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TO PALESTINE AND JORDAN

SETTLEMENTS AND DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS IN SALFEET-NABLUS AREA (CENTRAL PALESTINE) FROM EARLY BRONZE TO IRON AGE

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INTRODUCTION

The area around the site of Tell Sheik Abu Zarad, territory of Ephraim, rise along an important road link connecting Tell Balata/ancient Shechem to the north with Jerusalem/ancient Urushalimum to the south, and Ras el-'Ain/ancient Aphek to the west with Beitin/ancient Bethel to the east (Nigro *et al.* 2015, 139). The area, now in the provinces of Salfeet, Nablus and Ramallah, spread along the border three enclaves geographically and topographically different: Northern Slopes (NS), Southern Slopes (SS) and the Northern Central Range (NCR).

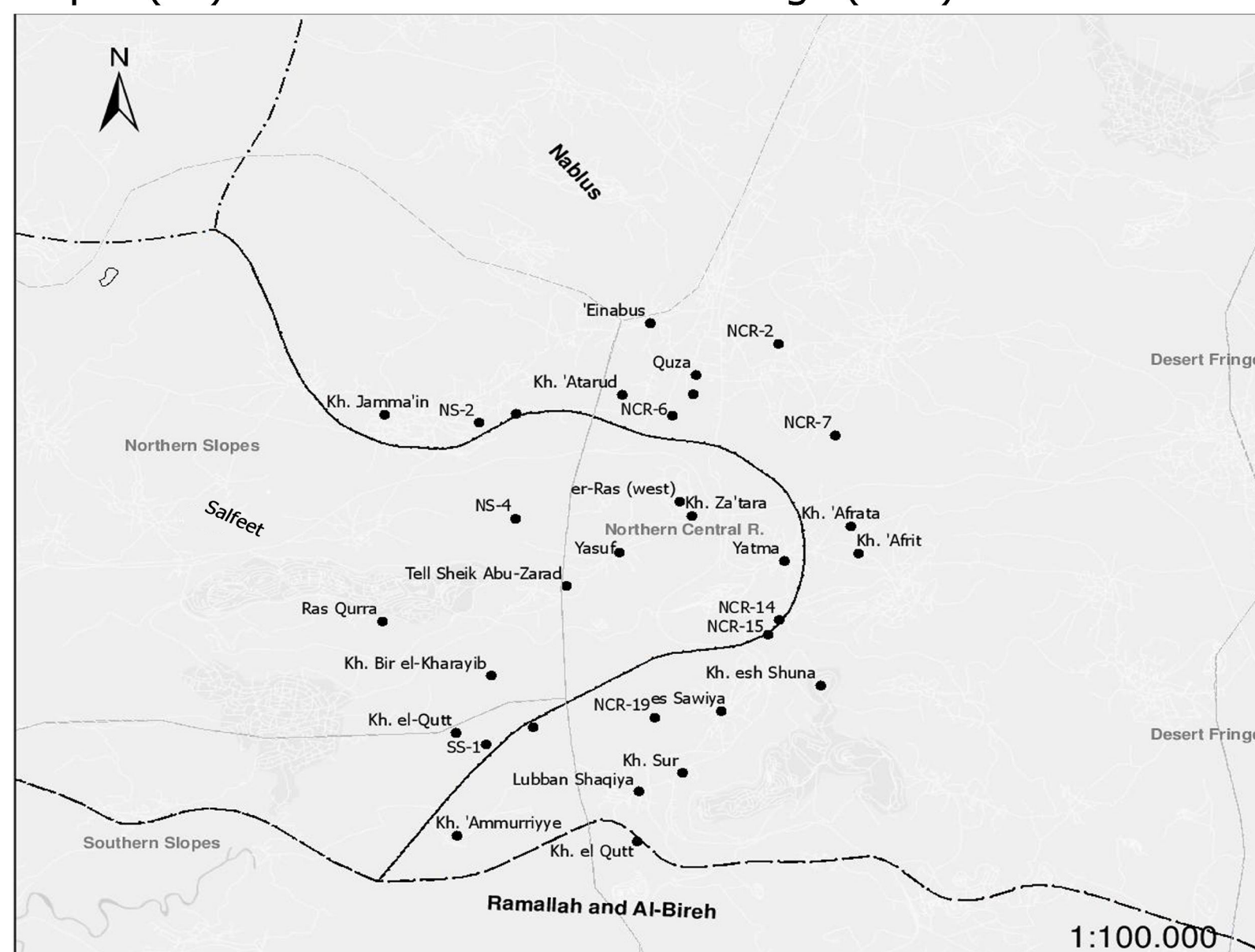


Fig. 1 - The provinces of Salfeet and Nablus cut off from the territory of Ephraim in Central Palestine.

SETTLEMENTS ANALYSIS

During the long span of time throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages, the three areas were inhabited in a different way, with occupational peaks and phases of abandonment. Nevertheless, the survey area in Salfeet and Nablus provinces has always had a prominent role in settlement analysis. Both in the three geographic units, that are cut off from the investigated territory and the entire Ephraim, as in the surveyed area, the percentage of sites occupied is high (Fig. 2). During the Early Bronze Age 23 sites are occupied in NCR, NS and SS, 13% of them located in Salfeet-Nablus area (corresponding to the 7% of Ephraim total settlements). Even in the Middle Bronze II, the territory is densely settled: 55 sites are occupied in the three topographic units, 13% located in the territory here investigated (corresponding to the 8% of Ephraim settlements). For Late Bronze it is difficult to make statistics due to lack of data, while during Iron I of the 60 settlements that arise in the three topographic units, 21-22% are in the Salfeet-Nablus area (11% of Ephraim settlements). During the Iron II, 136 sites are settled in NCR, SS and SS areas, 17% of them are located in the surveyd area, and this corresponds to approximately 13% of all settlements in the territory of Ephraim (Finkelstein 1988, 167). That is due to the extraordinary presence of springs, as the three geographic areas have 85% of Ephraim province water sources (Tab. 1).

TOPONYM	NCR	NS	SS	TOT.	EFRAIM
SPRINGS	38	8	231	277	326
PER CENT	12	2	71	85	

Tab. 1 - Distribution of permanent water sources in the Ephraim territory (reworked by Finkelstein 1988).

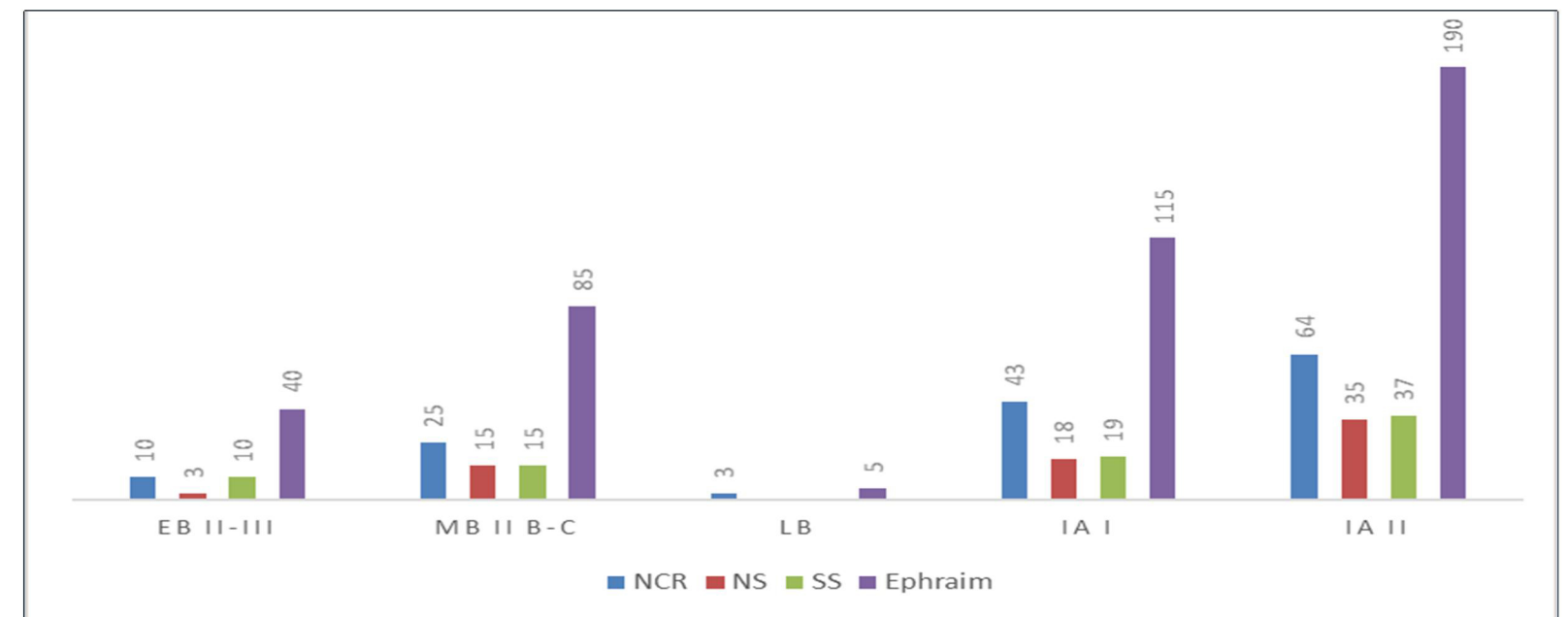


Fig. 2 - Settlements pattern from Early Bronze to Iron II in NCR, NS and SS areas and the territory of Ephraim.

POPULATION ANALYSIS

During EB II-III it is estimated that there were about 1700 inhabitants in the three units, 22% lived in the Salfeet-Nablus area, corresponding to the 14.6% of the entire Ephraim. In the MB II it is estimated that there were 4100 inhabitants between NCR, NS and SS, and approximately 23% are settled in the surveyed area, the 16% of the Ephraim population. As already stated, lack of data cannot provide population estimates for LB. During the Iron I, it is assumed that 6570 inhabitants lived in the three units, 26% located in the surveyed area, which would correspond to 19% of the Ephraim population. During the Iron II, the population of the NCR, NS and SS units was 31400, 17% of which resided in the surveyed area, corresponding to the 12% of entire Ephraim population (Finkelstein - Gophna 1993) (Fig. 3).

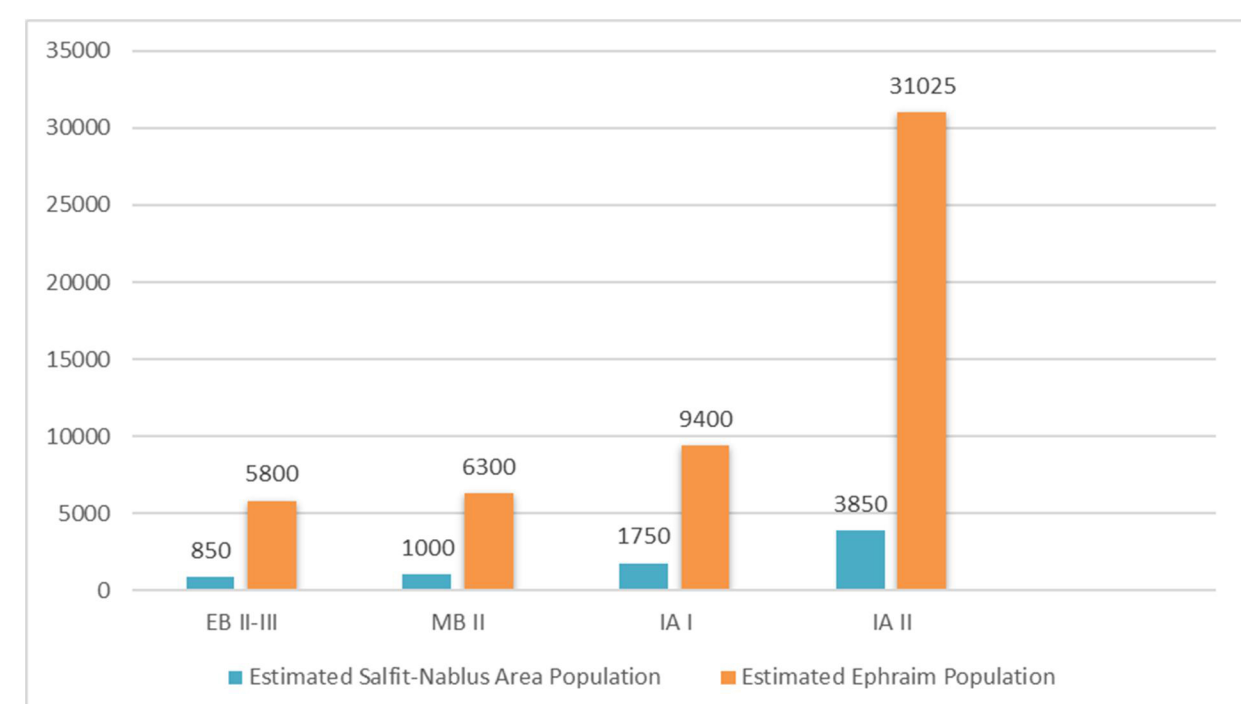


Fig. 3 - Population estimates of Salfeet-Nablus area and Ephraim territory from Early Bronze Age to Iron Age.

CONCLUSIONS

Important crossroads of ancient and modern times, the area of Salfeet and Nablus provinces has always had a strong impetus for settlements, as indicated by the study survey. Perhaps it was the need to live in such important connection areas that would encourage local communities to develop the terracing system already from the ancient Bronze Age (Sayej 1999) and make productive that topographically possessed a low yield.

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