

# **“The Territory Facing Jaffa”: Cultural Landscapes of a Mediterranean Port and its Hinterland**



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The ancient mound of Jaffa, situated on the southern Levantine coast south of the outlet of the Yarkon River, was the closest maritime outlet for inland centers in ancient times. Jaffa has the distinct status of being one of the few ports on the southern Levantine coast featuring an almost continual occupation history from the Middle Bronze Age through the modern era. However, a survey of the literature on the archaeology of the coastal plain of the southern Levant, reveals two separate yet related problems that served as foci for my dissertation research conducted at the Albright Institute.

First, the absence of Jaffa and other hinterland sites from archaeological and historical studies of the coastal plain is evident, likely due to the modern urban nature of Tel Aviv-Jaffa and the greater metropolitan area, the dearth of accessible archaeological publications of research and salvage excavations, and few references to Jaffa in ancient texts. Second, many discussions about coastal sites and trade connections are sea-oriented, and investigations into imported pottery provide the “smoking gun” of maritime commerce. With few exceptions, scant studies or frameworks exist for port-hinterland dynamics of eastern Mediterranean littoral with a terrestrial focus. While the goods and materials, and their containers, imported to the region by maritime routes illustrate the thalassic affiliations of a coastal site, the presence of such objects at inland sites may illustrate just one of the possible arrays of connections between a port and its hinterland.

New analyses of Jaffa's material culture recovered from excavations conducted over the last sixty years necessitate the current study of Jaffa's role focused on regional settlement patterns and systems and material culture to elucidate the potential economic and cultural connections between the port and inland sites, both urban and rural in nature. Situated within a maritime cultural landscape, Jaffa served as a gateway for the coastal plain and the highlands, connecting inland sites with materials from the coast and acting as a transit point for commodities produced inland that would be transshipped to other gateways in the eastern Mediterranean. Despite fluctuations in Jaffa's prominence resulting from changes in political control, shared material culture with inland sites illustrates the strong connections that Jaffa forged with its hinterland as a central place within the settlement system of the coastal plain.

During my tenure at the Albright, I completed the bulk of the research for my dissertation and commenced writing its chapters and appendix. Using resources from the IAA, I was able to finalize the site catalog for the research area around Jaffa, extending from the Mediterranean to the low hills east of Aphek and from Tel Michal in the north to the outlet of Nahal Soreq in the south, resulting in the identification of nearly 300 sites, ranging from MB II to terminal Iron II in date. A major part of this process involved collating published ceramic profiles to illustrate the temporal and spatial connections between the sites in the region, a task that was aided by discussion with colleagues from the IAA, Hebrew University, Bar-Ilan University, and the University of Haifa in addition to the Albright Fellows. Furthermore, Aron Tillema of Azusa Pacific University, a student at the Hebrew University's Rothberg School who was participating in the Albright's internship program, provided much needed assistance with bibliography and ceramic seriation, for which I am extremely grateful. My fellowship afforded me the time and location to devote myself to dissertation writing, the resources to conduct the research, and numerous opportunities to interact with senior colleagues who helped and encouraged me within the inspiring intellectual environment cultivated by the Albright's director, staff, and Fellows.

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