

JABAL AL-MUTAWWAQ PROJECT (ZARQA, JORDAN) SEPTEMBER 2014

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Have been opened in order 2014 season, two excavation trenches to investigate two structures identified in the eastern part of the Early Bronze Age I (EB I) village³. The first structure was the Great Enclosure, a large open area of about 1,500 square meters that differed from the apsedal private houses of Jabal al-Muṭawwaq on account of its huge dimensions and monumentality of construction. The second structure was a house oriented north - south, with a square open courtyard on its eastern side (Building C). To complete this task we opened a 12 x 7 m area (designated Area C West) along the western part of the square open courtyard, previously identified by the Spanish team, in order to understand the chronological and stratigraphic relationship of the courtyard with the nearby apsidal house and dolmen C. The other area of excavations (designated Area C East) measured 21 x 12 m and was opened along the western part of the Great Enclosure, between the main circular wall and the inner side of the open structure, about 20 meters distant from Area C East. A third area was also opened (Area C Central), being a 5 x 5 m square centred on dolmen C, situated near the open courtyard of

house C. The total area excavated was about 260 m² (**Fig. 1**).

Area C West

Architecture

The excavations in Area C West identified a main building (designated building C). The trench extended from the eastern wall of the structure (wall W.53) towards the center of the neighbouring square open courtyard (L.51). Within L.51, a compact sealing layer of small stones and earth was exposed throughout the area, probably relating to the final phase of abandonment of the courtyard (**Fig. 2**). Under this layer, the floor of the courtyard was recognized. It consisted of the natural bedrock, leveled in places with a foundation layer of small stones and pebbles. This was covered with a layer of compact earth representing the courtyard floor, but this was only identified in its northern part. In front of the main door of building C, a small circular platform was discovered (designated L.56). This seems to have been related to activities performed in the open courtyard; an entire hole-mouth jar with loop handles (JM.14.Cwest.US.106.1) was



1. General view of the excavation areas, from south-east.

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3. For the previous excavation results, see: Alvarez-Muniz-Polcaro 2013; Polcaro et al. 2014; Muniz - Polcaro - Alvarez 2016; Polcaro - Muniz - Alvarez 2016.



2. General view of Area C West, from north.

discovered just to its north. The chipped stone tools discovered in the courtyard suggest that some activities were carried out there (**Fig. 3**).

To the south of L.51, other small structures were discovered, but these were badly damaged by the collapse of the southern wall of the courtyard and only survived to the west. In future seasons, this trench will be extended to the south to clarify the nature of these small structures close to the naturally sloping bedrock. They may have been associated with a southern passage or street running from the Great Circle in Area C West towards the central part of the village. Concerning the small preserved part of the southern wall of L.51 (wall W.52), it is evident that a foundation of medium-sized stones was constructed first, with a superstructure of two or three courses of large stones on top that probably stood to a height of no more than 1.5 m.

Finds

Many pottery sherds were recovered from the layers over the natural bedrock that served as the floor of the courtyard. The pottery from Area C West is relatively homogenous in terms of fabric and shape, pointing to an EB I date. All sherds are mineral-tempered: the most common

grits are small- and medium-sized particles of limestone and flint, although iron oxides are present where red slip and paint is attested (Metallic Ware). All vessels are handmade and low-fired, but in some cases a metallic fabric is present. Cooking ware is characterized by an orange or reddish exterior surface, with traces of burning. The surface ranges from light pink to reddish brown. Whitish slip and wash are also common and, although rare, impressed decoration typical of the simple ware production are small bowls, with a hemispherical or sinuous body and pointed rim, and jars with a plain rim and beveled lip. The storage ware jars typically have a flat lip and more flaring neck. Hole-mouth jars are well-represented, both in simple and storage wares⁴. Some diagnostic specimens are also attested: two fragments of hole-mouth jar with knob-decoration and a line of small circular impressions on the top and at least three sherds with small horizontal appliqué with vertical incisions link this layer with US.110, the lowest layer in L.60. Also, some well-preserved flint tools were discovered just above the courtyard floor in its southern part. In particular, two blades, two scrapers and a point were recovered. A flint arrowhead was discovered in

4. For a preliminary analysis of the pottery see Casadei

in press.



3. Southern part of courtyard L.51, from south.

association with these objects. The arrowhead, which dates to the Neolithic period, is clearly older than the building and the village of Jabal al-Mutawwaq. It may have been kept inside the building as an heirloom (**Figs. 4 and 5**).

Stratigraphic Phasing

The stratigraphic phases identified in Area C West are:

Phase 1: construction phase

The natural slope of the bedrock on the southern cliff of the mountain was leveled with a layer of small stones. The foundations of the enclosure wall of open courtyard L.51 and of building C were then constructed. Finally, a layer of compact earth was laid to create the floor of L.51.

Phase 2: use phase

In this phase, open courtyard L.51 and the circular

platform in front of the eastern door of house C were in use.

Phase 3: abandonment phase

The settlement wall was abandoned, the open courtyard was partially sealed with a layer of small stones and, finally, the larger stones of the enclosure wall of L.51 collapsed, destroying the small structures to the south. The area was buried under natural accumulation layers coming from the top of the mountain. It was probably many centuries later that dolmen C was built against the south-east corner of the courtyard, using the stones of the ancient structures.

Area C East

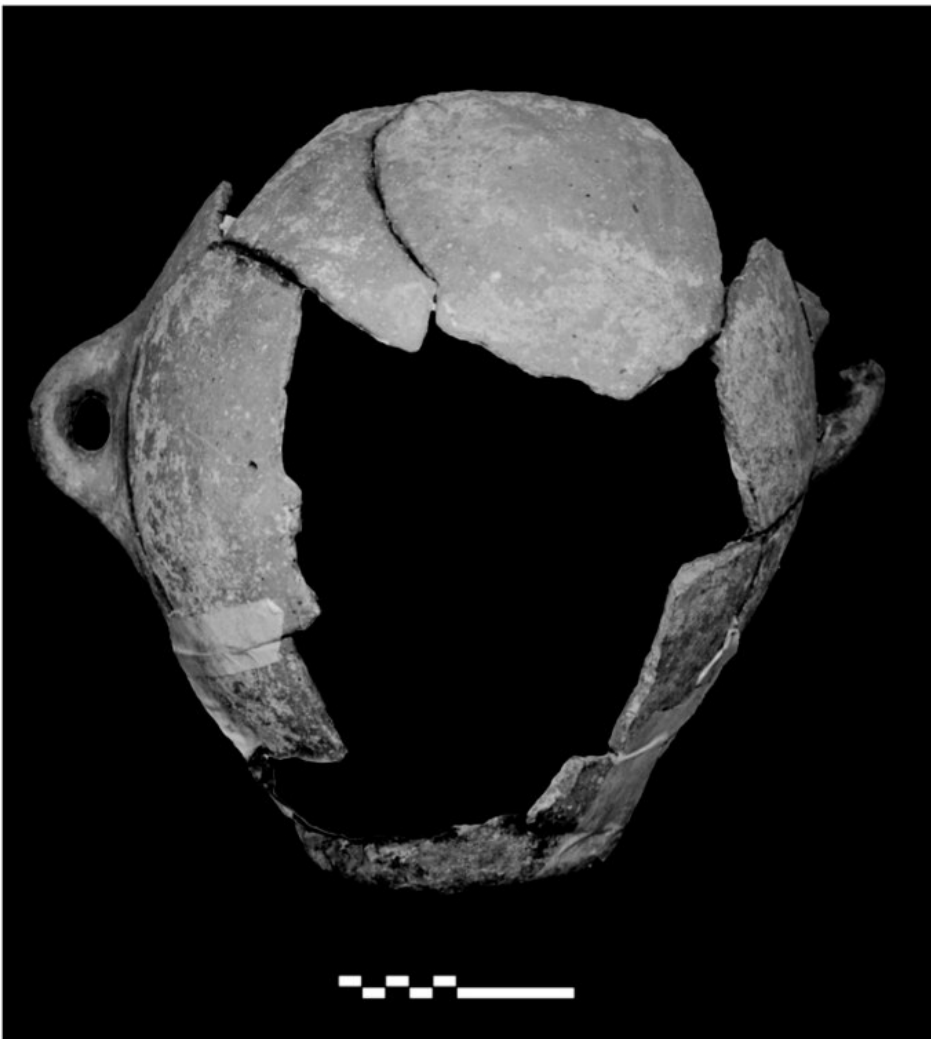
Architecture

The trench opened in Area C East aimed to clarify the nature and construction technique of the Great Enclosure (designated L.101). The semicircular perimeter wall is a huge structure, made of at least two rows of large stone blocks, preserved in some places to a height of three courses (**see Fig. 7**). After the removal of the collapsed stones and blocks (US.201) of the Great Enclosure perimeter wall (W.102), a layer of compact earth and small stones (US.203) was discovered around the entire length of the wall. This probably relates to an external path running around the Great Enclosure (**Figs. 6, 7, and 8**).

In the southern part of W.102, a large flat stone was interpreted as one of the possible entrances to the Great Enclosure. On the outer and inner sides of the entrance, a street (L.105) delineated by two rows of stones, 1 m apart with a fill of compact earth and small stones, was recognized. The street is perhaps the same as that identified in Area C Central along the south-eastern side of the open courtyard excavated in Area C West. In this southern part, the Great Enclosure perimeter wall (W.102) was very badly preserved owing to its stones being robbed out to build a later large tumulus (about 12 m across). The date of the tumulus was not established because the trench did not reach its northern part; this will be one of the objectives of the next excavation season.



4. Flint tools recovered in L.51.



5. Entire vessel recovered near circular platform L.56.



6. Western external face of the Great Enclosure perimeter wall (W.102); [foreground] layer of compact earth and stones named US. 203.

The eastern part of the trench inside the Great Enclosure identified some circular structures (designated walls W.104 and W.111) that were characterized by a small internal circular stone installation on one side (I.109). Inside and outside these structures, a compact layer of earth - probably the floor of the Great Enclosure - was recognized (US.204; US.205). Owing to the poor preservation of the area, where the high bedrock is exposed to natural weathering and erosion, and is consequently covered with only 10 cm of topsoil, no significant finds were recovered. However, it seems clear that these structures are in architectonic association with the Great Enclosure. The few pottery sherds recovered inside them are also *Early Bronze Age* in date, as are those recovered near W.102 and its collapse layers (**Fig. 9**).

Finds

Pottery is less common in Area C East than in Area C West. It is characterized by a light buff to reddish fabric, usually smooth, with small to medium limestone grits. All vessels are handmade and low-fired. Simple ware is best represented; it has a light pink smooth surface and small limestone grits. The most common shape is a hemispherical bowl with a pointed vertical rim and small base, probably a small jar or jug for daily use. Storage ware is

similar to the simple ware, being buff to light pink but with a higher frequency of mineral and vegetal inclusions. Sometimes the core of the fabric remains non-oxidized, in which case the light buff surface should indicate bad control of firing. Usually, the jars have a straight or slightly inturned neck, a plain rim and a round, flat or beveled lip; all bases are flat. Rope decoration with large, circular impressions is well-attested on both simple and storage wares, with the latter being predominant. Concerning other artefact categories, a few badly preserved objects were recovered in Area C East. These include small blades similar to the scrapers found in domestic contexts, five grinding stone fragments and a basalt vessel fragment with two knobs near the rim, the latter being a common find in the houses of the EB I village. Two interesting objects were discovered amongst the collapsed stones of W.102, viz. fragments of two mace-heads, one made of basalt (O.74) and the other of an as yet unidentified red stone (O.73) upon which strange black traces are present on the external surface; these will be subjected to future analysis in order to better understand their nature (**Fig. 10**).

Stratigraphic Phasing

The stratigraphic phases identified in Area C East are:



7. Western part of W.102, from south; [foreground] large flat stone interpreted as one of the entrances door [L.106] to the Great Enclosure.

Phase 1

Construction of main wall W.102, street L.105 and the circular structures inside the Great Enclosure. From architectural and stratigraphic points of view, it is currently impossible to say whether there might be more construction phases or whether or not the internal circular structures (W.104 and W.111) were built after the main perimeter wall of the Great Enclosure in a second phase.

Phase 2

Use phase of the Great Enclosure, street and internal circular stone structures, associated with the compact earth surfaces identified inside and outside these areas (US.204 and US.205).

Phase 3

Abandonment Phase. All structures exposed in Area C East were abandoned and the main

circular wall W.102 collapsed, partially covering the small internal structure in the western part of L.101.

Area C Central - Dolmen 534

Improving our understanding of the dolmen and its relationship with the nearest domestic space was one of the primary objectives of the season.

South-eastern Part of the Courtyard (L.51) of House C

In this area, we were able to demonstrate that the floor of the open courtyard was laid on a foundation layer of small stones that levelled the natural slope of the bedrock. This courtyard was delimited by an east - west stone wall, recognized in Area C West as W.52. In its south-east corner we identified a doorway (L.151), in front of which a street (L.152) led off in a south-westerly direction. The street was delineated by two rows of large stones turning to the south to the left of the entrance to courtyard L.51. The street had the same form as the one (L.105) identified in front of the Great Enclosure. The main element identified in Area C Central was dolmen C (L.153). The dolmen was built to the south of street L.152 using the collapsed stones of the southern wall of the courtyard. This megalithic monument was built with a tumulus of large stone blocks encircling the burial chamber and covering the entire dolmen to the height of the capstone. In the center of the structure, there was a burial chamber consisting of two standing stone slabs and a large capstone (L.154). The dolmen entrance (from the east) consisted of a lateral corridor at an angle of 90° to the burial chamber. This was the most unusual feature discovered this season, so far without parallel at Jabal al-Muṭawwaq. Because the corridor was not fully excavated for reasons of security we can only say that the entrance had a *dromos* consisting of at least one stone step. The entrance was sealed with stones and compact earth in front of the chamber; this was different to the dolmens excavated in previous seasons, which were sealed with a large flat



8. Large tumulus built over Great Enclosure perimeter wall W.102.



9. The internal Circular stone structures [W.104 and W.111] discovered inside the Great Enclosure [L.101]).

stone blocking the entrance (**Figs. 11, 12**).

Inside the burial chamber (1.8 x 0.9 x 1.1 m), which had been partially violated in modern times, we discovered some artefacts (pottery; chipped stone tools; bronze objects) and human and animal bone. Fortunately, some funerary gifts were found *in situ*, including stone and bronze beads, decorated bone and two complete vessels discovered in front of the entrance of the burial chamber. The megalithic tomb was probably

used just once, because there was no stratigraphic evidence for disturbance of the entrance corridor. The funerary gifts recovered from the burial chamber, in particular two fine bronze arrowheads, are evidence that the dolmen was not contemporary with the *EB* village⁵. (**Fig. 13**).

Conclusion

The results of this season have allowed us to reconstruct the chronological relationship between

5. For a complete report of excavation of dolmen 534, see

Polcaro - Muniz in pressa.



10. Two mace-heads [O.73; O.74]
discovered in L.101.



11. Entrance of Dolmen C, from North.



12. Pottery Sherds from a complete jar discovered inside the burial chamber of dolmen 534.

the domestic and public buildings of this part of the settlement with a number of megalithic structures identified inside the Early Bronze Age village. In particular, the 2014 excavations have demonstrated that dolmen C was built and used as a tomb at a time when the EB I village, Building C (and its open courtyard) and the Great Enclosure were already abandoned and their walls had collapsed.

This is just a brief report of the 2014 season in area C. A complete report of excavations in area C was presented at the ICHAJ 13 congress (Polcaro-Muniz, in press).

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13. Funerary gifts and some of the human bone discovered in dolmen C.

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