand Years Ago
(cont. from page 1)

arranged around a courtyard. Its small size, room layout, construction techniques, contents, and associated features leave little doubt about its domestic character. It is also the most frequently replicated architectural unit in settlements where there have been extensive exposures. This type of dwelling continued to be used for nearly six centuries. It was especially well adapted to farm life: the ground floor had space designed for food processing, small craft production, stabling, and storage; the second floor or loft, for dining and sleeping. Later in the Iron II period, urban dwellers also built in this style. Individual buildings probably housed no more than the nuclear family. However, in the Iron I highland villages, these dwellings frequently formed discrete clusters, or compounds. Compounds might be comprised of two, three, possibly even four, individual houses, which were either completely independent units or linked to another unit by common walls. Each house, nevertheless, maintained its own separate entrance, usually approached through a shared open courtyard. The compounds, themselves, might be separated from one another by streets, paths, or stone enclosure walls. It seems likely that extended, or multiple-family households, resided in these distinctive compounds. Such households are known from the Bible as *bēt 'āb* (literally, "house of one's father")—the social unit responsible for transmitting ancestral property to the succeeding generations.

Organized along kinship lines from the multiple-family household through higher order segments, such as patrilineages and clans, the Iron I village was the locus of the most basic and, in many ways, the most important socio-economic units in the society. Preference for marriage within the clans, especially of paternal first cousins, helped preserve the patrimony and produce actual consanguinity throughout much of the village, which, on the average, numbered fewer than 200 inhabitants. Politically, these highland villages were independent, free of the claims and controls exerted by the city-state centers. Each village had its council of "elders," probably chosen from among the heads of the household with the more prominent lineages.

Within the community, the primary productive and processing units were the extended households. Provisioning the family provided the impetus for production. Most subsistence needs were met by farming the land around the village. Although the family might produce the major part of the goods is consumed and supply most of its labor requirements, the household was never completely self-sufficient. The highland families based their economy largely on cereal production, supplemented by stock-raising, even though the small terraced plots were better suited to vine, olive and nut cultivation.

In contrast to their Iron II (1000-600 B.C.) successors, however, these villagers avoided heavy investments in long-term "cash-crops" (such as olives and grapes) that tend to propel the economy toward trade links with the outside world and dependency on inter-regional, or even international, exchange networks. Their mountain habitat, the historical circumstances that led to their being there, and continued hostilities towards the peoples of the plains, whether Canaanites, Egyptian troops, or "Sea Peoples", fostered the "économie locale." The investment in permanent quarters and pioneered land in the hills promoted independence and isolation from, rather than integration

with, surrounding complementary regions, especially the "bread baskets" of the coastal plains and valleys.

As an economic entity, the highland village was an autarchic unit in which the subsistence needs were paramount; nevertheless, even at this level, economic isolation was never complete. The regional homogeneity of certain pottery types may indicate some degree of specialization within certain centers. Other specialty products included metal tools and probably textiles. Mineral resources in the central highlands were minimal. They had good limestone and some timber, but no ore deposits. Ingots had to come from outside the region, as well as salt and bitumen. Itinerant pedlars and caravaneers probably played a limited role in opening up the economy. Labor, too, might have been "imported" at harvest time.

It is hardly conceivable that such economic needs generated really significant bonds beyond the individual highland communities and accounted for their integration into larger socio-political orders. Yet, from contemporary written sources, we can reasonably assume that tribal and even supra-tribal orders did exist and probably included the highland territories. The most inclusive tribal grouping in pre-monarchic Israel was the confederation — a loosely structured alliance reinforced by religion and activated for "mutual aid in common defense." Each village, or encampment, depending on its size, was expected to provide at least one unit of from five to fifteen warriors. However, as the behavior of certain tribal groups makes clear, some members could exempt themselves in times of crisis, suffer the scorn of those who rallied, but not be compelled to join the fight (see Song of Deborah, Judges 5). During the Iron Age I period, tendencies towards isolation among the highland groups and toward re-integration by the steppe groups increased differences between them as they diverged from their common cultural background. Yet, regardless of these differences, each could identify to greater or lesser degree with that fluid and heterogeneous polity known as Israel.

(cont. to page 3 col. 1)



Raddana, south slope. Midway between the hilltop settlement and the modern road lies an Iron I terrace wall built of large cuboid blocks. Its "corner" is the terrace divider wall which marked a property boundary and/or flanked a path up to the village.



Southeast of Raddana are modern terraces built on the natural scalloped slopes. Note divider walls which mark property boundaries.



Aerial view of 'Ai, with Iron I terraces. (Photo by Richard Cleave)

Highland Village Life in Palestine some Three Thousand Years Ago
(cont. from page 2)

The gradual disintegration of the Late Bronze Age city-state system and the associated proliferation of Iron Age I villages have been connected with the formation of Early Israel. However, none of the reconstructions dealing with these processes has managed to account adequately for and to explain the essentially "Canaanite" character of the material culture in the newly founded rural, highland villages. One such model is that dealing with the "Israelite Conquest", in which Canaanite displacement is envisioned as a rapid process, precipitated by the arrival of new groups via Transjordan (some ultimately from Egypt). A second model favors a slower process of migration from east of the Jordan, by semi-nomads who settled down in the highland zone. A third reconstruction may be cited — namely, the notion that a "peasants' revolt" triggered the formation of Early Israel, as a community "liberated" from Canaan. While this model comes closest to a recognition of the indigenous character of the newly established communities, it goes far beyond the available evidence which would suggest any "revolutionary" causes to the processes involved. It seems more likely that an entity known as "Israel" (first mentioned in the Merneptah Stela) was well-established in Canaan long before the critically debated period. With the ravages visited on the lowlands through Egyptian campaigns, perennial abuses by Canaanite overlords, and most important, the arrival of the "Sea Peoples" along the coast, the disruptive atmosphere provided the impetus for the physical withdrawal and flight of parts of the rural population. Many of the families and patrilineages involved fled to the hills and there established themselves in hilltop villages, thus transplanting their social organization to a new ecological niche.

The mountains served as a refuge and redoubt for the next two centuries. It was from here that the real "Conquest" of Canaan was launched, under King David. The highlands and lowlands were then reunited and the ties later reinforced through the political and economic integration promoted under Solomon.

Robert McC.Adams Writes History of Mesopotamian Settlements

University of Chicago Press has just published Heartland of Cities—Surveys of Ancient Settlement and Land Use on the Central Floodplain of the Euphrates by Robert McC.Adams, who is Harold H. Swift Distinguished Professor in the Oriental Institute and the Departments of Anthropology and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. Mr. Adams is also the author of Land behind Baghdad and The Uruk Countryside.

"Heartland of Cities is the most impressive contribution to the study of Mesopotamian settlement patterns and the interplay between environmental factors and social institutions yet undertaken by the acknowledged authority of these subjects", comments Norman Yoffee of the University of Arizona. Harvey Weiss of Yale University says that this work sets a standard that at present none can attain.

Southern Mesopotamia was the center of urban, literate civilization. Sedentary life on the alluvial plains between the lower Tigris and Euphrates rivers can be traced back into at least the sixth millennium B.C., and by the early fourth millennium the world's earliest cities had come into existence there. The region has retained a deeply impressed urban stamp, yet Mr. Adams argues that the powers of cities were always contingent and transitory even in their heartland. The difficulties of irrigation agriculture in an arid landscape produced rivalries and uncertainties that could never be overcome for long. The whole urban edifice of power, privilege, tradition, and ceremony rested in the end on the subordination and exploitation of shifting, tribal agriculturalists and semi-nomads in restive hinterlands.

The book has 367 pages with illustrations and map. Cost is \$35.00.

Tour Leaders Announced

JOHN A. LARSON



The Oriental Institute is pleased to announce the selection of the tour leaders for its two tours this coming fall. For the Museums of Europe tour, Mr. John Larson, Museum Archivist for the Oriental Institute, will lead the group through the wonders of Madrid, Turin, Berlin, Paris and London. Mr. Larson is a Ph.D. candidate in Egyptology here at the University of Chicago. He received his Bachelor's degree from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. He has published several articles and has given papers at the annual Egyptological conventions. Presently, he is also a consultant for the Field Museum of Natural History on its Old Kingdom Tomb Project, and is teaching a Members' Course on Ancient Egyptian Art this quarter.

CHAD HANSEN



Chad Hansen Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy of the University of Vermont, has accepted our invitation to guide Oriental Institute members through China. Sites such as Peking, Anyang, Hangchow and Sian will be visited. Mr. Hansen graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Utah and received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Michigan. He has held a Mellon Post-Doctoral fellowship at Stanford, as well as numerous other post graduate awards to study in Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong. Because of his fluency in Mandarin, Cantonese and Japanese, he was selected as one of the "troika" of negotiators who assisted in arranging the opening of China to Western tourists through the Chinese travel agency, Luxingshe, and its local and municipal tourist committees.

Mr. Hansen has published many articles and reviews on Confucius, ancient Chinese theories of language, and Chinese philosophy and truth. His area of study has been in classical and contemporary Chinese philosophy, Chinese logic and philosophy of language, Taoism, and philosophy of law, of language, and of religion. He also has a forthcoming book on Ancient Chinese Semantic Theory. He is eminently qualified to serve as our guide for the Chinese tour, not only because of his special areas of concentration in his study and work, but also because he has lived in Hong Kong, Taipei, Taiwan, China, and Kyoto, Japan.

The Museums of Europe tour leaves September 8 and returns September 25, and the China tour departs October 2 and returns October 25. Space is available on both tours. For more information contact the Membership Secretary at The Oriental Institute.

APRIL MEMBERS' LECTURE

"The Royal City in Ancient Egypt; Tell el Amarna & Malkata"

David O'Connor

University of Pennsylvania

Wednesday, April 15, 8:00 P.M.

The Quadrangle Club, 1155 East 57th Street, will be opened to Oriental Institute members who wish to make dinner reservations. Please call Nancy Miller, 493-8601. Please remember that the privilege of the use of the dining room at the Quadrangle Club is a courtesy extended to members of the Oriental Institute only on the nights when there is an Oriental Institute lecture.

Spring Members' Courses

ARCHAEOLOGY OF DAILY LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Lecturer: Peter Lacovara, Ph.D. Candidate in Egyptian Archaeology.

Besides discovering opulent tombs and splendid temples, Egyptian archaeology has become increasingly concerned with reconstructing the daily life of the ancient Egyptian. The arts, crafts and customs of life along the Nile, and how they developed from the "cave man" to Cleopatra, will be illustrated. In addition to examining recent excavations dealing with Pharaonic sites, Mr. Lacovara will discuss what is known of prehistoric man; the cultures in Nubia, and how they were affected by the Egyptians.

Saturdays, 10:00 AM-Noon, April 4 - May 23 (eight sessions)

GRANDEUR AND EMPIRE: Persia, Syria-Palestine and Egypt during the Persian Empire

Lecturers: Carol Bryant, Eugene Cruz-Uribe, and Charles Jones.

With the formation of the Persian Empire under Cyrus and Cambyses, a new era in the history of the Near East began which lasted over two centuries until it was brought down by the conquests of Alexander the Great. The goal of this course will be to examine from the historical viewpoint, three of the major satrapies within the Empire (Syria-Palestine, Egypt and Persia), to determine what role each province played within the Empire as a whole. Ms. Bryant will draw upon the many Biblical and archaeological records in her discussion of the Levant; Mr. Cruz-Uribe will utilize the many demotic, hieroglyphic and classical sources for his interpretation of Egypt; Mr. Jones has ready knowledge of the Institute's excavations at Persepolis, and is well versed in the Elamite archives found there. Social and economic factors, in addition to the historical summary, will be important parts of each discussion. Each lecturer will make three slide/lecture presentations.

Saturdays, 10:00 AM-Noon, April 4 - May 30 (nine sessions)

Please register by Thursday, April 2, 1981.

REGISTRATION FORM

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Grandeur and Empire (\$60 tuition)

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