Khirbat Iskandar

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Fig. 1. Aerial view of Khirbat Iskandar and its environs, looking northwest. (Photo courtesy of APAAME [APAAME_20141013_REB-0161.jpg], by Robert E. Bewley.)

The Archaeological Expedition to Khirbat Iskandar is a long-term project for the investigation of an Early Bronze Age mounded site in central Jordan, located on the north bank of the Wadi al-Wala (Fig. 1) and crucial to the understanding of the urban-rural nexus in the region during its proto-historic phases. Suzanne Richard of Gannon University, the PI and co-director of the project, started excavations at Khirbat Iskandar in 1981, with Jesse C. Long of Lubbock Christian University and Marta D'Andrea of Sapienza University as co-directors since 1994 and 2015, respectively. The expedition has, as of 2021, accomplished a pilot season, twelve major excavation seasons, and three seasons dedicated only to restorations and consolidations. In addition, in 2010 the team published one award-winning book on area C and the cemeteries surrounding the site, i.e., volume 1 in the series Archaeological Expedition to Khirbat Iskandar and Its Environs, Jordan.

Since the beginning of the excavations, the site has been critical for a better understanding of the non-urban Early Bronze IV period (ca. 2500–1950 BCE) that followed the demise of urbanism developed in the region during Early Bronze II–III (ca. 3100/3000–2500 BCE), thanks to the discoveries in areas A, B, and C. Subsequently, from the early 2000s, the expedition has revealed the importance of Khirbat Iskandar also during the urban period. In particular,

since 2013, the team has been disentangling the site's urban developmental trajectory, as well as modes and times of the rural transition through excavations in areas B and C. Continuous research over forty years has produced extensive archaeological records, which are in the process of being thoroughly studied and prepared for final publication. Therefore, during the forced break in international research travels because of the coronavirus pandemic, the Khirbat Iskandar team has "dug" into the expedition archive with a two-fold approach.

First, a major publication initiative is the preparation of volume 2 in the *Archaeological Expedition to Khirbat Iskandar and Its Environs, Jordan* series. This report builds on the results of the past thirteen field seasons and on stratigraphic and architectural assessments in the 2019 season. It is dedicated to the Early Bronze IV two-phase sequence in area B, which complements the evidence from area C published in volume 1. This sequence comprises a reuse/rebuilding of the fortifications (Fig. 2) and a major multi-room "public complex" dedicated to production and cultic activities, transformed into a domestic compound after a destruction, possibly due to an earthquake, and before the permanent abandonment of the site.

Second, another major effort has been to better define the processes and timing of the Early Bronze III–IV stratigraphic transition in area C, continuing the study of the stratigraphic and ceramic sequences excavated here in 2016 and 2019 (Fig. 3). This occupation comprises at least four Early Bronze III architectural phases that were followed, with no observable breaks, by a three-phase Early Bronze IV occupation. Thanks to selection and analysis of organic samples from secure, sealed archaeological contexts for chronometry, using radiocarbon for dating the samples (Fall et al. 2022), we are now able to more securely date the Early Bronze III–IV transition at Khirbat Iskandar to 2500 BCE. This is in line with the radiometric dating evidence for the beginning of Early Bronze IV at most of the other sites in the southern Levant.

The next field season at Khirbat Iskandar is scheduled for June 2022 and will build on groundwork laid in the past two years, concentrating in area C. In fact, its main objectives will be to achieve a larger lateral exposure and a better understanding of the various Early Bronze III phases identified in this sector (Fig. 3) and to connect this long sequence to the one excavated in Area B.

References

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Project website: gannon.edu/academic-offerings/humanities-education-and-social-sciences/undergraduate

Fig. 2. General view of the fortifications in area B, on the northwest edge of the mound, at the end of the 2019 season, looking south, showing multiple Early Bronze III rebuilds and a possible Early Bronze III/IV wall line. (Photo copyright the Archaeological Expedition to Khirbat Iskandar.)

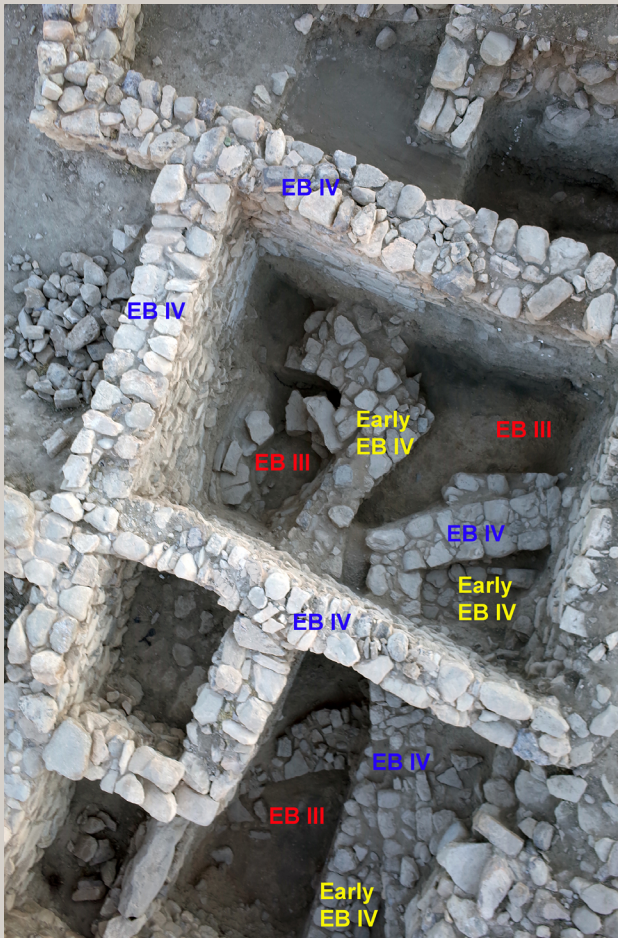

Fig. 3. General view of area C, along the eastern perimeter of the mound, from the top, showing where sondages into the Early Bronze III layers were excavated in 2019, and Early Bronze III remains under Early Bronze IV architecture. (Photo copyright the Archaeological Expedition to Khirbat Iskandar.)