

TALL ABŪ AL-KHARAZ
THE SWEDISH JORDAN EXPEDITION 1997
EIGHTH SEASON PRELIMINARY EXCAVATION REPORT

by

Peter M. Fischer

Preface

Excavations, directed by the author, were carried out at Tall Abū al-Kharaz, north of Wādī al-Yābis and about 4 km east of the River Jordan, from 11 April - 14 May 1997. The team members were Hikmat Ta'ani, the representative of the Department of Antiquities, Irbid office, who also acted as trench master of Trenches XXXIVB and XXXIXD, and foreman in the field. Other trench masters were Anna Ekström, University of Lund (Trenches XXXIVA, XXXVII and XXXVIII A), Salameh Faiad, Irbid Department of Antiquities ("The White Building" and Trench XXXIXB), and Stina Orsenmark, Monika Stolfer (Trenches XXXIVD and XXXIXA) and Anica Tanevska (Trenches XXXIVC, XXXVIII B and XXXIXC), all from Göteborg University. The expedition's architect was Muwafaq al-Bataineh, the draughtsperson Lamia Khoury and the photographer Hussein Debajeh, all from Yarmouk University. The team was further supported by twenty-five skilled workers from Pella and al-Mashār'a.

RESULTS OF THE EIGHTH SEASON

The objectives were (for the location of areas and trenches, see Fig. 1):

1. Further excavation of Area 2 in the western part of the upper plateau, where excavations had been performed from 1989 until 1993, in order to expose more of the defence systems of the Early and Late Bronze Age.
2. Further excavation of Area 7 in the northern part of the tall, partly excavated in 1993 and 1994, in order to investigate do-

mestic architecture.

3. Complete excavation of the "White Building", which had been discovered on the top of the tall the year before.

Information concerning excavation and sampling techniques, and electronic support, may be found in the preliminary reports previously published in *ADAJ* (Fischer 1991 and 1993-97). In the description below, the results from colluvial soil are presented area by area, and period by period.

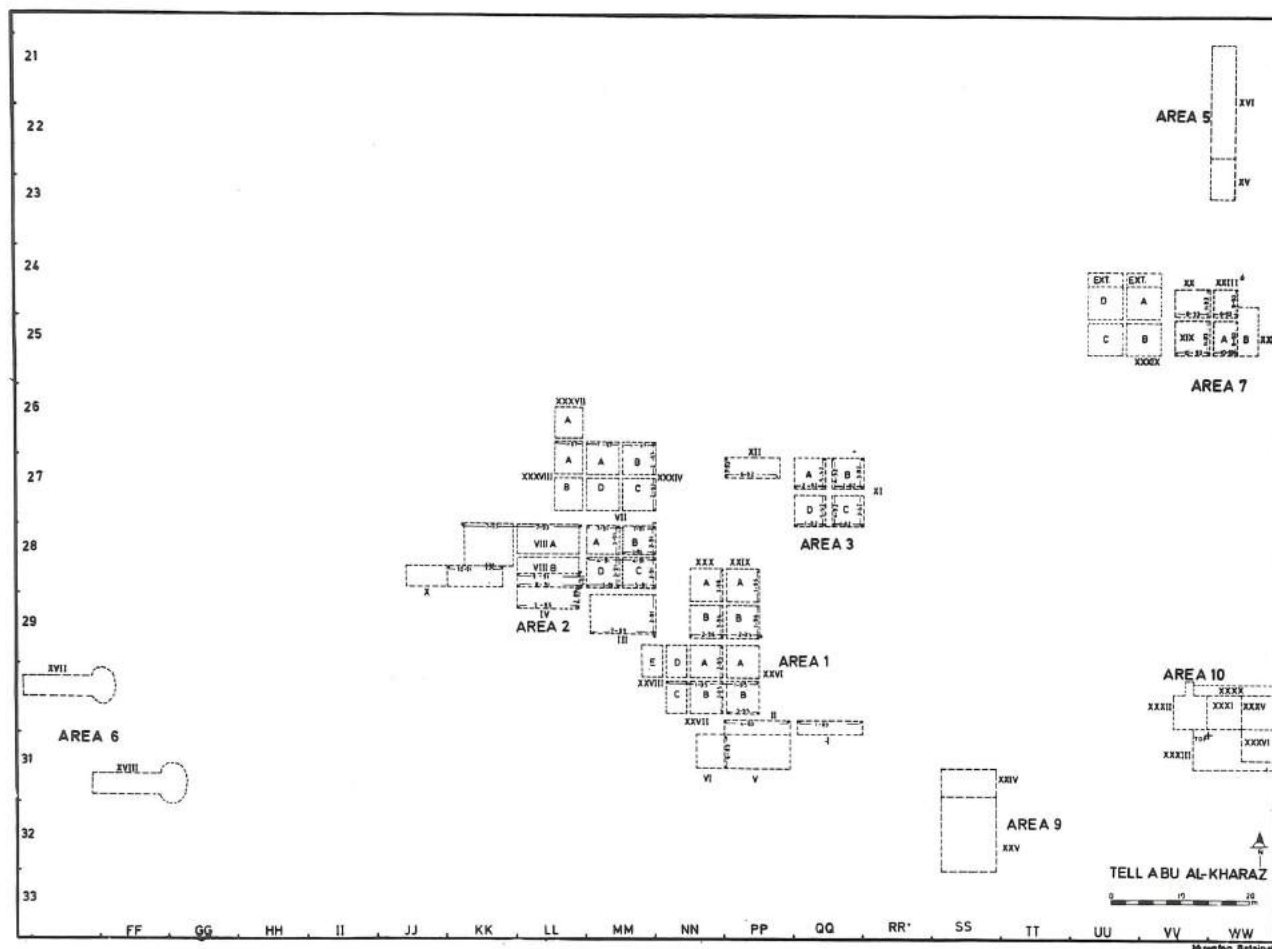
Area 2: Trenches XXXIVA-D, XXXVII and XXXVIII A and B

The trenches, which cover 160 m², are within the Grids LL/MM 26/27 (see the grid system in Fischer 1991). The co-ordinates of the centre of Trench XXXIV, that is, the middle of the crossing baulks separating sub-trenches A-D, correspond to E 206.104 and N 200.660 ± 1 m according to the Palestine Grid co-ordinate system.

This part of the tall slopes downwards from east to west approximately 2 m in 10 m, and from south to north approximately 1 m in 10 m, except for the extreme north-west part of the excavation area, which falls steeply to the north-west.

Colluvial soil

The colluvial soil is 10-30 cm deep. Stones belonging to walls which originate from the Iron Age and post-Iron Age periods are visible on the surface. The pottery is a mixture of all the periods found at Tall Abū al-Kharaz: post-Iron Age (mainly Abbasid, but also Roman and Byzantine), Iron Age, Late Bronze Age and Early Bronze Age periods are represented.



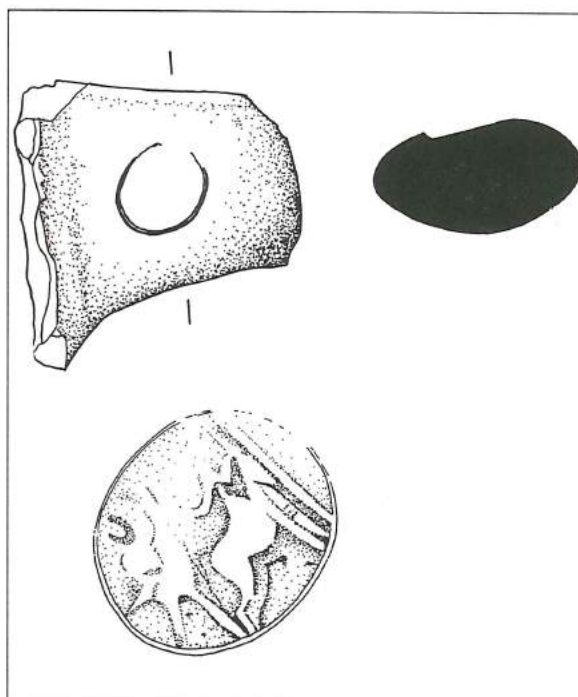
1. Tall Abū al-Kharaz 1989-97. Sketch of areas and trenches.

Iron Age and Post-Iron Age

Stratum 1A/1

The most recent architectural phase is only visible in the highest, south-eastern part of the area. It is represented by a wall, approximately 0.7-0.8 m wide (W 424) which runs north-north-east to south-south-west. Its direction corresponds to similar walls from the uppermost stratum which were found during earlier seasons (see e.g. Fisher 1997).

Most of the pottery from this stratum consists of late Iron Age types but there are other sherds mainly of Late Roman/Byzantine origin. A seal impression on the upper part of an Iron Age storage jar handle should be mentioned: it shows an animal flanked by one or two figures (Fig. 2). The preliminary date of this phase points to the late part of the Iron Age and a reuse of the



2. Iron Age storage jar handle with seal impression.

area during post-Iron Age periods.

Iron Age (see pottery forms in Fig. 4¹)

Stratum 1A

The dominating structure of this phase is a well-constructed cistern over 4 m deep (Fig. 3): it is oval, approximately 4 x 3 m, stone-built, sealed with clay between the stones, and carefully plastered. It could contain 30 cubic metres of water in its present state. The original water capacity may be estimated at about 50 cubic metres. The cistern was approached from the north-west by a path paved with stone and mud-brick, which ended in a 1 m wide step of hard clay leading up to the cistern. The cistern is surrounded by a stone pavement, which obviously represents part of a glacis.

A tentative date for this phase is the later part of the Iron Age, mainly based on specific pottery types, for example a complete Black Burnished Juglet inside the cistern (Fig. 4:7).

Strata 1B-1C/1

These previous two occupational phases reveal domestic architecture, which had been partly destroyed by the glacis constructed later.

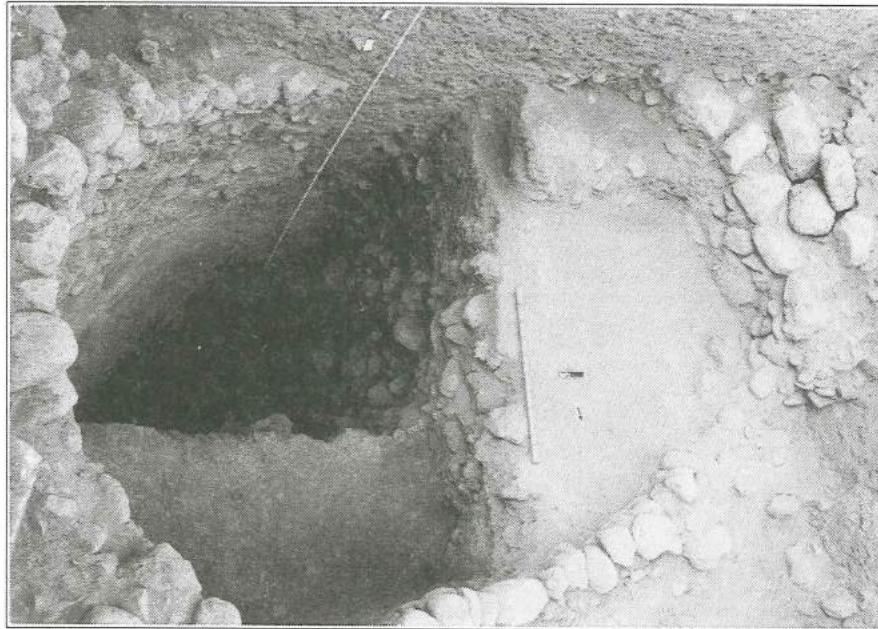
Strata 1C/2-1C/4

The domestic architecture of these three phases of occupation was originally built in the Late Bronze Age, reused during the Iron Age and later on used as a quarry for the glacis. Stone-paved rooms and passages were excavated.

Late Middle Bronze/Early Late Bronze Age (see pottery forms in Fig. 5)

Strata 2A-2C

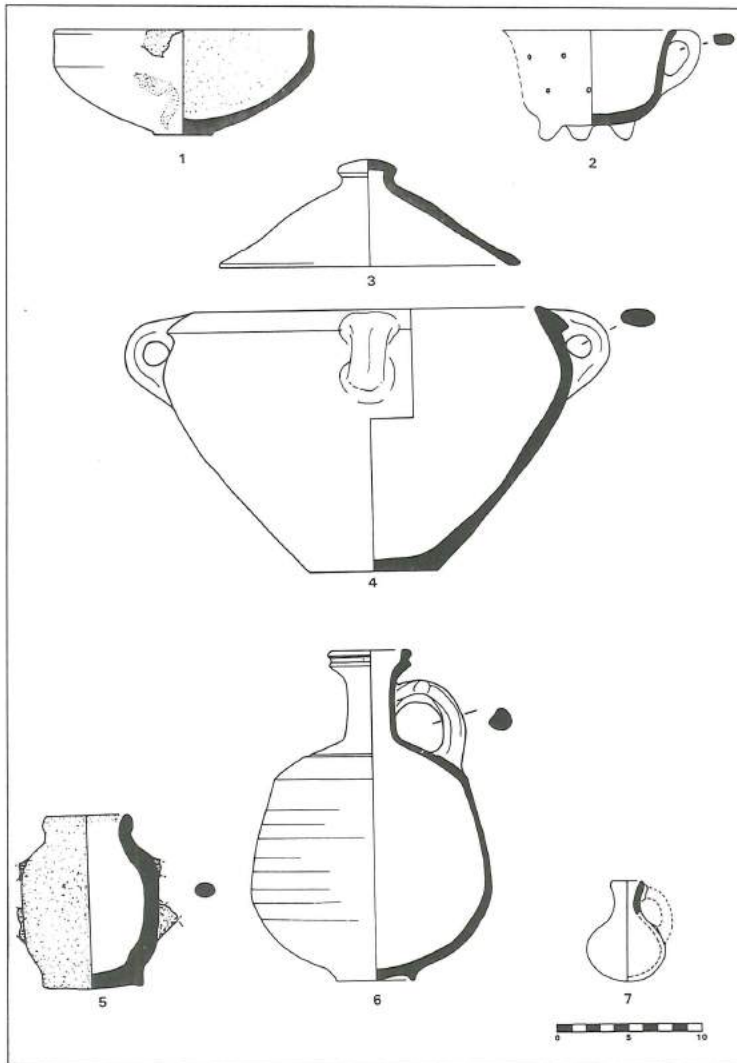
Three phases of occupation are represented. An impressive construction, 10 m x 10 m, with walls more than 1 m thick, on the inside of the 4.2 m wide city wall resembles a tower with stone-paved internal rooms (Fig. 6). This monumental construc-



3. Area 2. Iron Age cistern. Estimated original size: 50 cubic metres.

1. The following abbreviations have been used for the pottery descriptions: 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.



4. Iron Age II pottery.
 1. XXXIVB1L501-1, bowl, WM, S, light brown, fine with a few large inclusions, SS, red paint on rim and inside, red patches below rim on outside .
 2. XXXIVB1CL479-1, strainer, WM, H, reddish-brown clay, coarse, mainly grey inclusions, SS.
 3. XXXIVB1L464-1, lid, WM, H, dark grey, coarse, white inclusions, SS.
 4. XXXIXA1L125N1080, krater (four handles), WM, H, greyish-brown, light grey core, medium-coarse, mainly white inclusions, light brown slip.
 5. XXXIXA1L130N1083, juglet, WM, H, brown clay, fine, SS, red paint.
 6. XXXIXD1L129N1078, jug, WM, H, grey clay, brown core, medium-fine, mainly white inclusions, SS.
 7. XXXIVC1CL495N1056, juglet, HM, MH, brown clay, fine, thick black slip, burnished.

tion, including the city wall, is built on the remains from the Early Bronze Age, and was certainly also reused during the Iron Age. A foundation deposit was found just below the first course of the city wall and includes three approximately 16 cm long and 3 cm wide flint knives with trapezoid sections. It is interesting to notice that the three long knives have not been in use, which may suggest that they had been produced specifically as a foundation deposit. The smaller knife, of a similar shape but with traces of frequent use, was found close to the other knives. However, this could be a coincidence.

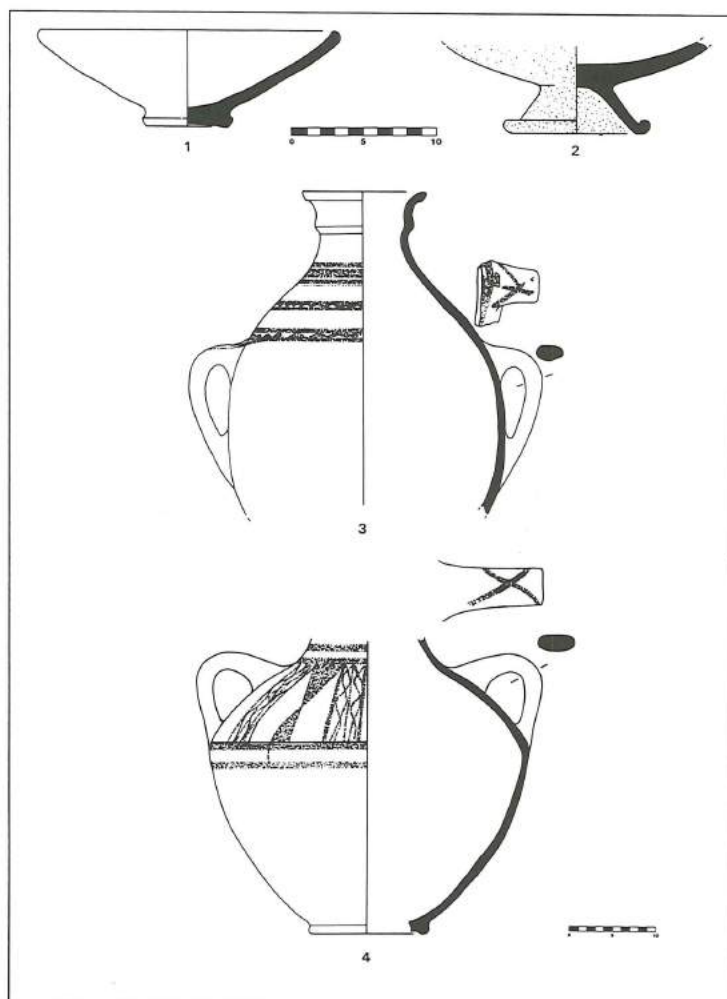
The pottery from this period includes Chocolate-on-White ware among other types.

Early Bronze Age (see pottery forms in Fig. 7)

Strata 3A-3C

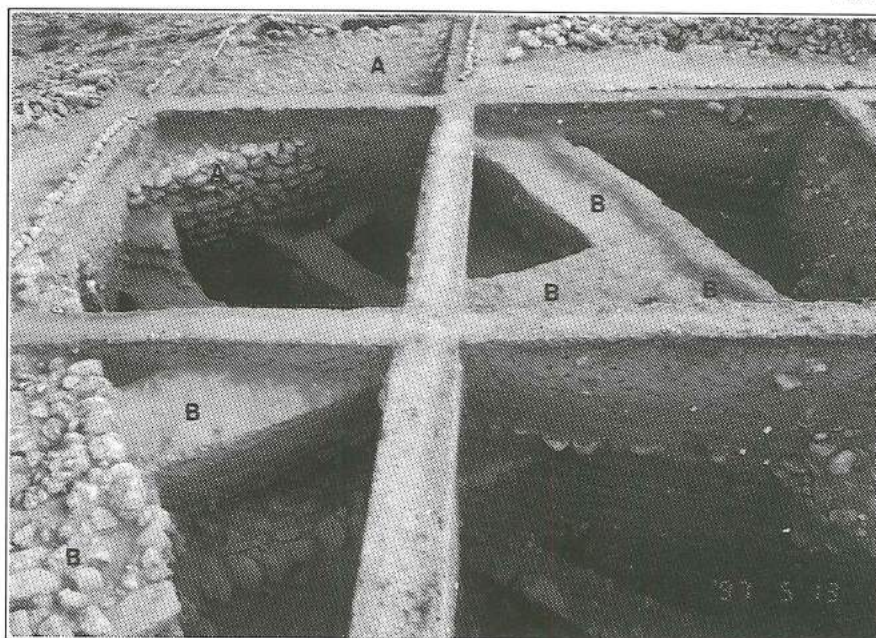
Three phases, which belong to the site's earliest occupation with architecture, were found (Fischer, in the press): Phase III (corresponds to Stratum 3A according to the relative sequence of the 1997 strata), Phase II (Stratum 3B) and Phase I (Stratum 3C). Phase III, which belongs to the transitional Early Bronze II/III period, is sparsely represented in this area, because of intensive building activities during later periods. The remains from Early Bronze Age II (Phase II) include bowls, platters and jugs of Metallic Burnished ware (see the previous reports in *ADAJ 35-41*).

Complementary information from Phase



5. Late Middle Bronze /Early Late Bronze Age pottery.

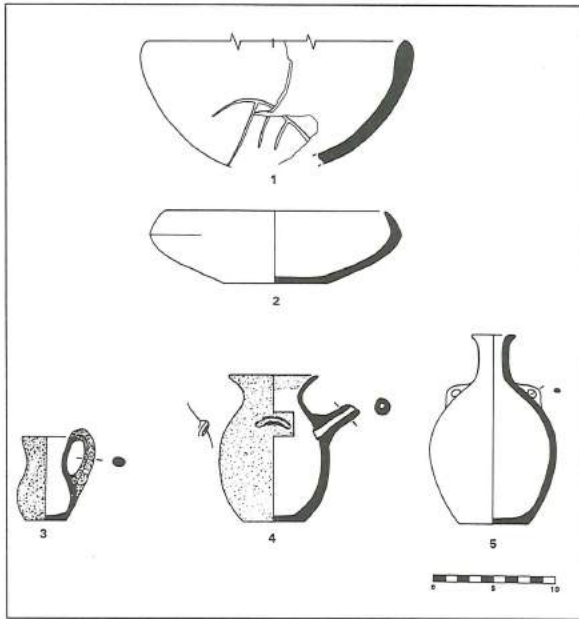
1. XXXIVD2L486-1, bowl, WM, MH, light brown, coarse, mainly grey inclusions, SS.
2. XXXIVA2L519-1, chalice, WM, H, yellowish-grey clay, light greyish-black core, yellowish-brown slip.
3. XXXIVC2L504N1053, jug, Chocolate-on-White, WM, H, greyish-yellow clay, light grey core, medium coarse, multi-coloured inclusions, burnished white slip, matt brown decoration.
4. XXXVIIIIB2L555-3, jug, WM, H, light red clay, light brown core, coarse, mainly white inclusions, burnished brownish-white slip, matt brown decoration.



6. Area 2. Late Middle Bronze/ Early Late Bronze Age city wall (A; approx. width 4.2 m with attached architecture of a possible tower (B; approx. widths of walls 1.2 m).

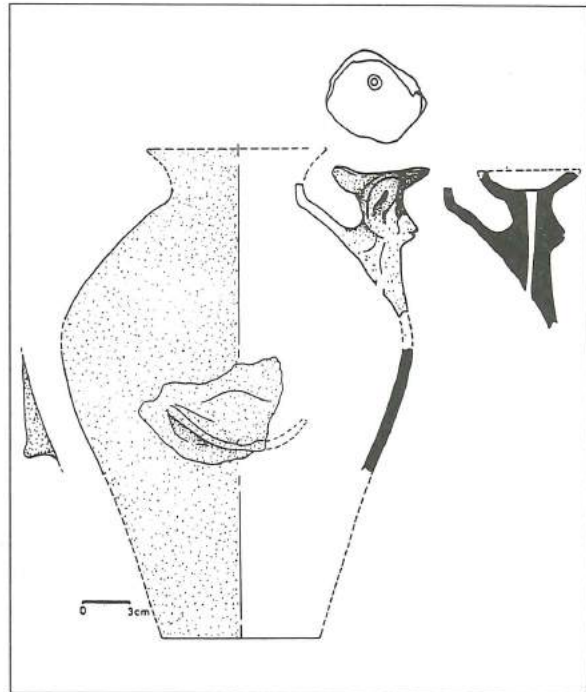
I, the second part of the Early Bronze Age I and the beginning of Early Bronze Age II, was obtained. A thick destruction layer

created fortunate find circumstances, sealing the entire remains of an Early Bronze Age IB house. This was the first evidence



7. Early Bronze Age pottery.

1. XXXVIII B3L568, bowl (?), HM, S, reddish-brown clay, coarse, multicoloured inclusions, "Grain Wash Ware", incised decoration.
2. XXXIV B3L572N1072, platter-bowl, mould-made, H, light red clay, medium-coarse, mainly white inclusions, greenish-grey slip on inside and pinkish-brown on outside, hand-burnished outside.
3. XXXIV B3L565N1977, juglet, HM, M, brown clay, grey core, medium-coarse, mainly white inclusions, red slip, burnished.
4. XXXIV B3L573N1071, spouted juglet, WM, MH, light brown clay, fine, red slip.



8. Early Bronze Age storage jar with a 'spout' in the shape of an animal (bat?) and a ledge handle, HM, H, light brown clay, medium-fine, SS; traces of soot on "rim" of pillar handle.



9. Early Bronze Age basket filled with grain.

of a catastrophe, local or regional, during the first phase of occupation at the site. Parts of a rectangular house with an almost undisturbed interior were exposed. It contained a variety of complete household objects, among them platters, jugs and juglets, including one with a wide mouth, a tiny spout and ledge handles, and storage jars, some of which still contained grain. One unusual find is a jar with a pillar-like 'spout': the pillar is modelled to depict a head, which shows human and animal traits resembling a bat with large ears (Fig. 8). In one room were the quite well-preserved remains of a basket plaited of organic fibres (Fig. 9); it had a rope-like handle and contained grain and a wooden spoon. A cylindrical jar, the second vessel of its kind at

the site, represents an Egyptian import from the Naqada IIIb/c culture.

Fourteen recently obtained high-precision calibrated radiocarbon datings, were synchronized with the ceramic sequence of both locally produced vessels, that is, within the northern Jordan Valley, and imported wares (Tables 1 and 2). Most Early Bronze Age vessel types were petrographically analyzed (for a thorough discussion of Early

Table 1. Tall Abū al-Kharaz, Early Bronze Age. Calibrated dates BC, phase by phase: age ranges and probability factors in brackets.

Phase I	
OxA-4334	
1σ: 3296(0.08)3275 3270(0.13)3238 3105(0.44)3014 3000(0.35)2923	
2σ: 3335(0.36)3153 3140(0.64)2916	
OxA-4335	
1σ: 3095(1.00)2919	
2σ: 3332(0.17)3221 3192(0.04)3155 3136(0.78)2890	
OxA-4336	
1σ: 3353(0.29)3293 3280(0.05)3266 3239(0.66)3103	
2σ: 3499(0.04)3455 3379(0.93)3028 2976(0.03)2930	
OxA-5094	
1σ: 3096(0.25)3057 3046(0.19)3016 3004(0.55)2924	
2σ: 3307(0.14)3235 3179(0.02)3162 3134(0.84)2916	
OxA-5095	
1σ: 3304(0.31)3237 3178(0.06)3163 3132(0.04)3122 3108(0.39)3030 2981(0.20)2932	
2σ: 3336(0.31)3220 3191(0.69)2923	
OxA-5096	
1σ: 3033(0.71)2953 2944(0.29)2910	
2σ: 3264(0.01)3245 3101(0.96)2880 2799(0.02)2781	

Bronze Age pottery shapes, petrography, radiocarbon dates and synchronism, see Fischer, in the press). Imports came from Egypt, the Judean Mountains and the Upper Galilee. The wares include Egyptian cylindrical jars, Early and Mature Metallic Burnished wares together with comb-decorated storage jars from the Upper Galilee, locally produced Light-Faced Painted juglets, Grain Wash and Band Slip decorated jars, pattern burnished vessels, and inverted conical cups. The latter type may be an import. This synchronization gave the duration of the three earliest occupational phases at the site, Phases I-III, and their position within the Palestinian and Egyptian chronological framework (Table 3).

Area 7. Trenches XXXIXA-D; Grids UU24/25

In 1993 an Iron Age II house with four

rooms surrounding a courtyard was found in this almost flat area (Fischer 1995:100-102). It lies approximately 50 m north of the summit of the tall. The area was extended to the east in 1994. A new trench, approximately 100 m² large, was opened to the west of the previous excavations. The centre of the new trench, that is the middle of the crossing baulks separating sub-trenches A-D, corresponds to E 206 183.5 and N 200 683.5 ± 1 m.

Iron Age and Post-Iron Age

Stratum IA/I

One long wall, which runs east-west along the northern edge of the upper plateau, and another quite disturbed wall 10 m to the south belong to the scanty remains of the uppermost stratum.

The majority of the pottery from this most recent phase of occupation consists of late

Table 2. Tall Abū al-Kharaz, Early Bronze Age. Calibrated dates BC, phase by phase: age ranges and probability factors in brackets.

Phase II			
OxA-4331			
1σ:	3300(0.28)3235	3178(0.04)3165	3108(0.42)3022 2988(0.26)2926
2σ:	3335(0.39)3153	3140(0.61)2920	
OxA-4332			
1σ:	3500(0.23)3453	3436(0.02)3430	3379(0.38)3306 3231(0.19)3184 3161(0.18)3115
2σ:	3613(0.01)3600	3514(.99)3096	
OxA-4333			
1σ:	3036(1.00)2907		
2σ:	3299(0.05)3236	3176(0.01)3166	3107(0.94)2876
OxA-5091			
1σ:	3097(0.23)3056	3047(0.77)2921	
2σ:	3323(0.15)3232	3182(0.03)3159	3138(0.82)2910
OxA-5092			
1σ:	3015(0.06)3004	2923(0.60)2875	2802(0.26)2778 2716(0.08)2705
2σ:	3034(0.64)2863	2812(0.25)2742	2726(0.09)2697 2679(0.02)2664
OxA-5093			
1σ:	3312(0.36)3233	3181(0.08)3161	3137(0.46)3033 2963(0.10)2936
2σ:	3339(0.35)3211	3200(0.49)3020	3000(0.16)2925
Phase III			
OxA-4329			
1σ:	3331(0.47)3224	3190(0.14)3156	3133(0.24)3074 3070(0.14)3037
2σ:	3346(0.89)3020	2991(0.11)2925	
OxA-4330			
1σ:	3297(0.25)3237	3173(0.01)3170	3106(0.44)3020 2992(0.30)2925
2σ:	3335(0.28)3211	3201(0.09)3153	3139(0.64)2920

Table 3. The proposed Early Bronze Age chronology of Tall Abū al-Kharaz .

Occupation	Chronology		
	Absolute	Palestine	Egypt
Phase I	3200-3100 BC	EB IB, later part	Later part of Dynasty "0"
Phase II	3100-2850 BC	EB II	Dynasty 1- 1st half of Dynasty 2
Phase III	2850-2775 BC	EB II/III trans.	Dynasty 2

Iron Age shapes but there are also Abbasid sherds, among them a Cream Ware jug with a "turban" handle (Fischer 1995:116-117). The preliminary date of this phase points to the late part of the Iron Age and a reuse of

the area during post-Iron Age periods.

Iron Age
Stratum IA

The well-preserved remains of a four-

roomed house were exposed. The house is almost square and measures 8 x 8 m (cf. the 9 x 9 m large house to the east); it is built close to the northern edge of the plateau. There are two rooms in the west, one in the north-east, and another one, which is stone paved, in the south-east. The latter has no wall separating it from the central courtyard: there may have been wooden pillars towards the courtyard. Two ovens were found in the courtyard. Numerous household and daily life objects were found inside the house: clay vessels comprise bowls, jugs and juglets, kraters, cooking pots and storage jars; other objects are loom weights of unfired clay, iron arrow heads, and tools of stone and bone. A sewer of clay was found attached to the southern wall of the house. Two objects were found to the south close to the house, a knife and a rhyton. The knife has a bone (or ivory) handle and an iron blade, which is attached to the handle with bronze rivets. The almost complete ceramic rhyton is unique at the site and shows an animal (donkey?) with two attached vessels (Fig. 10). The animal has a detailed modelled bridle. The hollow trunk is connected with the two vessels and the hole in the animal's muzzle. One may suggest that this kind of vessel was used in cultic activities.

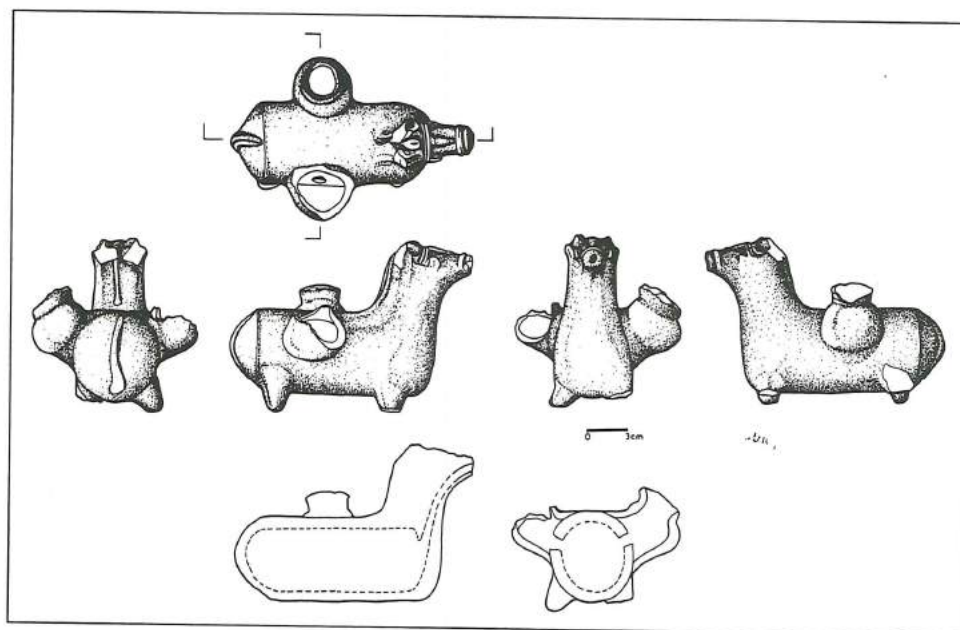
Further excavations to the south (to the summit) and west may perhaps reveal a religious building.

Area 10: The White Building (Trenches XXXI-III, and XXXV-XXXVI; Grids WW30/31 (Fig. 11)

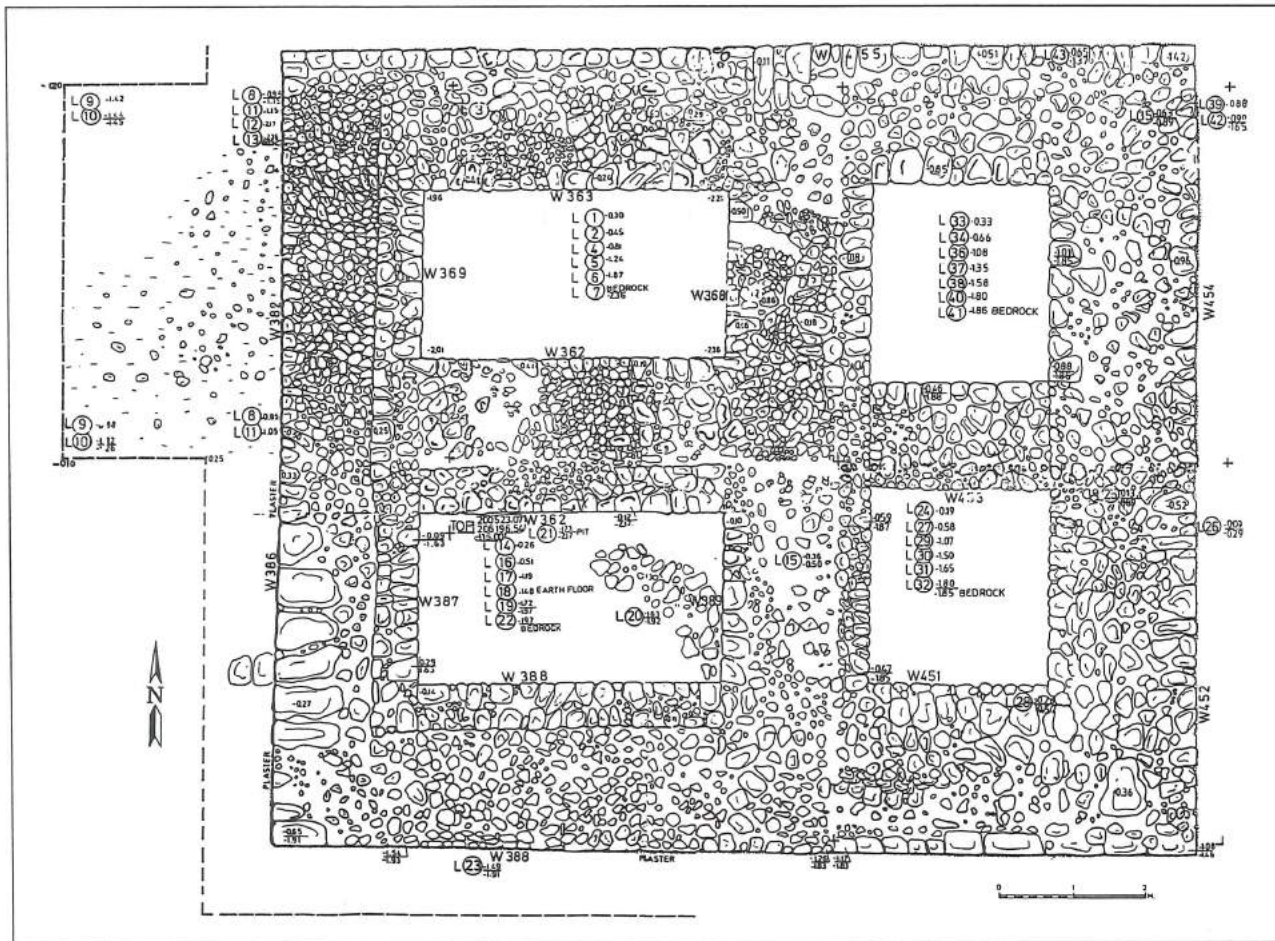
The excavations of this building on the flat summit of the Tall started in 1996 (Trenches XXXI-III) and were extended 5 m to the east during the 1997 season. Two more rooms and the eastern façade were exposed. The building is rectangular, 10.60 mx11.70 m. The axes of the building are oriented strictly north-south and east-west. The building is partly constructed of ashlar blocks of stone. It is covered on the outside with fairly well-preserved white plaster of lime and sand.

The two new eastern rooms are identical in size and measure 2.30 x 2.65 m. The building may represent a fortress. It may also be part of a larger complex, because further architectural remains could be traced to the east and south.

An Iron Age date was suggested for the building in the previous report. This dating was mainly based on the pottery and the Aramaic ostrakon, which was found in 1996. The pottery from inside the new



10. Iron Age rhyton, WM/HM, MH, brown clay, brownish-grey core, medium-coarse, mainly black inclusions, light brown slip, red paint.



11. "The White Building" of Tall Abū al-Kharaz.

rooms does not contradict a date within the later part of the Iron Age.

Acknowledgements

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permission to rent the Pella Dig House. I also would like to thank Drs Patricia and Pierre Bikai at ACOR for their hospitality. Finally I wish to thank all members of the team for their sincere interest and hard work, which greatly contributed to the successful execution of the excavations.

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