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## **CHANGE AND ADAPTABILITY DURING THE LATE BRONZE TO IRON AGE TRANSITION: INSIGHTS FROM RADIOCARBON AND POTTERY IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT**

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The transition from the Late Bronze to Iron Ages in the southern Levant has been the subject of intense debate concerning the timing and nature of major, multifaceted cultural and political changes. During this period, local communities suffered a series of catastrophic events, witnessed the stepwise collapse of their centuries-old city-state system and observed the nonlinear decline of Egyptian 'colonial' rule; in addition, they were confronted with new cultural influences and migrating/displaced peoples.

Key to elucidating the complex chain of events and adaptive response of societies during the Late Bronze/Iron Age transition, are ceramic studies and radiocarbon dating (14C). An accumulating body of 14C data now enables an absolute chronological framework that is independent of external factors such as Egyptian texts and foreign material parallels. It confirms some aspects of the traditional chronology while challenging others and bringing clarity to the most debated issues. The date of widespread destruction events, the end of Egyptian rule, and the introduction of local Aegean-style (so-called 'Philistine') material culture can each be addressed in considerable detail.

Pottery studies, on the other hand, can illuminate the relative chronological framework of the Late Bronze/Iron Age transition. Ceramic studies in the southern Levant – specifically the coastal 'Philistine' heartland and adjacent Shephelah region – have tended to emphasize new foreign elements at the expense of the indigenous 'Late Bronze-style' pottery traditions. However, close examination of the latter provides particular insight on how communities preserved and adapted their traditions through the tumultuous 13th-11th centuries BCE. It seems that the local artists were influenced by the appearance of foreign potters and adapted their own traditions within the indigenous ceramic workshops. Such insights allow a fine-tuning of relative chronology that neatly corresponds the 14C evidence, while also providing a crucial window on the resilience and adaptability of southern Levantine society.

### **Keywords**

Pottery, Radiocarbon dating, Shephelah, Late Bronze Age, Iron Age

### **Note/comment**

If possible, we would prefer to use the slightly longer title:

"Change and adaptability during the Late Bronze to Iron Age transition: insights from radiocarbon and pottery studies in the southern Levant"