

8 Equipping the Dead

Over the past few decades archaeological understandings of burial goods have developed substantially, from scholars building methods to differentiate between personal, status, or essential items (e.g. Baker 2006, 2012), to an exploration of their use for ritual or funerary purposes (e.g. Pfälzner 2011). Others have focused on the transformative role of death, stressing that through the burial process, the meaning and value of associated materials can also be transformed (Ekengren 2013). By seeing objects within the mortuary sphere as potential active agents (e.g. Van Wolputte 2004, 260), in this chapter I explore shifting patterns and consider the role of grave goods in the construction and negotiation of identity, personhood, and belief in the afterlife. I also examine what is missing and deconstruct what burials *without* associated materials may be able to tell us. Are graves without burials goods simply indicative of low status or are the possible interpretations more complex and varied?

Grave Goods in Context

In many respects the objects found within tomb/burial contexts and their association with the human body are a subject worthy of their own volume, and, indeed, numerous publications have been written on this very subject (e.g. Baker 2006, 2012; Ekengren 2013; Green 2014; Weber 2014). There has, however, been a tendency to elevate the importance of grave goods (see Chapter 2), without fully considering the interrelationships between body and object within the grave. As Duda (2009, 6) has suggested, you are sometimes left with the impression that human remains are simply buried to accompany objects, rather than the other way round. Whether this may actually be the case in some circumstances is an idea worth bearing in mind. A single chapter cannot do justice to the sheer breadth of potential discussions and avenues for investigation on this topic. With this in mind, and rather than attempting to be exhaustive, here I wish to pick out several key themes, from the use of objects to support/comfort the dead to the different materials used to ornament the human corpse. In doing so, I aim to consider how the construction of identity and personhood can expand far beyond the confines of a human body, to include other animals and things.

Supporting the Dead

Much has been written on the in an afterlife setting, a topic more concerned with here, however, the comfort of the dead within the tomb may mean the sustenance of the dead, but rather the support of the dead, such as matting, or platforms. The role of support has already been briefly mentioned. I want to consider the broader relation to the use of such items.

Perhaps one of the most obvious patterns is the fact that the support of the dead in tomb contexts is highly continuous. We consider very carefully whether the temporal patterns of use and conditions. The surviving dataset recorded as part of this project (any given period), and thus being said, the fact that the Chalcolithic to the end of the Neolithic is a consideration in this book does not.

Some of the earliest evidence for matting. By way of example, the evidence in the eastern fissure of pottery sherds, a bead, leather of a mat (Barshad and Shalish 2004). Textiles, matting, and human remains that we see within other cave contexts. The mid-fourth millennium BCE Wadi Makukh included the almost fully articulated male, likely wrapped in cloth (Schick 1998). Similarly, evidence dated to the fourth millennium BCE association with textile wrapping, and some internal organ remains from Nahal Hevrat, mid-fourth millennium BCE centre of the cave, lying on the floor.

One way in which to interpret matting, within tombs is as a decay and productivity (Gardner 2004) organic materials discussed

Supporting the Dead

Much has been written on the subject of comforting or providing for the dead in an afterlife setting, a topic I shall return to later in this chapter. What I am more concerned with here, however, is the evidence we have for the support/comfort of the dead within the actual burial context. By this I do not necessarily mean the sustenance of the dead through food or other types of consumables, but rather the support offered to the corpse itself by way of tomb furniture/equipment, such as matting, pillow stones, or even in some cases wooden beds or platforms. The role of such 'furniture' within processes and practices of display has already been briefly touched upon in the previous chapter, but here I want to consider the broader temporal or spatial patterns that can be seen in relation to the use of such items.

Perhaps one of the most obvious challenges in reconstructing these broader patterns is the fact that the survival of items such as matting and textiles within tomb contexts is highly contingent on preservation conditions. We thus have to consider very carefully whether the surviving evidence is indicative of broader temporal patterns of use and/or simply a product of preferential survival conditions. The surviving dataset is, by its very nature, extremely small (29 sites recorded as part of this project, accounting for no more than 6% of sites from any given period), and thus not necessarily representative of the whole. This being said, the fact that the recorded material ranges in date from the Chalcolithic to the end of the Iron Age and, thus, spans the period under consideration in this book does perhaps allow broader patterns to be seen.

Some of the earliest evidence for grave furnishings is the presence of organic matting. By way of example, human burials dating to the Chalcolithic discovered in the eastern fissure of Wadi Makukh Cave III/7 were found alongside pottery sherds, a bead, leather, textiles, rope, burnt bones, as well as fragments of a mat (Barshad and Shaked 2002, 36). While the relationship between the textiles, matting, and human remains is not fully clear, this is a repeated pattern that we see within other caves from this region. Deposits from the fourth millennium BCE Wadi Makukh Cave 13 (Cave of the Warrior), for example, included the almost fully articulated skeleton of a biologically sexed adult male, likely wrapped in cloth/textile and placed on a reed mat on the cave floor (Schick 1998). Similarly, evidence from the Nahal Mishmar Cave, also (likely) dated to the fourth millennium BCE,¹ includes articulated human remains in association with textile wrappings, possible clothing fragments, leather, matting, and some internal organs/hair/skin (Bar-Adon 1980; Nativ 2014). Finally, remains from Nahal Hevar/Wadi al-Khabat (Cave of Horror), dating to the mid-fourth millennium BCE,² include a single articulated burial found in the centre of the cave, lying on matting (Aharoni 1993).

One way in which to interpret the presence of organic materials, such as matting, within tombs is as indicative of the interplay between processes of decay and productivity (Greenberg 2019, 39, 41). Although the variety of organic materials discussed in relation to the above would certainly offer

opportunities for the marking of decay, the details of these LCH/early-fourth-millennium-BCE contexts would seem to suggest a slightly different scenario. Indeed, their discovery from cave contexts, accessible, but certainly difficult to reach, their association with possible textile shrouds, and the presence of articulated (rather than disarticulated) remains would, to me, suggest a very strong focus on the comfort and protection of the corpse, rather than on a replication and mimicking of processes of decay.

A different or additional set of motivations may be at work within the EB I tombs at Bab edh-Dhra. Here, matting has been preserved both in direct association with human skeletal material and via impressions on the ceilings of tombs. In the majority of examples, reed matting appears to have been placed on the floors of burial chambers, prior to the interment of human remains. Tomb A71N, for example, included the remains of multiple disarticulated burials (probably two adults and one child) in a chamber, with impressions of reed matting found underneath the bone pile and skulls (Schaub and Rast 1989, 111–12). In some instances, separate sections of matting appear to have been used for skulls and postcranial elements (e.g. Tomb A114 (Ortner and Frohlich 2008, 216–24)). Tomb A68, in contrast, provided evidence for matting on the ceiling of the tomb, but not on the floor, with Schaub and Rast (1989, 99) suggesting that this material may have been held up by wooden supports.

While little is known about the original ‘burial’ location (i.e. if it took place outside of the shaft tombs) of the corpses deposited within the EB I tombs, preservation levels indicate that very variable lengths of time were involved in the initial burial/deposition process, from weeks to possibly years (Ortner and Frohlich 2008, 51). Thus, while some remains, due to their articulation, were still associated with soft tissue, others, due to the disarticulation and fragility of the bones, provide evidence for either rapid decay or a much lengthier period of initial deposition (Ortner and Frohlich 2008, 51). The act of laying matting upon the floor, with human remains deposited above, speaks to ideas of support and comfort. The use of different sections of matting for the cranial and postcranial remains, however, may have been a practical consideration, allowing for easy manoeuvre and organisation. It also reinforces the division and subsequent gathering together of separate body elements, a visual reminder of the temporal decay and divisibility of the human body. Bab edh-Dhra is, unfortunately, the only EB I site with definite evidence for the use of matting. Given the survival of matting fragments and other tomb furniture in the MBA tombs at Jericho, it is somewhat surprising that traces were not noted in relation to the EB I tombs.³ This may, however, be due to the different depositional histories at Bab edh-Dhra and Jericho, with corpses at the latter, at least in some cases, being originally deposited and then re-arranged within the shaft tombs, rather than buried elsewhere (e.g. Kenyon 1965, 11).

The handful of matting examples found in association with third millennium BCE (EB III and EB IV) tombs again appear to have been used to ‘support’ human remains. The eastern chamber of shaft tomb 17/35:4 at Tell Bi’a (EB III), for example, contained the remains of a single older adult male, whose corpse had originally been placed on a mat (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer

1998, 15). Several EB IV tombs show the potential use of matting. These include tomb 16/35:4 and a possible shaft tomb 17/35:4 around two months old, undisturbed (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998, 15). Mirzbaneh, Tomb A4, a shaft tomb, was used to lay out the disarticulated remains of a skull fragments and sub-cranial elements. In number, these examples, especially in relation to the use of matting in relation to the burial of adults and non-adults. Care has been associated with an individual based on the yellowish material (III), even animal remains may be found (2006, 608; Schwartz 2024, 47).

A final set of evidence for the use of matting dating to the second millennium BCE. We cannot assume that this material was recorded from the EBA or LBA in every MBA tomb. When it appears to have been used as a support (Burial K) in Tomb H22, for example, a thick layer or thick folds of matting were found (Crowfoot 1960, 524). In non-adults were treated in this way, was also found lying on a mat (503). Only one other MBA tomb for textile or organic support was found for an individual aged 18–25 years, naturally placed on a mat or post (43). Similarly, it is also suggested within Burial 124 at Sidon (196). What is notable about the support for the individual corpse earlier at EB I Bab edh-Dhra appears to have been used to support cushions in the previous chamber.

It is with this notion of support that we also consider the use of objects of the dead within the burial chamber, ‘stones’ (i.e. stones/objects used to support the head of a corpse) in the third millennium BCE onwards. We see an increasing focus on

tails of these LCH/early-fourth-century suggest a slightly different scenario. Possible, but certainly difficult to prove, and the presence of articulated, to me, suggest a very strong purpose, rather than on a replication

may be at work within the EB I when preserved both in direct association with impressions on the ceilings of tombs. It appears to have been placed in the interment of human remains. The use of multiple disarticulated burials, with impressions of reed matting on skulls (Schaub and Rast 1989), and the use of matting appear to have been common in Tomb A114 (Ortner and Frohlich 1998). The evidence for matting on the walls of Tomb A114 (Schaub and Rast (1989, 99) suggest it was supported by wooden supports.

The 'ritual' location (i.e. if it took place within the EB I tombs, presents a question of time were involved in the initial deposition, possibly years (Ortner and Frohlich 1998). In articulation, were still associated with the fragility of the bones, possibly a lengthier period of initial deposition, laying matting upon the floor, with the use of support and comfort. The use of matting and postcranial remains, however, suggest a need for easy manoeuvre and organization of the gathering together of separate remains, temporal decay and divisibility of the remains. The only EB I site with definite evidence of matting fragments and other features is somewhat surprising that traces of matting are present.³ This may, however, be due to the use of matting at Jericho, with corpses at the site deposited and then re-arranged elsewhere (e.g. Kenyon 1965, 11).

The association with third millennium BCE suggests that they may have been used to 'support' the body in a shaft tomb 17/35:4 at Tell Bi'a (EB I). A single older adult male, whose remains were found at (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer

1998, 15). Several EB IV tombs from Tell Bi'a also provide evidence for the potential use of matting. These include the burial of a child in a pit grave (Burial 16/35:4) and a possible shaft or pit tomb (Burial 24/47: 2) containing an infant around two months old, under which were found possible traces of a reed mat (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998, 12, 30). Further south, at EB IV Dhahr Mirzbaneh, Tomb A4, a shaft tomb, revealed the presence of matting, possibly used to lay out the disarticulated remains of a single adult individual, including skull fragments and sub-cranial remains (Lapp 1966, 14–15). While minimal in number, these examples, especially those from Tell Bi'a, provide evidence for the use of matting in relation to different tomb types (shaft tombs and pit graves), as well as in relation to both articulated and disarticulated human remains, adults and non-adults. Care and support of the dead, thus, does not seem to have been associated with any one particular group or type of burials. Indeed, based on the yellowish material discovered in Tomb 6 at Umm el-Marra (EB III), even animal remains may have been placed upon matting (Schwartz et al. 2006, 608; Schwartz 2024, 47), at least within this highly elite tomb context.

A final set of evidence derives from the MBA tombs at Jericho. Given that matting dating to the second millennium BCE primarily comes from this site, we cannot assume that this is representative. This being said, matting is not recorded from the EBA or LBA tombs from Jericho, nor is matting preserved in every MBA tomb. Where surviving or present, however, matting again appears to have been used as a supporting layer for individual corpses. A child (Burial K) in Tomb H22, for example, was positioned lying on a rush mat, with a thick layer or thick folds of textiles being placed between the body and this feature (Crowfoot 1960, 524; Kenyon 1960, 504). Again, not only children or non-adults were treated in this manner; Burial G, an adult from the same tomb, was also found lying on a rush support (Crowfoot 1960, 524; Kenyon 1960, 503). Only one other MBA site recorded by the project has provided evidence for textile or organic supports; Sidon.⁴ Burial 112, a stone lined pit, contained an individual aged 18–25 years, orientated E-W, whose corpse was likely originally placed on a mat or possibly a thin plank of wood (Doumet-Serhal 2009, 43). Similarly, it is also suggested that the upper body of the individual found within Burial 124 at Sidon was placed on a bed of reeds (Doumet-Serhal 2011, 196). What is notable about the examples mentioned here is the focus on support for the individual corpse. Thus, in contrast with the examples discussed earlier at EB I Bab edh-Dhra, matting from the third millennium BCE onwards appears to have been used to support, comfort, and, thinking back to my discussions in the previous chapter, display an individual corpse.

It is with this notion of individual display and comfort in mind that I want to also consider the use of other materials and objects to support and arrange the dead within the burial context. Objects that can be identified as 'pillow stones' (i.e. stones/objects specifically designed/positioned in the grave in order to support the head of a corpse), for example, appear to emerge from the mid-third millennium BCE onwards (see Figure 8.1). This is around the same time we see an increasing focus on the individual corpse within the burial record.

Similarly, other items of tomb furniture such as beds or platforms would appear to be absent from the archaeological record prior to the third millennium BCE. In order to determine why this might be, it is worth zooming in on a couple of specific case studies, to once again explore how such objects may have been used within the display and comfort of the dead.

One of the earliest examples of a pillow stone recorded by the project is from Grave 1782 at Jerablus Tahtani, dated to the Late EBA (c. 2600–1900 BCE). This shallow pit contained a young adult/adolescent, likely biological female, lying on their left side. Their head was positioned on a flat stone, while their feet were lying on two other stones. This individual's body also appears to have been covered with stones (Peltenburg et al. 2015, 85). One potential reading of this evidence (especially due to the presence of a stone covering) could be associated with tethering the body to the grave (see Chapter 9); elements of display and support, however, are also indicated. Several other contemporary graves at Jerablus appear to show evidence for stones found in association with or alongside the facial region, although instead of supporting the head, these appear to have either been found covering the skull (e.g. Burial 1342, an articulated infant, found in a shallow scoop below the floor of B1000 in Room 1191 (Peltenburg et al. 2015, 74)) or, in the case of Tomb 956, positioned in front of the face (Peltenburg et al. 2015, 72, Plate 29.10–11)). These latter two examples appear to have had a different function or meaning to the example from Grave 1782.

SITES WITH TOMBS CONTAINING MATTING, TOMB FURNITURE AND PILLOW STONES BY 100-YEAR TIMEBLOCK

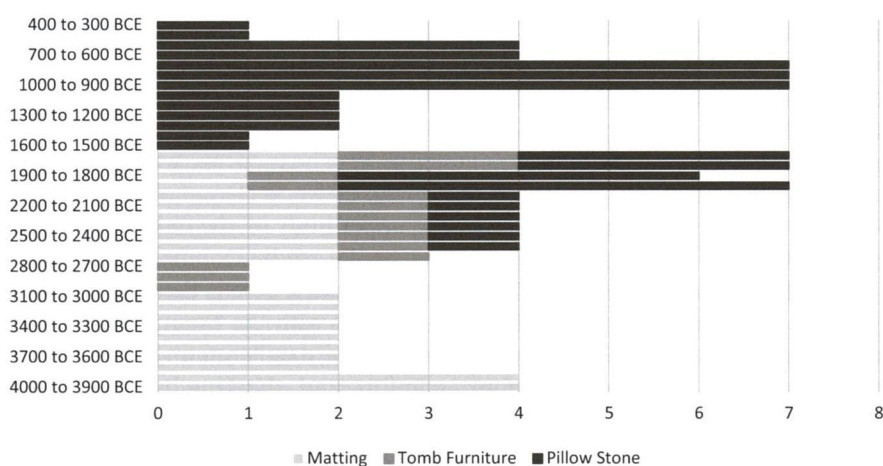


Figure 8.1 Pillow stones and items of comfort plotted by 100-year time-block. Only a very small number of sites have such remains preserved/recorded. The pillow stones included here for the LBA onwards are, by this point, predominately integrated into hewn or immovable structures within the burial context. Sites which include hewn/immovable platforms and benches (without definite pillow stones) are not included in this plot but are discussed in the text which follows.

Moving forwards in time more (relatively) prolific. Sites from Amrith in the north (c. 1954) to Gesher in the south (Figure 3.33)). At MBA Tell 1045) of a young, biological female, their head resting on a stone (Kempinski et al. 2002, 31). Tomb 439 showed a similar arrangement—two adults, biological, c. 5–6 years old—were found. Unfortunately, it is unclear if the head lying on the stone. This is even within a single burial context, suggesting not only particular types of furniture, but also particular types of objects. From Tomb 1 appear to have 17–19). Intriguingly, however, contain metal weapons (a sword). Again think about issues of context.

To delve a little further into contexts. Tomb B39 (MB I) 1700 years, whose head was positioned with two jars (found). A spearhead (also at the south). A juglet (possibly placed above the head and to the south of the body). The placement of objects certainly seems to have been meaningful, meanwhile, contained a bronze axe associated with a bronze axe found adjacent to the feet, a large boulders were placed around to have been used in order to maintain the body (Figure 17). The latter (i.e. context) with my discussions in the text being taken to maintain the body with associated materials.

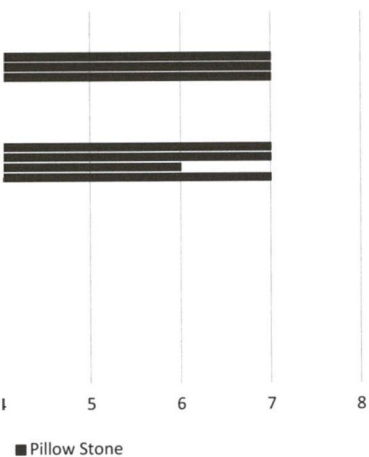
Tomb furniture, including several different roles within the use of matting, with support (comfort) for the human corpse alongside corpses, as in the example facilitated the display of the deceased personas. In line with the s

nt (4500–550 BCE)

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NG, TOMB FURNITURE AND AR TIMEBLOCK



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Moving forwards in time, evidence for pillow stones within MBA tombs is more (relatively) prolific. Such features have been documented at sites ranging from Amrith in the north (e.g. Tomb/Silo 7 (Dunand, Saliby, and Khirichian 1954)) to Gesher in the south (e.g. Grave 7 (Garfinkel and Cohen 2007, 25, 30, Figure 3.33)). At MBA Tell Kabri, for example, the articulated skeleton (Tomb 1045) of a young, biologically sexed female, c. 25 years, was positioned with their head resting on a stone. A further stone was also placed under their feet (Kempinski et al. 2002, 31). One of the adult skeletons documented from Tomb 439 showed a similar arrangement (Kempinski et al. 2002, 48). Three individuals—two adults, biologically sexed male and female, and a child aged c. 5–6 years old—were found within this grave (Kempinski et al. 2002, 48, 389). Unfortunately, it is unclear from the original publication which adult had their head lying on the stone. This example, however, highlights that not everyone, even within a single burial context, was afforded comfort via additional tomb furniture, suggesting not only a focus on the support of the individual body, but also particular types of individuals. At MB I Tiberias, all four individuals from Tomb 1 appear to have had their skulls placed on stones (Tzaferis 1968, 17–19). Intriguingly, however, Tomb 1 was the only tomb at this site found to contain metal weapons (a single arrowhead and three daggers), requiring us to again think about issues of display, as well as support.⁵

To delve a little further into this idea of display, I want to consider two final contexts. Tomb B39 (MB I) from Rishon le-Zion contained an adult c. 30–40 years, whose head was positioned on a brick support. This individual was associated with two jars (found near the southern wall of the tomb), a bronze spearhead (also at the south), a bronze dagger with stone pommel (at the hip), a juglet (possibly placed above the body), and animal bones (both near to the head and to the south of the tomb) (Levy and Kletter 2018, 27, 103, Plan 2.27). The placement of objects above and around the body of this individual, certainly seems to have been a choreographed affair. Burial 5 from Sidon, meanwhile, contained a biologically sexed adult male. This individual was associated with a bronze axe and spearhead, both found near to the skull, a jug found adjacent to the feet, and animal remains (in the north of the tomb). Two large boulders were placed at the head and feet, and shaped lumps of clay seem to have been used in order to support the corpse (Doumet-Serhal 2004, 91, 99, Figure 17). The latter (i.e. clay lumps) are particularly intriguing and, in line with my discussions in the previous chapter, would hint towards measures being taken to maintain body positioning and, thus the spatial relationships with associated materials.

Tomb furniture, including stone supports, therefore, appears to have played several different roles within MBA tombs. The first links to my discussions on the use of matting, with such features providing support (and possibly even comfort) for the human corpse.⁶ Given the other material remains found alongside corpses, as in the examples above, we can also suggest that such objects facilitated the display of the human body and its associated social and cultural personas. In line with the second millennium BCE ‘heat treatment’ practices

discussed in Chapter 5 and body positioning in Chapter 7, such additions can be seen as a potential further method of maintaining the individuality of the human body, at least for a short period of time. As the limited number of examples demonstrates, however, this practice was not a necessity for everyone, but yet another way of effectively controlling and outwardly expressing bodily and social identity in death.

Evidence for the use of 'pillow stones' and other forms of smaller or more moveable/organic tomb furniture is surprisingly limited for the later second millennium BCE (i.e. LBA). By way of example, at Hazor, a single articulated skeleton (young female adult), dated to LB II, was found deposited within a reused cistern (T. 9027), lying on their back, with hands on their chest and head resting on a stone (Gonen 1992, 123). Much further north, at Tell Alalakh, Woolley (1955, 211) documented a LBA burial (ATG/47/8, Level IV) containing two individuals: an infant and an adult. The lower burial, the adult, was found lying on their left side, tightly flexed, with their head resting on a stone. Given the fact that there is a drop in the number of burials in the LBA (see Chapter 3), especially in comparison to the earlier second millennium, the drop in sites with associated tomb furniture is not necessarily surprising. As such, it appears to roughly mirror the overall ebbs and flows in site numbers, albeit at a much lower frequency. Moreover, this pattern can be supplemented by considering tombs with hewn or immovable benches/platforms/tables, foreshadowing shifts in tomb equipment from the end of the second millennium BCE onwards.

Relatively few examples of immovable tomb furniture are documented prior to the LBA. Exceptions to this are the MBA mudbrick platforms from Jericho, mentioned in the previous chapter, and stone platforms at the site of El-Jib (Tombs 57 and 58), possibly used for laying out the body (Pritchard 1963, 58–62). At Tell Shiqmona/Tell es-Samaq, an MB II shaft tomb contained rock-cut benches and shelves (Hallote 1994, 184), while Tomb 5 at Tell el-Far'ah North contained a large bench along the southern side of tomb (de Vaux and Steve 1949, 123). As the latter was also in use during the LBA and IA (as well as EB I), it is unclear whether this feature was present and in use throughout the whole life history of the tomb. Tomb 65 at Khirbet Nisya also provides evidence for the presence of an internal platform, although again this tomb was in use during the MB II, as well as the IA (and Late Chalcolithic-Early Bronze Age I) (Livingston 2002). Finally, semi-circular platforms, carved from bedrock with mudbrick superstructures, in Tomb V at Qatna, have been interpreted as platforms used for the deposition of grave goods, rather than skeletal material (Morandi Bonacossi 2011, 28).

As we move into the LBA, the evidence for immovable tomb furniture increases, although some of this evidence derives from contexts dating to the LBA-EIA. At Sahab, for example, Tomb C (LBA-IA) contained benches, at least one of which may have been used for the deposition of deceased individuals (Dajani 1970). Similarly, the LBA-EIA tombs at Deir el-Balah (Dothan and Brandl 2010), Tell el-Far'ah South (Braunstein 1998), Irbid (Al-Shalabi, Bürge, and Fischer 2017) and Khirbet Tell el-Beida (Klein and Shai 2016)

contained benches. The LB II tomb identified in the early twentieth century is presumably where the dead were carried, as was recorded in association with a reused cistern dated to the LBA. The majority of skeletal remains are from the LBA (Gonen 1992, 126–27). To this, the el-Far'ah North (de Vaux and Steve 1949, 123). Lastly, much further north, at Tell Alalakh, wooden benches were utilised for the display and treatment of the dead (Pfälzner 2012; Roßberger 2015).

From at least the IA I–II, the use of tomb provisioning by way of furniture is evident itself (i.e. carved pillow stones). The early IA, contained numerous examples of the NW section of the cave. The cave was equipped with rock-pillows and benches (Gonen 1992, 32). This pattern is repeated in the Iron Age, where a rock-cut tomb (Tomb 109) on three sides. Each bench had a stone carved into the walls near the entrance (Gonen 2002). Similarly, Tomb 4 at Tell el-Far'ah North (109) to be typical of burial practices of which had stone pillows as well as benches (Ussishkin 1974, 117). Rock-cut benches (Hinnom Valley), Silwan, and Jericho, with associated headrests/pillows (Ussishkin 1970). At Khirbet Nisya, both ends of the benches (Bloch 2002) evidence from nearly 40 additional tombs to the Iron Age.

Considering general shifts in tomb provisioning, organic materials such as matting, in many cases, persistent and not only at least the mid-second millennium BCE, but in the form of supporting/displaying the dead, of comfort that I started this chapter with a stone as medium through which the dead might seem like a permanent presence. The possibilities. First, while the dead might seem like a permanent presence in the first place to rest your head in the tomb, perhaps transformed (e.g. Ekholm 2017).

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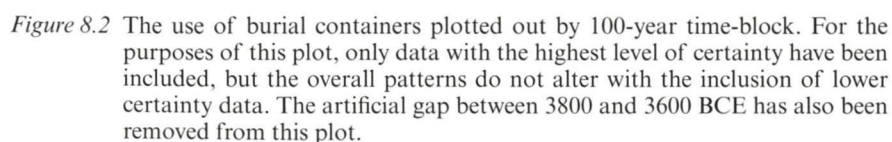
e for immovable tomb furniture rives from contexts dating to the (LBA-IA) contained benches, at e deposition of deceased individ- tombs at Deir el-Balah (Dothan unstein 1998), Irbid (Al-Shalabi, el-Beida (Klein and Shai 2016)

contained benches. The LB II rock-cut tomb at Sarafend (Baramki 1956), first identified in the early twentieth century, also contained internal benches, presumably where the dead were originally laid out, although no skeletal material was recorded in association with this tomb (Gonen 1992, 124). At Gezer, a re-used cistern dated to the LBA was equipped with a stone platform/paving, with the majority of skeletal remains being recorded from this area (Gonen 1992, 63; Macalister 1912, 289). Several other tombs containing LBA deposits at Gezer (Cave/Tomb 9 and Cave/Tomb 58) also contained rock hewn benches (Gonen 1992, 126–27). To this list we can add evidence from the site of Tell el-Far'ah North (de Vaux and Steve 1949), as well as Lachish (Tufnell 1953). Lastly, much further north, at the Royal Hypogeum at Qatna, stone and wooden benches were utilised for the placement of grave goods, as well as the display and treatment of the deceased within the tomb (e.g. Lange 2012; Pfälzner 2012; Roßberger 2015).

From at least the IA I–II onwards we see increasing investment in tomb provisioning by way of furniture, although now part of the overall structure itself (i.e. carved pillow stones). At Sahab, the lower levels of Area C, Tomb 1 (early IA), contained numerous individuals deposited on bedrock benches in the NW section of the cave. All the benches/recognisable individuals were equipped with rock-pillows and lamps (Bloch-Smith 1992, 177; Ibrahim 1972, 32). This pattern is repeated within the Tell Halif/Tell el-Khuweilifeh cemetery, where a rock-cut tomb (Tomb 6) dated to IA II contained benches on three sides. Each bench had a stone pillow associated with it, while lamp niches were carved into the walls near the head of the deceased (Bloch-Smith 1992, 202). Similarly, Tomb 4 at Tell 'Aitun/'Eitun, considered by Ussishkin (1974, 109) to be typical of burial practices at this site, contained three recesses, two of which had stone pillows associated with them (Bloch-Smith 1992, 198–99; Ussishkin 1974, 117). Rock-cut tombs at Khirbet el-Qom and Jerusalem (Ben Hinnom Valley), Silwan, and Zuba/Suba show similar patterns of benches with associated headrests/pillow stones (Bloch-Smith 1992, 234, 241–43; Ussishkin 1970). At Khirbet el-Qom and Zuba headrests are possibly seen at both ends of the benches (Bloch-Smith 1992, 241). To this dataset we can add evidence from nearly 40 additional sites with tombs containing benches dated to the Iron Age.

Considering general shifts in the provisioning of tombs; from the use of organic materials such as matting, to the employment of immovable and, in many cases, persistent and non-decayable forms of tomb furniture, from at least the mid-second millennium BCE onwards, we see a more streamlined form of supporting/displaying the dead. Here, I also want to return to the ideas of comfort that I started this section with. In many ways, the idea of using stone as medium through which to provide support and, especially, comfort for the dead might seem like a paradox. We can, however, consider several different possibilities. First, while a stone slab or bench would perhaps not be the first place to rest your head in life, in the mortuary context, such materials were perhaps transformed (e.g. Ekengren 2013). Stone 'pillows' or rests, rather than

Here, by way of a conclusion to this section, I want to briefly turn to the role of burial containers (i.e. a container, whether it be a ceramic jar or wooden coffin, used to house human remains). Over time we see two significant peaks in the plots (see Figure 8.2).⁷ The first, dating to the fifth/fourth millennium BCE, corresponds to the use of ossuaries in Late Chalcolithic tombs, a topic already discussed by many scholars (see Chapter 3 (e.g. Ilan and Rowan 2012,



This pattern is, of course, more fully discussed in Chapter 5, with sites providing ample evidence for burials remains. Moreover, we also have stone sarcophagi, prior to their non-adult burials, however, because burial containers are often associated with elite tombs. Examples include the sarcophagi at Umm el-Marra ((Porter 2002, 19) and see Chaffin at Umm el-Marra (Schwartz 2002), fins from the MBA and LBA (266, 274; Montet 1928, 146–4

Based on the tens of anthropol-
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Furthermore, as more than one burial container, there are people such as burial benches and more naturalistic anthropoid coffin forms that contained three adults and one child that these variations and pat-

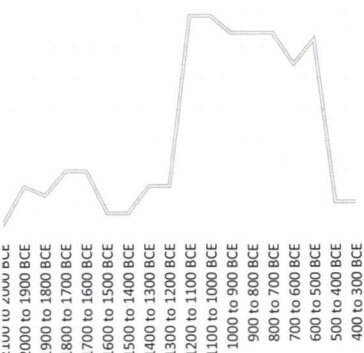
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2019; Nativ and Gopher 2011; Nativ 2014; Rowan and Golden 2009, 52–56; Rowan and Ilan 2013, 89–90)) and thus not covered in detail here. What I instead want to focus on is the significant uptick in the numbers of burial containers from the end of the LBA/beginning of the IA.

This pattern is, of course, related to the rise in cremation practices already discussed in Chapter 5, with sites across both the southern and northern Levant providing ample evidence for the use of containers to house cremated human remains. Moreover, we also have evidence for the use of containers, including stone sarcophagi, prior to this period. Beyond the use of jars for infant and non-adult burials, however, between the third and late second millennia BCE, burial containers are often associated with particularly richly equipped and elite tombs. Examples include the wooden coffin from Tomb 7 at Tell Banat ((Porter 2002, 19) and see Chapter 3), the bitumen-coated coffin from Tomb 6 at Umm el-Marra (Schwartz 2024, 47), and wooden and stone sarcophagi/coffins from the MBA and LBA royal tombs at Byblos (Genz and Sader 2007, 266, 274; Montet 1928, 146–47, 218–26).

In comparison to this small, albeit important, set of examples, our evidence explodes in the late second/early first millennium BCE. LBA-EIA anthropoid coffins, for example, are documented at sites such as Beth She'an (Oren 1973), Deir el-Balah (Dothan 1979), and Tell el-Far'ah South (Braunstein 1998). Meanwhile, at LBA/IA Tell es-Sa'idiyeh (Green 2006, 2009, 2014) the use of jars or double jars to contain non-burnt human remains is a well-documented practice. Although not a burial container, per se, it is also worth noting the application of bitumen, as well as the presence of linen shrouds at this site (Green 2009, 83), evidence that has been linked to Egyptian embalming practices (e.g. Green 2009, 83; Greenberg 2019, 305; Gonen 1992, 30–31, 89; Pritchard 1980, 15, 20–21). A similar, localised, role may have been played by beeswax at other sites also dating to this broad period (e.g. Horvat Tevet (Amir et al. 2021; Weitzel et al. 2024) and Tell Shadud (Be'eri, Van den Brink, and Kirzner 2021)).

Based on the tens of anthropoid coffins recorded from Deir el-Balah, very few duplicates, in terms of decoration and modelling, exist (Greenberg 2019, 299). Thus, whether attempting to mimic a lived or imagined social identity, in comparison to the benches and pillow stones found in rock-cut tombs, such burial containers offer the potential for a more individualised approach to treating and comforting the human body. The two, however, are not mutually exclusive, with both carved and free standing sarcophagi and burial containers also being found in rock-cut tombs (e.g. Sahab (e.g. Albright 1932; Bloch-Smith 1992, 166, 189; Ibrahim 1972, 31–32) and Jerusalem (Old City Walls) (Bloch-Smith 1992, 221; Broshi, Barkay, and Gibson 1983)).

Furthermore, as more than one individual could be interred with a single burial container, there are perhaps more similarities between static structures such as burial benches and moveable burial containers, such as coffins. The naturalistic anthropoid coffin from Tomb 114 at Deir el-Balah, for example, contained three adults and one child (Dothan 1978, 5–27). This is not to suggest that these variations and patterns have no temporal, spatial, or sociocultural

meaning. Underlying these complex conscious and unconscious decisions, however, may be an increased concern with comfort, as well as the control of preservation and decay of the human corpse.

Providing (or Not Providing) for the Dead

Beyond ideas of comfort, one of the most often cited explanations for the inclusion of objects within tombs is the idea of providing for the dead in the afterlife/netherworld. While evidence would seem to suggest that such interactions could occur in different ways and in numerous locations beyond the grave (e.g. Aubet 2010, 154; Lange 2017), the inclusion of pottery vessels, as well as animal remains, points towards the notion of provisioning, as well as real and imagined/symbolic consumption activities, either during the burial process (i.e. food consumed by the living and then deposited within the tomb) or by the deceased within the afterlife. It is not only consumption activities, however, that are visible within these datasets. The adornment and ornamentation of the dead also plays an important role in the funerary sphere. As I will further explore below, however, the extent to which these aspects of ornamentation and provisioning can be seen as expressions of lived versus created identities can be debated.

Pottery and Consumption

It is not my intention to go into significant detail here regarding the provisioning of tombs with pottery vessels and items relating to consumption activities. What is worth highlighting, however, is the changing form and thus likely contents and use of vessels within the burial sphere. By way of example, significant shifts can be seen in the popularity of different vessel forms over time across the wider Levant. Baker (2012, 58), in her analysis of the ‘Canaanite’ burial kit, suggests that three basic groups of ceramics can be identified: serving vessels (e.g. platters and larger bowls), tableware or vessels of personal consumption (e.g. smaller bowls and cups), and containers for commodities (e.g. juglets for perfumes and oils). I shall return to the latter towards the end of this section. For now, by way of one particular corpus of pottery, drinking sets, I want to consider the differential presence of consumption vessels during the mid-late third to second millennia BCE.

Drinking sets are often characterised as a standard EBA/MBA ‘grave good’. In some contexts, such items are deposited alongside meat offerings (e.g. Ascalone 2014, 199), while in others, sets of jars, dipper juglets, and occasional goblets or drinking bowls suggest the (intended) consumption of liquids, either during the funeral or by dead (e.g. Be’eri et al. 2020; Greenberg 2019, 148, 156, 172). The categorisation of cups versus bowls within the literature is not always clear, many overlaps exist, and reports do not always distinguish between these two forms or publish the basis of their categorisations. The data, however, point towards several major peaks in the use of such vessels. The first, in terms of drinking vessels or cups, during the EB IV or Late EBA and, the second, in

terms of bowls, during the M part, be influenced by different cups) by researchers working in and (b)),⁸ however, are so star

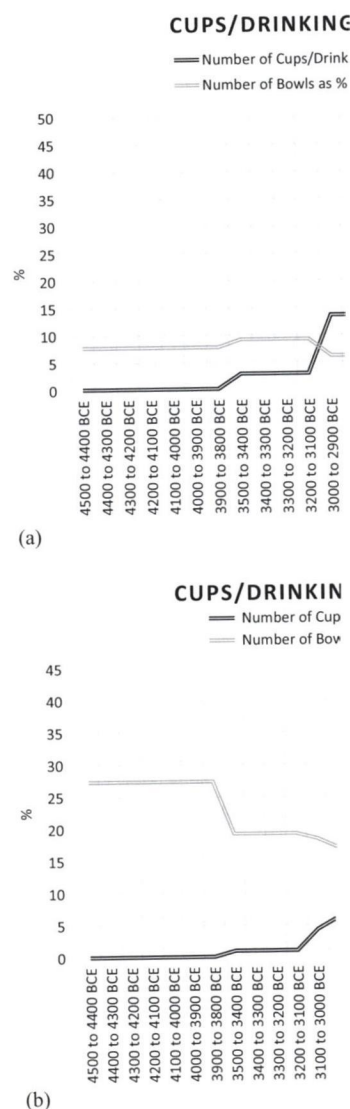


Figure 8.3 (a) Cups/drinking v recorded cups/drink vessels and bowls at 100-year time-block are included in this

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terms of bowls, during the MBA-LBA. The patterns presented here may, in
part, be influenced by differential categorisations of vessel forms (bowls versus
cups) by researchers working in different periods. The shifts (see Figure 8.3(a)
and (b)),⁸ however, are so stark as to warrant further consideration and may

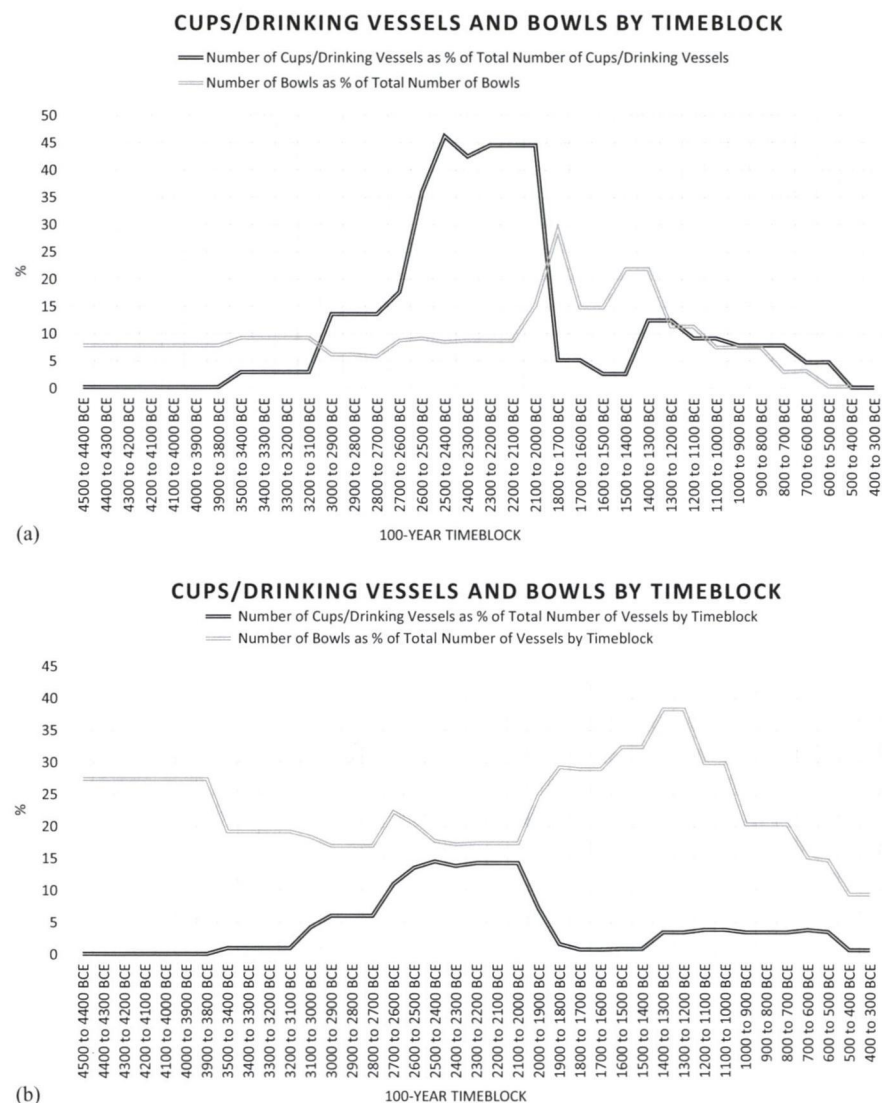


Figure 8.3 (a) Cups/drinking vessels and bowls as a percentage of the total number of recorded cups/drinking vessels and bowls respectively and (b) cups/drinking vessels and bowls as a percentage of the total number of recorded vessels by 100-year time-block from across the Levant. Only sites with numerical data are included in this plot.

suggest broader changes in the ways in which consumption activities were occurring, and being conceptualised of, in and around burial contexts.

The period between c. 2600/2500 and 2000 BCE accounts for over 40% of the total number of cups/drinking vessels recorded by the project and for c. 15% of the total number of vessels recorded for this period. This may well be an underestimation due to the inclusion of data with only the highest level of certainty in the graphs presented here. The majority of these derive from burials in the northern Levant (see Figure 8.4) and predominantly from a handful of sites and tombs. By way of example, at Tell Ahmar, hundreds of cups (including three bronze examples), chalices, and bowls/cups were found in association with two individuals within a stone-built chamber (Peltenburg 2013, 244; Roobaert and Bunnens 1999; Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936). The finds from these and similar tombs have been characterised by Peltenburg (2013, 243) as representing an “... explosion of competitive consumption in funerary monuments...” and highlight clear individualising tendencies and visible elite expressions in death.

We can, however, also consider the role drinking vessels may have played within patterns of collective individualism (Fowler 2016, 403; and see Hamilakis 2014, 154–55 for a discussion of this in relation to the Cretan EBA). The cumbersome pedestalled vessels/chalices (champagne cups) from Tomb 302 at Jerablus Tahtani and other Euphrates river sites, for example, may have been used in single large-scale feasting events, or drinking rituals, carried out as part of the burial process (e.g. Jamieson 2017, 481; Peltenburg 1999, 432, 2015, 245; Porter 2002, 22, 2012, 206–7). In other words, ideas of belonging and identity in death could be expressed through individual consumption technologies, enacted, and displayed through a shared, albeit exclusive, group setting.

Cups and bowls/cups also appear at late-third-millennium-BCE sites across the southern Levant, although in smaller quantities per context (see Figure 8.4). The famous silver goblet from ‘Ain Samiya stands out as a unique example and may even have been an heirloom when deposited (Greenberg 2019, 175–76). Although the exact numbers of vessels are not reported, the EB IV tombs from Tell Hizzin also contained beakers and goblets (Genz and Sader 2008, 187), while 20 EB IV shaft tombs documented from ‘Ein Assawir contained diagnostic pottery including jars, bowls, cups, cooking pots, and spouted jars (Yannai and Horowitz 1998, 48). In terms of quantified pottery, the looted chamber of Tomb A48 at Dhahr Mirzbaneh likely held the remains of a single adult individual, associated with the fragmentary remains of three cups and one spouted lamp (Lapp 1966, 22). Meanwhile, Tomb NE2 at Tiwal esh-Sharqi revealed the fragmentary remains of a single burial, associated with a cup and storage jar, found close to where the hands of this individual may have originally been located⁹ (Tubb 1990, 13).

Given the extent of evidence from the northern Levant, the more limited and variable number of drinking/consumption vessels in the south, also including spouted jars (‘teapots’), is intriguing. This is even more notable given the contemporary fluorescence of cups/goblets in non-mortuary contexts in this



Figure 8.4 The distribution of drinking vessels from the third millennium BCE (sites mentioned here, as MB I). Sites mentioned: 1. Tell Ahmar; 2. Tell Mirzbaneh; 7. ‘Ain Samiya

area (Bunimovitz and Greenberg 2019). Differential patterns suggest that burial forms and traditions in the southern Levant (e.g. Greenberg 1994–95; D’Andrea 2018; Kenyon 1979), such influences did not extend to drinking vessels within mortuary contexts in the northern Levant (e.g. Peltenburg 2017, 481; Mazzoni 1994), although they were found in quantities that would suggest feasting events. Further research is needed, but it may suggest that despite shared traditions, the EB IV southern Levant burial practices played a different role in the region.

By the second millennium BCE, the expense of cups/dedicated drinking vessels identified by Baker (2012, 5) can also consider a broader

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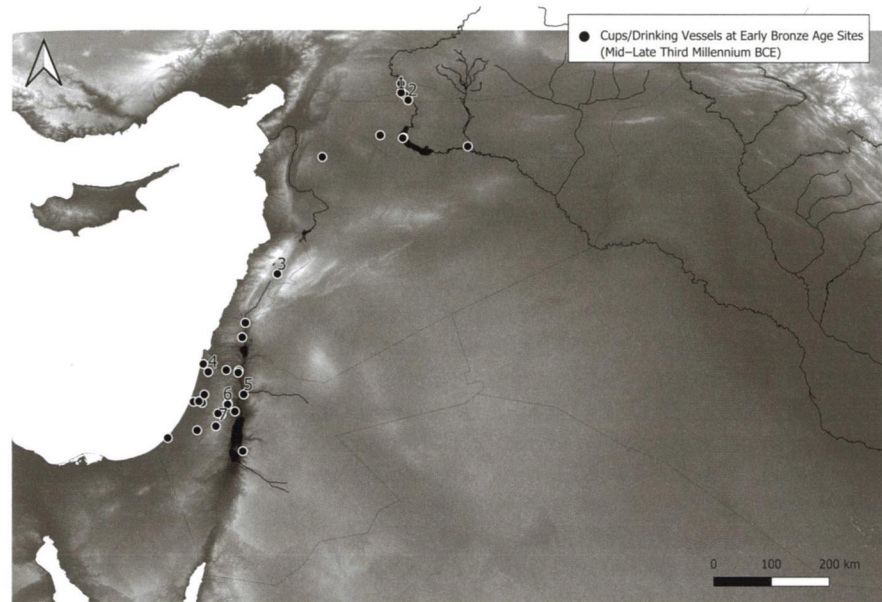


Figure 8.4 The distribution of cups/drinking vessels from Early Bronze Age (late third millennium BCE) mortuary contexts across the Levant. All certainty levels are included here, as well as sites which may overlap in date (e.g. EB IV-MB I). Sites mentioned in the text are labelled as follows: 1. Jerablus Tahtani; 2. Tell Ahmar; 3. Tell Hizzin; 4. 'Ein Assawir; 5. Tiwal esh-Sharqi; 6. Dhahr Mirzbaneh; 7. 'Ain Samiya/'Ein Samiya.

area (Bunimovitz and Greenberg 2004, 25; D'Andrea 2018, 84–86). Such differential patterns suggest that, despite clear Syro-Mesopotamian influences on burial forms and traditions during EB IV (e.g. Bradbury and Philip 2017, 94–95; D'Andrea 2018; Kennedy 2015) and see Chapter 3 for further discussion), such influences did not necessarily extend to the systematic inclusion of drinking vessels within mortuary contexts. In particular, in contrast to contexts in the northern Levant (e.g. Bunimovitz and Greenberg 2004, 26–27; Jamieson 2017, 481; Mazzoni 1994), cups and individualised drinking vessels are not found in quantities that would point to their use in the large-scale feasting events. Further research is clearly needed on this topic. These findings, however, suggest that despite showing clear northern influences, communities in the EB IV southern Levant selectively adopted and adapted burial traditions from their northern neighbours, with drinking paraphernalia and technologies playing a different role in the mortuary sphere of these societies.

By the second millennium BCE, the percentage of bowls¹⁰ increases at the expense of cups/dedicated drinking vessels. Undoubtedly such containers, as identified by Baker (2012, 58), could be used for personal consumption. We can also consider a broader range of functions and thus potentially (intended)

contents for these vessels. Both platter and globular bowls, sometimes in combination, are found in MBA tombs (e.g. Tell Hizzin (Genz and Sader 2008)) and may point towards the differential or multi-purpose use of vessels falling under the broad category of ‘bowls’.¹¹ The corresponding and almost parallel apogee of large storage vessels/jars and juglets during the second millennium BCE, and particularly MB II, also points towards a larger shift in the ways in which tombs were being provisioned. Such wider patterns also reflect trends seen at a more localised level. As might be expected, assemblages from Jericho shape many of these patterns, they are, however, observed elsewhere. Typical MB I–II pottery at Rishon le-Zion, for example, consists of juglets, bowls, followed by jars and pithoi (Kletter and Levy 2016, 12–13), while the association of bowls, juglets, and jars/pithoi (alongside lamps) was also identified at Ashkelon (Baker 2012, 84). These associations then, albeit perhaps showing local, regional, and chronological variations, point towards shared material practices and expressions, particularly during the MB II, a period during which, as already discussed, we see the significant re-emergence and popularity of multiple successive burials with tombs.

Personal Ornamentation and Grooming

To take these arguments one step further, I want to return to the potential use of Baker’s (2012, 58) containers for commodities (e.g. juglets for perfumes and oils). As discussed in Chapter 3, the MBA represents a period during which we see start to see increased evidence for the exchange of precious goods within ceramic vessels (Maguire 2009, 76–98, 111). Beeswax, vegetable oils, animal fats, and even vanilla and opium found in second- and first-millennia-BCE contexts (e.g. Megiddo (Cradic 2021, 421–22), Tell Yehud (Linares et al. 2022) and Horvat Tevet (Weitzel et al. 2024)) highlight the variety of ways in which containers, and their contents, could be utilised both during and in the aftermath of the burial process. Rather than reiterating this research here, what is worth highlighting is the ways in which such commodities may have been linked to concepts of personal grooming and display, even in death.

In previous chapters I discussed a variety of visual and, as Cradic (2021) has pointed out, sensorial, tableaux, in terms of the positioning, display, and ornamentation of the body within MBA tombs. Worth emphasising is that during this period we also see a visible increase in the number of personal grooming items in the mortuary sphere. These include items such as bottles and juglets, interpreted as having contained cosmetics/oils, as well as items such as combs, palettes, and spatulas. When vessels are removed,¹² the visible popularity of items associated with personal grooming becomes even more significant during this period (Figure 8.5).

Cosmetic items predating the MBA certainly do exist. Stone palettes from third-millennium-BCE (EB II–III) Bab edh-Dhra (e.g. A41 (Schaub and Rast 1989, 455–56)) and Jericho (e.g. Tomb D12 (Kenyon 1960, Figure 40.3)), for example, are linked to the grinding of cosmetic pigments (Nigro 2010, 224).

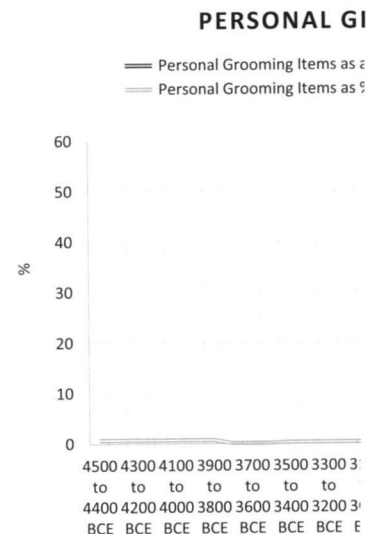


Figure 8.5 Items associated with personal grooming as a percentage of the total items associated with the project.

Similarly, decorated bone tubes from Jericho (Tomb D12 (Kenyon 1960, Figure 40.3)) and Banat (e.g. Tomb 1 (Porter 1999, 193–94)) contain traces of organic substances (Genz 2003). Worth noting is the distribution of these objects. Genz (2003) documents only three examples from the southern Levant, while 36 are documented in Syria/the northern Levant contexts still outweigh those documented in the southern Levant. These totals (Eremin et al. 2015, 193–94) suggest that such objects were used in different ways in these two broad regions.

Moving into the MBA we see a significant increase in the data, the majority of which are associated with personal grooming items, including combs, have been found. For example, the combs from Tomb H11 were found in a wooden box containing what has been identified as a wig, including five combs and a wig. A second example from a tomb with nine combs and a wig,

PERSONAL GROOMING ITEMS BY TIMEBLOCK

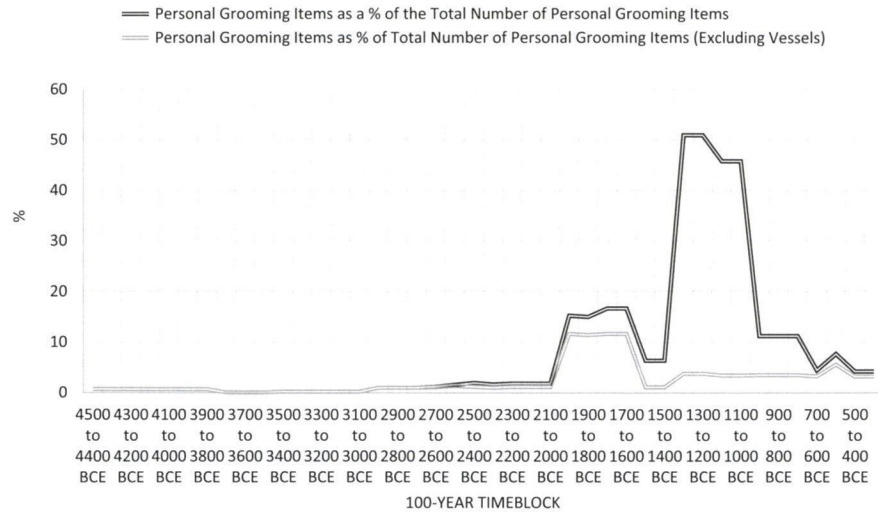


Figure 8.5 Items associated with personal grooming recorded by 100-year time-block as a percentage of the total number of personal grooming items recorded by the project.

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Similarly, decorated bone tubes (third millennium BCE) in the southern (e.g. Jericho (Tomb D12 (Kenyon 1960, Figure 40.8)) and northern Levant (e.g. Tell Banat (e.g. Tomb 1 (Porter 1995, Figure 8)) and Jerablus Tahtani (e.g. Tomb 302 ((Eremin et al. 2015, 193–94)) are thought to have contained kohl or similar substances (Genz 2003). Worth highlighting here, however, is the differential distribution of these objects. Genz (2003, 30, Table 2), in his comprehensive analysis, documents only three examples of decorated bone tubes from tombs in the southern Levant, while 36 are noted from settlement contexts. Disparities are less stark in Syria/the northern Levant; however, the examples from settlement contexts still outweigh those documented from tombs. New finds have added to these totals (Eremin et al. 2015, 194);¹³ however, the differential distribution between mortuary and non-mortuary locales in the northern and southern Levant suggests that such objects were understood and employed in slightly different ways in these two broad regions (see below for a similar discussion on pins).

Moving into the MBA we are still dealing with a relatively small subset of data, the majority of which derives from Jericho, where a range of wooden items, including combs, have been recorded. By way of example, four individuals from Tomb H11 were associated with either single or multiple wooden combs (Kenyon 1960, 470–73). Individual A from Tomb H18 was linked with a wooden box containing what Kenyon (1960, 488) interpreted as ‘toilet equipment’, including five combs and fragments/strands of a wool-like textile, which may have been a wig. A second adult, Burial L, was also potentially associated with nine combs and a wig, as well as a faience bottle and alabaster juglet

(Basket 25 (Kenyon 1960, 489)). Burial D from Tomb H22, meanwhile, was likely associated with a basket containing 12 wooden combs, two alabaster vessels and one faience bottle. A similar assemblage of objects was noted in relation to Burial E (Kenyon 1960, 503). Such materials, although more commonly seen alongside adults, are also on occasion found alongside children (e.g. Burial K, Tomb H11 and Burial H, H22 (Kenyon 1960, 503–4) and see Chapter 6 for further discussion). The repeated association of cosmetic vessels and combs, some of which may have been positioned in relation to/fallen from the head, as well as the possible discovery of sections/fragments of wigs suggests that combs may have been used as part of (elaborate) hairstyles. As with my discussions in Chapters 3 and 7, these assemblages continue to point to the beautification of the individual articulated corpse. Jericho is clearly remarkable in this regard. Such materials, however, are also documented to a lesser extent from a handful of other MB sites.

Pit 195 at Ashkelon (Ramat Eshkol), for example, contained two storage jars, two dipper juglets and one bone comb, although this burial was unfortunately disturbed and cut by heavy machinery (Gershuny 2019, 65). The upper layer of Tomb 3 (MBA), at Khirbet Kufin, also revealed evidence for bone combs, and, in this case, the investigator of the site argued for their likely Egyptian origin (Smith 1962, 26). This possibility is intriguing, especially given suggestions of a strong cultural connection between Jericho and Egypt during this period (MBA) (Nigro 2009, 372–74). Given the overall paucity of bone combs recorded from the southern Levant, however, and the fact that, in Egypt, Middle Kingdom combs are rare (Fletcher 1995, 441), we also have to consider whether we are dealing with localised trends and interconnections.

Including other objects falling within the category of personal grooming or cosmetic items broadens the dataset. Two graves (103 and 106) at Ashkelon (Barnea) (MB II), for example, contained fragments of cosmetic utensils (Zelin 2002), while MB II deposits from Tomb 57 at El Jib, included a single bone spatula¹⁴ (Pritchard 1963, 148). Other metal grooming items are also documented during this period. D17, at Ebla, for example, contained two individuals, both orientated with heads to the N and associated with a blade, bronze pin, and two bronze spatulas¹⁵ (Baffi Guardata 1988, 5). Although not linked with a specific individual, metal tweezers were also found within a MBA multiple successive burial at Rishon le-Zion (Tomb A8, Level II) (Levy and Kletter 2018, 312) as well as a MBA-LBA tomb (Tomb III) at Jalame (Covello-Paran and Porat 2011). Finally, bronze tweezers and needles were documented from the MB II to LBA tomb at Majdalouna (Genz and Sader 2007, 268), while four sets of metal tweezers derive from Tomb 62 at Pella (McNicoll et al. 1992, 76). As both of these tombs continued in use/contained assemblages dated to the MBA-LBA, the dating of these objects is unclear. If we can take Jericho as any sort of indicator, however, the significant increase in personal grooming/cosmetic items documented in MBA, as opposed to earlier (e.g. EBA) and later (e.g. LBA) burials, at this site does indicate a significant temporal shift and pattern. Such trends would again point towards ideas of individualised

self-beautification and display expression of identity and person

Before concluding this section, objects linked to ideas of ornamentation items associated with the dress of the burials from MBA Jericho also, however, extend these observations (and third) millennium BCE. Items such as buttons, belts, (Figure 8.6(a)). Very little evidence prior to the third millennium. (Figure 8.6(b)), which may or may not shrouds or wrappings for the patterns. Indeed, the pre-th derives from a handful of sites Cave of the Warrior (Schick 1 Azor (Ben-Tor 1975, 28). More deposited within the latter (E copper pins, which may very spread pattern.

From the third millennium seen. From c. 3100/3000 BCE, (over 60%) of personal ornaments deriving from the Euphrates into the later EBA in the area L12, at Qara Quzaq, for example alloy pins (Montero Fenollós bronze pins were found along Halawa A, eight of which were adult male (Orthmann 1981, 5 their overall form make it unlikely the in situ dressing of the dead they seem to have played an association (Stork 2014, 326–27). More such objects may have been given at and creating relationships

More modest assemblages Syrian sites. Tomb KCG. 9 remains of a single individual Woolley and Barnett 1952, Tomb 2, A3 at Qala'at Mudic for the use of metal pins from (Stork 2014, 329), although the paucity of EB II–III burials. EB II–III deposits within the

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owards ideas of individualised

self-beautification and display playing a significant role in the formation and expression of identity and personhood in death.

Before concluding this section, it is worth returning to a final category of objects linked to ideas of ornamentation and personal display: clothing and items associated with the dressing of the dead. The association of textiles with the burials from MBA Jericho is already well known (see Chapter 7). We can also, however, extend these observations to several other sites from the second (and third) millennium BCE. The distribution of clothing or clothing accessories such as buttons, belts, and footwear¹⁶ shows several broad trends (Figure 8.6(a)). Very little evidence of clothing or clothing accessories appear prior to the third millennium. If we extend this category to include pins (Figure 8.6(b)), which may or may not be associated with clothing, as opposed to shrouds or wrappings for the deceased, there is little alteration in the overall patterns. Indeed, the pre-third-millennium-BCE evidence that does exist derives from a handful of sites, such as the leather sandals recorded from the Cave of the Warrior (Schick 1998) or two copper pins/needles from Tomb 4 at Azor (Ben-Tor 1975, 28). More than one hundred individuals may have been deposited within the latter (Ben-Tor 1975, 8), making the discovery of two copper pins, which may very well be needles, hardly representative of a wide-spread pattern.

From the third millennium BCE onwards, however, significant shifts can be seen. From c. 3100/3000 BCE, pins start to account for a significant proportion (over 60%) of personal ornamentation, with the majority of these early examples deriving from the Euphrates/Carchemish region, a pattern that continues into the later EBA in the area (Stork 2014). The young adult female from tomb L12, at Qara Quzaq, for example, was associated with 25 bronze and copper alloy pins (Montero Fenollós 2004, 39; Valdés Pereiro 1999). Similarly, nine bronze pins were found alongside the two individuals from Grab H-70 at Tell Halawa A, eight of which were associated with Skeleton I, identified as an adult male (Orthmann 1981, 54). The sheer number of pins and, in some cases, their overall form make it unlikely that these items were solely associated with the in situ dressing of the dead or replication of a lived experience. Instead, they seem to have played an active role in practices of elite display and expression (Stork 2014, 326–27). Moreover, like the weaponry discussed in Chapter 6, such objects may have been gifts for the grave (e.g. Archi 2002, 2012, 11), mediating and creating relationships between the deceased and the gift givers.

More modest assemblages are documented from other Euphrates and north Syrian sites. Tomb KCG. 9 from Carchemish, for example, likely held the remains of a single individual associated with four metal pins (Stork 2014, 326; Woolley and Barnett 1952, 221), while two bronze pins were found within Tomb 2, A3 at Qala'at Mudiq (Collon 1975, 112). Further south, the evidence for the use of metal pins from the earlier third millennium BCE is very sparse (Stork 2014, 329), although this is not necessarily surprising given the overall paucity of EB II–III burials. Two bronze pins were found in association with EB II–III deposits within the rock-cut tomb at Lebe'a (Genz and Sader 2007,

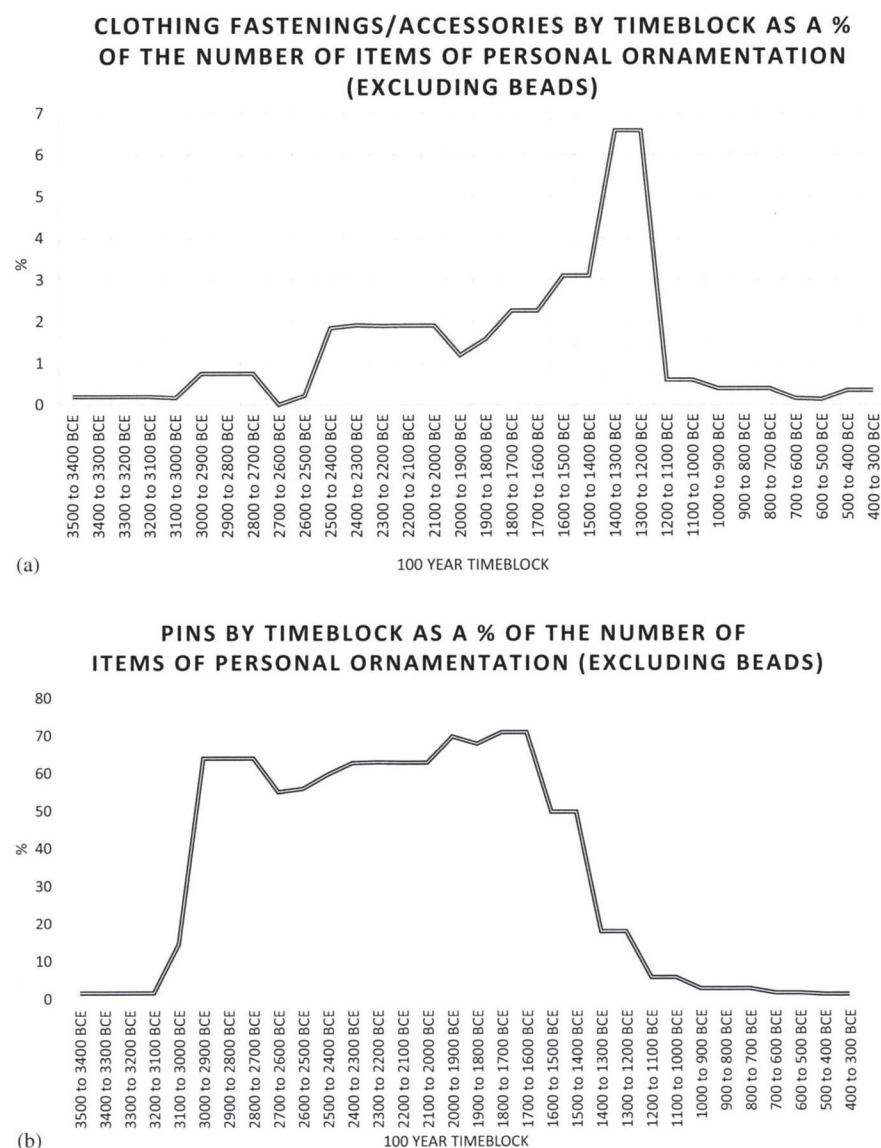


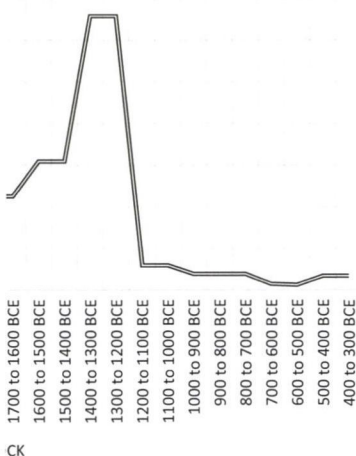
Figure 8.6 (a) Clothing and clothing accessories and (b) pins as a percentage of the total number of items of personal ornamentation by 100-year time-block.

259), while several copper pins were found within charnel house A41 at Bab edh-Dhra (Schaub and Rast 1989, 348). Such spatial variations, like that of the decorated bone tubes discussed earlier, clearly show the differential value and significance placed on the dressing and beautification of the deceased within these different geographical contexts (Stork 2014). This pattern is also borne

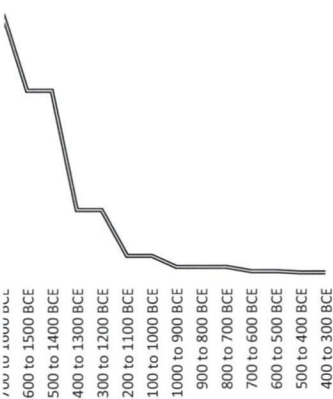
out via evidence for (non-pin) clothing fastening from Tomb H at Wreide (van Loon and 1960), the only examples of such objects.

Things shift again once we move into the second millennium BCE (e.g. EB IV). During this period, the number of objects increases, although the dataset is again a very limited dataset. Jericho provide evidence for objects with adhered organic material. In Tomb L2, interpreted as the remains of a (possibly) biological individual, a copper button was found. Meanwhile, a copper button was found in Tomb H22 (Kenyon 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 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and (b) pins as a percentage of the
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/ show the differential value and
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2014). This pattern is also borne

out via evidence for (non-pin) metal clothing accessories; with a possible metal clothing fastening from Tomb 5 at Tell es-Sweyhat (Zettler 1997, 55) and a silver buckle (which is also described as an earring) found in shaft tomb WRD H at Wreide (van Loon and Meijer 2001, 4A.152–155) representing some of the only examples of such objects dating to the earlier third millennium.

Things shift again once we move into the latter half of the third millennium BCE (e.g. EB IV). During this period, the total evidence in terms of both sites and objects increases, although in terms of non-pin clothing accessories there is again a very limited dataset. By way of example, several EB IV tombs from Jericho provide evidence for clothing/clothing accessories. A band of copper with adhered organic material was found around the head of the deceased in Tomb L2, interpreted as the possible remains of cap (Kenyon 1965, 144). Meanwhile, a copper button was found near the bone scatter in the EB IV phase of Tomb H22 (Kenyon 1960, 260). Dating to the very end of this period (EB IV-MB I), Tomb 26, a mudbrick lined grave at Qatna, contained the articulated remains of a (possibly) biological female, aged 35–45. Found near the legs of this individual was a copper/bronze disc, decorated with shells, and interpreted as having adorned a textile/leather belt (Morandi Bonacossi 2011, 23–25).

Metal pins are also prolific within EB IV tombs, including those from Jericho, although the majority of burial contexts have yielded only one or two pins. Exceptions to this are again located in the northern Levant (see Figure 8.7),¹⁷ suggesting continuing differences in the value and role of (pins) beautification and dressing of the corpse between the north and south. The only tomb in the southern Levant to yield more than a handful of pins is ‘Enan (14 pins in total). The pin associated with the female burial here is considerably longer (c. 49.5 cm long) than others found within the tomb (Eisenberg 1985, 71). As Stork (2014, 327) has argued in regard to the oversized pin from Hacinebi Cist Grave 5,¹⁸ it is hard to see how such a cumbersome and lengthy item could have been worn easily. This is not the sole example of an oversized pin from the EB IV southern Levant. Parallels are documented from Shamir Dolmen Field (Eisenberg 1985, 71), as well as Tell Hizzin (Genz and Sader 2008, 187, Figure 8). This item, however, when combined with the other evidence from ‘Enan (see Chapter 3), further marks this tomb as unique.

Metal pins continue to play an important role within burial assemblages into the earlier second millennium BCE (Figure 8.6(b)). Toggle pins, for example, are well documented from the MBA tombs at Jericho, again often appearing in a ratio of one or two pins per individual and, when in situ on the body, found in several different positions including on the left or right shoulder or near the ribs or pelvis (Kenyon 1965, 566–69). Occasionally, as discussed in Chapter 7, they are found in association with textiles. Similar patterns are also seen at MBA Rishon le-Zion (Kan-Cipor 2018, 493–501), while the MB II tombs from Tell el-Hashash (South) revealed evidence for over 60 metal pins, alongside pottery vessels (Marmelstein, Gorzalczy, and Segal 2016). As we move towards the end of this period (i.e. end MB II-beginning LB I), this pattern continues, with contexts such as the possible shaft tomb at ‘En Nashab

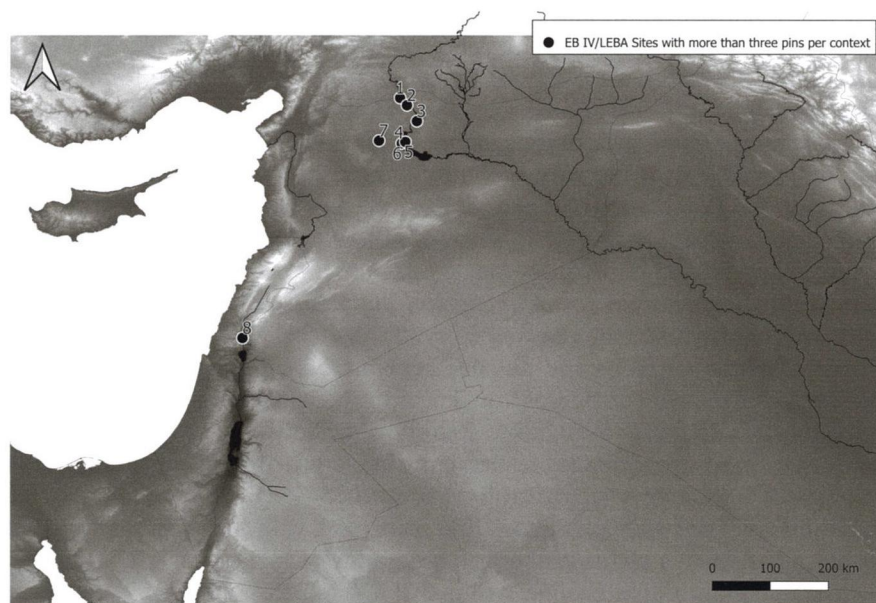


Figure 8.7 The distribution of late-third-millennium-BCE (EB IV/LEBA) burials with more than three pins per burial context in the northern and southern Levant. Sites are labelled as follows: 1. Jerablus Tahtani; 2. Tell Ahmar; 3. Tell Banat; 4. Selenkahiye; 5. Halawa; 6. Wreide; 7. Umm el-Marra; 8. 'Enan.

(Gal and Zori 2005) providing evidence for 51 toggle pins. Although the exact MNI from this tomb is unclear, at least 20 skulls were documented, suggesting a ratio of roughly two to three pins per individual.

By the end of the LBA, however, pins account for less than 20% of personal ornamentation (see Figure 8.6(b)). Alongside this, we see an increase in the range of items. Tomb 387, at Tell Dan, for example, contained a large assemblage of bone/ivory buttons, alongside the remains of 30 individuals, including adults and children (Biran 1996). The LB II stone burial chamber at this site also contained clothing accessories such as buttons, as well as gold plates decorated with rosettes, originally suggested to have been sewn onto garments (Biran 1971, 5; Gonen 1992, 139–41). The pinnacle of such ornamentation is represented at a site such as Qatna, whereby jewellery/items of personal ornamentation such as necklaces, scarabs, beaded girdles, or belts, as well as metal elements such as rosettes, presumably once associated with textiles, quantitatively dominate the assemblage (Roßberger 2011, 2014, 205). In line with broader patterns, however, there is a paucity of pins recorded from the Qatna tombs (Roßberger 2015, 238–44).

When considered alongside the evidence discussed above, these trends suggest that the ways in which people were being clothed, dressed, and presented within mortuary contexts likely shifted during this period. Pins, although still

being used within LBA and replaced by fibula following. Moreover, they likely served multiple functions: fastenings for clothing, and/or, supporting strings of beads, as seen at Khanmohamadi 2022, 3; Michalowski 2011, 100. The display of the dead (and possibly the repertoire of personal ornamentation) likely shifted.

Two very broad trends then emerge: towards the extended supine position, and towards supports. These supports could be read as a partitioning, supports, and containment of the bodily display and (at least tentatively) control of decay. Indeed, with increased decoration, variation would still be present, what Greenberg (2019, 336) has called 'rate identities...'.¹

Burials Without

As I bring this chapter to a close, I reflect on the graves, burial locales simply composed of earth and goods. The term 'empty' is a term that is often associated with material have often been associated with lower class, these features are not necessarily the placement of a body, they are intended to return to in the next chapter, to discuss status and investment, albeit largely in terms of simple considerations of status and investment. Graves would appear to shift or change.

In Chapter 3, for example, I discussed the paucity of IAI burials in the southern Levant, as well as the absence of any associated goods. One of the problems of such contexts is, of course, the lack of absolute dating, material goods, and burials without any associated goods. It is likely that I am underestimating the complexity, the two phases of data collection were associated with human remains, burials/burial zones, summarised in this topic, therefore, deserves a more detailed consideration allowed for here. With these considerations, several patterns emerge.

To start, we can consider the 'empty'; locales devoid of burials



m-BCE (EB IV/LEBA) burials with in the northern and southern Levant. 1. Tell Ahmar; 2. Tell Banat; 3. Umm el-Marra; 4. Enan.

toggle pins. Although the exact details were documented, suggesting dual.

ment for less than 20% of personal items, we see an increase in the sample, contained a large assemblage of 30 individuals, including a stone burial chamber at this site. Buttons, as well as gold plates decorated, have been sewn onto garments. The practice of such ornamentation is evidenced by jewelry/items of personal ornamentation, such as girdles, or belts, as well as metal associated with textiles, quantitatively (2011, 2014, 205). In line with the number of pins recorded from the Qatna

discussed above, these trends suggest the dead were clothed, dressed, and presented in this period. Pins, although still

being used within LBA and even IA mortuary contexts, were eventually replaced by fibula following the eighth century BCE (Platt 2003, 200). Moreover, they likely served multiple functions, including as hair ornaments, fastenings for clothing, and/or, in combination with other forms of jewellery, supporting strings of beads, rings, scarabs, or seals (e.g. Amelirad and Khanmohamadi 2022, 3; Michel 2020, 183). Pins, while still playing a role in the display of the dead (and possibly gift giving), were just one part of a wider repertoire of personal ornamentation.

Two very broad trends then seem to be visible. On the one hand, a shift towards the extended supine positioning of the dead and use of permanent supports could be read as a pattern of increasing standardisation. Such positioning, supports, and containers, however, also better facilitated individual bodily display and (at least temporary) preservation, manipulation, and control of decay. Indeed, with increased repertoires and opportunities for bodily decoration, variation would still seem to have been a key element, fitting with what Greenberg (2019, 336) has described as “scripted performances of disparate identities...”.

Burials Without

As I bring this chapter to a close it would be remiss not to consider ‘empty’ graves, burial locales simply containing bodies without any associated material goods. The term ‘empty’ is a deliberate misnomer, as while burials without associated material have often been interpreted as graves or tombs of the ‘poor’ or lower class, these features are clearly not empty. Instead, via the deliberate placement of a body, they are imbued with meaning and significance. As I shall return to in the next chapter, the very act of burial represents some form of status and investment, albeit largely one of time and energy. Moreover, beyond simple considerations of status and wealth, the relative proportion of empty graves would appear to shift over time (Figures 8.8–8.9).

In Chapter 3, for example, one of potential explanations presented for the paucity of IAI burials in the southern Levant was the inhumation of individuals without any associated goods (Ilan 2017, 53). The chronological assessment of such contexts is, of course, an issue. In the absence of strong stratigraphic or absolute dating, material goods are key chronological indicators, and thus, burials without any associated material cannot always be dated. It is also highly likely that I am underestimating the total number of ‘empty’ graves. By necessity, the two phases of data collection for this project focused on tombs that were associated with human remains and, when dealing with very large cemeteries/burial zones, summarised some of the available published data. This topic, therefore, deserves a much more robust and in-depth discussion than allowed for here. With these caveats in mind and by way of a very preliminary consideration, several patterns are worth exploring.

To start, we can consider graves that truly do fall under the heading of ‘empty’; locales devoid of both material objects, as well as human or animal

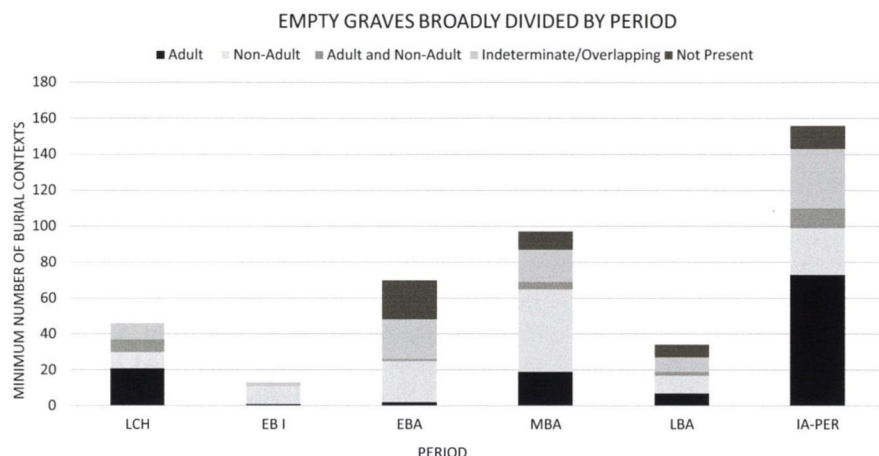


Figure 8.8 Empty graves broadly divided by period and age group based on data collated by the project. More research is required to refine these plots, as they do not include sites which were summarised in the original data collection or sites with overlapping dating (e.g. EB IV/MB I or LB II/EIA). The indeterminate/overlapping category includes contexts with human remains where age is unclassified and/or where age categories significantly overlap, e.g. child/adolescent/adult.

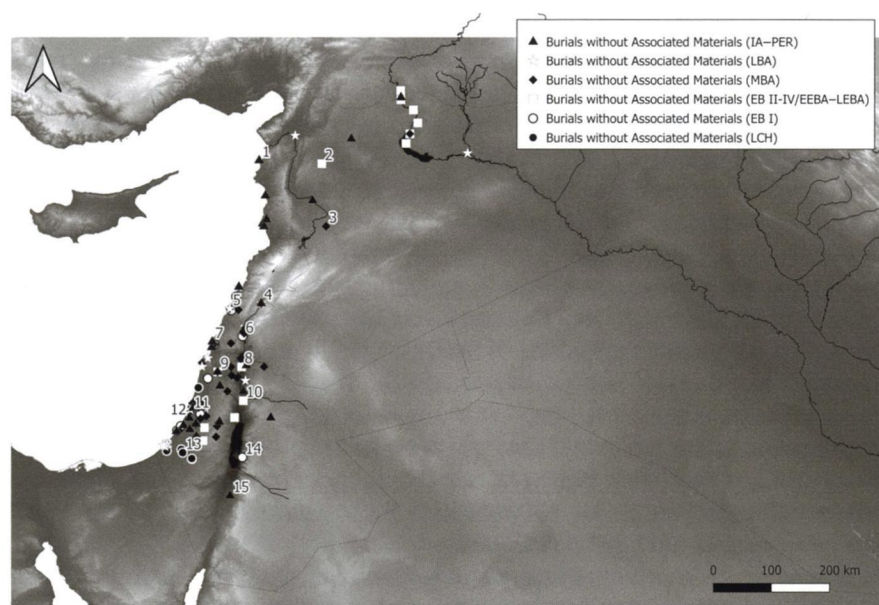


Figure 8.9 Empty graves from across the Levant plotted out by period. Sites mentioned in the text are labelled as follows: 1. Ras el-Bassit; 2. Ebla; 3. Qatna; 4. Kamid el-Loz; 5. Sidon; 6. Tell Te'o; 7. Akhziv; 8. Menahemiya; 9. Megiddo; 10. Tiwal esh-Sharqi; 11. Rishon le-Zion; 12. Yavne; 13. Gilat; 14. Bab edh-Dhra; 15. Wadi Fidan 40.

remains. The possible hypogeum, was found completely bare actually used as a burial local tombs have also been documented at TA19 and TA75, for example, with the stones intact, while no human remains were found. At the same site, several tombs may have been left unfinished.

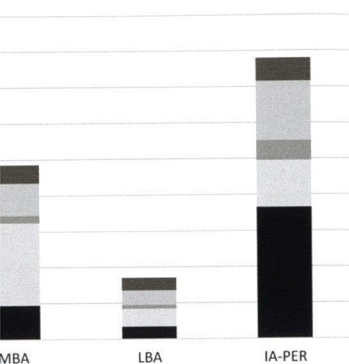
In other cases, we are dealing with both human remains and associated materials. The condition of these remains is often highly fragmentary human remains, completely 'cleaned' of any material. For example, Tomb A112 (EB I) contains fragmentary human bones in a shaft (Ortner and Frohlich 2001). Human remains are usually present within this shaft.

In other cases, tombs have been destroyed. Several of the EB IV tombs are highly eroded and thus devoid of human remains (Tomb SE6 (Tubb 1990, 72)). Some tombs, destroyed, with minimal outlines (e.g. Tomb III at Menahemiya) have, at some sites, also led to the discovery of human remains (e.g. Locus B46 at Rishon le-Zion). Sometimes remains following the destruction of a tomb, for example, was damaged by a lion. In some cases, human remains were listed, the tomb contained three bottles, one copper earthenware jar. Conversely, EB IV Tomb NE2 was disturbed due to flooding, revealing human remains 2–3 years of age, although no human remains were found.

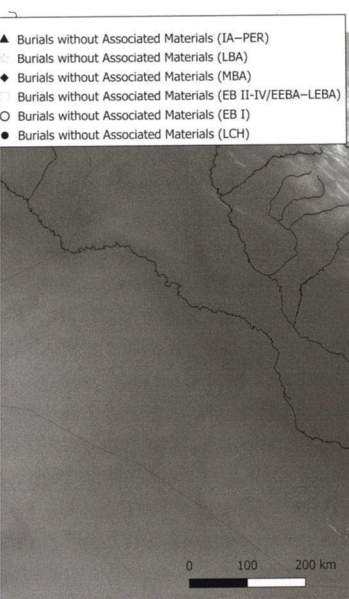
This brings us to a third category of burials: infants. As already discussed, the potential to be treated differently is a significant factor whereby a large proportion of recorded 'empty' graves are infants. Further excluding records which are not classified by age, this figure increases the complexities and nuances. While burials without associated materials and children (and even neonates) are a significant record (see Chapter 6). To be considered whether there are any differences in the types of burial contexts found across the periods. Several periods stand out in

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Akhziv; 8. Menahemiya; 9. Megiddo;
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remains. The possible hypogeum (G4) underneath Palace G, at Ebla, for exam-
ple, was found completely bare; thus, it is not clear whether this space was ever
actually used as a burial locale (Matthiae 2013, 50). Several possibly unused
tombs have also been documented from IA Akhziv (Mazar 2001). Tombs
TA19 and TA75, for example, both shaft tombs, appear to have had their seal-
ing stones intact, while no human remains or material goods were found within
these. At the same site, several tombs typologically dated to the same period
may have been left unfinished and unused.

In other cases, we are dealing with contexts that may have originally held
both human remains and associated material but have since been illicitly exca-
vated. The condition of these contexts varies, with some still yielding limited
and highly fragmentary human remains, while others appear to have been
completely ‘cleaned’ of any material, either human or otherwise. By way of
example, Tomb A112 (EB I) at Bab edh-Dhra was looted in antiquity. Frag-
mentary human bones and pottery were found in the fill of the looter’s
shaft (Ortner and Frohlich 2008, 214–16), suggesting that material was origi-
nally present within this shaft tomb.

In other cases, tombs have been disturbed by a variety of natural taphonomic
factors. Several of the EB IV Tombs at Tiwal esh-Sharqi, for example, were
highly eroded and thus devoid of any human remains or material culture (e.g.
Tomb SE6 (Tubb 1990, 72)). Similarly, some tombs are recorded as having been
destroyed, with minimal outlines or features being visible through excavation
(e.g. Tomb III at Menahemiya (Bahat 1976, 27)). Modern bulldozing activities
have, at some sites, also led to the destruction and disturbance of burial contexts
(e.g. Locus B46 at Rishon le-Zion (Levy and Kletter 2018, 29)). Materials can
sometimes remain following these disturbances. Tomb 5 at Hazorea (EB IV), for
example, was damaged by a bulldozer and also looted, and while no human
remains were listed, the tomb was found to contain 11 spouted jars, 11 jugs,
three bottles, one copper earring, an awl, and a tool (Meyerhof 1989, 16–19).
Conversely, EB IV Tomb NE5 at Tiwal esh-Sharqi, despite having been highly
disturbed due to flooding, revealed the fragmentary bones of a child, around
2–3 years of age, although no associated material was documented.

This brings us to a third category of burials, those of young children or
infants. As already discussed in Chapter 6, across time non-adults had the
potential to be treated differently in death and this pattern is borne out here,
whereby a large proportion (c. 30% of recorded burial contexts¹⁹) of the
recorded ‘empty’ graves are those of younger individuals (see Figure 8.8)²⁰.
Further excluding records where the human remains could not be/are not clas-
sified by age, this figure increases to nearly 55%. This pattern is not without its
complexities and nuances. While there may be a higher number of non-adult
burials without associated materials, numerous examples exist whereby infants
and children (and even neonates) are amply provided for in the archaeological
record (see Chapter 6). To bring this chapter to a close, therefore, it is worth
considering whether there are any significant changes in the overall numbers
and types of burial contexts found without any associated materials over time.
Several periods stand out in terms of the broader patterns, especially given

fluctuations in burial numbers. I want to briefly consider three of these broad periods here: the LCH, the MBA, and, finally, the IA to PER period (Figure 8.8).

Thinking back to Chapter 3, and the relative modesty of Chalcolithic burials, the presence of burial contexts without any associated material should not be surprising. The examples recorded here, dating to the LCH (fifth to fourth millennia BCE), predominantly derive from a handful of sites and, to some extent, also blur the lines between burial and settlement, planned and unplanned. In Chapter 3, I referred to the richly decorated and carved ossuaries from LCH burial contexts and these, alongside other burial containers, may have served as ‘grave goods’, containing, displaying, and, in some cases, mimicking the human form. Moreover, it is also possible that some of the preserved LCH burials represent a single stage snapshot in a lengthy burial process. None of the below floor burials at Tell Te’o, for example, provide evidence for associated materials. In the case of the 10-year-old child under Room 563, however, this articulated individual was associated with the fragments of a skull and mandible of an adult (Eisenberg, Gopher, and Greenberg 2001, 33). Excavators suggested that these represented either bones left behind when the body was removed or a secondary deposit (i.e. placed after being buried/exposed elsewhere (Eisenberg, Gopher, and Greenberg 2001, 207)). Was it simply not necessary for this stage in the burial process to be accompanied by any associated materials or, alternatively, can we blur the line between human and object and see the skull and mandible as a form of ‘grave good’ for the 10-year-old child?

Moving further south, the majority of contexts recorded from Gilat contain fragmented human remains (see Chapter 9). While a handful of contexts have revealed evidence for associated materials (e.g. L.806 (T. E. Levy 2006, 101), the majority are ‘empty’. Moreover, even the contexts that have revealed non-human materials, including animal remains, show complex relationships between the latter and their human associates. By way of example, the mass burial L.1237 is described as the only “... planned mortuary structure...” by the excavators (T. E. Levy 2006, 104–5). This mudbrick basin contained nine individuals, deposited above a layer of ash and a layer of animal carcasses (mainly sheep/goat). Evidence suggests that the human individuals (children and adults) were placed and then moved and manipulated several times within the basin prior to being covered. In one sense these burials could be interpreted as ‘provisioned’, yet the deposit of animal carcasses followed by a layer of ash and the repeated interaction with the same human remains seems to point towards a more meaningful, lengthy, and complex practice (T. E. Levy 2006, 105). We clearly have evidence for the significant provisioning of *some* burials or individuals during this period (see Chapter 3). Given the evidence briefly discussed here, however, I wonder to what extent we should also be considering the differential provisioning of individual stages within the overall mortuary processes. Some steps, forms of interaction, and practices perhaps did not require such activities and additions.

To move forward a few thousand years, to the Iron Age, as discussed in Chapter 6, the MB has a large majority of undisturbed burials containing children or infants (nearly 100%). This observation would seem to be earlier. This pattern, however, is not unique. Due to the general increasing complexity of populations also become more complex burial contexts, including ‘empty’ burials, whether accompanied by ‘grave goods’ or not, a natural role. What is of greater interest is a handful of adult and adolescent burials from sites such as Sidon, Kamacha, and roughly contemporary, burial contexts, for example from Qatna in the neolithic period, the examples from Sidon and others in other ways.

Burial 82 at Sidon, a jar burial containing a single articulated skeleton (Doumet-Serhal 2009, 21–22), is notable for its lack of grave goods but even young adult within a burial jar (adult jar burial from Sidon). It is unclear what the death that necessitated the Beqa’a Valley, I also wonder about the burial of an adult and child with grave goods in earth pits underneath burials were found flexed on their sides as holding their hands in front of their faces (Durand 2014, 52–53). While, it is clear that provisioning can be shaped and directed, the narrative does seem to be becoming more complex.

Finally, the Iron Age to Persian period, the ‘empty graves’ (Figure 8.8). Given the undisturbed, we would therefore expect a pattern. One of the potential explanations discussed earlier was the burial of children. While this has been linked to the idea that too much burial complexity during a transitional period, eventually leading to a reduction (e.g. Sherratt 2000, 80), the idea that a lack of grave goods was the result of supply and demand issues was also at play. Also worth highlighting is that adults represent a proportionally small number of burials.

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To move forward a few thousand years, and complicating the data already discussed in Chapter 6, the MBA would truly seem to be a period whereby the large majority of undisturbed burial contexts without any grave goods contain children or infants (nearly 65% of the undisturbed tombs). At first glance this observation would seem to be at slight odds with the trends explored earlier. This pattern, however, can also be seen as parallel or complementary. Due to the general increasing visibility of infants/children in the MBA, such populations also become more visible within different types of burial contexts, including 'empty' burials. As I argued in Chapter 6, infants/children, whether accompanied by 'grave goods' or not, played an important sociocultural role. What is of greater interest for my discussions here, therefore, is the handful of adult and adolescent burials with no associated goods recorded from sites such as Sidon, Kamid el-Loz, and Qatna, especially given the rich, roughly contemporary, burials from each of these sites. I will return to the example from Qatna in the next chapter, but here I want to draw attention to the examples from Sidon and Kamid el-Loz, which are remarkable in other ways.

Burial 82 at Sidon, a jar burial, lying on a N-S axis, contained the remains of a single articulated skeleton, probably biologically female, aged 13–19 years (Doumet-Serhal 2009, 21–22, Figure 13–13b). This burial is unusual not only for its lack of grave goods but also in terms of the burial of an adolescent or even young adult within a burial jar (see Chapter 9 for discussion of another adult jar burial from Sidon). Perhaps there was something about this individual or their death that necessitated or encouraged this treatment. Moving to the Beqa'a Valley, I also wonder whether the circumstances of death encouraged the burial of an adult and neonate (Tombs 96 and 113) without associated goods in earth pits underneath the floors of Building 1 at Kamid el Loz. Both burials were found flexed on their sides, with the adult burial being described as holding their hands in front of their face "... as if covering it..." (Wagner Durand 2014, 52–53). While, as discussed in the previous chapter, burial positioning can be shaped and dictated by a huge range of factors, a particular narrative does seem to be being communicated by this arrangement.

Finally, the Iron Age to Persian periods have, by far, the most evidence for 'empty graves' (Figure 8.8). Given that over half of these contexts appear to be undisturbed, we would therefore appear to be dealing with an interesting pattern. One of the potential explanations for the paucity of IA I burials discussed earlier was the burial of individuals without any associated goods. While this has been linked to metal shortages by some (Ilan 2017, 53), others have argued that too much bronze may have been in circulation during this transitional period, eventually prompting the switch from bronze to iron production (e.g. Sherratt 2000, 83; Whincop 2008, 27). Such hypotheses challenge the idea that a lack of grave goods (and overall paucity of burials) is simply a result of supply and demand and suggests that broader sociocultural factors were at play. Also worth highlighting is that unlike other periods, whereby non-adults represent a proportionally higher percentage, adults (or adults with

children or infants) account for over 50% of the dataset. This observation is also not isolated to a single site. The ‘empty’ IA I burials at Megiddo (Harrison 2004), for example, include both adults and children. At Yavne (IA II), numerous examples of adult graves without associated materials have been documented (Kletter and Nagar 2015), including both burials where the closing slabs are intact, as well as those where no closing slabs are present/have been disturbed.²¹

These depositions, however, are not ‘informal’, a topic I shall turn to in Chapter 9. While many of the IA II–III cremation burials at Ras el-Bassit (Courbin 1993), for example, were unaccompanied by associated goods, as discussed in Chapter 5, the very act of cremation represents an investment of time, energy, and resources. Thus, absence of goods is not necessarily indicative of a lack of care, status, or wealth. Such observations are borne out by an example of an Iron Age burial from Wadi Fidan 40 which, while yielding no pottery or non-ceramic goods, included possible fragments of a leather shroud (Grave 55 (Beherec 2011, 227)). Several of the ‘empty’ Persian-Hellenistic adult/adolescent burials from Kamid el-Loz also appear to have housed the human corpse within a coffin (Graves 12, 13 and 60 (Heinz 2010, 78–79; Heinz et al. 2010, 21)). In these examples, while ‘offerings’ were perhaps not seen as important provisions for the deceased in the grave, and perhaps even the netherworld/afterlife, the comfort and individual integrity of the corpse certainly were.

Concluding Remarks

The examples mentioned above bring us full circle to the beginning of this chapter, and the support and comfort of the dead. Moreover, while status and access to wealth and resources may have been at play here, the overall evidence from the first millennium BCE points towards a more general shift in practices, priorities, and beliefs around the provisioning of the dead, one which foreshadows some of the elements we start to see in post-Iron Age burials within the region. This chapter has, in many ways, only scratched the surface of these topics, and much more remains to be done. Given my discussions here, however, on the paucity versus popularity (or even ‘normativity’) of empty graves, I want to turn to the final chapters of this volume. To explore one of the key questions at the heart of this project: what does a ‘typical’ versus ‘atypical’ burial really mean in the mortuary practices of Western Asia?

Notes

- 1 See Chapter 3 for further discussion of the dating of this burial context.
- 2 The matting and burial placed upon it were radiocarbon dated to 3624–3374 calibrated BCE.
- 3 Textile fragments were noted and studied from Tomb A94, although no fragments of matting were recorded (Crowfoot 1960, 519–20).

- 4 Matting is also possibly attested here the identification is not certain.
- 5 Tombs 2, 3, and 4, had either been of antiquity; however, the only of disarticulated burials and pottery 1968, 15–17).
- 6 Burial 12 from Sidon (see Chausse Schutkowski 2004, 164, Table 1) emphasising these notions of status.
- 7 The over 2000 jar burials from Ras el-Bassit significantly distorts the overall frequency of dating (see Chapter 3 for frequency of burial containers recorded).
- 8 The sharp peak between 2500–2000 of an increase in cups/drinking vessels and start and end dates for pottery start of EB IV coded in the database of northern Middle Euphrates valley.
- 9 The hands of this burial, unlike the rest of the cup, however, reveal burial positions and associated items.
- 10 As both a fraction of the overall number of vessels listed.
- 11 Platters are accounted for separately.
- 12 When vessels are included in the overall EIA, a pattern I explore in more detail.
- 13 It has also been suggested that these vessels contained different types or contents.
- 14 Bone spatulas have also been found (e.g. 274) and tools for net repair/repairing (Lamon and Shipton 1931) implements (Van Beek and Van Beek 1960) items for personal grooming.
- 15 In a more recent article on the use of chisels or engraving tools, also referred to as *spatule*. The plates provided in the appendix show these artefacts clearly.
- 16 Personal ornamentation items include: Anklet, Armlet, Bead, Fastening/Accessory, Digit Ring, Necklace, Pendant, Personal items.
- 17 By way of example, Tomb U at Ras el-Bassit two individuals: Burial A, associated with seven copper/bronze items.
- 18 Although note this example is from a published figure (see Stein 1990, 19).
- 19 This excludes records where vessels were found in contexts where human remains were not recorded.
- 20 This includes the categories of vessels found in contexts where human remains were not recorded.
- 21 For my purposes even tombs where no human remains have been recorded or pit was recorded in the original publication.

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m Tomb A94, although no fragments
9–20).

- 4 Matting is also possibly attested at other sites such as Rishon Le-Zion, although here the identification is not certain (Sukenik and Shamir 2018, 636).
- 5 Tombs 2, 3, and 4, had either been destroyed by bulldozing activities or disturbed in antiquity; however, the only other intact tomb at the site, Tomb 5, contained two disarticulated burials and pottery, although no metal items or pillow stones (Tzaferis 1968, 15–17).
- 6 Burial 12 from Sidon (see Chapters 6 and 7 (Doumet-Serhal 2004, 90; Ogden and Schutkowski 2004, 164, Table 1)) was also associated with a pillow stone, perhaps emphasising these notions of support and comfort.
- 7 The over 2000 jar burials from Byblos have been excluded from this plot, as this site significantly distorts the overall patterns. If added in, however, due to the difficulties of dating (see Chapter 3 for further discussion), it would simply increase the frequency of burial containers recorded for the period between 4500 and 3000 BCE.
- 8 The sharp peak between 2500 and 2400 BCE, rather than being a definite reflection of an increase in cups/drinking vessels, is due to the overlap of chronological data and start and end dates for periods in the northern and southern Levant, i.e. the start of EB IV coded in the database as 2500–2000 BCE and the Middle EBA in the northern Middle Euphrates which is coded as 2600–2400 BCE.
- 9 The hands of this burial, unfortunately, were not preserved. The potential placement of the cup, however, reminds us of the potential choreographed nature of burial positions and associated objects.
- 10 As both a fraction of the overall number of quantified bowls and a proportion of the overall number of vessels by time-block.
- 11 Platters are accounted for separately in the database via the category of plate/bowl.
- 12 When vessels are included in the plot there is a notable peak during the LBA to EIA, a pattern I explore in more detail elsewhere.
- 13 It has also been suggested that a range of other artefacts, such as shells, may have contained different types or colours of kohl (Eremin et al. 2015, 194).
- 14 Bone spatulas have also been interpreted as writing implements (Macalister 1912, 274) and tools for net repair/making (Petrie 1928, 17). Their interpretation as cosmetic (Lamon and Shipton 1939, Plate 95–96) or even possibly ophthalmological implements (Van Beek and Van Beek 1990) would fall in the general category of items for personal grooming.
- 15 In a more recent article on the Ebla tombs, Polcaro (2014, 212) lists these objects as chisels or engraving tools, although the original term used by Baffi Guardata is *spatule*. The plates provided in the original publication, unfortunately, do not depict these artefacts clearly.
- 16 Personal ornamentation items as classified by this project include the following categories: Anklet, Armlet, Bead, Bracelet, Brooch, Button, Clothing, Clothing Fastening/Accessory, Digit Ring, Earring, Footwear, Footwear (Leather), Jewellery, Necklace, Pendant, Personal Ornamentation/Jewellery, Pin, Ring, Torque/Collar.
- 17 By way of example, Tomb U (Chamber V 24 in Tomb 2) at Selenkahiye contained two individuals: Burial A, associated with three copper/bronze pins; and Burial B, associated with seven copper/bronze pins (van Loon and Meijer 2001, 4A.181–187).
- 18 Although note this example is probably only around 20 cm in length based on the published figure (see Stein 1998, 207, Figure 13).
- 19 This excludes records where we are unclear how many burial contexts are present or contexts where human remains are not present.
- 20 This includes the categories of foetus, neonates, infants, and children.
- 21 For my purposes even tombs with evidence for the stone slabs having been removed or being missing have been considered undisturbed, as no disturbance of the burial pit was recorded in the original source records.

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9 Throwing Away of Normative?

There has been a wealth of literature on burials in recent years, particularly in Europe and the Americas (e.g. Tsaliki 2020). Relatively little, however, has been written about the association with Western Asia and the Mediterranean. As I shall show, the archaeological record documented from the archaeological sites is showing potential signs of new burial positions. Bodies which seem to be of individuals who were likely objects of

Trying to seek a pattern across the archaeological record. Yet, all of the burials discussed in this chapter, and archaeological visibility, and the role of scholars, however, we are happy to accept, and possibly for some periods, and therefore, I want to shine a light on these burials, which have traditionally been treated as 'atypical' might actually have been part of the normative to throw away the concept of a

Atypical Burials: Do They Really?

Recent discussions of 'atypical' burials, or 'non-burials' in America, Europe, and the Mediterranean, a multitude of potential explanations have been proposed. From untimely deaths, including natural deaths, or wrong doers (e.g. Lindenmeyer 2008; Donnelly and Murphy 2008; V. or wrong doers (e.g. Lindenmeyer 2008; Donnelly and Murphy 2008; V. dead, ghosts, revenants, and 'atypical' burials (e.g. 2008; Tsaliki 2008). Many of these burials have played a role in Western Asia. Ghosts and spirits have been sources as interfering with the