THREE SEASONS OF EXCAVATIONS AT KHIRBAT ISKANDAR: 2007, 2010 AND 2013

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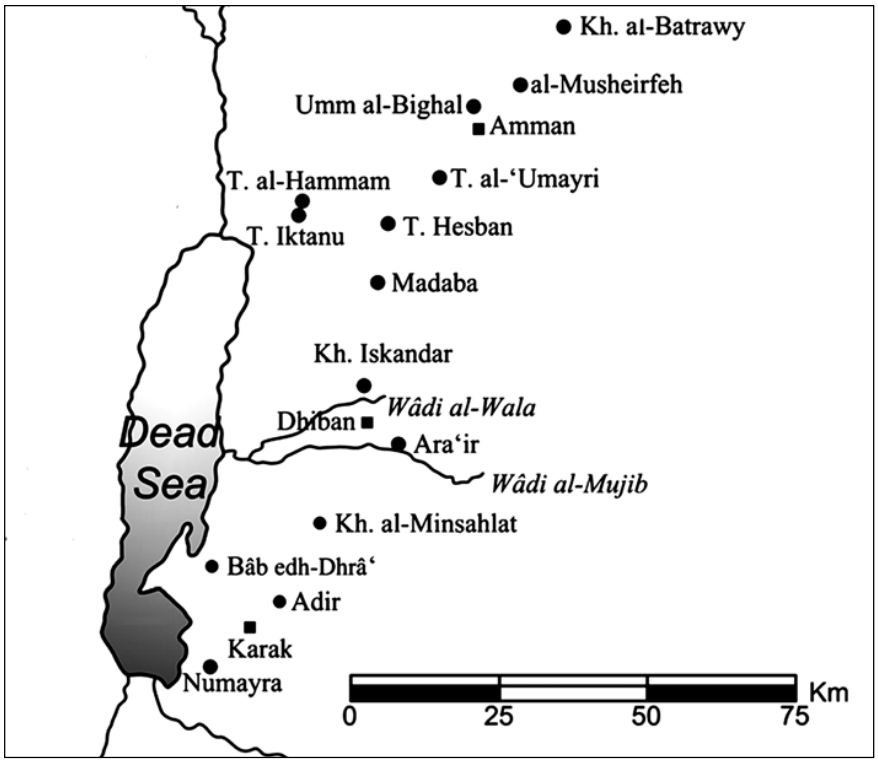
Introduction

This article summarizes the results of the last three seasons (2007, 2010 and 2013) of excavations at the site of Khirbat Iskandar. The consortium members for these three seasons were, once again, Gannon University, Lubbock Christian University and McMurry University. Suzanne Richard served as Principal Investigator and as Co-Director with Jesse C. Long (Jr). Field supervisors were Rikke Wulff-Krabbenhøft and Susan Ellis. The 2007 season took place from 1 June 1 to 9 July, the 2010 season from 20 May to 28 June and the 2013 season from 24 May to 29 June.

The site of Khirbat Iskandar is located on Wadi al-Wala about 20 - 25 km south of Madaba on the King's Highway (**Fig. 1**). The mound itself (**Fig. 2**) covers 2.7 hectares, although as Glueck pointed out (1939: 127), there was an area of ruins just as large to the east where there were structures, menhirs and stone-circles, dated by EB IV sherds. The current project was able to survey and excavate this lower rise to the east before it was destroyed by plowing and the planting of olive trees. The combined area of the two suggests that in antiquity Khirbat Iskandar was a center of over 5 hectares and probably more, given the occupation found by Glueck north of the site, as well as to the south where the famous Khirbat Iskandar menhir



1. Map showing the site of Khirbat Iskandar located on the Wadi al-Wala.

2. Site of Khirbat Iskandar on the north side of the Wadi al-Wala.

once stood (Glueck 1939: Fig. 48). The fortified Early Bronze Age site of Khirbat Iskandar owes its prominence to the perennial Wadi al-Wala, to the caravan route that passed close by the site and to the expansive agricultural lands contiguous to the site (Cordova and Long 2010: 21-35; Cordova 2007: Figs. 5.8 and 6.6, and see pp 189-90). The latter geoarchaeological study has illuminated Khirbat Iskandar as a prosperous Early Bronze Age agricultural site that was eventually abandoned at the end of the EB IV period, owing to unabated erosion and destruction of the floodplain. Among a number of causes, it is likely that a drying trend in the mid-third millennium BC, in combination with intensive land use, steadily diminished the carrying capacity of the landscape. This data set informs our study of the urban and post-urban periods at Khirbat Iskandar in the third millennium BC.

There have been nine major excavation seasons at the site: 1982 (Richard 1983; Richard and Boraas 1984), 1984 (Richard and Boraas 1988), 1987 (Richard 1990), 1997, 2000 and 2004 (Richard and Long 2005), plus the three reported on here: 2007, 2010 and 2013. Along with two pilot seasons, Phase 1 in 1981 (Richard 1982) and Phase 2 in 1994 (Richard and Long 1995), two seasons were devoted solely to restoration: 1998 (Long and Libby 1999) and 2006, although restoration, preservation and consolidation of walls is an integral component of each excavation season. The major archaeological periods investigated at the site thus far date to the EB III and EB IV, although earlier materials have been encountered on the *tall* and in the cemeteries (EB I and EB II).

This article focuses on Area B, reporting on the following elements: (1) the history of continuous rebuilding of the fortifications at the site, (2) the EB III settlement phasing, (3) additions to the EB IV settlement plans and (4) a summary of the progress of restoration at the site (see **Fig. 3** for squares discussed in this report).

Research Design

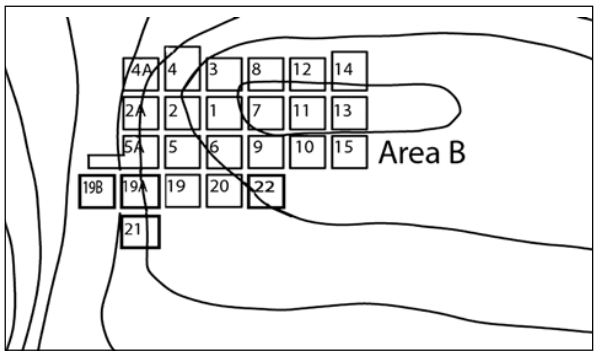
The project's overriding research design includes two major objectives: (1) to study cultural change at the end of the third millennium BC in the southern Levant - a dramatic transition from urban institutions to non-urban economies - and to investigate the rise and collapse of urbanism at the site during the Early Bronze Age (3600 - 2000 BC). Except for recent excavations, work at the site has focused on the first objective, namely the enigmatic EB IV non-urban period. Khirbat Iskandar is one of the best-preserved and best examples of a well-established, multiphase *tall* site in the southern Levant during the rural EB IV period. The recovery of, for example, a 'public building / storeroom', a gate, well-preserved neighborhoods and reuse / rebuilding of earlier walls, as well as the continuous development of antecedent ceramics has demonstrated beyond cavil that there was a high level of complexity in the rural EB IV period and strong continuities with Early

Bronze Age tradition. Excavations at Khirbat Iskandar support an alternative view of EB IV society that contrasts with the traditional model of pastoral-nomadism for the period (and alternate identification of the period as the Intermediate Bronze Age), emphasizing instead that an important sedentary component to the population was extant as well (see summaries of the period in Richard 1987, 2003: 294-300, 2010: 3-5; Palumbo 1990; Gophna 1992; Prag 2014). On the basis of a growing corpus of connections with the subsequent Middle Bronze Age culture (Richard 2000: 403, 2006: 120; Richard and Long 2010: 274-75), we believe that the EB IV sedentary component across the southern Levant kept institutional traditions alive, thus facilitating re-urbanization at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, as is seen, for example, in the EB IV - MB IIA occupation at Tall al-Hayyat (Falconer 1994).

With the unique EB IV gate in Area C as well as the EB IV cemeteries published in Vol. 1 of the Project Series (Richard *et al*. eds 2010) and Vol. 2 in preparation (the EB IV settlements in Area B), the project has redirected its focus to the second objective of our research design, namely the investigation of the pre-EB IV strata on the mound.

Overview

Although known primarily for its EB IV multi-phase occupational stratum, excavations at this south-central Jordanian plateau site substantiate an observation made by P. Parr, based on a few ceramic indicators, that there was EB III (and earlier) occupation at the site (1960: 130-32). Excavations over the past three seasons in Area B (**Fig. 3**) have revealed a substantial urban EB III stratum with sub-phases, including multiple rebuilds of the fortifications. Although some aspects of the settlement and fortifications have been known from earlier seasons, it is only recently that the phases of the fortifications, their date and their relation to occupational levels have come into sharper focus. Settlement *(tall*) sites with both EB III and EB IV occupation, like Khirbat Iskandar, are a characteristic of the central and southern plateau areas in Transjordan, including the south-eastern Dead Sea area (Palumbo 1990: 46; Chesson *et al*. 2005, table 8; Schaub 2009: 101-110).



3. Topographic map of Khirbat Iskandar showing Area B and excavated squares, at the northwest corner of the mound.

Previous reports (see Richard 2010 *et al*. eds, and earlier reports cited therein) have tentatively identified six phases (A - F) in Area B. From the top, Phases A (domestic settlement) and B ('storeroom / public building') represent the EB IV occupation. Phase C (EB III) includes an upper destruction level (C1) and founding settlement (C2), as well as the outer fortifications. Phase D is the earlier stage of fortifications, the mud-brick / stone base inner wall, previously thought to be EB II (but see below). Phases E - F, discovered in early seasons, were dated to EB I - II on the basis of few diagnostics. Little more is known about these two superimposed layers of wall fragments north of and running below the corner 'bastion / tower'. Although our overall understanding of the phasing in Area B still stands, new discoveries in the last few seasons require some modification (see below) to the stratigraphic profile and dates previously published.

The two major discoveries that impact and shed light on the stratification of the site are: (1) the discovery of a new EB III fortification line and (2) the discovery of EB III occupational remains that run under the EB III fortifications on the north. Both of these were unexpected discoveries that help to resolve several questions about the construction history of the fortifications and their respective dates, both conundra for a number of years. The new data inform the nature of the EB IV fortifications at the site. Still puzzling is the seeming dissonance between the (two-phase EB IV) stratigraphy of Area B and the (three-phase EB IV) stratigraphy of Area C. In the latter area, the earliest phase was termed transitional EB III / IV (see stratigraphic report in Long 2010). There

are hints of a similar phenomenon in Area B, where sub-phasing may provide an explanation. If not, there may simply be a disconnect between the two areas or, alternatively, the substantial EB III destruction / EB IV rebuilding activities in Area B have obscured the data.

Fortifications

The EB III fortifications: Phases C - D

Throughout the 2007, 2010 and 2013 seasons, work concentrated on exposing more occupational ties to the fortifications, excavating probes and sections of the fortifications, all in an endeavor to clarify, once and for all, the relationship of Phase C to Phase D and to date both definitively. It would be useful at this point to review the site's fortifications as previously published in preliminary reports.

The 3 m wide northern fortifications comprise two wall traces, an inner mud-brick / stone base wall (B3014) and an outer stone line (B3017), with a rubble layer (B3019) in between (Richard and Boraas 1984: Fig**.** 14; Richard 1990: Figs. 3 and 5). At the north-west, the outer curtain bonded to the corner 'bastion / tower' whose preserved height was 2.25 m. A balk section between Squares B3 / B4 illustrates the various components, the rubble appearing to be a buttress against the fallen inner wall (**Fig. 4**). We called the mud-brick / stone base inner wall Phase D; the outer line and its various constitutive parts (rubble fill / buttresses / 'tower') we interpreted as a subsequent (Phase C) fortification built to shore up and expand the site's defenses following an apparent destruction of Phase D. Also part of the discussion at the time was the consideration that the two were constructed originally as a double-wall defensive system, a possibility that can now be dismissed.

The continuation of the Phase C outer curtain wall on the west was a 3 m wide rubble-covered sloping wall abutting the south-western corner of the 'bastion / tower'. This 'rubble' wall also had three components, but its construction technique differed appreciably from the northern outer curtain (**Fig. 5**). A section through the wall and beneath the 'rubble' cap, revealed a one-row 1.65 m high inner wall (B2024B), an outer wall of two to three courses and two rows (B2A005), and a rubble interior (B2A005A). The wall's rough abutment to the 'bastion / tower', including a massive monolithic stone, gave the appearance of a later block (Richard and Long 2005: Fig. 4). The disparity in construction technique between the northern and western fortification lines notwithstanding, the 'rubble wall' appeared to be the only candidate for a Phase C western fortification line. This assessment is coming into serious question in light of the 2013 season. Finally, a section through

4. Khirbat Iskandar Sq. B4/B3 balk: collapsed inner Phase D mud brick/stone base wall, outer Phase C stone wall on left, rubble/buttress in-between, at the northwest corner. Looking east.

5. Khirbat Iskandar "rubble wall": outer line (between sandbags), inner line at top and rubble in-between; looking east.

the 'rubble wall' in Squares B2 / B2A showed it to be superimposed over an earlier wall system (identified as Phase D), which included a mudbrick / stone basewall of the same construction technique as the 'inner' curtain wall on the north. The wall was also associated with a type of buttress / pier, as on the north (Richard and Long 2005: 270, Fig. 9; here **Fig. 6**).

In the past three seasons, we have uncovered more of the Phase C and D fortifications, such that we believe we have a much better grasp of their construction history and dating. It is now clear that the Phase D fortifications represent an early phase of EB III, as occupational surfaces excavated in 2013 attest (see below). In 2007, work renewed in Squares B2 / B2A (just mentioned) for the specific purpose of investigating the newly uncovered Phase D fortification lying below the 'rubble wall'. Continued excavation has delineated a curvilinear stone wall (B2108), on top of which lay a solid mass of mud-bricks and mud-brick debris. It gave every appearance of a tower, including being later buttressed by stone structure / pier B2A007 (**Fig. 6**).

A second (Phase D) curvilinear wall (B2A077) - likewise lying below the 'rubble wall' - came to light in the 2010 season juxtaposed opposite curvilinear wall B2108. A stone threshold between the two enhanced the probability that we had a Phase D passageway (gate?) between the two curvilinear structures (**Fig. 7**). The bottom row of W. B2A077 ran up to (and below) the Phase C 'bastion / tower', giving every appearance of having been cut by the latter

7. Khirbat Iskandar Phase D: threshold and two juxtaposed curvilinear "towers," W. B2A077 to left and W. B2108 to right. Corner of "bastion/tower" top.

construction. It is almost certain that the curved structure B2A077 relates to the Phase D inner wall to the north, although the later 'bastion / tower' obscures the connection. As we shall see, further evidence for curved structure B2A077 being cut by a later Phase C wall became evident in 2013, when we discovered a new fortification line on the west.

This past season, a section was excavated against the exterior face of the 'rubble wall' (B2A005) in order to trace the underlying Phase D curvilinear wall (B2A077) and determine if, indeed, it was a tower. The expanded section not only revealed the continuation of the curved Phase D wall, but also that it had been cut by a substantial fortification line, new wall B2A120 (**Fig. 8**). Expanding the section to Square B4A,

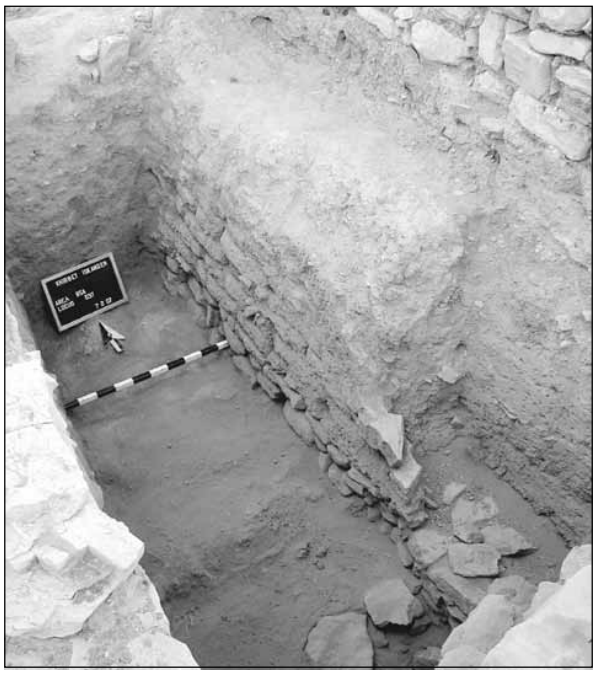
6. Khirbat Iskandar Phase D mud brick/stone base wall with Phase C buttress at right; both below the "rubble wall" (left).

8. Khirbat Iskandar northwest fortifications:" bastion/ tower" (top); rubble wall" B2A005, including partial remains of rubble interior (center), overlying curvilinear wall B2A077 either side; new fortification line B2A120/B4A006 to left under meter stick.

the new fortification proved to abut the 'bastion / tower' at its north-west corner (B4A006) and to be of a construction similar to it and to the northern outer Phase C curtain wall (and founded some 1.5 m lower than the 'rubble wall'). It is now clear that this new wall is the original Phase C western perimeter wall and that the 'rubble wall' is a later phase (see below).

The 2013 discovery of the new Phase C (EB III) fortification wall (B2A120 / B4A006) has clarified not only the construction history of the fortifications, but also the nature of the strengthened north-west corner. As is clear in **Fig. 8**, in the original Phase C construction, there was no tower projecting beyond the curtain wall, as appeared to be the case with the abutment of the 'rubble wall' against the south-west corner of the 'bastion / tower'. The Phase C strengthened defenses at the north-west corner represent an interior bastion or platform of some sort. Based on the stairway and the interior space, it clearly included a guardroom (see Richard and Boraas 1984: Figs. 12-13). About 4.5 m from the southwest corner, there is a four-step stairway leading up to what we call a platform, which extends 10 m up to a transverse wall. The expanded defenses enclosed the inner mud-brick wall and collapse, extending the width of the fortifications to 7 m at this point (see **Figs. 8** and **11**). As at other Early Bronze Age sites, for example Bab adh-Dhra' (Rast and Schaub 2003: 280-83) and Numayra (Coogan 1984), the builders incorporated transverse walls perpendicular to the fortification line, but whether these functioned as an earthquake device or simply a segmental construction method is unknown. Khirbat Iskandar thus joins other sites where the erection of bastions and platforms attest to the strengthening of defenses within the EB III period, as at Tell Yarmut (de Miroschedji 1990). The strengthened north-west corner, the highest point on the mound, along with its occupational evidence (below) suggests a possible public area.

Finally, work over the past three seasons has recovered a candidate for the 'missing' Phase D curtain wall on the west (B5A043). The latter - of a construction similar to mud-brick / stone base curvilinear W.B2108, including the buttress / pier - lies to the south of B2108 in contiguous Square B5A (**Fig. 9**). Although a balk separates the two walls (B5A043 and B2108)



9. Khirbat Iskandar: Phase D mud brick/stone base curtain wall (B5A043) on western perimeter; curvilinear Phase D "tower" on other side of balk to north. Stone buttress at bottom right corner.

and although they do not line up, these two similar constructions are almost certainly contemporaneous and related. In 2013, a section to investigate the buttress against W. B5A043 showed that it too ended against a mass of mud-brick collapse, as noted elsewhere. Again, the series of Phase C buttress / pier constructions apparently served as a technique to stabilize the earlier (Phase D) collapsed wall in the rebuilding and expanding of the fortifications.

The EB IV fortifications

As has, hopefully, become apparent in this discussion of the Khirbat Iskandar fortifications, the 'rubble wall' (B2A005 and components) is the last major rebuild of the fortifications. We have shown that this relatively insubstantial construction superseded newly discovered Phase C EB III western perimeter wall B2A120 / B4A006. The 'rubble wall' is in many ways the most complex defensive element stratigraphically speaking, since, as well as being associated with the Phase C bastion and outer curtain wall on the north, it is also intertwined with Phase A, B and C walls along the western perimeter of the site. To review, the 'rubble wall' overlies Phase C pier / buttress B2A007 that abuts Phase

D curvilinear W. B2108 (**Fig. 6**). The 'rubble wall' likewise overlies Phase D curvilinear wall B2A077 (**Fig. 8**). There is a thin soil layer between the upper and lower phase constructions. Although the 'rubble' wall may represent a late EB III effort to quickly shore up the defenses on the west once the Phase C curtain wall (newly discovered W. B2A120 / B4A006) went out of use, there is mounting evidence to support the view that the EB IV population not only used, but rebuilt - and very possibly erected - the 'rubble wall'. Germaine to this proposition are multiple lines of pertinent data, in addition to the above stratigraphic evidence.

We have noted in previous seasons that the Phase B 'storeroom' was built against and reused the outer Phase C curtain wall on the north, as demonstrated by W. B14025. Also, in earlier excavations, several courses of walls were found to have built up the height of the 'rubble wall'; the bastion and the rubble cap to the 'rubble wall' appear to be deliberate. These data now are comprehensible and correspond well with an EB IV rebuild. Phase B occupational surfaces, in particular, have in the past been found linked to the 'rubble wall'. The clearest evidence for EB IV construction in relation to the defenses, however, comes from the last three seasons of excavations in Squares B5A and B19A on the western perimeter, south of the bastion.

In the western half of Square B19A, four substantial intersecting walls converge (B19A021, B19A043, B19A042 ['rubble wall'] and B19A020). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, there are Phase A, B and C walls intertwined and reused, for example, Phase A W.B19A003 reuses as a threshold Phase B - C wall B19A021. Both of the above factors render a definitive stratigraphic analysis challenging, to say the least (see **Fig. 10**). Nevertheless, it is possible to make the case for EB IV construction in relation to the 'rubble wall'; thus three-course Phase B domestic wall B19A019 (east part of square) was definitively shown in 2013 to continue as six- to seven-course W. B19A043 and to intersect with the 'rubble wall' (B19A042). (In the previous, 2010, season a cache of whole and restorable EB IV vessels was found on the surface associated with W.B19A019). Combined W. B19A019 / B19A043 is founded at a higher level than the three other intersecting walls with which it is associated, ending at Surface 19A041 on a layer of destruction. The other three walls continue through a layer of silt and appear to end at a layer of destruction (B19A044); in fact, the 'rubble wall' appears to overlie a course of mud-bricks.

10. Khirbat Iskandar: Phase B EB IV wall B19A019/ B19A043 (under meter stick) intersecting with "rubble wall" at right and with Phases A-B-C wall B19A021 at left; at the bottom of the photo is W.B19A020. Above Phase B wall is Phase A wall stub B19A003 to right of pillar (not in-situ).

Despite the limited exposure of the four walls, the data are compelling enough to posit not just a reuse, but a late rebuild of the defenses at the site in Phase B; *viz*. EB IV W.B19A019 / B19A043 intersects with earlier non-domestic walls of great depth, including the 'rubble wall'. We are positing as a hypothesis to test that the 'rubble wall' was constructed in the EB IV period. At the present time, we are considering it an EB III / IV fortification. The cumulative data correlate nicely with the description of the site provided by Nelson Glueck (1939: 127-28).

As he noted, there were prominent fortifications visible around the site, along with towers, and an east - west wall bisecting the site. These visible defenses, now affirmed by excavation, relate to the latest occupation discovered on the mound: the EB IV period.

The Fortifications and the Amended Khirbat Iskandar Site Phasing

The new Phase C outer wall (B2A120 / B4A006) has provided the missing link in the construction history of the Khirbat Iskandar fortifications. The wall helps us to explain some heretofore unresolved questions about the defensive system at the site; it also requires that we amend our earlier reported phasing (above).

The amended sequence is as follows: Phase D fortifications (inner mud-brick / stone base wall and curvilinear structures, as well as the mud-brick / stone base western curtain wall) are the earliest, now confidently dated to the early EB III period (see occupational evidence below). Subsequently constructed, the Phase C fortifications (bastion / platform associated with outer walls on north and west, along with other Phase C components (piers / buttresses / transverse walls) also date to the EB III, based on occupational surfaces associated with these fortifications. When the Phase C western curtain wall (B2A120 / B4A006) went out of use, the 'rubble wall' - a less substantial construction - was erected at the south-west corner of the bastion. We are presently identifying it as an EB III / EB IV (Phase C - B) wall, based on the sum of the evidence detailed above.

The EB III Settlement

Phase C

Since the earliest EB III settlement (Phase D) has limited exposure to date, we begin with the somewhat later, Phase C settlement. As reported previously (see Richard and Long 2005 for details), the EB III (Phase C1) settlement was discovered under a major destruction layer. This phase comprised the B1 / B7 central room with pillar base and numerous storage jars , the B2 well-preserved (1.0m high) 'doorway wall' (**Fig. 11**) and the B5 storeroom / workroom with its enigmatic mud-brick bench (B5024A) feature (see Richard and Long 2005: 3, 10, 12). The collapse also included remains of wooden beams,

11. Khirbat Iskandar: EB III central room with "doorway wall" at top, bastion/platform to right. Looking west.

quantities of carbonized seeds, and whole and restorable vessels. The 2007 season exposed more of the central room in the east, where a distinct activity area in a paved corner included a horn core, small mortar and a pithos neck used as a stand (Richard and Long 2005: 271). In 2010, in the small area between the B1 'doorway wall' and the diagonal (partition?) wall of the central room, we uncovered an interesting activity area of hearths, one fairly large (1 x 9.75 m), a smaller one and one found previously in the balk (**Fig. 12**). The 2010 and 2013 excavations also provided evidence for additional activity areas just to the south.

On the basis of a large open area in B6 to the south of the central room, it is probable that what we have is a courtyard, based on the activity areas contiguous to the mud-brick bench-like feature in B5. Several installations came to light: a well-made stone bin and pavement, mortar encircled with stones and two small postholes (**Fig. 13**), all connected by a plaster surface to the surface of the central room. The surface turned patchy, especially in the south-east corner of B6, the location of two midden levels yielding an abundance of bone fragments, pottery sherds and seeds, together with several

12. Khirbat Iskandar Phase C hearth found in B1, east of the "doorway wall."

13. Khirbat Iskandar courtyard features in B6: bin, mortar, and post holes; mud-brick bench feature to right.

grinding stone fragments, hammer stones and a few lithics. It is likely that these middens contained the refuse from activities in the courtyard and, perhaps, from the mud-brick feature. As reported in an earlier article (Richard and Long 2005: 273, Fig. 12), the enigmatic B5 mud-brick bench-like structure included two ledges, on one of which sat a large EB III jar. Hoping to clarify the function and plan of the feature, as well as to pull the contiguous areas together, we removed several balks in 2010 and 2013. Unfortunately, only the very fragmentary and poorly preserved eastern half of the mud-brick feature remained. However, the activity areas mentioned earlier may provide a context that enhances one of the several explanations proffered in the past for the feature (kiln; bench; work area; storeroom). It is likely that it was a workshop. Found in association with it were a number of ground stone vessels, e.g. a lovely hematite bowl, a mace-head, a stamp seal, a potter's tournette, a number of bowls with one or two depressions (or only partial depressions) and grinding stones (see details in Richard and Long 2005: 273-74).

In combination, the features discovered in association with the central room / courtyard provide evidence of activities related to pottery (tournette and whole vessels), to ground stonework (numerous objects discovered), to food preparation and storage (grain; mortar; hearth; bin), disposal (the middens) and possibly others. It would be fair to say that significant activities took place in the vicinity of the central room, where the evidence of seeds and grain from pithoi and storage jars of various sizes suggests it may have been a storage facility.

The contiguity of the various installations, a specialized workshop perhaps, and activity areas in relation to the central room with its imposing entrance (the 'doorway wall'), all within the strengthened defenses at the north-west corner of the site, does offer a new lens through which to view the character of occupation in the area in EB III. Although much more finds processing and study of the material culture in the Phase C1 settlement thus exposed is essential, it is likely that we have uncovered a public area.

Phases D / E

In 2013, in order to expose more Phase D occupation with as little destruction to the Phase C settlement as possible, we excavated the small area east of the B2 'doorway wall' (**Fig. 14**). Reestablishing the B2 / B1 balk, the goal in Square B2 to the west was, hopefully, to find the continuation of curvilinear wall / 'tower' (B2108) which seemed to disappear under doorway wall B2095. Although excavation did not uncover the wall (it apparently follows the line of W. B2095), important stratigraphic information came to light below the pavement associated with the threshold of the Phase C 'doorway

14. Khirbat Iskandar: Sq. B2 on right with Phase C pavement and threshold in "doorway wall;" on left in Sq. B1 is new Phases D-E structure running under Phase C platform at bottom.

wall'. The pavement overlay a hard mud-brick surface. It is a recurring pattern at the site to find the top of mud-brick debris leveled to serve as a surface. Below the debris layer - clearly related to the Phase D destruction - two additional surfaces were traced that corresponded to surfaces on the west side of the 'doorway wall'. Significantly, clear EB III diagnostics (platter rims and ledge handles) on the surfaces gave us our first indication that Phase D was within the EB III period.

In the Square B1 excavation to the east, work began by excavating the early surfaces connected with the Phase C hearths, described above. Below the latter residue and two layers of collapse, the corner of a large stone structure (B1102/103) began to appear, one wall continuing eastward under the partition wall of the central room, the other running northward under the platform. Two interior beaten earth surfaces, seemingly coeval with those found in adjacent Square B2, were excavated, below which a thick layer of ash and collapsed mud-brick was encountered. Excavation ended at the founding level surface associated with the 1 m high structure. The surface was some 0.5 m lower than the Phase D fortifications. Although we kept expecting EB II pottery, what we found inside the structure was early EB III (EB IIIA) ceramics. More exposure is necessary before we can understand this structure's broader context, but its stratigraphic position is clear: the structure lies below Phase C, was reused in Phase D and was founded earlier than the Phase D fortifications. Tentatively, we are designating the structure Phase D - E and are looking to correlate it with the wall fragments discovered in earlier seasons to run under the north-west corner bastion (see above).

The EB IV Settlement

Over the past three seasons, several newly opened squares have expanded our perspective on the EB IV Phase A - B settlements, as well as providing new information on their relationship to the fortifications. For reports on these settlements prior to 2007, see Richard and Long (2005).

Phase A settlement

This report presents the most significant new information garnered about the Phase A settlement plan over the last three seasons, *viz.* greater exposure of the B19 building in the southwest (Richard and Long 2005: Fig. 7), a new line of domestic buildings (as seen in B22) on the south side of the projected street and more architectural tie-ins to the fortifications. Note that since the last preliminary report (Richard and Long 2005: Figs. 5 and 8), we have determined that the two deep circular silos (in B15 and B20) should probably be dated to the Iron Age. Originally, it was not clear whether or not the bins were in association with EB IV surfaces or had cut them. The latter appears to be the case, especially regarding the B15 bin, where the evidence is clearer than in B20. Without further excavation of the latter feature, we cannot be certain of its attribution.

The Phase A settlement is the most extensive plan at the site, stretching over 25 contiguous squares. Its interconnected long- and broad-room buildings around courtyards reflect a domestic phase, evidenced by a great deal of domestic material remains (e.g. *tabuns*, sunken mortars, stone work tables, stone table with depression, stone benches, many querns, grinders and food preparation material. A unique aspect of the settlement is the existence of Phase A2 pillared buildings (rows of stacked drums and orthostats; see Richard 1990: Figs. 6-7) which were filled in to make solid walls in Phase A1. The use of pillars in various ways seems to be characteristic of the site. On the southern edge of the building complex, there was an apparent corridor or street lined with cobbles.

The B19 / 19A multi-roomed building - one room of which we interpreted as a kitchen (Richard and Long 2005: Figs. 5, 7) - proved to be a large multi-roomed structure (12 m in length). In 2010, excavation exposed another room in which two different-sized pillars, along with an associated row of cobbles, had been erected opposite the doorway. Given the disparate sizes of the pillars and the fact that no other structures at the site have two central pillars, it is tempting to see this room as a domestic cult room. On the south, the building ends in B21, where new excavations uncovered a stone-lined bin outside the building.

That there was a line of domestic buildings south of the above-mentioned corridor / street / open cobbled area is affirmed by recent excavations in Square B22, where a new row of structures emerged (**Fig. 15**). A corner house continued into B20 to the west and into the south balk. Architectural features to the south, as well as a pillar base, were associated with the building by means of a hard-packed surface (the top of the Phase B roof collapse) that extended through most of the square.

Finally, excavation resulted in the discovery of several more architectural tie-ins of Phase A walls to the late western fortification, the 'rubble wall' discussed in detail above. In addition, to the south-west in B5A and B19A, walls B5A003, B5A074 and B19A045 ran up to the 'rubble wall'. There were also features such as bins (e.g. B5A007). The architectural wall tie-ins often represent a second or third rebuild and complicate the disentanglement of Phase A, B and C walls on the west, which are under fortifications as discussed above.

15. Khirbat Iskandar: new Phase A (EB IV) structure and features in Square B22.

Phase B settlement

In the last three seasons, thanks to more horizontal exposure of the underlying Phase B settlement, it is possible to situate the 'public building / storeroom' within a broader context. As reported previously, constructed against the outer fortifications on the north was a multi-roomed structure comprising three contiguous rooms, *viz.* a bench room, a central room with pillar bases and a third room at the eastern end (see Richard 1990: Figs. 8-17; Richard and Long 2005: Fig. 6). A doorway in the south wall of the central room led to an apparent courtyard, as well as a 'corridor' room. Earlier reports have discussed the contents of the 'storeroom' (150 restored vessels to date; see also Richard 2000), the well-appointed and interesting array of features, including a stone bin and stone-lined pit with a bowl containing a bovid hoof in association with two horn cores. The cumulative evidence (including numerous miniatures) from this exceptional EB IV building, suggested the presence of social stratification, perhaps an elite enclave occupying a well-defended area at the north-west corner, as may have been the case in EB III (above). The unmistakable markers of a storeroom and hints of ritual activities seemed convincing enough to identify a public building in this EB IV rural period. Recent excavations have enhanced our view of this remarkable complex and have expanded our understanding of the Phase B buildings further to the west.

In 2007 and 2010, excavations under Phase A walls in B10, B11, B13 and B15 discovered that the 'public building' was more extensive than originally thought, as two additional rooms came to light just east of the 'corridor' room, bringing to six the number of rooms thus far excavated. Work in B10 also showed the 'corridor' room to extend further to the south than originally projected. As mentioned above, wall B14018/25 definitively connected with the outer fortifications.

Elsewhere, work exposed more complete architectural plans to the west and south-west. Excavations in Square B21 in 2013 contributed the context for the whole vessels found the previous season in the roof collapse associated with east - west W. B19A019 (connected to the 'rubble wall', as reported above). We now know that W. B19A019 was the northern boundary

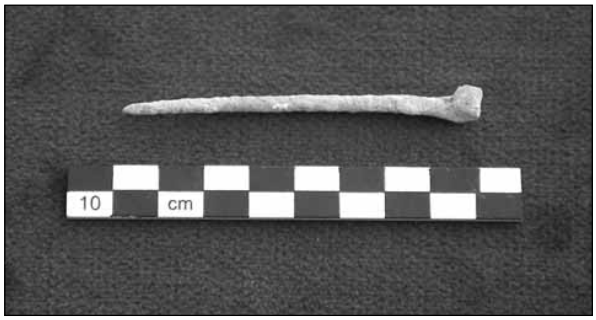
of a two-roomed structure (**Fig. 16**), comprising a bench room where a lovely intact EB IV 'teapot' sat on the Phase B surface and a second room where excavators meticulously recovered 15 whole vessels *in situ* (**Fig. 17**). The team recovered another 13 bags of restorable pottery. There was an unusual predominance of vessels close in size range, *viz*. small closed jars, small bowls, cyma-profile bowls and even a miniature jar found previously only in the cemeteries (Peterman and Richard 2010: Fig. 10.7: 1-2, 5-8). The room also yielded a lovely metal rolled toggle pin (**Fig. 18**) and a bone amulet decorated with two rows of circles.

In the north balk of Square B5A, a large stone-lined bin (B5A050) was discovered built against the 'rubble wall' (**Fig. 19**). Analogous to the 'storeroom' bin (see Richard 1990: Fig. 10), the B5A feature was likewise extremely well-made with large stone slabs, although it was more elongated (1.4 x 0.6 - 0.75 m) and shallower (0.4 m) than the 'storeroom' bin (1 m diameter and depth). The construction of both subterranean bins cut through Phase C mud-brick debris; a coat of plaster covered the leveled top of the mud brick, becoming the major surface for Phase B. Notably, two miniature jars and a miniature teapot lay near the 'storeroom' bin, while two votive cups sat on the surface near the B5A bin. Importantly, the latter bin sheds light on previously discovered remains in B5A near the balk: a wall fragment on whose associated surface lay a zoomorphic figurine, a pestle and a small mortar.

As for the context of the B5A bin and other features mentioned above, the removal of balks and several Phase A walls afforded us an expanded view of relatable features, albeit more study

16. Khirbat Iskandar: Phase B (EB IV) structure in Square B21, to right a bench-lined room, to left a room filled with small-sized vessels; Phase A wall at top.

17. Khirbat Iskandar: vessels in situ in the western room of the Square B21 (Phase B) structure



18. Khirbat Iskandar: Rolled-head metal toggle pin discovered in B21 (Phase B).

19. Khirbat Iskandar: Phase B elongated bin built against "rubble wall" in Square B5A north balk

is needed to piece everything together. The bin sits opposite a doorway, framed by two monumental pillar bases protruding from the B5 west balk. One base connects integrally to another feature jutting out of the B5 west balk: a square stone platform, 1.25 m in width x 3 m in length thus far, including several layers of pavers at the north end. Associated with the platform was a unique pillar composed of a lower vertical (fluted) drum and a flat horizontal stone on top (**Fig. 20**). Additionally, a small two-stone pillar came to light just north of the platform. When pieced together, this area is quite unlike anything seen elsewhere in Phase B, given the monumentality of the platform and contiguity of the various features mentioned. It should be noted, in this regard, that it was on Phase B mud-brick surface B5007, near the west balk and platform where a bronze miniature socketed spearhead was previously found (Richard 2006: 119-132, esp. Fig. 2). This constellation of features hints at specialized activities in the vicinity of the bin (as we have inferred for the 'storeroom' bin).

Finally, aside from additional Phase B wall lines found in the B9 north balk, new square B22 provided a glimpse of occupation south of the 'storeroom'. Discovered below the Phase A wall discussed earlier was a Phase B wall continuing into Square B20 to the west in association with several restorable storage jars in roof collapse. Again, additional linkages between the Phase B settlement and the late western fortification, i.e. the 'rubble wall', confirm - we believe - that the EB IV population rebuilt and continued to use the fortifications.

20. Khirbat Iskandar: a unique pillar in association with Phase B platform in B5/B5A balk; looking south.

Conservation

The conservation, consolidation and preservation of the Early Bronze Age settlements uncovered at Khirbat Iskandar are an integral component of our research design every season. With the completion in 2006 of the restoration of the gate in Area C at the south-east corner of the mound (Long and Libby 1999), the project now concentrates on Area B EB III - IV architecture. Virtually every major wall has been consolidated, including the corner bastion / platform, as well as standing walls throughout the field. Our overall field research and strategy for excavation is, to a certain extent, driven by our designation of certain areas of the mound for Phase A, B, C or D preservation. For example, we intend not to excavate below the Phase B storeroom complex, we are leaving the exceptional and extensive Phase A building complex in B19 / 19A at the south-west corner and we are preserving the Phase C settlement in the middle of Area B, as well as the various phases of the fortifications. Ultimately, Khirbat Iskandar should be a showcase for viewing the important stages in the urban / non-urban Early Bronze Age.

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