

The Research Project deals with the settlement and culture in Lower Galilee during the Iron Age, that is between 12th and 7th/6th centuries B.C. It is a relatively small, but well defined geographical region stretching from the Mediterranean coast in the west to the foothills of Upper Galilee in the east, and from the Ladder of Tyre (Rosh Haniqra) in the north to the Carmel ridge bordering on Jezreel Valley in the south. Such geographical setting has determined Lower Galilee as intermediate zone between Phoenicia and Palestine, which had a direct and continuous impact on the history of the region and on its inhabitants.

The Research Project aims to investigate and re-evaluate a number of different aspects of the settlement in Lower Galilee during the Iron Age in order to answer the principal question: What was the character of Lower Galilee during the Iron Age in terms of history, society and culture?

Specifically, the Project addresses the following detailed research issues:

- The impact of the so-called Crisis Years in the Eastern Mediterranean. At the close of the Late Bronze Age and at the beginning of the Iron Age Lower Galilee, as a part of the Southern Levant, witnessed several peaceful and/or violent events connected with the settlement of one of the Sea Peoples' group, infiltrations of Israelite and other nomadic tribes or even out-of-law groups which have had appeared during the time of general political and social unrest, climatic changes, etc.
- What has happened to the local, indigenous Canaanite population in the Early Iron Age? Were they replaced by new groups of the Aegean (Cypriote) origin, who settled in the coastal plain of Palestine between the Yarkon River to the south and Akko Plain to the north and the western Jezreel Valley to the east?
- To what degree Lower Galilee as a whole can be considered as a part of Phoenician territory, not only in terms of political divisions but also, or perhaps first and foremost, in the sphere of the material culture. Other related questions are when and where the Phoenician culture elements began? How they interacted with the local elements? Are there also visible influences of another regional power, namely the kingdom of Israel? Finally, what was the nature of any possible contacts with overseas?

The principal way to resolve these and other problems at least to some extent is to investigate the material remains of a site which yielded sufficient data to quest its history over the entire duration of the Iron Age. Therefore, the proposed Project is based on original unpublished archaeological data obtained during the last two seasons of excavations by the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem (1979, 1980) at Tell Keisan. The project aims to bring the results of a comprehensive study of pottery to light and thus update the knowledge we actually possess, and to contribute to our understanding of the settlement history of Lower Galilee in general. Results of comprehensive research on unpublished, and therefore still unknown to other scholars pottery material from Tell Keisan, completed with verified and re-analyzed data from other sites in Lower Galilee will allow, first and foremost, to work out a new overall typological/chronological system concerning the Iron Age pottery in this region and to establish its correlation with pottery assemblages at other sites of northern Palestine/southern Phoenicia.

However, the Project is not intended to study the pottery exclusively for itself and to limit itself to strictly typological schemas, chronological considerations, and catalogued pottery artefacts as it happens with some narrowly focused studies. Multi-methodological approach will show that the pottery artefacts, once classified and catalogued, can and should eventually serve as a complimentary and useful tool for resolving other scientific topics. The most important of them have been listed above.

The published results will mark a new, doubtlessly useful point of depart for any future pottery research in this region. The expected results will also add a significant element to the still incomplete puzzle of material culture of the inhabitants of Lower Galilee during the Iron Age. This highly interesting and promising scientific topic still remains insufficiently explored.