

A MIDDLE BRONZE IIA CEMETERY AT KHIRBET MUḤAYZIN

Assaf Yasur-Landau and Marta Guzowska

Supervisory work by the Israel Antiquities Authority preparatory to construction of Highway 7 disclosed archaeological remains at Khirbet Muḥayzin and in the winter of 2002 a salvage excavation was undertaken by the Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University. The first season was conducted between 14 October to 4 November 2002 (License No. B-260/2002) and was directed by Assaf Yasur-Landau, Marta Guzowska and Ron Shimelmitz. The second season (License No. B-266/2003) was conducted between 14 January and 29 February 2003 and was directed by Marta Guzowska and Assaf Yasur-Landau, with Lisa Bommel and Daniel Rosenblum as Area Supervisors. Guy Avivi was Administrator for both seasons. Pavel Shrago took the photographs. Rachel Pelta conserved the pottery and Neta Halperin cleaned the metal artefacts. Marta Guzowska drew the pottery and the small finds. Detection of metal objects was conducted by Rami Hen.

INTRODUCTION

The site of Khirbet Muḥayzin (Map Ref. 132223/134441 - 132377/134545) is located in the centre of the coastal plain, close to the modern kibbutz Ḥafetz Ḥayim south of Gedera (Fig. 1). The closest seasonal water source is Naḥal Timnah, a tributary of Naḥal Sorek. In the Middle Bronze Age the region was densely inhabited (Broshi and Gophna 1986:87).

THE EXCAVATIONS

Initially, the site was divided into two separate areas, A and B, according to surface finds. However, it was found that the remains in Area A comprised only the concrete and *kurkar* foundations of an early 20th century CE house. Surface finds included fragments of painted floor tiles, Marseilles terra cotta roof tiles, some glass bottles and fragments of porcelain plates. The house was apparently a large courtyard house covering more than 20 x 28 m. No antiquities were found in test trenches dug below this building.

In Area B (Figs. 2-3) the excavation squares were defined and marked out on the basis of the graves and pits visible on the surface. The size of the squares depended on the feature being excavated. They were numbered sequentially rather than according to their topographic position in the area. Twenty four squares (B/1-24) covering a total area of 287.5 m² were excavated.

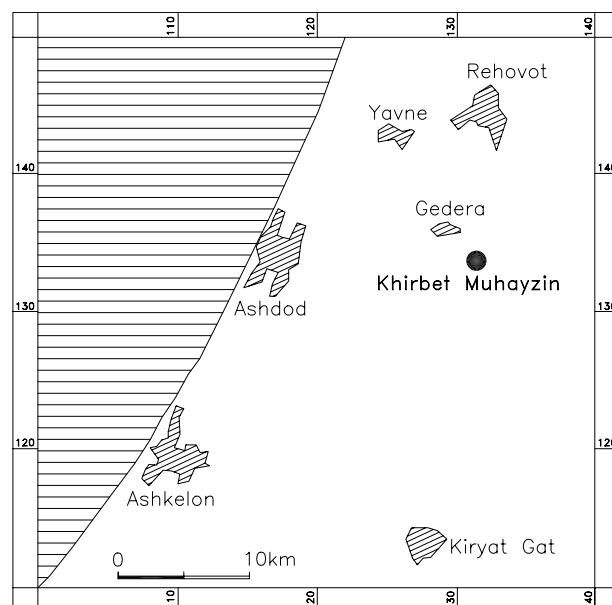


Fig. 1: Map showing location of the site.

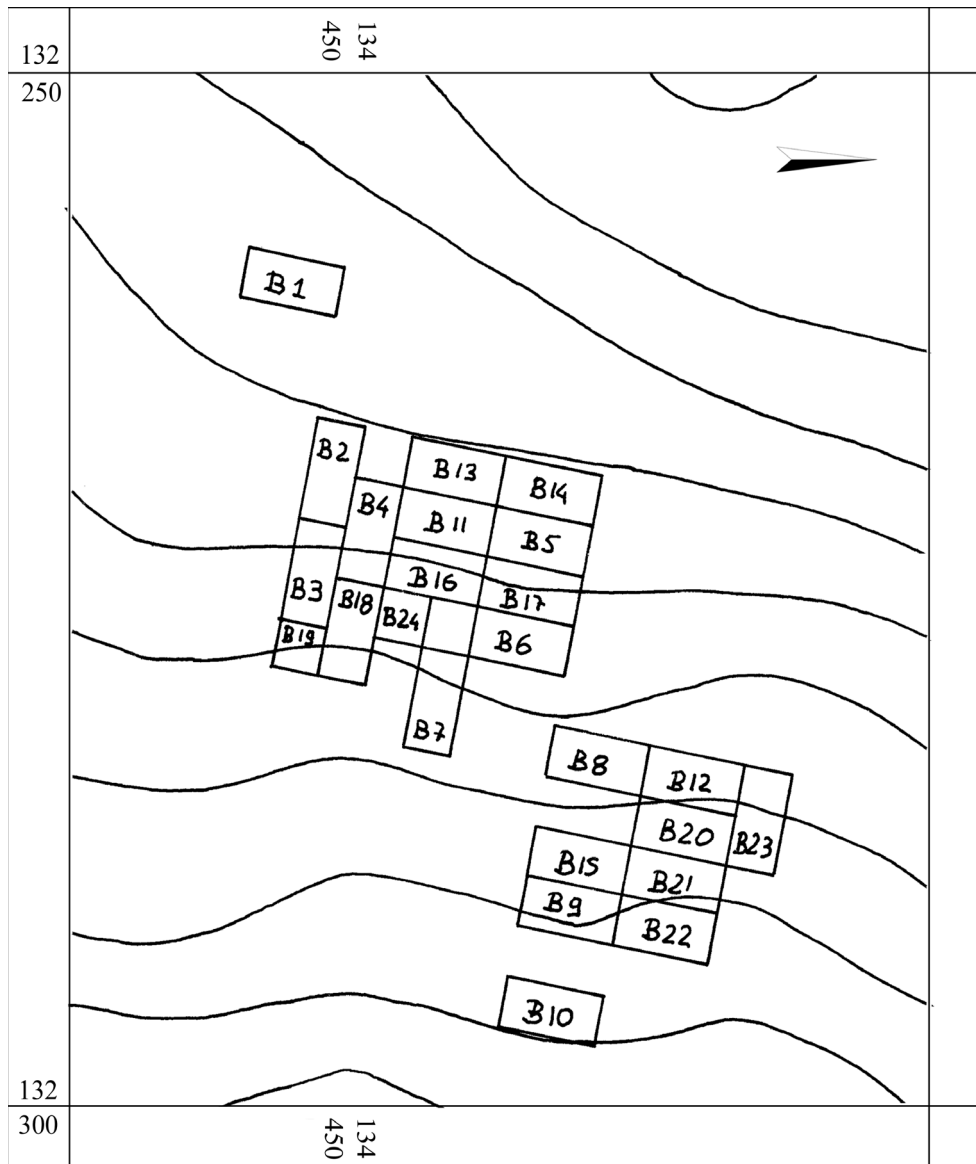


Fig. 2: Plan of the site.

SQUARE B1

This square lies slightly to the west of Square B15. Its main feature was Locus B1/L4, a pit ca. 0.40 m in diameter (top level: 64.61, bottom level: 64.36). This was filled with dark brown soil. Located in the centre of this lens was a heap of crushed pottery from which no identifiable forms could be extracted, and very fragmentary bone remains (B1/L4/b3). According to the anthropological report (Appendix II), this was a burial of a child, ca. 3-4 years old.

SQUARE B2

No burial was found within this square. Three pits filled with dark brown soil, all containing pottery *in situ*, had no apparent connection to any burial.

In the southwestern corner of Locus B2/L2 was a semicircular pit with a maximum diameter of 0.90 m (top level: 64.19, bottom level: 64.04). It contained three large vessels (B2/L2/b2-4) with their tops missing and therefore identification was impossible.

In the western part of the square (Locus B2/L4) was a sub-rectangular pit with a maximum length of ca. 2 m (top level: 64.23, bottom level: 63.21). It contained a large number of sherds from which three vessels could be restored – a small red-slipped round bowl (Fig. 7:17) and two storage jars or large jugs.

East of this locus was a roughly oval pit (Locus B2/L3) with a maximum diameter of ca. 1.5 m (top level: 64.21, bottom level: 63.72). One vessel, in a very poor state of preservation (B2/L3/b5) and fragments of at least one more vessel were recovered.

SQUARE B3

This square contained a single burial (Fig. 4) interred in an ellipsoid pit (Locus B3/L4) with a maximum length of ca. 2 m. The top level of the burial at 63.90 was disturbed by modern levelling so that any offering above the grave would have been removed. The bottom of the pit was at 63.81.

The orientation of the skeleton was roughly east-west, with the head to the east. The bones are those of an adult, 30-40 years old (Appendix II). The burial offerings were at least four vessels, all found in a very poor state of preservation. Two large bowls (Fig. 7:12) were located by the cranium. Two vessels, unidentifiable as to type, were found to the south of the skeleton at the level of the chest. The grave may have continued further to the west, since the remains of a badly crushed storage jar (B3/L4/b3) were found on the border with Locus B3/L3. The construction of the grave included a line of *kurkar* bricks going roughly east-west, following the orientation of the body, and extending to Square B19. This was probably not a lining to a burial chamber, but perhaps a small *dromos* or a grave marker. This feature may have been connected also to the *kurkar* line going in a north-south direction in Square B 18.

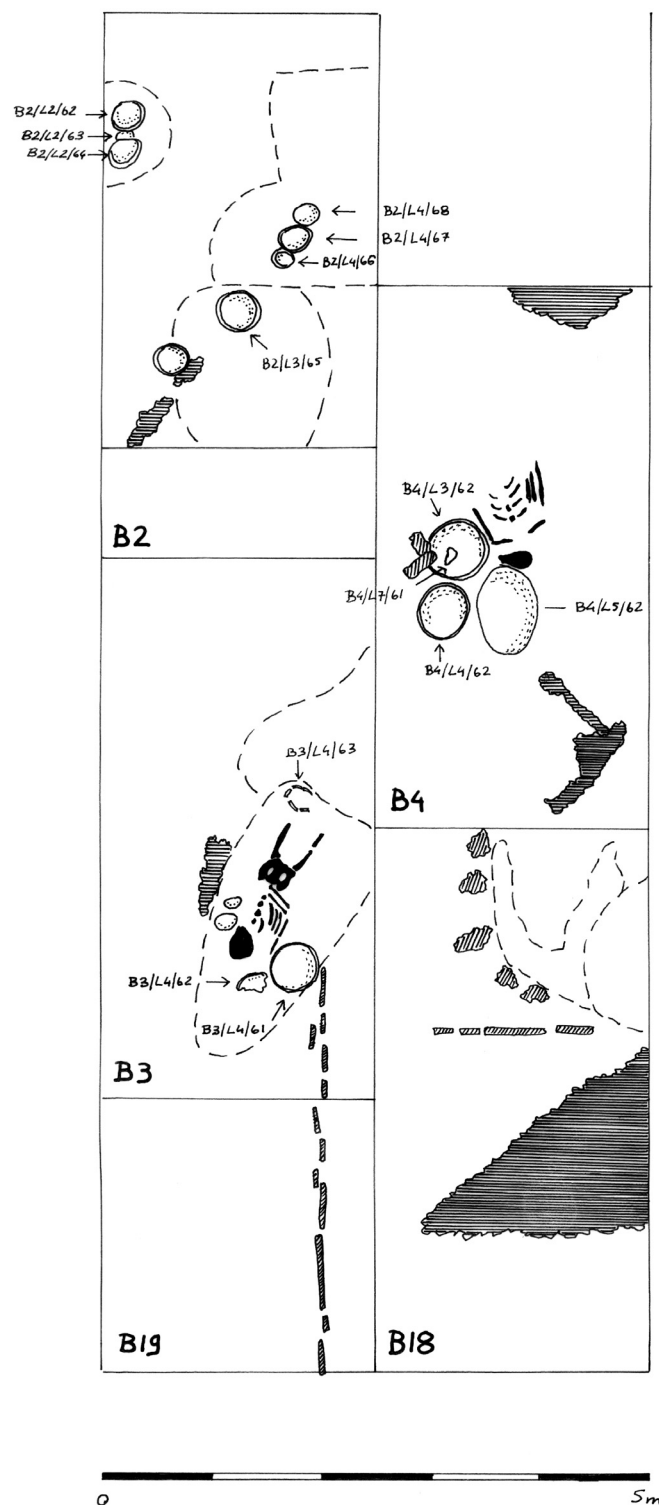


Fig. 3a: Southern part of Area B.

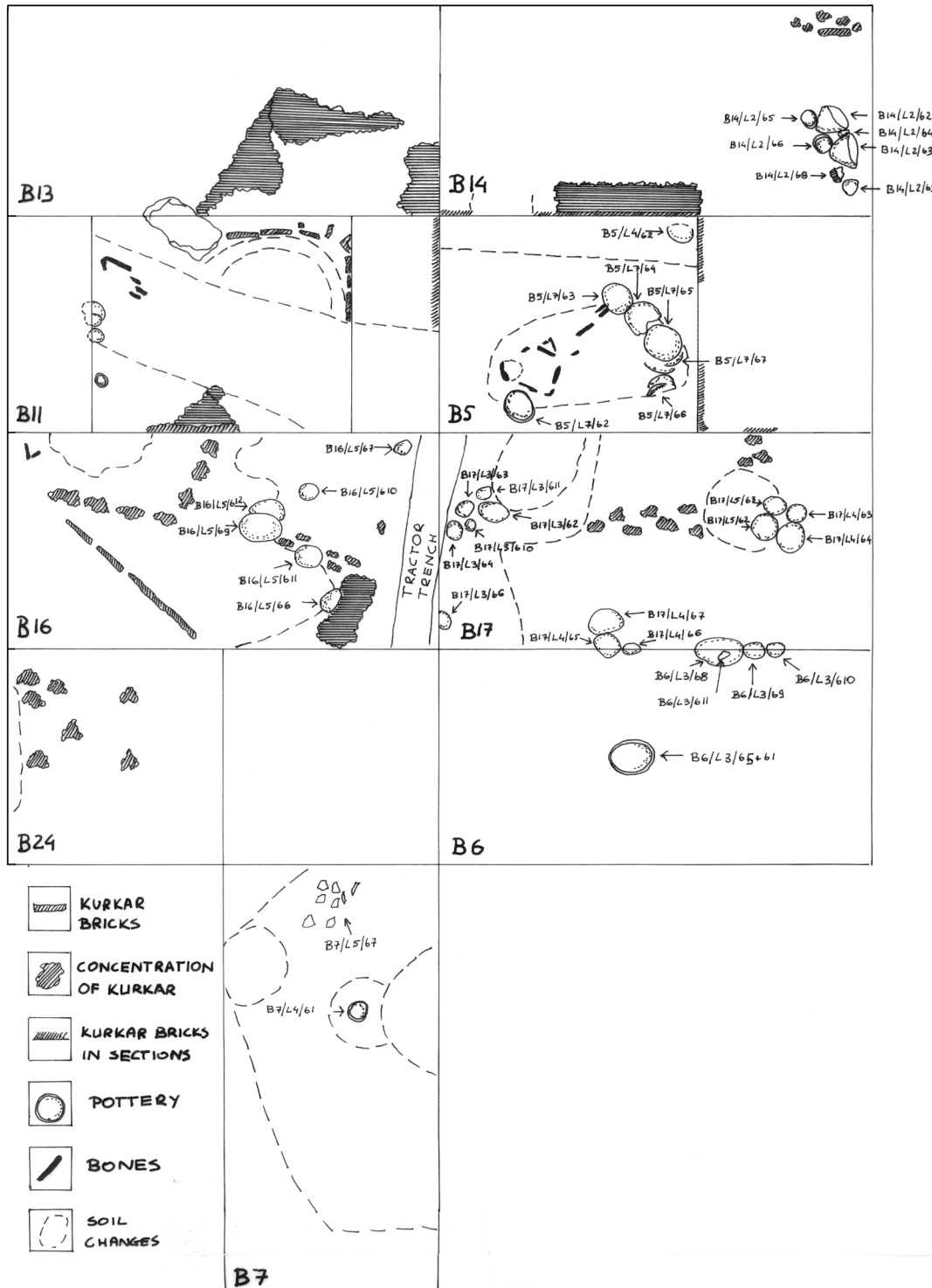


Fig. 3b: Southern part of Area B.

SQUARE B4

The main feature in this square was a single burial. It was not possible to identify the borders of the grave. In the centre of the square, just south east of the cranium of the skeleton, and immediately above it, three storage jars (B4/L3/b2, B4/L4/b2 and B4/L5/b2) and a dipper juglet (B4/L7/b1) were found in L3 (top level of the highest vessel: 64.27; bottom level: 63.79). These were probably accompanying the burial and not later than it. The skeleton (assigned to Locus B4/L8) was oriented roughly east-west, with its head to the east. No age or sex was identifiable. A toggle pin (Fig. 8:2) was found by the head of the skeleton, at the level of 63.98. Some concentrations of crushed *kurkar* were found in the square, but none seem to form a coherent shape.

SQUARE B5

The main feature in this square was a single burial (Locus B5/L7) inside an oval pit (Fig. 5) with a maximum length of ca. 2.30, and maximum width of ca. 1.10 (the bottom level of the locus; 63.40). The orientation of the skeleton was roughly north-south, with the head to the south. These were the remains of an adult individual, although sex and age were unidentifiable. The burial was accompanied by at least 7 vessels. A shallow bowl (Fig. 7:13) was found just east of the cranium. The other vessels (B5/L7/b3-b7) were located by the feet of the skeleton, at the edge of the burial pit: a shallow bowl red-slipped on the inside (Fig. 7:11), two storage jars and a jug, a carinated bowl (Fig. 7:16) and other fragmentary vessels. A second set of offerings was found above the level of these vessels. This group includes two storage jars (B5/L3/b4-5: top level: 63.89, bottom level: 63.65). The tops of both storage jars were missing, probably due to modern agricultural activity. They, in turn, disturbed upper parts of the earlier burial gifts. Sherds belonging to another storage jar (B5/L4/b2) were found to the west of the second group of vessels (top level: 64.39, bottom level: 64.11). It is uncertain whether this vessel belonged to the burial assemblage in the square, or rather to a later, intrusive offering pit.

SQUARE B6

A subrectangular pit (B6/L3) filled with dark soil was found in the northwestern part of the trench. It contained in its centre, close to the top, a single vessel: a large shallow bowl (B6/L3/b1+b5, top level: 63.94, bottom level: 63.86). A polished stone (B6/L3/b3) was found by the northern edge of the pit at the level of 63.77. Four other vessels were found near the western border of the pit (top level: 63.77,

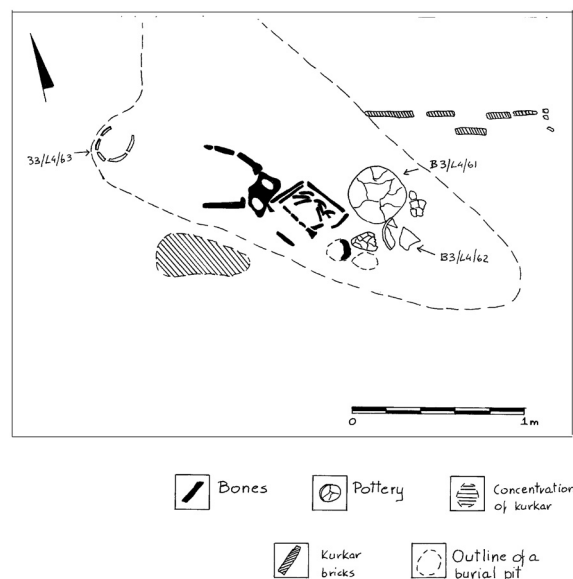


Fig. 4: Burial in Square B3.

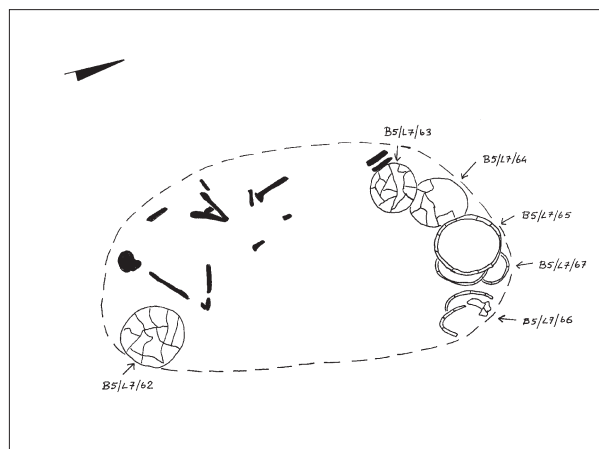


Fig. 5: Burial in Square B5.

bottom level: 63.25). One is a large storage jar (Fig. 7:5) which contained a dipper juglet. Another is a large jug with trefoil rim (Fig. 7:7) and the fourth is a medium-sized storage vessel too crushed to be identified.

SQUARE B7

The central and western part of the square included a vast area of dark brown soil (Locus B7/L5), bordered on the north, east and south by *hamra* with much crushed *kurkar*. The western part of this locus

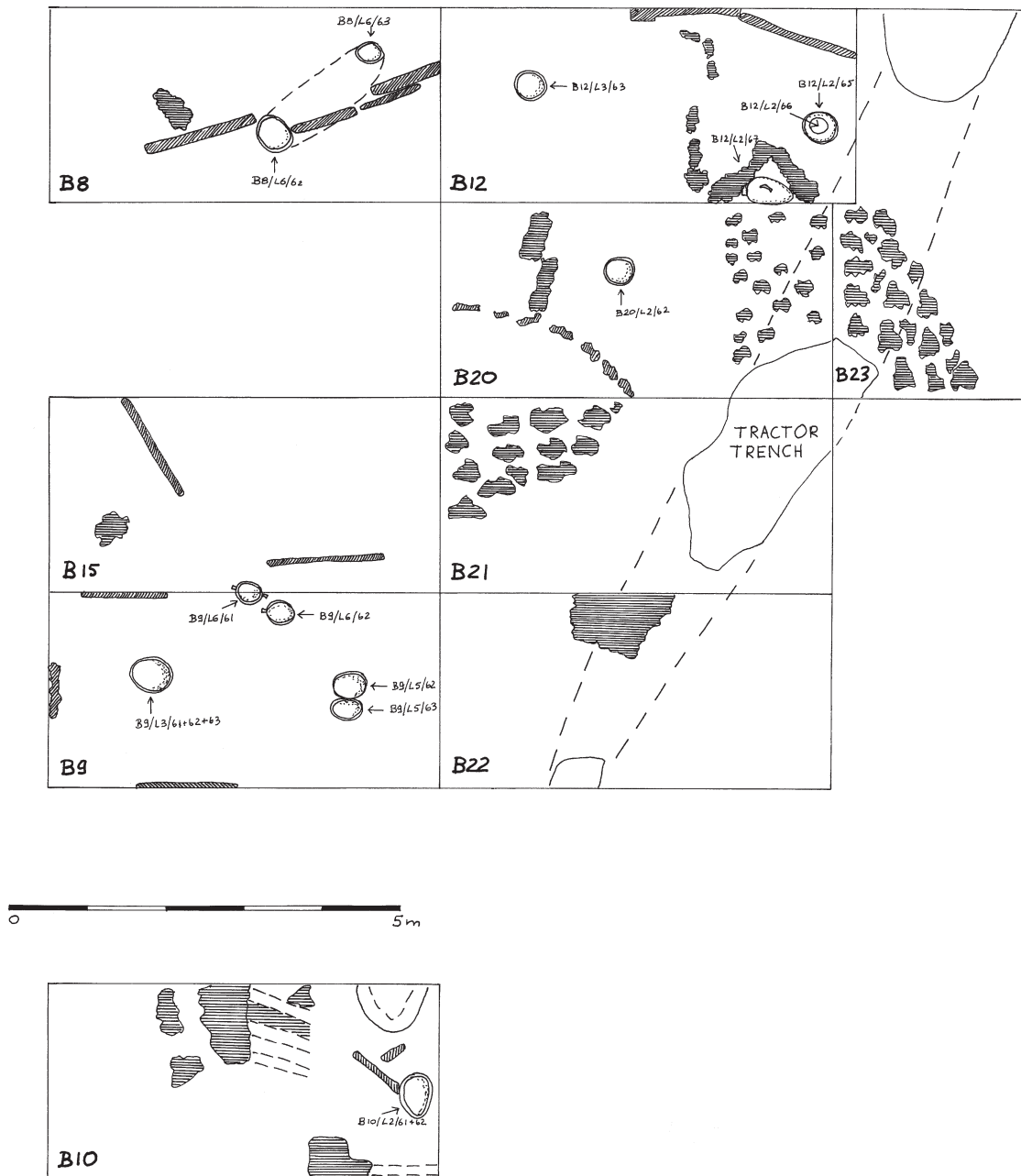


Fig. 6: Northern part of Area B.

contained two concentrations of sherds (B7/L5/b7-8) with no restorable vessels *in situ*. The westernmost feature (B7/L5/b2+b7, top level: 63.39) included sherds of large bowls (Fig. 7:8, 10), storage jars (Fig. 7:1, 3) and a wheelmade cooking-pot (Fig. 7:19), a rare vessel in burial assemblages. No bones were found in this square.

SQUARE B8

An axe (Fig. 8:1) and a limestone dagger pommel (Fig. 8:5) come from the surface layer of this trench, without apparent connection to other features.

The southern half of the square included a recent pit (Locus B8/L3, top level: 63.15, bottom level: 62.48). A large piece of lead was found at its top, a British Mandate coin from 1935 was found halfway down.

The northern half of the square contained the bottom of an oval pit (Locus B8/L6, top level: 63.49, bottom level: 63.27) filled with dark soil. Its maximum length was ca. 2 m, maximum width 0.60 m. Two large very poorly preserved storage vessels (B8/L6/b2-3) were found in the north and south of the pit. Below the pit at a level of ca. 63.24 (Locus B8/L7) several *kurkar* patches were found aligned in bands oriented north-south.

SQUARE B9

In the northern part of this square (Locus B9/L4) two storage jars stood upright (top level: 62.77, bottom level: 62.56) in loose *hamra* soil (Locus B9/L5) but no visible pit. Their upper part was missing.

The southern part of the square (Locus B9/L3) contained very compact dark grey clay (top level: 62.74, bottom level: 62.34), in which many pottery sherds (B9/L3/b1-6) were embedded. Most sherds belonged to storage jars and bowls. This locus was bordered on the west and east, and possibly also from the south, by long parallel lines of crushed *kurkar*. An additional storage jar (B9/L3/b1+b2+b3, top level: 62.74, bottom level: 62.61) was found above the clay in the centre of Locus B9/L3. Since this jar was complete except for its upper part, probably removed in modern times, it is likely that it belonged to a later phase of activity at the site.

Two other storage jars (Fig. 7:6) were found standing upright (top level: 62.88, bottom level: 62.53) on the western border of Locus B9/L3. These vessels seem also to be of a later date than the sherd concentration in the grey clay.

This locus may represent two different phases of activity: the lower one of non-burial activity (habitation?) to which the broken pottery belongs, and a later one of complete pottery within pits.

SQUARE B10

Locus B10/L1 (top level: 62.74, bottom level: 62.06) contained remains immediately on the surface in the northern half of the square. They included regular patches of dark soil which resembled imprints of decayed organic material (wooden beams?) as well as patches of crushed *kurkar*. A storage jar (Fig. 7:4), standing upright (top level: 62.28, bottom level: 62.07), was found on the northern border of the square.

SQUARE B11

The excavation of this square was aimed at finding the context of the large stone with cup marks located in the west of the square (top level of the stone: 64.51). Locus B11/L1 (top level: 63.91, bottom level: 63.86) was *hamra* top soil below which the area was divided into three zones. In the northwestern corner, a semicircular line of dark soil was seen within the *hamra* soil, reminiscent of those seen in Square B10. Patches of crushed *kurkar* seem to have formed regular shapes to the west, and north, perhaps belonging to two brick walls (?) or fills, visible also in the northern and eastern sections of the square. The centre of the square was filled with dark soil and contained some pottery sherds. The southeastern corner of the square was composed of *hamra* with much crushed *kurkar*. Locus B11/L2 was dug inside the area of the dark soil. At the height of 63.60, well below the bottom level of the large stone (bottom level of the stone: 63.94), pottery vessels and long bones were discovered near the southern border of the excavation trench. Although the grave was not exposed further, nor were the vessels removed, it appears that a skeleton was oriented north-south.

SQUARE B12

The southeastern part of the square (Locus B12/L3) contained the bottom of a pit (top level: 63.20, bottom level: 63.02) filled with dark brown soil. A storage jar (B12/L3/b3), its upper part missing, was located at its western edge. The northern half of the square contained three vessels embedded in *hamra* soil in the northeastern corner, a storage jar (B12/L2/B7, top level: 63.19, bottom level: 62.87), and a red-slipped bowl with a ridge below its rim (Fig. 7:14) placed on top of a shallow bowl (B12/L2/b6) (top level for both bowls: 63.22, bottom level: 63.12). The area in which this pottery was situated was bordered by *kurkar* bands on the west and north. The regular pattern of the crushed *kurkar* seen in the western section may indicate the existence of a wall or a lining of *kurkar*.

SQUARE B13

No pottery was found within this square. The only features were three patches of crushed *kurkar* in the northeastern part.

SQUARE B14

The main feature in this square (Locus B14/L2) was a pit (preserved top level: 64.40, bottom level: 63.98) in the northeastern corner of the trench, probably extending to the north. The pit was filled with crushed vessels heaped together. At least two storage jars missing their upper part (B14/L2/b2-3) and three dipper juglets (B14/L2/b4, 5 and 9) were identified. An *ovis/capra* skull (B14/L2/b8) was found east of the vessels. These finds may be interpreted as the remains of the burial gifts from a tomb which extended further to the north.

Near the eastern border of the trench was a straight thick band of crushed *kurkar* running north-south, perhaps a part of the same phenomenon of regular *kurkar* lines observed in the western section of Square B5.

SQUARE B15

The southeastern part of the square (B15/L2) contained dark brown soil with some irregular

kurkar patches and pottery sherds (Fig. 7:2, 9). Two long regular *kurkar* bands were found north of this feature, one running northeast-southwest and the other north-south. The latter, at a level of 62.79, lay parallel to the eastern border of the square and was perhaps connected to the north-south band on the edge of Square B9.

SQUARE B16

The northern part of this square (Locus B16/L5) contained a large pit (top level: 64.12, bottom level: 63.72), filled with dark brown soil. This pit continued to the north, towards Square B17. The irregularly-shaped pit became narrower with depth (maximum width at the top = 2.70m, at the bottom = 1.10m). The pit contained a number of vessels, most of which were fragmentary and unidentifiable except for four storage jars (B16/L5/b6, 9, 11, 13), two bowls (B16/L5/b4 and 12), one cooking-pot (Fig. 7:20) and one juglet (B16/L5/b10). Many flint fragments were scattered within this pit (Appendix I). A large concentration of crushed *kurkar* was found near the southeastern edge of the pit, possibly packed over the bottom of the pit at the level of 63.73. The entire feature identified may have formed a part of burial pit had its continuation in Square B17.

The southern part of the square contained an oval pit filled with dark brown soil (Locus B16/L4) in its southwestern corner (top level: 64.11, bottom level: 63.80). The size of the pit decreased with depth. At the top the maximum length was 1.20m and the maximum width 1.50m, while at the bottom these measurements were 0.40m and 1.20m respectively. One storage jar in a very poor state of preservation was found inside the locus, but not recovered. This pit seems to be contained within two converging bands of crushed *kurkar*, creating a corner (?). An additional line extended to the east, going on a southeast-northeast axis.

A toggle pin and several long bone fragments (B16/L3/b1) were found in the southwestern corner of the square at the level of 64.15. These finds may belong to a burial continuing towards west, under the unexcavated south baulk of Square B11.

SQUARE B17

The southern part of the square (Locus B17/L3) contained a large pit (top level: 64.06, bottom level: 63.58) which seems to have been the continuation of the pit in Locus B16/L5. Two large concentrations of pottery were found in Locus B17/L3. The first, on the northeastern edge of the locus, contained a storage jar (B17/L4/b5), a juglet (B17/L4/b6) and an unidentified vessel (B17/L4/b7). The second concentration was located in the centre of the pit (Locus B17/L4) and contained very fragmentary vessels; among them at least four bowls (Fig. 7:15). Several flint finds and a bronze pin (Fig. 8:4) were associated with this concentration, as well as parts of an *ovis/capra* cranium (B17/L3/b12).

The northwestern part of the square (Locus B17/L5) contained a shallow oval pit (maximum size 0.70 x 0.90 m, top level: 64.07, bottom level: 63.80). On its northeastern border were four vessels: three bowls (B17/L5/b2-3 and B17/L4/b4) and a juglet (B17/L4/b3). One of the bowls (B17/L3/b3) had traces of burning. This pit seems to be dug into a feature made of crushed *kurkar* which resembled two lines making a corner.

SQUARE B18

The main feature in the western part of the square was a pit (Locus B18/L3) filled with dark brown soil (top level: 64.03, bottom level: 63.58) but without any material culture finds. A large, irregular concentration of crushed *kurkar* was found in the central part of the square (Locus B18/L2).

SQUARE B19

No material culture finds were found in this trench, most of its extent filled with irregular crushed *kurkar* patches.

SQUARE B20

Locus B20/L1 contained a single sherd of a Levantine Painted Ware jug (?) (Fig. 7:18). A single storage jar, without its top part (B20/L2/b2, top level: 63.27, bottom level: 63.15) was found in the centre of the square, in no discernible context but possibly at the bottom of a pit destroyed by modern

activity. The northwestern corner of the square had a large concentration of a crushed *kurkar* (top level of the concentration: 63.24, bottom level: 63.00). The southeastern corner was enclosed by a *kurkar* band, best visible on the level of 62.90.

SQUARE B21

The southwestern corner (Locus B21/L3) contained a concentration of *kurkar* (top level: 62.87, bottom level: 62.78) probably corresponding to the feature in the southeastern corner of Square B20.

SQUARE B22

This square contained no finds, save the imprint of a modern tractor trench.

SQUARE B23

The southwest corner of the square contained a large concentration of crushed *kurkar*, devoid of any material culture finds.

SQUARE B24

The square contained a few irregular crushed *kurkar* concentrations but no finds.

POTTERY

The ceramic assemblage of Khirbet Muḥayzin had suffered greatly from the conditions of the soil, which had caused complete deterioration of the most of the vessels, and recent agricultural and other work, which had damaged the pottery even more. Almost all storage jars, which stood upright, were decapitated by heavy machinery. The following report is based on vessels painstakingly restored by Rachel Pelta, and on identifiable diagnostic sherds.

BOWLS

SHALLOW OPEN BOWLS

With simple rim: Fig. 7:11-13 have parallels at Aphek in Stratum A XIVa (Beck 2000a:Fig. 10.16:9) and Stratum A XII (*ibid.*:Fig. 10.21: 3,14). Additional parallels come from Megiddo, Stratum XIV (Loud 1948:Pl. 14:2) and XIII (*ibid.*:Pl. 21:18).

With everted rim: Fig. 7:8-10 is similar to a bowl from Tomb 7 at Aphek (Beck 2000a:Fig. 10.18:3).

Fig. 7:9, 10 are larger undecorated bowls. Shallow, undecorated bowls with an everted rim are found in Stratum A XII at Aphek (*ibid.*:Fig. 10.20:6). Parallels to both medium and large variants come from Megiddo, from Stratum XIIIb (Loud 1948:Pl. 16:15) and XIIIa (*ibid.*:Pl. 19: 9).

SMALL ROUNDED BOWLS

Fig. 7:17 is a small undecorated rounded bowl which has its best parallel from Aphek in Stratum B Vc-b (Beck 2000a:Fig. 8.18:7) and another in Stratum A XIVb (*ibid.*: fig. 10.12:6). Similar bowls with decoration appear in Phases B and C of the Early MB IIA at Tel el-Ifshar (Paley and Porath 1997: Fig. 13.4: 2, 3) and Megiddo, Stratum XIIIa (Loud 1948:Pl. 19:3).

CARINATED BOWLS

Fig. 7:16 is a small undecorated carinated bowl. The high carination is typical for the late MBIIA and early MBIIb pottery phases; cf. Megiddo Stratum XII (Loud 1948:Pl. 28:6) and Stratum XI (*ibid.*:Pl. 36:8).

LARGE, DEEP BOWLS

Fig. 7:14 is a red slipped bowl with thick square ridge below the rim. It has a close parallel in Aphek, Stratum A XVII (Beck 2000a:175, Fig. 10.4:1), and in the later Stratum A XIV (*ibid.*: Fig. 10.10:16).

Fig. 7:15 is a large undecorated bowl with a thickened rounded rim, which may find its parallel in the deep bowl from Stratum A XVI from Aphek (*ibid.*:Fig. 10.1:13).

COOKING-POTS

Fig. 7:19 is a large wheel-made cooking-pot with a long flaring rim and traces of charring. It has its best parallels from Aphek in Stratum A XVI (Beck 2000a:Fig. 10.1:23) and Stratum A XIVb (*ibid.*: fig. 10.12:17), and another, with a shorter rim, in Stratum B Vb from the same site (Beck 2000b:Fig. 8.10:7).

Fig. 7:20 is a large wheel-made cooking-pot with a very short and thick triangular rim. It closely parallels cooking-pots from Aphek Stratum B IV (*ibid.*:Fig. 8.20:4). Furthermore, Beck (2000a:Fig.

10.1:16) describes a vessel with a very similar rim and made of cooking-pot ware from Stratum A XIV at Aphek as a krater.

JUGS

Fig. 7:7 is a large jug with a simple trefoil rim of a type which has a long period of existence in Megiddo. It appears, decorated and undecorated, in Stratum XIV (Loud 1948:Pl. 11:19, 22) and Stratum XII (*ibid.*:Pl. 24:35, 25:6).

STORAGE JARS (AND LARGE JUGS)

Folded thickened rim: Fig. 7:1 is paralleled at Megiddo in Stratum XIIIa (Loud 1948:Pl. 18:1).

Fig. 7:2 has parallels at Aphek in Stratum B Vc (Beck 2000b:Fig. 8.12:18), B IV (*ibid.*:Fig. 8.20:5), A XVII (Beck 2000a:Fig. 10.1:8), A XIVb (*ibid.*:Fig. 10.11:13, 14). This rim may also have belonged to a large jug, like those from Stratum XIV at Megiddo (Loud 1948:Pl. 12:22) and Stratum A XVII at Aphek (Beck 2000a:Fig. 10.4).

Fig. 7:3 has parallels at Megiddo in Stratum XIIIb (*ibid.*:Pl. 16:10) and in a large jug from Stratum XIV (*ibid.*:Pl. 11:20). Additional parallels for both sherds come from Aphek Area B in Stratum Vd (Beck 2000b:Fig. 8.10:18-20) and Stratum Vc (*ibid.*:Fig. 8.12:23) and from Area A Strata Va (*ibid.*: Fig. 8.16:10), XIVb (Beck 2000a:Fig. 10.12:23) and XIII (*ibid.*: Fig. 10.21:11).

Simple, slightly thickened rim: Fig. 7:4, 5 are similar in proportions to a jar from Aphek, Stratum A XII, which belongs to the late MBIIA period (*ibid.*:221, Fig. 10.23:11).

Fig. 7:6 has similar proportions but a different rim shape to a jar from Aphek, Stratum A XII, belonging to the late MBIIA period (*ibid.*:221, fig. 10.23:14), and an example from Megiddo, Stratum XII (Loud 1948:Pl. 27:3).

LEVANTINE PAINTED WARE

Fig. 7:18 is a sherd of a closed vessel painted in dark brown on a white slip. The decoration of bands and hatched triangles (?) as well as the general appearance of the sherd is typical of Levantine Painted Ware jugs from the earlier part of the

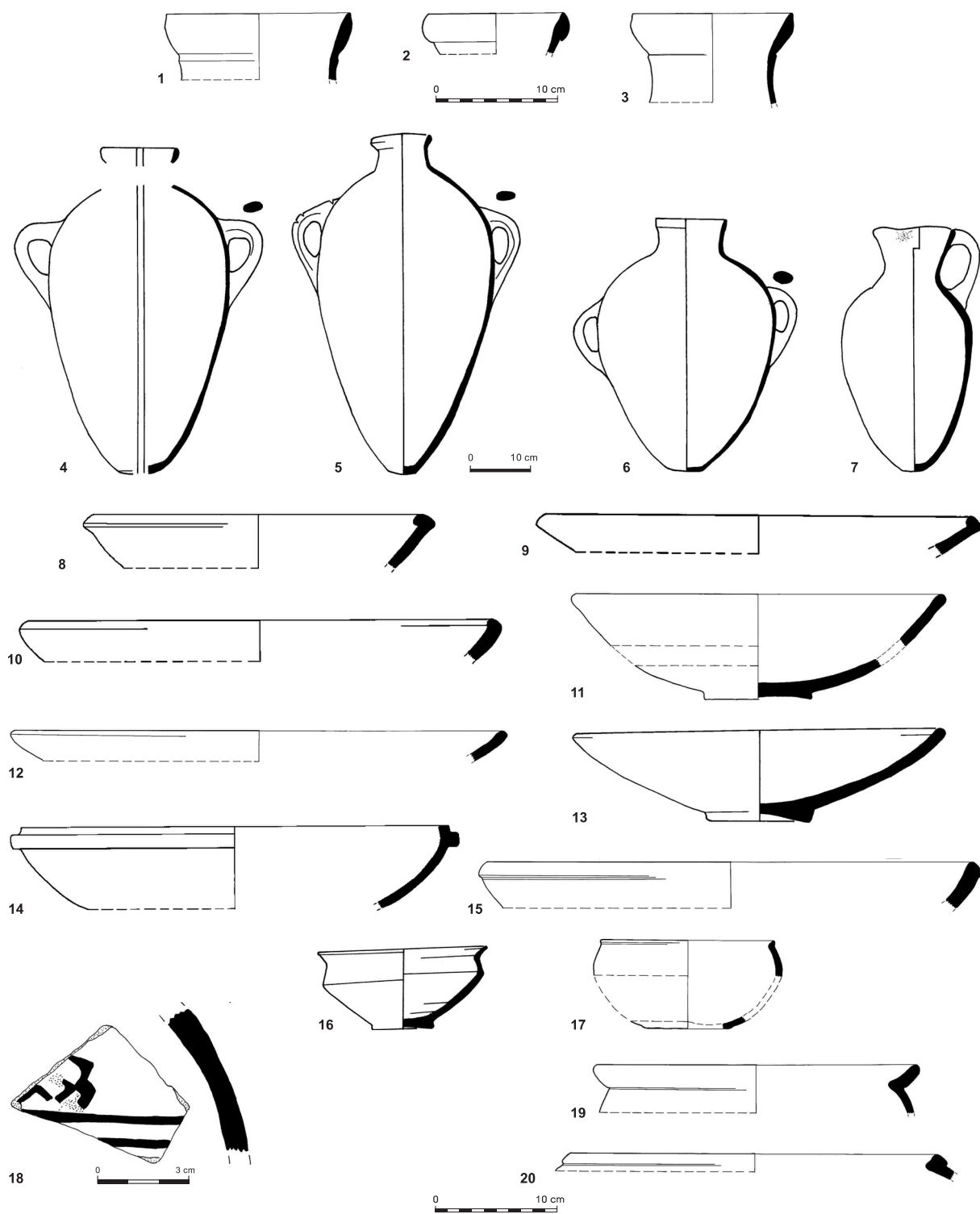


Fig. 7: Pottery.

MBIIA (Beck 2000c:240-242) with its best parallels in the tombs excavated by Ory at Tel Aphek (Ory 1938:Pl. XXV). An additional parallel comes from Phases B and C of the early MB IIA at Tel el-Ifshar (Paley and Porath 1997:Fig. 13.5:3).

SUMMARY

From the above typology it is possible to assume that the different pottery assemblages, both burial

and non-burial, from Khirbet Muḥayzin cover chronologically most of the MBIIA period. The early part of MBIIA is represented by the Levantine Painted ware sherds. Types like the carinated bowl with the high carination appear late in the MBIIA, or during the transitional MBIIA-B. There are no clear examples of MBIIB pottery. It seems that both non-burial and burial activity at the site occurred during the MBIIA.

FIGURE 7: POTTERY

No.	Locus	Type	Description
1.	B7/L5/b3	Storage jar	D. rim ca. 15.0 cm; Th. 0.6, 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow; surface 10YR 7/4 very pale brown; small dark grits
2.	B15/L1/b1	Storage jar	D. rim ca. 11.0 cm; Th. 0.5 cm, 10YR 6/4 light yellowish brown; small dark grits
3.	B7/L5/b2	Storage jar	D. rim ca. 13.0 cm; Th. 0.5 cm, 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow, surface 10YR 7/4 very pale brown; small white grits
4.	B10/L2/b1+b2	Storage jar	D. rim 13.0 cm; D. max. 29.5 cm; H. reconstr. 55.5 cm, 2.5YR 5/8 red, cored dark grey; small and medium white grits
5.	B6/L3/b8	Storage jar	D. rim 10.0 cm; D. max. 29.0 cm; H. 55.5 cm, 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow; medium dark, blue and white grits; unevenly fired
6.	B9/L6/b2	Storage jar	D. rim 11.5 cm; D. base 5.0 cm; H. 41.5 cm, 5YR 5/6 yellowish red; small and medium white and very small dark grits
7.	B6/L3/b9	Jug with trefoil rim	D. rim 13.0 cm; D. base 3.5 cm; H. 40.0 cm, 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow; small blue grits
8.	B7/L5/b2+b7	Bowl with everted rim	D. rim ca. 27.0 cm; D. base ca. 11.0 cm; Th. 0.8 cm, 10YR 7/4 very pale brown; small white grits
9.	B15/L2/b1	Bowl with everted rim	Th. 1.0 cm, 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow; small dark grits
10.	B7/L3/b7	Bowl with everted rim	D. ca. 50.0 cm; Th. 1.0 cm, 10YR 7/6 yellow; few white grits
11.	B5/L7/b4	Bowl with simple rim	D. ca. 30.0 cm; Th. 0.8 cm, 5YR 7/6 reddish yellow; medium white and blueish grits; red slip inside
12.	B3/L4/b2	Bowl with simple rim	D. ca. 40.0 cm; Th. 0.8 cm, 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow; surface 10YR 7/4 very pale brown; medium white grits
13.	B5/L7/b2	Bowl with simple rim	D. rim 61.0 cm; D. base 17.0 cm; H. 15.0 cm, 10YR 6/6 brownish yellow; small and medium white grits
14.	B12/L2/b5	Deep bowl	D. ca. 35.0 cm; Th. 0.7 cm, 2.5YR 5/6 red; medium and small white grits; red slip inside 7.5R 4/8, burnished
15.	B17/L3/b11	Deep bowl	D. ca. 40.0 cm; Th. 1.2 cm, 2.5YR 6/8 light red; medium dark and blueish grits
16.	B5/L7/b7	Carinated bowl	D. rim 27.5 cm; D. base 10.5 cm; H. 13.5 cm, 2.5YR 5/8 red; medium and small white grits
17.	B2/L4/b6	Small rounded bowl	D. ca. 14.0 cm; Th. 0.5 cm, 5YR 5/6 yellowish red; small white and blueish grits, red slip outside
18.	B20/L1/b4	Levantine Painted Ware	Th. 0.8 cm, 10YR 7/3 very pale brown; small dark grits; slip 10YR 8/3 very pale brown, burnished; paint 10R 3/3 dusky red
19.	B7/L5/b2+b6	Cooking-pot	D. ca. 26.0 cm; Th. 0.6 cm, 2.5YR 5/6 red, core dark grey; small and medium white grits; traces of burning inside
20.	B16/L5/b8	Cooking-pot	D. ca. 30.0 cm; Th. 0.7 cm, 2.5YR 5/6 red; small and medium white grits; traces of burning inside

METAL AND STONE ARTEFACTS

BRONZE AXE

The bronze axe head (Fig. 8:1) belongs to the Maxwell-Hyslop Type 24 (Maxwell Hyslop 1949: 116) and to Miron's narrow, elongated socket axes Type I (Miron 1992:71). Ziffer (1990:71*) names this type of axe 'notched chisel axe'. Miron (1992: 76-77) had convincingly demonstrated that the great majority of the datable examples of this type belong to MBIIA, although few examples may belong to MBIIB. Garfinkel and Bonfil (1990:145) tend to date these axes to the MBIIA period, yet not to its very beginning. Philip (1989:39, 266) dates them to a short period towards the end of MBIIA. An axe found in Tomb F/I-m/18, Stratum d/1 at Tell el-Dab'a (Bietak 1996:27, Fig. 22:7) is dated to the beginning of the 13th Dynasty, i.e., late MBIIA. Other examples come from Tomb F/I-o/17-Tomb 1 of Stratum d/1 (Schiestl 2002:Fig. 15:4, 5) belonging to a late phase of the Middle Kingdom, and from Tomb 1/12 in Stratum F (Bietak 1991:54, Fig. 26:2) dateable to the transition MBIIA-B, being possibly one of the latest in the series (see also Bietak 2002: Fig. 9 for the summary of axe occurrence at Tell el-Dab'a). The Type I axe was replaced in MBIIB by Types II and III of narrow elongated socket axes (Miron 1992:77-80).

TOGGLE PINS

Three toggle pins were found in the excavations.

Fig. 8:2 is a nail-shaped pin with a circular cross-section throughout the entire length. The part above the eye is incised. This type is a variant of the Henschel-Simon's Group IIIB, Type 8b "with head, nail shaped, incised" (Henschel-Simon 1938: 174). According to Ziffer (1990:59*) such pins came into use in the 18th century BCE. Similar pins were found in Tomb 498 at Kabri (Shalev 2002:312-315) dateable to the MBIIA and into the MBIIB.

Fig. 8:3 is a long nail-shaped pin with a flat head. It is a variant of Henschel-Simon's Group IIB,

Type 8a "with head, nail shaped, plain" (Henschel-Simon 1938:174). Bunimovitz (2000:276) collected many parallels to this type, dating to the wide chronological range of the MBII period, probably without the possibility of narrowing it down further.

Fig. 8:4 is a fragmentary pin with a circular cross-section throughout the entire length. Its tip is missing. It may also belong to the Henschel-Simon's Group IIA, Type 2, "without head, plain" (Henschel-Simon 1938:173) with a wide range of occurrence throughout the MBII-LB continuum.

The location of the toggle pins on the upper part of the body, as observed at the burials at Khirbet Muḥayzin, confirms that such items were used to fasten the garment at the shoulder (Ziffer 1990:*59). This position of toggle pins is also known from Dhaharat el Humraiya, Tel Sukas, Tel Rehov (Ory 1948:77; Garfinkel and Bonfil 1990: 147, n. 9) and Kabri (Shalev 2002:316).

LIMESTONE DAGGER POMMEL

Fig. 8:5 is a globular limestone pommel of a type which may be associated with a dagger with multiple cast-in ribs (Philip 1989:Type 13).

Globular limestone pommels are common in the MBII burials. Parallels can be observed at Dan, in Tomb 1025 dating from late MBIIA (Biran, Ilan and Greenberg 1994: 235, Fig. 4.106.2) and Ginnosar, Tomb 4 (Epstein 1974:Fig. 18:3). Globular limestone pommels of different proportions come from MBIIA tombs at Megiddo (Guy 1938:Fig. 171:4, Pl. 118.2), Tell el-Ajjul (Petrie 1932:Pl. XIV:71; 1934:Pl. XLI:110, 111, 115, 118) and Gezer (Macalister 1912:Pl. LXI:23-24). Sometimes the pommels may be deposited without a dagger, as in the case of two globular limestone pommels from F/I-o/17 Tomb 1 of Stratum d/1 at Tell el-Dab'a (Schiestl 2002:Fig. 15:4, 5) belonging to the late Middle Kingdom period which is equivalent to an advanced stage of MBIIA.

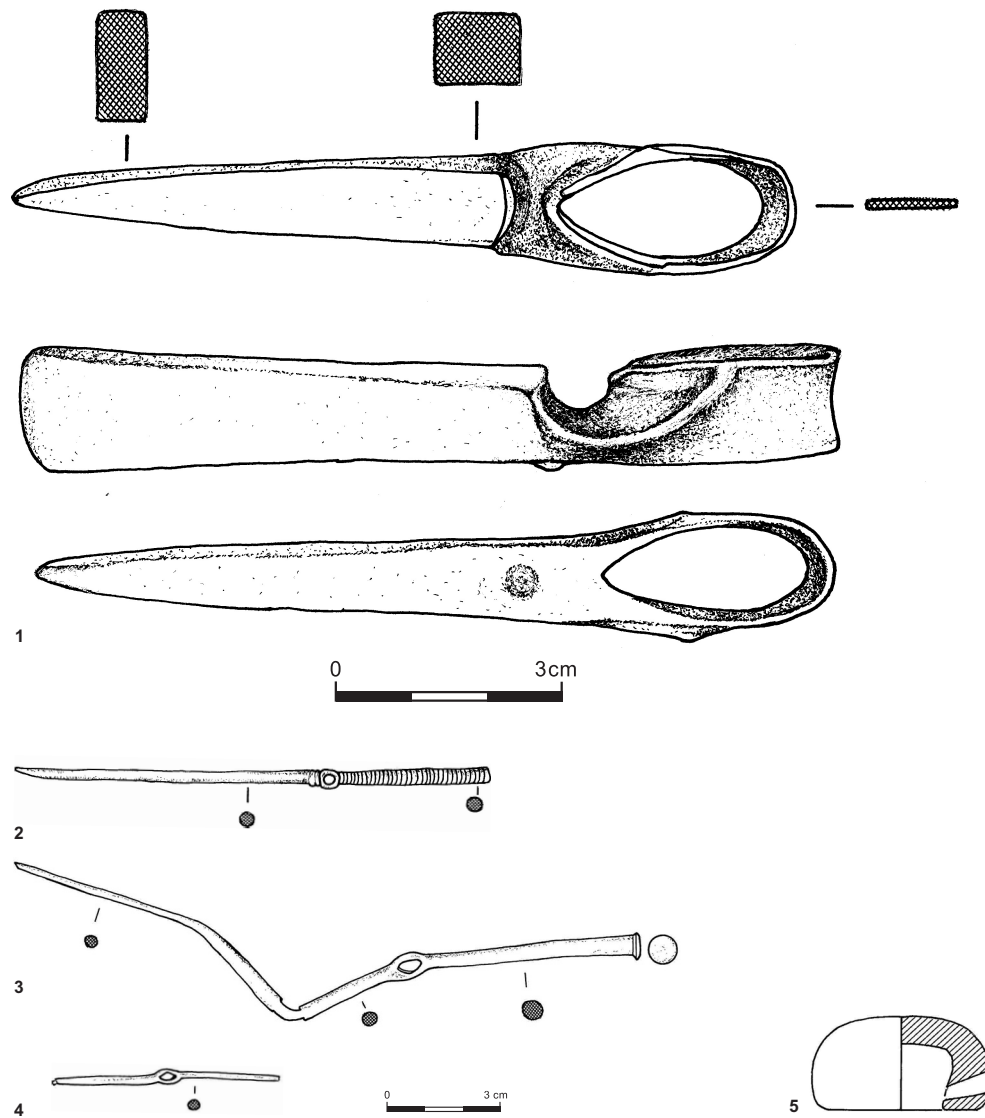


Fig. 8: Metal artefacts.

No.	Locus	Type	Description
1.	B8/L1/b4	Bronze axe	L. 10.4 cm; W. of shaft max. 1.4 cm; H. max. 1.4 cm
2.	B4/L8/b1	Toggle pin	L. 12.7 cm
3.	B16/L3/b4	Toggle pin	L. 17.7 cm
4.	B17/L3/b1	Toggle pin	L. pres. 6.0 cm
5.	B8/L1/b3	Limestone pommel	Diam. 4.7 cm; H. 2.5 cm

CONCLUSIONS

NATURE OF THE SITE

Features at the site fall into three distinct categories: graves, offering pits and pre-burial activity.

BURIALS

The three most complete burials were found in Squares B3, B4 and B5. These are single burials of adults placed inside a pit. There are indications that the pit itself and/or features connected with it were marked or coated with crushed *kurkar*. The grave in Square B5 may have been bordered by walls made of clay and crushed *kurkar*. The principal type of funerary offering found accompanying the dead was pottery. Bowls were often placed near the head of the deceased, and jars as well as dipper juglets near the feet. This practice was observed also at Gesher in Graves 2, 13 and 14 (Garfinkel 2001:146-148) and at Kabri in Tomb 990 (Scheftelowitz and Gershuny 2002:30). According to their position, the toggle pins found in two graves (Loci B4/L8 and B16/L3) were associated with the upper body. Weapons were also included, as evidenced by the bronze axe found in B8/L1 and the stone dagger pommel found on the surface outside the excavated area.

The orientation of the head of the skeleton is between south and east, with none pointing to the north or west. The single burial of a child in Square B2 indicates that young children were considered incorporated members of the family and buried along with the adults. There may be evidence for sealing of the grave with clayey soil mixed with potsherds (in Square B9). A similar feature has been attested in the cemeteries at Rishon Le-Zion and Dhahrat el-Humraiya (Levy 1995:58; Ory 1948:76-77).

The closest parallel to the cemetery at Khirbet Muḥayzin may be at Rishon Le-zion, a well attested burial site dating from the second half of the MBIIA and continuing into the MBIIIB. It includes shaft tombs and simple graves (Gophna and Beck 1981; Levy 1995; Ben-Tor 1997; Cohen 2002: 91) as well as evidence of buildings with *kurkar* foundations. Similar features can also be seen at Kibbutz Na'an and at the small cemetery

of Dhahrat el-Humraiya with a total of 15 graves which started in the earlier phases of MBIIA and continued through the transition MBIIA-IIB (Ory 1948; Gophna and Beck 1981:74; Gerstenblith 1983:33; Broshi and Gophna 1986: 83; Cohen 2002:77). A burial cave at Tel Maḥoz (Cohen 2002: 86; Gophna 1993) is dated to MBIIA.

OFFERING PITS

These were pits containing several vessels, mostly jars, but without human skeletal remains. They were found in two types of context. The majority were without apparent connection to a nearby burial (e.g. B2/L2, B6/L3/b5, B6/L3/b8-11, B8/L6, B9/L3/b3, B9/L5, B9/L6, B12/L3/b3, B12/L2/b5-7, B17/L5, B20/L2/b2). However, it is possible that in some of these cases the actual burials were destroyed by modern activity at the site. One instance, however, shows the connection of a pit to an earlier tomb (the burial in B5) in which later vessels disturbed the original burial gifts. It is possible to interpret these features as offering pits, connected to burials, the exact location of which was already unknown.

At the cemetery in Rishon Le-zion some bowls and storage jars deposited in burials contained sheep bones accompanied by knives, and in one case by a dagger with a pommel (Levy 1995:59). At Khirbet Muḥayzin too animal bones were found in offering pits. The *ovis/capra* skull in B17/L3/b12 may have been deposited simultaneously with the burial, but the exact character of the feature in this locus remains unclear.

PRE-BURIAL ACTIVITY

Flint finds (Appendix I) indicate activity at the site as early as the Epipaleolithic, Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. Closer to the period of the cemetery, the geometric sickle blades, which could belong to the Middle Bronze Age, indicate that in this period activity was not only limited to burial. Additional evidence for the MBA non-burial activity at the site provided Squares B7 and B9 where no human skeletal remains or restorable vessels were found. Locus B7/L5 contained sherds of cooking-pot(s), a type of vessel totally unfamiliar in MBII burials.

In addition, Locus B9/L3 was cut by at least one (probably by two) offering pits. It may be cautiously suggested that the evidence from these two contexts points to the existence of some form of habitation activity during the MBII period, prior to the use of the area as cemetery. The fact that B9/L3 was bordered from three directions by lines of *kurkar* may hint at the possible existence of structures connected with this pre-burial phase.

Analysis of the pottery and other artefacts suggests that most Middle Bronze Age activity at the site, both pre-burial and burial, can be dated to different phases within the MBIIA period. It is supported by the fact that no unmistakably MBIIB pottery or other artefacts were found at the site. The cemetery at Khirbet Muḥayzin can thus be defined as belonging to a rural settlement, possibly a large village, which prospered throughout the MBIIA period. The absence of MBIIB remains may indicate either that the settlement was abandoned or became smaller during this period.

THE PLACE OF THE SITE WITHIN THE NAḤAL SOREK SETTLEMENT SYSTEM

The rural community of Khirbet Muḥayzin settled very close to Naḥal Timnah, a tributary of Naḥal Sorek whose basin is characterized by intensive occupation mainly during the 2nd and 3rd phases of the MBIIA period (Cohen 2002:51-55). During the MBIIA massive population growth and a clear division in the character of settlement (urban vs. non-urban) has been observed throughout the Naḥal Sorek basin (Gophna and Portugali 1988:18-21). Less activity is recorded for the earlier part of the MBIIA period.

Several clusters of sites have been distinguished in the lower drainage system of Naḥal Sorek. In the upper reaches of Naḥal Timnah and Naḥal Sorek, MBIIA settlements have been registered in the fields of Kibbutz Revadim, Revadim quarry, Gedera and east of Yavne (Gophna and Beck 1981:63-75;

Broshi and Gophna 1986:83; Cohen 2002:79). The sites of this cluster, to which Khirbet Muḥayzin also belongs, were all non-urban settlements, (probably villages) rather similar in scale. Settlement in this cluster continued into the MBIIB in the fields of Kibbutz Revadim, the Revadim quarry and Yavne-Shikun (Gophna and Beck 1981:65-75). MBIIA and MBIIB burial sites are known at the Revadim quarry, Gedera, a site south of Yavne, Yavne-Shikun, Ness Ziona, El-Jisr and Dhahrat el-Humraiya (Gophna and Beck 1981:65-75; Broshi and Gophna 1986:83; Cohen 2002:79, 84).

Towards the west, a cluster of MBIIB sites can be distinguished, with cemeteries at Kibbutz Na'an, at the Yavne-Rehovot road and northeast of Tel Poran (Gophna and Beck 1981:74-75) and MBIIB unfortified settlement at Khirbet el-Duheisha (Gophna and Beck 1981:74).

North of Naḥal Sorek and south of the Ayalon and Yarkon rivers MBIIA settlements have been observed at Rishon Le-zion, Bat Yam and east of the Ramle prison (Gophna and Beck 1981:52-63; Cohen 2002:74, 90). At Bat Yam there are remains of MBIIA tombs (Ayalon 1982:50).

Another MBIIA cluster consists of mainly coastal sites at Giv'at Haparsa, Tel Haraz, the site at the coast of Yavne and Yavne-Yam (Gophna and Beck 1981:74; Cohen 2002:94). An MBIIA pottery kiln has been found at Naḥal Sorek (Singer-Avitz and Levi 1992). Gophna and Beck (1981:75-77) proposed a territorial subdivision of the coastal plain in which the rural sites would remain in direct relation to the urban settlements, like Yavne Yam or en-Nebi Rubin. If so, the MBIIA rural settlement cluster in the upper flow of Naḥal Timnah and Naḥal Sorek, which includes Khirbet Muḥayzin, may have been part of the agricultural hinterland of a political unit which spread along Naḥal Sorek, perhaps centred around the large, coastal MBIIA fortified settlement of Yavne-Yam (Kaplan 1993).

APPENDIX 1: THE FLINT ASSEMBLAGE

Ron Shimelmitz

Only fifteen flint items were retrieved from the excavations at Khirbet Muḥayzin. The assemblage consists of six flakes, one broken blade, five cores (two of which are bladelet cores), one unidentified tool fragment and two chunks. The majority of these artefacts can be attributed to the Epi-Paleolithic industries as indicated by the bladelet cores and the rather small debitage size. It should be mentioned that the debitage is very different from that which typifies the Middle Bronze Age flake industries (Rosen 1997).

In addition, some flint items were collected from the surface in the area of the site. A small concentration of these was found ca. 150 m east of the main excavation area and south of the water facility of Kibbutz Hāfetz Hāyim. The surface material provides a larger (138 items) and more varied sample, permitting a better understanding of the character of the prehistoric and proto-historic activities in the area. The surface collection was not conducted systematically and therefore only selected features were chosen for further examination.

The most common material in the surface collection is from the Epi-Paleolithic period, the most dominant type being bladelet cores (11 items) (Fig. 9: 1, 2). They are all rather small and exhausted. There are also some microliths — mostly narrow-backed bladelets (8 items) (Fig. 9:3). Especially interesting are two microlithic points, one obliquely truncated bladelet and one obliquely backed truncated bladelet which were all broken (Fig. 9:4-6). Among the ordinary tools scrapers are the most common.

The Epi-Paleolithic material may confidently be assigned to the Kebaran complex on typological grounds. The narrow microliths, obliquely truncated bladelets and microlithic points are the main types of the Kebaran complex (Bar-Yosef and Vogel 1987;

Goring-Morris 1995). On technological grounds, the production of narrow bladelets is the main feature of the Early Epi-Paleolithic, of which the Kebaran complex comprises a large part (Bar-Yosef 1991; Goring-Morris 1995; Shimelmitz 2002). The small size of the cores is typical of areas located far from the source of raw material (Bar-Yosef 1970:152-153; Gilead 1991:136-137). The paucity of microliths and bladelets in relation to cores may be the result of non-systematic collection of surface finds. It is also possible that small artefacts disappear into the crevices in the clayey soil which cracks deeply every summer.

Flint items from later periods are less common. Two broken bi-facials with traces of polish are attributed to the Neolithic period. Three Canaanite blades (Fig. 9:7, 8), of which one bears gloss, are attributed to the Early Bronze Age. In addition two geometric sickle blades (Fig. 9:9, 10) are characteristic of the period from the Middle Bronze Age II until the Iron Age (Rosen 1997).

CONCLUSION

The scarce flint assemblage may be evidence for the existence of an Epi-Paleolithic camp site, most probably disturbed by the extensive ploughing in the immediate vicinity of the excavated area. There is also evidence for Neolithic activity in the area. The presence of sickle blades may indicate that cereals were grown in the area of the site. These sickle blades date to the Early Bronze Age and later periods, implying that this area was connected with activities carried out in the nearby settlements. Furthermore, it is apparent that the Middle Bronze Age cemetery was located in an area connected to settlement.

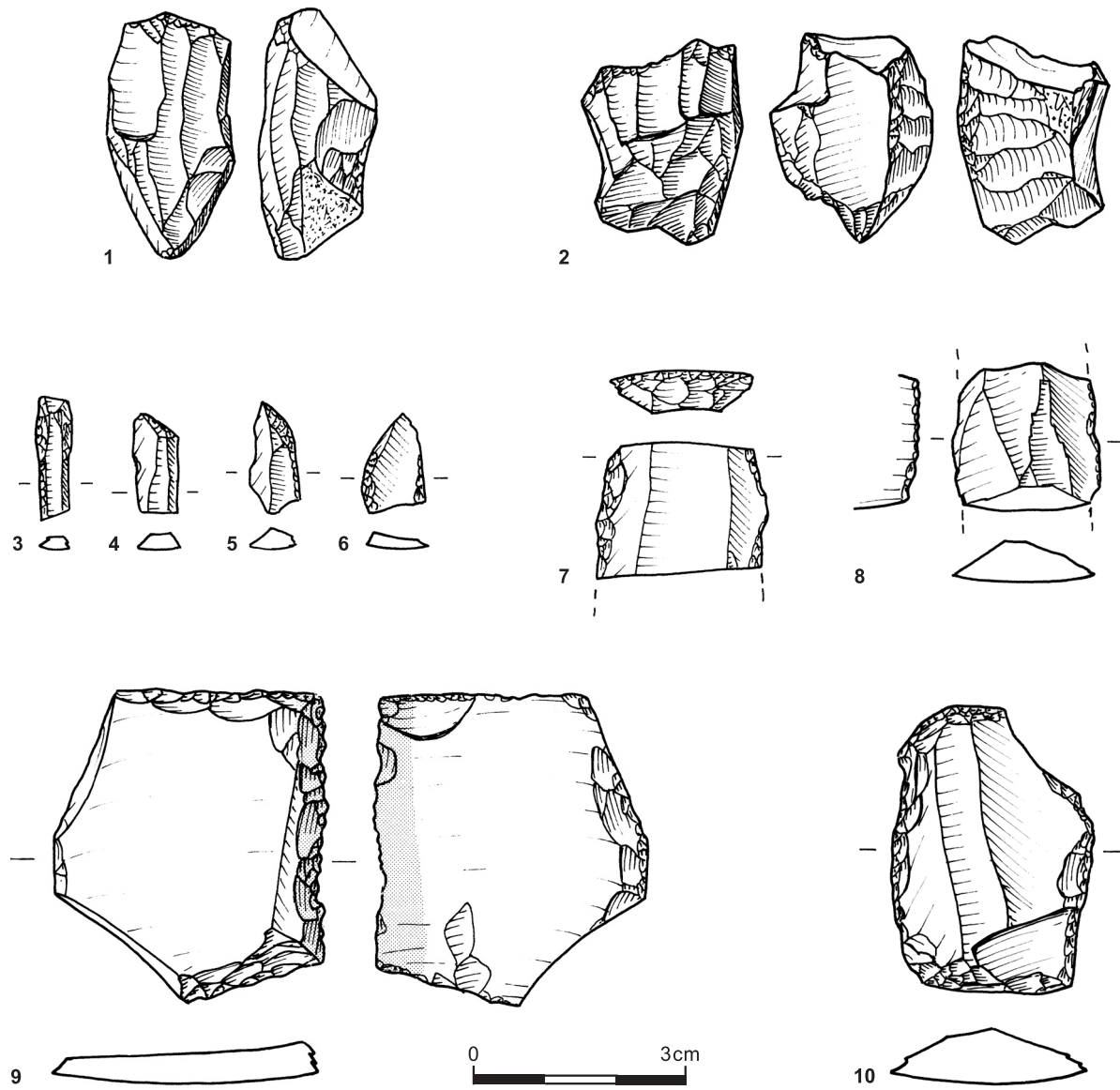


Fig. 9: Flint artefacts.

APPENDIX II: THE HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS

Yossi Nagar

Human skeletal remains, dated to the Middle Bronze Age IIA period, were found at Khirbet Muḥayzin. The bones were in a very poor state of preservation. The bones were studied *in situ* (Bass 1987; Hillson 1993) and left in the graves.

SQUARE B1

The skeletal remains included several teeth and a fragment of a mandible of a child. Tooth development and attrition rates:

1. Upper and lower 1st permanent molars showing complete crown.
2. Upper permanent canine and lower permanent incisor showing complete crown.
3. Upper deciduous molar showing slight enamel attrition (root closed).

Conclusions: The bones represent a child 3-4 years old.

SQUARE B3

The skeletal remains included fragmentary adult skull, teeth, and postcranial bones. The bones were found in anatomical articulation indicating primary burial. The body was laid on its back, in an east-west direction with the head to the east, hands on

the pelvis. Lower premolar shows dentine cup in one cusp, typical of an individual 30-40 years old. Sex unknown.

Conclusions: The bones represent an adult individual, 30-40 years old.

SQUARE B4

The skeletal remains included a few fragmentary postcranial bones. The burial posture could not be determined. Age and sex estimations unknown, yet the fragments were bigger than those of a small child.

Conclusions. The bones represent an individual aged 10< years old.

SQUARE B5

The skeletal remains included fragmentary adult skull, teeth, and postcranial bones. The bones were found in anatomical articulation indicating primary burial. The deceased was placed on his left side, in a north/south direction with the head in the south facing west. Age and sex estimations unknown.

Conclusions: The bones represent an adult individual (15< years old).

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