

S. Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites on Mount Hermon, Israel: Ituraean Culture in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*. BAR International Series 589. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. xxii + 325.

Mount Hermon is mentioned a number of times in several books of the Bible. Deut. 3:8-9 reads: "and we took at that time the land from the kings of the Emorites, which is in Transjordan from River Arnon to Mount Hermon. Sidonians call Hermon Sirion and the Emorites call it Senir". The topographical name Sirion appears in documents from Ugarit and that of Senir in Assyrian documents. Both names also appear in the Bible. The literary and documentary evidence indicates that these names were used to refer to the Anti-Lebanon mountains, Mount Hermon denoting the range south of River Barada, Jabel el-Sheikh in Arabic (Y. Aharoni, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 3, 1958, cols. 294-7 [Hebrew], accepted by Dar). The association of the Ituraeans with this region may be inferred from I Chron. 5:18-23, a passage which records the war of the tribes Reuben, Gad and the Half-Menasseh against several enemies, among them the people of Jetur, commonly identified with the Ituraeans of the later Greek and Latin sources; Half-Menasseh extended from Bashan/Batanaea to Mount Hermon (cf. I. Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs*, 1982, 100-101, n. 337). Be that as it may, the information provided by Josephus and Strabo, and a few other sources, points to Ituraean settlement in and control of Lebanon, the Plain of Massyas (the Beq'a valley), Anti-Lebanon and adjacent areas by the late second century BCE (E. Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC-AD 135)*, *A New English Version*, revised and edited by G. Vermes *et alii*, I, 1973, 561-73; W. Schotroff, "Die Ituräer", *ZDPV* 82, 1982, 125-52). Whether the Arabs against whom Alexander the Great fought in Anti-Lebanon in 332 BCE (Plut. *Al.* 24; Arr. *Anab.* 2. 20, 4-5) were, or included, Ituraeans, cannot be established on the basis of the literary sources. Dar, however, asserts that the Ituraean tribes were already well-established in the region in the fourth century, no doubt because he accepts the identification of the pottery, and other material remains, found in surveys of north Golan and Mount Hermon as Ituraean (pp. 15-18). The first to suggest the attribution of this pottery to the Ituraeans was S. Gutman ("Ituraean Country", *Mibifnim* 35, 1973, 143-51 [Hebrew]).

In this study Prof. Dar presents the results of two decades of archaeological surveys and excavations which he and his associates have conducted in Mount Hermon and its foothills since 1970. Prof. Dar has published several interim reports of his investigations and has been able to exploit information provided or published by others who have surveyed some parts of the region since 1967. It should be made clear that the area researched in these surveys occupies only a fraction of Mount Hermon, which is about 55 km. long and 35 km. wide, approximately 1800 square km. The sixty-four sites surveyed and discussed in this study extend over an area of some 120 square km., that is, about a fifteenth of the region of Mount Hermon.

The book is reasonably organized and convenient to follow, use and consult. It begins with an informative geographical-ecological description of the region, followed by an historical outline, concentrating on the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The next thirteen chapters (III-XV) present and discuss in detail the remains and finds explored and excavated in twenty-one sites. Another chapter (XVI) lists and provides information about the remaining forty-one sites. Due to various limitations, military, topographical and climatic, it was impossible to carry out a complete,

systematic survey, and hence not all the archaeological sites of the region have been listed. The final chapter presents the pottery found in various sites on Mount Hermon, but on a rather selective basis. Unfortunately this chapter altogether excludes the so-called Ituraean pottery; the explanation given for this is that that pottery was analyzed and published in a former study: S. Dar, "Pottery from the Hermon Survey", in *Mt. Hermon and its Foothills* (edd. S. Applebaum *et alii*) 1978, 121-41. However, it is not easy to get this publication and it is accessible only to those who know Hebrew. Even so, note the storage jar which is considered as Ituraean (210-1) and the short discussion of pottery from Har Senaim (80-1). Cf. M. Hartal, *Northern Golan Heights*, 1989, 147-52, 237-41 (Hebrew).

The sites surveyed include farmsteads, villages, seasonal settlements, military enclosures, mines, cult places and temples. The finds comprise various remains of buildings, inscriptions, coins, pottery, oil-presses, cisterns, metal artifacts, arrow heads, sarcophagi, tombs, statues, altars, rings, glass vessels, weights, animal bones, etc. Also, roads and paths have been identified. They bear witness to the religious beliefs and practices of the inhabitants of the region in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, their material culture, aspects of their economy, settlement forms, as well as cultural affinities with neighboring populations and in particular the influence of Graeco-Roman culture on the region.

Generally speaking, Dar prefers to present the evidence in a factual manner, adding short discussion and interpretations, but he avoids overall systematic, analytical treatment. Thus he has much to say, by way of short commentaries to the archaeological finds, about the significance of the cult structures and objects found in several sites, notably their similarities to Nabataean cult monuments. He has decided, however, not to explore the subject in depth: "This is not the place for a discussion of how the Ituraeans and the Nabataeans influenced each other or of the common element from which they drew their belief in the stone cult, although these subjects do need fundamental elucidation" (p. 42). The coins of all the sites are presented meticulously, but no attempt has been made to provide a general assessment of the coinage evidence. That the pottery from Mount Hermon "is worthy of further study" is frankly admitted (p. 200). According to Dar, "Christianity penetrated the Hermon region slowly over a long period of time and paganism...was widespread there even in the 5th and 6th centuries" (p. 27), and yet no real study of this interesting subject is included.

Despite these points of criticism, Prof. Dar has done an important service to all those interested in the history and cultural development of Syria and Palestine in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The wealth of material presented and discussed will surely be exploited for further studies. One should also note the lavish number of instructive illustrations that are included in the book: eighty-nine maps and drawings, twenty plates and one hundred and thirty-six photos. They all enhance the value of the book.