

EB IV Tombs at Khirbat Khanāzīr: Types, Construction, and Relation to other EB IV Tombs in Syria-Palestine

Introduction

The excavation of the EB IV cemetery at Khirbat Khanāzīr, located in the Southern Ghawr of Jordan to the southeast of the Dead Sea, took place, under the directorship of W. E. Rast and R. Thomas Schaub, from December 1989 - January 1990. The writer was field director of Fields B and E. He also participated in work undertaken in Fields C and D. The present paper's main objective is the description of the four different, EB IV tomb types excavated at Khirbat Khanāzīr, the manner of their construction, and their relation to other EB IV tomb types in Syria-Palestine.

We are dating these tombs to the EB IV period, without further specification, on the basis of their associated pottery. We found no other pottery during the excavations of Khirbat Khanāzīr. (For a general description of this pottery see MacDonald *et al.* 1992: 200-201, PL. 14).

For contextual purposes we will first provide a general description of the EB IV tomb types of Syria-Palestine.

EB IV Tomb Types of Syria-Palestine

Dever (1987) and Palumbo (1991) list four and three tomb types respectively for the EB IV Period of Syria-Palestine. The former lists the four types as the built-chamber tomb, dolmens, cairns or tumuli, and, by far the most common, the shaft tomb (1987: 9-11). The latter, on the other hand, dealing specifically with the Southern Levant, lists the EB IV tomb types as dolmens, cairns, and shaft tombs (1991: 78, 125). The difference lies in the fact that the built-chamber tomb, which Dever lists, appears to be confined to Upper Syria (Dever 1987: 9).

Dever describes the built-chamber tomb as "a large, rectangular subterranean chamber, lined and roofed with stones slabs, usually accessible by a square shaft" (1987: 9; see also 10, FIG. 1a). He describes the dolmens as "above-ground chamber tombs, either elliptical or rectangular, constructed of megalithic uprights and roof slabs" (1987: 9; see also 10, FIG. 1b). The "cairns or tu-

muli are similar to the dolmens, though much smaller, consisting of a slab-built, rectangular chamber above ground level, mounded over by a heap of smaller stones" (Dever 1987: 9; see also 10, FIG. 1c). He describes the shaft tomb, by far the most common EB IV tomb type, as "consisting of a rock-cut vertical shaft, normally leading through a small stone blocked doorway to a single lateral chamber but occasionally to two or four chambers" (1987: 11; see also 10, FIGS. 1d and 1e).

Kenyon classified all the tombs of the Intermediate Early Bronze-Middle Bronze Period (our EB IV) which she excavated at Jericho in her 1952-54 and 1955-58 seasons into seven categories (1960: 180-181; 1965: 34). For the most part, however, the great majority of these seven tomb types are the so-called shaft tombs which consist of a shaft which leads to a chamber in which the dead person is interred. The passage between the shaft and the chamber is usually sealed by what is called a blocking-stone.

In the northern cemetery of Baysān, the standard entry device of all the EB IV tomb groups is a squarish or rather a rectangular shaft (Oren 1973a: 19). The shaft is connected to the chamber by a long and narrow passage which Oren refers to as a *dromos*. The only distinction between tomb types A (single-chambered shaft tombs), B (double-chambered shaft tombs), and C (multi-chambered shaft tombs) is based on the number of burial chambers (Oren 1973a: 19-25; 1973b: 22, FIG. 1).

At Ṭiwāl ash-Sharqī, with the exception of two of the tombs, namely, NE8 and SE14, which should more correctly be described as "graves", "the tombs were of the shaft tomb variety, a vertical shaft giving access to a chamber by way of a small entranceway" (Tubb 1990: 10). However, Tubb cautions that this nomenclature "can only be applied in the broadest sense, for many of the tombs were found to have been cut into existing hill slopes, and in such cases the vertical element of the shaft was reduced to that of a 'semi-shaft'" (Tubb 1990: 10). However, because the number of the tombs which Tubb excavated at the site represents such a small proportion

of the potential total in the cemetery, he makes no attempt to construct a typology of tomb architecture (1990: 11).

Lapp excavated two EB IV tombs, namely, A 52 and A 54, at Bāb adh-Dhrā', north of Khirbat Khanāzīr (Schaub 1973; Schaub and Rast 1989: 473-483; for A 54 see p. 482, FIG. 277). Both are of the shaft tomb variety.

The EB IV Tombs Types at Khirbat Khanāzīr

The EB IV tombs of Khirbat Khanāzīr are much more diverse than the categories of shaft tombs which Kenyon excavated at Jericho during the 1960's. Moreover, they do not fit neatly into the groupings of Dever and Palumbo. For example, there appears to be three different tomb types in Field B alone. Besides this, there is another EB IV tomb type in Field E. We will examine each of these four tomb types.

Tomb Type I

This first tomb type consists of what appears to be a rectangular, stone structure having well-constructed and well-defined exterior walls (FIG. 1). However, there is, within the structure and below ground level, a shaft and a tomb chamber. The entire structure is made of unhewn stone which is readily available immediately to the east. We excavated four, namely, A.1; B.1; C.1; and D.1, of this tomb type. B.1 is typical of this group. It is described here because the author was involved in its excavation.

Externally, B.1 measures 9.83 m (E-W) on the north side; 9.00 m (E-W) on the south side; 4.38 m (N-S) at the west end; and 3.88 m (N-S) at the east end (FIG. 1). Parts of the external walls are fallen. However, the northeast corner, the best preserved of the four, stands c. 1 m high on the exterior. While the exterior walls of the structure are smooth, the builders made no attempt to construct interior walls of the same character since it appears that the rectangular structure served only to demarcate the place of the burial. Interiorly, the structure consists of piles of stone covering a chamber and a shaft which are below ground level. Both the chamber and the shaft are covered by flagstones/capstones. Within the structure, at ground level, the chamber and shaft combined measure 3.38 m (E-W) x 2.25 m (N-S) (FIG. 1, section A-A). Internally, at floor level, the chamber measures 1.55 m (E-W) while the shaft measures c. 0.35 m (E-W) wide. The chamber is c. 1.10 m deep. The entrance or passageway between the shaft and the chamber measures 0.50-0.35 m wide and is c. 1.00 m deep. Thus, internally, B.1 consists of a chamber on the west and a shaft on the east. They are joined by a passageway (FIG. 1, section B-B). The internal walls, especially the north one, of the chamber curve inward at the top. This construction feature probably made it easier to cover them over with flagstones/

capstones at ground level. At the time of our work the chamber was filled with windblown soil and some stones as well as burials and associated artifacts. However, the shaft segment of the tomb was blocked with large stones.

Tomb Type II

B.2, B.3, and B.5 are also EB IV shaft and chamber tombs which are in ways similar to, but also different from, Tomb Type I. A good example of Tomb Type II is B.3. It consists, at ground level, of two segments, both semicircles of stones (FIG. 2). At this level, the tomb, including stones which form the rim, measures c. 3.45 m (N-S) x 1.90 m (E-W). This can be broken down into the shaft, measuring c. 1.15 m (N-S) x 1.75 m (E-W), and the chamber, measuring c. 2.00 m (N-S) x 1.90 m (E-W), which even at ground level are separated by a line of stones measuring c. 0.30 m wide. Within the tomb, at floor level, the shaft and chamber measure c. 0.55 m and c. 1.65 m (N-S) respectively (FIG. 2, section A-A). There is still, at this level, the 0.30 m wall separating the two sections of the tomb. The passageway between the shaft and the tomb measures 0.60-0.65 m wide, is 0.70 m high, and, as mentioned previously, is 0.30 m thick (FIG. 2, section B-B). The depth of the shaft is c. 1.33 m while that of the chamber is c. 1.53 meters.

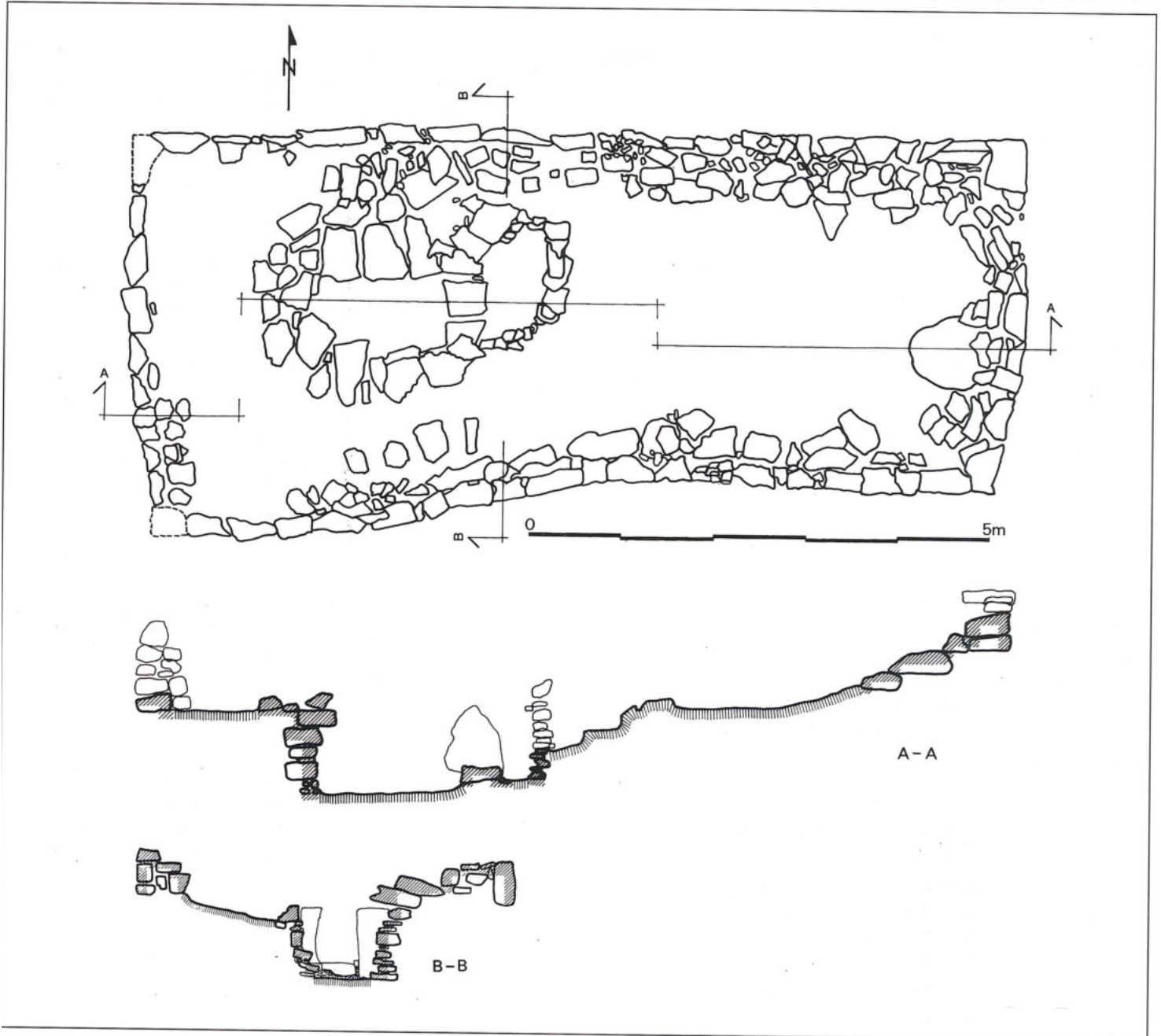
Tomb Type III

Tomb Type III, represented by E.1 (FIG. 3), consists of a pile of stone, in the shape of a rectangle, not unlike that of Tomb Type I. Exteriorly, the structure measures c. 4.50 m (N-S) x 2.50 m (E-W) while the cist, in which the burial was placed, measures c. 2.45 m (N-S) x 1.00 m (E-W) (at its greatest width). The depth of the cist is c. 0.70 m from the top of the stone wall to the flat-lying stones. Thus, the cist of the tomb is very shallow. The stones which form the exterior of the tomb now stand, in some place, to c. 0.50 m above the present ground level.

Tomb Type IV

We excavated a fourth type of tomb as B.4 (FIG. 4). We are presently calling this an EB IV tomb. However, we found no pottery from any period associated with the very poorly preserved, human-skeletal remains in this tomb. We are calling it EB IV, for the present time, because of its association with the other EB IV tomb types at Khirbat Khanāzīr.

B.4 is a long, wall-like structure, measuring c. 16.50 m (N-S) x 2.50 m (E-W) externally and c. 15.25 m (N-S) x 0.75-0.85 m (E-W) internally. It, like the other tomb types previously described, is made of unhewn stone. Internally, at a balk which we cut at 4.70 m from the south end, the east wall still stands seven while the west wall stands five courses high. The interior walls are well built with smooth surfaces at the areas where we excavated.



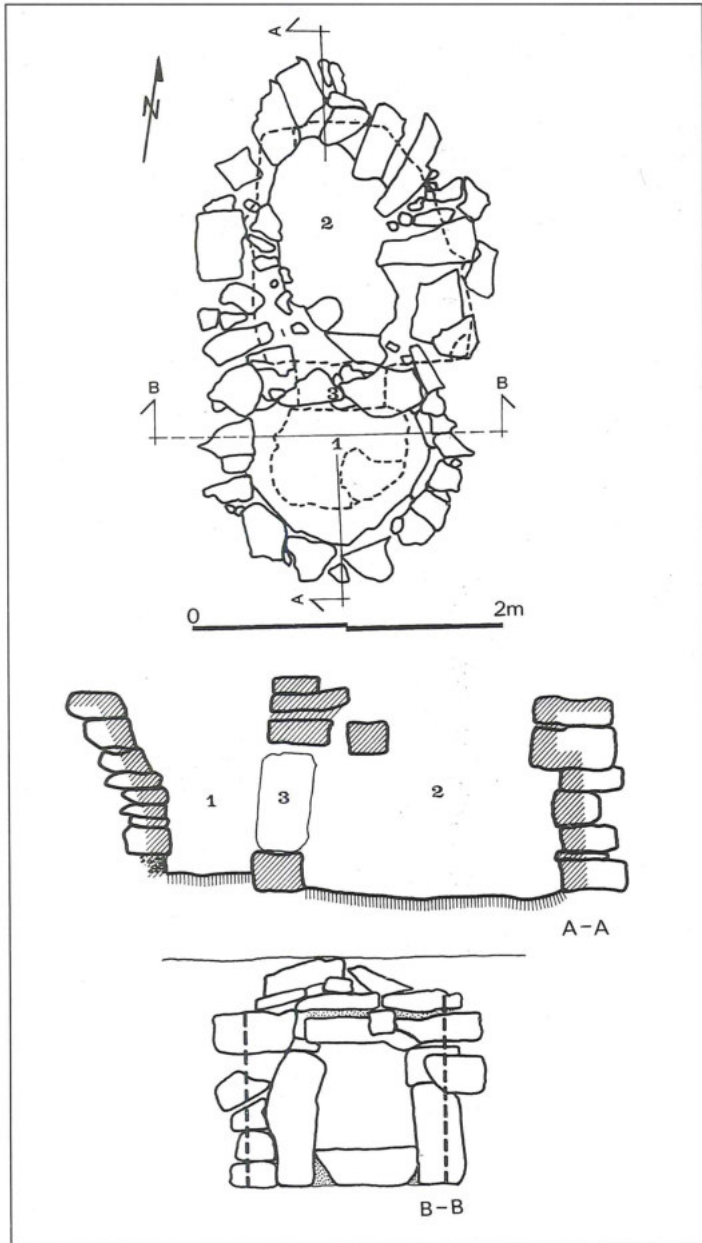
1. B.1, top plan and sections.

The stones which form the walls are of varying sizes. The depth from the top of the east wall to the floor is c. 0.87 m while that of the west wall is c. 0.73 m. However, both walls were probably originally the same height. The exterior walls are constructed of the same type of stone. They are in the form of three steps with no risers. Our excavations revealed that there is evidence of what appears to be corbelling, or at least flat lying stones, which once served as the roof of the structure. However, since the interior width of the structure is only 0.75-0.85 m, it would not be difficult to roof it with readily available stone. Conversely, it is possible that what

we identified as possible corbelling are actually stones in association with the burials within the structure.

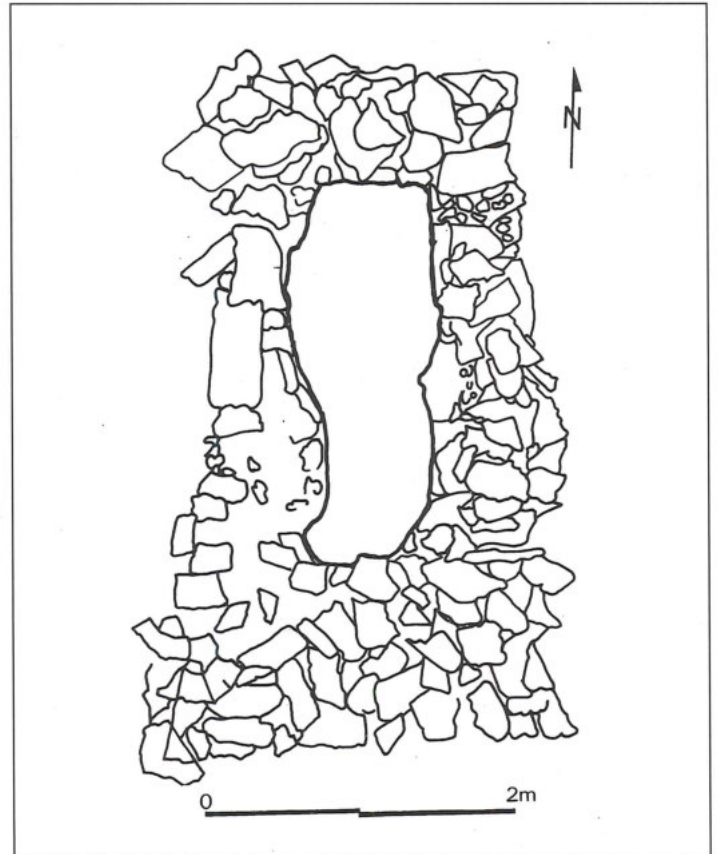
Construction Technique of the Four Tomb Types

It appears that in the construction of Tomb Type I, i.e., A.1; B.1; C.1; and D.1, and Tomb Type II, i.e., B.2; B.3; and B.5, the tomb builders dug a large hole over 1 m deep. They lined the sides of this hole with unhewn stones making the interior walls as smooth as possible. They next constructed a wall to separate a larger burial chamber from a smaller shaft. They left a hole or passageway in this wall to permit "communication" be-



2. B.3, top plan and sections.

tween the two segments of the tomb. They put down flat-lying stones to serve as the floor of the tomb. Some walls of the burial chambers appear to curve inward towards the top while the others are perpendicular. This was probably done to make it easier to construct the roof of the chamber which consisted of flagstones/capstones. The much smaller shaft, on the other hand, is often funnel-shaped. It too is covered over with flagstones/capstones. The passageway/doorway between the chamber and the shaft was filled with stones, rather than with one blocking stone, after a body or bodies were placed in the tomb. This resulted in blocking off the chamber from the shaft. The latter was also filled with stones before its entrance was covered. In the cases of A.1, B.1,

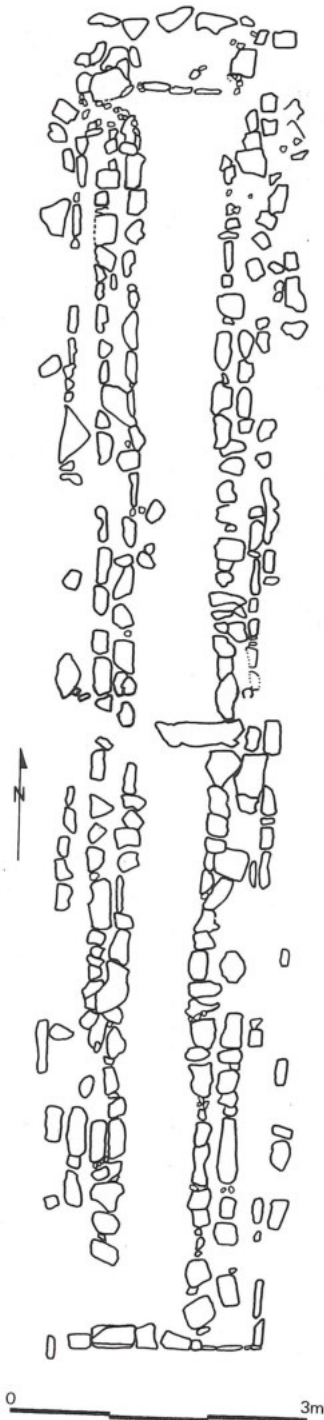


3. E.1, top plan.

C.1, and D.1, the builders next piled stones over the chamber and the shaft and enclosed them in seemingly rectangular structures. However, the piles of stones and the rectangular structures are not part of B.2, B.3, and B.5. Otherwise, it appears that Tomb Types I and II are constructed similarly.

It is probable that the builders of Tomb Type III, i.e. E.1, dug a rectangular hole in the ground. This was not deep since they soon hit bedrock. Some of the bedrock in the southeastern interior of the tomb appears to have been cut away. Since the bedrock sloped towards the northeast, the tomb builders put soil to level off the bedrock in the central and northern segments of the cist. They then put flat-lying stones in these areas to serve as the floor. They also lined the sides of the cist with flat, unhewn stones. The body or bodies were then laid on the flat stones and covered over with soil and stones to about ground level. More stones were then used to demarcate the place of the burial.

To construct Tomb Type IV, i.e. B.4, the "trough-like" structure, the tomb builders dug a trench, running north-south. They then built two walls of stones, facing each other, about 0.75-0.85 m apart. They next put a floor between them. They then built a second and third wall to the exterior of these inner walls. This gave the impression of steps or terraces. After burying an in-



f. B.4, top plan.

dividual or individuals, the builders then covered the bones, probably disarticulated, with fine sand and large stones. The entire structure was then covered over with large stones.

Concluding Comments

Tomb Types I and II can, in general, be categorized as shaft tombs. In the case of Khirbat Khanāzīr, however, they resemble miniature, subterranean houses. They all have a very distinct passageway/doorway which consists of door posts, a lintel, and a threshold. There is, thus, an impression given that one is, indeed, entering a house. The passageway/doorway leads from a small, stone-built shaft, usually not more than 1 m deep, to a larger, burial chamber/room. One "steps down" from the shaft into the chamber. Both the shaft and the chamber are roofed-over by large flagstones/capstones. There must have been the intention of imitating houses/dwellings since it was not necessary to use both a shaft and an associated chamber for burial purposes. Thus, the site appears to be town/city of the dead (Dever 1987: 15). The pastoralists, who expended so much effort in constructing these tombs, probably returned year-after-year to bury, in permanent dwellings, those of their number who had died during the intervening period.

Tomb Type III is of the cist type. However, it has, as noted above, some similarities to Tomb Type I. On the other hand, this tomb type is quite different from the EB IV cist tombs close by Rujm Khanāzīr, immediately to the north (MacDonald *et al.* 1992: 260, Site No. 109 and 261, Site No. 119).

A parallel that we found for Tomb Type IV, namely, B.4, is Bidya 1 located 38 km north of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates (al Tikriti 1989: 102-103 and PLS. 61 and 91). Bidya 1 is a long, collective tomb within an Islamic cemetery which is still in use today. Its upper chamber has parallels to B.4. Although it is almost twice as long as B.4, the construction technique is similar. Parts of both tombs are above and below ground level. B.4, like Bidya 1, appears to have been covered over by flagstones in antiquity. Moreover, both have stone floors. The building material for both appears to be local. The orientation, that is, north-south, is similar. The condition of the human bones in B.4 and Bidya 1 is also similar. The bones in both cases are only in small fragments and the numerous skulls uncovered are in a poor state of preservation. Moreover, Bidya 1 dates to the beginning of the second millennium BC. This is the time to which we are dating B.4. The major areas of dissimilarity is in two-level nature of the Bidya 1 tomb and the number of burial goods found relative to B.4. The latter was almost devoid of grave goods.

Thus, from the above, it appears that there are four different EB IV tomb types at Khirbat Khanāzīr. As noted above, none of these tomb types fits neatly into the tomb types which Dever, Palumbo, Kenyon, Oren, and Tubb describe. Furthermore, the tombs excavated at Khirbat Khanāzīr are unlike those EB IV shaft tombs, namely, A 52 and A 54, which Lapp excavated at Bāb

adh-Dhrā'. The EB IV cist tombs at Rujm Khanāzīr are constructed of cobble-stones capped by flagstones. This then is a fifth type of EB IV tomb present in the immediate vicinity of Khirbat Khanāzīr. Thus, it seems unwise to attempt to categorize too strictly the EB IV tomb types of Syria-Palestine.

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