BEIDHA AND THE NATUFIAN:
VARIABILITY IN LEVANTINE SETTLEMENT AND SUBSISTENCE

by

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SIGNED: 

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Beidha (Jordan), Antiquities
ABSTRACT

The research addressed in this dissertation involves examination of variability in Natufian settlement and subsistence patterns. The Natufian is a late Epipaleolithic culture that flourished in the Levant during the late Pleistocene and early Holocene. There has been considerable research interest in the nature of Natufian settlement and subsistence over the last fifty years. This is due to the apparent pivotal position the Natufian holds in the developmental sequence from mobile hunting and gathering societies to sedentary village communities subsisting on domestic plants and animals.

The research has two major components. The first aspect of the research focused on the range of activities and the nature of settlement intensity and duration during the Natufian occupation at one site, Bnaidha. The second aspect of the research entailed examining data for settlement and subsistence patterns throughout the Levant during this time period in order to gain insight into pan-Levantine variation.

Research on the Bnaidha settlement has provided information on the range of chipped stone manufacturing processes carried out at the site, the nature of the tools produced, the range of activities that these tools imply, and the distribution of these elements between different areas of the site. The minimal evidence of spatial
differences between provenience units is indicative of a site that was occupied as a relatively short-term camp site. The interpretation of the site as a short-term settlement, that was occupied repeatedly, fits with the lack of evidence for permanent features such as houses and storage facilities, as well as the lack of large groundstone objects and burials.

Analysis of available data on late Epipaleolithic settlement and subsistence has indicated that there are regional differences in settlement and subsistence patterns, most notably between steppe and desert sites versus sites of the forest and coast. In addition, there appear to be patterns in variability within the steppe and desert area with respect to the permanence of sites and the range of activities carried out in them. One set of sites is characterized by moderate settlement permanence and intensity, while the other set of sites is characterized by less permanent occupation and more specialized activity focused primarily on hunting.