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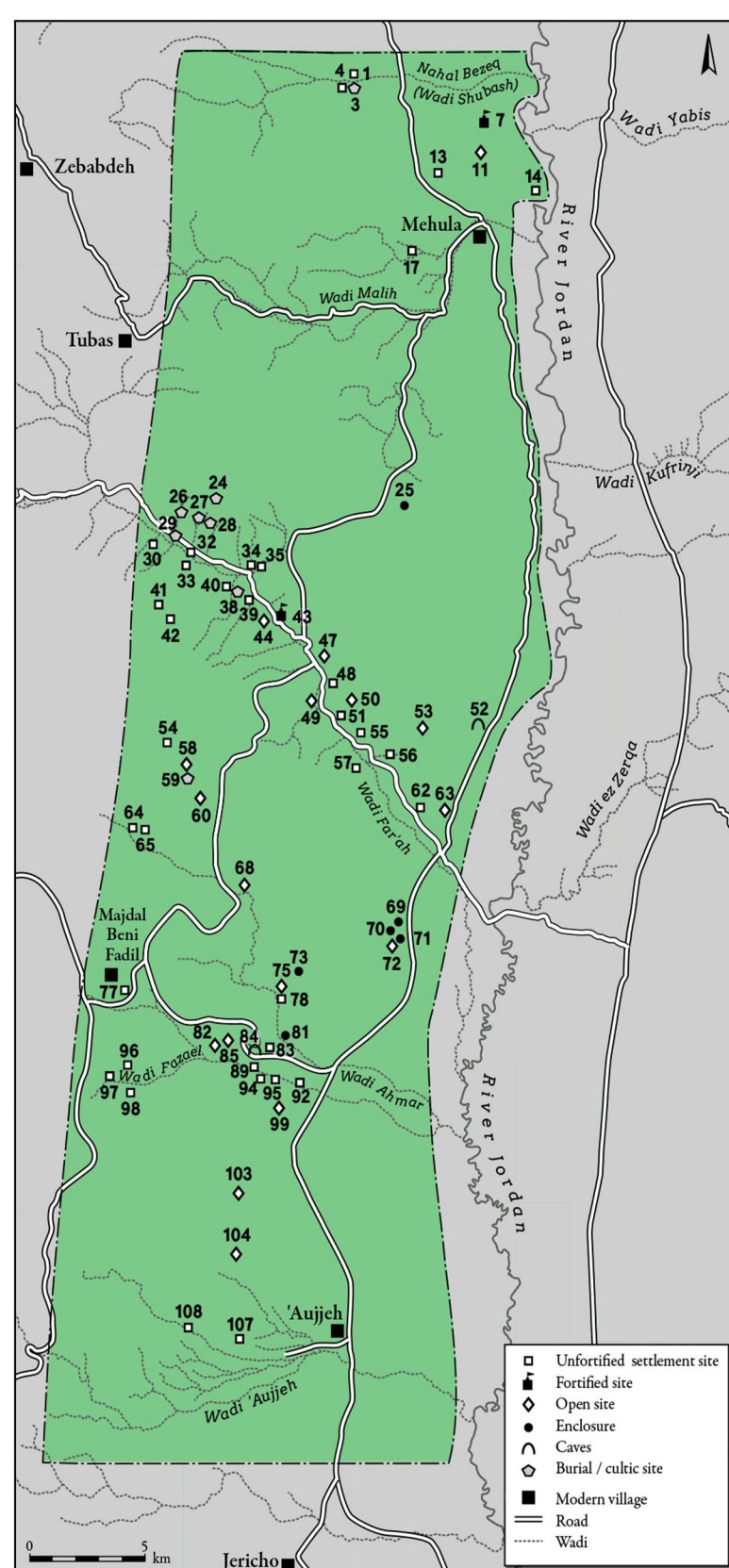
TO PALESTINE AND JORDAN

SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS IN SOUTHERN JORDAN VALLEY DURING THE EARLY BRONZE I

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ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The southern Jordan Valley, located between the hill country area of Samaria and the Jordan River, consists of three different geographical sub-units: the Ghor, precipitous banks 30 to 70 m high, the Katar hills, and the Zor that hosted the main part of the archaeological sites (Serangeli 1980). Despite the climatic conditions, this valley shows a long occupation since the Neolithic Period. The Early Bronze Age I represents a period of transition between village farming community and urban life (Gophna 1995).



ORGANIZATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF SITES

The increase in number of sites is the main characteristic of the EBA IB period together with the settlement of new regions before inhabited and the first appearance of fortifications. In this period settlements are preferably located in the cone shaped hill, and placed near a water source, an agricultural area or a crossroads. Usually the sites on the plain are abandoned and relocated to the wadi's highlands, leaving fertile areas for agricultural purposes (Bar 2013). A settlement centre in this period was the region of Wadi Far'ah, with more than half of all EB I sites, while the desert frontier of Samaria, Wadi Fzael and Wadi Uja were sparsely populated.

Fig. 1 - Site typology map (after Bar 2014, fig. 6.2).

Surveys have shown 82 sites dated to the EB I and divided in seven different groups (Fig. 1). The unfortified category is the most common with 40 sites, divided into four groups according to the area: 4 large sites were discovered in Wadi Far'ah, along the wadi flood plains, and in the southern Beth Shean Valley; 13 medium-sized sites were concentrated in the western part of the same wadi and near the springs of the desert fringes of Samaria; 8 small sites near a source of water and arable land; few very-small sites, up to 3.000 m² in area, were always located close to the wadi (Fig. 2). Regarding as the fortified sites there are just Tel Shalem and er-Rjjum. Open sites, burials, caves, enclosures, and cultic sites are the other categories that have been discovered.

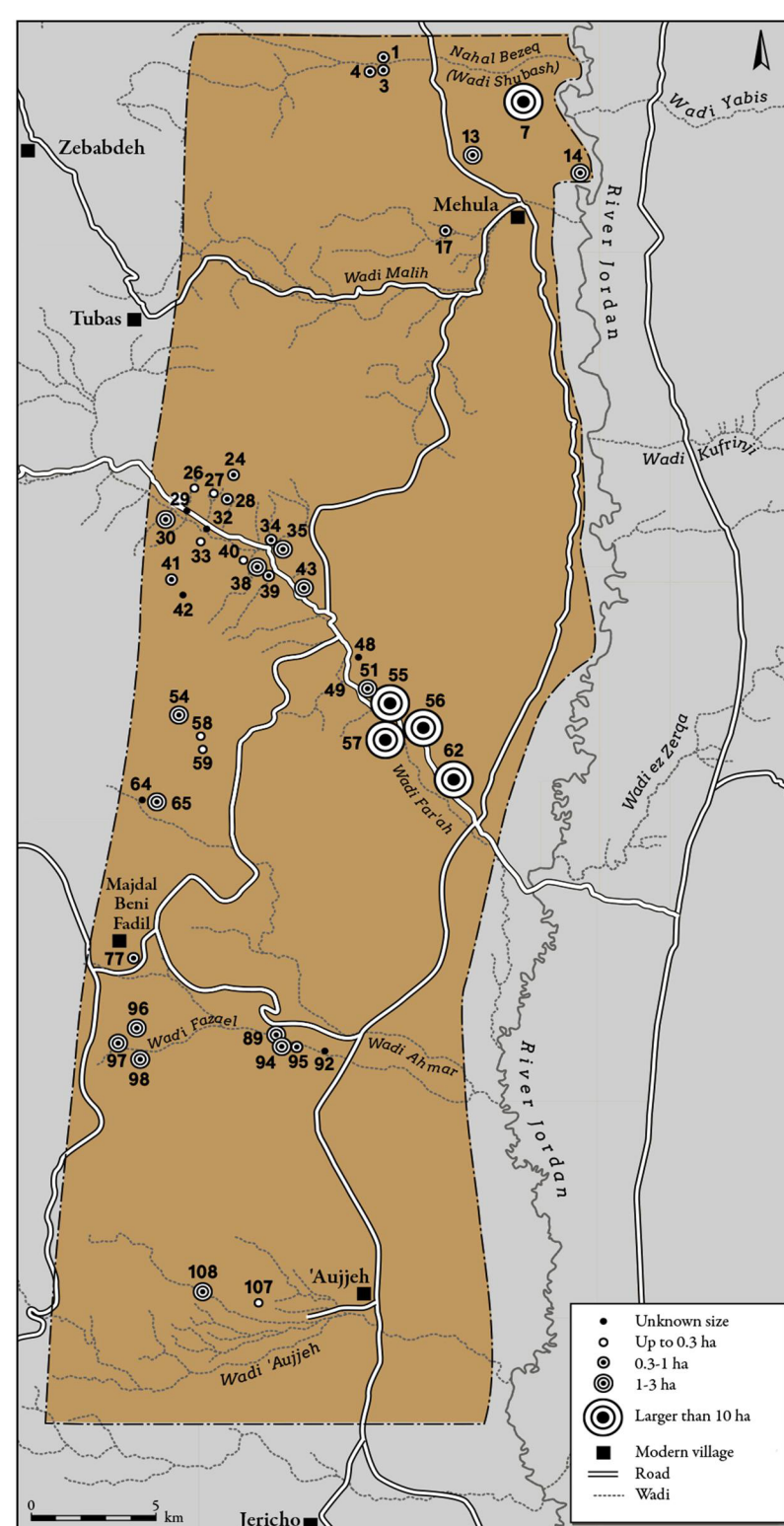


Fig. 2 - Site map based on size (after Bar 2014, fig. 6.7).

The water sources and potential farmland are key components in size and location of the sites. The average distance to the source of water is about 217 m (GPS and a *t*-test) and it changes according to the settlement typology. Index of dispersion of sites demonstrated that in EB I they were grouped in settlement clusters with one site (or a block) at the center and smaller villages gravitating around it (Bar 2014, 121). The distance between clusters ranged between 20 and 40 Km. Three main units have been identified: the southern Beth Shean Valley, concentrated around Tel Shalem; the Wadi Far'ah cluster with er-Rjjum, maybe Tell Far'ah North and 'Ain Farr; and finally Wadi Fzael cluster with Khirbet Rahiyeh as key site.

THE CASE OF TELL ES-SULTAN, ANCIENT JERICHO

Tell es-Sultan started its urban experience early in the 3rd millennium BC, thanks to its extremely suitable ecological niche: the oasis. Surveys and materials analysis (Conder - Kitchener 1883; D'Andrea - Sala 2011) suggested the presence of very few EB I villages in the Jericho Oasis (Fig. 3): Tell Abu el-'Alayiq North and South on Wadi Qelt, and Tell el-Mafjar on Wadi en-Nu'eima. Tell es-Sultan is the only medium-sized site known in the area and is located in the middle of the two wadi; the site can be included in the fortified category just starting from EB II (Nigro 2005; *contra* Bar 2014, 39). This sector is depopulated if compared with the inner hill country and wadis in the northern regions. It is unclear what the relationship between Tell es-Sultan and neighboring sites were, even if the undisputed agricultural and commercial vocation would suggest a key position for ancient Jericho.



Fig. 3 - Settlement pattern in the Jericho Oasis during Early Bronze Age I.

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