

7 Burial Positioning in the Archaeological Record

Variations in burial positioning (extended, flexed, etc.) have been linked to a wide variety of explanatory factors. From the practicalities of burial contexts (Pettitt 2011, 130) to gendered and/or status differentiation (e.g. Palumbo 1987; Shay 1983, 30), different ethnic or tribal identities (Kenyon 1960, 182) to religious beliefs and traditions (e.g. Ilan 1995, 135; Simpson 1995, 241). It is also clear, however, that different burial positions were used contemporaneously and may be found within the same cemetery and possibly even within the same tomb or burial context (e.g. MBA Jericho (Kenyon 1965, 206–478) and Tell Dan (Ilan 1995, 127, Table 15.6)).

The situation is further complicated by the variety of ways in which the same burial position can be named and described in the literature (e.g. Bradbury et al. 2015; Knüsel 2014; Sprague 1968, 2005), making comparative studies difficult, or even impossible, without original photographs, plans, or field sketches and notes. While acknowledging all these challenges, here I want to explore some of the broadscale patterns and trends in burial positioning/corpse placement that we see over time and space. In doing so, I will consider the processes and practices that likely influenced these configurations, before untangling what different burial positionings might be able to tell us about ideas of social identity, difference, and belief at both macro and micro scales.

Understanding and Recording Burial Positions

If we view the human corpse as the embodiment of a tangled web of lived experiences, social relations, as well as a potential locus of power, subjection, and resistance (e.g. Gramsch 2013, 459–61; Joyce 2005; Van Wolputte 2004, 254, 260), the treatment of the human body in death becomes a potent symbol and form of communication. A way in which to reinforce, memorialise, transform, and even challenge existing social relations. It also offers an opportunity for the control and mediation of not only the physical decay of the human corpse, but also the transformations (social, religious, etc.) that can arise from this (e.g. Gramsch 2013, 462). The documentation and discovery of burials in

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'atypical' or dramatic poses, something about the nature of deposition. An examination of both site- and intra-site level broader traditions and beliefs. So, too, may bodily orientation surrounding wider religious practices (Parker Pearson 1999, 8).

Perhaps one of the most significant interpretation of burial positions is the position of a given inhumation, human manipulation, taphonomic Chapter 2 (Mickelburgh 2018) assumed disarticulation sequence of natural versus anthropogenic 2018; Knüsel and Robb 2016 that distinguish between labile and persistent joints (such as and, thus, under most circumstances the presence of supporting structures, contrast, are those that resist disposition (Mickelburgh 2018,

As already discussed, the context (see Chapters 1 and 2). Where taphonomic processes document many cases, however, this information significant evidence that can be local levels. While the excavations exploring variations over time nearly 2,000 individuals with ability to identify trends that same period, may point towards traditions.

Before turning to a discussion emphasising several things. I benefitted from numerous discussions in archaeothanatological meetings appropriate anatomical descriptions when recording burials in this volume have been specified to reflect the ambiguities in origin of the broader analyses, re-determined or where the period from the following analysis

'atypical' or dramatic poses, a topic I will turn to in Chapter 9, may tell us something about the nature and timing of death, and the subsequent burial or deposition. An examination, however, of recurring trends and patterns at both site- and intra-site levels may point towards chronological variations, broader traditions and beliefs and concepts around belonging and difference. So, too, may bodily orientation communicate general ideals and concepts surrounding wider religious principles, as well as local behaviour and values (Parker Pearson 1999, 8).

Perhaps one of the most significant challenges for the recording and interpretation of burial positions is attempting to determine whether the excavated position of a given inhumation and the associated assemblage is the product of human manipulation, taphonomic processes, or a combination of the two (see Chapter 2 (Mickelburgh 2018, 105–6)). Pivotal for such reconstructions is the assumed disarticulation sequence of a corpse,¹ which can aid in an identification of natural versus anthropogenic elements (e.g. Duday 2009; Mickelburgh 2018; Knüsel and Robb 2016). Underlying such reconstructions are methods that distinguish between labile (such as the small bones of the hands and feet) and persistent joints (such as the knees). The former are relatively unstable and, thus, under most circumstances disarticulate soon after death (without the presence of supporting soil and/or architecture). Persistent joints, in contrast, are those that resist disarticulation and often maintain their anatomical position (Mickelburgh 2018, 110, 112).

As already discussed, the data compiled for this project are extremely varied (see Chapters 1 and 2). Where possible, data concerning the anthropogenic and taphonomic processes documented at any given site have been documented. In many cases, however, this information is not available. Despite this, there is still significant evidence that can be extracted and explored at both regional and local levels. While the excavated position may diverge from the original, by exploring variations over time and space using a large data set (in this case nearly 2,000 individuals with a recorded body position), we start to have the ability to identify trends that, when recurring at multiple sites dating to the same period, may point towards wider patterns and even socially approved traditions.

Before turning to a discussion of these trends and patterns it is worth emphasising several things. First, I am not an osteologist, and while having benefitted from numerous discussions with colleagues, I have not been trained in archaeoethanatomical methods. As such, while Duday's (2009, 16) call for appropriate anatomical descriptions for human burials is vital (especially when recording burials in the field), in many cases the terminologies used in this volume have been specifically chosen with a view to accessibility and reflect the ambiguities in original source publications (see Table 7.1). In terms of the broader analyses, records where the period of burial could not be determined or where the period certainty was negligible have been excluded from the following analysis and discussion. So, too, have burial positions

**BURIAL POSITIONS
(DEFINITE) PLOTTED OUT AS % OF OVERALL MNI
WITH RECORDED BURIAL POSITION BY
TIMEBLOCK**

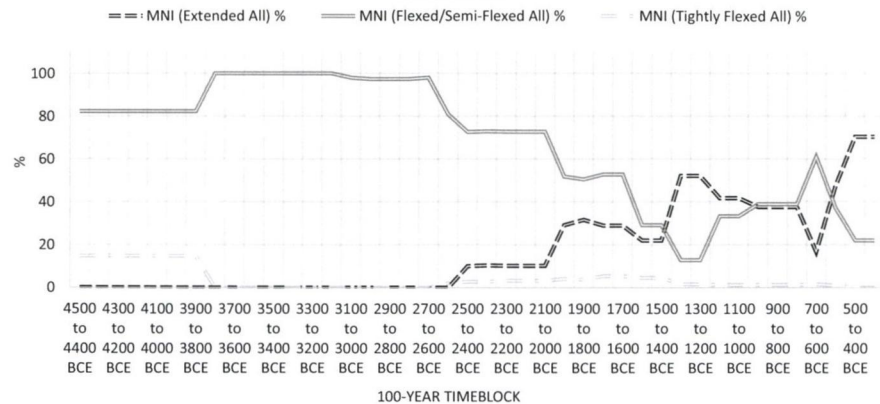


Figure 7.1 Burial positions over time (c. 4500–300 BCE) plotted out by 100-year time-block. This plot is only showing burial positionings with the highest level of certainty, and the site of Byblos has been excluded due to significant overall pattern distortions. The respective positions are plotted out as a percentage of the number of individuals per time-block with a recorded burial position.

documented in the archaeological record; however, shifts in the popularity (and potentially meaning) of different burial positions can be seen over time. At the most basic level, and when comparing the prevalence of extended, tightly flexed, and flexed/semi-flexed burials, for much of antiquity the latter are particularly prolific (Figure 7.1). By the beginning of the EBA in the northern Levant or the end of EB I/beginning of EB II in the southern Levant (i.e. from c. 3100 to 3000 BCE), they account for nearly 100% of recorded burial positions. Prior to this, patterns are more difficult to interpret or are shaped by a handful of sites (e.g. Byblos). We are also dealing with a very small dataset prior to c. 2500 BCE, with less than 50 individuals for whom burial positioning and chronological dating can be determined with any certainty. Part of the minimal data here, as explored in earlier chapters, is due to the prevalence of disarticulated successive burials prior to this period.

In contrast, for each of the 100-year time blocks from 2500 BCE onwards we are dealing with a minimum of 200 individuals for whom burial positioning and chronological dating can be determined with definite certainty, thus a much more robust dataset in terms of total numbers (Figure 7.2). These data seem to suggest several general trends. The first is the limited number of burials that can be identified as tightly flexed, accounting for less than 10% of definite positioning in every 100-year time-block, a pattern I will return to shortly. For now, however, I want to focus on the second trend, the shifting popularity of flexed/semi-flexed versus extended burials from at least 3100/3000 BCE onwards.

The Popularity of Flexed Burials: The Third to Second Millennium BCE

Flexed and semi-flexed burial positions are documented at numerous sites across the wider Levant (see Figures 7.2 and 7.3). If we focus initially on examples where both the burial positioning and dating is definitive, these data show no obvious geographical trends or spatial patterns; flexed/semi-flexed, or extended burials are not confined to one geographical, cultural, or ancient sociopolitical region. Gaps in spatial coverage, therefore, are much more likely to be associated with a lack of data on burial numbers or uncertainty regarding the dating and/or burial positioning at any given site. One exception to this is the significant predominance of flexed/semi-flexed burials along the Euphrates, something I will return to shortly.

Over the course of the late fourth to second millennia BCE not only is the overall number of flexed/semi-flexed burials high, so too is the number of sites which show evidence for definitively dated flexed/semi-flexed burials, 37 (EBA) and 39 (MBA-LBA) sites respectively. As might be expected, the majority of EBA evidence is dated to c. 3000 BCE or later, and the proliferation of flexed burials contrasts with evidence for extended body positionings. For the latter we only have a handful of definitively dated sites (four in total); adding in sites with possible certainty or where the numbers of burials are unclear does not increase this number (compare Figure 7.3(a) and (b)). Moreover, all of these sites, bar one, Tell en-Nasbeh (McCown 1947), show evidence for both extended and flexed/semi-flexed burials. The evidence from the latter, meanwhile, is only possible at best.

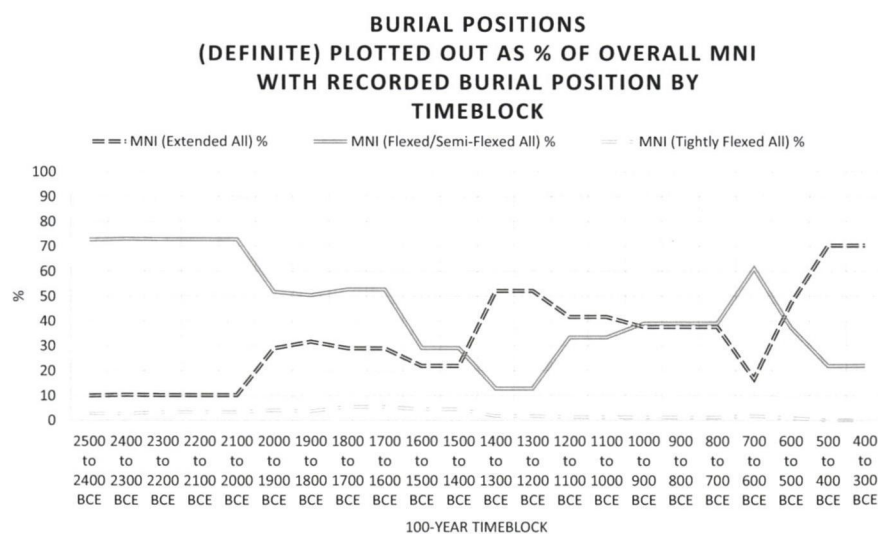


Figure 7.2 Burial positions over time, zooming in on the third millennium BCE onwards (c. 2500–300 BCE) plotted out by 100-year time-block. This plot is only showing burial positionings with the highest level of certainty. The respective positions are plotted out as a percentage of the number of individuals per time-block with a recorded burial position.



(a)



(b)

Figure 7.3 Distribution maps (burials). The plots have a. (EBA Flexed) 1. Tell 'An 1. Khirbet al-Umbash; 5. Tell 'An 1. Khirbet al-Umbash and c. (MBA-LBA) 1. Dan; 5. Megiddo; 6. Rishon le-Zion; 10.

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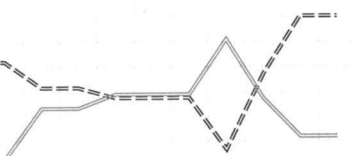
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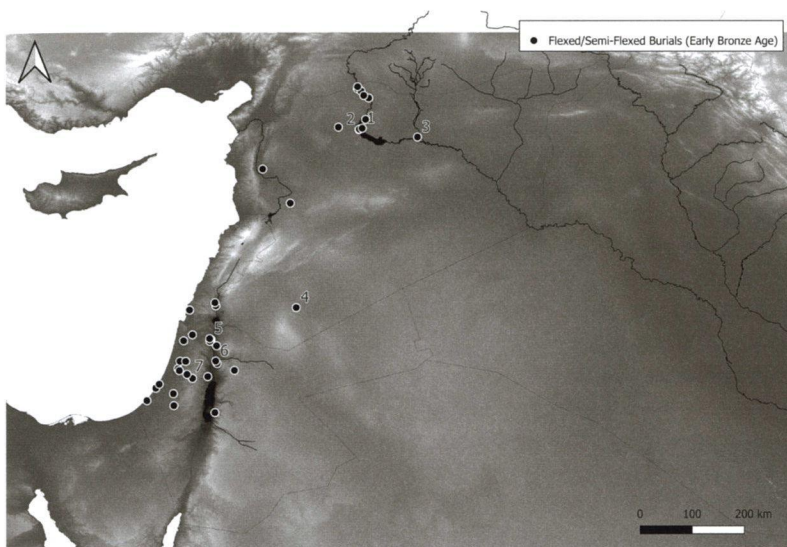
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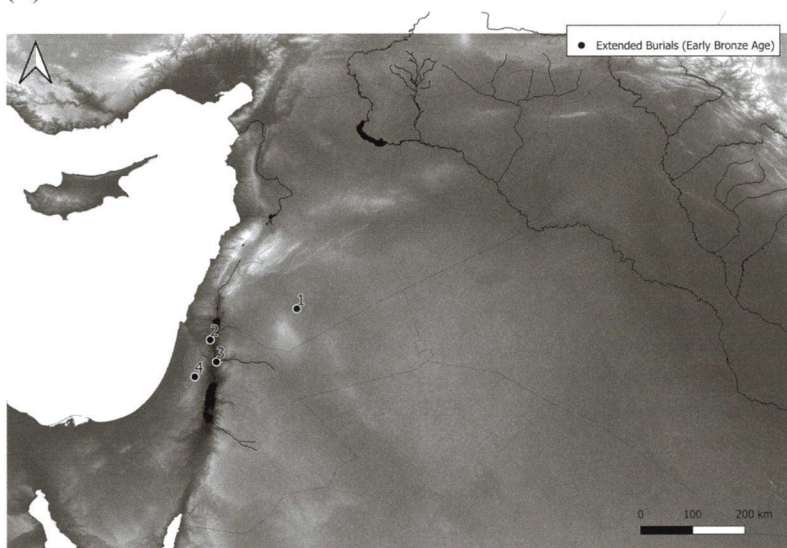
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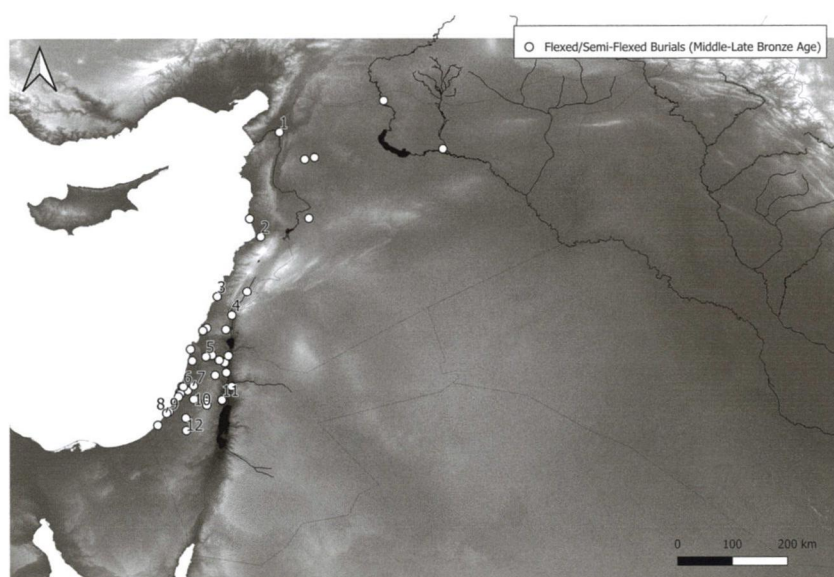
(a)



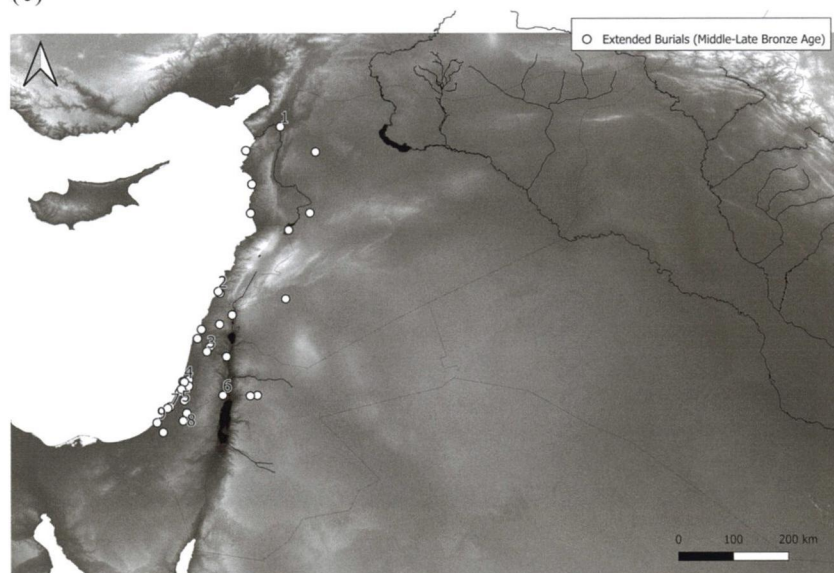
(b)

Figure 7.3 Distribution maps (a)–(d) of Bronze Age flexed/semi-flexed vs. extended burials. The plots have been broken down into very broad sub-phases here: a. (EBA Flexed) 1. Tell Halawa; 2. Selenkahiye; 3. Tell Bi'a; 4. Khirbet al-Umbashi; 5. Tell 'Amal; 6. Tiwal esh-Sharqi; 7. Jericho. b. (EBA Extended) 1. Khirbet al-Umbashi; 2. Tell 'Amal; 3. Tiwal esh-Sharqi; 5. Tell en-Nasbeh; and c. (MBA-LBA Flexed) 1. Tell Alalakh; 2. Tell Arqa; 3. Sidon; 4. Tell Dan; 5. Megiddo; 6. Bene Baraq; 7. Palmahim; 8. Dhahrat el-Humriya; 9. Rishon le-Zion; 10. Gezer; 11. Jericho and d. (MBA-LBA Extended)

(Continued)



(c)



(d)

Figure 7.3 (Continued) 1. Tell Alalakh; 2. Sidon; 3. Megiddo; 4. Bene Baraq; 5. Rishon le-Zion; 6. Jericho; 7. Dhahrat el-Humriya; 8. Lachish; 9. Deir el-Balah. Unlike the charts in this chapter, however, the plots include both highly certain and uncertain data. Only sites where we have numerical data have been included.

Additional sites where burial positioning has been noted without any associated numerical values (e.g. as a presence) have not been included in the plots. These data are extremely limited and only include data from 19 sites, ranging in date from the Late Chalcolithic to Persian period.

Excavated in the early twentieth century, but unfortunately not published until 1990, the structure of many of the excavations extended burials dating to the Middle Bronze Age. The undisturbed, skeleton found in the structure indicated that the bodies were placed in a flexed position (McCown 1947, 70). Unfortunately, the burials were both significantly disturbed, and scattered, with no clear evidence of sections, and photography of the burials (Figure 4.13), identifying a clearly extended burial. It is possible that all the individuals were placed in a flexed position, this has to remain to be seen.

Other EBA sites with both flexed and extended burials include Tell 'Amal and Khirbat Tiwal esh-Sharqi, for example. At Tell 'Amal, an individual, probably female, was found in a flexed burial (Figure 4.8 (Tubb 1990)). At Khirbat Tiwal, a different, extended burial of an individual was found in Cave A (Feig 1990). At Tell 'Amal, the burials contained the remains of eight individuals. The remains have been placed on their side and were identified (e.g. Tomb 24) as being placed on their right side in a flexed (or extended) position.

The absence of extended burials in the Levant is not the focus of this chapter. Although not the focus of this chapter, the absence of extended burials in the Middle Bronze Age is not the dominance of flexed burials. One of the limiting factors for the study of extended burials occurred within some of the sites, and flooding. In many cases, the burial positioning (Cooper 1981), for example, there were intact, however, a significant number of burials were on their right side (and left side). This would seem to be the case for the Middle Bronze Age, as well as biologically sexed females.

It is possible that we can try to see the bigger picture; the Middle Bronze Age, and thus, a lack of extended burials indicate a conscious rejection of extended burials, or conversely, the popularity of flexed burials in the Middle Bronze Age. Regional variation is also a factor, however. Given the overall



Megiddo; 4. Bene Baraq; 5. Rishon
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Excavated in the early twentieth century by Badè, Tell en-Nasbeh was unfortunately not published until 1947, and it was clearly a difficult task to reconstruct many of the excavation details (McCown 1947, ix). The presence of extended burials dating to the EBA at this site was based on one, relatively undisturbed, skeleton found in Cave Tomb 6 which, according to McCown, "... indicated that the bodies ... had been buried in the extended position" (McCown 1947, 70). Unfortunately, Tombs 6 and 5 at Tell en-Nasbeh were both significantly disturbed, and the majority of remains were disarticulated and scattered, with no clear evidence for any stratification. Based on the plans, sections, and photography of these tombs (McCown 1947, 69, Figure 4, Plate 13), identifying a clearly extended burial is difficult. Thus, although it is possible that all the individuals within this tomb were initially placed in extended positions, this has to remain tentative.

Other EBA sites with both flexed and extended burials include Tiwal esh-Sharqi, Tell 'Amal and Khirbet al-Umbashi. The majority of EB IV burials at Tiwal esh-Sharqi, for example, were flexed/semi-flexed, while a single adult individual, probably female, found in Tomb SE4 was recorded as an extended burial (Figure 4.8 (Tubb 1990, 67)). At Tell 'Amal (also EB IV), the pattern is different, extended burials outnumber flexed burials, with only a single flexed burial found in Cave A (Feig 1991, 119–20). Meanwhile, at Khirbet al-Umbashi (Braemer, Echallier, and Taraqqi 2004, 200) both extended (e.g. Tomb 47 which contained the remains of eight individuals, at least seven of which appear to have been placed on their side in an extended position) and flexed positionings were identified (e.g. Tomb 24, where the remains of a single individual was on their right side in a flexed (or foetal) position).

The absence of extended burials along the Euphrates is worth a note here. Although not the focus of her work, Cooper's (2006, 202–56) descriptions of EBA burial types in the northern Euphrates Valley highlight the potential dominance of flexed burials, especially in association with pit and cist graves. One of the limiting factors here is the sheer degree of displacement that has occurred within some of the tombs, whether due to looting activities or erosion and flooding. In many cases we have limited or no information on original burial positioning (Cooper 2006, 205). Based on tombs where assemblages were intact, however, a significant pattern emerges. At Halawa (Orthmann 1981), for example, there seems to be a clear preference for corpses to be placed on their right side (and left in a smaller number of cases) in a flexed position. This would seem to be the case for biologically aged adults and children, as well as biologically sexed females and males.

It is possible that we can treat the northern Euphrates Valley as a microcosm of the bigger picture; the majority of burial data from this region date to the EBA, and thus, a lack of extended burials is perhaps a broader trend. This may indicate a conscious rejection or avoidance of extended positions and/or, conversely, the popularity of flexed/semi-flexed burials during the third millennium BCE. Regional variations and patterns may also be playing a role, however. Given the overwhelming combination of flexed and right sided

der whether local circumstances surrounding entry into the neth- and shaped the placement of

MBA-LBA), the overall percent- cantly exceeds those that are sites (flexed/semi-flexed) versus d). There is, however, considera- for both flexed/semi-flexed and 50% of MBA-LBA sites with flexed/semi-flexed burials, while burials also have extended. If we emerges. Sites definitively dated burials substantially outnumber a to 18). The opposite pattern, sites with flexed/semi-flexed bur- urials). Moreover, adding in the ly alter this picture. The overall is directly in line with the over- chapter 3 and (Greenberg 2019, ongst this backdrop, however, /semi-flexed to extended burial explore this trend in more detail es with both body positionings

excavation, I want to start with HAR (Square HII) excavated by excavated in 1999 (Nigro 2009, pter, was located underneath a d both the adult and child from in a flexed/semi-flexed position the lower terrace area, similarly on their right sides with flexed (Nigro 2009, 367, Figures 11–12). , two of which were in articula- l on their back (Kenyon 1981, led in the area, although these

ne tombs discussed above show t to the MBA cemetery (Kenyon urials have been recorded. How bs located on 'Ayn es-Sultan, as we can suggest a possible link tombs and the ruling class of vere most likely built specifically

for the individuals interred within them; thus, a simple explanation for the flexed burial positioning due to tomb size seems unlikely; if extended burials were the preferred burial positioning why not simply build bigger tombs? Given these factors, we may be dealing with a conscious distinction; the elite ruling class burying their dead on Spring Hill perhaps chose to differentiate their burials from those in the cemetery, not only in terms of numbers and location (Bradbury and Philip 2020, 64), but also in terms of burial positioning and practices.

A final possibility lies with the dating of these contexts. It is generally agreed that MB I (c. 2000–1800 BCE) occupation and activity are very limited at Jericho, with the main phase of building and settlement assigned to MB II or the very end of MB I (Nigro 2009, 368; Prag 1986, 71). Based on stratigraphy and artefactual assemblages, the tombs from Spring Hill have been tentatively dated to MB I ((Nigro 2009, 361, 368), although see Maeir (2010, 59) for an alternative dating), whereas the tombs from the necropolis were (predomi- nately) in use during MB II (Kenyon 1960, 301, 1965, 167; Yasur-Landau 1992, 236–37). This chronological variation would fit well with broader-scale pat- terns, whereby extended burials seem to increase in popularity over the course of the second millennium BCE. Such a simple chronological division cannot be attested to at every site, however.

Data from Rishon le-Zion (Levy and Kletter 2018), for example, show a slightly different pattern. Flexed and extended burials date to both MB I and II, and while the number of flexed burials outweigh those that are extended, the difference between the two is minimal (111 extended versus 140 flexed). At the MBA cemetery (9000) at Lachish, the numbers of flexed and extended bur- ials were roughly equal, with no clear patterning between burial position, bur- ial context, or the biological sex and age of the buried individuals (Singer-Avitz 2004, 1003–4). As with Jericho, then, this brings us back to the idea of local circumstances, or even individual life histories dictating burial positioning. The MBA cemetery from Sidon (e.g. Doumet-Serhal 2004, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2014, 2016), discussed extensively in the previous chapter, for example, pro- vides evidence for both extended and flexed burials throughout the MBA. The proportions, however, are very uneven. Based on the 69 burials with a recorded positioning included in this project, 51 of these could be identified as flexed/ semi-flexed or tightly flexed burials; only six were identified as extended. I have already discussed one of these, Burial 12, in the previous chapter, and given the complex life history of this individual, we might wonder whether this body positioning was particularly dictated by his bodily trauma. Was his placement in an extended, supine position, designed to comfort, disguise, or even trans- form his ailing body?

In contrast to the substantial overlap between flexed/semi-flexed and extended individuals at many MBA sites, only a handful of LBA sites, includ- ing Megiddo (Guy and Engberg 1938; Gonen 1992, 41–52, 87–88, 98–118, 139) and Tell Alalakh (Boutin 2008; Woolley 1955), have evidence for both posi- tionings.³ At Megiddo (Guy and Engberg 1938; Gonen 1992, 41–52, 87–88,

98–118, 139) we are only dealing with a small sample of LBA extended burials (six individuals), including both adults and possibly one child/adolescent. Moreover, there is a larger number of flexed burials (19 individuals (adults, infants, and children)) dating to this period. Similarly, higher numbers of flexed burials in comparison with extended have been documented from Tell Alalakh (Boutin 2008; Woolley 1955), although here there does seem to be a possible pattern, with a higher number of adult extended burials in comparison to non-adult (ten versus four in the dataset compiled for this research).

At other sites we see a possible chronological shift. At Dhahrat el-Humraiya, for example, the majority of extended burials appear to date to the LBA, whereas tombs containing flexed burials are predominantly MBA in date (Ory 1948, 77). A similar pattern is visible at Bene Baraq (Be'eri et al. 2020); most LBA burials from the site were extended, while those dating to the MBA were flexed. Here, however, we may also be dealing with differential practices based on age. The MBA burials were all infants; unfortunately, the positioning of the handful of MBA adult burials at the site was not published. Earlier excavations in this area, however, also revealed evidence for shaft tombs dating to the MBA and LBA, including a MB II shaft tomb containing an adult male, placed in a flexed burial position (Hallote 1994, 202). Finally, a handful of LBA sites from both the northern and southern Levant have, to date, only revealed evidence for flexed burials. By way of example, a flexed adult burial, lying on their back at Tell Arqa (Tomb 12.67), was the latest deposit within a collective chamber tomb. The rest of the remains were disturbed (Thalmann et al. 2006, 77–76, Plate 42). Similarly, excavations within the LBA Tomb/Cave I.10A at Gezer revealed evidence for multiple disturbed and disarticulated burials but only one fully articulated individual, the final deposition, with a definitive (flexed) positioning ((Dever et al. 1971, 106–7, Figure 6) and see Chapter 9 for further discussion).

The question that remains, however, is why a flexed/semi-flexed placement; why is this burial positioning so popular for much of antiquity, at least until the mid-second millennium BCE? I have already hinted at several potential explanations for this, from the use of positioning as a way of marking the end life of a tomb, mapping and expressing social differentiation, to possible age-dependent practices. Such trends, however, are only really visible at a localised and site level scale. Could there have been more widely held traditions and beliefs shaping trends around body positioning?

In his discussions of the MBA burials at Tell Dan, Ilan (1995, 135) points towards the links between a flexed or contracted corpse and concepts of rebirth, rest/sleep, and foetal positions in the womb. Drawing upon ethnographic analogies, as well as textual references, Parker Pearson (1999, 54) similarly highlights several of these interconnections. Certainly, the links between sleep/rest and death are not out of place within wider Western Asia. Textual sources from Mesopotamia, as well as the biblical world, hint towards such associations, whether corpses were seen as resting in the grave, within the netherworld or, if appropriate precautions and provisions had not been made,

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Another possibility lies wi tionships between people, pla their sides, for example, allow tions between cervical verteb facial skeleton (Knüsel 2014, 3 ily placement was a way of e would, of course, necessitate position. As scholars have e specialists and individuals w death and decay than we do t

Burial Positioning and Orientation

Prior to the third millennium which to explore the relation tion, and head orientation. F number of articulated buria detail. At the other end of 1 (e.g. Tell Alalakh (Boutin 2 T. Dothan and Brandl 2010)) and thus we are very limited focus on the evidence from tl and consider three themes: tures, orientation as a mean ships, and finally, orientation communities.

The vast majority of EBA and Kohlmeyer 1998) appear left or right side. Out of the (c. 68%) were oriented with tl the late-third-millennium-BC 2001) out of the 19 documen and head orientation), over l also seems to be a potential tioning at the early-third-mill Pits contained articulated inh majority of individuals (nine ing N. All of these third-mill Valley, and thus, while the

restlessly wandering (e.g. Jonker 1995, 191; Katz 2005). Associating a specific burial position with this concept, however, is problematic; no one positioning dominates any single chronological period and, in many cases, any one single site or burial context. If we are to assume that the flexed or semi-flexed position emulates rest or sleep, does this mean that burials in extended positions were not deemed restful or sleep-like?

Another possibility lies with the creation and replication of (spatial) relationships between people, places, and objects. Flexed burials, positioned on their sides, for example, allow for the maintenance of the anatomical connections between cervical vertebrae, and therefore constrain movement of the facial skeleton (Knüsel 2014, 38). In such cases, we might wonder whether bodily placement was a way of ensuring the longevity of facial orientation. This would, of course, necessitate a detailed understanding of processes of decomposition. As scholars have emphasised, however, it is likely that both burial specialists and individuals within the past had a much greater awareness of death and decay than we do today (e.g. Hallote 2001, 49).

Burial Positioning and Orientation: Creating Relationships

Prior to the third millennium BCE we, have relatively limited data through which to explore the relationships between burial positioning, body orientation, and head orientation. From around 3000 BCE, however, the increasing number of articulated burials allows us to consider these patterns in more detail. At the other end of temporal interest, only a handful of LBA sites (e.g. Tell Alalakh (Boutin 2008, 192) and Deir el-Balah (T. Dothan 1979; T. Dothan and Brandl 2010)) have data on both burial and facial positioning, and thus we are very limited in our interpretations. Here, therefore, I want to focus on the evidence from the early to mid-third and second millennia BCE and consider three themes: orientation in relation to landscape or site features, orientation as a means of creating local (i.e. within tombs) relationships, and finally, orientation and body positioning as way of creating broader communities.

The vast majority of EBA burials from the site of Tell Bi'a (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998) appear to be flexed/semi-flexed, positioned on either the left or right side. Out of the 28 burials recorded as part of this project, 19 (c. 68%) were oriented with their heads facing to the S, SW, or SE. Similarly, at the late-third-millennium-BCE site of Selenkahiye (van Loon and Meijer 2001) out of the 19 documented burials (with both data on burial positioning and head orientation), over half were flexed/semi-flexed and facing E. There also seems to be a potential relationship between orientation and burial positioning at the early-third-millennium-BCE site of Halawa B (Orthmann 1981). Pits contained articulated inhumations in a flexed/semi-flexed position, and the majority of individuals (nine out of 11) were positioned on their left side, facing N. All of these third-millennium-BCE sites lie along the Euphrates River Valley, and thus, while the orientations are different at each, it is worth

considering whether burial positioning (i.e. flexed/semi-flexed) was partially selected in order to facilitate facial orientations towards particular local features, structures, or landscape locations.

Recalling discussions from Chapter 4, we can also consider the relationships being created or facilitated by body positioning within tombs. By way of example, Grave H-116 at Halawa B contained the remains of three individuals; two adults, a well-preserved biologically sexed female aged c. 40–45 years, lying on their left side orientated W-E and facing N, and, a second older adult, c. 45–50 years, biologically sexed male, lying on their right side in a flexed/semi-flexed position, orientated W-E and facing S. The third individual was a neonate. The two adults, in this case, seem to have been deliberately positioned facing one another (Orthmann 1981, 79–80, Plate 38).

Dated to roughly a thousand years later, similar spatial relationships are visible within Tomb B104 at Rishon le-Zion. This tomb contained four individuals, likely contemporaneous depositions. Two adults and a child c. 1 years of age were orientated roughly E-W, positioned on their backs with their legs extended. The fourth individual, a child of around 7–8 years, and the focus of attention here, was positioned at the western end of the tomb, with their body carefully enclosing or circling the legs of the other burials. This individual was facing slightly eastwards, looking towards the three other corpses within the burial context (Levy and Kletter 2018, 52–53, Plan 2.67). Those burying the dead in these different examples were deliberately creating a spatial relationship, potentially mimicking or representing biological or social links present in life. Positioning and orientation, therefore, may be as much about choreographing a particular spatial relationship between individuals within a tomb, as it is about orientating a body or face towards a particular direction.

Finally, it is worth considering whether body positioning and facial orientation, at least at some sites, was aimed at delimiting or creating broader communities in death. Staying at MBA Rishon le-Zion (Levy and Kletter 2018) two broad categories can be identified. The majority of left-sided (including semi- and tightly) flexed burials, for example, face S (13 out of 14), while burials positioned on their right side appear to be predominantly facing N (11 out of 13). These patterns are also repeated by the handful of burials classified as extended on the right side and unclassified on the right or left side. Neither age nor biological sex seems to have been a determining factor, with non-adults and adults, biological males, and females being noted in both of these two broad categories (see Table 7.2). Equally, these orientations are represented in both pit burials and shaft tombs, as well as in the different areas of the site. Given the example of Tomb B104 (Levy and Kletter 2018, 52–53, Plan 2.67) discussed above, it would therefore seem as if those burying the dead at Rishon le-Zion, especially within the same grave, could choose whether to orientate individuals to face one another or alternatively to face the same direction (e.g. Tomb B108 (Levy and Kletter 2018, 50–51)). What particular significance such orientations had to different individuals or groups is harder to determine. Here, however, we might also come back to concepts of communities of

Table 7.2 Rishon le-Zion body
Middle Bronze Age to

<i>Tomb ID</i>	<i>Burial positioning</i>
<i>Tomb B19</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B37</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B51</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B104</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B121</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B134</i>	Tightly flexed on le
<i>Tomb B152</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B159</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B207</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B210</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B211</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb F4</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb F9</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B6</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B9</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B57</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B58</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B75</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B108</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B108</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B150</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B164</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed side
<i>Tomb B193</i>	Tightly flexed on ri

flexed/semi-flexed) was partially
as towards particular local fea-

n also consider the relationships
within tombs. By way of exam-
mains of three individuals; two
male aged c. 40–45 years, lying on
1, a second older adult, c. 45–50
right side in a flexed/semi-flexed
d individual was a neonate. The
iberately positioned facing one

similar spatial relationships are
his tomb contained four individ-
adults and a child c. 1 years of
on their backs with their legs
und 7–8 years, and the focus of
nd of the tomb, with their body
her burials. This individual was
three other corpses within the
(Plan 2.67). Those burying the
ately creating a spatial relation-
ological or social links present in
may be as much about choreo-
ween individuals within a tomb,
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y positioning and facial orienta-
ing or creating broader commu-
on (Levy and Kletter 2018) two
ty of left-sided (including semi-
S (13 out of 14), while burials
dominantly facing N (11 out of
handful of burials classified as
the right or left side. Neither age
rmining factor, with non-adults
ing noted in both of these two
e orientations are represented in
n the different areas of the site.
Kletter 2018, 52–53, Plan 2.67)
hose burying the dead at Rishon
uld choose whether to orientate
y to face the same direction (e.g.
What particular significance such
groups is harder to determine.
o concepts of communities of

Table 7.2 Rishon le-Zion body positioning and head orientation from a sample of Middle Bronze Age tombs.

<i>Tomb ID</i>	<i>Burial positioning</i>	<i>Age category</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Facial orientation</i>
<i>Tomb B19</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Middle adult	Indeterminate	S
<i>Tomb B37</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Middle adult	Indeterminate	S
<i>Tomb B51</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Young adult	Female	S
<i>Tomb B104</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Child	Indeterminate	E
<i>Tomb B121</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Child	Indeterminate	SW
<i>Tomb B134</i>	Tightly flexed on left side	Adult	Male	SW
<i>Tomb B152</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Middle adult	Indeterminate	S
<i>Tomb B159</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Child	Indeterminate	S
<i>Tomb B207</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Middle adult/ older adult	Indeterminate	S
<i>Tomb B210</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Young adult/ middle adult	Male	S
<i>Tomb B211</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Young adult/ middle adult	Female?	S
<i>Tomb F4</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Middle adult	Indeterminate	S
<i>Tomb F9</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on left side	Young adult	Indeterminate	S
<i>Tomb B6</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Young adult	Female	N
<i>Tomb B9</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Middle adult	Indeterminate	N
<i>Tomb B57</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Middle adult	Female	N
<i>Tomb B58</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Child	Indeterminate	N
<i>Tomb B75</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Child	Indeterminate	N
<i>Tomb B108</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Middle adult	Male	N
<i>Tomb B108</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Middle adult	Indeterminate	N
<i>Tomb B150</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Young adult/ middle adult	Male	S
<i>Tomb B164</i>	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Child/ adolescent	Indeterminate	S
<i>Tomb B193</i>	Tightly flexed on right side	Child	Indeterminate	N

(Continued)

Table 7.2 (Continued)

Tomb ID	Burial positioning	Age category	Sex	Facial orientation
Tomb B194	Tightly flexed on right side	Middle adult/ older adult	Male	N
Tomb B204	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Middle adult	Indeterminate	N
Tomb A3	Flexed/semi-flexed on right side	Adult	Indeterminate	N

All data collated from Levy and Kletter 2018. Original Tomb IDs included in table.

practice ((e.g. Chesson 2023, 63–65; Lave 2011) and see Chapter 4), with groups choosing to orientate their dead in different ways based on learnt and embodied behaviours.

What, then, might these data variations be telling us; no single positioning completely dominates the burial record over the roughly 2,000-year period under discussion here. The popularity of flexed/semi-flexed burials does, however, appear to be significant. There is likely no single explanation for this pattern; concepts of a ‘restful’ burial, the nature of the mortuary context, the importance of creating relationships and interconnections between individuals, and perhaps even the desire to maintain facial orientation may have been factors influencing those burying the dead to select this positioning.

Extended Burials: A Late-Second to First-Millennia-BCE Trend?

From at least the mid-second millennium BCE onwards, we see the growing popularity of extended burial and, conversely, the decreasing visibility of flexed/semi-flexed burials. There are oscillations (e.g. between the 700 and 600 BCE time-block) within this broad trend; however, by the Late Iron Age–Persian period, extended burials appear to be the dominant burial position recorded in the dataset (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). The identification of this pattern is not new. Scholars have previously recognised that extended supine burials were common during the LBA-IA (e.g. Abercrombie 1979, 14; Bloch-Smith 1992, 26; Braunstein 1998, 167–70; Green 2006, 244), yet there has been little discussion of this on a broader temporal and spatial scale. Furthermore, it is not only the overall numbers of flexed/semi-flexed burials that seem to drop during this period. We also see a significant decrease in the number of sites with flexed/semi-flexed burials (17 IA-PER sites as compared with 39 during the MBA-LBA (Figure 7.4)). Similar to earlier discussions, there are also no obvious spatial patterns, flexed/semi-flexed versus extended burials are not confined to a specific geographic or cultural region, even when these data are disaggregated into sub-periods (e.g. Iron Age I, II, III). Two sites within the dataset *only* show evidence for IA flexed/semi-flexed burials—Ashdod (M. Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005) and Tell Migne-Ekron (Gitin 2006)—and



Figure 7.4 Iron Age flexed vs. extended burials. Sites discussed: 1. Fawqani; 2. Tell Neir; 3. Mazar; 6. Azor; 7. Far'ah South.

here we are likely dealing with a possibly age-specific practice.

The site of Ashdod has been the focus of research revealing evidence for Iron Age burials (Shlomo 2003; M. Dothan 1977). Of IA burials have been recorded, most are extended on burial positioning. A single Iron II burial (Burial 5.2.44). Given the proportion of extended burials as indicative of the rest of the Iron Age, a factor at Tell Migne-Ekron. Iron Age (IA I) burials from the several areas (Field IV (Low VIB), data on burial positioning found from Field I, at the sun of two of these individuals were inhumation. A further flexed burial covered with storage jar she the small dataset, we have to

Category	Sex	Facial orientation
Adult/Adult	Male	N
Adult	Indeterminate	N
	Indeterminate	N

IDs included in table.

and see Chapter 4), with groups
types based on learnt and embod-

telling us; no single positioning
the roughly 2,000-year period
flexed/semi-flexed burials does, how-
single explanation for this pat-
of the mortuary context, the
connections between individu-
facial orientation may have been
select this positioning.

-BCE Trend?

Onwards, we see the growing
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However, by the Late Iron Age
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The identification of this pattern
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Crombie 1979, 14; Bloch-Smith
(6, 244), yet there has been little
spatial scale. Furthermore, it is
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I, II, III). Two sites within the
flexed/semi-flexed burials—Ashdod
Miqne-Ekron (Gitin 2006)—and

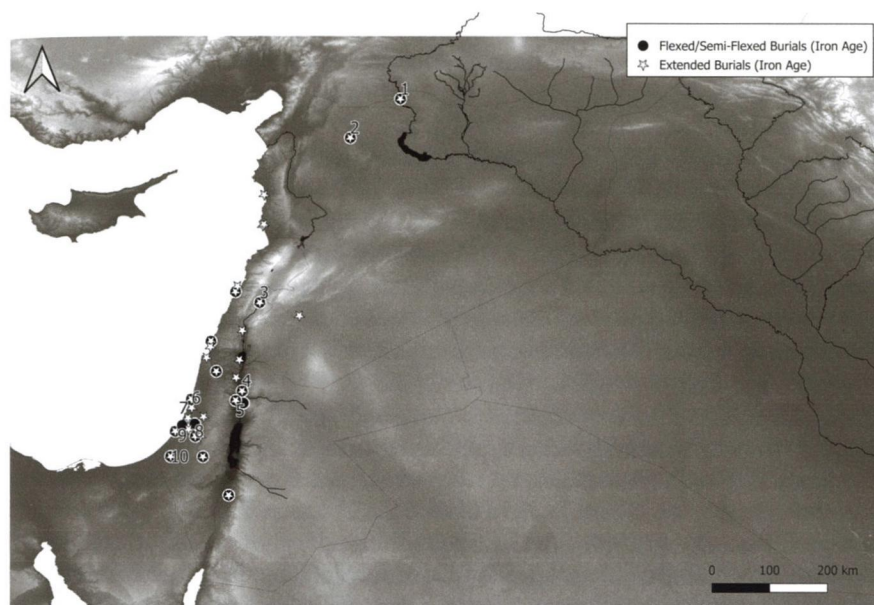


Figure 7.4 Iron Age flexed vs. extended burials. These plots include data at all certainty levels. Sites discussed in the text are labelled as follows: 1. Tell Shiukh Fawqani; 2. Tell Neirab; 3. Kamid el-Loz; 4. Tell es-Sadiyeh; 5. Tell el-Mazar; 6. Azor; 7. Yavne; 8. Tell Miqne-Ekron; 9. Ashdod; 10. Tell Far'ah South.

here we are likely dealing with a lack of data, in the case of Ashdod, and possibly an age-specific practice at Tell Miqne-Ekron.

The site of Ashdod has been extensively excavated and published, with research revealing evidence for a Late Bronze to Iron Age sequence (e.g. Ben-Shlomo 2003; M. Dothan 1971; M. Dothan and Ben-Shlomo 2005). Thousands of IA burials have been recorded from the site; however, we have limited information on burial positioning and in terms of this project, information from a single Iron II burial (Burial 5338 (Mazar and Ben-Shlomo 2005, 42–44, Figure 2.44)). Given the proportion of missing data, we cannot take this one individual as indicative of the rest of the burials from the site. Limited data are again a factor at Tell Miqne-Ekron, but here a possible pattern emerges. The Iron Age (IA I) burials from the site are all young children/infants. Found across several areas (Field IV (Lower City), Field I, Field III, and Strata VIIA and VIB), data on burial positioning are, unfortunately, limited. Three burials found from Field I, at the summit of the NE Acropolis, were recorded as flexed; two of these individuals were found in jars, while the third was an articulated inhumation. A further flexed inhumation, Burial 8175, was found in Field III covered with storage jar sherds (Gitin, Meehl, and Dothan 2006, 55). Given the small dataset, we have to be cautious in our interpretations. This example,

however, does suggest that we may be seeing specific age-dependent practices, particularly in relation to those individuals deposited within jars.

I want to consider this pattern at a broader scale, and, as just over 400 individuals (303 adults (c. 70%) versus 109 (c. 25%) non-adults) dating to the IA and Persian period have associated burial positioning and age data, there is a good dataset to play with. As already mentioned in Chapter 6, adults significantly outweigh non-adults during this period, and this pattern extends to the distribution of extended burials. A total of 276 extended individuals have associated age data, and while 43 (c. 15%) of these individuals are non-adults, the vast majority, 219 (c. 79%) individuals, are classified as adults. The estimated ages for the remaining individuals crosscut age categories.⁴ Exploring IA flexed burials alongside age data (116 individuals) shows a completely different pattern. Fifty-three individuals can be classified as non-adults (c. 46%) and 57 (c. 49%) as adults. We are thus dealing with a significant overrepresentation of non-adults in comparison to the total dataset. In other words, while non-adults are not solely buried in flexed/semi-flexed burial positions, they do seem to be preferentially positioned in this way. Conversely, adults are under-represented in the flexed/semi-flexed burial category (and slightly over-represented in the extended burial category), suggesting a slight preference towards extended burials for adults during this period. With these variations in mind, I want to explore several sites in more detail in order to see how such patterns play out at a site level.

The first site I want to explore in this section is Kamid el-Loz, and the vast Persian to Hellenistic cemetery on the eastern slopes of this site (e.g. Hachmann and Penner 1999; Heinz 2010, 2016; Heinz et al. 2001, 2006, 2010, 2011; Poppa 1978) and see Chapters 3, 6 and 9 for a discussion of the second-millennium-BCE evidence). Some of these remains can be assigned to the Hellenistic (post-332 BCE) or Pre-Hellenistic period (c. 539–332 BCE); however, many, due to a lack of artefactual material and clear stratigraphy, are simply assigned a broad sixth- to fourth-century-BCE date (e.g. Heinz 2016, 199–201, 207–9; Heinz et al. 2001, 2006, 2010, 2011). This is not to suggest that no changes are seen during this broad period. Indeed, Heinz (2016, 208–9) suggests that the use of large clay vessels to entomb the dead (adults) was a new practice during the Hellenistic. There does, however, seem to be some elements of continuity; the location of the cemetery for one.

Of the 100 burials with associated data on burial positioning and age, the vast majority were extended (78%).⁵ Coming back to the patterns discussed above, the majority of remaining individuals were classified as flexed/semi-flexed (19%). Twenty individuals from this overall dataset were identified as non-adults (including infants, children, and adolescents), and most of these individuals (60%) were found lying in a flexed/semi-flexed position. Indeed, only five (c. 26%) of the semi-flexed burials appear to be adult individuals. In this case, then, there appears to be a clear relationship between the age of the deceased individual and the selected burial positioning. Moreover, this correlation is not due to the mode of burial; non-adults, similar to adults, appear to have been buried within simple unlined pit graves (Heinz 2016, 200).

Such patterns, however, are seen at the east of the Jordan River, at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh (Green 2006, 2007; Dorrell 1991, 1993, 1994; Tubb 1998). Burials, in line with the overall pattern also highlighted by Green (2006), the 47 burials dated to the IA are classified as extended (including 14). Four were categorised as flexed, and two individuals: an infant and a child. The burial positioning of the child, in the field report it is suggested that it was flexed (Tubb, Dorrell, and Cobbing 1998). This was described by Green (2006) as a flexed position, replicating the pattern seen at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh. In contrast, Grave 441 (Green 2006, 582, 583) and Tomb 108 (Pritchard 1980, 1981) seen between age and burial positioning is a sample size issue. Expanded data shows correlations between flexed burials and depositions (Green 2006, 24). This is outlined above. If correct, the data is indicative of range of different burial practices or timing of death. Moreover, the choice that was made by the individual.

Similar uncertainties are also seen at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh. Around 90% of burials (37) are classified as extended. A preferential placement of individuals in extended burials is noted within the LB-early IA period. Semi-flexed burials derive from Tomb 133, a pit grave, dated to the LB-early IA. This was used over multiple phases. Burial positioning could not be determined for the third individual, a child, was found on the right (Braunstein 1998, 488–489). This consisted of two burials, both adults, in a flexed position. The second individual, and left leg extended (Braunstein 1998, 488–489). IA I, would also appear to date to the same period. Here burial positioning is hard to determine as on their back with slightly flexed knees. The spine and pelvis of this individual were only partially preserved.

cific age-dependent practices, sited within jars.

ale, and, as just over 400 indi- n-adults) dating to the IA and and age data, there is a good Chapter 6, adults significantly pattern extends to the distribu- individuals have associated age e non-adults, the vast majority, s. The estimated ages for the Exploring IA flexed burials pletely different pattern. Fifty- (c. 46%) and 57 (c. 49%) as epresentation of non-adults in while non-adults are not solely / do seem to be preferentially nder-represented in the flexed/ esented in the extended burial xtended burials for adults dur- vant to explore several sites in / out at a site level.

is Kamid el-Loz, and the vast es of this site ((e.g. Hachmann 2001, 2006, 2010, 2011; Poppa on of the second-millennium- e assigned to the Hellenistic 19–332 BCE); however, many, atigraphy, are simply assigned Heinz 2016, 199–201, 207–9; to suggest that no changes are 2016, 208–9) suggests that the ults) was a new practice during : some elements of continuity;

burial positioning and age, the ack to the patterns discussed were classified as flexed/semi- rall dataset were identified as olescents), and most of these /semi-flexed position. Indeed, ear to be adult individuals. In onship between the age of the ioning. Moreover, this correla- ts, similar to adults, appear to es (Heinz 2016, 200).

Such patterns, however, are not necessarily easily apparent at every site. To the east of the Jordan River, both extended and flexed burials are noted at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh (Green 2006, 2009; Pritchard 1980; Tubb 1988, 1990; Tubb and Dorrell 1991, 1993, 1994; Tubb, Dorrell, and Cobbing 1996, 1997). Extended burials, in line with the overall dataset, significantly outweigh flexed, a pattern also highlighted by Green (2006, 244) in his PhD thesis on the cemetery. Out of the 47 burials dated to the IA I-II included in this study,⁶ 40 (c. 85%) were classified as extended (including those positioned on the back and side), while only four were categorised as flexed/semi-flexed. Grave 510, a pit grave, contained two individuals: an infant and an adult. Unfortunately, no data are available on the burial positioning of the adult from this tomb, although in the original field report it is suggested that one of the individuals was lying on their back (Tubb, Dorrell, and Cobbing 1997, 72). The infant or non-adult, meanwhile, was described by Green (2006, 582, Table 7.12) as lying in a flexed/semi-flexed position, replicating the pattern from the overall dataset. Grave 105 (Upper),⁷ in contrast, contained a flexed adult individual, lying on their back, oriented W-E (Pritchard 1980, 17). In addition, flexed adult burials were also found in Grave 441 (Green 2006, 582, Table 7.12; Tubb, Dorrell, and Cobbing 1996, 37) and Tomb 108 (Pritchard 1980, 18), and thus, no obvious relationship can be seen between age and burial positioning in the examples here. This may well be a sample size issue. Expanding the analysis to the whole LBA-EIA dataset shows correlations between flexed positioning and infant jar burials/non-adult depositions (Green 2006, 245–46), thus conforming to the wider trends outlined above. If correct, the handful of flexed/semi-flexed adult burials could be indicative of range of different factors, from individual preference to the mode or timing of death. Moreover, despite being less 'typical' they still represent a choice that was made by the living on behalf of the dead.

Similar uncertainties are apparent at Tell el-Far'ah South (IA I and I-II). Around 90% of burials (37 out of 41)⁸ are extended on their backs and the preferential placement of individuals in a supine extended position is also noted within the LB-early IA assemblage (Braunstein 2011, 8). The four flexed/semi-flexed burials derive from two burial contexts: Tomb 133, and Tomb 645. Tomb 133, a pit grave, dated to the eleventh to tenth centuries BCE (IA I-II), was used over multiple phases. Three initial burials were all disturbed, and positioning could not be determined for the two adults from this level. The third individual, a child, was lying on their back with their legs flexed to the right (Braunstein 1998, 488–91). The second burial phase, meanwhile, consisted of two burials, both adults, one of whom was lying on their right side, in a flexed position. The second was lying on their back with the right leg flexed and left leg extended (Braunstein 1998, 488–91). Tomb 645, dated to the late IA I, would also appear to diverge somewhat from overall patterns, although here burial positioning is harder to discern. Identified as an adult female⁹ lying on their back with slightly flexed legs apparently "... fallen outward...", the spine and pelvis of this individual may have been missing and thus, the remains were only partially preserved (Braunstein 1998, 635–36). Unfortunately, the

original excavation report (Petrie 1930) does little to shed further light on these two tombs, and thus, neither of these examples can be used to demonstrate a direct (non)relationship between burial positioning and age.

Finally, moving forwards in time, salvage excavations in the plain north of the ancient tell at Yavne revealed evidence for a LBA tomb, as well as an IA cemetery, with 28 burials from the latter being excavated and recorded as part of excavations (Kletter and Nagar 2015). Dating to IA II, both simple and lined pit graves were documented, with most of these burials containing a single individual, although in the case of the simple pit graves, these burials were very poorly preserved. Based on the published data, the burial positioning of 16 individuals could be determined, all of which were lying in a supine position with extended legs. At least 80% of the individuals who could be biologically aged (26 individuals) were identified as adults, with only five non-adults¹⁰ being documented from the site (Kletter and Nagar 2015, 7, Table 1).

Despite this limited assemblage, there appears to be an association between adults and extended burials, although a correlation between non-adults and flexed positioning is not present in this case. Instead, a decision seems to have been made to position corpses, irrespective of age, in the same way, perhaps reflecting a desire to create a delimited and interconnected community in death. Alternatively, we can come back to the ages of these non-adults, who were estimated to be between 10 and 19 years (Kletter and Nagar 2015, 7, Table 1). Given my discussions in the previous chapter, perhaps these individuals were not even considered as non-adults. Finally, it is also worth noting that the lined pit graves at Yavne (all roughly similar in size, although construction techniques vary) seem to offer a relatively snug fit for the individuals interred within (e.g. Tomb 219 (Kletter and Nagar 2015, 9, Figure 11, Plan 2)). A similar pattern is also present at the site of Azor, where an IA brick lined tomb (D75) is described as having held a biologically sexed female, in a supine extended position and whose skeletal remains fit the frame of the tomb "... in an exact manner ... touching the inner faces of the bricks" (Ben-Shlomo 2008, 35, Figure 7). Tomb form and body positioning then seem to have been potentially interrelated.

As this handful of examples demonstrate, the popularity of extended burials in the first (and late second) millennium BCE is a pattern that can also be identified at both regional and localised site levels. The correlations between non-adults and flexed burials, and to some extent adults and extended positioning, are harder to detect in these cases, although this may be due to sample size and lack of data. Leaving aside age-dependent influences (although these obviously played a role at some sites (e.g. Kamid-el-Loz)), how then might we explain the general shift from flexed to extended burials towards the end of the second millennium BCE?

One possibility raised by some of the examples discussed here is the role of Egyptian influence. As discussed in Chapter 3, both Tell Far'ah South and Tell es-Sa'idiyeh provide clear evidence of Egyptian or Egyptianising traditions and practices. In part, then, we can perhaps see the increasing preference for

extended burial positioning, especially of the adoption and emulation of the body (see Chapter 8 for further discussion of the individuals in Tombs 133 and 134) as a rejection of such practices found at sites within the Egyptian former we should, as Bunimovitch, interactions as complex "... i dead were making active choices in a certain way.

While the total number of burials increase from the mid-late second millennium period that we see the proportion of extended burials rise to over 70%. Furthermore, during this period we have phases during which burial practices vary. These variations can perhaps be seen as positioning playing an active role in the identity at both local and regional levels.

Whether associated with Egyptian influence or whether the type of body that was buried in the netherworld/afterlife was being negotiated in the present. As discussed in Chapter 3, the increase in cremation practices during the Iron Age may be the two trends, which have the potential to suggest that they represent a re-interpretation of death. As Robb (2016, xi) has argued: "... highly differentiated practices as a means of constituting high status."

If we bring these patterns into the Iron Age, control could be seen as emerging. This emphasis may have been placed on the representation of the human form, and therefore, the integral and (all) aspects of the body, created by an extended positioning in the tomb (e.g. Yavne and Azor) and tomb furniture (see Chapter 4). Whether or not this speaks to a broader trend is discussed in Chapters 8 and 9. Before I want to very briefly consider broader patterns. More specifically, trends c. 700–600 BCE (Figure 1) are able to tell us about localised practices.

The deviation observed between the actual nature of the available data.

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s can be used to demonstrate a
ning and age.

excavations in the plain north of
a LBA tomb, as well as an IA
excavated and recorded as part
ting to IA II, both simple and
f these burials containing a sin-
ple pit graves, these burials were
l data, the burial positioning of
h were lying in a supine position
duals who could be biologically
with only five non-adults¹⁰ being
2015, 7, Table 1).

urs to be an association between
elation between non-adults and
instead, a decision seems to have
age, in the same way, perhaps
connected community in death.
of these non-adults, who were
ter and Nagar 2015, 7, Table 1).
perhaps these individuals were
also worth noting that the lined
ze, although construction tech-
or the individuals interred within
gure 11, Plan 2)). A similar pat-
an IA brick lined tomb (D75) is
male, in a supine extended posi-
f the tomb "... in an exact man-
Ben-Shlomo 2008, 35, Figure 7).
em to have been potentially

he popularity of extended buri-
CE is a pattern that can also be
levels. The correlations between
tent adults and extended posi-
ough this may be due to sample
dependent influences (although
e.g. Kamid-el-Loz)), how then
to extended burials towards the

ples discussed here is the role of
both Tell Far'ah South and Tell
ian or Egyptianising traditions
ee the increasing preference for

extended burial positioning, especially for adult burials, as a broader reflection of the adoption and emulation of Egyptian customs and beliefs surrounding the body (see Chapter 8 for further discussion). The differential positioning of the individuals in Tombs 133 and 645 at Tell el-Far'ah South could even be read as a rejection of such influences. Such trends, however, are not solely found at sites within the Egyptian sphere (i.e. Yavne). Moreover, even at the former we should, as Bunimovitz (2019, 276) has suggested, consider these interactions as complex "... intercultural encounters...". Those burying the dead were making active choices to position and arrange the corpse(s) in a certain way.

While the total number and proportion of sites with extended burials increase from the mid-late second millennium BCE, it is not until the Persian period that we see the proportional percentage of extended burials reaching over 70%. Furthermore, during the nearly one thousand years preceding this, we have phases during which flexed burials seem to re-emerge in popularity. These variations can perhaps be seen as an indication of burial practices and positioning playing an active role in the construction and expression of identity at both local and regional levels.

Whether associated with Egyptian influence or not, however, I do wonder whether the type of body that was envisaged as necessary for burial and the netherworld/afterlife was beginning to shift during the later second millennium. As discussed in Chapter 5, it is no coincidence that we see a florescence in cremation practices during this same broad period. This is not to compound the two trends, which have their own unique temporal and spatial parameters, but instead suggest that they may be indicative of broader processes of experimentation and re-interpretation of the role the human body could play in death. As Robb (2016, xi) has argued in relation to Late Bronze Age Greece, "... highly differentiated practices ... may underlie the importance of burials as a means of constituting highly local identities".

If we bring these patterns into conversation, ideas of containment and control could be seen as emerging concerns. Whether inhumed or cremated, emphasis may have been placed on the manipulation of the decay and transformation of the human form, its timing and display. Within inhumation burials, therefore, the integral and (albeit temporary) surviving body, possibly accentuated by an extended positioning (at both local and regional levels), tightly fitting tomb (e.g. Yavne and Azor), and/or the placement or scarcity of goods and tomb furniture (see Chapter 8) may have been the primary focus. Whether or not this speaks to a broader shift in belief systems is something I will return to in Chapters 8 and 9. Before bringing this section to its conclusion, however, I want to very briefly consider a handful of sites which do not fall within the broader patterns. More specifically, I want to zoom into the oscillation in trends c. 700–600 BCE (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). What might this discontinuity be able to tell us about localised and differential practices?

The deviation observed between 700 and 600 BCE is partly driven by the nature of the available data. One of the first challenges is the relatively sparse

number of period specific records we have for burial positioning dating to the latter half of the Iron Age. In addition to generic IA (e.g. 1200–550 BCE) records, which can distort overall trends, the time-block 700–600 BCE incorporates materials categorised as dating to IA II–III (1000–550 BCE), IA III (700–550 BCE) and IA III–PER (700–330 BCE). Only a handful of sites have yielded definitive burial position data dated to these periods (nine sites in total), and we are thus dealing with a small set of data. Our general understanding of the Iron Age III (IIC) to the Persian period is also relatively poorly developed, and despite textual references attesting to the impact of the Iron Age empires in the Levant (e.g. Lehmann 2013, 842; Porter 2019, 331–34; Steiner 2013, 677), archaeological evidence for this period is variable. In spite of these challenges, there are local traditions and variations that we may be able to identify. These again are not confined to one region of Levant, although different patterns and trends may be visible across north and south.

The cemetery of Tell Shiukh Fawqani, located on the eastern bank of the river Euphrates, near the modern border between Turkey and Syria, has revealed evidence for both Iron Age inhumation burials (Luciani 2005) as well as an extensive cremation cemetery (al-Bahloul, Barro, and d'Alfonso 2005; Tenu 2007, 2009), with the latter very tentatively linked to Aramean practices (Tenu 2009). Out of the fourteen inhumation burials documented at this site dating to the Iron Age IIIB–Persian period (sixth to fifth centuries BCE), only two were identified as extended burials, nine were flexed/semi-flexed burials, while three were indeterminate (Luciani 2005, 782, Table 1). Although only a small dataset, this example seems to show a pattern that is in direct contrast to the rest of the IA data discussed so far.

Staying within the northern Levant, around 6km from Aleppo, the site of Tell Neirab/Tell Nayrab, was excavated in the early twentieth century, following the discovery of a stone sarcophagus and two funerary stelae (Abel and Barrois 1928; Carrière and Barrois 1927a, 1927b). Mentioned in Neo-Assyrian texts (Alstola 2019, 237), the partial excavations carried out at the site yielded evidence for 73 graves, only a small proportion of which were recorded in detail (Nunn 2000, 436–37). Like Tell Shiukh Fawqani, this site broadly dates to the sixth to fifth centuries BCE.¹¹ Several burials have assigned more precise dates (e.g. Persian), while the majority are very difficult to pin down to a specific period (Nunn 2000, 436), and have therefore been classified as Iron Age III–PER for the purposes of this research. The majority of individuals for which information about burial positioning is available seem to have been placed on their left side in a flexed/semi-flexed position, although some extended burials are also noted (e.g. Tomb 3 (Carrière and Barrois 1927a, 136)).

The form of burials at Tell Neirab varies, with pit graves (some of which were covered with large jars), jar burials, and sarcophagi all being attested from the site (Abel and Barrois 1928; Carrière and Barrois 1927a, 1927b). There is no clear pattern between burial positioning and burial form. Both extended and flexed/semi-flexed burials are found in association with pits covered with jars, for example, although in several cases it might be suggested that the size

of the burial container dictated positioning. The individual within raised knees, while the individual legs, a measure necessary in a container (Nunn 2000, 437). We can also consider the identity of the basalt sarcophagi, found at the site, dated with two funerary stelae dedicated to Sin-zero-ibni and Sin-zero-ibni. Written in Aramaic, these stelae mark the tombs and/or erected stelae.

Although both of these sites represent populations, I do not mean to suggest particular Aramean phenomena are universal, and easily discernible. They never have existed. Thinking back to el-Far'ah South, however, where different groups and their variations or departures from the norm at Fawqani, differential burial practices alongside one another and throughout the Levant during this period of kingdoms, albeit at times uncertain (e.g. Mazzoni 2013; Steiner 2013 references), diversity is perhaps a more accurate description of the traditions and practises throughout the Iron Age within this broad region. At Fawqani, we may be seeing local variations, a shot of the complex ways in which burial practices as a means of expression.

Moving further south, we see a slightly different way, perhaps. In the late 1970s, investigations at Tell Yassine revealed over 80 graves dating to the Iron Age. The types of burial seem to have been limited to unlined pits, a jar burial, and a sarcophagus. Of interest for our discussions here are the semi-flexed and extended burials. Yassine (1984, 3–6), 29 individuals were identified as flexed (crouched). The evidence is the spatial clustering of the burials (Figure 1), which does not show a clear pattern as well as the apparent clear orientation. 'Males', according to the positions (i.e. extended) and

of burial positioning dating to the generic IA (e.g. 1200–550 BCE) time-block 700–600 BCE incorporates IA II–III (1000–550 BCE), IA III (550–500 BCE). Only a handful of sites have dated to these periods (nine sites in the Levant set of data). Our general understanding of the Iron Age period is also relatively poorly informed, owing to the impact of the Iron Age collapse (Porter 2013, 842; Porter 2019, 331–34; Porter 2020). In spite of this, the period is variable. In spite of the complexity and variations that we may be seeing, the period is one region of Levant, although the period crosses north and south.

Located on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, between Turkey and Syria, has been identified as a burial site (Luciani 2005) as well as a burial site (Barrois 2005; Porter 2013, 842; Porter 2019, 331–34; Porter 2020). Burials documented at this site (sixth to fifth centuries BCE), only a few were flexed/semi-flexed burials, (Porter 2013, 842; Porter 2019, 331–34; Porter 2020, Table 1). Although only a few burials, the pattern that is in direct contrast to

located 6 km from Aleppo, the site of Tell el-Far'ah South, following the discovery of funerary stelae (Abel and Barrois 1927a, 1927b) mentioned in Neo-Assyrian texts carried out at the site yielded evidence of which were recorded in detail (Abel and Barrois 1927a, 1927b). This site broadly dates to the Iron Age III, although some extended burials have been assigned more precise dates (Abel and Barrois 1927a, 1927b). It is difficult to pin down to a specific period, but the majority of individuals for which burials have been placed on the site, although some extended burials have been documented (Barrois 1927a, 136)).

Alongside the pit graves (some of which are sarcophagi all being attested from the Iron Age III (Barrois 1927a, 1927b). There is a clear correlation between burial form and burial form. Both extended burials and pits covered with pits might be suggested that the size

of the burial container dictated or at least influenced the chosen burial positioning. The individual within Sarcophagus 2, for example, was found with raised knees, while the individual in Sarcophagus 53 seems to have had flexed legs, a measure necessary in order for this individual to fit within the burial container (Nunn 2000, 437). Alongside issues of the size and burial form, we can also consider the identity of those burying their dead at Neirab. The large basalt sarcophagi, found at the site in the late nineteenth century, was associated with two funerary stelae, found a short distance from the sarcophagus, dedicated to Sin-zera-ibni and Siḡabbar, both priests of Šahr at Neirab. Written in Aramaic, these stelae contain warnings against violations to the tombs and/or erected stelae.

Although both of these sites show links with potential Aramaic speaking populations, I do not mean to suggest that flexed or semi-flexed burials were a particular Aramean phenomenon. As Tenu (2009) discusses, a clearly discrete, universal, and easily discernible 'Aramean' cultural identity or package may never have existed. Thinking back to the examples of Tell es-Sa'idiyeh and Tell el-Far'ah South, however, what I do think is interesting is that it is often in regions where different groups, entities and powers were interacting that we see variations or departures from overall trends.¹² At Neirab and Tell Shiukh Fawqani, differential burial positionings, as well as practices, can be identified alongside one another and throughout the Iron Age. Given our understanding of the Levant during this period as a mosaic of fragmented states, polities, and kingdoms, albeit at times under the influence and control of imperial powers (e.g. Mazzoni 2013; Steiner 2013 and see Chapter 3 for further discussion and references), diversity is perhaps key. A reflection of the range of beliefs, localised traditions and practises that may have existed for much of the first millennium BCE within this broad region. Thus, at both Neirab and Tell Shiukh Fawqani, we may be seeing local intersectional expressions of identity. A snapshot of the complex ways in which ancient groups used (and did not use) burial practices as a means of expression and communication.

Moving further south, we can see such localised traditions being utilised in a slightly different way, perhaps by way of internal differentiation. Excavated in the late 1970s, investigations on Cemetery Mound A at Tell el-Mazar revealed over 80 graves dating to the late IA III–PER period.¹³ Various modes of burial seem to have been employed at this site, including both lined and unlined pits, a jar burial, and a larnax (bathtub) burial (Yassine 1984, 4–7). Of interest for our discussions here, however, is the high proportion of both flexed/semi-flexed and extended burials documented from this site. According to Yassine (1984, 3–6), 29 individuals were identified as extended burials and 32 were identified as flexed (crouched). Perhaps the most tantalising aspect of this evidence is the spatial clustering of flexed versus extended burials (Yassine 1984, Figure 1), which does suggest some degree of group differentiation, as well as the apparent clear correlation between gender identity and burial positioning. 'Males', according to Yassine (1984, 11), were found in stretched positions (i.e. extended) and 'females' in a crouching position (i.e. flexed/

semi-flexed). This interpretation has also been cited in recent synthetic papers (e.g. Porter 2019, 334).

While certainly an intriguing pattern, the criteria used by the original excavator to determine biological sex and gender needs to be examined further. Although cautioning about the risks of identifying sex based on associated grave goods, females were thought to be easily identifiable due to their associations with a "... rich assortment of feminine articles..." (Yassine 1984, 8). In this case, however, around 30% of the anthropological biological sex data did not match the gender assigned by Yassine (1984, 8), opening a potential space to reconsider such binary patterns and/or consider individuals whose biological sex did not necessarily conform to their lived (or deceased) gender experience.

When we drill down into the data, further variations and ambiguities emerge. By way of example, Grave 17 contained an adult individual orientated E-W. They lay on their left side, in an extended position. The departure from an extended dorsal positioning was interpreted as relating to the trauma this individual had suffered in life. Indeed, the skeletal remains from Grave 17 provided a unique opportunity for determining the apparent cause of death; a bronze rod (referred to as an arrowhead in the anthropological report) penetrating the skull. The side positioning, it was argued, prevented the rod being driven further into the skull (Disi, Henke, and Wahl 1983, 528; Yassine 1984, 26–27). Besides the bronze rod/arrowhead the individual appears to have been 'dressed' for the grave and was associated with a fibula, scarab, and silver finger ring (Yassine 1984, 26–27). While the archaeologists noted the robusticity of the skeletal remains, osteological examination suggested this individual was aged c. 25–30 years and "most probably female" based on diagnostic sexual features apparent in the pelvis (Disi, Henke, and Wahl 1983, 528). While deeper analysis of this burial would necessitate a re-examination of the remains, it serves as a useful reminder of the potential intersecting identities and life (and death) experiences that can shape and influence mortuary behaviours. Thus, while there does seem to be some correlation between burial positioning, spatial patterning, and the types of goods being deposited within the graves at Tell el-Mazar, a degree of experimentation, variation, and ambiguity is also present.

The case studies discussed here point towards complex local and regional expressions. Whether linked to emerging concerns surrounding preservation and/or transformation, ideas of ethnicity or emulation, or intersections between age, gender, biological sex, status or lived experiences, from the end of the second millennium BCE onwards we would appear to be dealing with a period of experimentation and reconfiguration, at least partly centred on the placement and manipulation of the human body in death.

Tightly Flexed Burials: Interpreting a Small Dataset

Before concluding this chapter with a final case study, I want to return to the topic of tightly flexed burials. Generally accounting for less than 10% of definite body positions in every 100-year time-block, distinguishing between flexed

and tightly flexed (often referred to as foetal) burial positions in extremely rare and accurate descriptions (Knüsel 2014, 39). These positions are significantly under-represented in the archaeological record, particularly in the dated chronological information from Byblos. Setting these data aside for the moment, the difference between tightly flexed burial positions and the context.

Bearing in mind Ilan's (1992) argument that, by picking the foetal position, it is not possible to date accurately (Knüsel 2014, 39). This is particularly true for infants and non-adults to be buried in this position. In this case. Excluding Byblos, there is no evidence for this position which can be assigned to a date (with varying levels of certainty). Out of the dated age data, again with different levels of certainty, broken down into a range of age groups, the burial of a foetus. When we consider non-adult (the latter including infants and adults), adults (c. 62%) predominate. To re-assign adolescents to an adult category, the percentage of older individuals increases.

Tightly flexed burials have been found in this project, ranging in date from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Of these, six sites have evidence for this position. Of these seven sites have yielded only one example. In this set, here by way of a handful of examples, different explanations for this burial position.

Starting with the Bronze Age, the individual T. 5040A was identified as a tightly flexed individual in the eastern walls of the palace, a small room identified as 'him' by Gonen (1992, 1993). The sex is unclear. Of interest for my argument is that this structure was not specifically identified as an individual to be positioned in this way. What is worth noting is that in the pharaonic period (T. 361), the lower half of this position was identified, whether by excavation or prior to excavation. Several other of the tightly flexed burials.

Skeleton A, a tightly flexed individual, for example, was found alongside a cist grave. Although the body was not identified as Skeleton B, possibly disarticulated, the skeleton was reconstructed as an adult male. The position of the wall of the burial. According

ant (4500–550 BCE)

1 cited in recent synthetic papers

criteria used by the original excavation needs to be examined further. Identifying sex based on associated identifiable due to their associated articles..." (Yassine 1984, 8). In anthropological biological sex data did (1984, 8), opening a potential space to consider individuals whose biological (or deceased) gender experience. Further variations and ambiguities needed an adult individual orientated in a defined position. The departure from the expected as relating to the trauma this skeletal remains from Grave 17 pointing to the apparent cause of death; as argued in the anthropological report) pene- as argued, prevented the rod being found (Wahl 1983, 528; Yassine 1984, 8). The individual appears to have been buried with a fibula, scarab, and silver finger ring. Archaeologists noted the robusticity of the skeleton suggested this individual was "female" based on diagnostic sexual characteristics (Wahl 1983, 528). While deeper analysis and re-examination of the remains, it is the intersection of identities and life (and the influence mortuary behaviours. Thus, the intersection between burial positioning, space being deposited within the graves at Tell el-Faraj, and ambiguity is also present. The intersection towards complex local and regional concerns surrounding preservation, identity or emulation, or intersections of lived experiences, from the end of the world would appear to be dealing with a situation, at least partly centred on the human body in death.

dataset

nal case study, I want to return to the accounting for less than 10% of the female block, distinguishing between flexed

and tightly flexed (often referred to as contracted/crouched in the literature) burial positions in extremely difficult, largely due to a lack of standardisation and accurate descriptions (Knüsel 2014, 39). As such, this dataset may be significantly under-represented. Out of the 478 tightly flexed burials with associated chronological information, 406 of these individuals are from the site of Byblos. Setting these data aside, briefly, it is worth considering the relationship between tightly flexed burial positioning and factors such as age and burial context.

Bearing in mind Ilan's (1995, 135) interpretation of flexed burials as mimicking the foetal position, it is actually only a tightly flexed burial that does so accurately (Knüsel 2014, 39). Thus, we might expect a higher proportion of infants and non-adults to be buried in this position. This is not, however, the case. Excluding Byblos, there are 72 dateable tightly flexed burials (i.e. burials which can be assigned to a defined chronological period, albeit with differing levels of certainty). Out of these burials, c. 85% (63 individuals) have associated age data, again with differing levels of certainty. These individuals can be broken down into a range of different age categories from older adults to the burial of a foetus. When we divide this group, very generically, into adult vs. non-adult (the latter including adolescents but excluding adolescents/young adults), adults (c. 62%) predominate. If, as in the previous chapter we were to re-assign adolescents to an adult category, this would simply increase the overall percentage of older individuals buried in a tightly flexed position.

Tightly flexed burials have been found at 17 sites recorded as part of this project, ranging in date from the fifth/fourth to the first millennia BCE. Out of these, six sites have evidence for more than three tightly flexed burials, while seven sites have yielded only one tightly flexed burial. Although a small dataset, here by way of a handful of examples, I want to explore a couple of different explanations for this burial positioning (Figure 7.5).

Starting with the Bronze Age burials from the site of Megiddo, burial T. 5040A was identified as a tightly flexed individual. Found outside the southern walls of the palace, a small structure contained an adult individual, referred to as 'him' by Gonen (1992, 106) although the biological sex of this individual is unclear. Of interest for my discussions here, however, is the suggestion that this structure was not specifically designed for burial, thus requiring for the individual to be positioned with their legs tucked underneath their body. Also worth noting is that in the photo of the burial provided by Loud (1948, Figure 361), the lower half of this individual appears to be disturbed, although whether by excavation or prior to this is unclear. Space may also be a factor in several other of the tightly flexed burials documented by this project.

Skeleton A, a tightly flexed burial from Tomb NE8 at Tiwal esh-Sharqi, for example, was found alongside a second individual within a stone lined pit or cist grave. Although the bodies were poorly preserved and, in the case of Skeleton B, possibly disarticulated, it was suggested that Skeleton A could be reconstructed as an adult male in a tightly flexed position against the western wall of the burial. According to the anthropological report, Skeleton A was

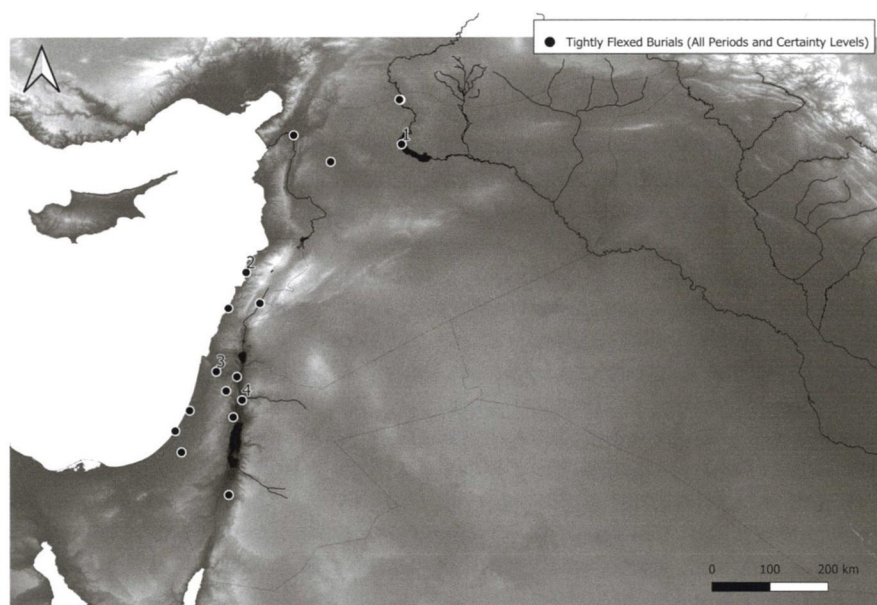


Figure 7.5 Tightly flexed burials recorded by the project. This plot includes sites ranging in date from the Late Chalcolithic to the Iron Age at all certainty levels. Sites mentioned in the text are labelled as follows: 1. Selenkahiye; 2. Byblos; 3. Megiddo; 4. Tiwal esh-Sharqi.

estimated to be c. $1.70 \text{ m} \pm 0.879 \text{ m}$ in stature. Space, therefore, may play a partial role here; the grave, according to the figures in the original report, was little over 1m in width (at its widest part) and a little over 2 m in length, only allowing c. 30cm of clearance (Tubb 1990, 17–18, Figure 11).

Again, only one tightly flexed burial was recorded from the site of Selenkahiye, found within Tomb Q, an intramural shaft tomb located beneath the floor of Room R26 (Meijer and van Loon 2001, 59). Originally designated as a second chamber of R26 in Tomb 1, it was suggested that the carving of Tomb Q took place either due to the original larger chamber (R26) being full, or alternatively due to the lower status of this individual. The chamber contained a single skeleton, identified as a female, lying in a very tightly flexed position on their right side, with their face oriented towards the entrance (van Loon and Meijer 2001, 175). The chamber itself was only slightly larger than the shaft, only 1m deep and 1.15m in height, of which, according to the report, 30cm was taken up by the blocking (brick and mud plaster) of the tomb. Although no original plans are included in the published report, from the description relatively little space was available for this burial, although some effort seems to have been made to lay a flooring for the tomb (van Loon and Meijer 2001, 175). Although no stratigraphic evidence exists to determine which chamber was built first, the effort involved in digging the larger chamber

does raise several questions. M the tightly flexed burial and, if to expend additional effort to Meijer's hypothesis that this i into this decision and the final

It would be remiss to concl already discussed, the vast ma from this site, attesting to the s the dedicated work by Artin (which had been previously bu 2,097 burial contexts dating to ary jars. Unfortunately, huma 63% of the jar burials, and we this site; many of the remains excavation (Artin 2008, 81, 20 collated burial positioning da vast majority was indetermin Table 36) 'Hyper-contracté' a tightly flexed category, while flexed/semi-flexed. The catego in working with a variety of c Despite this, it would appear t as burials in a 'foetal' positio at 21% (Artin 2009, 82, 2010, positioning are discounted, c.

The placement of adult ir burial at Byblos would gener case, therefore, the chosen mo burial positioning. Rather th should consider the burial m decision-making process. If inappropriate, an alternate m cussed in Chapter 3, simple j from the same broad period and despite hopes that simila there have, as yet, been no dis Burials at this site underline tl evolution of burial practices, deliberate rejection of, broa regions (e.g. Bradbury and Pl

As I have so far demonstr nal and excavated burial posi cal record. From the size ar practices and variations at bo for some individuals, burial j



project. This plot includes sites ranging from the Iron Age at all certainty levels. The sites included are as follows: 1. Selenkahiye; 2. Byblos;

ture. Space, therefore, may play a role in the figures in the original report, was found to be a little over 2 m in length, only 1.7–1.8 m (Figure 11).

was recorded from the site of a subterranean shaft tomb located beneath the site (van Loon 2001, 59). Originally designated as a 'foetal' position, it was suggested that the carving of a larger chamber (R26) being full, this individual. The chamber contained a female, lying in a very tightly flexed position, oriented towards the entrance (van Loon 2001, 59). The chamber itself was only slightly larger than the body, of which, according to the report, was made of brick and mud plaster) of the tomb. In the published report, from the evidence available for this burial, although some evidence exists to determine the reasons for the tomb (van Loon and Meijer 2001, 59). The evidence exists to determine the reasons for the tomb (van Loon and Meijer 2001, 59). The evidence exists to determine the reasons for the tomb (van Loon and Meijer 2001, 59).

does raise several questions. Might the small size of Tomb Q have necessitated the tightly flexed burial and, if this is the case, why was the decision made not to expend additional effort to dig a larger chamber? Could van Loon's and Meijer's hypothesis that this individual was considered 'inferior' have played into this decision and the final burial position selected for this individual?

It would be remiss to conclude this section without mentioning Byblos. As already discussed, the vast majority (c. 85%) of tightly flexed individuals are from this site, attesting to the sheer number of burials, over 2,000 in total, and the dedicated work by Artin (2009, 2010) to re-interrogate and publish data which had been previously buried in the Fonds Dunand archives. Out of the 2,097 burial contexts dating to the fourth millennium BCE, 2,059 were funerary jars. Unfortunately, human remains were only documented from around 63% of the jar burials, and we have relatively little anthropological data from this site; many of the remains were either destroyed during or lost following excavation (Artin 2008, 81, 2010, 6). Despite these challenges, Artin (2009, 82) collated burial positioning data for 1,411 individuals; the positioning of the vast majority was indeterminate (68%). For this research, Artin's (2009, 82, Table 36) 'Hyper-contracté' and 'Contracté' categories were combined in a tightly flexed category, while burials classified as 'Fléchi' were recorded as flexed/semi-flexed. The categorisations used here again highlight the difficulties in working with a variety of diverse sources, all using different terminologies. Despite this, it would appear that tightly flexed burials, also described by Artin as burials in a 'foetal' position, represent the largest proportion of individuals at 21% (Artin 2009, 82, 2010, 6, 8, Figure 14) or, if burials with indeterminate positioning are discounted, c. 67%.

The placement of adult individuals within the storage jars employed for burial at Byblos would generally have led to some degree of flexion. In this case, therefore, the chosen mode of burial was clearly influential in terms of the burial positioning. Rather than the jars necessitating flexion, however, we should consider the burial mode and burial positioning as part of the same decision-making process. If flexed or tightly flexed burials were considered inappropriate, an alternate mode of burial could have been selected. As discussed in Chapter 3, simple pit graves and burial caves are also documented from the same broad period and area. Byblos is, in many ways, a unique site, and despite hopes that similar deposits may exist in the area (Artin 2008, 85), there have, as yet, been no discoveries to rival this vast mortuary assemblage.¹⁴ Burials at this site underline the potential for the stark local differentiation and evolution of burial practices, and the apparent isolation from, or possibly even deliberate rejection of, broader sociocultural phenomena within particular regions (e.g. Bradbury and Philip 2017, 89–90; Greenberg 2019, 42).

As I have so far demonstrated, a range of factors can affect both the original and excavated burial positioning of any individual within the archaeological record. From the size and shape of a burial context, to age-dependent practices and variations at both regional and intra-site level. At some sites and for some individuals, burial positioning in conjunction with a range of other

elements seems to have played a key role in the construction and communication of identity. Burial positioning could perhaps even have been a way of rejecting or adapting external traditions and practices. It is to the notion of differentiation, experimentation, and improvisation, however, that I now wish to turn, albeit in association with a particular, and somewhat unusual, burial positioning identified at second-millennium-BCE sites across the Levant.

Splayed Burials: A Short Case Study

Although constituting only a very small proportion of the recorded burial positions (40 individuals in total from 13 sites/burial areas), I want to end this chapter by turning our attention to a burial position often referred to in the literature as splayed or tightly flexed (see Figure 7.2). As Knüsel (2014, 30) has noted, the terminologies used for this positioning are often very varied, although are best described as an individual with laterally rotated lower limbs, flexed at the hip and knee. Noted at different sites and dating to a range of different periods (Table 7.2), relatively little consideration or detailed analysis has focused on how (and why) the individuals found or excavated in this position might have originally been placed in the grave. Positioned in something akin to a reclining bound angle pose or reclined cobbler's pose in Yoga, for the present study, the term 'splayed burial' is used rather than 'flexed', highlighting an observed splaying out of the femora from the midline, left and right, and variably flexed knees. The generic term splayed is perhaps even misleading here, with variations being seen within the known archaeological assemblage (Figure 7.6; Table 7.3); termed for my purposes here as tightly (femora splayed left to right from the midline and knees flexed at an acute angle i.e. less than 90 degrees), openly (femora splayed left to right from the midline and knees flexed at roughly a right angle) and loosely splayed (femora splayed left to right from the midline and knees flexed at an obtuse angle i.e. more than 90 degrees).

One of the most comprehensive analyses of a splayed burial position published to date is the study of an Epipalaeolithic burial from the site of 'Ayn Qasiyya, Jordan ((Richter et al. 2010) see Figure 7.6). Excavations at this site revealed a semi-articulated adult in an 'unusual' burial position; with tightly flexed knees and a lateral extension, left to right, of the femoral shafts. Based on a detailed taphonomic and contextual analysis of both the skeletal remains and burial context, the authors suggested that the lateral rotation of the legs occurred following deposition, although likely shortly after interment due to taphonomic processes.¹⁵ The authors do, however, note that there is a possibility that the observed position of the fibulae, tarsals, and metatarsals could also represent post-depositional displacement from a tightly flexed position, i.e. one in which the legs may originally have been splayed (Richter et al. 2010, 327–31).

Dated to nearly 15,000 years later, the EB I burial from Tomb A at Jericho, shows evidence for visually similar practices. A closer examination, however, suggests that this burial positioning resulted from a very different series of



Figure 7.6 Schematic examples of splayed burial positions documented from the Levant, presented in order facilitating comparison. Top: Tightly Splayed (top left) and Openly Splayed (bottom right) (after Tufnell 1962, Figure 5).

processes (Polcaro 2005, 55). Garstang (1932, plate xvi), in the published materials, with pottery vessels found within a splayed position in the 59–60) identified the burial crossed, although, this individual rather than legs. Given the (Garstang 1932, plate xvi), in

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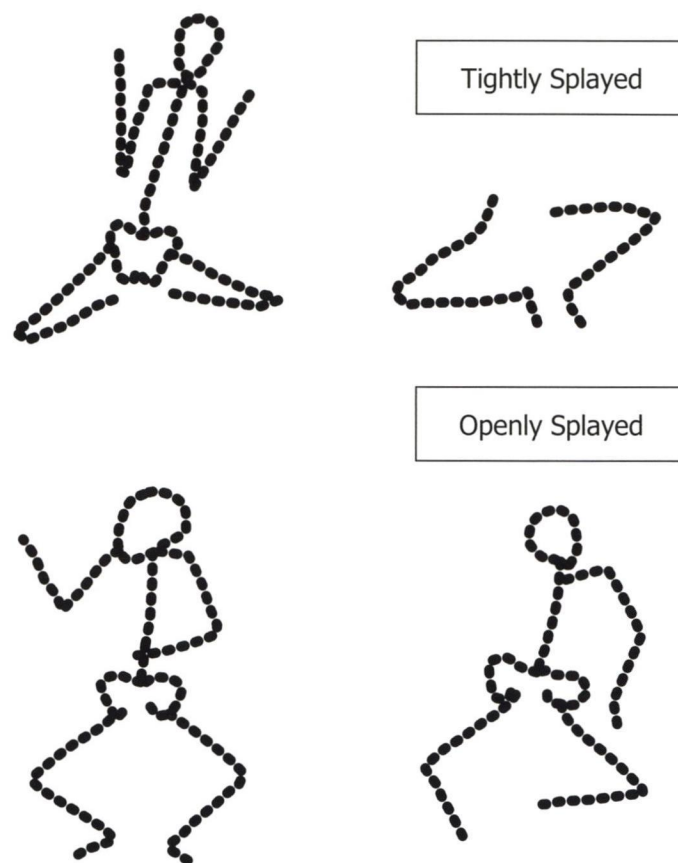


Figure 7.6 Schematic examples of openly and tightly 'Splayed' burial positions documented from the Levant. These have been re-drawn and significantly simplified in order facilitate easy comparison between different positionings. Tightly Splayed (top row based on left: Jericho, Tomb A (after Garstang 1932, plate xvi) and right: 'Ayn Qasiyya (after Richter et al. 2010, Figure 4)) and Openly Splayed (bottom row based on left: Tell el-Ajjul Tomb 1417 (after Tufnell 1962, Figure 2) and right: Jericho Tomb HAR (after Kenyon 1981, Figure 5)).

processes (Polcaro 2005, 59–60). Originally excavated and published by Garstang (1932, plate xvi), Inhumation 24 was not specifically remarked upon in the published materials, which are mostly dedicated to a discussion of the pottery vessels found within the tomb. This burial, however, is clearly depicted in a splayed position in the plates accompanying this report. Polcaro (2005, 59–60) identified the burial as a male,¹⁶ lying on their back with their legs crossed, although, this individual is better described as having crossed ankles, rather than legs. Given the very schematic plans provided in the original report (Garstang 1932, plate xvi), it is, unfortunately, impossible to tell whether this

Table 7.3 'Splayed' burial positions documented from the Levant (Early Bronze Age–Persian period). Those with blank certainties are records with 'definitive' certainty.

<i>Site name</i>	<i>Body position</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Certainty</i>	<i>Burial type</i>	<i>MNI from burial context</i>	<i>Biological sex</i>	<i>Biological age</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Jericho	Legs tightly splayed on back	EB I		Multiple	300 to 500	Unclassified	Unclassified	Polcaro 2005
Jericho	Legs tightly splayed on back	EB IV	Possible	Single or multiple	1 to 2	Male/ unclassified	Middle adult	Kenyon 1965/Shafiq 2010
Ugarit	Legs openly splayed on back	EB IV-MB I		Single	1	Female (possible)	Adult (possible)	Schaeffer 1949
Jericho	Legs loosely splayed on back	MBA	Probable	Multiple	9	Unclassified	Child	Kenyon 1960
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA	Probable	Multiple	6	Male (possible)	Child	Kenyon 1965
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA	Probable	Multiple	6	Female (probable)	Adolescent	Kenyon 1965
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA	Probable	Multiple	9	Male	Adult	Kenyon 1960
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA	Possible	Multiple	22	Unclassified	Unclassified	Kenyon 1960
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	19	Unclassified	Unclassified	Kenyon 1960
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	9	Unclassified	Unclassified	Kenyon 1965
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	9	Unclassified	Non-adult (negligible)	Kenyon 1965
Jericho (Spring Hill)	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	6	Unclassified	Unclassified	Nigro 2009
Tell el-'Ajjul	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Single	1	Unclassified	Unclassified	Tufnell 1962
Tell Sukas	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	41	Unclassified	Unclassified	Thrane 1978
Rishon le-Zion	Legs loosely splayed on back	MBA I	Possible	Multiple	2	Unclassified	Adult	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I		Multiple	3	Unclassified	Adult/young adolescent	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I		Multiple	3	Unclassified	Child	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I		Single	1	Unclassified	Young adult/ Middle adult	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I	Possible	Single	1	Unclassified	Middle adult	Levy and Kletter 2018

Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA	Probable	Multiple	9	(probable) Male	Adult	Kenyon 1960
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA	Possible	Multiple	22	Unclassified	Unclassified	Kenyon 1960
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	19	Unclassified	Unclassified	Kenyon 1960
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	9	Unclassified	Unclassified	Kenyon 1965
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	9	Unclassified	Non-adult (negligible)	Kenyon 1965
Jericho	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	6	Unclassified	Unclassified	Nigro 2009
Jericho (Spring Hill)	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Single	1	Unclassified	Unclassified	Tufnell 1962
Tell el-'Ajjul	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA						

mi (4500–550 BCE)

Tell Sukas	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA		Multiple	41	Unclassified	Unclassified	Thrane 1978
Rishon le-Zion	Legs loosely splayed on back	MBA I	Possible	Multiple	2	Unclassified	Adult	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I		Multiple	3	Unclassified	Adult/young adolescent	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I		Multiple	3	Unclassified	Child	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I		Single	1	Unclassified	Young adult/ Middle adult	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I	Possible	Single	1	Unclassified	Middle adult	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I	Probable	Multiple	3	Unclassified	Child	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I		Multiple	2	Unclassified	Middle adult	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I	Probable	Multiple	2	Unclassified	Child	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs tightly splayed on back	MBA I		Multiple	4	Unclassified	Child/ adolescent	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs tightly splayed on back	MBA I		Single	1	Unclassified	Older adult	Levy and Kletter 2018
Tell el-Far'ah North	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I		Multiple	3	Female	Adult	Mallet 1973
Tell Fadous- Kfarabida	Legs tightly splayed on back	MBA I		Single	1	Female (possible)	Unclassified	Genz et al. 2010
Rishon le-Zion	Legs loosely splayed on back	MBA II		Multiple	6	Unclassified	Middle adult	Levy and Kletter 2018
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA II		Multiple	4 (in burial chamber/ zone)	Unclassified	Child	Levy and Kletter 2018

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(Continued)

Table 7.3 (Continued)

Site name	Body position	Period	Certainty	Burial type	MNI from burial context	Biological sex	Biological age	Reference
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA II	Possible	Multiple	4 (from burial phase)	Unclassified	Unclassified	Levy and Kletter 2018
Sidon	Legs loosely splayed on back	MBA II		Single	1	Unclassified	Adolescent (probable)	Doumet-Serhal 2009
Sidon	Legs openly/tightly splayed on back	MBA II		Multiple	12 to 17	Female	Adult	Doumet-Serhal 2016
Sidon	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA II	Probable	Single	1	Unclassified	Child	Doumet-Serhal 2011
Sidon	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA II		Multiple	5	Unclassified	Adult (possible)	Doumet-Serhal 2009
Tell Qasile	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA II		Multiple	2	Unclassified	Older adult	Kletter 2006
Rishon le-Zion	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I-II		Multiple	4 (from burial phase)	Unclassified	Unclassified	Levy and Kletter 2018
Ashkelon	Legs openly splayed on back	LBA I		Multiple	2 (from chamber cluster)	Female	Adult	Baker 2006
Tell el-Far'ah South	Legs openly splayed on back	LB II-IA I	Possible	Multiple	7	Unclassified	Adult (possible)	Braunstein 1998
Wadi Fidan 40	Legs openly splayed on back	IA		Multiple	4	Unclassified	Child/adolescent	Beherec 2011
Kamid el Loz	Legs openly splayed on back	Persian-Hellenistic	Possible	Single	1	Unclassified	Adult (probable)	Heinz et al. 2010
Kamid el Loz	Legs openly splayed on back	Persian-Hellenistic	Possible	Single	1	Unclassified	Adult (probable)	Heinz et al. 2010

individual's feet (and position Polcaro (2005, 63, Figure 3.53) 24; however, the positioning around the pelvis and presun unlike the burial from 'Ayn Q this position. Moreover, the ir could be interpreted as indic: gious role within society ((Po explanations).

A final tightly splayed exar the MBA. In this case a single old at the time of death, was sharply outside..." (Levy and in the publication, and althou west of the feet, in the publi represented, possibly suggesti excavation. Despite this, the : *not* due to a lack of space. W) inal plans of the tomb, a bu hamra and filled with silt (Le elements for some time, leadir Qasiyya and Jericho, this bui perhaps suggesting that this tightly splayed position.

All of above examples hav examples, indicative of not fi 328–29), or the distinctive tr Polcaro 2007, 107). Splayed t variety of burial contexts and site or within a specific tomt loosely splayed burials are Ashkelon, Jericho, Sidon, ar examples from multiple peric the majority derive from the BCE (c. 80% (32 out of 4) Figure 7.7). Those not derivi I individual from Jericho dis many cases, are only recorder A cursory examination o demonstrates that, at least vis Qasiyya burial and the more t the second-millennium-BCE have also been interpreted in and/or placed with the legs Figure 18; Kenyon 1965, 22;

	Legs openly splayed on back	MBA I-II	Multiple	burial phase 2 (from chamber cluster)	Female	Adult	2018
Rishon le-Zion							
Ashkelon	Legs openly splayed on back	LBA I	Multiple	7	Unclassified	Adult	Baker 2006
Tell el-Far'ah South	Legs openly splayed on back	LB II-IA I	Possible	7	Unclassified	Adult	Braunstein 1998
Wadi Fidan 40	Legs openly splayed on back	IA	Multiple	4	Unclassified	Child/ adolescent	Beherec 2011
Kamid el Loz	Legs openly splayed on back	Persian- Hellenistic	Single	1	Unclassified	Adult	Heinz et al. 2010
Kamid el Loz	Legs openly splayed on back	Persian- Hellenistic	Single	1	Unclassified	Adult	Heinz et al. 2010

individual's feet (and positioning) were recorded at the point of excavation. As Polcaro (2005, 63, Figure 3.53) hints towards in his interpretation of Inhumation 24; however, the positioning of the artefacts (eight vessels and a macehead) around the pelvis and presumed ankles of this individual does suggest that, unlike the burial from 'Ayn Qasiyya, Inhumation 24 was originally placed in this position. Moreover, the inclusion of a macehead alongside Inhumation 24 could be interpreted as indicative of their status and possibly even their religious role within society ((Polcaro 2005, 63) but see Chapter 4 for alternative explanations).

A final tightly splayed example from Tomb B221 at Rishon le-Zion dates to the MBA. In this case a single adult individual, estimated to be at least 70 years old at the time of death, was found in a supine position with legs "... folded sharply outside..." (Levy and Kletter 2018, 89). No photographs are provided in the publication, and although the authors mention a jug being found to the west of the feet, in the published plan of the tomb no lower extremities are represented, possibly suggesting they were not preserved/present at the time of excavation. Despite this, the authors indicate that this burial positioning was *not* due to a lack of space. While a contour could not be identified in the original plans of the tomb, a burial pit appears to have been dug into the local hamra and filled with silt (Levy and Kletter 2018, 88–89). Unless open to the elements for some time, leading to or prior to the deposition of silt, unlike 'Ayn Qasiyya and Jericho, this burial appears to have been a closed context, again perhaps suggesting that this individual was also deliberately deposited in a tightly splayed position.

All of above examples have largely been treated as exceptions or very rare examples, indicative of not fully recognised practices (e.g. Richter et al. 2010, 328–29), or the distinctive treatment of individuals with a special status (e.g. Polcaro 2007, 107). Splayed burial positions, however, have been recorded in a variety of burial contexts and, in some cases, occur more than once at a specific site or within a specific tomb. Indeed, tightly splayed, openly splayed, and/or loosely splayed burials are attested at several large cemeteries, including Ashkelon, Jericho, Sidon, and Rishon le-Zion. Moreover, although we have examples from multiple periods (from the late fourth to first millennia BCE), the majority derive from the MBA or, more, broadly the second millennium BCE (c. 80% (32 out of 40 MBA, 33 out of 40 MBA to LBA) and see Figure 7.7). Those not deriving from the second millennium, including the EB I individual from Jericho discussed above, form a very small dataset, and, in many cases, are only recorded with possible certainty (four out of seven).

A cursory examination of the examples presented in Figures 7.6 and 7.7 demonstrates that, at least visually, there is a strong difference between the 'Ayn Qasiyya burial and the more openly or loosely splayed examples seen at some of the second-millennium-BCE sites. In several cases, however, these individuals have also been interpreted in the literature as resulting from having been bound and/or placed with the legs or knees flexed upright (e.g. Baker 2006, 16–17, Figure 18; Kenyon 1965, 228). Examples from both closed (e.g. single burial

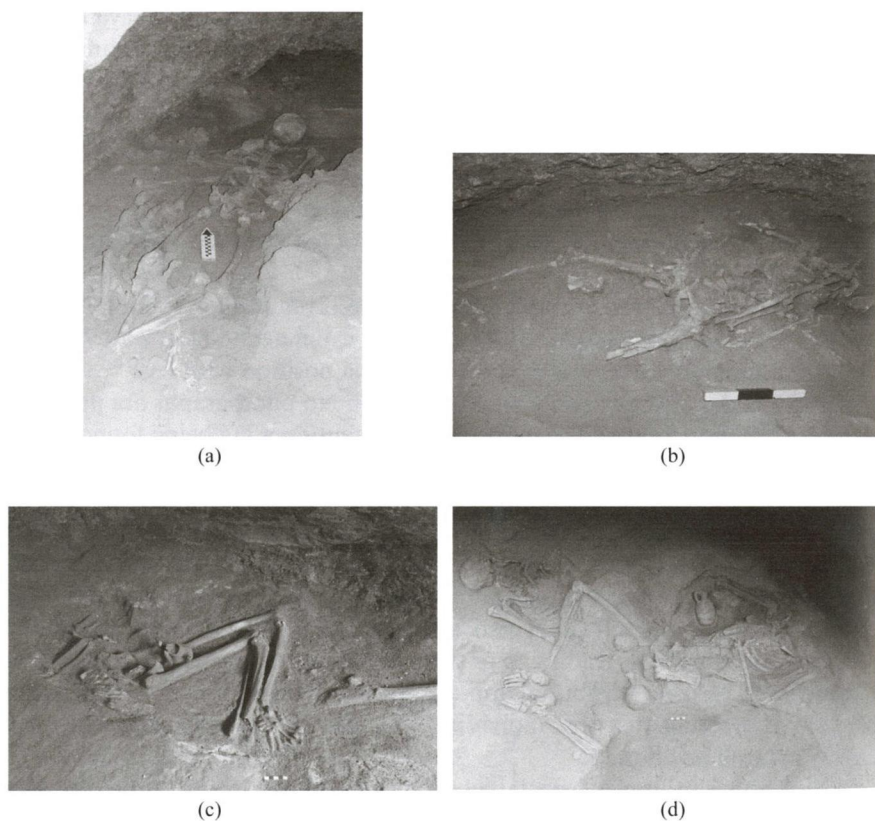


Figure 7.7 Comparison of Ashkelon burials a. Burial 121; b. Burial 122; c. Burial 149; d. Burial 157 from Baker, Jill. 2006. 'The Funeral Kit'. *Levant* 38:1–31, Figures 3, 18, and 23. Original Photographs by Ilan Sztulman. Images courtesy of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon and reprinted by permission of the publisher (Taylor & Francis Ltd, <https://www.tandfonline.com>). ©2013 Council for British Research in the Levant.

pits) and open contexts (e.g. multiple chamber tombs) are recorded, making taphonomy a factor to consider. Unfortunately, however, in many cases the feet and toe bones are not visible (or even preserved) in plans and photographs of individuals in this burial position. Despite these challenges, I want to turn to an exploration of several case studies; all large, second-millennium-BCE cemeteries, where multiple examples of this positioning have been recorded.

Ashkelon

When carrying out research for this project, Burial 157 (an adult female) from Ashkelon was the first splayed burial I encountered within the literature. Located next to the western wall of Chamber 14, this individual was found in

a supine position, their 'bowed' position process (see Figure 7.7). In Burial 157, Baker (2006, 4, 16) suggests, the majority of corpses were crossed over their chests and legs. This interpretation, took place shortly after death with the muscles then relaxing and the body falling forward and falling apart, either in a supine position. Based on the data from Rishon le-Zion, challenged by Levy and Kletter (2006), Ashkelon examples supports Baker's interpretation. Baker describes, a visual examination of the different results from these archaeological positions. Burials 121 and 122 are described as very loosely splayed, with the lower extremities being in a supine burial with flexed/semi-supine position.

Given that these examples are presumably, similar taphonomic processes, the hypothesis that all the individuals originally buried with legs flexed and the position of Burial 157 also seems to support. The photograph appears to show the body rotated, with no evidence, unless for an orientation towards the head. The positioning of artefacts apparently suggest that Burial 157 may have been in a 'bowed' position, with two juglets placed on the process of decarnation. The juglets would have remained in place, possibly even on top of the pelvis.

Rishon le-Zion

In addition to the tightly splayed burials, there are also examples of loosely splayed burials at Rishon le-Zion. Although no estimated ages range from childhood to adulthood within the wider dataset, individuals may be restricted to a single burial. It is worth noting, however, that the examples far outweigh single interments and within the wider dataset, the discussions above regarding Ashkelon and Rishon le-Zion suggest a distinction between splayed burials



(b)



(d)

rial 121; b. Burial 122; c. Burial 149; 'The Funeral Kit'. Levant 38:1–31, aphs by Ilan Sztulman. Images cour- shkelon and reprinted by permission Ltd, <https://www.tandfonline.com>). the Levant.

ber tombs) are recorded, making ly, however, in many cases the feet ved) in plans and photographs of ese challenges, I want to turn to an second-millennium-BCE cemeter- ng have been recorded.

Burial 157 (an adult female) from ncountered within the literature. er 14, this individual was found in

a supine position, their 'bowed' legs interpreted as resulting from the decarna- tion process (see Figure 7.7). In her detailed analysis of burials 121, 122, 149, and 157, Baker (2006, 4, 16) suggests that despite the variety of *excavated* posi- tions, the majority of corpses were placed on their backs, with their arms crossed over their chests and legs flexed upwards. Placement, according to her interpretation, took place shortly after death or after *rigor mortis* had passed, with the muscles then relaxing during decarnation and the feet and legs sliding forward and falling apart, either to the left or right side or into a bowed posi- tion. Based on the data from Rishon le-Zion, this interpretation has been chal- lenged by Levy and Kletter (2018, 20) and, a closer examination of the Ashkelon examples supports their critiques. As Baker (2006, 4, 16) herself describes, a visual examination of Burials 121, 122, 149, and 157 shows vastly different results from these apparent identical or at least similar original burial positions. Burials 121 and 122, for example, could only very generously be described as very loosely splayed, with Burial 121 showing potential evidence for the lower extremities being crossed. Burial 149, meanwhile, appears as a supine burial with flexed/semi-flexed legs on the left side (see Figure 7.7).

Given that these examples come from the same burial complex where, pre- sumably, similar taphonomic processes may have been occurring in each cham- ber, the hypothesis that all these positions represent individuals who were originally buried with legs flexed upward seems less tenable. A closer examina- tion of Burial 157 also seems to suggest that this might not be the case. Field photography appears to show the ankles and feet of Burial 157 as laterally rotated, with no evidence, unlike the 'Ayn Qasiyya example discussed earlier, for an orientation towards the midline of the body. Furthermore, the position- ing of artefacts apparently associated with this individual would seem to sug- gest that Burial 157 may have been deliberately placed within this so-called 'bowed' position, with two juglets being found on either side of the pelvis. Had the process of decarnation led to this situation it seems unlikely that both juglets would have remained in such a position, so closely associated and pos- sibly even on top of the pelvic bones.

Rishon le-Zion

In addition to the tightly splayed burial discussed earlier, several cases of openly and loosely splayed burials have been recorded at the MBA cemetery of Rishon le-Zion. Although no biological sex is recorded for the individuals, the estimated ages range from children/adolescents to adults. In addition, as seen within the wider dataset, individuals discovered in this position do not seem to be restricted to a single burial type, deriving from both single and multiple burials. It is worth noting, however, that multiple interments with splayed bur- ials far outweigh single interments at both Rishon le-Zion (c. 78%, 11 of 14) and within the wider dataset,¹⁷ a point I shall return to shortly. Given my dis- cussions above regarding Ashkelon, also of potential interest are the associa- tions between splayed burials and deposited objects.

Tomb B208, for example, contained a single individual, estimated to be around 20–30 years old, buried on their back with their legs folded outwards (Levy and Kletter 2018, 85). Tomb B30, also a single interment, estimated to be aged 30–40 years, is less clearly identifiable as an openly splayed burial, with only the left leg being folded outwards, while the right leg appears to have been extended (Levy and Kletter 2018, 23). Both tombs were dated by the investigators to the first quarter of the second millennium BCE (MB I) and contained grave assemblages including pottery vessels, animal bones and, in the case of Tomb 208, a bronze dagger. In the case of Tomb B30, a jar and bowl were found near and above the feet of the deceased (Levy and Kletter 2018, 23). In Tomb 208, the individual's feet were missing, although a bronze dagger was (likely) found in association with the left hip, an arrangement strongly resembling the MBA openly splayed burial from Tomb 1417 at Tell el-Ajjul (Petrie 1931).

Also of note at Rishon le-Zion is the potential association between the deposition of an openly splayed burial and the closure or end life of a tomb. In other words, when found in multiple tombs, splayed burials often appear to be the last individual to be deposited. Here I discuss a few significant examples, although others can be found in Table 7.2. In the case of Tomb B115, for example, although the three individuals within the tomb appear to have been buried within a single phase, the openly splayed southern burial (6733) was likely the last to be placed. Similar to Tomb B208, a bronze dagger was also found in association with this individual, near the pelvis along the left side of the body (Levy and Kletter 2018, 56, Plan 2.75). Tomb B123 also contained three individuals, in this case all identified as children, likely deposited within a very short time span, but with the openly splayed burial, B6785, again being the last deposit to be placed (Levy and Kletter 2018, 59).

Moving to area F, Tomb F1, identified as a shaft tomb with multiple phases of use, revealed evidence for a potentially splayed burial (B8087, loosely splayed in this case). Phase I of the so-called Southern Burial Area yielded six individuals, with B8087 being the best-preserved individual (Levy and Kletter 2018, 174, Figure 3.6) and therefore possibly the latest deposition in this phase and area. Another small shaft tomb, F7, located in the same area, shows a similar pattern with skeleton B7509, a splayed child burial, representing the latest burial in this locus, and in this case overlying burial B7510 (Levy and Kletter 2018, 210). Finally, within Phase II of Tomb A5 (Levy and Kletter 2018, 344, Plan 4.27), the southernmost splayed burial seems to have legs overlapping the central burial, possibly suggesting that it may have been the last burial to be deposited, albeit, as suggested by the authors of the volume, within a very short time period (Levy and Kletter 2018, 300). It is worth noting that two juglets were found in association with this latter burial, both located in the pelvic area, possibly similar to Burial 157 from Ashkelon.

This pattern is certainly compelling; however, a note of caution is needed. Splayed burials are not always the final deposits to be made at Rishon le-Zion. Tomb B81, for example, contained three child inhumations, and in this case, it is not clear whether the splayed burial was the last to be interred or not (Levy

and Kletter 2018, 42). In contrast, some burials show splayed legs and seem to have been placed in a splayed burial, with the right arm of the child but underneath the

Jericho

In the concluding section of the volume, Kenyon indicates several pages to the discussion of splayed burials. Identifying a general trend, she notes that there was a 'predilection' for burials with the knees raised. Similar to Baker (1953), in the excavated burial positions, the femora were placed out of the sockets of the pelvis. In reference to the bones of the feet, she notes that this was done for reasons of space, unrelated to the spatial arrangement of the burial.

With these hypotheses in mind, Kenyon is highlighting. Within layer 1 of the site, she notes what Kenyon (1960, 443–44, Figure 3.6) shows seven individuals (A–F and R). In this layer, earlier remains seem to have been placed in a splayed position, while Individuals A to E were found in a splayed position. Individual F was found in a splayed position. Individual R also lay in a splayed position, oriented in the opposite direction to the other individuals. Individual A interlock with those of Individual F. Skeleton A, were laid in a splayed position. This shows evidence for splayed burials, originally being placed in the splayed position. This suggests that this was due to the splayed position. Skeleton A would be the only splayed burial in this manner, especially as Skeleton A was found in a splayed position, yet was placed in a splayed position. It does overlap those of Skeleton F. This is a simultaneous burial. If Kenyon's interpretation is correct, however, then

Tomb H6 presents another example of an apparently splayed individual. Kenyon notes a person of importance... (Kenyon 1960, 443–44, Figure 3.6). In the tomb, Burial A, identified as a platform of large thick mudbrick, the head lay on a mudbrick pillow. This may have been too short for this individual. It appears to have fallen over the

single individual, estimated to be with their legs folded outwards single interment, estimated to be as an openly splayed burial, with the right leg appears to have been. Burials were dated by the investigation MB I and contained animal bones and, in the case of Tomb B30, a jar and bowl were found (Levy and Kletter 2018, 23). In Tomb B91, a bronze dagger was (likely) an object strongly resembling the dagger found at Tell el-'Ajjul (Petrie 1931).

The spatial association between the deposition or end life of a tomb. In splayed burials often appear to be discussed a few significant examples, the case of Tomb B115, for example, Tomb B115 appear to have been buried. The splayed burial (6733) was likely the bronze dagger was also found in this along the left side of the body. Tomb B123 also contained three individuals, likely deposited within a very early burial, B6785, again being the last (Levy 2018, 59).

A shaft tomb with multiple phases of splayed burial (B8087, loosely Southern Burial Area yielded six splayed individuals (Levy and Kletter 2018, 300). It is worth noting that the latest deposition in this phase, located in the same area, shows a splayed child burial, representing the splayed burial B7510 (Levy and Kletter 2018, 300). It is worth noting that the splayed burial, both located in the Southern Burial Area.

However, a note of caution is needed. It is worth noting that the splayed burial, both located in the Southern Burial Area, both located in the Southern Burial Area.

and Kletter 2018, 42). In contrast, in Tomb B91, both individuals likely had splayed legs and seem to have been placed at the same time as a simultaneous burial, with the right arm of the adult being positioned above the upper body of the child but underneath their knees (Levy and Kletter 2018, 45).

Jericho

In the concluding section of the 1965 Jericho volume, Kenyon (1965, 575) dedicates several pages to the discussion of MBA burial practises and body positioning. Identifying a general trend towards supine burials, she also suggests that there was a 'predilection' for individuals within some tombs to have their knees raised. Similar to Baker (2006), and although resulting in vastly different excavated burial positions, the evidence for this is based on the twisting of the femora out of the sockets of the pelvis and the displacement of leg bones in reference to the bones of the feet. She also suggests that while in some cases this was done for reasons of space, in others it seems to have been a clear decision, unrelated to the spatial affordances of the tomb.

With these hypotheses in mind, Tomb G1 (see Figure 4.4) at Jericho is worth highlighting. Within layer 1 of this tomb, excavations revealed the presence of what Kenyon (1960, 443–44, Figure 188) described as a simultaneous burial of seven individuals (A–F and R). Representing the latest phase within the tomb, earlier remains seem to have been swept aside (see Chapter 4 for further details), with individuals A to E being placed within the centre of the burial chamber, while Individual F was found to the west, deposited on top of a pile of earlier remains. Individual R also lay to the west and was deposited with their head oriented in the opposite direction, although it is noted that the legs of this individual interlock with those of the A–E group. All the individuals, bar one, Skeleton A, were laid in a supine extended position. Skeleton A, in contrast, shows evidence for splayed legs, interpreted as resulting from this individual originally being placed in the tomb with knees drawn up. Although Kenyon suggests that this was due to existence of earlier remains, it is not clear why Skeleton A would be the only corpse in this assemblage to be placed in this manner, especially as Skeleton F was apparently deposited on top of a pile of earlier material, yet was placed in an extended position. The legs of Skeleton A do overlap those of Skeleton B, and thus may be a later (albeit broadly simultaneous) burial. If Kenyon's hypothesis surrounding the original burial positioning is correct, however, this may be due to post-depositional decay.

Tomb H6 presents another potential factor to consider. In this case, an apparently splayed individual seems to have been marked and treated as "... a person of importance..." (Kenyon 1960, 454). Located roughly in the centre of the tomb, Burial A, identified as an adult male, was positioned on their back, on a platform of large thick mudbricks. Underneath was a rush mat, and their head lay on a mudbrick pillow (see Chapter 8). The platform seems to have been too short for this individual, and the lower extremities, including feet, appear to have fallen over the end of the platform during the decay process

(Kenyon 1960, 454). An alabaster bowl was found on the left side of this individual's abdomen, and traces of textile, including dark leathery material, were found around the pelvis and femur, perhaps suggesting that this individual originally wore a belt or kilt. On the left shoulder a toggle pin was found (Kenyon 1960, 454) providing additional support for the interpretation of clothing. Unusually, this individual seems to have had their lower arms removed, with the ulna of the right arm displaced and broken and the lower arms of the left arm completely missing (Kenyon 1965, 576). Towards the rear of Tomb H6 a second potentially splayed burial (Individual D) was also found, this time identified as a 'younger' child (Kenyon 1960, 454–55).

Tomb M11 (see Figure 4.4) again contained two burial phases, the latest of which included a row of seven individuals, A–F, buried simultaneously or at least over a very short interval of time. Two individuals within this assemblage were found in splayed positions, Burials B and C, again interpreted by Kenyon as resulting from decay following deposition with knees raised. Unfortunately, very few objects could be directly associated with specific individuals, although a toggle pin was potentially associated with Burial C, found near the individual's shoulder (Kenyon 1965, 227–28, Figure 105). The exact sequence of these placements is unclear, and while the legs of Burials B and C overlies some of the surrounding remains, if Kenyon's hypothesis is correct, this may again have occurred during post-depositional decay. Whether originally placed with their knees raised or with splayed legs, what is worth considering is why these individuals were placed in this manner. Space does not necessarily seem to be a significant factor here. Moreover, if all these individuals were placed simultaneously or within a very short time, why were two individuals placed with their knees raised/legs splayed out, whereas the others were placed in an extended or semi-flexed position?

Finally, Tomb P19 was also found to contain seven individuals, six of which were found in articulation and the seventh '... considerably disarranged...', although still thought to be in the original position (Kenyon 1965, 388). What is particularly remarkable about the six individuals within Tomb P19 is that they all show signs of (apparently) peri-mortem blunt force trauma to the head (see Chapter 9 for further discussion). Burials A and C also appear to have been deposited in a splayed position or with raised knees. C, a child (suggested to be male), was laid on rush matting and possibly wore leather sandals or shoes. No objects were found in direct association with Burial A, although, given the traces of textiles with skeletons D and F, we might suggest that individuals within this tomb were clothed. A close study of the Plan of Tomb P19 (Kenyon 1965, 389, Figure 193) also seems to show the feet of both Burials A and C as fully splayed out. No midline orientation of any of the digits is readily observed, perhaps challenging Kenyon's hypothesis that these individuals were originally placed within the tomb with raised knees.

It is not only in the extramural cemetery or necropolis at Jericho that splayed burials have been documented. As discussed earlier, Tomb HAR (Square III) is one of five potential built tombs found on 'Ayn es-Sultan (Kenyon 1981,

349–50; Nigro 2009, 362). Loc D.641 (Nigro 2009, 362), this tomb was for a corbelled brick vault and it contained the skeletal remains of a mix of disarticulated and articulated individuals, used as a multiple successive burial. While Kenyon (1981, 349–350) initially placed in articulation, or perhaps the latest burials, seem to have been found against the walls of the tomb plan, the two individuals with knees flexed to the left are not in the previous necropolis volumes, included in the 1981 volume. The legs of the 'splayed' individual are articulated skeleton and thus two in

Drawing upon Kenyon's (1981) theory, the knees of this individual are in articulation leading to the overlap. Alternatively, if burial position was the burial to be placed, albeit likely a second interment, with the legs over the earlier flexed burial. This is visible in either the plan or plan view recorded during excavation. As they were associated with several objects, a dipper juglet (Kenyon and Nigro 2009) close to the heads of these individuals.

Kenyon records a series of splayed leg positioning and/or their knees raised. Even disarticulated up positioned) with the examples from Jericho, which equals in total dating to the Middle Bronze Age site.

Sidon

The final case study I wish to discuss is four splayed burials. The example of multiple and single burial in a corbelled tomb documented in 2009, including both articulated and undisturbed females) were recorded, although

nt (4500–550 BCE)

und on the left side of this indi-
ing dark leathery material, were
suggesting that this individual
oulder a toggle pin was found
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to have had their lower arms
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on 1965, 576). Towards the rear
l (Individual D) was also found,
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necropolis at Jericho that splayed
earlier, Tomb HAR (Square HII)
on 'Ayn es-Sultan (Kenyon 1981,

349–50; Nigro 2009, 362). Located to the east of the more recently excavated D.641 (Nigro 2009, 362), this tomb is square in shape with potential evidence for a corbelled brick vault and stone blocked entrance (Kenyon 1981, 349–50). It contained the skeletal remains of at least six individuals and, based on the mix of disarticulated and articulated human remains, appears to have been used as a multiple successive burial. The remains were apparently very crushed, and while Kenyon (1981, 349–50, Figure 5) suggests that six burials were originally placed in articulation, only two fully articulated individuals, assumed to be the latest burials, seem to be clearly visible from the plans. Earlier burials were found against the walls of the tomb, particularly in the North. Based on the tomb plan, the two individuals found in articulation were both supine: one with knees flexed to the left and the other with openly splayed legs. Unlike the previous necropolis volumes, no direct discussion of the burial positioning is included in the 1981 volume. According to the plans and plates, however, the legs of the 'splayed' individual appear to overlap those of the second articulated skeleton and thus two interpretations are possible.

Drawing upon Kenyon's (1965, 575) earlier work in the extramural cemetery, the knees of this individual could originally have been raised, with decar-nation leading to the overlapping observed within the images and plans. Alternatively, if burial positioning was deliberate, this could have been the final burial to be placed, albeit likely with a brief time span between the first and second interment, with the legs of this individual being deliberately placed over the earlier flexed burial. Unfortunately, the feet of this individual are not visible in either the plan or plates, possibly suggesting they were absent or unre-corded during excavation. According to the original reports these individuals were associated with several pottery vessels, including two jugs, two bowls, and a dipper juglet (Kenyon and Holland 1983, 397–98, Figure 162), likely found close to the heads of these individuals (Kenyon 1981, 349, Figure 5, Plate 188).

Kenyon records a series of other tombs with evidence for burials with splayed leg positioning and/or burials interpreted as having originally having their knees raised. Even discounting those burials that were positioned (or ended up positioned) with their legs to the left or right, when we consider all the examples from Jericho, we are dealing with a sizeable dataset, c. 38 individ-uals in total dating to the MBA, making this the largest dataset from a single site.

Sidon

The final case study I wish to consider is Sidon, which has revealed evidence for four splayed burials. The examples discussed here have been documented from multiple and single burial contexts, and all date to MB II. Burial 123, a stone lined tomb documented in 2013, contained the remains of at least 12 individ-uals, including both articulated and disarticulated skeletal material. Two fully articulated and undisturbed individuals (Skeletons 7386 and 7425, both adult females) were recorded, although the tomb also appears to have been used for

both the re-deposition of partially and fully disarticulated remains (Doumet-Serhal 2016, 116–18). Skeleton 7386 (flexed on the right side) is suggested to have been the final individual placed in the tomb. Skeleton 7425 (legs openly/tightly splayed), however, is also fully articulated and presumably, based on the level of preservation, represents one of the final depositions. Oriented E-W with the upper legs splayed outwards from the midline and flexed knees, this individual was positioned with their head and left shoulder leaning against the southern wall of the tomb and upper torso slightly elevated (Doumet-Serhal 2016, 116–18). Another partially articulated burial, Skeleton 7426, was found just to the north of Skeleton 7425, the upper body likely truncated at some point in antiquity. Based on the tomb plan, the knees of Skeleton 7426 are almost touching the lower right leg of Skeleton 7425, which, in comparison to the left leg, is flexed at an almost 45-degree angle (Doumet-Serhal 2016, 119, Plate 14). If Skeleton 7426 was in place prior to the deposition of individual 7425, the more extreme flexion of the right leg might therefore make sense as a space saving exercise, to prevent the legs of individuals 7426 and 7425 from overlapping.

A similar issue may be at play with Burials 103, 104, 105, 107, and 109. Found within a well-constructed pit grave, lined with stones and mudbrick, this tomb was used for multiple successive burials with five individuals, both articulated and disarticulated, identified. In addition to the disarticulated remains of one individual (Burial 107) and an articulated burial (Burial 109) which was found oriented E-W, Burials 103, 104, and 105 were simultaneously placed (see Chapter 4 for further details) alongside one another (Doumet-Serhal 2009, 32). Burial 104 appears to have been positioned with their legs flexed to the left, although their right leg appears to have fallen or have been propped up against the northern edge of the tomb. The positioning of Burial 103 is not depicted or described in the report, but Burial 105 (potentially an adult) was oriented W-E, supine, with the legs splayed outwards from the midline, the feet together. Based on the figures included in the report this seems to have been a relatively confined tomb, and the positioning of Burial 104 may suggest that space was an issue. Moreover, the phalanges on Burial 105's right foot appear to be orientated towards the midline of the body, while those on the left foot are rotated outwards (Doumet-Serhal 2009, 32, Figure 31(a) and (b)), possibly suggesting a body positioning (at least partially) influenced by decay processes.

Finally, two single burials from Sidon have been classified as splayed for the purposes of this project. Burial 80, a potential adolescent, aged 15–18 years, is represented by a pair of articulated legs. Although a clear pit was not identified during excavation, this deposit does seem to be a deliberate burial. Based on the positioning of the legs, the individual appears to have originally laid on their back, with their legs very loosely splayed out from hips and their ankles/heels together, although the phalanges and metatarsals of the left foot were missing, and the right leg appears to have been severed. No grave goods are recorded in association with this burial (Doumet-Serhal 2009, 36–37, Figure

36, 36(a)), although it is assumed to be in antiquity.

The last example, Burial 101, is located to the west of the Mound. It is the burial of a child aged 5–6 years. This individual seems to have been positioned with their legs slightly splayed outwards and placed over the forearm (Doumet-Serhal 1987–88, Figure 21, 22(a)) (note the discussion). This individual is associated with fragments of burnt wood, an antler, a shell, as well as incised antler. This is found in other burials at Sidon, suggesting a high-ranking female; however, one of the worked bone fragments (Figure 22(c)).

By treating splayed burials as a tiny proportion of the overall assemblage. The cemeteries of hundreds of burials dated to slightly more at Jericho) of splayed burials while some of these individuals are positioned upon interment, or other processes. Given these uncertainties, examples and their potential

The original burial positions, cases, a full re-evaluation is needed, data, illustrative figures, and examples where the lower extremities are placed alongside the placements of individuals, at least some of these seem to be deliberate placements, or other processes. Here, I want to briefly discuss and Kenyon (1965, 575), who noted that, typically, there was a predilection for individuals with their knees raised with

Perhaps one of the most striking features of the sheer variety of excavated burials is the placement, including individuals with legs almost fully extended, and others with legs. In the case of Kenyon (1965, 575), he observed twisting of the femur and the placement of the leg bones. This is illustrated by the 'Ayn Qasiyya burials from a variety of different but

been classified as splayed for the adolescent, aged 15–18 years, in-
though a clear pit was not identified
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d out from hips and their ankles/
metatarsals of the left foot were
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By treating splayed burials as a distinct burial position, we are dealing with a tiny proportion of the overall MBA or second-millennium-BCE burial assemblage. The cemeteries of Sidon, Jericho, and Rishon le-Zion have yielded hundreds of burials dated to this period, and yet we only have a handful (or slightly more at Jericho) of splayed burials from each of these sites. Moreover, while some of these individuals may have been deliberately placed in a splayed position upon interment, other examples may result from taphonomic processes. Given these uncertainties, how might we go about interpreting these examples and their potential meanings?

The original burial position of the individuals is still a key issue. In some cases, a full re-evaluation is needed, although given the lack of descriptive data, illustrative figures, and photographs, this is almost impossible. Based on examples where the lower extremities do survive, however, and when considered alongside the placement of artefacts in association with the buried individuals, at least some of these second-millennium-BCE splayed positions seem to be deliberate placements, rather than the result of post-depositional processes. Here, I want to briefly return to the interpretations of Baker (2006, 4) and Kenyon (1965, 575), who suggest that at Jericho and Ashkelon, respectively, there was a predilection or tendency towards the placement of individuals with their knees raised within tombs.

Perhaps one of the most problematic aspects of their interpretation is the sheer variety of excavated positions resulting from this supposed original placement, including individuals with legs flexed to either side, individuals with legs almost fully extended, and examples of individuals with splayed or bowed legs. In the case of Kenyon (1965, 575), part of her analysis also relied on the observed twisting of the femora out of the sockets of the pelvis and the displacement of the leg bones in reference to the bones of the feet. As demonstrated by the 'Ayn Qasiyya example, however, such displacements can result from a variety of different burial positions and are not definitively indicative of

a bound burial or a burial with upright knees. Moreover, within the dataset discussed above it is clear that we have several examples whereby such twisting and displacement seems more readily explained by the original placement of the individual in a splayed position (i.e. examples where the bones of the feet and ankles, in addition to the femora, seem to be laterally splayed left to right, rather than orientated towards the midline of the body).

A further element to consider is the placement of objects in association with these individuals. If originally placed with knees raised, it seems unlikely that artefacts such as the juglets found in association with Burial 157 at Ashkelon or Tomb A5 at Rishon le-Zion would have remained in place, on top of the pelvis. There are, of course, examples of tombs and graves within this subset that contain no associated artefacts, and we cannot treat this as an absolute criterion. Furthermore, some of the examples discussed certainly may have resulted from a burial with raised knees. Whether originally buried in a splayed position or with knees raised, however, the question that remains is, why? Most of the examples discussed above and included within the data analysed for this volume derive from tombs containing multiple burials (over 70%) and there are generally no more than one or two individuals in a splayed position from any given burial context. How then can we explain variations of burial positioning from tombs dating to the same broad cultural period, from within a single cemetery and even from within a single burial context?

One of the most obvious explanations is the size and space available within any given burial context. Skeleton O from Tomb J7 at Jericho, for example, seems to have been crammed into a re-used tomb, with limited space for an extended burial. The positioning of Skeleton 7425 from Sidon, as already discussed, may also have been partly dictated by the presence of an earlier burial. In several of the Jericho tombs, Kenyon suggests individuals may have been placed with their knees raised to avoid earlier deposits (e.g. Tomb G1, Skeleton A). However, it is not clear why this decision would have been made in some cases but not in others. To this list we can also add the example of Tomb 736 from Fadous-Kfarabida (Genz et al. 2010, 251–52, Figures 10 and 11), where a tightly splayed individual is surrounded by a circle of undressed stones. In this case there would clearly not have been room for an extended burial but why a splayed burial, why not a tightly flexed burial, or why not simply dig or build a bigger tomb? Furthermore, if the saving of space was really a high priority why do we not see more burials like those from Tomb F4 at Rishon le-Zion, where the investigators suggest the legs were originally folded on top of the body (Levy and Kletter 2018, 194, 197). Space does not seem to have been a key concern in every example, and in several tombs, areas were even cleared of remains prior to the deposition of the individuals found in these positions (e.g. Skeleton Q, Tomb G37, Jericho).

Shifting away from the practicalities or affordances offered by the burial context I want to consider the role of the deceased within life and death. Several of the burials discussed in this section could be viewed as having been marked out or uniquely treated/equipped. Here, I want to draw attention to

splayed burials with evidence (Tomb P19), a topic I shall return to. The presence of trauma, Burial A from Tomb P19, within this tomb to be placed (Tomb P19) alongside the alabaster burial, would seem to suggest whether apparent/presented in the final burial phase. On the top of Burial 120 at Sidon, a small practice, serving as protection. The burial in this case, however, status objects, perhaps suggesting the individual was being marked out.

Out of the examples discussed, either the final burial placed in the burial phase. While we are aware of this is seen across multiple sites, suggesting a potential pattern and suggesting a final deposit within a tomb. Burials placed in MBA tombs are splayed, suggesting inclusion of a final splayed burial as a recognised practice; one possible approved practices.

Whether part of a closure or a visual tableau being presented, a small group of living people can contemplate whether this is the structured display of assemblages geographically and temporally. Hirst's (1985, 38) study of this suggested that burial positions and grave goods. The presence of some of the splayed burials with specific types of material culture at Jericho, for example, were worth considering whether a design and coloured or text.

Although rarely preserved, and iconographic sources supportive, supporting complex figures (Fig. 10; Gleba and Griffiths 2011). Burial A and Tomb G73, Burial of Tomb H6) plain weave (Clothing burials and tombs (e.g. Burial some evidence for the use of decorative element, as well as

s. Moreover, within the dataset examples whereby such twisting ed by the original placement of ples where the bones of the feet be laterally splayed left to right, the body).

nt of objects in association with es raised, it seems unlikely that on with Burial 157 at Ashkelon emained in place, on top of the bs and graves within this subset cannot treat this as an absolute es discussed certainly may have er originally buried in a splayed stion that remains is, why? Most within the data analysed for this : burials (over 70%) and there are s in a splayed position from any i variations of burial positioning al period, from within a single context?

ie size and space available within omb J7 at Jericho, for example, tomb, with limited space for an 7425 from Sidon, as already dis- the presence of an earlier burial. gests individuals may have been deposits (e.g. Tomb G1, Skeleton would have been made in some o add the example of Tomb 736 l–52, Figures 10 and 11), where a circle of undressed stones. In this for an extended burial but why a , or why not simply dig or build a ace was really a high priority why omb F4 at Rishon le-Zion, where nally folded on top of the body es not seem to have been a key mbs, areas were even cleared of uals found in these positions (e.g.

ttfordances offered by the burial deceased within life and death. n could be viewed as having been ere, I want to draw attention to

splayed burials with evidence for peri-mortem or post-mortem trauma (e.g. Tomb P19), a topic I shall return to in Chapter 9. In addition to showing evidence of trauma, Burial A from Tomb H6 at Jericho was also the only burial within this tomb to be placed on a mudbrick platform and, when this is considered alongside the alabaster bowl and textiles found associated with this individual, would seem to suggest the importance or status of this individual, whether apparent/presented in life or only in death. The placement of stones on the top of Burial 120 at Sidon could be interpreted as a negative or abnormal practice, serving as protection against malevolent forces (see Chapter 9). The burial in this case, however, also shows evidence for several unique high-status objects, perhaps suggesting a more complex purpose, and that this individual was being marked out in some way.

Out of the examples discussed here a substantial number also appear to be either the final burial placed within a tomb/grave or within/part of the last burial phase. While we are again dealing with very small numbers, the fact that this is seen across multiple sites (e.g. Jericho, Sidon, Rishon le-Zion) may suggest a potential pattern and correlation between splayed burials and the closure or final deposit within a burial context. Clearly not all final burials to be placed in MBA tombs are splayed. In other words, we cannot suggest that the inclusion of a final splayed burial was a necessity. Instead, it was a socially recognised practice; one possibility within a range of other socioculturally approved practices.

Whether part of a closure event or not, I want to end by considering the visual tableau being presented by such burials. Although perhaps only ‘seen’ by a small group of living people, presumably those carrying out the burial, we can contemplate whether this burial positioning may also have been related to the structured display of associated objects and items of clothing. Although geographically and temporally distant from the examples under discussion, Hirst’s (1985, 38) study of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Sewerby in the UK suggested that burial positions were associated with the optimal display of grave goods. The presence of textiles and other artefacts in close association with some of the splayed burials raises questions about the potential display of specific types of material culture. Skeletons A from Tomb H6 and Tomb G73 at Jericho, for example, were both found in association with textiles, and it is worth considering whether a splayed-out position would have enabled weaved designs and coloured or textured textiles to be better displayed.¹⁸

Although rarely preserved in the archaeological record, excavated material and iconographic sources suggest that MBA textiles could be highly decorative, supporting complex figural and geometric patterns (e.g. Breniquet 2013, 10; Gleba and Griffiths 2011, 289). The surviving fragments from Tomb H6, Burial A and Tomb G73, Burial A at Jericho appear to be (coarse in the case of Tomb H6) plain weave (Crowfoot 1960, 523, 1965, 662). From other MBA burials and tombs (e.g. Burial C from Tomb H6), however, there appears to be some evidence for the use of selvedge, possibly as a reinforcement, as well as decorative element, as well as finer textiles (Crowfoot 1960, 519–20, 523). While

textiles used in burial contexts can range in form from shrouds to garments to matting (Breniquet 2013, 11), particularly in the case of the Jericho tombs, these fragments were likely associated with garments, an identification emphasised by the discovery of toggle pins around the shoulders and hips of some individuals (Crowfoot 1960, 520). Here it is worth remembering that Burial A from Tomb H6 at Jericho was placed on a platform, reinforcing this idea of display and the presentation of a particular form of visual tableau.

Beyond textiles, other forms of material culture may have been an integral part of the display and presentation of the dead, with the burial placement and positioning being deliberately selected to highlight the associated objects found alongside an individual. This possibility has interesting implications for the few splayed burials associated with daggers (e.g. 'Ajjul and Rishon le-Zion). Greenberg (2019, 198) in his discussion of MBA 'warrior burials', for example, references iconographic depictions of rulers or gods, clearly associated with weaponry and depicted wearing a short battle kilt. Other senses, beyond the visual, may also have been involved, with Baker (2012, 83)¹⁹ suggesting that the juglets found on top of the pelvis in burials at Ashkelon may have originally contained substances with medicinal or olfactory qualities. The placement of juglets, daggers, and other objects around the pelvis of such burials perhaps also attests to a desire to showcase or draw attention to grave goods and their close association with the body. As will be discussed further in the next chapter, whether this points towards their use in life, death, or the afterlife is less clear.

Concluding Remarks

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the human corpse represents a powerful tool, serving as a representation of the living body and communicating and reflecting idealised stereotypes, while also serving as a locus for the negotiation and construction of shifting identities and relationships (e.g. Gramsch 2013, 459–61; Joyce 2005; Van Wolputte 2004, 254, 260). It is not only the artefacts that feed, intoxicate, or dress the body that can be used to understand processes of embodiment in mortuary contexts, but also the ways in which the living dealt with the physicality of the corpse, touching, arranging, positioning, orienting.

Burial positioning and orientation are then indicative of the many tangled relations in which the deceased participated in life (and in death). Thus, even where burial positioning appears to have been dictated by the size and shape of the burial context, such decisions are not just practicalities; rather, they are products of the relationships and spatial and temporal contexts of the deceased (and the living). This chapter has provided both macro- and micro-overviews of the patterns and changes in burial positioning and orientation from the Late Chalcolithic to the Iron Age. Rather than arguing for the existence of a single 'norm' in burial positioning it has emphasised diversity. By highlighting larger-scale shifts over time potential changes in the ways in which the living viewed

the human body, identity, and scholars have argued, however, of a single skeletal structure (2004, 260), an idea to which I

Notes

- 1 While body position and treatment of joint disarticulation, the latter purely on joint type, may be
- 2 In terms of negligible burial in total which, given the size observed patterns.
- 3 These figures do not include (due to intermixing of material forms), adding these burials,
- 4 That is, they are classified as indeterminate ageing.
- 5 Seventy-six supine extended
- 6 With associated burial position
- 7 This grave disturbed and cut (Lower).
- 8 Investigations at the site of graves), ranging in date from Only a handful of precisely with these data being drawn the site. Twenty-six of these adults, and six as indeterminate
- 9 It is unclear whether the biological assessment or an assessment based on the associated artefacts
- 10 The non-adults were estimated
- 11 Niehr (2014, 192) refers to this
- 12 This observation also draws for the varied practices at Chapter 3.
- 13 Yassine (1984) dated this ceremony while Sauer (1979) assigned 334) meanwhile suggests a assigned to the data for the
- 14 The only other fully published Sidon-Dakerman (Genz a Chapter 3 for additional points
- 15 Due to the recorded position orientated with their proximal the rest were orientated towards
- 16 No anthropological assessment biological sex and age of the
- 17 Seventy per cent (28 out of multiple burials, whereas c are from contexts housing 1
- 18 With many thanks to Graham
- 19 And see Cradic (2021) for a

m from shrouds to garments to the case of the Jericho tombs, ments, an identification emphasis shoulders and hips of some orth remembering that Burial A atform, reinforcing this idea of m of visual tableau.

lture may have been an integral ead, with the burial placement highlight the associated objects has interesting implications for gers (e.g. 'Ajjul and Rishon le-1 of MBA 'warrior burials', for f rulers or gods, clearly associ-short battle kilt. Other senses, ed, with Baker (2012, 83)¹⁹ sug-elvis in burials at Ashkelon may icinal or olfactory qualities. The s around the pelvis of such burase or draw attention to grave y. As will be discussed further in s their use in life, death, or the

, the human corpse represents a he living body and communicat- also serving as a locus for the entities and relationships (e.g. lputte 2004, 254, 260). It is not ss the body that can be used to uary contexts, but also the ways of the corpse, touching, arrang-

1 indicative of the many tangled n life (and in death). Thus, even dictated by the size and shape of st practicalities; rather, they are mporal contexts of the deceased oth macro- and micro-overviews ng and orientation from the Late uing for the existence of a single diversity. By highlighting larger- ways in which the living viewed

the human body, identity, and personhood have also been touched upon. As scholars have argued, however, the 'body' can expand far beyond the confines of a single skeletal structure to include animals and things (e.g. Van Wolputte 2004, 260), an idea to which I will now turn.

Notes

- 1 While body position and treatment prior to and during burial can affect the order of joint disarticulation, the notion of a predictable disarticulation sequence, based purely on joint type, may be flawed (Mickelburgh 2018, 110, 112).
- 2 In terms of negligible burial positioning data, we are only dealing with 23 records in total which, given the size of the dataset, is unlikely to significantly influence the observed patterns.
- 3 These figures do not include burials broadly dated to the Middle/Late Bronze Age (due to intermixing of materials, lack of published details, and/or lack of diagnostic forms), adding these burials, however, do not change the overall observed patterns.
- 4 That is, they are classified as adolescents/adults or adolescents/young adults or have indeterminate ageing.
- 5 Seventy-six supine extended burials and two extended on side unclassified.
- 6 With associated burial positioning and age data.
- 7 This grave disturbed and cut into an earlier burial which was designated Grave 105 (Lower).
- 8 Investigations at the site of have revealed evidence for hundreds of burials (379 graves), ranging in date from the MBA to Roman period (Braunstein 2011, 4–6). Only a handful of precisely dated burials have burial positioning and age details, with these data being drawn from Braunstein's (1998) thesis on burial practices at the site. Twenty-six of these were classified as adults, nine as children/infants/non-adults, and six as indeterminate/cross-category ages.
- 9 It is unclear whether the biological sex of the individual was based on an anthropological assessment or an assumption about the gender of this burial was made based on the associated artefactual assemblage.
- 10 The non-adults were estimated to be aged between 10 and 19 years.
- 11 Niehr (2014, 192) refers to the site as a seventh-century-BCE cemetery.
- 12 This observation also draws inspiration from some of the explanations put forward for the varied practices at Tell Sheikh Hamad (Kreppner 2014), discussed in Chapter 3.
- 13 Yassine (1984) dated this cemetery to the Iron IIc (i.e. Iron III) to the Persian period, while Sauer (1979) assigned the material a Babylonian-Persian date. Porter (2019, 334) meanwhile suggests a fifth-century-BCE date. An IA III-PER date has been assigned to the data for the purposes of this research.
- 14 The only other fully published site in Lebanon with similar adult jar burials is Sidon-Dakerman (Genz and Sader 2007, 259; Saidah 1979, 42), although see Chapter 3 for additional poorly documented examples.
- 15 Due to the recorded positioning of the toes and feet. The fifth metatarsals were orientated with their proximal ends towards the centre or midline of the body, while the rest were orientated towards the lateral sides of the burial.
- 16 No anthropological assessment is mentioned and for the purposes of this study the biological sex and age of the individual remains unclassified.
- 17 Seventy per cent (28 out of 40) of splayed burials from the total dataset are from multiple burials, whereas c. 78% (25 out of 32) splayed burials dated to the MBA are from contexts housing more than one individual.
- 18 With many thanks to Graham Philip with whom this idea was originally discussed.
- 19 And see Cradic (2021) for a more general discussion of senses within MBA tombs.

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