

TALL AL- KAFRAYN: PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE UNIVERSITY OF IOANNINA EXCAVATIONS: 2010 AND 2011 SEASONS

Thanasis J. Papadopoulos and Litsa Kontorli-Papadopoulou

Introduction

This report presents the results of the 2010 and 2011 seasons excavation by the Hellenic Archaeological Expedition of the University of Ioannina at Tall al-Kafrayn (**Fig. 1**). The site is situated *ca.* 5km south of the modern village of South Shūnih and 3 km south-south-west of al-Kafrayn dam. It was selected as the focus for our research because of its prominent and strategic location overlooking the central Jordan valley. Excavations have been conducted at the site since 2002 and preliminary syntheses of the results of Phase I (2002-2004) and Phase II (2005-2008) have already been published (Papadopoulos 2007; Papadopoulos and Kontorli-Papadopoulou 2010). Within the context of the archaeological sites surrounding it, Tall al-Kafrayn stands out in terms of its size and complexity, and provides interesting insights into the lives and subsistence patterns of ancient communities in the area.

Trench supervisors were post-graduate

archaeology students from the University of Ioannina, namely Kostas Paschalidis, Spyros Thermos, Aris Frantzeskakis and Maria Sofikitou. Sofia Sakkari and Kalliopi Lambri were respectively illustrator and pottery specialist. Alexandros Lagopoulos (University of Thessaloniki) was the architect and Penelope Marinou the conservator. Archaeology students from the University of Ioannina, namely Theodora Alevra, Anastasia Nella, Eirene Petridou, Ioanna Stefanou, Charoula Poya, Sofia Baltzoi, Panayota Koutsona, Maria Lappa and Kostas Tsemberis, assisted with the fieldwork.

The project was funded by the University of Ioannina and Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and was directed jointly by the authors.

Aims of Phase III of the Project

Phase III of the project is aimed at continuing exploration of the earlier occupation levels of the *tall*, documenting its remains and enhanc-



1. Map of Jordan showing location of Tall al-Kafrayn.

ing our knowledge and understanding of the site's history.

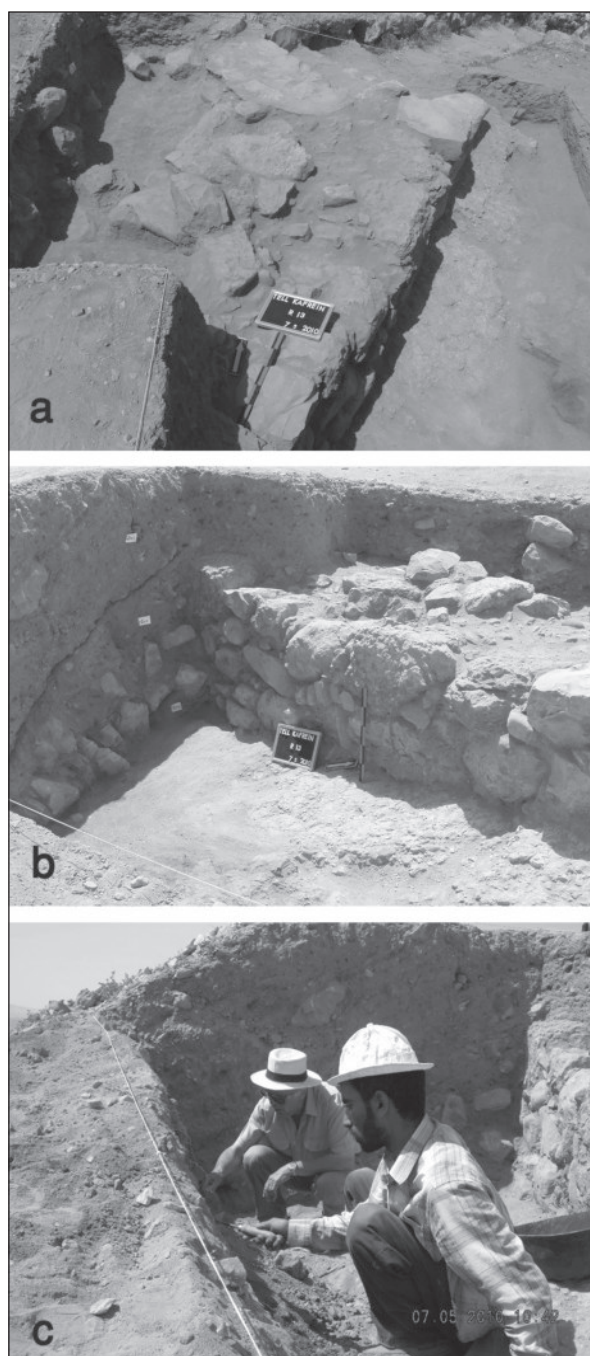
Information concerning recording system may be found in the preliminary report on the 2005-2008 seasons (Papadopoulos and Kontorli-Papadopoulou 2010).

The 2010 Season

During the tenth excavation season (2-14 May 2010) work continued on both the top and slopes of the *tall*. On the north-east part of the summit, trench R13 exposed the northern extension of the eastern defensive wall, which had been partly uncovered in trenches Q14-15 and P16 in 2009. This part of the wall (length [l] = 4.1m; width [w] = 1.5-1.6m; max. height [h] = 1.0m) (Figs. 2a-d) was founded on bedrock in the same fashion as its southern part. Its northernmost part was eroded and lost, but it seems almost certain that it once formed a right angle, turning west into trench R12.

Trench R12 (Fig. 3a), located on the north slope, revealed the easternmost part of the northern defensive wall. The base of this part of the wall (l = 4.3m; w = 1.59m; h = 1.47m), which is evidently a continuation of the wall previously exposed in trench R13, is still buried by deposits of fallen mud-bricks, stones and earth. Noteworthy was the discovery, at the easternmost end of its external face, of a partially preserved *tannūr*- or *tābūn*-type oven with fragments of a cooking pot on its *stomion* (Fig. 3b). This is similar to examples found in trenches J17 and M14-15 on the southern slope and top of the *tall* (Papadopoulos 2010: 298, fig. 37; Flanagan *et al.* 1996: 279, fig. 18; Steen 1991: 135-153). A fragment of a bronze pin, flint blades and carbonised wood and grain fragments were also recovered. However, the most important discovery was an ivory Egyptian scarab (Fig. 4a-b), attributed by Egyptologists Dr Vassilis Chrysikopoulos and Dr Jacke Philips to the Ramesside period, i.e. 19th – 20th Dynasties, most likely earlier rather than later within that date range¹.

Work during the previous two seasons (2008 and 2009) in the northern exploratory trench (Fig. 5a-b) had revealed part of the impressive defensive wall of the *tall*, as well as another retaining (?) wall and a massive house wall. In

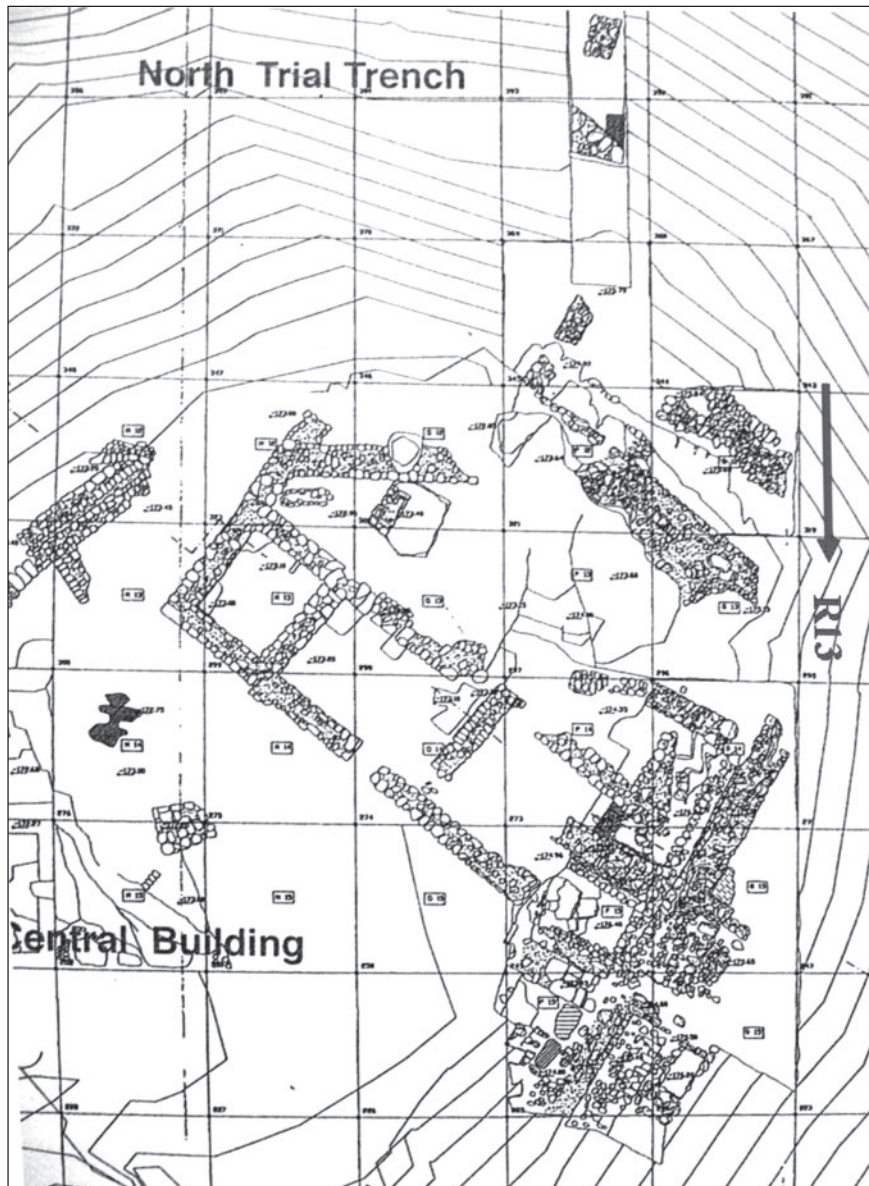


2a-c. Trench R13.

2010, the trench was extended by 6.5m in the direction of the slope, reaching a total length of 24m. This extension resulted in the exposure of two main levels of new walls and house floors. Two walls associated with the upper level, which joined at a right angle, may have formed part of a domestic room. Three successive floors of

1. We warmly thank both scholars for their help in dating

the scarab.



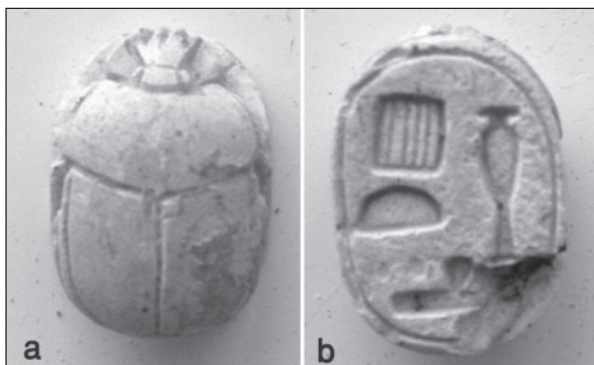
2d. Plan of trench R13.



3a. Trench R12.



3b. Trench R12; tannūr- or ṭābūn-type oven.



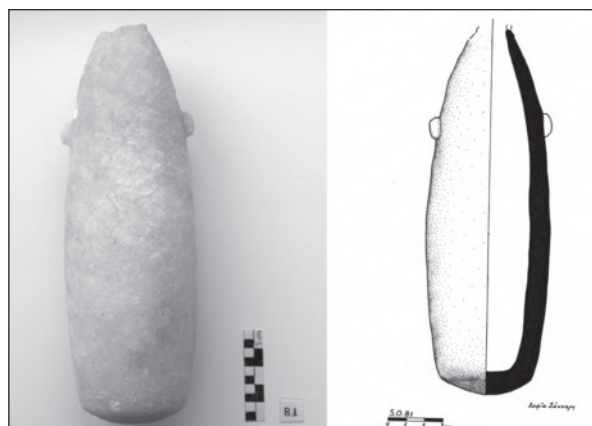
4a-b. Egyptian scarab.



5a-b. Northern exploratory trench from the north and south.

compact, beaten earth were identified and various cereal remains collected. No architectural remains were associated with the lower (and northernmost) level, which nonetheless yielded an exquisite near-intact ‘alabaster’ vase, missing only its flaring rim (**Fig. 5c-d**). There is a general consensus that such vessels were used as cosmetic containers. According to Dr Jonathan Tubb, some alabaster examples are imports from Egypt. However, he is of the opinion that this specimen is of local manufacture, dating it to the Persian period on the basis that similar vases are quite common in tomb deposits of this period. An alternative suggestion has been put forward by Dr Abdelsami Abu Dayyeh of the Department of Antiquities (DoA), who assigns it – on the basis of “many parallels from Tall al-‘Umayrī and others displayed at the ‘Amman Museum” – to the MBA II / early LBA (Hyksos period)². Other finds include two sea shells, flint blades and Iron Age pottery (**Fig. 5e-h**).

The west slope of the *tall* had hitherto been neglected by our mission, so in 2010 it was decided to open the so-called western exploratory trench (**Fig. 6a**), roughly in square K11. It measured 2x8m and was oriented west-east. The purpose of this trench, like its counterpart on the north slope, was to examine the stratigraphic sequence of this part of the *tall*. During this season, work was restricted to the eastern half of the trench, where four successive layers of compact, beaten earth surfaces were revealed, as well as a well-built stone wall (l = 1.85m; w = 0.95m) running perpendicular to the axis of the trench and, further down, another similar floor. Of par-



5c-d. ‘Alabaster’ vase.

2. We warmly thank Dr Tubb and Dr Abdelsami for their

helpful comments.



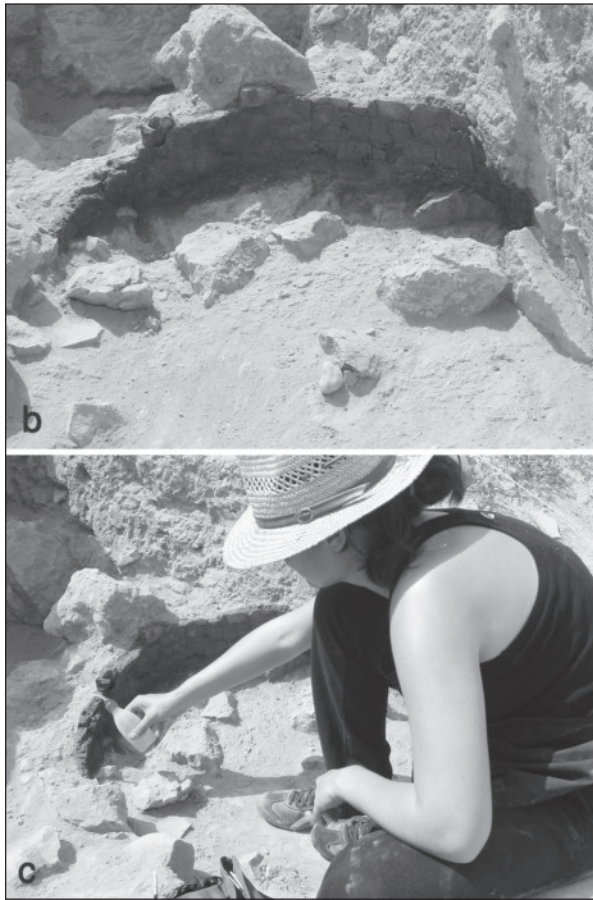
5e-h. Sea shells, flint blades and Iron Age pottery.



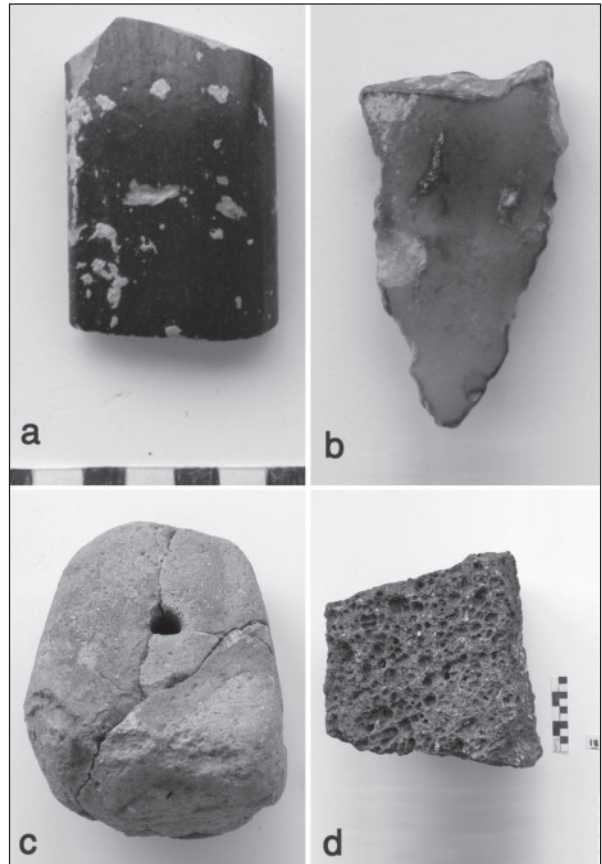
6a. Western exploratory trench from the north.

particular interest was a *tannūr*- or *tābūn*-type oven (diameter [diam] = 0.68m; d = 0.2m) (Fig. 6b-c), half of which was reasonably well-preserved and similar to examples found in trench R12 and elsewhere on the *tall* (e.g. trenches J17, M14-15 [Papadopoulos 2010: 298, fig. 37]); this is suggestive of the presence of a food preparation area. Also of significance was the discovery of a fragmentary, small Attic (4th century BC) skyphos (Fig. 7a) in a layer beneath the oven. Other finds included Iron Age pottery, animal bones (including a knuckle bone [probably used for board games]), flint blades, a loom weight, a whetstone, basalt grinders and pounders (Fig. 7b-d).

During the previous (2009) season, an impressive part of the *tall*'s defensive wall was exposed in trench J17. In 2010, the excavation was extended into adjacent new trenches I17 and I18. This confirmed that the defensive wall was constructed as a large platform-like feature (w = 2.9m; present h = 1.3m) (Fig. 8a) made of rubble and irregular, massive stones, supported by a lower stone wall on its external face with a mud-brick fill in between. Unexpectedly, the



6b-c. Tannūr- or ṭābūn-type oven.



7a-d. Sherd of Attic skyphos, flint blade, loom weight and basalt grinder.



8a. Trenches J17, I17 and I18; large, platform-like wall.

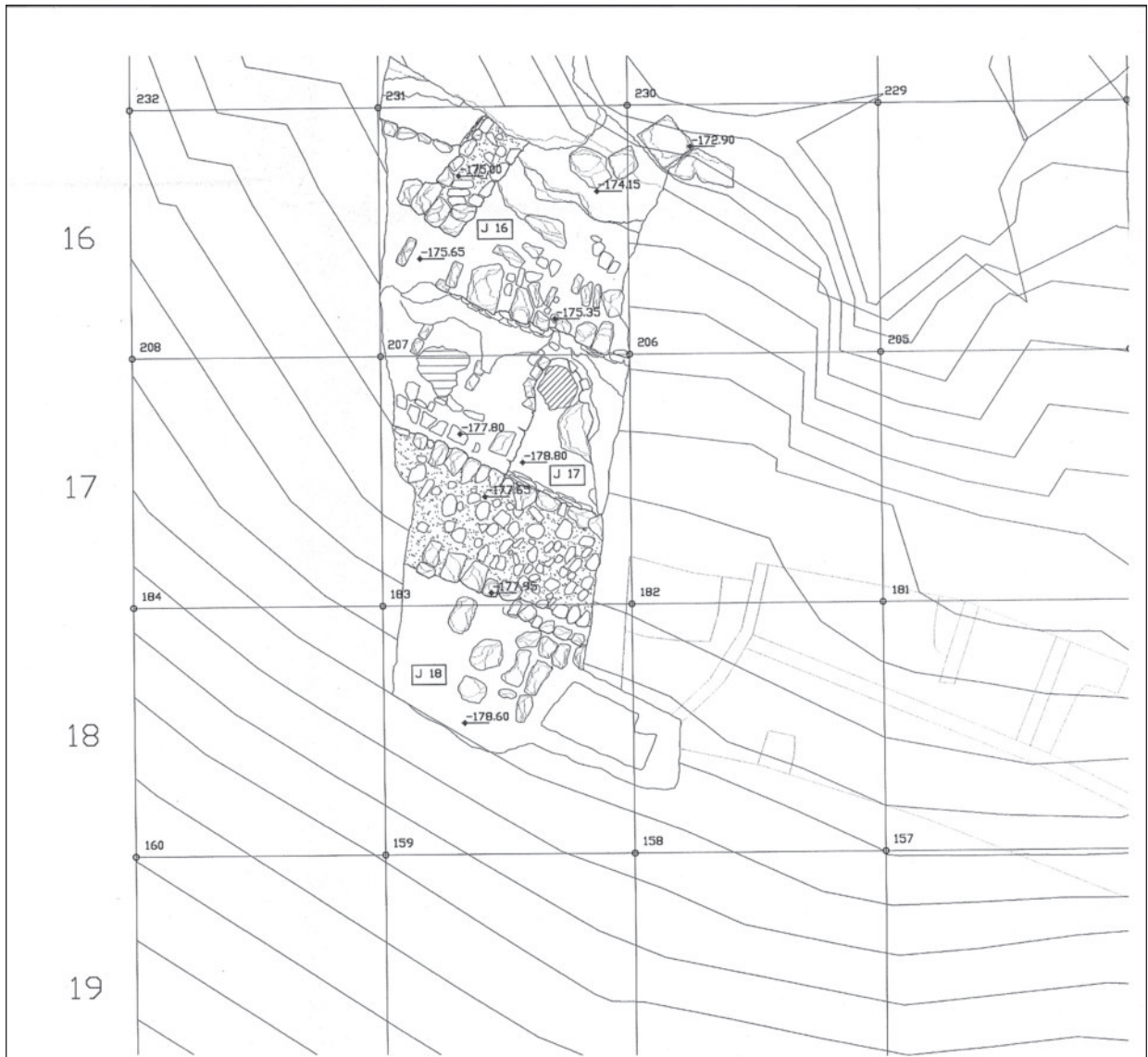
whole construction was founded on a compact beaten earth surface, owing to an absence of natural rock in this area. The portion of the defensive wall uncovered so far (l = 9.5m) is indicative of a well-organised building programme dating, on the basis of the pottery, to the Early Iron Age. Another wall, oriented north-south and joining the abovementioned wall at a right angle, may belong to *intra muros* buildings, which will be explored next season. Other finds from trenches J17, I17 and I18 include flint blades, two snail shells, sea shells, stone weights or pecking stones and a stone pounder (Figs. 8b, 8c-k).

Work resumed in trench Q13, but was

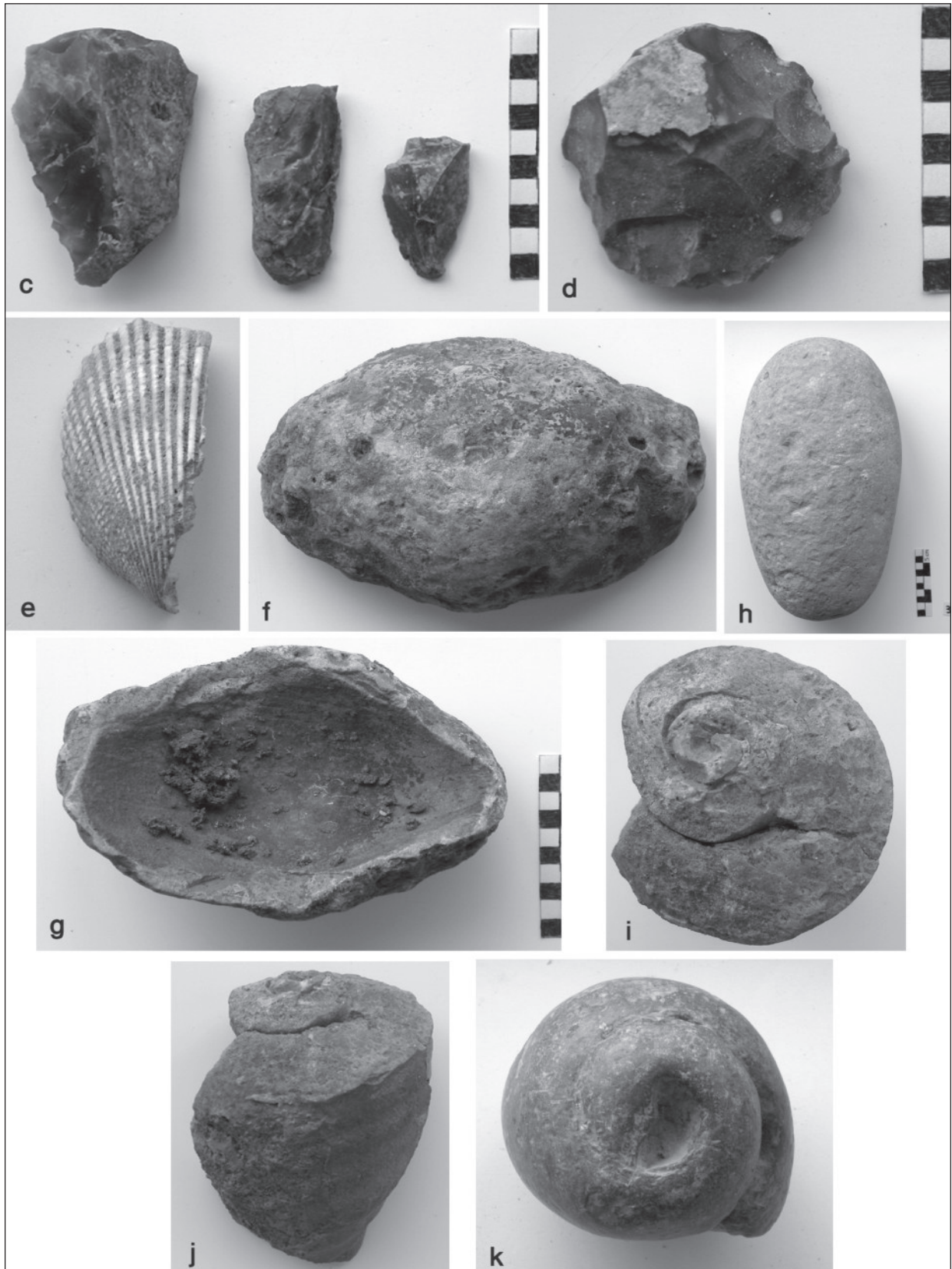
abruptly suspended owing to the discovery of an Islamic tomb (Fig. 9).

Part of the summit enclosure wall had been revealed in trench O16 during the previous season (2009). Its remaining northern part (Fig. 10a) was exposed this season. The only finds were Iron Age pottery, animal bones, snail shells and basalt grinder fragments (Fig. 10b-d). Further to the east, the remains of other walls indicate the presence of more buildings; these await investigation next excavation season.

During the 2010 season, a local friend from the village of Tall al-Kafrayn brought us a small clay female figurine in the shape of a



8b. Plan of trenches J17, I17 and I18.



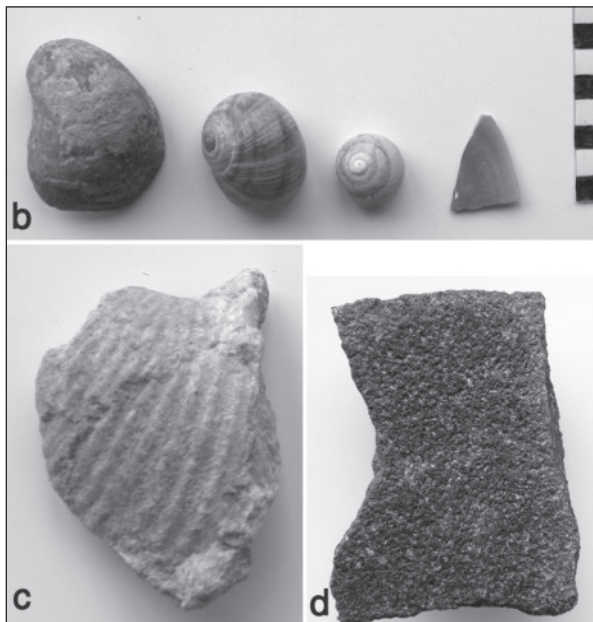
8c-k. Finds from trenches J17, I17 and I18: flint blades, sea shells, two snail shells and stone pounder.



9. Trench Q13.



10a. Trench O16.



10b-d. Finds from trench O16: sea shells and basalt grinder.



11a-c. Clay female figurine (private collection).

protome (h = 6.3cm; w = 4.5cm) (**Fig. 11a-c**). It is made of red clay, with grey and white grit inclusions, and is slightly chipped. The head, neck and upper chest are represented. The figurine has a neatly indicated headdress, the eyes are almond-shaped and the ears, nose, mouth and breast clearly represented; the chin is slightly pointed. The back of the figurine is roughly shaped by hand. This object is an example of Abdel-Jalil 'Amr's Type D moulded figurine (Amr 1980: 105) and has some parallels at Buṣayra which date to the late 9th or early 8th century BC ('Amr 1980: 373, nos. 71-72)³.

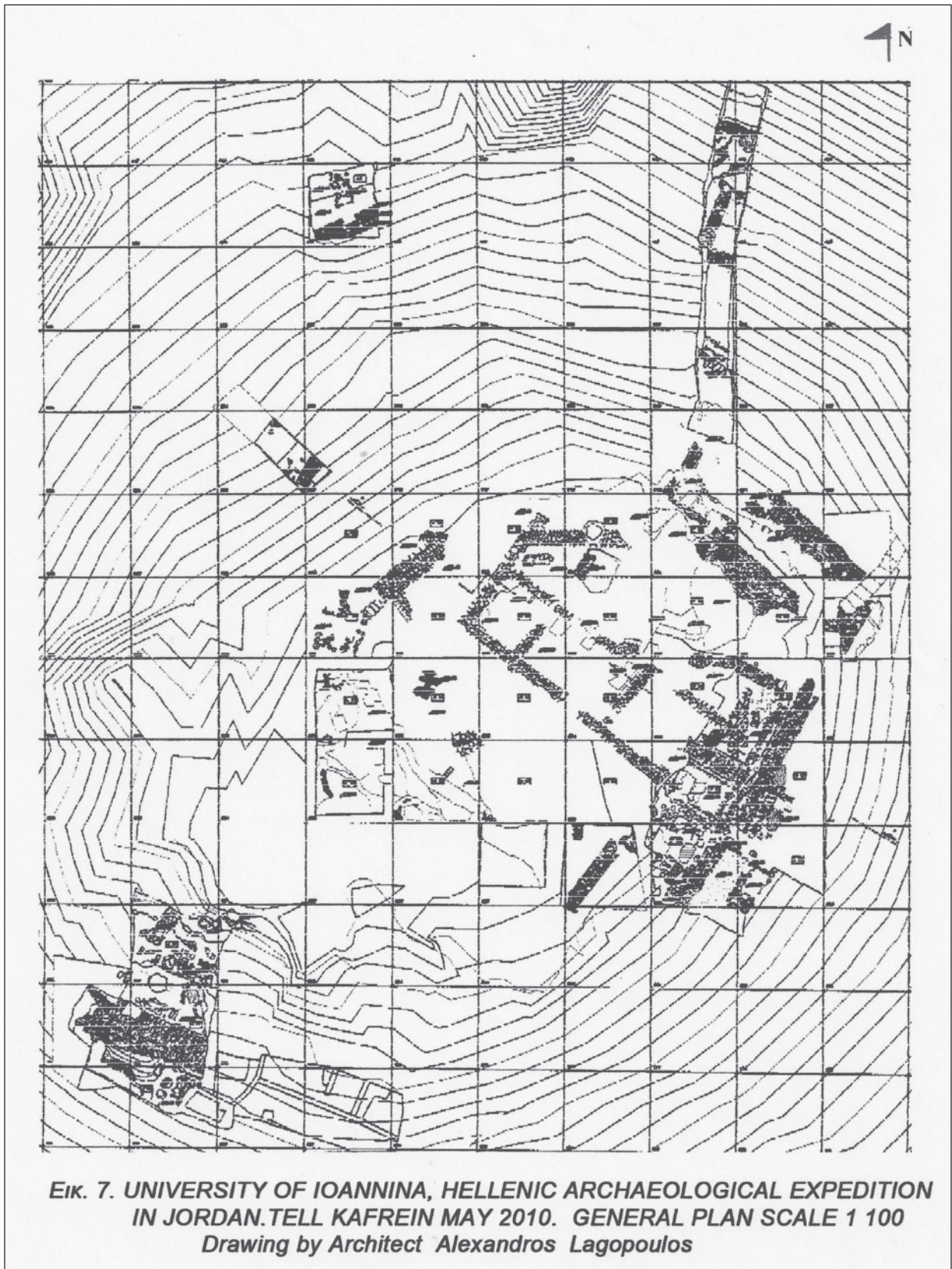
In addition to the fieldwork, study and preparation of finds for publication was carried out (**Figs. 12-17**). Also, during the season the site was visited by DoA archaeologists Abdelsami Abu Dayyeh and Adeib Abu Shmais, who collaborated with us and helped mainly with the dating of pottery (**Fig. 18**).

Archaeometrical Results by the University of Ioannina

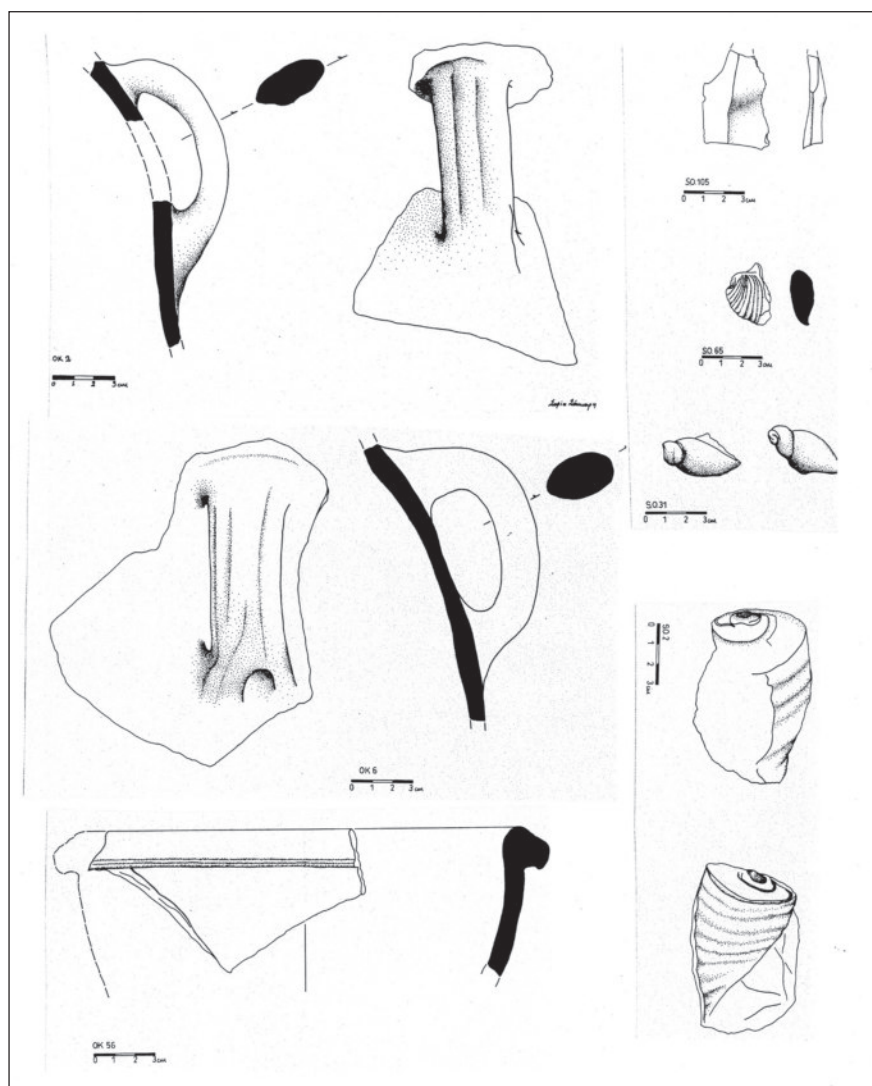
Samples from three trenches on the south slope and close to the top of the *tall* (trenches I17, I18 and R12) were collected and sent to

3. Alternatively, Dr Abdelsami of the DoA has suggested that it is a local imitation of the Assyrian goddess

Astarte dating to the 6th century BC.



12. Tall al-Kafrayn; general plan of the architectural remains (2010).



13a. Selection of Iron Age pottery and other finds (photos and profiles).

the laboratories of the Archaeometry Centre at the University of Ioannina for analysis and dating. The samples, which included both sherds and sediments, were dated using the Riso TL/OSL DA-15C/D reader. The estimated age of the sherd samples varied from 1400 BC \pm 800 years to 2700 BC \pm 1700 years, while the ages determined for the sediment samples ranged from 720 BC \pm 630 years to 1100 BC \pm 200 years. Further analyses, using techniques such as radioisotope-induced energy-dispersive X-ray fluorescence (EDXRF) spectroscopy and X-ray diffraction (XRD), will hopefully reveal the causes of these variations in observed age.

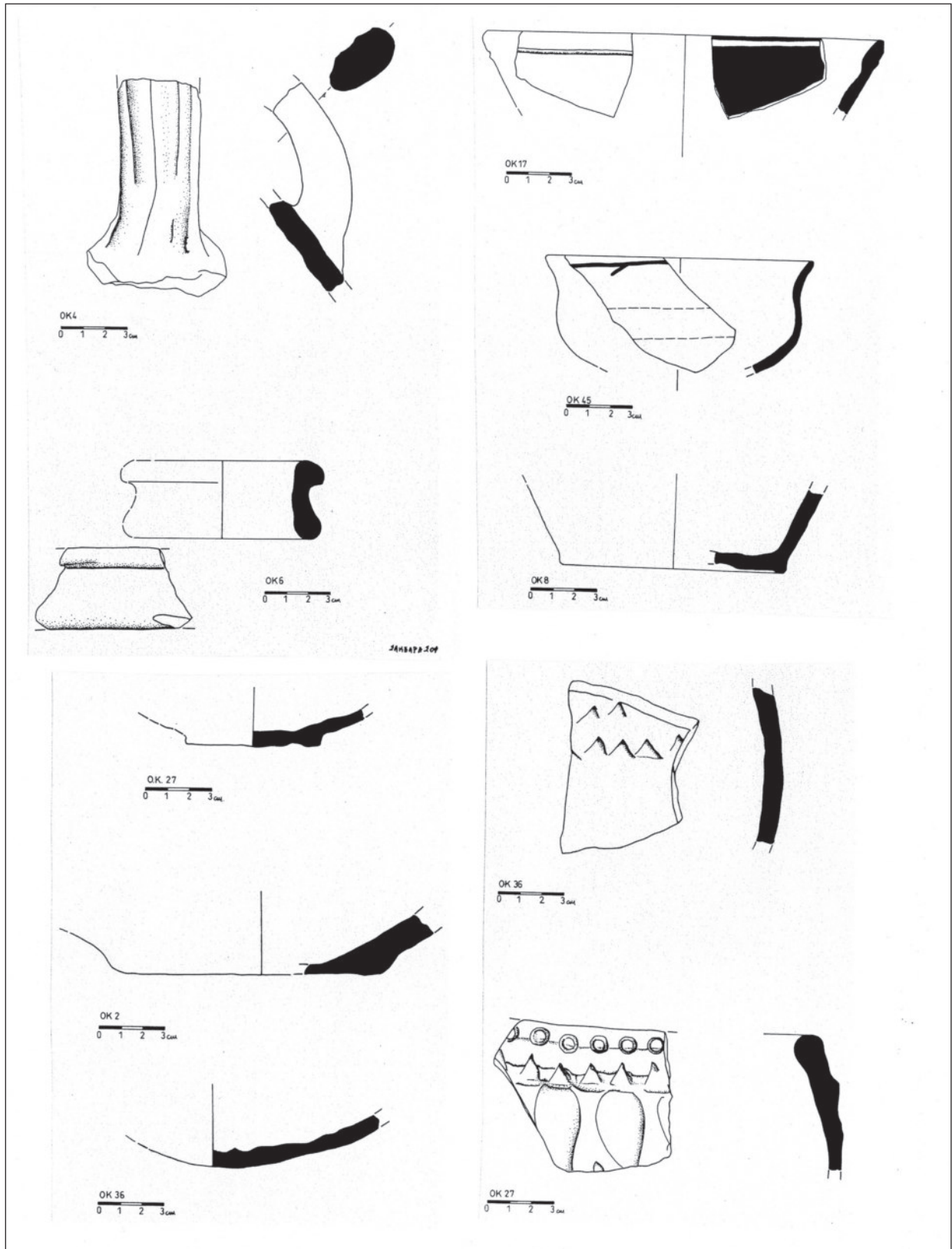
The 2011 Season

Work at Tall al-Kafrayn resumed in 2011

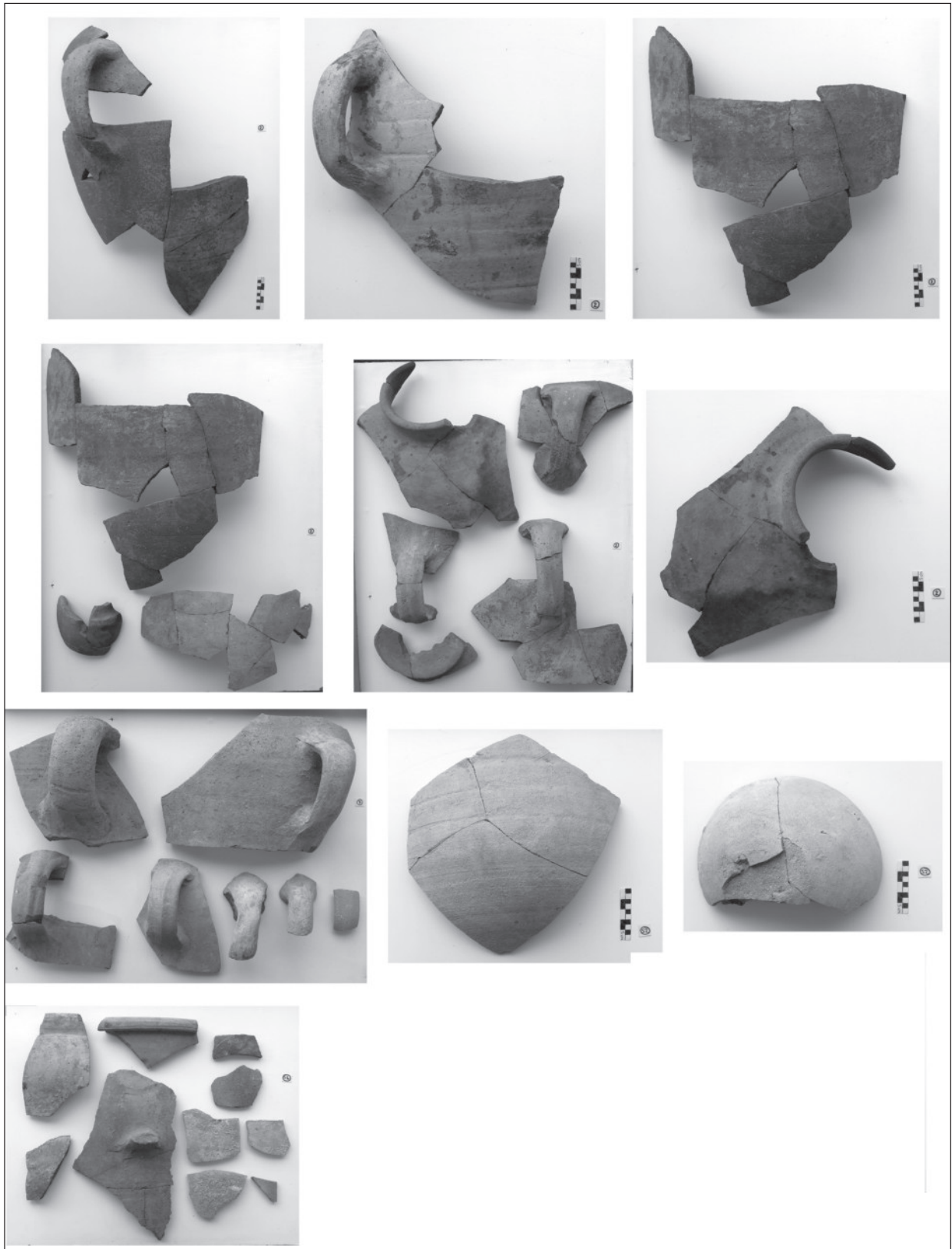
(the eleventh season; 10-17 April 2011) but was restricted to the northern and western exploratory trenches (Figs. 19-21). These yielded additional architectural remains, Iron Age I-II ceramic loom weights and stone artifacts. Much of the season was devoted to aerial photography of the *tall* by our two professional photographers, Kostas Xenikakis and Symeon Yessafidis, who used a remote-controlled camera and balloon at a height of 250-300m above the ground with excellent results (Figs. 22-24).

Conclusions

The continuation of excavation at Tall al-Kafrayn in 2010 and 2011 produced new evidence concerning the stratigraphy of the *tall*, its earlier levels and the ways of life of its inhabitants. In particular, work in the two ex-



13b. Selection of Iron Age pottery and other finds (photos and profiles).



14. Selection of Iron Age pottery and other finds (photos and profiles).



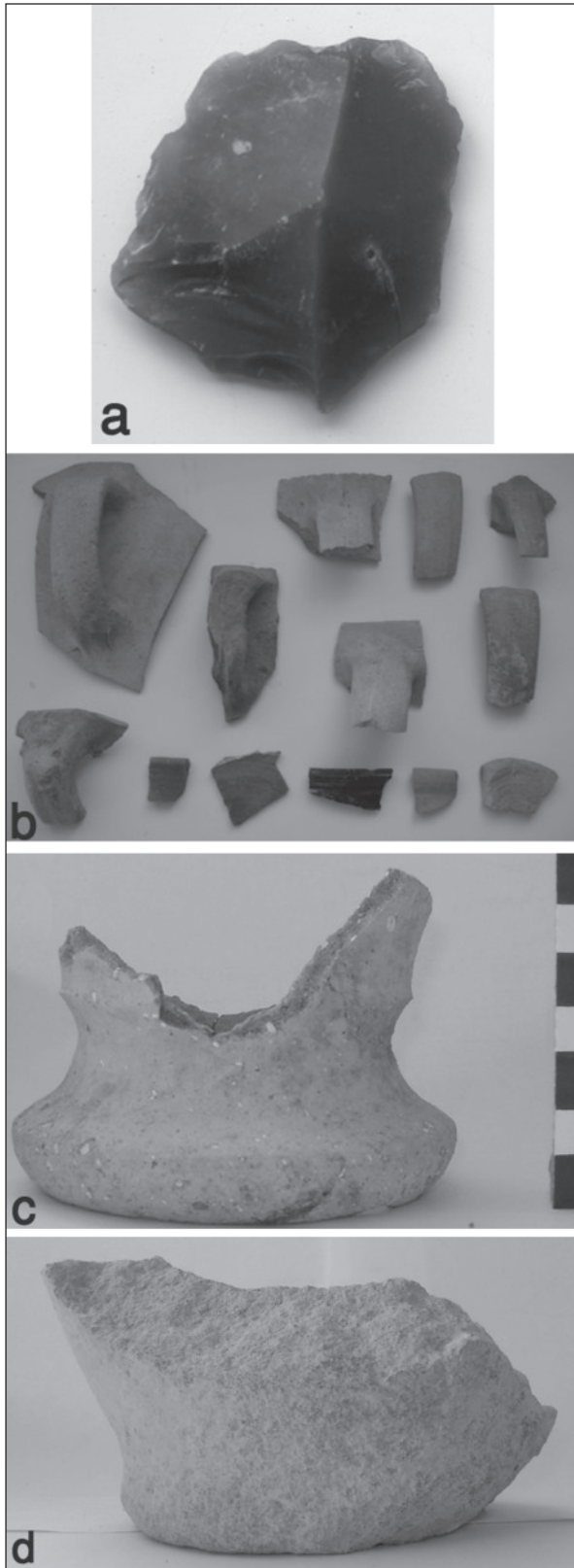
15-17. Study and preparation of finds for publication (2010).



18. Visit of DoA archaeologists.



19. Northern exploratory trench (2011).



20a-d. Flint and pottery finds (2011).



21. Western exploratory trench (2011).



22. Aerial photography of Tall al-Kafrayn using balloon (2011).



23-24. Aerial photos of Tall al-Kafrayn (2011).

ploratory trenches on the northern and western slopes of the *tall*, as well work on its southern and eastern slopes, revealed important new architectural remains, *viz.* parts of the retaining and fortification walls, domestic installations and a reasonably well-preserved *tābūn*-type oven; a similar oven was found near the top of the *tall* in trench R12. Most of the pottery finds date to the Iron Age. Of particular importance and interest was the discovery of the two Egyptian objects (the scarab and, possibly, the exquisite 'alabaster' vase) and the fragmentary Attic (4th century BC) skyphos, which are indicative of links with Egypt and classical Greece.

Future seasons should see more extensive excavation of the structures exposed to date, as well as completion of the two exploratory trenches, with the aim of documenting the entire history of occupation at Tall al-Kafrayn.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the late Dr Fawwaz al-Khraysheh, former Director General of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, for granting permission to excavate at Tall al-Kafrayn. DoA representatives Khaled Ahmad al-Hawawreh and Hussein al-Jarah of the Dayr 'Allā office are thanked for their kind assistance in facilitating the fieldwork. DoA archaeologists Abdelsami Abu Dayyeh and Adeeb Abu Shmais are similarly thanked for their valuable assistance and help with dating pottery and some other finds. We are once again much indebted to the Director of City Planning and Irrigation in South Shūnah for making the basement of his office available for the study of finds and temporary storage of excavation tools. We are grateful to the University of Ioannina and the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism for

their financial support, as well as to the Greek Ambassador in 'Ammān, H. Asteriadis, and Secretary of the Greek Embassy, I. Malikourtis, for their assistance. We would also like to thank Archimandrite Innokentios, representative of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, for providing us with safe and secure lodgings at the Pilgrims' House of the Monastery of St George at Mādabā. Finally, we cordially thank former Vice Rector of the University of Ioannina, Prof. Niki Agnanti, who visited us at Tall al-Kafrayn in 2011 and all of the team members mentioned above for their valuable assistance and excellent collaboration.

Bibliography

- 'Amr, A.-J.
1980 A Study of the Clay Figurines and Zoomorphic Vessels of Trans-Jordan during the Iron Age, with Special Reference to their Symbolism and Function. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of London.
- Flanagan, J.W., McCreery, D.W. and Yasine, K.N.
1996 Tell Nimrin: Preliminary Report on the 1995 Excavation and Geological Survey. *ADAJ* 40: 271-292.
- Papadopoulos, T.
2007 The Hellenic Archaeological Project of the University of Ioannina in Jordan: A Preliminary Synthesis of the Excavation Results at Ghawras-Sufi and Tall al-Kafrayn (2000-2004). *SHAJ* 9: 175-191.
- Papadopoulos, T. and Kontorli-Papadopoulou, L.
2010 Preliminary Report of the 2005 - 2008 Seasons of Excavations by the University of Ioannina at Tall al-Kafrayn in the Jordan Valley. *ADAJ* 54: 283-310.
- Van der Steen, E.J.
1991 The Iron Age Bread Ovens from Tell Deir Alla. *ADAJ* 35: 135-153.

