

EXCAVATIONS IN DOLMENS

By : Rafik Wafa Dajani

(See pls. XXVII — XXXVIII.)

In Jordan there are ancient stone monuments called dolmens. They are widely spread from North of Hisban up to South of Irbed, East of Jarash and Mafraq and mainly concentrated at Damiya, el-Quttein and Matabi in the Jordan Valley. Dolmens are also found elsewhere, outside Jordan; in Europe; in Spain, south France, in Ireland, in Sweden, Denmark, in the Beliaric Islands, at Sardinia and Corsica. They are also found at Kurdistan, in Iran and in India. People of Europe consider their structures to giants and Maglithic culture. The Germans called them **Hohen** and the Sweedish called them **Toten**.

Study and Research

Since 1868 and until the present date, over one hundred and fifty articles and major works mentioning dolmen studies have been done, but such work as had been done was descriptive or speculative and while much of it was good, it had been performed as axillary to other projects. There is still no sure knowledge as to who built the dolmens, when, or why.

Date and period

Many archaeologists have dated Dolmens on the basis of few pottery sherds and artifacts collected from the top surface or nearby area of a dolmic field. To the best of my knowledge no systematic excavation or in any Iron Age excavation, any evidence has been found by any one before 1966.

Dolmens have been dated by archaeologists as follows : Prof. W.F. **Allbright**, Tahunian, Dr. G. **Landes**, upper and middle chalcolithic 3500 - 3200 B. C, **Broome**, Proto Urban 3100 - 2900 B. C. **pere de vaux** of the Dominican Ecole Biblique et Archaologique Francaise in Jerusalem, EB-MB 2300-2000 B.C. (O.S.J.P. 118) and the writer in his recent excavations and on bases of pottery and archaeological finds in stratified levels dates dolmens 1300-900 B.C.

Definition and descriptions

Dolmens are ancient stone monuments in a box like shape, called by Musil

in 1868 as « stone tables ». They are built of very crude cut slabs of limestone, erected in a box like shape of four walls parallel to one another and covered by another slab of the same type. Some of these dolmens have a wall of one slab, others of more than one.

The length of a fairly standard size dolmen is around 2.75 m. width, 1.00m. exterior heights, ground to underside of cover slabs 1.00m. Interior volumes average 2.75 m. exceptions to this standardization exist, some of them are larger and some are smaller than the usual one.

Most dolmens are oriented N-S, but very few are oriented E-W.

The floors of the dolmens are levelled and in most cases are of one slab of stone, on circular terraces formed of one, two or three layers of blocks of stone of heterogeneous shapes and sizes. Very few found set on bed rock. The terrace technique probably gave an elasticity to the dolmic structure as a whole that permitted it to absorb the shock of earthquakes that overthrew more pretentious buildings but left the dolmens standing.

Some of the dolmens have doors and some have none. Doors in dolmens are called by Wheeler (1956, 206) and Daniel (1958, 23) «Portholes». Portholes are rounded holes carved in a slab and in most of the dolmens they are in the north side. Some of these portholes have borders 0.05m. carved around them and they are like frames.

These framed doors in dolmens are similar to some framed portholes of some caves near the dolmic fields.

Survey of the Jordanian dolmens

Though many survey work had been done to dolmens in Jordan by many archaeologists and others such as Conder, Claude, R (in his book SEP. 1889). Schumacher Goteleib in his book, (Northern Ajlun 1890). Trestram H. B. in his book, (The Land of Moab 1874). Glueck in the (AASOR's XIV, XV, XXV-XXVIII from 1932 - 1939). E. Broome in his book, (The Dolmens of Palestine and Transjordan.) 1940 (JBL. LIX (59) 1940. 479 - 497). Harding G. Lankester, (the Antiquities of Jordan 1959.)

The main and accurate work on the survey of the Jordanian dolmens started in 1962 when Dr. J. Swauger, came to Jordan and included the result of his work in cooperation with the writer in the Annual of the Department of Antiquities in Jordan vol. X. P. 5-36.

Trial Trenches in Dolmens

As a result of our explorations in the Dolmic fields of Damiya, el-Quttein and el-Matabi, some Iron Age sherds were found with some human bones in dolmen No. (6) in el-Quttein field (see ADAJ. X. P. 25 and the last paragraph in P. 34) and from nearby dolmens in Damiya and el-Matabi. This has encouraged the writer to continue his research in the following years :

In 1963, the writer conducted small trenches in Dolmen No. 6. in el-Quttein area (see pl. XXXVII. Fig. 1) and in two Dolmens at Damiya (see pl. XXXVIII fig. 2).

Many Iron Age sherds were collected from inside these Dolmens, especially from Dolmen 6. in el-Quttein, such as : Rims of cooking pots, a rim and a handle of a dipper and many big sherds of storage Jars scorched in black, found in a disturbed layer with cremated human bones. (see pl. XXVIII fig. 2), and pl. XXVII. Fig. : 1.)

In a small Dolmen at Damiya, and at a depth of more than one metre and half, some Iron Age sherds were found, one of them was a small rim of a red Jug, highly burnished, everted and slipped in dark red, (see pl. XXX fig. 1 : III).

A third Dolmen at Damiya was excavated to a depth of 1.50 m., a few Iron Age sherds were collected near the bottom, and a hearth was found near the door and some Iron Slab¹. On the covering slab of this Dolmen, the writer discovered an altar. It was a groove in a straight line, cut in the stone from nearby its centre to the end of its side.

The covering slab on this dolmen is inclined towards one side.

The research in 1964

In 1964 the writer repeated his research in the dolmic fields of Damiya and el-Quttein. The result of this research was as follows:-

1. Many other altars were discovered on the plain surface of some rocks near the dolmic field.
2. These altars were not far from the EB cave burials excavated by Dr. Stekelis in 1943.

Whether these altars were related to the EB cave burials or to the dolmens, is still uncertain.

Excavations in 1966

The result of these excavations, has encouraged the writer to plan for a systematic excavation in Dolmens 5 and 6 in el-Quttein (see pl. XXXVI. Fig. 1.) and (pl. XXXVII. Fig. 1).

The reason why the writer has chosen to excavate in these Dolmens was:-

1. Because of the many EI I-II sherds which have been collected from the trial trenches already done in these dolmens.
2. The Dolmens in el-Quttein are larger than those at Damiya and other fields. This type

is called by Dr. Swauger (the double chamber dolmen) (see pl. XXXVIII Fig...1...).

Five strata were found. (see pl. XXXIV fig...1...). In strata 1, 2 and 3 many Iron Age sherds were found and many fragments of human bones. Some of these were:- rim of a cooking pot, fragment of rim of a pottery stand, base of a jug, rim of a krater or deep bowl, rim and handle of a dipper, rim of a small bowl. All these sherds are typical to Early Iron Age materials in Palestine and Transjordan².

Stratum 4 was a filling.

Stratum 5 was the most promising one. It was about 80 cm. overlay the floor of the dolmen. On the floor of this dolmen, this stratum was found undisturbed in which intact pottery and human bones were discovered in addition to more than a hundred sherds, typical of the EI I-II types such as:-

cooking pots, dippers, storage Jars, Jugs, bowls and plates. (see pl. XXIX fig 2).

One of these important intact finds was an Amphora, a handleless Jar and two conical type handle less Pyxes. (see pl. XXVII. fig. 1).

Another important discovery in this stratum was a copper Febula of bow or knee type and a scarab typical of Iron Age materials in Palestine and Transjordan and elsewhere. (see pl. XXVIII Fig ...1...).

Lumps of Iron Slab were also discovered in this stratum near a hearth which was found near the door of the dolmen. (see pl. XXXVI. Fig ...2...).

Excavation outside the door of Dolmen 6

Three strata were found as a result of the excavation. Stratum III was found undisturbed and 30 cm. thick above the stone floor. Many intact small jugs and bowls of EBI and II and the proto Urban period typical to Jericho Tombs; (A-127), (A-108), (F2) and Ai (A and G) Tombs. (see pl. XXVII Fig. 2).

Excavation in Dolmen 5

(see pl. XXXVIII. Fig...1...) and (ADAJ. X. P. 26 fig 2).

This dolmen has been anciently vandalized, probably by Tomb robbers. Very few EI I-II sherds and human bones were collected.

An altar was found cut on the top of one of the walls of this dolmen, similar to those already found in the dolmic field at Damiya.

CONCLUSION.

This is the first discovery of its kind in the history of Dolmens. Now we have a clear evidence of Iron Age burial in Dolmens. For the first time in the history of dolmens intact Iron Age pottery have been discovered in excavated Dolmens.

The evidence of cremation in Iron age burials in Transjordan appears for the first time. This type of Dolmens in el-Quttein is quite different from those in other fields in East Jordan.

Probably the Early Iron Age settlers had reused the EB Dolmens, but in a different type by enlarging them. This is evident from their walls and the floor slabs. Usually in most of the dolmens, the floor slabs were cut in a way exactly to fulfil the area floor of the dolmen. What one observes here, is the floor slab, not covering but 2/3 of the whole floor area. The rest of the floor is paved by flat stones.

A clear evidence which will prevail our conclusion was found in Dolmen 5 in el-Quttein. See (pl. XXXVI Fig. 1).

The floor slab of this Dolmen was found built on the earlier one and covering only 2/3 of the whole floor area. It was also found that the dividing wall or the arched door between the two chambers is built over an earlier one (see pl. XXXVIII fig.1.).

Some of the walls of these dolmens reached 14m. in length.

DATING

On the basis of the earliest type of pottery found in this dolmen see (Pl. XXXXI. Fig. 1 : 198). The pyxis of squat type with a ledged handle is parallel to the end of level C2 & B in TBM, and the rim and neck of the jar collared under the rim (see Pl. XXX. Fig. 1 : 6), is also the same period which have been found in TBM in level C2. The burial in this dolmen probably started from the very end of the 13th cent. B.C. & the starting of the 12th century B.C. and continued till the end of the 9th century B. C.

(PARALLEL OF CONTENTS)

Pl. XXXI
Fig. 2 : 15

Lower part of a Juglet small disc base, red slipped, highly burnished and undecorated.

TNII. pl. 4 : 778, Gerar. pl. 57 : 536 b. ca. 1100-900 B. C.
Albright L. 10th cent.-7th cent. B.C. AAS. 12:79.

- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 1 : 115 Water dakanter, L. red undecorated, unslipped and unburnished lime grits, well fired. Parallel ADAJ. XI. Tomb c. (Irbed) No. 4. pl. 32. TNII pl. 39:740. T. el-Ful. TS. S. PEQ. 1915.
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 2 : 33 Rime of cooking pot. lred, gritty plain rim, the handle attached to the rim and the profile slightly carinated. Parallel to Deir Alla level A. TNII. pl. 47:1003. (AS II. 56 pl 37. 46, 1200-900). Tell - Ful Fort. II AAS II:10f pl. 25, Fig. 22. 1050 - 1000 B.C. L. 10th - E 11th cent. B.C.
- Pl. XXX
Fig. 1 : 111 Rim of a red Jug. broad neck, wide mouth everted rim, thin ware, dark red slipped from outside and on the rim from insid, red ware hard fired, very fine grits, vertically burnished. Parallel TN II. pl. 34 : 609. Tell Ful TS. S. slope (PEQ, 1915, 36 : 37 pl. 4 : 2) Albright Elii, AAS XII, 76. AS.T.6 (APEF 2 : 79 pl. 44 : 9 ca 950-700).
- Pl. XXX
Fig. 1 : 106 Two fragments of decanter, the base and part of the shoulders, L. red ware, white gritted, dark red slipped, Parellel TBM. (AASOR XII. pl. 59 : 4) TN II, pl. 61 : 1420.
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 1 : 114 Rounded base of a Jar, buff ware lime grits = TBM A. (AAS. XII pl. 53 : 6), TN II pl. 3 : 36, AAS IV pl. 69 : 3 ca 825 B.C.
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 1 : 113 Big sherd with a loop handle. L. red buff ware, fine grits, m. fired. The handles on the top of the shoulders of the jar is parallel pl. XXXXIV: 25 found in Irbed Tomb (B) (ADAJ. XI P. 91). TN II pl. 1 : 2 - 44 : 549, 1000-670 B.C.
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 1 : 117 Cooking pot (rim and handle) reddish brown ware, lime grits. parallel TBM A. (AAS XII PL. 55 (a) 4), TBM A. AAS 12: 85f pl. 60 : 7. Ours has two handles and earlier in date. 900-800 B.C.
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 1 : 120 & 121 Rim of a cooking pot, red brown ware, gritty, the rim is ridged. Parallel to TBM (A) AAS. XII pl. 55.11, TN II pl. 46 : 1002, AS IV pl. 62.46 ca 1000-950 B. C.
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 1 : 116 Rim and handle of a krater red/buff ware, gritty. M. fired, parallel Madeba T. (AEFA VI, 1953 fig. 14 : 53 dated 1250-1150 B.C).
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 2 : 62 Rim of a Krater and a handle red/buff ware, gritty everled inverted rim. parallel TBM. A (AAS XII pl. 66 : 22 950-850 B. C.).
- Pl. XXX
Fig. 1 : 1 Amphore (intact), knob base, two loop handles attached to the neck under the rim, sharp carinated shoulder, covered with a dark red slip.

- Parallel TBM «A» (AAS. XII pl. 71.4) the handles on our are drap.
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 2 : 61 Lower part of a jug, ring base. L. red gritted M. fired, TN II pl. 28 : 478
TBM C. AAS 12 : 51 pl. 22 : 36, 1230 B. C., Tell el Ful AAS:4 : 13 pl.
29. 1. L. 11th - E. 10th cent. B.C.
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 2 : 124 Rim and handle of a jug attached to the rim L. red grits, TN II pl. 30 :
547, AAS IV pl. 62 : 51 1000-950 B.C., Gerar pl. 53: 34 ca 1200 B.C.
- Pl. XXXI
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- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 2 : 65 Big sherd rim and handle of a jug. L. red slipped, rolled rim, gritted,
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- Pl. XXXI
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36. 645, MI. pl. 3 : 87, ca. (780-733 B. C.)
- Pl. XXXI
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II 53. 1176. AS.T. 4 APEF 2, pl. 39. B(AS.V 136 T. 7). APEF 2. 81. pl.
46. (1000 - 950 B. C.)
- Pl. XXXI
Fig. 2:90 Rim of a jug pinched mouth, collered under the rim L. red, gritty, TN II
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Fig. 2:130 Scarab white lime stone, un-identified inscription.
- Pl. XXXI
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- Pl. XXXI Big sherd and a ledge tilted handle of a pyxis. squat type, round flat base,

- Fig. 1:118 buff ware, gritty, parallel TN II pl. 74:1698. MT 37. pl. 39:3 EIii
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- Pl. XXX Rim and a jug handle, everted, L. red gritty, m. fired. parallel : TN II pl.
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- Pl. XXX Neck, mouth and rim of a jug ridged under the rim, buff/ware M. fired.
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- Pl. XXX **Intact ug handleless, ridged neck, round base, pale slipped.** (Meqablein
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- Pl. XXX Part of a cooking pot or Krater, disc base, carinated profile, L. red, gritty
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- Pl. XXX
Fig. 1:116 Rim and handle of a krater, everted/inverted broad rim L. red, gritty, parallel : TNII pl. 62 : 1433 our is earlier and has a disc base.
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- Pl. XXX
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- Pl. XXX
Fig. 1:106 upper part, neck and handle of a decanter, ridged under the neck and red ware, loop handle, gritty and M. fired. Parallel, TN II pl. 40:747 AS.T. 8 APEF. 2:76 pl. 41:12 ca. 950-700 B.C.

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