

## **Revisiting Social Complexity in the Early Bronze Age: New Evidence from the Madaba Plain Region.**

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Abstract:

Scholars have used a number of evolutionary models to describe the social structure and development of urbanism during the Early Bronze Age in the Southern Levant. The majority of these models have tended to be site specific rather than regional, and stress the urban character of a hierarchical system based on scale or size. However, recent studies using rank-size analysis of survey data have suggested that the rise and decline (or intensity and abatement) of settlement in the Southern Levant was based on rural complexity rather than on urban complexity. Contrary to earlier models, it has been proposed that the level of integration of cities, towns and rural communities is a better indicator of the level of complexity and 'urbanization' in a region than is scale or size. Research has shown that low levels of integration occur consistently during the Early Bronze Age, suggesting towns and small communities acted more autonomously than was previously believed, primarily based on heterarchical systems where no single settlement dominated the region politically or economically.

This paper will present the results of a regional study of the ceramic industry during the Early Bronze Age in the Madaba Plain Region of Central Jordan in an effort to test the heterarchy concept. The manufacturing techniques and methods of pottery production identified from fifteen sites within the region will be presented. These data provide insight into the scale of production, which in turn allows for a better understanding of the social and political organization of the community.