

## **Khirbat Iskandar: an Argument for Elites in the Early Bronze IV Period**

### **Introduction**

Much has been written and speculated about the apparent uniqueness of the Early Bronze IV (hereafter EB IV) settlement at Khirbat Iskandar (Rast 2001; Prag 2001; Dever 1989; 1995, Haiman 1996; Gophna 1992: 138; Palumbo 1990; 2001: 236). Is it a city, a town, a large village? Is it urban? Is occupation at the site an anomaly for a non-urban period generally characterized as agro-rural/pastoral-nomadic? Or, should it not be considered an anomaly at all, but rather an “example of an urban EB II-III site one could have expected to survive the collapse” (Dever 1992: 88). The expedition has consistently argued that Khirbat Iskandar’s EB IV remains veer from the norm; that the archaeological record (settlement, architecture, and material culture) compares more favorably with small urban sites, e.g., EB III Numayra, than with most of the sites in EB IV. Indeed, comparisons with house type and features at EB II ‘Arad have also been suggested in the past.

Renewed excavation (Richard 2002; Richard and Long 1995a, 1995b, 1998; Richard, Long, and Libby 2001, 2005) has revealed a wealth of new data that both illuminate more clearly the occupational history of the site, and support more strongly the previous hypotheses proffered by the expedition; namely, that 1) the level of sociopolitical and economic complexity at Khirbat Iskandar is somewhat unique for the period, and 2) that continuity with Early Bronze Age traditions is discernible in the EB IV settlement. The remarkable state of preservation of the stratified remains offers perhaps the best view of a site that apparently weathered the still enigmatic forces that caused the disintegration of the EB II-III urban system and abandonment of many sites ca. 2350 BC throughout the southern Levant. With a view toward understanding

the uniqueness of the site, we offer an interpretive framework (below) that contextualizes and helps to explain the remarkable EB IV remains at Khirbat Iskandar.

In support of that framework, this article will summarily highlight the relevant data both from past work and from the most recent excavations. In the process, we hope to clarify earlier published accounts of the stratigraphy of the site, and to set forth our present understanding of Khirbat Iskandar’s occupational history. On the strength of recent discoveries, newly refined working hypotheses now guide the project; namely, 1) there are vestiges of urban sociopolitical and economic organizational institutions at the site; and 2) there is continuity of Early Bronze Age occupation at Khirbat Iskandar in the EB IV period, destruction phase notwithstanding. These hypotheses presuppose continuity in the community’s traditions and lifeways, including vestiges of power inequality representative of a ruling elite. That said, one should expect to find evidences for unequal access to resources, as well as other status markings that imply vertical social distinctions, such as differentiated architecture, neighborhoods, or material culture, etc. We believe that such data sets, indicative of social complexity and differentiated social identities, exist at Khirbat Iskandar, and that a case can be made for elites in residence in EB IV. These data are not inconsistent with recent research demonstrating considerable complexity in the period, e.g., in reciprocal trade networks, possible colonization (Goren 1996: 67; Haiman 1966) metal production (Adams 2000) and in burial customs, including probable warrior burials (Palumbo 1987; Philip 1995; Baxevani 1995).

### **Recent Work at the Site**

At the close of Phase 1 operations in 1987, the Ex-

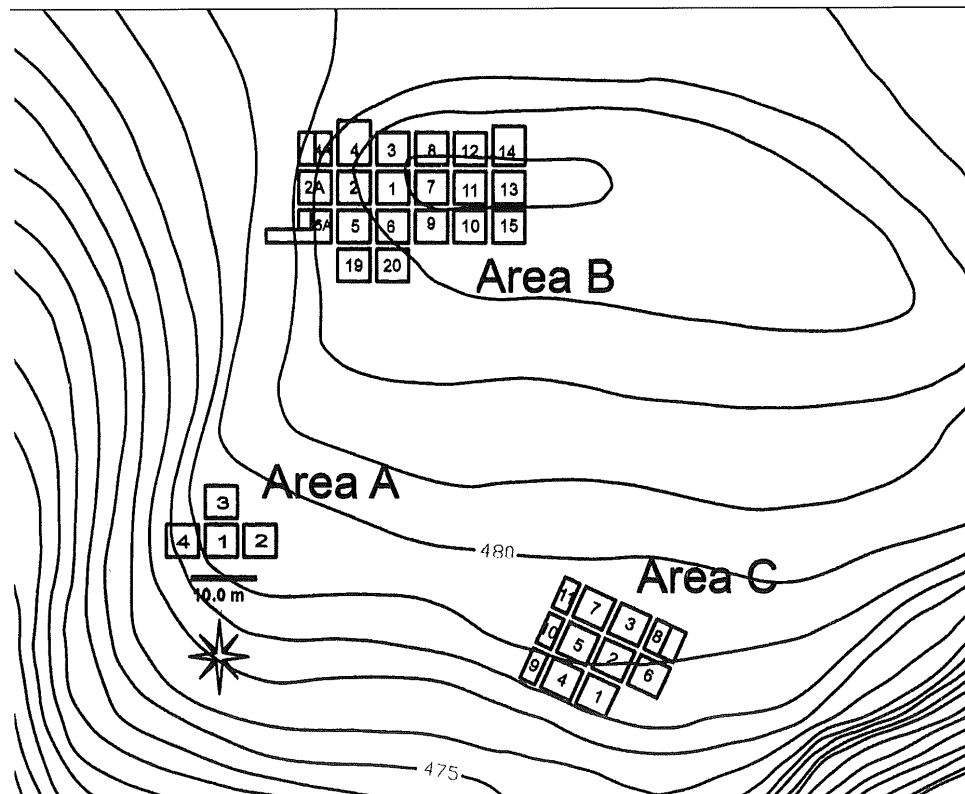
expedition had completed work in Area C at the southeast (FIG. 1), where three EB IV phases revealed an evolution to a quite remarkable type of “gate” or entryway (Richard and Boraas 1984, 1988; Richard 1990). In Area B, at the northwest, the stratigraphic record had revealed what were clearly multiple strata, including two major settlements in EB IV, two major stages in the construction of the fortifications, and what appeared to be two phases of buildings running under the corner tower. Some of the pottery in deeper probes, though weathered, sparse, and generally non-diagnostic, appeared to be early, perhaps EB I or EB II. Given the discovery of an EB I tomb by the expedition (Richard 1990), as well as the findings of Peter Parr (1960), the presence of earlier remains on the mound was not surprising.

Phase 2 operations at the site began with a study season in 1994, followed by major field seasons in 1997, 2000, and, most recently, 2004. Work concentrated in Area B, particularly on the interior occupational levels within the fortifications. As a result, the work from earlier seasons has been considerably clarified.

In broad strokes, from the top, in Area B there are two major EB IV settlements, Phases A and B, both with sub phasing. There is a Phase B reuse and rebuild of the fortifications. Below, a major destruction layer covers an EB III occupational

layer, whose architectural elements are a rebuild of an earlier phase, presumed to be EB III, although this is not yet certain. Temporarily, we have labeled those levels C1, C2 and C3. We now are certain that the founding and the expansion of the fortifications date to Phase C. Finally, below the western perimeter defenses, there is a destruction layer covering a stone and mudbrick construction, plus battered pier. We have tentatively labeled those remains, Phases D1 and D2. The date of Phase D is not yet clear, since no interior occupational remains with diagnostic pottery have been excavated. Whether these remains are from the same phase as the structures found below the tower on the north is not yet known. Because of the obvious architectural superposition of each of these phases, and clear separation markers, previously excavated materials and phases termed Phases C and D can now be aligned or realigned with the stratigraphic profile of the site, as currently understood. Whether there are still earlier strata remains to be seen.

It is worth noting that Parr’s excavations on the northeast slopes are not incompatible with the above-mentioned phasing. From the top, Period 3ii comprised 3-4 phases of EB IV buildings, plus reuse of Period 3i fortification wall. In Period 3i, there was a large foundation trench (2m deep and 3m wide), probably for a defensive structure, a segment of which was found; several rebuilds of the



1. Topographic Plan of Khirbat Iskandar, showing Areas A-B-C.

structure were indicated. In Period 2, occupational remains, including mud brick debris from a destroyed building were found. Finally, on bedrock, a large defensive wall, probably EB I, was discovered in Period 1 (Parr 1960).

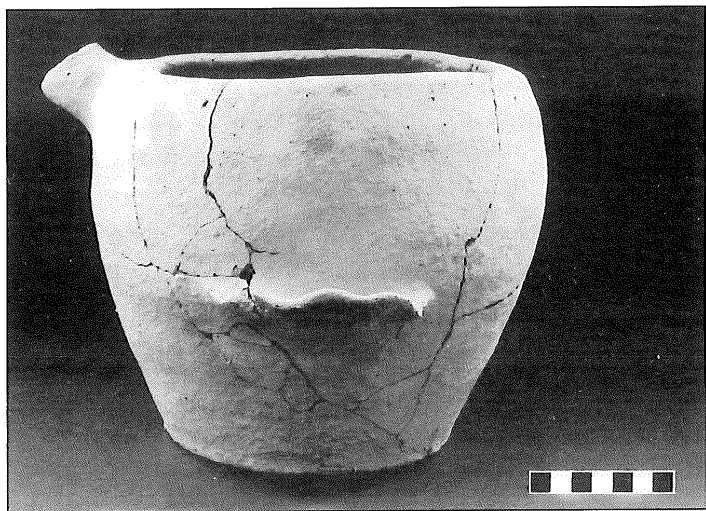
Previously, we have termed the newly recovered Phase C occupational remains EB II-III; however, in 2004, continued excavation of the same destruction level in two squares uncovered a wealth of pottery, including wavy, ledge-handled teapots and wavy, ledge-handled pithoi (FIG. 2). These classic diagnostics date Phase C at Khirbat Iskandar to the EB III period. Once the considerable number of C14 samples taken from the destruction level has been analyzed, we will have a firmer grasp on the date when the EB III settlement at Khirbat Iskandar was destroyed.

This newly recovered EB III stratum is quite remarkable in a number of ways, not the least being the need to dismiss the near iconic identification of Khirbat Iskandar with EB IV only. Three projects at the site (Glueck 1939; Parr 1960, and the current expedition), and countless sherdings of the site through the years, found at most a handful of diagnostic EB III sherds (Parr 1960: 32), but more evidence for a probable EB I occupation. Clearly, these new discoveries will require a re-evaluation of work and materials from earlier seasons in the light of what appears to be a major settlement of urban occupation at the site in EB III, not to say, possibly a considerable settlement in Phase D, whose date is uncertain as yet. A case in point is the teapot discovered in a probe from the pilot season (Richard 1982: Fig. 4:1). That teapot has been variously dated, based on comparisons with EB IV trickle-

painted ware and with EB III Tomb A at Jericho. Its context and comparisons with FIG. 2 now unquestionably date the vessel to Phase C and, thus, EB III.

The newly recovered EB III level is also remarkable because it makes the wonderfully preserved and, to date, somewhat unique, EB IV settlement at Khirbat Iskandar, much more comprehensible. It renders moot earlier questions about the project's stress on EBA continuity through the EB IV period at the site (although continuity with EBA tradition generally was the thrust of the argument). Clearly, the well-fortified EB III urban site at Khirbat Iskandar and its subsequent fortified EB IV settlement combine to strengthen the argument that, in the face of collapse at the end of the third millennium BC, some urbanites opted for a continuation of their traditional city lifeways. It suffices to note here that EB IV rebuilding and reuse of EB III structures does occur (Richard and Long, forthcoming b).

Finally, the EB III occupation is remarkable because Khirbat Iskandar becomes the only site known thus far to show a complete reoccupation of an EB III tall site, following the destruction that brought urban life to an end throughout the southern Levant. EB IV reoccupation of EB III tall sites is known, e.g., Jericho, Ader, Lajjūn, Khirbat az-Zayraqūn, Hazor, Lachish, Bethel, Tall Bayt Mirsim, Bāb adh-Dhrā', Megiddo. Although only the cultic area is on the tall at Bāb adh-Dhrā', still there is good evidence for continuity between EB III and EB IV at that site (Rast and Schaub 2003: 399). However, with the exception of Megiddo, whose continuity of the cultic area is probably but a shadow of what may have been a significant reoccupation by EB IV occupants, the original nature of EB IV tall remains is, unfortunately, not recoverable. Yet, surveys indicate that EB III/IV occupation of tall sites was not inconsiderable. Palumbo has shown that thirty percent of EB II/III sites and fifty percent of EB III sites in Palestine were reoccupied in EB IV (1990: 45). Interestingly, some thirty of EB II/III/IV sites continued into the MBA, where a "smooth" transition is noted (Palumbo 2001: 240-241). In many cases, MBA building efforts clearly have obliterated the evidence for EB IV settlement. Note, for example, the quantities of EB IV material culture but the lack of architectural remains at Tall al-Hayyāt, due no doubt to the construction of the

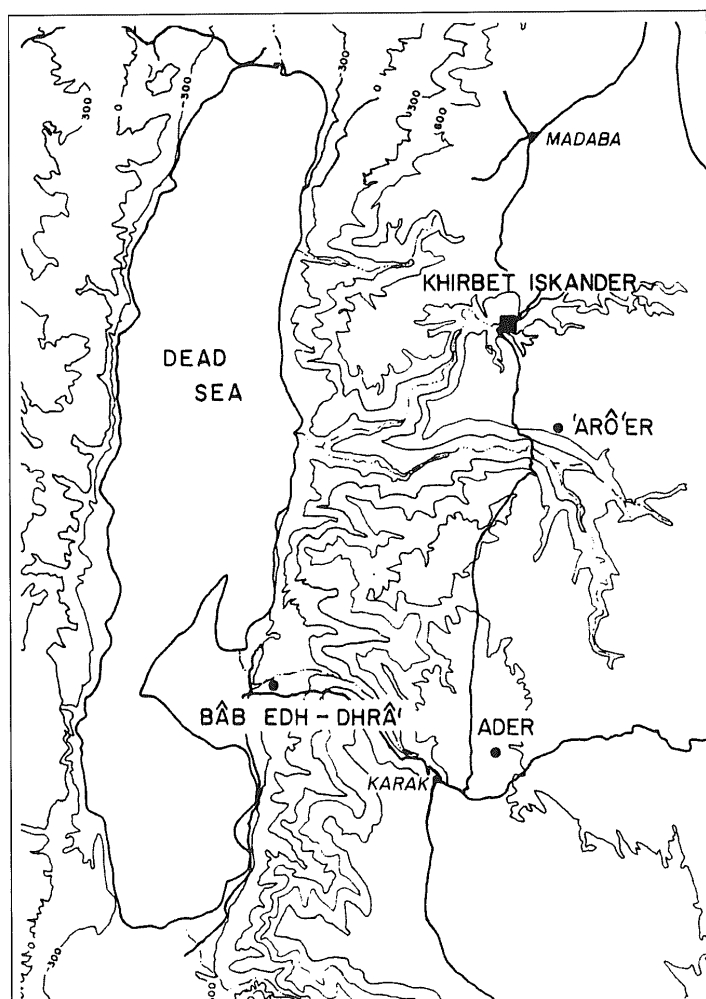


2. EB III wavy, ledge-handled "teapot" found in Phase C at Khirbat Iskandar.

temple precinct in the succeeding period (Falconer and Magness Gardiner 1989: 341). It is interesting that as recently as 1989, it was observed that “not a *single* site thus far excavated in Western or Eastern Palestine shows a full continuity of domestic occupation from EB II, through EB III, into EB IV, then on into MB I.” (Dever 1995: 236). As the discussion above indicates, it is now possible to emend this long-held view.

### Theoretical Considerations

How may we understand the continued success of tall/urban-like lifeways at Khirbat Iskandar in a post-urban period of collapse? For one thing, the site is strategically located on the Central Transjordanian Plateau at a major crossing point of the Wādī al-Wāla, along the main north-south trade route, the ancient “King’s Highway” (FIG. 3). Presumably, the site’s accessibility to trade and tribute, as well as the continued dominance of agriculture and horticulture (primarily olive), were major factors in its continued occupation throughout most,



3. Map showing some key EB IV sites and the position of Khirbat Iskandar along the ancient “King’s Highway”.

if not all of, the Early Bronze Age, ca. 3500-2000 BCE. However, similar extenuating factors such as these could be suggested for other tall sites in the EB IV. Perhaps Khirbat Iskandar played an important role in the EB IV reintegration of trade routes, the continued production of copper ore in the mines of Faynān, manufacturing, and the expansion of sites between the Faynān, an-Naqab (Negev), Sinai and Egypt, as has been postulated (Haiman 1996; Goren 1966).

Recently, we have developed a theoretical framework that offers some alternative perspectives on why Khirbat Iskandar appears to veer from the norm in the EB IV period (Richard, Forthcoming b; Richard and Long: Forthcoming a). By utilizing insights from Chaos Theory and venturing into the realm of the “archaeology of people” one can posit a model or paradigm that has great explanatory value for understanding a remarkable, continued tall-site occupation in EB IV, following the “chaos of collapse”. The interpretive framework is predicated on the view that, regardless of a destruction layer in between, the two prosperous EB III and EB IV settlements at Khirbat Iskandar represent continuity of tall settlement. Intrinsic to this paradigm is the concept of a “mental template” specific to the settlers of this reoccupied tall-site. Arguably, for the community at Khirbat Iskandar (and probably other tall-sites), such a view is totally at odds with a pastoral-nomadic “mental template”. The latter has recently been posited for the EB IV population generally (Dever 2003). As developed elsewhere (Richard, Forthcoming b; Richard and Long, Forthcoming a), it is self-evident that the “pastoral-nomadic mental template does not resonate with the evidence recovered from this site. While the aforementioned “pastoral-nomadic mental template” may be applicable to the majority of EB IV society, there’s no denying that considerable variability is extant in the period. Only when the hundreds of sites in the marginal and peripheral deserts of the Negev/Sinai are added to the mix, does the resulting picture favor an overwhelming pastoral-nomadic “look” to the archaeological landscape in EB IV. We should not underestimate the strong evidence for a considerable, permanently settled agricultural and sedentary core to the population, with which the inhabitants of those seasonal/temporary sites in the Negev/Sinai were clearly connected (Goren 1966; Haiman 1996). Nevertheless, for the sake of argument, we consider the normative pastoral-no-

matic “mental template” to be a useful benchmark against which to compare and contrast the distinctive Khirbat Iskandar site and community.

If one can speculate on the “mental template” driving the community’s reoccupation of the tall site of Khirbat Iskandar, one would assume that: 1) the community seemed firmly intent on salvaging and maintaining, to various degrees possible, antecedent urban traditions of the land; and 2) the community likewise seemed determined to reorganize their sociopolitical and economic system, and to re-integrate their community within the interregional system. Based on the archaeological record at the site, these suppositions seem valid. Research on burial customs in the period likewise suggests that a “period of qualitative re-organization of southern Levantine communities” ensued following the collapse of cities (Baxevani 1995: 95). The pastoral-nomadic agro/rural “mental template,” on the other hand, drives people to occupy or reoccupy a “peripheral site or a cave or a newly dispersed site or a deserted mound with ephemeral remains” (Dever 2003: 43). Again, the occupiers of this particular urban tall-site appear to reflect motives in contrast to the pastoral nomads, at least from the viewpoint of the “archaeology of people”.

So, why did the apparent option for continued occupation at a former urban site seem plausible at Khirbat Iskandar? We know that tumultuous events and conditions, still poorly known to date, transformed the southern Levantine landscape from a uniform and integrated EB II-III urban cultural complex to a landscape of despecialized (in the macro sense) and regional polities in EB IV (Long 2003). We also know that factionalism is a fairly typical phenomenon following a breakdown of any inter-regional system of communication and trade (see, generally, Yoffee and Cowgill 1988; for the Chaco Valley culture, Vivian 1990; the Hopewell culture, Braun and Plog 1982). This seems to be the case in the southern Levant following the collapse of cities at the end of EB III.

Borrowing insights from Chaos Theory, it is possible to assume that, in the face of collapse, individuals or groups can play a role in the outcome. Not generally considered in paradigms of culture change, the perception of and reaction to instability in a system by the individual or the community are cognitive factors not to be underestimated (Stone 1999). Obviously, systemic instability and perception of communities to it varies from site

to site, region to region, across the entire inter-regional system. Some communities either suffered greater instability or perceived more instability in the system, which resulted in the subsequent abandonment of their cities for alternative subsistence styles. Others, apparently, perceived less instability in the system; they remained to rebuild and to attempt some maintenance of previous traditions. In such a process, typically, communities gradually tend to experiment with and reorganize the system, economically, politically, socially and ritually. Studies have shown that the transformation after systemic collapse usually includes both of the above elements: traditional (antecedent) organizational principles of the former system, and experimental reorganization, often recharged or energized by outside influences (Renfrew 1979, 1991; Stone 1999; Tainter 1988).

The still enigmatic collapse, destruction, abandonment of sites in EB II-III in the southern Levant is a considerably complex issue, one that requires analysis at the level of individual regions and sites in order to understand the peculiar factors that played a role in their demise. This discussion of the site and population of Khirbat Iskandar is intended as a case study, highly particularized to the site, to its unique archaeological record, eco-environment, and place on the broader landscape.

Generally, one could argue that, given the separate trajectories in reorganization in EB IV in Transjordan and Cisjordan, the dynamics of collapse had to vary considerably throughout the region. This inference derives from the evidence that permanent, multiphase agricultural/sedentary settlements appear to be a cultural phenomenon primarily of Transjordan in EB IV (see also Gophna 1992: 138; Palumbo 2001: 240-41, 243). It is suggested here, that some of these insights from Chaos Theory do explain the variability and uneven evidence for collapse in the southern Levant; they also inform us on the regionalism or factionalism in the subsequent EB IV period. Although paradigms describing the EB III/IV shift — continuity / discontinuity; urban / deurbanization; specialization / despecialization; urban / rural; urban / pastoral-nomadic — have played an important role in the re-evaluation of the EB IV, Chaos theory offers more explanatory value.

The newly recovered EB III stratum at Khirbat Iskandar serves to bolster the interpretation of the site’s fortified EB IV settlement as representing the

last vestiges of Early Bronze Age urban traditions. We surmise that, among other factors undoubtedly, reoccupation at Khirbat Iskandar following the collapse reflects the perception that instability in the system was not insurmountable, and that some semblance of the earlier “urban” system could be maintained in a general reorganization.

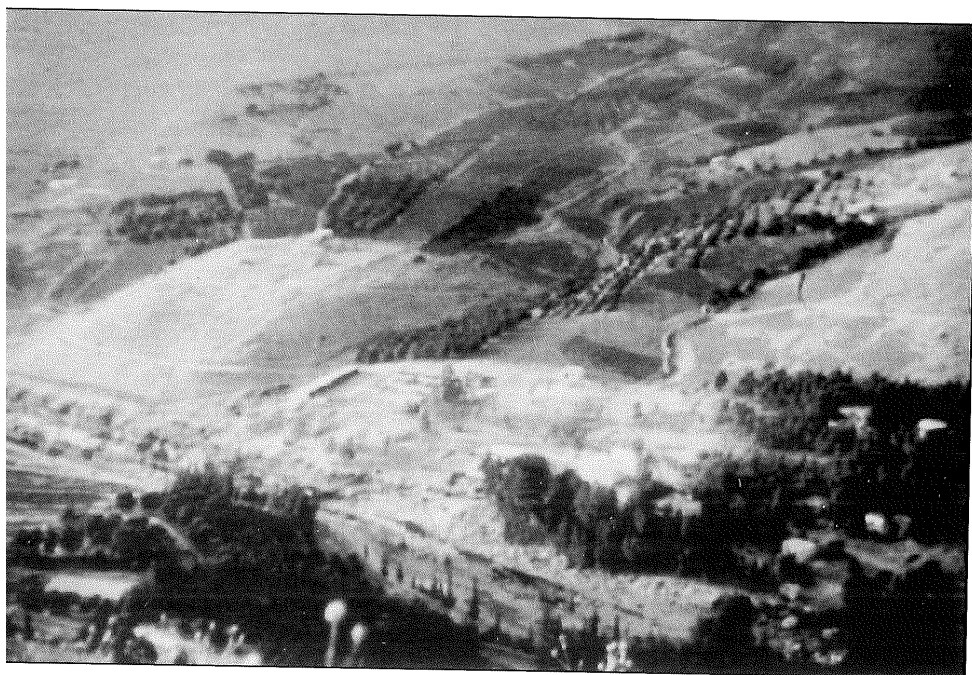
Thus, we suggest that the EB IV population at Khirbat Iskandar chose to perpetuate a semblance of “city-life” at a well-established former urban site in a strategic and successful eco-environmental niche on the Central Transjordanian Plateau. By focusing our lens on a variant, perhaps idiosyncratic, population in the period — the settlers of the urban sites — we hope to provide a glimpse into the perceptions and behaviors of individuals who, apparently, made choices distinctly at odds with the “majority” of people in the face of collapse. More specifically, the theoretical structure sketched above contextualizes and helps to explain the higher levels of complexity apparent at the site, including the evidence for elites.

### The Archaeological Evidence

As much of the evidence concerning the relevant materials at the site has been elaborated recently in several sources (Richard 2000, 2003, Forthcoming a and b; Richard and Long, Forthcoming a), the following is a summary discussion highlighting the relevant evidence bearing on the issues, paradigm, and hypotheses detailed above. Relevant to the discussion is the site and its catchment area (FIG.

4). Given the results of excavation and survey, the political and territorial, as well as economic, boundaries of Khirbat Iskandar extend far beyond the tall itself (see also Prag 2001). Recent GPS survey of the tall delineates a mound of 2.5 hectares, although the east and southern sides have eroded. The project excavated a “circle of stone” feature in 1987 to the east beyond the small wadi, which bounds the tall, as well as a “high place” in 2004 on the summit of the hill behind and overlooking the site on the north. Excavations took place in Cemetery D in the hillside, across the wadi to the south, Cemetery E to the east, and Cemetery J to the west. Menhir have been found throughout the vicinity of the site. Although some of the features could very well be EB III, the vast EB IV cemeteries in the vicinity indicate that Khirbat Iskandar, just like Bāb adh-Dhrā‘, was a central site or regional center, to which kindred peoples returned to practice the rituals associated with burial of the dead.

Although much of the surrounding area is under cultivation, when Glueck explored the site, he noted circles-of-stone features, menhir, EB IV ceramics and occupational remains beyond the site in all directions, including the area to the north (1939). It is also worth emphasizing that the fortifications and towers were visible at the time, thus strongly suggesting that they were still in use through the EB IV period, the latest layers on the mound. In particular, Glueck noted that the uppermost (EB IV) structures at the north were built against the outer fortifications (1939: 127). The evidence of



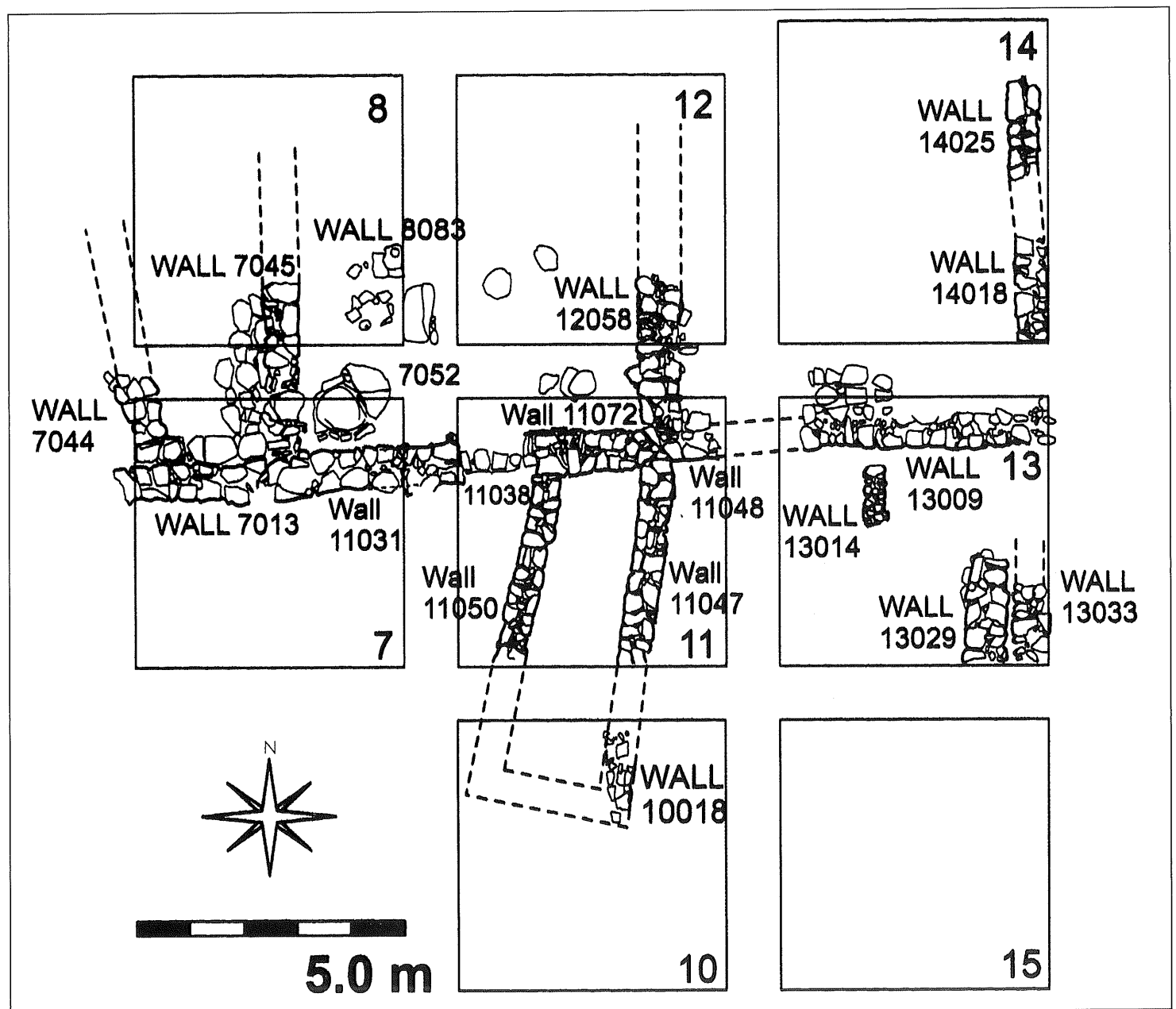
4. Khirbat Iskandar and its environment in a view from the east.

paleobotanical remains (Neef 1990), faunal remains, geomorphological evidence for irrigation agriculture (flood terraces to the west of the site, per Carlos Cordova), along with the requisite material cultural remains attesting to production facilities for olive oil, all combine to illuminate a stable economic regime underpinning what appears to be occupation at the site of Khirbat Iskandar throughout most, if not all, of the Early Bronze Age.

With the above as a backdrop, then, a brief discussion of the relevant EB IV materials follows. In Phase B, what we have termed the “public complex” succeeds the destroyed EB III settlement at the northwest (FIG. 5). The complex is unique at the site. The tripartite building, its furnishings,

its unusual range of materials (see below), and its location suggest continuity with what we have termed “the citadel area” from Phase C. The highest elevation on the mound, the “citadel area”, includes a reinforced tower, steps leading up to a platform, a well-preserved inner and outer defensive line, all bounded by a substantial north-south transverse wall at the east. The EB IV “public complex” includes a bench-lined room, a large central room, and a third room, the eastern boundary wall of which runs to the outer fortifications. Within the Phase B destruction, a wealth of whole and restorable vessels and objects came to light.

As detailed elsewhere (Richard 2000), the complex included a wide range of vessels and an unusu-

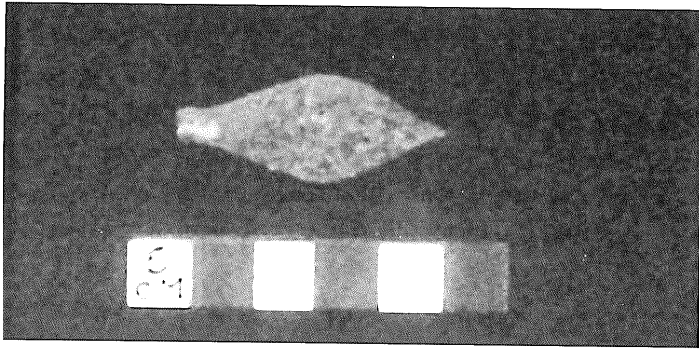


5. Khirbat Iskandar, Area B, Phase B, the “public complex”.

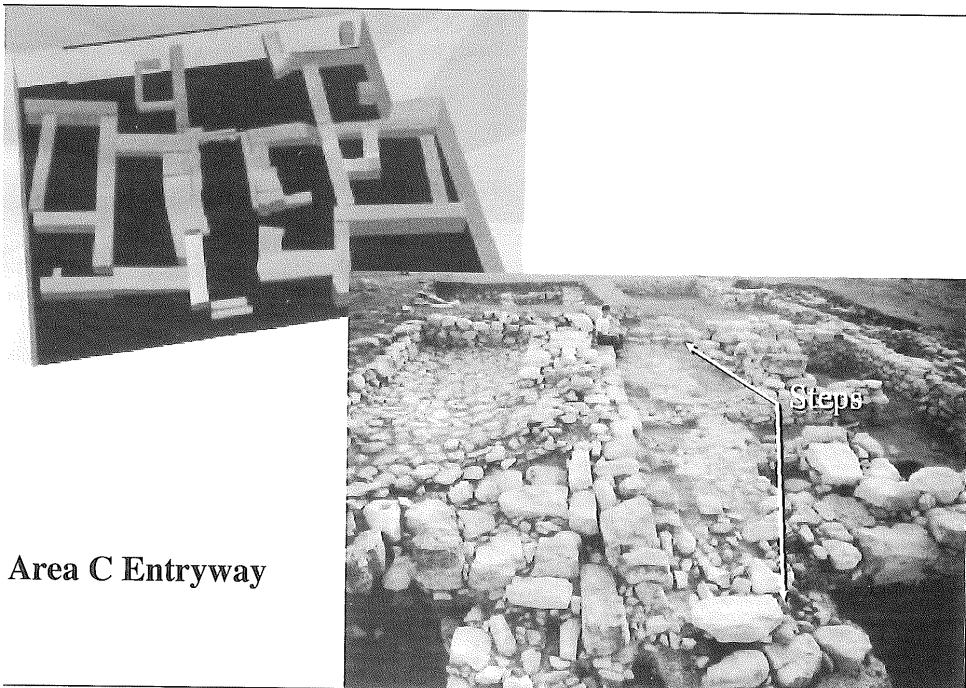
al number of well-made and highly decorated jugs and juglets. In comparison with the usual domestic assemblages found elsewhere on the mound, the evidence for concentrated storage facility is unique. Volumetric study of thirty-five restored storejars alone points to at least 834 liters of product, adding the widths of 100 of the 103 restored vessels suggests nearly 26 meters of shelving space would be necessary to store them, or that there was a second floor. The restored vessels (Richard 2000) represent only a portion of the assemblage of pottery discovered in the building. The stereotypical olive oil production materiel is seen by the large vats, various sizes of spouted vessels and by pithoi. Whether these stores were intended for trade, for redistribution, for use in public rituals, or other, all things considered, it is difficult to label this complex as domestic. The discovery of miniatures and several status items (below) serves to reinforce observations made long ago (Richard 1990) that the Phase

B northwest sector probably was a public area, possibly connected with the cult, as suggested by pits with whole vessels and food offerings (*favissae*). At the very least, the combined evidence implies the control of production and a level of political/economic control made explicable only by assuming that elites were in residence at the site. We believe it is possible to discern such social identities; that is, those having, apparently, unequal access to wealth in the EB IV at Khirbat Iskandar. The recent discovery in Phase B of a ceramic bull's head and a unique bronze spearhead (Richard Forthcoming a), both of which are indicative of differential wealth and perhaps gifting, strengthens the view that elites were in residence at the site of Khirbat Iskandar.

The spearhead is significant because it illuminates further the transition to tin/bronze alloying processes in the southern Levant at the end of the third millennium, BC (FIG. 6). It provides us with valuable data with which to further the discussion concerning the role of metalworking and its socio-economic implications in reconstructions of the EB IV period; it offers insight into the level of institutional complexity and specialization that is a remnant of the previous urban era. This particular artifact can be added to a growing corpus of bronze weapons (mostly daggers), virtually demanding the conclusion that the EB IV people were more innovative and the period more pivotal as a transition to the MBA than most of us believed. For a full discussion of the spearhead, see Richard (Forthcoming a).



6. Bronze socketed spearhead from Phase B at Khirbat Iskandar.



Area C Entryway

7. The Area C "gateway" at Khirbat Iskandar, photo and isometric view.



Thus, it is really the uniqueness of the Area B, Phase B building complex that allows us to explore the “alternate EB IV mental template”. All the evidence points to the continuation of public occupation in an area that gives every indication of being a high status citadel at the highest point on the mound. Although it is not possible to discuss the overlying Phase A settlement, the contrast between its domestic nature and the Phase B public area could not be clearer, pointing to discernible functional distinctions in site settlement. We have hypothesized previously that, following the destruction of Phase B, the public area shifted to Area C at the southeast, where the monumental (for EB IV) “gateway” or entryway is found (FIG. 7). A brief look is in order, since the three-phase occupation in Area C serves as the archaeological correlates to the theoretical framework posited earlier.

Briefly, Phase 1 witnesses the reestablishment of stability at the site and return to some modicum of equilibrium. It is a transitional EB III/EB IV occupational phase witnessed especially by the intrinsically local Early Bronze Age red-slipped and burnished pottery and virtual absence of the fossil-type of the EB IV — the inverted, rilled-rim platter bowl. In Phase 2, however, the distinctive inverted, rilled-rim platter bowls (the caliciform assemblage) appears and merges with the local red-slipped wares and forms; new forms also appear, e.g., the necked cooking pot. The sum of the evidence suggests the community experimented with, modified, and added to remnant traditions, a type of reorganization spurred on by new, outside influences. Finally, in Phase 3, where there is re-use of Phase 2 walls, the former domestic area was transformed into an entryway or gateway of some sort. The caliciform ware dominates the repertoire and new types appear, e.g., the beveled rim platter bowl, carinated bowl, and straight-sided cooking pot. Yet, the last vestiges of the millennium-long EBA traditions, though greatly diminished, are still evident to the very end.

### Conclusion

In this essay, we have shown that the excavations and material culture recovered at Khirbat Iskandar indicate that there was a higher level of complexity at the site than found in the EB IV generally. The sum of the evidence suggests that elites were in residence at the site. Framed with Chaos theory and an alternate EB IV “mental template”, there is

a plausible rationale for the continued occupation at Khirbat Iskandar in the face of collapse. We interpret the remains to indicate that the community was intent on maintaining remnant organizational principles with which they were familiar, including the control of production by elites. The Area C phasing likewise illuminates a community changing and experimenting, as evidenced by new external influences in Phases 2-3.

The evidence is considerable, but the Phase B “public complex” is especially telling. As we have summarized, the bull’s head, the bronze spearhead, the unusual amount of storage, the evidence for olive oil production, the high quality vessels, the evidence of offerings, possible *favissae*, and miniature vessels, all combine to demonstrate a high level of social complexity extant at the site. We, therefore, infer that the social identities of those in control of production at the site were elites.

In particular, the discovery of the tin-bronze socketed spearhead adds additional support to the view espoused for some time that elites were living at the site of Khirbat Iskandar. We might surmise that the very costly and prestigious item was: 1) an offering in the cult, perhaps as a miniature; or 2) an object derived through gifting, or 3) simply a high-status item indicating status/wealth/power. Whatever the answer, the proposed paradigm utilizing both insights from Chaos Theory and an alternate EB IV “mental template”, not only makes the EB III/IV occupation at Khirbat Iskandar more comprehensible, but also provides a window on the eclipse of urban lifeways in the southern Levant following the chaos of collapse.

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