



THE MEGALITHIC CULTURE OF THE CORAZIM PLATEAU, EASTERN GALILEE, ISRAEL: NEW EVIDENCE FOR A CHRONOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Within the framework of the ongoing archaeological survey of the Corazim plateau under the auspices of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) during the years 1990-2002, 450 dolmens and a few hundred more Tumuli Cairns were recorded – more than half of the Megalithic burial-field known to exist in this area, which is the largest of its kind within Israel west of the Jordan. They consist of several types, including a relatively rare group of closed oval-shaped dolmens with a corbelled roof. In general, their characteristics are similar to those of the more well known Dolmens of the Golan and it seems reasonable to include both within a common chronological and cultural framework. The finds gathered from excavations and surveys (including an MBIIa bronze chisel axe) and the recent discovery of some IB (MBI) – MBIIa rural and semi-nomadic settlements (e.g. H. Berech west of Corazim) indicate that the Corazim plateau dolmen phenomena should be dated to the end of the 3rd – early 2nd Millennia B.C.E., and pertains to a semi-nomadic population sustaining during that period in this area.

KEYWORDS: Basalt, Dolmen, Tumulus, Tomb, Intermediate Bronze Age (IB), Semi-Nomadic

THE CORAZIM PLATEAU - INTRODUCTORY PREVIEW AND SHORT HISTORY OF RESEARCH

The Corazim Plateau is a basalt-covered rock-strewn undulating plateau encompassing an area of approximately 75 km² within the Jordan Rift Valley, between the Lake of Galilee Basin in the south and the Hula Valley in the north. In its northern part are some extinct lava cones, the highest of them (Mt. Philon) reaching a peak of 409m above sea (Mediterranean) level, from whom lava flows were discharged 2.5 – 4.4 million years ago, forming the Basaltic crust that covers this part of the plateau. The southern part of the plateau, sloping down towards the Lake of Galilee reaching a minimum low of 210m below sea level, is covered by the Basaltic Lower Pleocene (3.5 – 5 million year old) 'covering layer' which encompasses a vast area that includes large parts of Southern Syria and Lower Eastern Galilee. The plateau's western border is sharply defined by the limestone slopes of Mt. Canaan, while on its eastern side the Jordan River Rift Canyon divides it from the Basaltic Golan Heights. The landscape of the plateau, very similar in appearance to the Golan Heights (and actually may be seen as its western extension), is composed of protruding stony hills and elongated rocky spurs enclosing small local valleys, with a 400-500 mm per year rainfall average providing for a small number of perennial springs and trickling seasonal streams that flow down towards the Jordan river or the Lake of Galilee.

Since the Calcolithic period (4th millennium B.C.E.) at least, the plateau has sustained permanent sedentary settlement, mostly – but not necessarily – adjacent to the water sources, with an economy based mainly on local field cultivation and/or cattle breeding. During most historical periods, it seems, the plateau was also home to semi-nomadic cattle breeders and pastoralists who lived in temporary tent dwellings, leaving

behind remains of stone animal-pens which are a common feature of the open-field rocky landscape on both sides of the Jordan. However, the most prominent and conspicuous archaeological element on both the Golan Heights and the Corazim Plateau is certainly the striking spectacle of hundreds of Dolmens and Tumuli which dot the landscape, forming one of the most dense megalithic burial fields in the world. These enigmatic relics of the past are the subject of the forthcoming discussion.

The Corazim field, the western extension of the vast megalithic field of Southern Syria and Upper Jordan (Hartal 1987; Zohar 1992), is the largest of its kind west of the Jordan river. While the larger Golan Dolmen field has been investigated and reviewed in the past quite intensively (Epstein 1985), research on the Corazim phenomena has progressed only recently during the 1990's as a result of the ongoing archaeological survey of this area of Eastern Galilee undertaken by the author under the auspices of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). This relatively dense Dolmen field was overlooked by the 19th century explorers of Galilee, being first discovered and described by Karge (1917, 306-320). In the late 1920's Turville-Petre (1927, 300, 308-310) included a short description of the field in his report on Prehistoric Galilee (Fig. 1) and subsequently excavated 24 Dolmens to the east of Corazim (Turville-Petre 1931). Stekelis briefly mentions the field in his review of megalithic monuments in Palestine (Stekelis 1935, 28-29) and visited some Dolmen sites in the 1960's (Stekelis 1962). In the 1970's C. Epstein began exploring parts of the northern part of the plateau with a group of amateur-archaeologists from Kibbutz Kfar Hanassi led by Tommy Amit, who had become aware of the high density of the Dolmen fields in the surrounding area of their home kibbutz already in the 1950's. This activity was pursued in the 1990's when an official

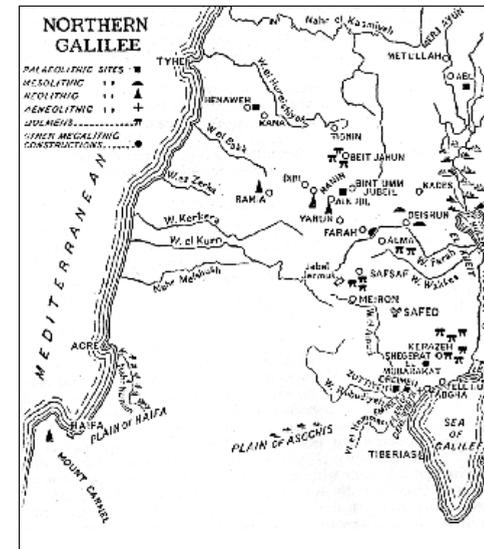


Fig. 1: Prehistoric Galilee and Dolmen Fields, after Turville-Petre 1927,300 (General Map of Galilee)

archaeological survey was initiated by the author under the auspices of the Israel Antiquities Authority encompassing the area from the Hula Valley in the north to the Lake of Galilee in the south, including all of the Corazim Basaltic Plateau (Archaeological Survey Maps of Rosh Pinna [no. 18] and Kfar Nahum [no. 36]; Stepansky 1995; 1996; 1997; 1999 [chap. 6]; 2000; 2003).

Within the framework of the ongoing survey, approximately 450 Dolmens have so far been recorded on the plateau, and a few hundred more Tumuli were registered. In the northern part of the plateau, north of latitude line 260, 389 Dolmens were recorded and a full distribution map of the Dolmens and Tumuli was attained (Fig. 2; Stepansky 1995,14; 1996,16, fig. 14; 1999, fig. 48). However, none have yet been authoritatively excavated. In the southern part of the plateau, within the Kfar Nahum Survey map area, as of the year 2004 another 50 Dolmens have been recorded (Stepansky 2000,10*; 2003,7*-8*), while some five hundred more have yet to be

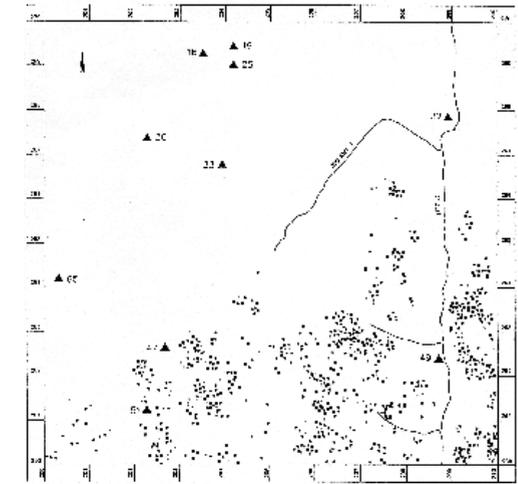


Fig. 2: Dolmen and Tumuli Distribution, Rosh Pinna Archaeological Survey Map

surveyed along the rocky ridges that slope down towards the Lake of Galilee east of Biblical Corazim. It was in this last area that Turville Petre first excavated his 24 Dolmens (their exact locations have yet to be reidentified). In this area two limited salvage excavations were also conducted during the 1990's in a small number of Dolmens on the eastern fringes of the plateau to the north and to the south of Moshav Almagor (Damati and Abu-Uqsa 1992; Stepansky 1997, 31-32).

THE CORAZIM DOLMENS AND TUMULI: TYPOLOGY, CHARACTERISTICS AND DATA

The documentation of the Corazim Plateau Dolmens surveyed until now includes an inventory with data on their size, preservation, number and size of covering stone(s), orientation and description of the burial chamber and its surrounding area. Based on Epstein's (1985) Dolmen typology, the majority of them are small-sized 1b (55%) or 2a (25%) types with 1.5 - 3m long closed chambers and 1-2 covering stones although in more than 50 instances the chamber length



Fig. 3.1: Covering stone with grave-robber's hole;
Tuba Dolmen field
(Black & White photograph no. 315926)



Fig. 3.2: Dolmen with 'hat' shaped covering stone
(Black & White photograph no. 315985)

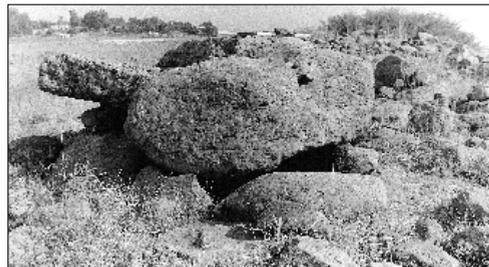


Fig. 3.3: The "Cannon" Dolmen of Kfar Hanassi
(Black & White photograph no. 315955)



Fig. 3.4: A typical Dolmen Tumulus
(Black & White photograph no. 315920)

reaches 3 – 6m. Where the chambers were found uncovered we assume that the covering-stones were removed in the past by grave robbers (Fig. 3.1), probing inquirers, shelter-seekers or as a result of local iconoclasm (a deliberate damaging of pagan objects). The size of the covering-stones varies, with an average of 0.5 X 1.5X 3 m (Fig. 3.2), but some single stones may weigh as much as 15 tons. Some of the Dolmens, especially those built on the high points of the region, stand out conspicuously and can be seen from afar due to a large capstone that covers the Dolmen chamber or its tumulus (e.g., Fig. 3.3: The 'Cannon' Dolmen of Kfar Hanassi). More than half of the Dolmens were covered by tumuli (Fig. 3.4), consisting of various sized fieldstones. In many instances one can discern within them or/and around their circumference remains of mortar-free built walls which were probably constructed to strengthen the tumulus and uphold the tomb chambers, adding also a more commanding and monumental appearance. The average sizes of tumuli are 5 to 10m (diameter) and 1-2m (height), but some reach sizes of 15-20m X 3m (the largest recorded tumulus is 22 X 3 m' in the Nahal Qela field, 20650/26245, covering a type 2a dolmen). Those dolmens without a tumulus are usually enclosed by a stone circle or by scattered stones placed evenly or without order around the structure.

As for the chamber orientation, there is a certain preference (60% of 300 Dolmens) for the entranceway to point to one of the easterly directions (east, south-east and mostly north-east), a trait common to Dolmens in the Golan, as well as in other parts of the world (Zohar 1992, 47).

Most Dolmens were constructed along the crests of the spurs and ridges of the plateau and on their moderately-inclined slopes, but we find them also on the fringes of the small local valleys between the ridges, and in fact they may be found at any place that provides

fair conditions for the moving (or sliding), stacking and piling up of large stones. In many instances natural orthostatic-style slabs placed upright were used for constructing the burial chamber, and it is most reasonable to assume that their location in the field facilitated the dolmen builder's choice of place for their construction. On the rocky sharply-inclined slopes of the Jordan river canyon hardly any Dolmens can be found (Fig. 2), possibly because of the relative steepness of the slope, but it may also be for some other unknown reason having no connection with the topographical conditions at all. The most dense Dolmen field is located south-east of the Bedouin village of Tuba (Central Map Reference 203/259) necessitates a more specific analysis. These dolmens, with a turtle-shell shaped elliptical contour (Fig. 4.2), were built of large basalt boulders – 50 stones were

While the vast majority of Dolmens consist of rectangular open-ended burial chambers (Fig. 4.1), a small group of about ten Dolmens located to the east of Kibbutz Amiad (Central Map Reference 203/259) necessitates a more specific analysis. These dolmens, with a turtle-shell shaped elliptical contour (Fig. 4.2), were built of large basalt boulders – 50 stones were

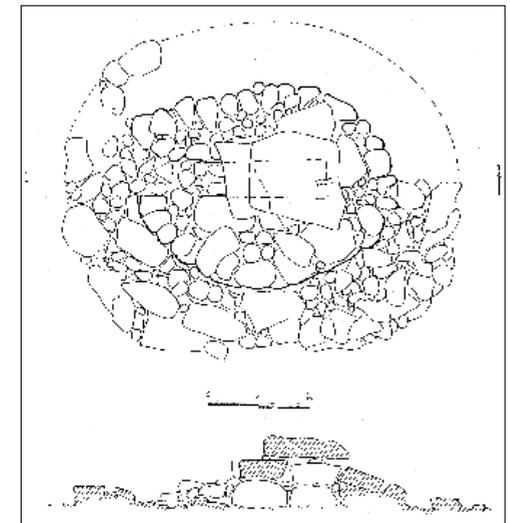


Fig. 4.1: Typical Dolmen, plan and section

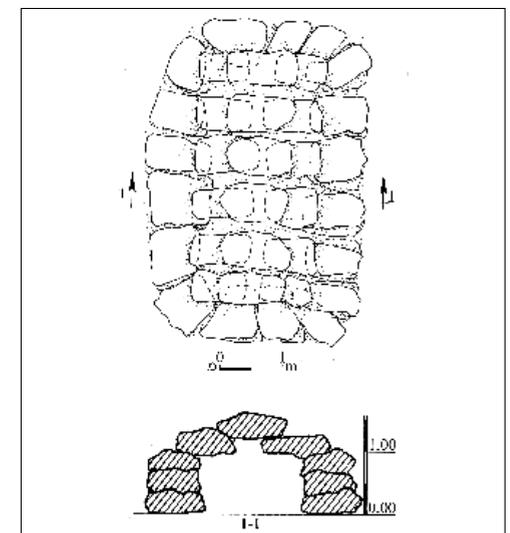


Fig. 4.2: Elliptical, 'turtle-shell' shaped Dolmen;
plan and Section



Fig. 5: H. Ali, an aerial view from the north-west (Black & White photograph no. 359230)

counted in one – closed, oval structures, with average dimensions of 3.5 X 5m. Their outer walls stood originally to a reconstructed height of three courses (height ca. 1m), supporting a corbelled roof composed of 5-7 basalt slabs that were placed one on top of the other. All six were found collapsed, although one (20360/25960) is preserved slightly better than the others. No small finds were found while surveying these Dolmens, however in a solitary Dolmen of this type located further northwest (map ref. 20573/26070, 5 X 8m chamber length size) a few Middle Bronze Age II sherds were found. This Dolmen type, being very similar to Zohar's (1992) type C and a combination of Epstein's (1985) types 1b and 6, stands out as a special group although it seems that they too were used for burial and were built under the same circumstances as the other types. One Dolmen of this type was excavated by Turville-Petre further south (1931, 161, Dolmen 20), while a group of this type was surveyed by Hartal in the central Golan and attributed by him to the Late Bronze Age (16th-13th centuries B.C.E.; Hartal 1989, 55-57, 119-120;

Hartal, personal communication). We should point out that monumental – and sometimes royal – tombs using the corbelling method for roofing, and attributed to the Middle Bronze II – Late Bronze Age I, have been excavated at the Canaanite cities of Ugarit, Megiddo and Dan; could this type of corbelled Dolmens have been the prototype for this method of constructing tombs? Only time – and, of course, excavations of these enigmatic structures – will tell.

Within the framework of the Rosh Pinna Map Survey a North-South 10km long and 1km wide strip of land on the western edge of the Golan Heights above the Jordan River gorge was also surveyed (Fig. 2), allowing for a documentation of another 150 Dolmens and a comparison with the Corazim field. In general, they are similar in outline, size and orientation to their western counterparts, although in the Golan field Epstein's type 2b is relatively more numerous and the average size of the Golan dolmens (height, chamber length, tumulus size) is slightly larger (in 70% of them the chamber length is more than 2m, while in the Corazim field only 60% reach a

length of 2m). These slight differences do not contradict our conviction that the Dolmen phenomena on both sides of the Jordan share a common ethnic (tribal?) and chronological framework (as described below), being part of a larger megalithic - building culture extending over wide areas of the Levant (Hartal 1987, 51).

In all of the area surveyed until now (2004), some 250 tumuli without noticeable burial chambers or sure signs of their presence - although seemingly covering one - were registered separately. Their typical traits are similar to those covering visible Dolmen chambers: stone heaps 5-10m in diameter, 1-3m high, in many cases with remains of structural walls built into the tumulus heap and/or around its circumference. An especially large tumulus (15m in diameter, 3m high), conspicuously placed on the peak of a prominent hill (Kh. Ali, map ref. 2048/2605), is surrounded by an enigmatic enclosure wall 350m long, and it seems that here is a unique burial site, as yet undated (Fig. 5: H. Ali, an aerial view from the north-west; Stepansky 1996:15, fig. 13). Another relatively large tumulus (11m diameter, 2.5m high) was recorded at map ref. 20595/26200¹.

CHRONOLOGY AND SOCIO-ECONOMICAL SETTING

It is widely believed that the megalithic Dolmen phenomena in the Levant is an expression of pastoral - agricultural interaction, manifesting the periodic dominance of pastoralist groups over sedentary agricultural societies during transitional periods marked by a relative dearth of cities and permanent settlements (Zohar 1992, 54-55). More specifically, the construction of the Golan Dolmens has been generally dated to the transitional Intermediate Bronze Age ['IB', known also as the Middle Bronze Age I ['MBI'], ca. 22nd - 21st centuries B.C.E), an

assumption supported by pottery and metal artifacts found insitu in excavated Dolmens (Epstein 1985; Hartal 1987, 57), while finds from a slightly later MBIIa date (20th - 19th centuries) show for a continuation in the use of the Dolmens, probably for subsequent burial (Epstein 1985, 41). We must also note that in almost all of the excavations and surveys in the Golan and Corazim Fields much later material, most usually Roman-Byzantine sherds, has been reported (Turville-Petre 1931; Damati and Abu-Uqsa 1991; Stepansky 1997), indicating a continuing interest in these conspicuous (and for them, at least as for us - very peculiar) structures pertained through the ages by the local populace².

However, recent reevaluations have suggested a different chronological and social framework, ascribing their main phase to a pastoral element who lived alongside and in close integral symbiosis with the sedentary Early Bronze ('EB') Age II-III society during the course of the middle 3rd Millennium B.C.E., earlier than had been perceived by Epstein and others (Gibson and Dauphin 1990, 39; Vinitzky 1992; Greenberg 1996, 150-151, xiii). This conclusion is based mainly on a comparison of Dolmen and EBII-III settlement distribution patterns in the Golan and Galilee, some meager EBII sporadic finds and the conception that Dolmen-construction took place mainly alongside sedentary societies, precluding the IB age because of the absence of settlements during that period in the vicinities of the Dolmens (Vinitzky 1992).

It is here that our survey of the Corazim Plateau can help in clarifying this matter. These contributions may be noted:

A number of EBII sites have been discovered and plotted (non from EBIII), but a view of their distribution pattern compared with that of the Dolmen pattern shows no necessary coherent connection between them (see Fig. 2).

No EBII-III pottery sherds whatsoever were found among the survey finds of the Corazim Dolmens (although the total number of finds is quite small in itself), and moreover – none were found in the Dolmen excavations carried out so far in both the Golan and Corazim fields, compared to relatively many insitu IB-MBIIa finds (e.g. Epstein 1985:40, pointing out the discovery of ‘MBI’ [=IB] copper daggers found both in an excavated Golan Dolmen and by Turville-Petre within the confines of the Corazim Dolmen field).

The concept of an almost complete absence of IB age settlement in upper eastern Galilee has been disproved. In recent years the existence of an IB age agricultural settlement network has been discovered in the Hula Valley (e.g. Tel Hazor [Ben-Tor 1998:275] and Tel Naama [Greenberg 1996: 151-153, xiii; Greenberg *et al.* 1998, 18-24, 32]) and elsewhere in lower and upper Galilee (the latest – in the summer of 2004, at Meiron in upper Galilee, near a large scattered limestone Dolmen field). More important, remains of a quite extensive IB - MBIIa settlement, probably semi-nomadic in nature, have recently been discovered on the Corazim Plateau itself west of ancient Corazim and on the western fringes of the large Corazim Dolmen field (see below).

The Corazim Dolmen excavation and survey finds include: pottery and metal artifacts from the IB and MBII periods (ca. 22nd-19th centuries B.C.E.), and sherds from later Iron age, Roman, Byzantine and medieval periods. Noteworthy are a group of IB - MBIIa sherds and an indicative MBIIa bronze ‘chisel’ axe well dated to the 20th-19th centuries that were found in the earth fill of a Dolmen burial chamber north of ancient Corazim at map ref. 20245/25888 (Fig. 6; Stepansky 2000: 10*, fig. 20), probably indicating (although not necessarily proving) the date of construction and first usage of the dolmen. With these were also found some Iron Age sherds, probably remains of a probe

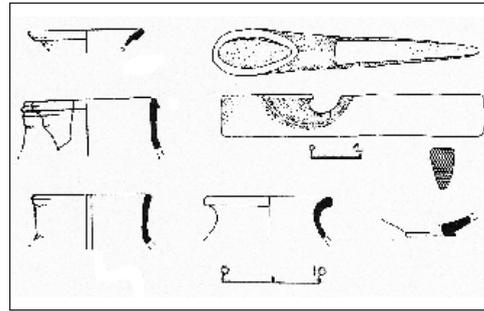


Fig. 6: Dolmen Survey Finds

carried out by inhabitants of the nearby Iron Age settlement of Horbat Shum some 3000 years ago, about 1,000 years after the Dolmen's construction.

These facts should be enough to corroborate a solid connection between the Golan and Corazim Dolmens and the IB - MBII chronological horizon. Luckily enough, the discovery of the IB - MBIIa semi-nomadic site of Horbat Berekh enables us also to suggest a connection between the ‘phantom’ Dolmen-builders and a specific habitant population.

This site (Central Map Reference 2020/2564), in a rock-strewn area named “Es-Shegerat el-Mubarakat” by the local Bedouin (= ‘The Blessed trees’, probably referring to a few old Tarabinth trees that have survived eradication and are still visible today in this area; Horbat Berech is its name in modern Hebrew), was discovered and first described by Krage in the early 20th century (Krage 1917, 320-328) and then again by Turville-Petre who includes it in his short account on Megalithic sites in Galilee and notes ‘isolated dolmens, stone circles, cyclopean walls and small circular enclosures, the walls of which stand at present about one meter above ground...which is possibly the site of a large megalithic village’ (Turville-Petre 1927, 310). In the years 1998-2000 the site was surveyed by our IAA team, in wake of the construction of the Christian Franciscan



Fig. 7: H. berech: Megalithic Structure (in the background - the new ‘Domus Galilaeae’ seminar center. (Black & White photograph no. 715904)

“Domus Galilaeae” seminar center in its vicinity and precluding the visit of Pope Paul who gave here an open-air sermon to thousands of believers in the year 2000³. The remains of more than ten collapsed stone-constructed structures and enclosures, mostly built of medium to large-sized basalt stones were traced in an area of ca. 200 dunams mainly to the east and south of the Domus center. One structure is oval-shaped (3 X 15m, 1m preserved wall height), most others are rectangular or square in outline (Fig. 7). The most impressive enclosure (map ref. 20188/25598), 20m in diameter with walls preserved one meter high, has a small trilithon Dolmen incorporated into its southern part. Some retaining walls (at map ref. 20210/25638 a wall 2 m’ high and 5m long is preserved) and tumuli were also noted. In this whole area are also scattered remains of less-massive structures (2 X 3m average size) and stone circles (3 – 5m diam.) one or two courses high, built of basalt fieldstones, probably the foundations of ancient huts and/or tents and small animal pens. All these remnants have yet to be excavated, however at least part of them should be related to the coarse-ware potsherds and other stone artifacts gathered amongst the structures, mostly from the patches of open field between them. The pottery finds date mainly to the IB

(MBI) and MBIIa periods, ca. 2200-1900 B.C.E., and it is our belief that the stone finds, which include small flint tools, basalt grinding stones and mortars are also from that range of time (Fig. 8). These finds all support the assumption that during this period a fairly extensive semi-nomadic settlement existed in this vicinity, based on animal herding and grazing (as witnessed by many of the structures, especially the low-coursed enclosures, which should be interpreted as ancient animal pens) and local grain - cultivation (attested by flint sickles and the grinding stones and mortars)⁴. As finds from these periods, from the end of the 3rd – beginning of the 2nd millennia B.C.E., are also the mainstay of pre-Roman material found insitu in the Dolmens of the Golan and on the Corazim Plateau, we may safely conclude that

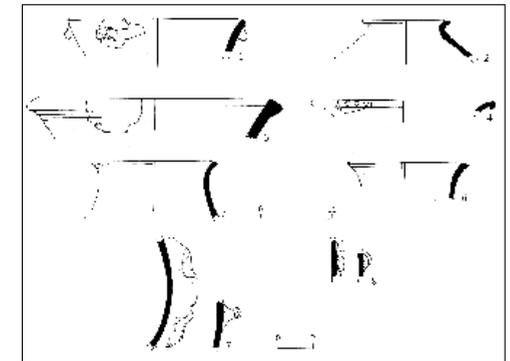


Fig. 8: H. Berech: IB-MBIIa finds (drawing of sherds and Black & White photograph no. 707705)

these semi-nomadic people, and those of other tribes and semi-nomadic settlements that sustained during these periods in these basalt covered areas⁵, are the human source most likely to be responsible for the construction of most of the Dolmens and Tumuli, and possibly the other megalithic structures too.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although certainly not the first phase of Dolmen building in the Levant (see, e.g., The Early Bronze Age I dating for the famous Damiyah Dolmen field in the Jordan valley; Yassine 1985), this IB (MBI) – MBIIa phase should be at least seen as the epitome of Megalithic open-field tomb construction. However, even if we have advanced a long way

in the dating and identifying of the Dolmen builders, we still are aware that a final absolute dating for their construction can be attained only in the wake of additional controlled excavations that should be carried out in as many sealed Dolmens as possible. In any case, we still do not know for sure what stimulated the Dolmen builders into investing so much of their limited resources into Megalithic Tomb construction (especially compared with their assumed modest way of life), leaving this enigmatic problem as yet unsolved. Hopefully future research will unravel this mystery too, enlightening our knowledge on one of the most interesting archaeological phenomena in the Levant.

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Figure 1 (Map of Northern Galilee) was reproduced by permission of Antiquity Publications LTD.

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NOTES

- 1 Smaller heaps of stones whose function is difficult to evaluate (many of them possibly the result of agricultural stone clearing or – more probably – the remains of space clearing efforts in preparation for pitching tents or building temporary huts) were not included in the tumuli data, even though we cannot rule out the possibility that some of them may cover burial remains.
- 2 The Dolmens may have nurtured the biblical tradition of the shadowy giant-people who are labeled in the Old Testament ‘Rephaim’, reminiscent of the mythical folklore regarding the Dolmens and Menhirs of Europe and elsewhere as ‘Giant’ structures (Wright 1938). The passage in Deuteronomy 3:11 which describes the legendary king Og’s resting place as a large ‘beaststead of iron’ probably refers to a basalt-constructed chamber-tomb Dolmen (contra to Joussaume 1988:258, who maintains that ‘nowhere is there a biblical mention of a chamber-tomb’). The Dolmens are also probably referred to in the New Testament as ‘tombs’ where outcasts from the surrounding towns lived and took shelter (Mark Chap. V). One of these towns was probably Corazim, surrounded by Dolmens. It is interesting to note that until this day the native Bedouin of the area call the Dolmens of this area ‘Dan’, a term meaning ‘shelter’, possibly preserving the tradition mentioned in the New Testament. During Late Roman times, the Jewish populace saw them as Pagan entities, and they are referred to in the Talmud as ‘Merkolis’ or ‘Beit Kolis’ (relating to the pagan god Mercury; see, for example, Mishna Sanhedrin, Chap.7:6, and numerous references in Tractate Avoda Zarah).
- 3 The site was chosen for the Pope’s visit because of its proximity to Biblical Corazim, The Mt. Of Beautitudes and Capernaum, with a beautiful view overlooking the Lake of Galilee and many Christian sites. Although the visit had nothing to do with the Megalithic site presented here, the Pope and the public were presented with a written description of the site and of the unique Megalithic remains strewn all over the area. Megalithic structural remains were fenced off and the site, albeit partly damaged by the continuous construction work of Domus Galileaea, is mostly preserved until today (2004) in the open rocky area to the east and south of the Domus center.
- 4 The semi-nomadic nature of livelihood referred to here is not one of a transitional phase between nomadism and sedentarization based on agriculture, but rather a distinct and prolonged mode of life. This part of Galilee, with dissected landforms and an average of 400-500mm yearly precipitation, allows for a diverse economy in a non-desert environment where crop growing can be conveniently combined with stockherding. This mode of life has been discerned as the main character of Galilee- Bedouin “Nomadism” in the 19th century c.e. (Falah 1990) and until recently was the mainstay of the Zangariya and El-Heib tribes who have been living on the Corazim Plateau since the 18th century at least (today they are gathered in the village of Tuba-Zangariya on the NE part of the plateau).
- 5 We believe that in the future more IB-MBIIa sites will be discovered. Pottery finds from these periods are hard to detect without a previous mechanical cleaning of the area, as had been done within the confines of the Domus Galilea under archaeological supervision prior to the construction of the building. Most of the finds were discovered immediately under the top layer of brush, stone and dirt covering the surface, without any observed stratigraphic context.