

THE EARLY BRONZE AGE CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE FROM TELL TA^cANNEK, PALESTINE

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The Problem

Greenberg states that isolating temporal ceramic indicators for the Early Bronze II-III periods is "one of the thorniest issues in the archaeology of Palestine" (2000, 183). The problem is twofold: the homogenous nature of ceramic assemblages from Early Bronze Age Palestine, and a continued lack of published information. Both issues are addressed by this study. Excavations at Tell Ta^cannek between 1963 and 1967 unearthed the remains of a multiperiod site, including the residues of an Early Bronze II-III fortified settlement. The purpose was to isolate that portion of the site in the collected records and residues in order to produce a ceramic sample that is stratigraphically derived. From this sample, inferences may be drawn concerning chronology, technology, and trade.

The Method

On the basis of data drawn from field records, a relative chronology of the settlement was built by square and locus. This sequence was tested by the retrieval and analysis of saved ceramic sherds. Index forms forced alterations in the sequence that, in turn, prompted additional stratigraphic work. This cycle produced approximately 400 isolated loci and a working sample of some 2,000 sherds, which were then analyzed internally in typological and technological terms and externally through comparison with other published assemblages from North Palestine.

The Results

Deposition from the site suggests three Early Bronze Age strata and a corresponding ceramic sequence stretching from Early Bronze I (Stratum 1), Early Bronze II (Stratum 2), and early Early Bronze III (Stratum 3). While the presence of fortification and destruction debris is indicative of destabilization and armed conflict, the ceramic record of "Common Ware" is stable and fairly homogenous, interrupted only by the presence of Metallic and Khirbet Kerak Wares.

Conclusion

Using Metallic and Khirbet Kerak Wares as reference points, select "Common Ware" features may be isolated. These contribute to a growing set of knowledge that is promising for isolating temporal ceramic indicators for the Early Bronze II-III periods. It is suggested that most residents of Tell Ta^cannek were removed from, or resistant to, "imported" potting traditions that left a powerful imprint elsewhere in North Palestine. A preference for local wares over more expensive or exotic forms underlines a rural conservatism that is consistent with the site's location.