

A Late Bronze – Iron Age Tomb Excavated at Sahab, 1968

by
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The village of Sahab lies 11 km. south-east of Amman. It is built on a historical mound, rich in many archaeological remains. Since 1929 at least five Iron Age tombs have been discovered.

The discovery of the tomb under discussion was reported to the Department of Antiquities of Jordan by the local police. As soon as the information was received, the author of the article examined the find spot. The tomb is in the center of the village, close to the main road which passes through Sahab from Amman and el-Kahf to Muwaqqar and the desert places. The tell of Sahab is a low tell representing the site of an Iron Age town. There are many other caves in existence that were formerly tombs. They are used as storage places by the villagers. A careful examination of the sherds found on the tell indicates that no occupation ever existed there before the late Bronze Age or later than the Iron Age.

Other Published Sahab Tombs. The first ancient tomb was discovered in 1929. It contained an anthropoid coffin, and was dated by W. F. Albright to the 9th cent. B.C. (*AJA*, XXXVI, 1932, p. 296). This tomb has generally been referred to as Sahab Tomb A.

The next tomb discovered was excavated by the Department of Antiquities in 1949 and published by Lankester Harding as Sahab Tomb B. It was dated by Harding to the 8th cent. B. C., but by Simon to the 7th cent. (QDAP, XIII, pp. 92-96).

Description of the Tomb

The tomb is large rock-cut cave (Plate I)

approximately 8.20 m. long, 4.50 m. wide and approximately 1.80 m. high. The entrance was made from the west side by a flight of several steps hewn in the rock. The walls are roughly cut and no attempts were made of dressing the rock surfaces. The most curious feature of this tomb which it shares with Sahab Tomb B is a chimney-like construction near the south east corner, reaching up to the original surface outside. (Plate I). This feature presumably indicates that the cave was originally used as a dwelling. However other Iron Age tombs are known that have this feature, called in Jewish literature *nepshesh*, such as several tombs recently discovered in the Old City of Jerusalem on the east slope of the Tyropoeon Valley. That the cave at one time was a dwelling seems to be supported by the existence of a stone pavement inside the cave (Plate I), about 80 cm. wide and running from the entrance eastward to a recess in which the chimney is constructed, while another strip of pavement runs from the low northern bench to the higher southern bench.

Benches. Along the south side of the cave was a rock-cut bench, some 50 cm. high. The strata of debris that had entered the tomb sloped fairly steeply toward the center of the cave and then levelled off with the result that many of the pots and skulls had rolled from the bench to the floor.

The other bench on the northern side of the cave was about 150 cm. wide and only 20 cm. high, and there is no indication that burial remains were ever deposited on it (Plate I).

(*) See plates pp. 53-64.

Comparison and Parallels

This tomb in cutting, construction and burial customs closely parallels Sahab Tomb B. (*QDAP*, XIII, 3-4, pp. 92-96), as well as the tomb and the Moon Temple of Hureidha in the Hadramout excavated by Miss Caton Thompson (G. Caton Thompson, *The Tomb and the Moon Temple of Hureidha*, pp. 81 ff. and 90 ff.).

Harding expressed the opinion that Sahab Tomb B had been used as an ossuary, i.e. a place of secondary burials. The same may be true with regard to the newly discovered tomb which we will label Sahab Tomb C to differentiate it from the other two tombs discovered earlier at the same site.

This conclusion is strengthened by observing that the two tombs are very similar in plan. In viewing the contents of the burial, one obtains first the impression that the tomb had been disturbed in ancient times. However, the facts refute this first impression. The entrance was found properly closed and there was no sign of any ingress.

The other fact is that the strata of debris under the chimney were higher and thicker than those of the surrounding areas and most of the contents in this area were of a later period. In this area, the earliest pottery, of the Late Bronze Age, was found in the lowest levels above which were Early Iron I contents and above these were remains of the Early Iron II period. Some of the contents of the latest burial had rolled to the pavement in the center of the cave.

The Burials. This tomb had a long history of use. The first burial dates to the 14th cent. B.C., primarily found in Area C near the southeast corner. The 13th cent. contents were found in an area marked C-D on the plan (Plate I), located at the southwest corner. The major area of the Early Iron I remains was D, located at the southwest side. Area B contained the major burial of the Early Iron II period which could not have been earlier than the end of the 8th cent. B. C.

Conclusion

This tomb in plan and burial customs resembles closely Sahab Tomb B (*QDAP*, XIII, pp. 92-96) as well as the tomb and the Moon Temple at Hureidha in the Hadramout, as stated above. This resemblance strongly indicates that Trans-Jordan was ethnologically more closely connected with Arabia than was Palestine.

The stone pavements inside the tomb and the chimney-like hole in the roof being similar to those of Sahab Tomb B (*QDAP*, XIII, p.92), provide evidence for the suggestion that the cave was used first as a dwelling and afterwards as a place of burial. This conclusion is supported by the evidence that no human skeleton was found intact. The bones and skulls were found in fragments and some pottery and other Iron II materials were found as having rolled to the floor.

Two ostrich eggs (Plate II) were found in very good condition in Area C-D in a LB II-EI I context. It is, in my opinion, the first LB-EI II age tomb, ever discovered in East Jordan that contains ostrich eggs. However, ostrich eggs have been found in MB II Jericho tombs excavated by Miss Kathleen Kenyon in 1954.

Date of the Tomb

The discovery of this tomb, in addition to other LB II - Iron Age tombs found earlier in this village sheds more light on the Late Bronze II and Iron Age cultures in Transjordan.

The Late Bronze Age contents of the tomb, all found in Area C, cannot be dated earlier than the 14th cent. B.C. because many of the earlier pottery types, such as milk bowls and Bilbil juglets are absent. Late Bronze Age pottery found in quantity in this tomb consisted either of imported Mycenaean ware or of locally produced imitation of Mycenaean pottery, such as stirrup vases, pyxes and flasks. They find close parallels among the pottery found at the Amman Airport

Temple (*ADAJ*, XI, p. 105), Tell Abu Hawam, Stratum IV (=LB II) (*QDAP*, IV), Tell Beit Mirsim, Stratum C (*AASOR*, XII), Tell Duweir, Fosse Temple III (*Lachish* II), Dhahret el-Humraiya (*QDAP*, XIII, p. 75).

The 13th cent. B.C. types are parallel to those found in a Madeba tomb (*APEF*, VI, 1953), Nuzha Tombs A and B (*ADAJ*, XI, p. 48), Megiddo, Strata VII and VI, and in Irbed Tomb D (*ADAJ*, VIII-IX, p. 99).

The Early Iron Age pottery found in this burial is parallel to many types of pottery from Tell Beit Mirsim, B₂ and B₃, Megiddo Stratum V, Irbed Tombs A, B and C (*ADAJ* XI, p. 88) and Sahab Tomb A (*AJA*, XXXVI, 1932, p. 296).

The Iron Age types are parallel to those of Sahab Tomb B (*QDAP*, XIII, 3-4, p. 92), Amman Tombs A, B and D (*QDAP*, XI, p. 67), Tell es-Saidiyeh, Level II, and Deir 'Alla, Stratum D.

Since many Iron Age types are absent from this tomb, it cannot have been used for burials later than the end of the 9th cent. B.C. Such absent Iron Age types are; (1) Tripod cups, that were found in quantities in a Jabal Jofeh Tomb (*ADAJ*, XI, p. 42), in the Megabelein Tomb (*QDAP*, XIV, Plate XVII:9), Sahab Tomb B (*QDAP*, XIII, 3-4, pp. 92-96), and in the Amman Tombs A, B, and D (*QDAP*, XI, p. 6). (2) Jugs, one-handed, decorated or plain, with or without a spout, found in the above-mentioned tombs. (3) Water decanters. (4) Pointed bottles. (5) Mugs. (6) Chalices. (7) Deep bowls or kraters with multiple handles. All these types of pottery, absent from Sahab Tomb C, are common in Iron Age II sites and tombs.

From these observations it can be concluded that the Sahab Tomb C was used from the 14th cent. B.C. to the end of the 9th century. β. c.

Catalogue of Pottery in Chronological Order

The Late Bronze Age Types.

1. *Jugs*. Either decorated or plain; the

decoration in black or dark red in geometric designs. The handles are loop handles placed on the pot horizontally or tilted as in SA 2 (Pl. III) or vertically on the profile as in SA 76 and 205 (Pl. IV) or attached below the rim as in SA 31 and 32 (Pl. IV). The bases are either of the ring-, disc-, round-cut- or round-base variety. The slip is either creamy or red; the grits are very fine. See SA 2 (Pl. III.), 49 (Pl. V.), 76 (Pl. IV.), 93 (Pl. IV.), 114, 185 (Pl. VI.), 203 (Pl. IV.), 243 (Pl. IV.), and 407 (Pl. VII.).

Parallels: Tell Duweir (*Lachish* IV. Pl. 85:988); Amman Airport Temple (*ADAJ*, XI, pp. 105-106); and Irbed Tomb D (*ADAJ*, VIII-IX, p. 99).

2. *Cooking Pots*. They have either two loop handles or no handles. The profile is carinated, the base is of the disc-, ring-, round-cut- or round-base variety. The slip is creamy or dark red. See as examples SA 86 (Pl. III) without handles, and SA 3 (Pl. VIII) and 281 (Pl. IX.) with two loop handles.

Parallels: Bethshemesh (*AS*, IV, Pl. 61: 12); Madeba Tomb (*APEF*, VI, 1953, Fig. 14:60); Beth-zur (*BZ*, Pl. 8:7); and Bethshemesh (*AS*, II, Pl. 37:85).

3. *Flasks*. Either imported Mycenaean ware or locally made imitations with loop handles under the rim as in SA 31, 35 (Pl. X), 39 (Pl. X), 40 (Pl. XI), 54 (Pl. XI), 65 (Pl. X), 66 (Pl. XI), 67 (Pl. X), 75, 77 (Pl. XI), 78, 81 (Pl. X), 83, 108, III (Pl. X), 140, 147 (Pl. XII), 157 (Pl. XII), 181 (Pl. XII), 208 (Pl. XI), 253 (Pl. X), and 264 (Pl. XII). Some flasks have loop handles on the shoulders as SA 154 (Pl. X) and 156 (Pl. XI). The decoration is in black or dark red and consists of concentric circles, Maltese crosses or spirals. The bulk is not bulbous, the rim is everted.

Parallels: Jericho (*Jer*, Pl. 39E, 40); Tell el-Far'ah Tomb 613 (*RB*, pp. 85-95, XIXth Dynasty); Madeba Tomb (*APEF*, VI, 1953); Amman Airport Temple (*ADAJ*, XI, pp. 105-106).

4. *Lamps*. Saucer-type, with thickened walls and deep bottom, upraised rim and lip, with creamy slip or dark red. Examples: SA 7 (Pl. XIII), 8 (Pl. XIV), 45 (Pl. XIV), 56, 57, 61, 87 (Pl. XIV), 95, 171 (Pl. XV), 195, 218 (Pl. XI), 219 (Pl. XV), 235 (Pl. XIII), 265 and 266.

Parallels: Megiddo, Strata VIII A and B; Jabal Nuzha Tomb B (ADAJ, XI, p. 48); Tell Abu Hawam (QDAP, IV, Stratum IV); and other LB sites.

5. *Bowls*. Inverted rim, disc-, round-cut, round-or trumpet-base, decorated on the inside in circles in black or dark red, and has a creamy or red slip. The profile is some times carinated as in SA 69 (Pl. XIV). Examples: SA 48 (Pl. XVI), 68 (Pl. V), 69 (Pl. XIV), 144 (Pl. VIII), 209 (Pl. IX), 210 (Pl. VIII), 216 (Pl. XIV), 243 (Pl. VI), 245 (Pl. XIV), 246 (Pl. XIV), 256, 284 (Pl. IX), 286 (Pl. IX), 408 (Pl. VII), and 409 (Pl. VII).

Parallels: Irbed Tombs (ADAJ, XI, p. 108); Madeba Tombs (APEF, VI, 1953); Megiddo, Strata VIII-VII; Tell Abu Hawam, Stratum IV (QDAP, IV); and the Amman Airport Temple (ADAJ, XI pp. 105-106).

6. *Juglets*. The juglets have either one handle or two handles. Their bases are either pointed or round. Some are decorated, others are plain; the slip is creamy. Examples: SA 51 (Pl. XVI), 207 (Pl. IV), 244 (Pl. IV), and 254 (Pl. IV).

7. *Zoomorphic figurines*. Animal figurines are common in the Bronze Age but are also found in other periods. See SA 52 (Pl. II).

8. *Stirrup Vases*. Late Bronze stirrup Vases are either imported Mycenaean pots, see SA 72 (Pl. V), 82 (Pl. V), and 204 (Pl. V), or local imitations.

Parallels: Amman Airport Temple (ADAJ, XI, pp. 105-106); Deir 'Alla, Area C; Tell es-Saidiyeh; Tell Abu Hawam, Stratum IV; and Tell Tabagat Fahl Tombs.

9. *Dippers*. Late Bronze dippers have usually one handle attached under the rim, have pointed or round bases, and have

a creamy or red slip. Examples: SA 94 (Pl. VI), 118 (Pl. VI), and 123 (Pl. VI).

Parallels: Deir 'Alla, Area C; Amman Airport Temple; Tall Abu Hawam, Stratum IV,

10. *Pyxes*. Late Bronze pyxes are either of the squat or conical types. The 14th-century types are usually squat. Those found in Sahab Tomb C are locally made, see SA 117 (Pl. V), 161 (Pl. V), 162 (Pl. V), and 278 (Pl. X).

LB II - EI I Types of the Transitional Period

The transitional period from the LB II to the EI I covers the second half of the 13th century. The LB II types continued to exist, but with some development in type and ware. The ware is usually coarser than that of the regular LB II period, some having a red slip and lime grits.

1. *Jugs*. The handles are attached to the rim, the mouths are either pinched or round, and the bases are usually disc- or round bases. Examples: SA 148 (Pl. VI), 155 (Pl. VI), 205 (Pl. IV), and 226 (Pl. III).

Parallels: Madeba Tomb APEF, VI, 1953; Dolmen No. 6 (ADAJ, XII-XIII); Irbed Tomb D (ADAJ, VIII-IX).

2. *Cooking Pots*. They have either two handles or none; their carinated bodies have a dark red slip. Examples: SA 280 (Pl. XIV), 285 (Pl. VIII), and 287 (Pl. VIII).

Parallels: Madeba Tomb (APEF, VI, 1953); Dolmen No. 6 (ADAJ, XII-XIII, Pls. XXX, Fig. 1:105; XXXI, Fig. 1:116); Tell Duweir, LB II Fosse Temple.

3. *Flasks*. The LB II types continued to survive with the same decoration as before. The bulk is more bulbous but some examples are globular as in SA 67 (Pl. X). Examples: SA 112, 177 (Pl. XI), 182, 212, 213, 214 (Pl. X), and 279.

Parallels: Madeba Tomb (APEF, VI, 1953); Tell Abu Hawam, Stratum III A; Tell Duweir, LB II Fosse Temple.

4. *Lamps*. No absolute date can be assigned for lamps of the different periods. However, the lamps of this period are shallower and have a thicker base than those of the previous period. The rim and lip is also more everted. Examples: SA 160 (Pl. XV), 188 (Pl. XV), 237 (Pl. XIII), 273, and 410 (Pl. XVII).

Parallels: Madeba Tomb; Irbed Tombs A, B and D (ADAJ, IX); Megiddo Strata VII A and VI A.

5. *Bowls*. Bowls in this period continued to preserve the LB types. The rim started to be everted, the slip is usually dark red and the ware is gritty. Examples: SA 46, 58, 68 (Pl. V), and 200 (Pl. VI).

Parallels: Madeba Tomb (APEF, VI, 1953); Jabal Nuzha Tomb B (ADAJ, XI, p. 48); Tell Abu Hawam, Stratum III A (QDAP, IV).

6. *Dippers*. The mouth is usually pinched, the base is either painted or round, the handles are attached to the rim. A ridge is usually round under the rim. Examples: SA 143 (Pl. VI), 199 (Pl. VI), 200 (Pl. VI), 215 (Pl. VI), and 424.

Parallels: Irbed Tomb D (ADAJ, VIII-IX); Tell Abu Hawam, Stratum III A; Dolmen No. 6 (ADAJ, XII-XIII, P. XXX, Fig. 1:6).

7. *Pyxes*. They are of the conical types.

The Early Iron Age I Types

The Early Iron I Age pottery is quite different from the LB II types. The ware is more gritty, the grits being lime stones; the slip is of Haematite or dark red. Most of the pots are plain and undecorated. They show poor workmanship in comparison to those of the LB I-II periods. New types began to appear.

1. *Jugs*. The rim is roled or thickened, the base is of the ringdisc- or round variety, the handle is attached to the rim. Some jugs have a spout and strainer. Examples: SA 92 (Pl. III) and 231 (Pl. III).

Parallels: Madeba Tomb (APEF, VI, 1953); Irbed Tombs A, B and C (ADAJ, XI); Dolmen No. 6 (ADAJ, XII-XIII); Ain Shems Tomb 2 (APEF, 1912).

2. *Cooking Pots*. Cooking pots are either without a base or have ring or disc-bases, possess two or more handles, are gritty, dark red, have triangular ridges, or ridges under the rim. Examples: SA 146 (Pl. VI), 248 (Pl. VIII), which may be a bowl, and 422.

Parallels: Dolmen No. 6 (ADAJ, XII-XIII); Tell Beit Mirsim, Stratum B₃ (AASSOR, XII); Megiddo, Strata V and VI A; Tell en-Nasbeh (TN, II, Pls. 46-48).

3. *Lamps*. The saucer lamps are flatter at the bottom, have an everted rim and lip, and are gritty. Examples: SA 9 (Pl. XIII), 11, 12, 15 (Pl. XIII), 16, 43 (Pl. XIII), 145, 149 (Pl. XIV), 158, 159, 169, 171 (Pl. XV), 178, 183, 184, 186 (Pl. XIII), 223, 229, 230 (Pl. XIII), and 234.

4. *Bowls*. Not many bowls of this period are decorated. They have a slip on the inside and outside. They have either ringdisc- or round bases. The rim is either everted, or inverted. The handles are attached to the rim. They are either loop-, bar- or bottom-type handles. Examples: SA 84 (Pl. XIV), 85 (Pl. V), 165 (Pl. XVI), 277 (Pl. XVI), 409 (Pl. VII), 411 (Pl. XVII), 430 and 431.

Parallels: Dolmen No. 6 (ADAJ, XII-XIII, Pl. XXXI, Fig. 2:23, 79); Tell Beit Mirsim, Strata B₂ and B₃; Tell en-Nasbeh; Tell Abu Hawam, Stratum III A.

The Iron Age II Types

Pottery in this period shows a good workmanship. It is represented by much pottery that comes from many sites of East Jordan and Palestine, such as the Amman Tombs A, B and D (QDAP, XI); Sahab Tomb B (QDAP, XIII); the Megabelein Tomb (QDAP, XIV); the Jabel El-Jofeh Tomb (ADAJ, XI); Deir 'Alla, Areas A and D; Tell Beit Mirsim, Stratum A (AASSOR, XII).

1. *Lamps*. Lamps of this period have flat bases or disc bases, and everted and flanged rims. Examples: SA 47, 58, 59, 60, 63, 71, 79 (Pl. XIII), 99, 101, 106, 107 (Pl. XV), 132 (Pl. XIV), 150 (Pl. XIV), 170 (Pl. XV), 172 (Pl. XIII), 175 (Pl. XIII), 220, 241, 260, 263, 267, 270, 412 (Pl. XVII), 414 (Pl. XVII), 415 (Pl. XVII), 416 (Pl. XVII), and 418 (Pl. XVII).

2. *Lamp with Stand*. A small saucer-type lamp with a high stand that is missing, SA 308.

Parallel: Tell Beit Mirsim, Stratum A (*AASOR*, XII, Pl. 70:11).

3. *Bowls*. Bowls have two or more handles or none, have ring- and round bases, everted or triangulated rims, a slip on the inside and a slip two-thirds on the outside and are wheel-burnished. The examples are the same as those listed already under the Iron Age I types, since it is difficult to assign them clearly to one or the other of the two periods.

4. *Juglets*. Sahab Tomb C provided one juglet with a basket loop handle. SA 97 (Pl. III).

Other Objects

1. *Eggs*. Two ostrich eggs, SA 151 (Pl. II) and 152 (Pl. II) were found in good condition. The shell is whitish-red. Ostrich eggs were found in Jericho MB tombs.

2. *Daggers and Knives*. The material is copper. They have barbed, tanged and ribbed blades. Examples: SA 166 (Pl. XVIII), 202 (Pl. XVIII), 288 (Pl. XVIII), 290 (Pl. XVIII), 292 (Pl. XVIII), 298 (Pl. XVIII), and 303 (Pl. XIX).

Parallels: Irbed Tomb D (*ADAJ*, VII-IX; Tell en-Nasbeh (*TN*, I, Pl. 104:3, 4).

3. *Toggle Pins*. They have a knob at the end and are decorated with circular lines. Examples: SA 289 (Pl. XIX), 374 (Pl. XX), and 375 (Pl. XX).

Parallels: Tell en-Nasbeh (*TN*, I, Pl. 108:12, 13, 14).

4. *Arrow Heads*. The arrow heads are of the leaf type, have tangs and some are barbed. Examples: SA 259, 300, 302, 323, 348, 349 350 (all depicted on Pl. XX).

Parallels: Tell en-Nasbeh (*TN*, I, Pl. 104:14-16, 23-26); Tell Abu Hawam (*QDAP*, IV, Pl. XXXIII:361).

5. *Bracelets*. All are of copper wire, rolled. Examples: SA 293 (Pl. XXI), 294-296, 301 (Pl. XVIII), 304 (Pl. XXII), 309-311 (Pl. XXI), 312, 313 (Pl. XXI), 314-321, 324, 325, 326 (Pl. XXII), 327 (Pl. XXI), 328, 329, 330 (Pl. XXI), 331, 332, 335-339, 340 (Pl. XXI), and 368-369 (Pl. XXII). SA 337, 345 and 346 are of the flattened type, while SA 340 (Pl. XXI), 342, and 344 (Pl. XXI) belong to the ribbed type.

6. *Anklets*. The anklets of Sahab Tomb C are of the rolled type, SA 333 (Pl. XXI), 334 (Pl. XXII), 341 (Pl. XXI), and 343 (Pl. XXI).

7. *Earrings and Fingerrings*. Some earrings are of the wire-type, SA 357-361, others of the hook-type, SA 370 (Pl. XX), and 360 (Pl. XX). The fingerrings are of the wire-type, SA 356 (Pl. XX), 365 (Pl. XX), 372 (Pl. XX), and 373 (Pl. XX).

8. *Kohl Sticks*. They are of copper, SA 322, 354, and 355 (all depicted on Pl. XIX).

9. *Pendants*. They are made of copper and are bell-shaped, SA 363 and 366.

10. *Stone Objects*. A basalt bowl with three knob legs, SA 233 (Pl. XVI); a flat base, SA 138 (Pl. XVI); a lamp, SA 139 (Pl. XVI); and a big, flat white stone plate, SA 282 (Pl. II).

11. *Seals and Stamps*. SA 179 (Pl. XXIII) is an oval-shaped Egyptian stamp seal of a faïence; SA 180 (Pl. XXIII) is a fingerring signet stamp of copper; and SA 201 (Pl. XXIII) is a signet stamp of copper.

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