

ANTHROPOLOGICAL REMAINS FROM ASHQELON, AFRIDAR (AREA E-2)

YOSSI NAGAR

Human skeletal remains were found in association with early EB I walls in two loci in Sq H10 in the excavations at Ashqelon, Afridar (Area E-2; see Golani and Paran, this volume).

DESCRIPTION OF THE REMAINS

Locus 601 (Jar burial).— The remains in this burial include a fragmentary skull, a jaw and postcranial bones of an infant. The bones were anatomically articulated, indicating primary burial (see Golani and Paran, this volume: Fig. 15). The infant was laid on its right side, in a flexed posture, on a north–south axis, with its head in the north. The bones were examined on-site and then reburied.

All the long bones were deteriorated at their extremities; however, the maximum length of the humerus could be estimated at 83 ± 1 mm, indicative of an individual aged 0.5–1.5 years (Bass 1987:149). In the maxilla, the deciduous incisors had erupted, the crown of the canines was completely developed and the first molars had started to erupt. The age at death, based upon tooth development stages, was 0.5–1.5 years (Hillson 1993:176–201).

Locus 596.— Sporadic remains were found in this locus, which included the diaphysis of a long bone identified as a left humerus. The cortical bone area was somewhat wide and the proportion of the bone indicates an adult individual.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The body of a circa one-year-old infant was buried in a holemouth jar. Primary burial of infants in jars and within the settlement was a widespread practice at Ashqelon during the middle and late phases of EB I (Nagar, forthcoming). Laying the infant in a flexed posture, on the right side, on a north–south axis, closely resembles the pattern described at the nearby site of Ashqelon, Barne‘a (Golani and Nagar 2011). Adults at the Ashqelon, Barne‘a site were interred in secondary burials in an adjacent cemetery. The single adult bone found in the vicinity of the jar indicates that this practice must have taken place at Ashqelon, Afridar as well; after a primary interment, adults were transferred to a cemetery outside the dwelling area, as was shown also in the Chalcolithic site of Nahal Qomem (see Fabian 2012).

Based upon burial data collected from all available Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age sites in the northern Negev and the southern coast of Israel, Golani and Nagar (2011) have argued for population continuity in this region between these two periods. The main EB I site in this comprehensive study is Ashqelon, Barne'a, dated to the middle and late phases of this period. The similarity in burial practices in Ashqelon, Afridar (Area E-2), associated with the early phase of EB I (EB IA), bridges the time gap between the Chalcolithic period and mid-EB I, lending further support to the idea of cultural continuity between the Chalcolithic period and EB I (cf. Golani 2013; forthcoming).

REFERENCES

- Bass W.M. 1987. *Human Osteology: A Laboratory and Field Manual* (3rd ed.). Columbia, Mo.
- Fabian P. 2012. Naḥal Qomem. *HA-ESI* 124 (February 2). http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report_Detail_Eng.aspx?id=1928&mag_id=119 (accessed June 10, 2021).
- Golani A. 2013. The Transition from the Late Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze I in Southwestern Canaan: Ashqelon as a Case for Continuity In E. Braun and V. Roux eds. *The Transition Late Chalcolithic to Early Bronze Age in the Southern Levant (Paléorient 39/1)*. Paris. Pp. 95–210.
- Golani A. Forthcoming. The Late Chalcolithic/Early Bronze I Transition in Southwestern Canaan and the Ashqelon Occupational Sequence. In M.J. Adams, V. Roux and F. Höflmayer eds. *Transitions during the Early Bronze Age in the Levant: Methodological Problems and Interpretive Perspectives. Proceedings of a Conference Held at the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem 16–18 May 2018*. Vienna.
- Golani A. and Nagar Y. 2011. Newly Discovered Burials of the Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age I in Southern Canaan—Evidence of Cultural Continuity? In J.L. Lovell and Y.M. Rowan eds. *Culture, Chronology, and the Chalcolithic: Theory and Transition (Levant Suppl. S. 9)*. Oxford–Oakville. Pp. 84–96.
- Golani A. and Paran N.-S. This volume. An Early Bronze Age I Site at Ashqelon, Afridar (Area E-2).
- Hillson S. 1993. *Teeth*. Cambridge.
- Nagar Y. Forthcoming. The Human Skeletal Remains from Early Bronze Age Ashqelon Barne'a. In A. Golani. *Ashqelon Barne'a: The Early Bronze Age Site II: The Finds* (IAA Reports).