

TALL ABŪ AL - KHARAZ
THE SWEDISH JORDAN EXPEDITION 1994, FIFTH SEASON
PRELIMINARY EXCAVATION REPORT

by
Peter M. Fischer

Preface

Excavations were carried out at Tall Abū al-Kharaz, north of Wādī al-Yābis and about 4 km east of the River Jordan, from 29 September to 1 November 1994. The director of the expedition, as during the previous years, was the author, from Gothenburg University in Sweden. Members of the team were Hikmat Ta'ani, the representative of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan from Irbid, who also acted as trench master in Trench XXIV and foreman in the field. Trench masters were José Gallart, University of Louisiana, in Trench XXII (part-time), Anders Kaliff, Department of Antiquities, Linköping, in Trench XXII (part-time), Madlaine Miller, University of Gothenburg, in Trenches XXVB and XXII (part-time), and Dieter Vieweger, University of Wuppertal, in Trench XXVA. Richard Holmgren, University of Uppsala, was the architect and photographer. The team was further supported by Hassan Rahmi Abu Sami. Twenty skilled workers from Pella and al-Mashār'a were employed.

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RESULTS OF THE 1994 SEASON

Introduction

The main objectives of the 1994 excavation were (for the location of areas and

trenches see Fig.1):

1. The search for defence walls in the south part of the tall, the most vulnerable sector of the site (Area 9, Trenches XXIV, XXVA and B).
2. The extension of the 1993 excavations in the north part of the tall, where among other finds an Iron Age house and towers were exposed (Area 7, Trench XXII; see *ADAJ* 39).

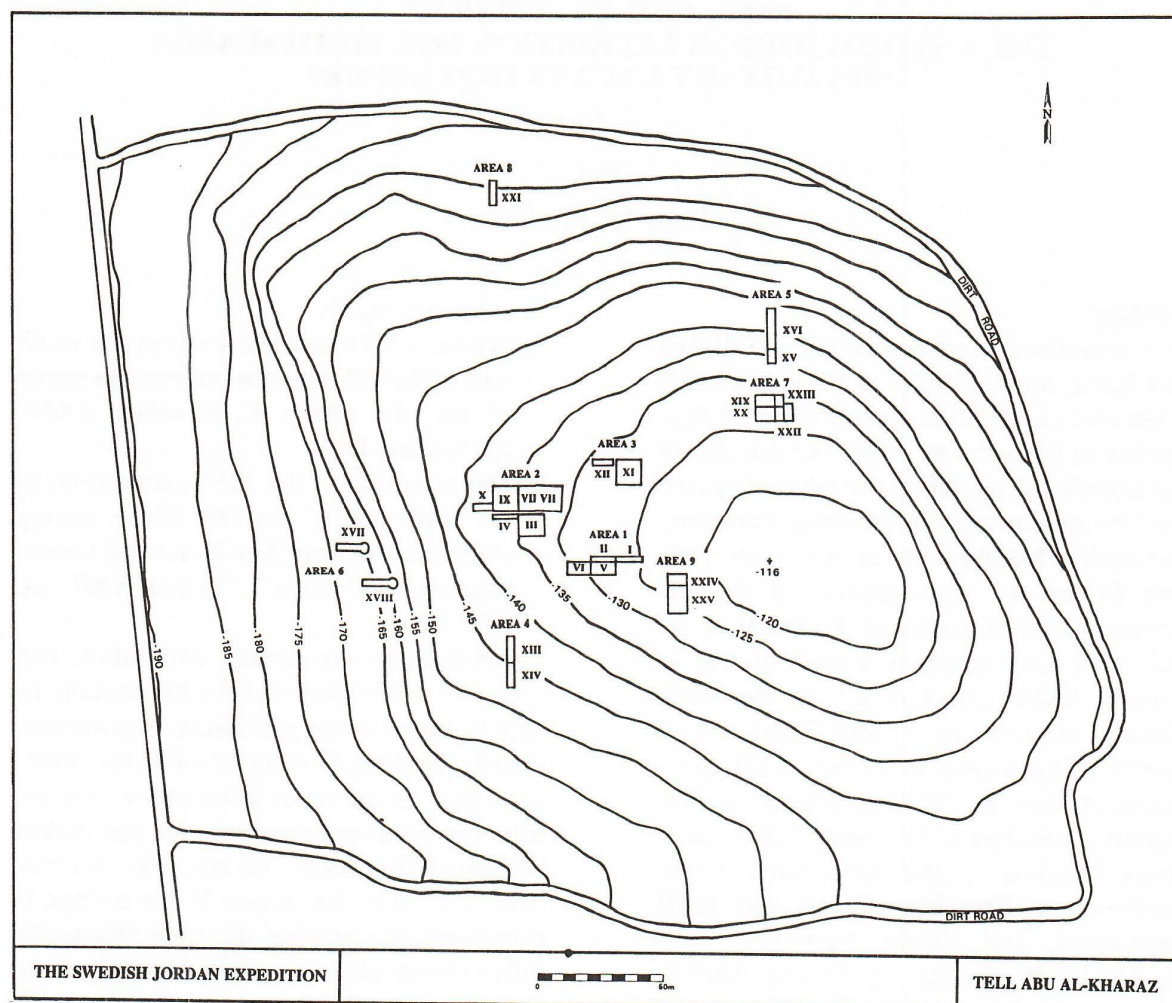
Information concerning excavation and sampling techniques, and electronic support, may be found in the preliminary reports previously published in *ADAJ* (Fischer 1991, 1993-95). In the description below, the results are presented area by area, and period by period from colluvial soil. The excavations took place on slopes. When a slope is excavated, the number of strata frequently differs from place to place, that is, strata with the same number from different areas do not necessarily belong to the same period.

Area 9: Trenches XXIV, XXVA and B

Area 9 lies in the south of the upper part of the tall east of Area 1 (1989). It measures 7x15m. The area includes a flat part, Trench XXIV (Grid SS31), measuring 7 x 4.75m, to the north, and the beginning of the upper part of the south slope, Trenches XXVA-B (Grid SS32), measuring 7x9.75m. The centre of the 0.5m wide baulk separating the two trenches corresponds to E 206.160 and N 200.613 ± 1m.

Colluvial Soil

The colluvial soil is 20 - 30 cm deep. Parts of stone walls which originate from



1. Tall Abū al-Kharaz: areas and trenches.

the three “main” periods represented at Tall Abū al-Kharaz, Iron Age, Late and Early Bronze Age, are visible on the surface. All walls run approximately east-west.

The pottery¹ is a mixture of all the periods found at Tall Abū al-Kharaz, however the Late Iron Age and the Early Bronze Age are the best represented periods. On top of Stratum 1 two Islamic finds were made: a well-preserved silver coin and a

lentoid flask from the Abbasid period. A lead-silver rosette-shaped pendant comes from the same level.

Iron Age

Strata 1-3

The two most recent phases, Strata 1 and 2, are separated by a layer of ash and were found in the northern part of the area. The feature that dominates amongst the remains

1. The following abbreviations have been used for the catalogue of illustrated pottery:

Description/abbreviations: identification number (trench/stratum/locus/find number), shape, HM (hand-made pottery includes techniques as pinching, drawing, mould-modelling and coiling; no further distinction is made in this report), WM

(wheel-made pottery includes wheel thrown and turntable pottery), fired hard (H), medium (M) or soft (S) or combinations, colour of clay, core, inclusions (refer to the Wentworth scale; Wentworth 1922: 377-292; and 1933: 633-634), slip (SS=self slip) and surface treatment.

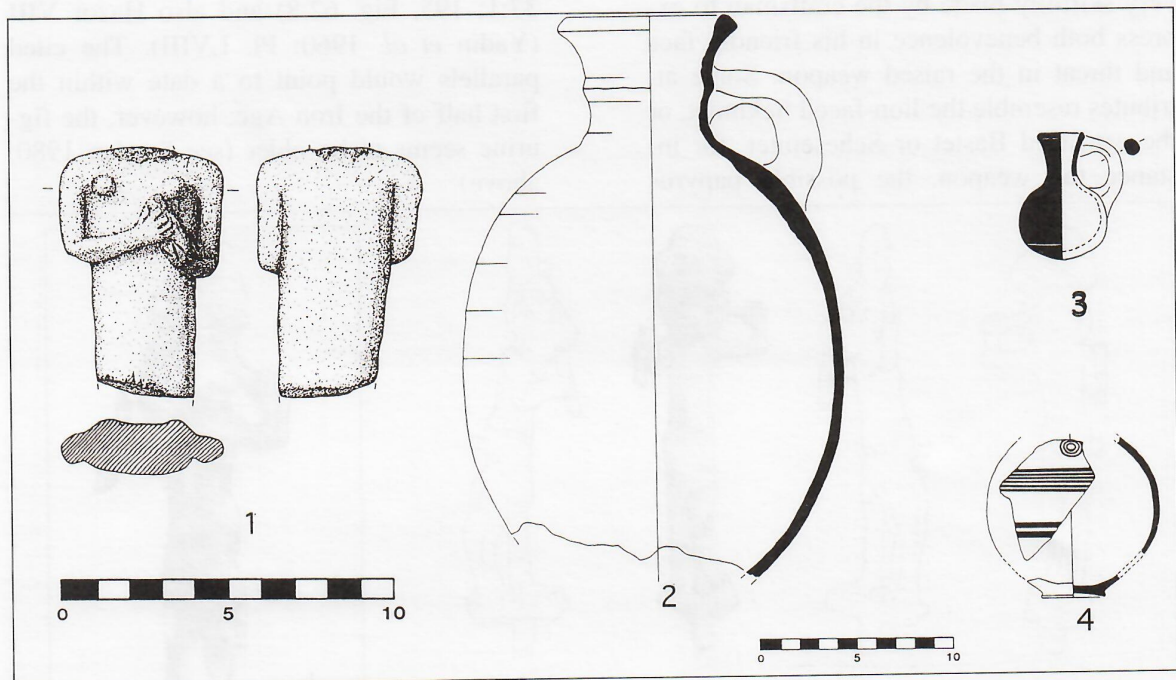
of domestic architecture is Wall 221 which was originally built in Stratum 2 and reused in the last preserved occupational phase (Stratum 1). It is the same "city" wall that was found in 1989 to the west in Area 1 and numbered Wall 4 (Fischer 1991: 73). Its total length is approximately 350 m and it encircles the upper part of the tell. The other architectural remains are represented by totally destroyed foundation walls of houses and stone pavements. Two ovens were found.

The pottery from both these strata contains typical Late Iron Age shapes, among which a 'Black Juglet' and an almost complete crater should be mentioned, together with a red-painted false spout of a jar (Tall al-Fār'ah, Chambon 1984: Pl. 46:10). Small finds include iron and bronze artefacts, and a bull and a female figurine both of hard fired clay. The slender female figurine is standing upright (Fig 2:1). She is holding an object in both hands just below her left breast. The object is very likely a musical

instrument, perhaps a tambourine (Tall al-Fār'ah, Chambon 1984: Pl. 63:1-2). Traces of glaze are visible on the back of the left shoulder of the figurine.

Architectural remains from Stratum 3 were found over the entire area of excavation. Defence walls from the Late and Early Bronze Age were reused and completed with new constructions. The result is an impressive approximately 5 - 6m wide construction for the defence of the vulnerable south part of the tell. Remains of partly stone-paved domestic buildings were found in the middle of Area 9 and to the north.

An interesting find was made outside a house in the north-eastern part of the area. A circular pit, approximately 1m in diameter, was dug close to the south-western corner of the house. It contained an almost complete but broken jug resting on a bed of pebbles (Fig.2:2). The pit was filled with ash (burnt straw?) and sherds, and covered by flat stones. A metal figurine of a lilac-



2. Iron Age finds: 1. XXIV1L1N874, female figurine with tambourine(?), HM, H, light red, thick grey core, medium-coarse, mainly white inclusions, traces of glaze on left shoulder. 2. XXIV3L69N907, jug, WM, H, light brown, medium-fine and some large white inclusions, SS. 3. XXIIIB2N906, Black juglet, WM, H, greyish-brown, medium fine, thick black slip, vertically burnished. 4. XXIIIB4L105/108W258-3, Cypriot Black-on-Red juglet, WM, H, light brown, fine, reddish-brown slip, burnished, matt black decoration.

grey colour was found lying on top of a flat flint stone which partly covered the pit (Figs. 3a and 3b). The well-preserved, approximately 10 cm high, statue depicts a warrior god, standing upright upon a plinth.

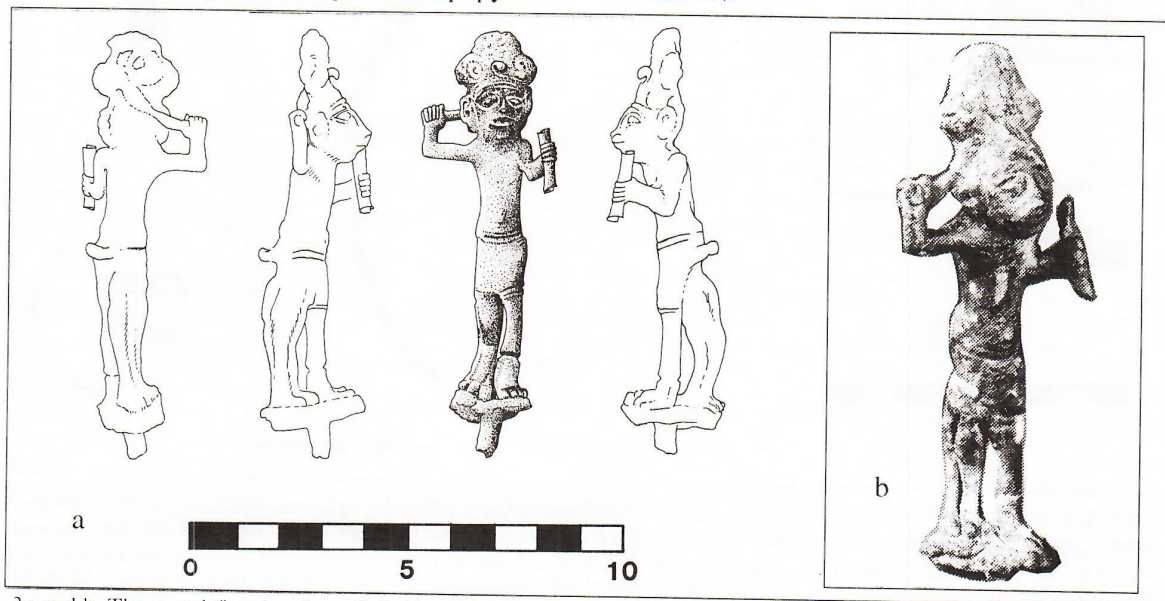
The god's face has a kindly expression and seems to be a mixture of lionine and human; he has a human body and arms. His left leg is human, but his right is very probably a lion's leg with a lion's paw. Two tangs are attached: one at his back and one below his feet for the purpose of attaching the figurine to something. His dress is a thin and short skirt with a waist band reaching from just below his navel to the knees. He has a cap with trefoil-shaped (ostrich?) plumes. On his forehead is the uraeus, the sacred serpent. His lifted right hand holds a weapon behind his head, resembling a scourge. His lowered left hand holds a papyrus scroll (?).

The overall impression of the Tall Abū al-Kharaz figurine is twofold: the god is very skilfully made by the craftsman to express both benevolence in his friendly face and threat in the raised weapon. Some attributes resemble the lion-faced Sekhmet, or the cat-faced Bastet or Schesemtet, for instance the weapon, the possible papyrus

scroll, the uraeus and the head-dress. However, it is very likely a male with naked upper body. No exact parallels could be found, but the general appearance of the figurine resembles other figurines from Palestine and Syria (see e.g. Seeden 1980: Pl. 102, 1722-1724, all females).

A small sample was taken from the plate and analysed by SIMS (secondary ion mass spectrometry) at the Chalmers University of Technology. It was anticipated, because of the quite heavy figurine's grey appearance, that it could be made of a silver-lead alloy. The preliminary, not yet quantified results, shows that silver and lead are constituents of the alloy, although copper and tin dominate. Other clearly demonstrable elements are iron, nickel, arsenic and antimony.

The preliminary date of Stratum 3 is based mainly on the jugs which have parallels at Megiddo V (Lamon *et al.* 1939: Pl. 8:177), Taanach IIB (Rast 1978: 138, Fig. 37:1; 195, Fig. 62:8) and also Hazor VIII (Yadin *et al.* 1960: Pl. LVIII). The cited parallels would point to a date within the first half of the Iron Age; however, the figurine seems to be older (see Seeden 1980, above).



3a and b. The metal figurine from Tall Abū al-Kharaz.

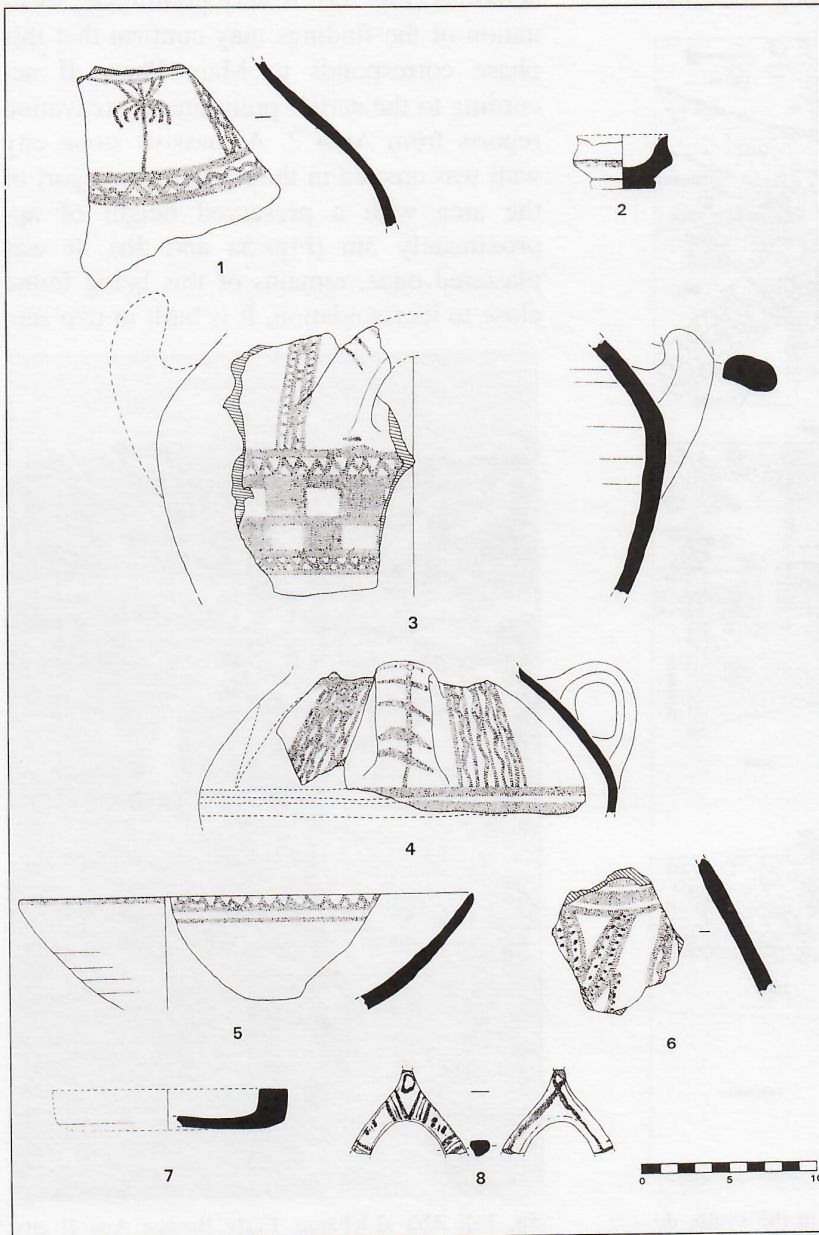
Late Bronze Age

Stratum 4

The almost 2 m wide Wall 225 in the centre of Trench XXV, running east-west, was used as a city wall during the Late Bronze Age. However, the foundation of this wall was built during the Early Bronze Age (see below) and later modified. The wall seems to be identical with Wall 9 in Area 1 (Fischer 1991: 75, Fig. 5c), and Wall

187 in Area 7 (Fischer 1995). Scanty architectural remains of this Late Bronze Age phase were found in the northern part of the area: the corner of a demolished house in the north-east, and a hearth and oven. Ash covers the remains.

The pottery includes Chocolate-on-White ware (see Fig. 4:3-6) and Cypriot imported early White Slip II (Fig. 5:8; cf. Åström 1972: 447-456).



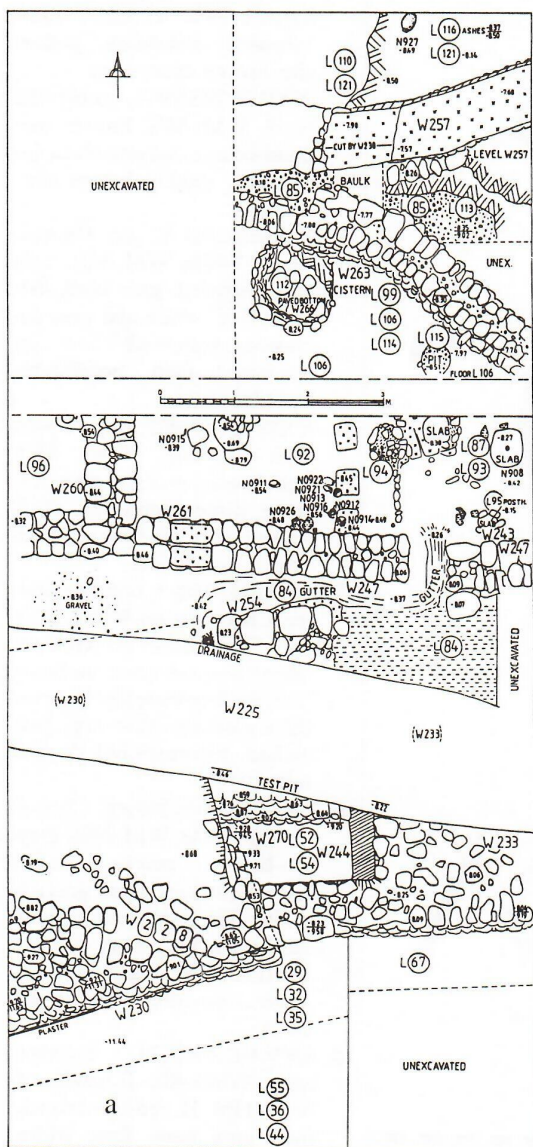
1. XXIV3L27-1, jug, WM, MH, light brown, coarse, multi-coloured inclusions, yellow slip, brown decoration.
2. XXIVW248N904, miniature bowl, WM, MH, brown, medium-coarse, mainly black inclusions, reddish-brown decoration.
3. XXIIIB5L104-4, jar, Chocolate-on-White, WM, MH, light yellowish-red, grey core, medium-fine, white and grey inclusions, yellowish-white slip, burnished, matt chocolatebrown decoration.
4. XXIV4L86N902, jug, Chocolate-on-White, WM, MH, light brown, medium-fine, few large white inclusions, thick yellow slip, burnished, matt brown decoration.
5. XXIIIB5L105-3, bowl or chalice, Chocolate-on-White, WM, MH, light reddish-brown, thick greyish-brown core, medium-fine, multicoloured inclusions, thick pinkish-white slip, burnished, brownish-red decoration.
6. XXIV2L37-1, jar/jug, Chocolate-on-White, WM, MH, greyish-brown, coarse, mainly grey inclusions, thick greyish-white slip, burnished, chocolate-brown decoration.
7. XXII5L103-1, faience bowl, white, blue core, green on surface.
8. XXVA4L19N878, Cypriot early White-Slip II handle of bowl, HM, H, reddish-brown, light grey core, fine, white slip, chocolate-brown decoration.

4. Late Bronze Age pottery.

Early Bronze Age

Strata 5-9

Stratum 5 is the most recent Early Bronze Age II (squatter) phase, and has been considerably disturbed by the following occupations (see the earlier reports for the preliminary divisions into "Squatter" and "Main" phases within Early Bronze Age II). Domestic buildings were erected against Wall 225 possibly rebuilt in Stratum 5 (see the outlines in Fig.5a). Among the small



5a. Early Bronze Age II city wall in the south, domestic architecture in the north (Area 9).

finds a stone mace head should be mentioned.

The foundation of Wall 225 seems to have been constructed in Stratum 6 upon the massive city Walls 230/233 built in the previous phase. Domestic architecture was built to the north against Wall 247. It is a 0.6 m wide wall running parallel to the city wall at a distance of roughly 1 m.

Stratum 7 is a phase of intensive building activities (Fig. 5a). A very preliminary evaluation of the findings may confirm that this phase corresponds to Main Phase II according to the earlier preliminary excavation reports from Area 2. A massive stone city wall was erected in the southernmost part of the area with a preserved height of approximately 3m (Figs.5a and 5b). It was plastered once, remains of this being found close to its foundation. It is built in two sec-



5b. Tall Abū al-Kharaz. Early Bronze Age II city wall. Early Bronze Age IB remains below.

tions on different levels (Walls 230 and 233). A tunnel-like opening can be seen between the walls. An approximately 2 m² test trench was opened on top of Wall 233 in order to investigate the "tunnel". It became clear that the walls were not built simultaneously, but a real tunnel could not be found. However, the test pit exposed two other well-constructed walls built on top of each other and parallel to the outer wall at a distance of about 2m. During the continued excavation inside the city walls another wall was found (Wall 254) which may be the innermost part of the city wall complex which would give it a width of 4 - 6 m.

This part is built on a foundation of mudbricks (!) which may be a still older city wall. It is difficult at this stage to decide exactly how and when the city wall complex consisting of a number of separate walls was constructed, for example, if the oldest part was the inner part in the north and later reinforced by additional walls on the outside, or vice versa. It cannot be ruled out, for example, that the wall to the south, Wall 230, might in fact be a huge tower. Below the foundation of this defence construction disturbed walls from an earlier phase were found. Domestic architecture was found inside the city wall. A stone-built cistern-like construction, about 1m large and deep, in the north part of the area may possibly represent a grain silo.

The pottery from Stratum 7 contains some complete and intact vessels including bowls, platters, jugs, juglets and jars (Fig. 6:1-6). A Red-on-White jar shows a very peculiar petrography which differs from the other petrographically examined Early Bronze Age sherds from Tall Abū al-Kharaz (Fig. 6:6; petrography report forthcoming).

The domestic architectural remains belonging to Stratum 8 are to the south built against a mudbrick wall (see above) which may represent a city wall built in the oldest phase (see below). A courtyard and two rooms were exposed. Small finds include

stone tools and pottery. A burnished mace head of alabaster (Fig. 6:10), a juglet and a number of storage jars should be mentioned.

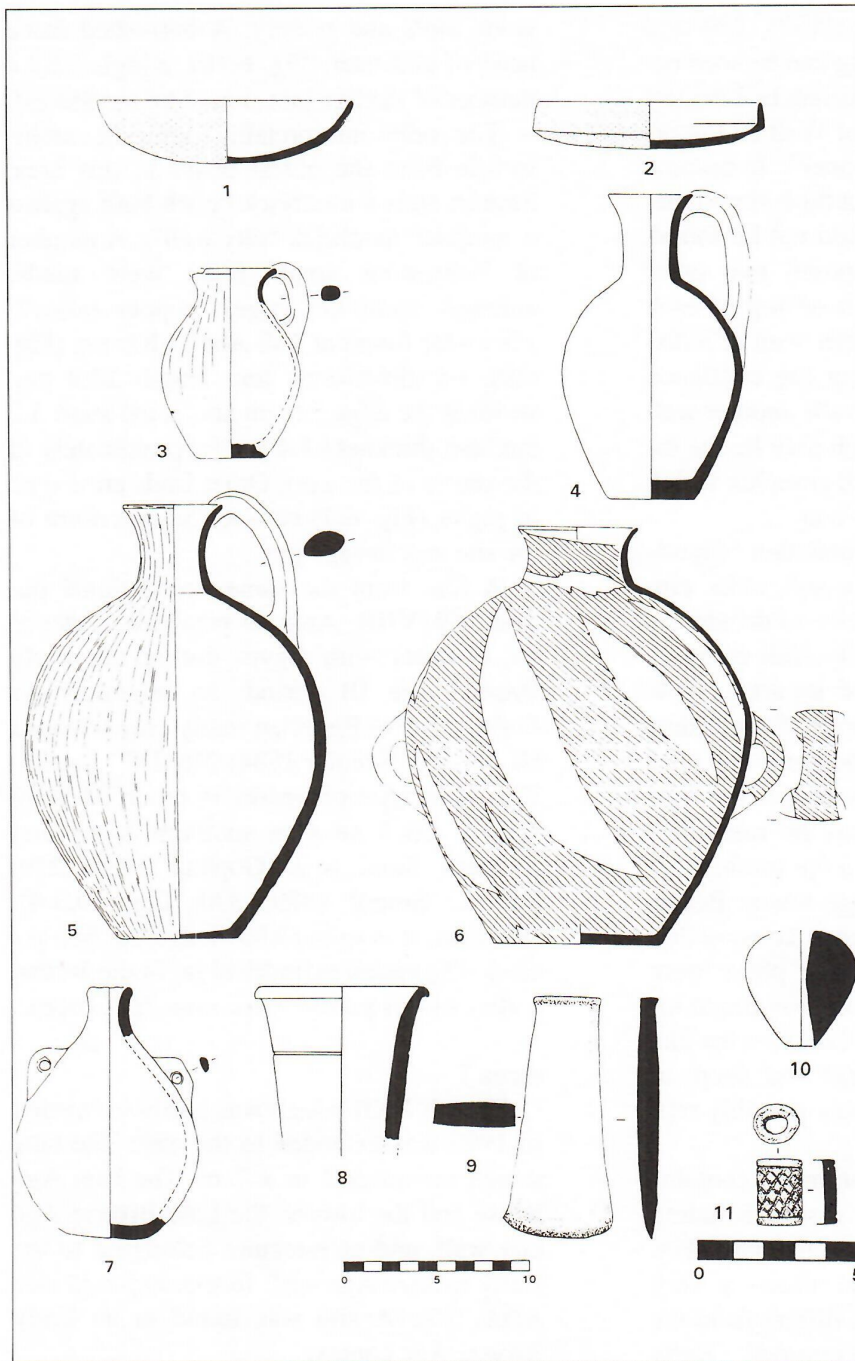
The only interpretable domestic architecture from the oldest phase in this area, Stratum 9, is a mudbrick bench built against a compact mudbrick "city wall". A number of interesting small finds were made, amongst them the largest copper (alloy?) axe so far found at Tall Abū al-Kharaz (Fig. 6:9). Its dimensions are: length 12.9 cm, width at the edge 5.6 cm and at the shaft 3.2 cm, and thickness 1.4 cm (approximately at the centre of the axe). Other finds are a type of juglet (Fig. 6:7) new to the repertoire of the site and storage jars.

A find from the same occupational period (K91VIIB, Area 2) provides evidence for contacts with Egypt during the Early Bronze Age IB period: an imported cylindrical jar of Egyptian marly clay (Naqada III; see e.g. Needler 1984: 216-217, nos. 76-77). This type of vessel is recorded from several EB I sites in southern Israel and northern Sinai (e.g. Gophna 1995: 279, Table 1; Brandl 1989: 370, Fig. 10:3-4). However, it is to our knowledge the first recorded Egyptian cylindrical jar in the Jordan Valley in this period (pers. com. Y. Goren).

Area 7

Trench XXII which was partly excavated in 1993 was extended to the east. The new trench measures 3 m x 7 m. The Iron Age house and the towers, the Late Bronze Age city wall, and architecture belonging to the Early Bronze Age were further exposed (see ADAJ 39). A silo was found in an Early Bronze Age context.

Small finds include a faience bowl found in an Iron Age context but possibly from the Late Bronze Age. A cylinder seal very likely cut from a young female hippopotamus canine (pers. com. Leif Jonson; Fig. 6:11). It resembles the one of bone found in 1991 (Fischer 1993: 297, Fig 12:11 and Pl. III:2, 59).



1. XXVA7L92N914, platter / bowl, WM, H, yellowish-brown, medium-fine, some white inclusions, SS on inside, dark red paint on rim and outside.
2. XXVA7L92N916, platter, HM, H, reddish-brown, thick grey core, medium-coarse, mainly white inclusions, SS inside, dark red paint outside.
3. XXVA7L92N912, juglet, WM, H, light brown, medium-coarse, brown inclusions, light brownish-red slip, vertically burnished.
4. XXVA7L92N921, juglet, WM/HM, M, light yellowish-brown, medium-coarse, mainly black inclusions, traces of reddish-brown slip, possible burnished.
5. XXVA7L92N922, jug, HM/WM, MH, red, medium-fine, some multicoloured inclusions, red slip, vertically burnished.
6. XXVA7L92N926, jar (Red-on-White), HM, H, light brown, thick grey core, medium-coarse with white and black inclusions, thick white slip, red paint.
7. XXVAL9L108N930, amphoriskos HM/WM, MH, yellowish-brown, medium-coarse, black and white inclusions, SS.
8. VIIB12 "W60"-1, Egyptian cylindrical jar, HM/WM?, M, grey, fine, burnished.
9. XXVA10L123N935, axe, copper (alloy?).
10. XXVA8L101N881, mace head, alabaster, burnished.
11. XXIIB5L113N920, cylinder seal, hippopotamus (canine of young female?).

6. Early Bronze Age finds. Nos.1-6 are from the same room.

Acknowledgments

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cessful execution of the excavations.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this report to my dear friend José Alberto Gallart. José was a professional assistant and a highly valued member of the Swedish Jordan Expedition at Tall Abū al-Kharaz 1992-1994. He loved archaeology, and was devoted to Jordan and its cultural heritage.

José was involved in a tragic car accident that took his life on 16 August 1996. He was 27 years old.

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