

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE BRONZE AGE LEVANT

The Levant – modern Lebanon, southern Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine – is one of the most intensively excavated regions of the world. This richly documented and illustrated survey offers a state-of-the-art description of the formative phase of Levantine societies, as they perfected the Mediterranean village economy and began to interact with neighboring civilizations in Egypt and Syria, on the way to establishing their first towns and city-state polities. Citing numerous finds and interpretive approaches, the author offers a new narrative of social and cultural development, emulation, resistance and change, illustrating how Levantine communities translated broader movements of the Near Eastern and Mediterranean Bronze Age – the emergence of states, international trade, elite networks and imperial ambitions – into a uniquely Levantine idiom.

Raphael Greenberg is Associate Professor of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University. Specializing in the study of early urban formations, economies and institutions, he currently heads the Tel Bet Yerah excavations near the Sea of Galilee and is co-founder of Emek Shaveh – a non-profit that monitors the political role of archaeology in Jerusalem and beyond.

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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF
THE BRONZE AGE LEVANT

*From Urban Origins to the Demise of City-States,
3700–1000 BCE*

RAPHAEL GREENBERG

Tel Aviv University



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To Adi, Ofer and Ayal

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PREFACE

The first to broach the possibility of writing this study were David Wengrow and Norman Yoffee, who encouraged me to submit a proposal to the Cambridge World Archaeology editorial board. I am grateful to them for the initiative, and to the board for their comments and encouragement at the very first stages of what was clearly an ambitious challenge. The main body of my work was structured around a three-year series of undergraduate seminars, each devoted to one of the three main divisions of the book – Early, Middle and Late Bronze. To the many students who participated in this seminar go my thanks for asking new questions, following leads and for generally serving as a sounding-board for half-baked ideas. David Ilan, Uri Davidovich, Felix Höflmayer and an anonymous reviewer offered valuable comments on parts or the whole of the manuscript. Many others are to be thanked for their moral and intellectual support and for discussion of various facets of the work: the postgraduate staff of the Bet Yerah Archaeological Project – Sarit Paz, Mark Iserlis, Yael Rotem, Hai Ashkenazi and Alon Arad – and Shlomo Bunimovitz, Matt Adams, Yuval Yekutieli, Raz Kletter, Mario Martin, Dafna Langutt, Mel Kennedy, Yorke Rowan, Morag Kersel, Jack Green, Giulio Palumbi, Elisabetta Boaretto, Hermann Genz, Meredith Chesson, Dana Behrman, Gideon Solimany and whomever I happened to bump into during my long hours at the Albright Institute and Rockefeller (IAA) libraries (where I am indebted to Silvia Krapiwko and Aryeh Rochman for countless cups of coffee and conversation). Susan Pollock was a kind host for a brief but productive stint at the Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology, Freie Universität, in 2016, and Sarah Fairman and Matt Adams invited me to a research associateship at the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, providing a quiet and congenial venue for the final stages of writing.

The arduous task of preparing illustrations was aided by the Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology graphic artists Itamar Ben-Ezra and Naama Earon, and the list of colleagues who provided me with images and permissions for publication is long: Matt Adams, Uzi Avner, Amnon Ben-Tor, Eliot

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There is little that is original in this study: my intellectual debt thus extends as far back as the beginnings of Levantine archaeology and as wide as the scholarly community that sustains it. Nonetheless, if I were to identify the crucibles in which my approach and understanding of Bronze Age archaeology was shaped, it would have to include the excavations in which I participated as an under- and post-graduate student (ancient Jerusalem with Yigal Shiloh, Deir el-Balah with Trude Dothan, Tel Batash with Ami Mazar and Tell Qasis with Amnon Ben-Tor), my first publication project (working up the EBA strata of Tel Dan under Avraham Biran) and my first proper job (editing the publications of colleagues at the Israel Department of Antiquities under the guidance of Ayala Sussman). The community of scholars that has coalesced around the study of the Early Bronze Age, founded at the Emmaus meeting convened by Pierre de Miroschedji in 1986, and sustained through countless ICAANE and ARCANE workshops, has also had a marked impact on my work, along with the Kura–Araxes devotees in the Caucasus and scattered across four continents, whom I have come to know and appreciate through our work at Tel Bet Yerah. Whatever is sound and trustworthy in this volume comes from the work of these and many others; its lacunae, misrepresentations and interpretive excesses are all my own.

In these days of online libraries and information fatigue, much of our work takes place at home, battling the distractions of a task-laden screen. I should therefore end with apologies and gratitude to those who had to endure me at home, listen to endless complaints (and verbal abuse of electronic devices, slow connections and incaltrant websites) and offer moral support, even as they were engaged in their own productive labors: Hannah, Jacek and Thomas, and, if only sporadically, Adi, Ofer and Ayal.

The simplified transliteration of place names in this volume follows varying regional conventions and common usage.