



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Between the valley and the hills: mobile horticultural communities in the Jordan rift escarpment in the 3rd millennium BCE

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Abstract

The EB IV period (2600-2000 BCE) in the southern Levant has traditionally been described as a rural interlude between the collapse of the region's first proto-urban centres during the EB II-III and their rejuvenation as a network of city-states in the MBA. During this period, populations are thought to have dispersed into simple agropastoral village communities. These interpretations have overlooked the significance of several small but well-defended "enclosure" sites. Such sites were new foundations on the well-drained slopes of the Jordan Rift Valley escarpment in areas better suited to the cultivation of upland tree crops than the flood-prone valley floor. The Khirbet Ghazlan Excavation Project proposes a model of seasonal horticultural specialisation that interprets enclosure sites as processing centres for upland fruit crops such as olive, and suggests they were enclosed to defend caches of seasonally-produced cash-crop commodities such as oil. This model explores how high-value liquid products helped promote a complex rural economy that reconfigured aspects of earlier urban production within smaller-scale, seasonal exploitation of niche environmental zones.

Keywords

Early Bronze Age, Jordan, olive oil, horticulture, mobility

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