

**KHALET AL-JAM'A
A MIDDLE BRONZE AND IRON AGE NECROPOLIS NEAR BETHLEHEM
(PALESTINE)**

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During Spring 2013, the MOTA-DACH Office of Bethlehem was informed of the retrieval of a tomb during the construction of an industrial area roughly 2.2 Km south-east of the Basilica of the Nativity on the Hindaza hill slope called Khalet al-Jam'a. Palestinian archaeologists recovered a number of items identifying there a multi-period necropolis. The site was the object of a rescue excavation in the following Spring 2014. Eleven tombs and their fittings were rescued and recovered in the MOTA storerooms. In May 2015, a joint Italian-Palestinian team preliminary surveyed the necropolis and recorded its finds, planning a future systematic exploration. At a provisional exam, KJ necropolis was in use during Intermediate Bronze Age (EB IV), Middle Bronze Age and, successively, through the whole Iron Age.

Keywords: Bethlehem; necropolis; Early Bronze IV; Middle Bronze; Iron Age

The site of Khalet al-Jam'a (31°40'54.34''N 35°12'38.25''E) lays 2.2 Km south-east from the center of Bethlehem (fig. 1), on the south-eastern slope of the hill of Hindaza, where a large area was used as cemetery in pre-classical antiquity. The geomorphology is characterized by a gently emerging limestone bedrock that shelves from a maximum elevation of around 700 m a.s.l., on the hill top, to the 660 m contour line on a central terrace on the hill flanks overlooking Wadi Artas.

1. THE DISCOVERY

In Spring 2013, during works for the construction of an industrial park promoted and developed by a French-Palestinian partnership, a bulldozer accidentally exposed a rock-cut tomb. The Palestinian Tourist Police, having intercepted some items, promptly informed the MOTA-DACH Office of Bethlehem which identified the plundered tombs, and, in Spring 2014, carried out a salvage excavation in order to survey the tombs and recover their fittings. In the meantime, after several negotiations with the construction firm, building activities were stopped in the still preserved western part of the necropolis.

In Spring 2015, the MOTA-DACH and Sapienza University of Rome formed a joint team¹ to carry on the systematic exploration of the necropolis and to rescue as much as possible what was still preserved on the site. In May, the necropolis area was completely surveyed. Excavated and looted tombs were documented, their funerary furnishings listed and recorded. Human remains and other finds underwent a preliminary study and sampling, which prepare future more accurate investigations.

¹ The joint team was composed as follows. MOTA-DACH: Dr. Mohammed Ghayyada, responsible for the Bethlehem district (presently carrying on a PhD on the Khalet al-Jam'a MB cemetery in Sapienza University); Dr. Wael Hamamreh, and Mr. Ayman al-Rjoob; Sapienza University: Prof. Lorenzo Nigro, director; Dr. Daria Montanari, field responsible; Mrs. Alessandra Guari, human remains and object draftsman, Mrs. Maria Tamburrini, surveyor and pottery draftsman, and Federico Capella, photographer and GPS technician.

2. THE NECROPOLIS

The necropolis stretches over an area of roughly 3 hectares with a north-south extension of 320 m and an east-west of 200 m (fig. 2), exploiting the natural characteristics of the bedrock emerging in series of sloping terraces. Two main terraces with underground caves hosted two different cemeteries. On the lower southernmost terrace, the largest Intermediate Bronze Age (EB IV)-Middle Bronze I-III cemetery was located, while on the upper northernmost terrace a less densely used Iron Age cemetery was implanted. The upper cemetery was partially damaged by modern buildings, as several modern houses were erected on the top of the Hindaza hill. Only a few tombs were thus still visible. The lower cemetery, on the other hand, was cleared off for at least two thirds of its original extension. In the preserved part, at least 30 tombs were identified.

Four major areas have been distinguished on the basis of topography (fig. 3): A, B, C, and D. Area A occupies the upper northern terrace of the MB cemetery (preserved only on its western side); Area B represents the lower south-eastern quadrant (almost completely removed by bulldozer) of the same cemetery; finally, Area C includes the sloping south-western quadrant of the MB cemetery. The northern cemetery falls within Area D. A rock step marks the border between the northern and southern cemeteries.

2.1. *Area A - the Middle Bronze cemetery on the north-western terrace*

Area A occupies the north-western terrace of the MB cemetery at a mean elevation of 680 m. In this area the natural bedrock emerges at several spots with a very flat and regular surface. The geomorphology favoured tombs digging, as underground caves in the limestone were huge and numerous. A preliminary examination of the site surface allowed to identify nineteen tombs distributed in the central and western sectors. Five tombs (Tombs A1, A2, A3, A4, A6) were excavated by MOTA-DACH; two (Tomb A7, A8) were identified and protected; five tombs (Tombs A14, A15, A16, A17, A19) were found already looted and only a few materials were recovered from them. The blocked shafts of at least five more tombs (A22, A23, A24, A25, A26) were identified during the survey of May 2015. Finally, two tombs (A29 and A30) were regrettably removed by the bulldozer, and only their cut shafts were visible.

2.1.1. Tomb A1

Tomb A1 is a multi-chambered shaft-tomb located in the southern-central sector of Area A. Bulldozing activities damaged the tomb on its eastern side, where the modern road cut through the ancient cemetery (fig. 4). Chambers were dug exploiting communicating underground cavities and, due to the bulldozer cut, it was impossible to ascertain if some of them originally belonged to separated tombs with their own shafts. Four chambers and one shaft were identified: a main central room (Chamber 1), cut by bulldozer to the east; Chamber 2 to the north-west (communicating with Tomb A2: the passage was blocked by a stone slab); Chamber 3 to the south-west, and Chamber 4 to the north; the round shaft is opened to the north of Chamber 3. Funerary furnishing retrieved in the tombs included pottery vessels, weapons and other personal ornaments. The majority of finds were recovered in Chamber 1, while some fragments and a few complete vessels were collected from Chambers 2, 3 and 4. The chronological setting of finds is within MB IIB.

Tomb A1, Chamber 1

Human remains were unfortunately largely disturbed by collapse of the chamber roof. Three mandibles probably belonging to different individuals (a male, a female, and a child) were found in Chamber 1.

The pottery repertoire included 4 platters (Bk11/1; 6060, BK3a/1, 6253; fig. 5:1); 13 bowls with high flaring rim, pronounced shoulders and pedestal base (6009, 6063, 6064, 6065, 6066, 6083A, Bk6/1, Bk7/1, Bk14/1, Bk15/1, Bk42/1, Bk43/1, KJ.15.TA1.1/4; fig. 5:2); 2 Gublite bowls² (6059, 6252; fig. 5:3); 2 sharply carinated bowls (6013, Bk4/1; fig. 5:4);³ 1 hemispherical bowl⁴ (Bk3b/1; fig. 6:1); 4 dipper juglets with pinched rim (6011, 6056, Bk39/1; one Red Burnished, 6012); 5 Black Burnished piriform juglets (6054, 6055, KJ.15.TA1.1/2, KJ.15.TA1.1/3, KJ.15.TA1.1/5; fig. 6:2); 1 red-slip tankard with pedestal base (6058; fig. 6:3); twin-vases consisting of two attached juglets with stepped rim, ridge at the bottom of the neck, pronounced shoulders, triple handle, and ring base (6085; fig. 7:1); 1 jug with globular body and ring base (6251); 1 single spouted lamp (6661). Chamber 1 also yielded an alabastron (2288), one bronze toggle pin (6192), and two bronze daggers (6196, 6197; fig. 7).⁵

Tomb A1, Chamber 4

Only a few ceramic vases were retrieved: 1 platter with inner rounded rim and disc base (6007); 1 bowl with high flaring rim, pronounced shoulders and pedestal base (KJ.15.TA1.4/3); 2 Black Burnished piriform juglets (6014; Bk4/2).

2.1.2. Tomb A2

Tomb A2 is to the north of Tomb A1, along the western rocky wall of the modern street. Like Tomb A1, also A2 was sliced on its eastern side by bulldozer activities that opened its main chamber (fig. 8). It is possibly the conjunction of three different caves each having its own shaft (fig. 9). A roughly triangular rock pillar was carved out from the bedrock at the centre of the tomb between Chambers 2 and 3. Chamber 1 is the largest one (3.8 x 4 m). A square (1.05 x 1.1 m) shaft opened on its south side; it was sealed by a rectangular slab. Another square shaft opened on the eastern side of Chamber 2, while a secondary circular one had cut through the thin bedrock wall between Chambers 2 and 3. A passage

² Nigro 2000, 1193; Kochavi - Yadin 2002, 198; W.F. Albright stressed the metallic origin of this type of bowls (Albright 1933, 69); Amiran 1969, 90, pl. 25:1.

³ Pottery vases illustrated in fig. 5: 1, 6253, outer slip 5YR 8/2 pinkish white, inner slip 5YR 8/2 pinkish white, inner colour 10YR 6/4 red, fabric colour 10YR 6/4 red, comparable with Kenyon 1965, fig. 222:2; 2, 6063, outer slip 10YR 8/2 white, comparable with Kenyon 1965, fig. 113:2; 3, 6059, fabric colour 10YR 6/4 pale red, outer colour 10YR 6/4 pale red, inner colour 10YR 6/4 pale red; 4, Bk4/1, outer slip 10YR 8/3 very pale brown, fabric colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown, inner colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown, comparable with Kenyon 1965, fig. 157:6.

⁴ Beck 2000, 174.

⁵ Pottery vases illustrated in fig. 6: 1, Bk3b/1, fabric colour 5YR 4/6 reddish yellow, outer colour 5YR 4/6 reddish yellow, inner colour 2.5YR 6/6 light red; 2, 6055, outer burnish 5YR 7/1 light gray; 3, 6058, fabric colour 10R 6/3 pale red, outer colour 10R 6/3 pale red, inner colour 10R 6/3 pale red. Twin-vases illustrated in fig. 7: 1, 6085, outer slip 2.5YR 6/6 light red, fabric colour 5YR 6/8 light red. Toggle pin 6192 can find comparison with Tomb B3 at Jericho (Kenyon 1960, fig. 165:1). Two fragmentary cooking pots and other pottery sherds dating to Iron Age II were found in the area of Chamber 1 of Tomb A1 suggesting a later reuse of this burial complex.

connecting Chamber 2 and nearby Tomb A1 was found blocked. Both Chambers 2 and 3 had a raised niche inside (presumably for hosting a lamp and dug in the EB IV?). Pick marks were visible on the chambers rock cut ceilings and in the shafts.

More than one hundred complete vessels were found in Tomb A2 distributed in the three chambers, as well as several bronze and stone objects. An Intermediate Bronze Age/Early Bronze IV four lips lamp (6039; fig. 16:1) and the fragment of a tray wall (Bk16/1) found in Chamber 3 may indicate that the tomb was originally used in this period.

Tomb A2, Chamber 1

Sparse human bones⁶ were found in this chamber referable to different individuals. Some animal bones (*ovis vel capra*) were probably connected to food offerings.

This chamber yielded 62 almost complete vessels: 1 single spouted lamp (6001); 5 platters (6006, 6049, 6079, 6081, 6170); a three-footed deep bowl with triangular rim (6067; fig. 10:1); 2 White Slip Gublite bowls with disc base (6047, 6048); a Gublite like bowl with pedestal and triple handle (6077; fig. 11); 15 White Slip bowls with flaring rim, pronounced shoulders and pedestal base (2283, 2284, 2285, 6008, 6017, 6026, 6052, 6083B, 6167, Bk9/1, Bk51/1, Bk55/1, Bk75/1, Bk82/1, KJ.15.TA2.1/3; fig. 10:2); 2 small jars (6082, 6027 carinated); 13 dipper juglets with pinched rim, loop handle and pointed base (2286, 6021, 6022, 6023, 6038, 6043, 6045, 6051, 6142, 6143, 6169, 6237, Bk83/1); 8 piriform juglets (6010, 6024, 6036, 6037, 6041, 6050, Bk56/1, KJ.15.TA2.1/2; fig. 10:3); 4 juglets with carinated shoulders (6025, 6042, 6044, 6168); a Tell el-Yahudiyeh cylindrical juglet (6238); a cylindrical juglet (6046); 1 ovoid jug (6053); 7 ovoid jars with two or four handles (6087, 6088, 6232, 6234, 6235, 6250, KJ.15.TA2.1/1).⁷

Chamber 1 also gave back a small group of bronzes (fig. 12): three daggers, one socketed axe, and a toggle pin. Dagger n° 6187 is 21.1 cm long; it has a straight tang and two preserved rivets, flattened lozenge-shaped cross-section. It possibly belongs to a renowned early Mycenaean type. Dagger n° 6188 exhibits a peduncular tang to be inserted into a wooden handle ending with round-shaped fine limestone pommel with domed cross-section; its blade has hexagonal cross-section.⁸ Dagger n° 6189, 14.5 cm long, shows a thinner flat cross-section, one central rivet and a rounded point.

The socketed axe (6186) has two ribs along the edge, the shaft-hole is decorated by two ridges and one hook, the blade has a lenticular cross-section.⁹ The axe was found together with dagger n° 6188, both deposited upon a stone slab at the centre of the chamber.

⁶ Fragments of crania, teeth, humerus, clavicles, ulnas and phalanges are reported.

⁷ Pottery vases illustrated in fig. 10: 1, 6067, fabric colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown, outer colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown, inner colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown, comparable with Kenyon 1960, fig. 160:4 (without hooked handles); 2, 6026, outer slip 5YR 7/6 reddish yellow, fabric colour 5YR 7/4 pink, inner colour 5YR 7/4 pink, comparable with Kenyon 1965, fig. 144:3; 3, 6021, outer slip 10YR 8/2 white, fabric colour 10YR 8/4 very pale brown, inner colour 10YR 8/3 very pale brown. The bowl 6077 illustrated in fig. 11: fabric colour 10YR 5/6 red, outer colour 10YR 5/6 red, inner colour 10YR 5/6 red. The jar KJ.15.TA2.1/1 is on display in the Bethlehem Museum (see Nigro 2015, fig. 3).

⁸ Dagger 6188 finds a comparison with Tomb D9 at Jericho (Kenyon 1965, fig. 111:11), and with Grave 3 at Tell ed-Dab'a (Philip 2006, 50, fig. 17:4).

⁹ The axe 6186 can be compared with the one recovered from Tomb 9 at Jericho by J. Garstang (1932, pl. XXVII:3; Philip 2006, fig. 9:1). It can be included in narrow, elongated socket axes – Type II, variant 2 of Miron's typology (Miron 1992, 71).

The bronze toggle pin (6183)¹⁰ is 13.9 cm belonged to the incised type. It was possibly associated with a carnelian bead (6175).

Two so-called 'Hyksos' scarabs (4368, 4369) complete the funerary set of Chamber 1 (fig. 13).¹¹

Tomb A2, Chamber 2

Chamber 2 was probably an autonomous tomb at the beginning, with a square (side 0.75 m) shaft to the east. It is 3.5 x 3 m wide. Human remains in this tomb were not preserved. Its ceramic inventory includes 3 bowls with straight walls and inverted rim (6069, 6239; 6068 radially burnished; fig. 14:1); 1 bowl with slight carination (6076); 1 hemispherical bowl¹² (6240) (fig. 14:2); 4 White Slip bowls with flaring rim, pronounced shoulders and pedestal base (6074, 6075, 6078, 6244); 4 Dark Faced Burnished juglets (6035, 6070, 6071, 6072); 1 dipper jug (6242; fig. 14:3) and 1 dipper juglet (6073).¹³

Two bronze toggle pins (6176, 6182)¹⁴ and a needle (6184) were possibly associate to female individuals buried in this chamber, as well as the bottom of a fragmentary calcite alabastron (6185).

Tomb A2, Chamber 3

Chamber 3 has a round plan and a dome roof. It is 2.8 m wide, with a raised niche on the north-eastern side (fig. 15). A circular shaft (3), located in between Chambers 2 and 3, might have been the original access to Chamber 3.

Chamber 3 gave back 23 pottery vessels and 4 bronzes. The ceramic repertoire is represented by: 1 single spouted lamp (6033); 5 platters (6018, 6019, 6020, 6031, 6241); 2 Gublite bowls (6002 with incised cross on the base, 6029; fig. 16:2); a sharply carinated bowl (6034); 5 White Slip bowls with flaring rim, pronounced shoulders and pedestal base (6003, 6032 with incised cross on the base, Bk5a/1, Bk5b/1, Bk5c/1; fig. 16:3); 2 dipper juglets (6005, 6243; fig. 17:1); a Black Burnished piriform juglet (6030); 2 fragmentary juglets (Bk16/3, Bk16/4); 2 jars (6233, Bk16/2; fig. 17:2).¹⁵

Two bronze toggle pins (6177, 6181)¹⁶ and two bronze needles (6178, 6179) were included into the (female?) funerary equipment of Chamber 3.

¹⁰ Toggle pin 6183 can find comparison at Jericho in Tomb J1 (Kenyon 1960, fig. 177:12).

¹¹ Scarab 4369 is incised with concentric circles (Ben-Tor 2004, 34, fig. 5) and it can be compared with one specimen from Tomb P17 at Jericho (Kirkbride 1965, fig. 289:2).

¹² Cohen 2002, 114-115, fig. 1:2.

¹³ Pottery vases illustrated in fig. 14: 1, 6068, inner+outer burnish 2.5YR 5/6 red, fabric colour 2.5YR 5/6 red, comparable with Cohen 2002, fig. 5:2; 2, 6240, fabric colour 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow, outer colour 5YR 7/6 reddish yellow, inner colour 5YR 6/6 reddish yellow; 3, 6242, fabric colour 5YR 7/6 reddish yellow, outer colour 5YR 7/3 pink, inner colour 5YR 7/6 reddish yellow.

¹⁴ The plain shaft toggle pins recovered from the Khalet al-Jam'a necropolis recall Klein's types I.31a-b (Klein 1992, pl. 61:1), and I.6A1b (Klein 1992, pl. 80:4-6).

¹⁵ Pottery vases illustrated in fig. 16: 1, 6039, fabric colour 2.5YR 6/2 pale red, outer colour 2.5YR 6/6 light red, inner colour 2.5YR 6/6 light red; 2, 6002, fabric colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown, outer colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown, inner colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown; 3, 6003, outer slip 2.5YR 8/2 white. Pottery vases illustrated in fig. 17: 1, 6243, outer slip 5 YR 8/3 pink; 2, 6233, combed and incised decoration, fabric colour 5 YR 7/3 pink, outer colour 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow, inner colour 5 YR 7/6 reddish yellow.

¹⁶ Toggle pins can find comparisons at Jericho, respectively in Tombs H18 and B51 (Kenyon 1960, fig. 207:19; 1965, fig. 174:2).

2.1.3. Tomb A3

Tomb A3 is located north-west of Tomb A2 and to the west of Tomb A4. Bulldozer cut through the shaft leaving the main oval chamber visible from the road (fig. 18). The shaft was circular (around 0.9 m of diameter). The shape of the domed chamber was regular. Some fragmentary animal bones were collected from this tomb.

2.1.4. Tomb A4

Tomb A4 is located north of Tomb A2. Also this tomb was damaged by bulldozer activity; the eastern part of its shaft was cut away (fig. 19). The shaft was square and opened into a roughly circular chamber. Some fragmentary human bones (a cranium) were collected from this tomb.

2.1.5. Tomb A6

Tomb A6, located roughly in the middle of Area A, had been badly damaged by modern building activities and belonged to a different architectural type in respect of the others. It had a short dromos followed by a small rectangular (2 x 1.2 m) chamber. As no finds were collected in it, its dating remains uncertain.

2.1.6. Tomb A7

Tomb A7 is located in the south-western sector of Area A. It was discovered and only partially explored during survey activities of Spring 2015. It has an irregular oval shaft (fig. 20), and a huge underground chamber subdivided into small partitions by walls made of regular stones (fig. 21). Due to roof collapses and possible looting attempts, the chamber was found filled up with limestone chops and erosion soil. It concealed Iron Age II ceramic material,¹⁷ possibly belonging to funerary furnishings (fig. 22).¹⁸

The retrieval of a basalt grinding stone, two flint globular pestles, and a clay animal figurine,¹⁹ suggests that the cave might have been reused.

2.2. *Area B - the Middle Bronze cemetery*

Area B is in the south-eastern sector of the necropolis, and it is delimited by the road of the factory area to the west and by the modern road climbing towards the modern water tower to the east. It was almost completely removed by building activities (including massive concrete pouring). As tombs were identified all around the newly built area, this suggests that at least two dozens of tombs were completely cleared off. Three tombs were surveyed at the north-west corner of the Area (B9, B10, B11).

¹⁷ 7 single spouted lamps (KJ.15.TA7/1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10); twin-bowls (KJ.15.TA7/23; fig. 21:1); 7 Red Slip kraters (KJ.15.TA7/3, 11, 12, 15, 17, 24, 26; fig. 21:2); 3 jugs (KJ.15.TA7/4, 6, 21); 7 jars (KJ.15.TA7/13, 14, 16, 20, 22, 25, 27); 2 pots (KJ.15.TA7/18, 19).

¹⁸ Pottery vases illustrated in fig. 22: 1, KJ.15.TA7/23, fabric colour 5YR 7/1 light gray, outer colour 2.5 YR 6/6 light red, inner colour 2.5 YR 6/6 light red; 2, KJ.15.TA7/12, inner+outer slip and burnish 2.5 YR 5/8 red, fabric colour 5 YR 7/1 light gray.

¹⁹ The figurine is a solid handmade quadruped (Holland 1977, 123, type G; 1995, 167-168, type D), possibly the hindquarters of horse, with preserved tail curving downwards under the belly of the animal, between the broken legs (Yezerki - Geva 2003, pl. 3:6: F178).

2.2.1. Tomb B9

The eastern half of Tomb B9 was completely removed for building the foundation of a factory, so that it was visible in section. It originally consisted of two chambers, with a square shaft located to the south-west in Chamber 1. Chamber 1 had a round irregular shape almost 4 m long on the north-south axis, while Chamber 2 was smaller.

Tomb B9, Chamber 1

A few human remains were preserved: crania fragments, ribs, sterni, scapulae, vertebrae, phalanges, and metatarsus referable to two individuals.

Some pottery vessels probably were part of the tomb furnishings: a Gray Burnished piriform juglet (6057), and a Canaanite jar with grooved rim and two combed bands on the shoulders (6236; fig. 23).²⁰

Tomb B9, Chamber 2

Vessels recovered from the bulldozed Chamber 2 are a few: a four spouted lamp (KJ.15.TB1.2/1), and a jar with decorated neck (KJ.15.TB1.2/2, fig. 24)²¹ to be connected with an Intermediate Bronze Age/EB IV interment; a dipper juglet (6062); and a jar (6247) referable to a MB II burial.

2.2.2. Tomb B10

Tomb B10 was located a few meters to the north of Tomb B9 and had originally one chamber and one circular shaft to the south. It was excavated by the MOTA-DACH before its complete removal. Remains of a male individual were found in Chamber 2.²²

The funerary equipment consisted of 2 four spouted lamps (6080, 6174), and 2 jars with globular body and large flat base (6157, 6173; fig. 25)²³ dating back to the Intermediate Bronze Age/Early Bronze IVB.²⁴

2.2.3. Tomb B11

Tomb B11 is located to north-east of Tomb B9, near to the northern limit or Area B. It was entered through a round shaft and consisted of a round domed chamber (fig. 26). The tomb was cut along its southern wall by bulldozer. Into the chamber a storage jar with four handles (6249; fig. 27),²⁵ and a bronze needle (6193) were retrieved after possible looting of the rest of the assemblage.

²⁰ Canaanite jar 6236 illustrated in fig. 23: outer colour 5YR 7/4 pink; a comparison for the rim is in Franken 2005, fig. 3.2.84.

²¹ Jar KJ.15.TB1.2/2 illustrated in fig. 24: fabric colour 2.5YR N5 gray, outer colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown, inner colour 2.5YR 6/4 light reddish brown.

²² Cranium, mandible and teeth.

²³ Jar 6173 illustrated in fig. 25: fabric colour 5 YR 7/4 pink, outer colour 5 YR 7/4 pink, inner colour 5 YR 7/4 pink, comparable with Tomb 30 at el-Jib/Gibeon (Pritchard 1963, fig. 33:38).

²⁴ Jar 6173 recalls Kenyon's type J (Kenyon 1965, 42, fig. 18:27), with rim wheel-made and body regularly hand-made. Nigro 2003a, 134; D'Andrea 2012, 22-23.

²⁵ Jar 6249 illustrated in fig. 27: fabric colour 5 YR 7/4 pink, outer colour 5 YR 8/3 pink, inner colour 5 YR 8/3 pink.

2.3. *Area C - the Intermediate Bronze Age/Early Bronze IV cemetery*

Area C is the south-western sector of the necropolis. In this area the MOTA-DACH dug two tombs (Tomb C5 and Tomb C12) during rescue excavations. Unfortunately, two tombs (C18 and C20) were looted before DACH intervention.

Other three Tombs (C26, C27, C28) were identified in the north-central zone of the area during the 2015 survey, presumably belonging to the MB cemetery.

2.3.1. Tomb C5

Tomb C5 is along the western border of the modern road. It has a square shaft, located to south-east of a single round chamber. Some pottery sherds and one triangular flint blade (6194) were retrieved inside it pointing to an Intermediate Bronze Age/Early Bronze IV dating.

2.3.2. Tomb C12

Tomb C12 is a shaft tomb provided with a round domed chamber, and a squared shaft to the south. One male almost complete inhumation was found inside this tomb (fig. 28).

A four spouted lamp (6040; fig. 29)²⁶ represents the only funerary equipment collected in Tomb C12, indicating that the tomb belonged to the original Intermediate Bronze Age/Early Bronze IV cemetery.

2.4. *Area D*

The northernmost terrace of the necropolis was named Area D. This area could represent a northern later expansion of the necropolis. Nowadays, it is encompassed in private estates and houses. In the western half of the area, during some construction works in a private property of Barmil's family, a tomb was discovered due to a bulldozer cut.

2.4.1. Barmils' Tomb (Tomb D13)

The tomb has a roughly round main chamber, which was cut by the bulldozer on its southern side, and a round shaft to the west (fig. 30). The shaft it is still partly unexcavated. A second smaller chamber, a kind of repository, opens on the northern side of the main chamber. It apparently was used for a relatively long period and hosted several inhumations. Finds include typical Iron Age II shapes, such as 7 Black Ware juglets (fig. 31:1), 4 one-spouted lamps (fig. 31:2),²⁷ a Red Slip painted neck ridge jug (6128), a strainer-spouted jug (6129; fig. 32:1), a typical chalice/incense burner with high foot (6133; fig. 32:2),²⁸ and some personal ornaments.²⁹ Tomb fittings from Tomb D13 cover a time span ranging from Iron IB to Iron IIC.

²⁶ Lamp 6040 illustrated in fig 29: fabric colour 10YR 5/6 red, outer colour 2.5YR 6/6 light red, inner colour 2.5YR 6/6 light red, comparable with Tomb G27 (Kenyon 1960, fig. 103:6).

²⁷ These lamps find a comparison with an item recovered from Tomb WH.I at Jebel el-Dhawayyat (Tushingam 1965, fig. 259:2).

²⁸ Pottery vases illustrated in fig. 31: 1, 6129, outer colour 2.5YR 6/6 light red, inner colour 2.5YR 6/6 light red; 2, 6133, fabric colour 7.5YR 7/4 pink, outer colour 7.5YR 7/6 reddish yellow, inner colour 7.5YR 7/6 reddish yellow.

3. BUILT UP INSTALLATIONS IN THE NECROPOLIS AREA

Some built up installations were identified in the area of the necropolis, showing the long lasting occupation of the south-eastern flank of the Hindaza hill (fig. 33).

A rock-cut wine press was uncovered in Area A (figs. 34-35), probably dating to the Byzantine Period. It consists of a large pressing vat, 2.5 x 2.7 m, carved out in the bedrock and connected by means of short channels with two other smaller square basins. The three rock-cut vats were plastered with a pinkish hydraulic revetment 1.2 cm thick. Southeast of these two square basins, there is a couple of round installations, also connected with wine production.

In Area A, two circular stone built lime kilns, also dating to the Byzantine Period were found north of Tomb A7. Moreover, roughly at the centre of the lower terrace and in proximity of the same tomb, the limestone boulders foundations of an Iron Age tower was uncovered (fig. 36). Such a structure was adjoined to an east-west enclosure wall with a width of 1 m. Tomb A7 extended northwards up to the bedrock platform upon which the tower was erected.

4. CONCLUSIONS: THE NECROPOLIS OF KHALET AL-JAM'A, A PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW

The necropolis of Khalet al-Jam'a is mainly characterized by shaft-tombs with single or multiple rock-cut chambers, realized by regularizing underground existing cavities. In spite of the lost of a large part of it, the overall number of tombs can be reconstructed over one hundred.³⁰ Tombs shafts generally are round or square and chambers are roughly circular in plan and domed, often provided with niches. Due to the temporally extended utilization of the necropolis, tombs were crowded and often chambers were connected as to create larger familiar hypogea. On the upper surface of bedrock, shafts' mouths are sometimes flanked by cup-marks, indicating that funerary rites occurred outside tombs after their closing. Tombs basically belong to three periods: Intermediate Bronze/Early Bronze Age IV, Middle Bronze and Iron Age. In some cases Intermediate Bronze Age/Early Bronze IV tombs were re-used in the Middle Bronze Age.

Both in IB/EB IV and in MB I-III inhumations were in primary articulated displacement and they were accompanied by ordinary funerary sets, consisting of pottery vessels, food offerings, personal ornaments and in certain cases of bronze weapons and signet rings with scarabs.³¹

The ceramic inventory shows a wide variety of shapes, from platters to different types of carinated bowls,³² jugs, juglets and jars, as well as several specialised wares, such as Red Burnished Ware,³³ Tell el-Yahudiyeh, Black or Dark Faced Burnished Ware,³⁴ the

²⁹ They include two bronze bracelets, some beads made of carnelian and vitreous materials, a decorated bone disc, and a frit eye-udjat; they can be compared with those from Tomb WH.I at Jebel el-Dhaweiyat (Tushingam 1965, 491-513, figs. 260-261).

³⁰ The number of tombs is actually a relative figure in respect of the groups using it, being them nomadic or seminomadic pastoralists in EB IV, and the inhabitants of the town of Bethlehem in MB and IA.

³¹ Nigro 2009, 367, 371.

³² Beck 1985, 194.

³³ Beck 2000, 195.

³⁴ Nigro 2003b, 351-353.

latter basically employed for small juglets possibly serving as containers of ointments or drugs.³⁵

Bronze daggers, socketed axes, toggle pins and needles also fall well into the regular equipment of individuals (respectively male and female) of the Middle Bronze Age.

The presence of an Iron Age cemetery in Area D is another important information obtained thanks to salvage excavations in Khalet al-Jam'a, as well as the discovery of a single major Iron Age tomb (A7) in the nearby of an Iron Age tower (see above § 3.) in the central sector of Area A.

Further systematic investigation at the site, when possible, will protect an important piece of the archaeology of Palestine and will provide a more detailed information on the ancient communities living in Bethlehem in the 2nd and 1st millennium BC.

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³⁵ Nigro 2000, 1194.

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Fig. 1 - Map of Bethlehem with the necropolis of Khalet al-Jam'a.



Fig. 2 - Sketch map of Khalet al-Jam'a necropolis overlying a satellite photo.

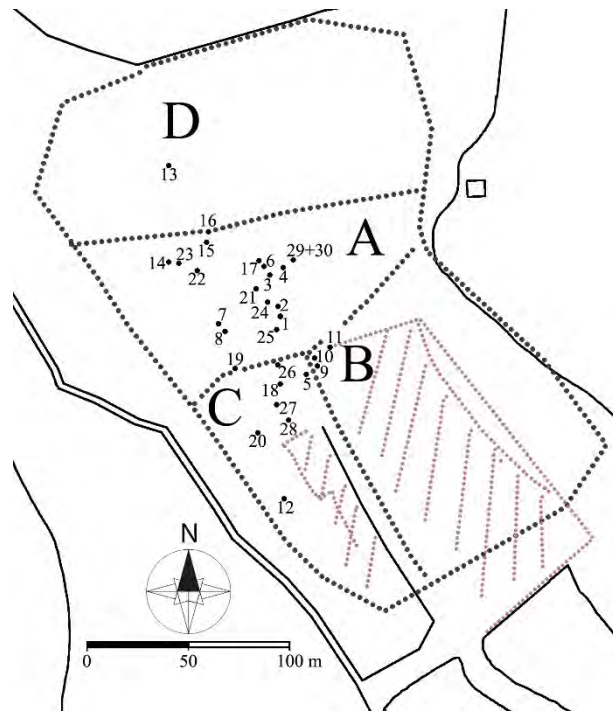


Fig. 3 - Plan of the necropolis with subdivision in areas and tombs.



Fig. 4 - Tomb A1 cut by the bulldozer; from the north-east.



Fig. 5 - Middle Bronze pottery from Chamber 1 of Tomb A1 (1:4).

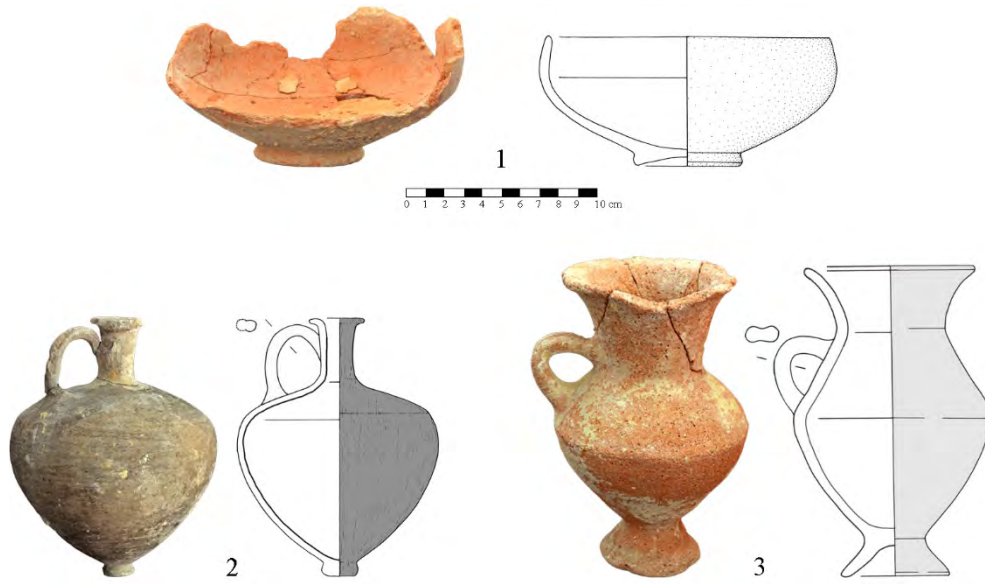


Fig. 6 - Middle Bronze pottery from Chamber 1 of Tomb A1 (1:4).

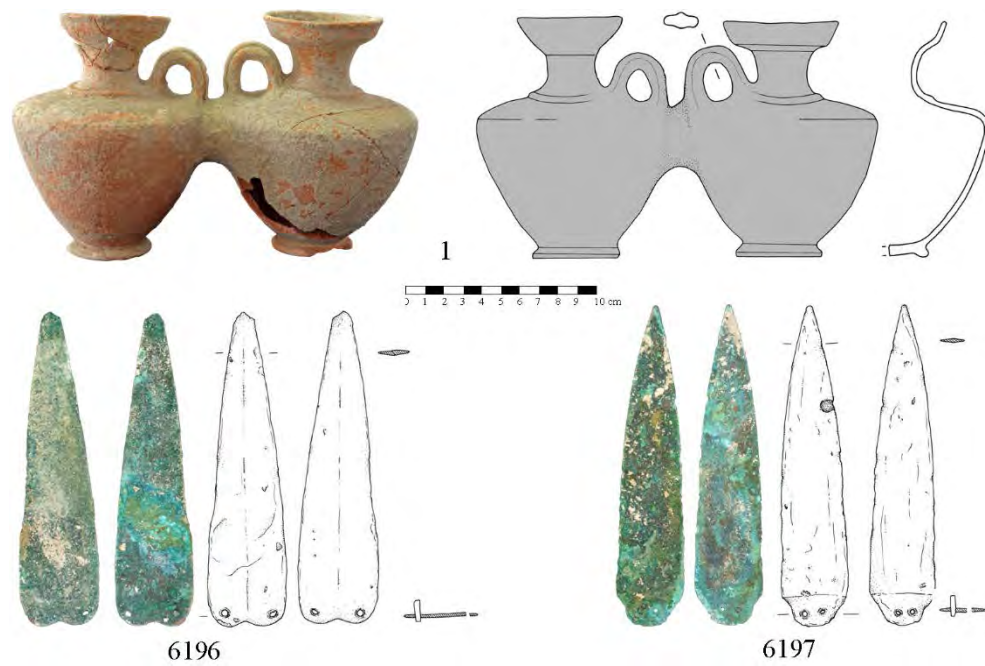


Fig. 7 - Twin-vases 6085 and two bronze daggers from Chamber 1 of Tomb A1 (1:4).



Fig. 8 - Cut Tombs A1 and A2; from the north.

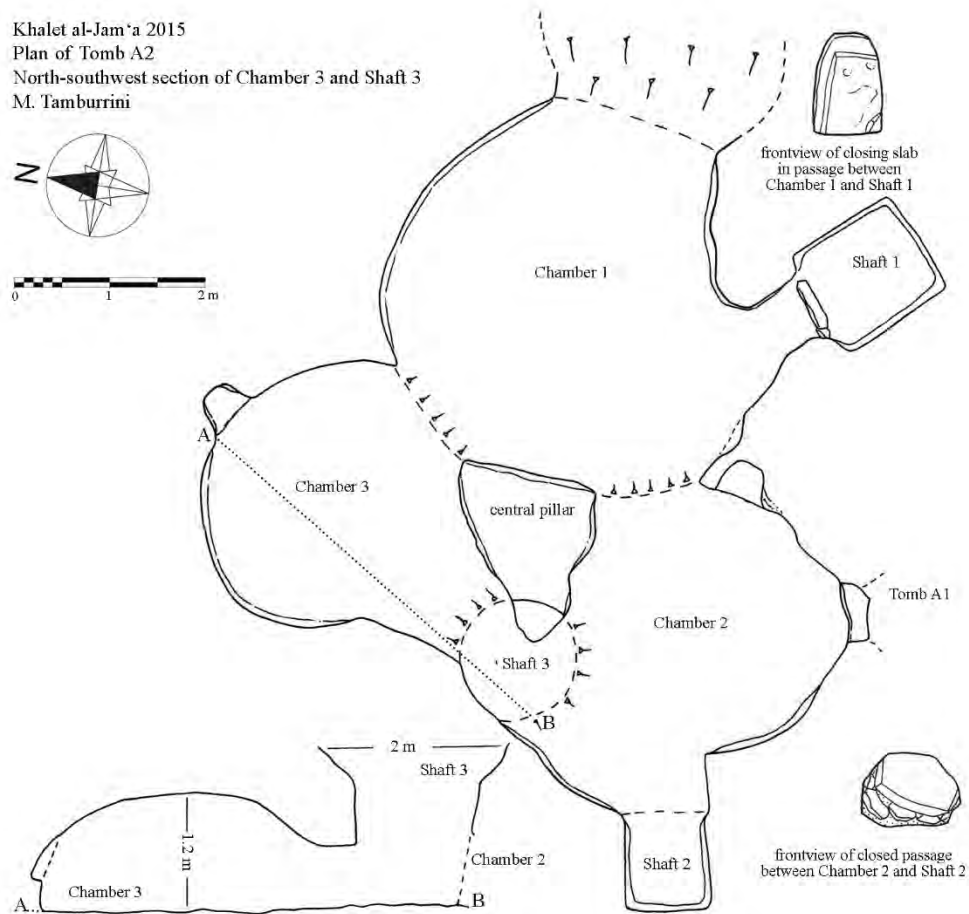


Fig. 9 - Plan and section of Tomb A2 (with front view of closure stones).



Fig. 10 - Middle Bronze pottery from Chamber 1 of Tomb A2.

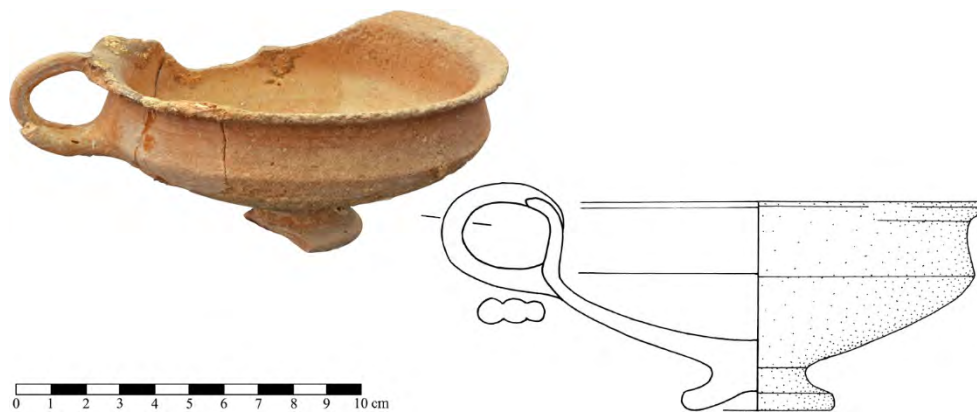


Fig. 11 - Pedestal vase 6077 from Chamber 1 of Tomb A2 (1:2).

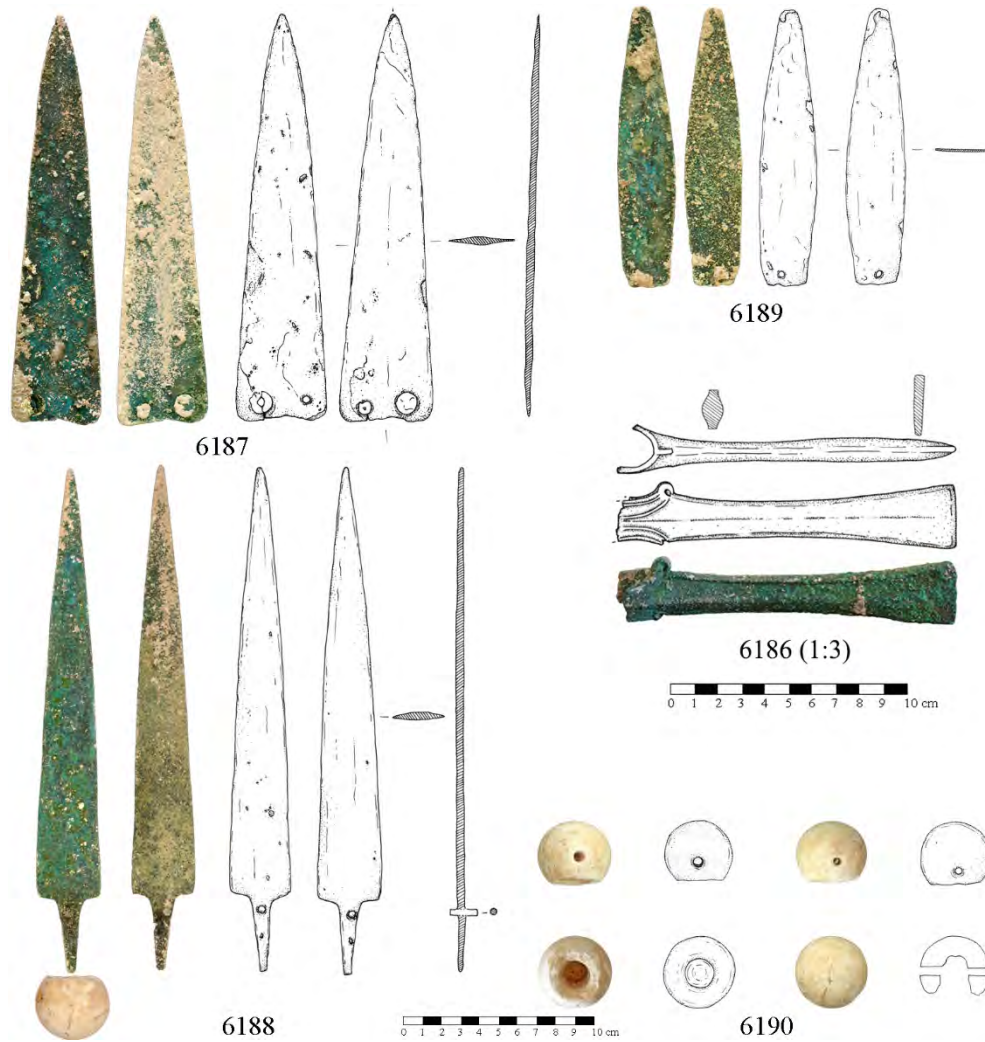


Fig. 12 - Daggers and pomel (1:4), axe (1:3) from Chamber 1 of Tomb A2.

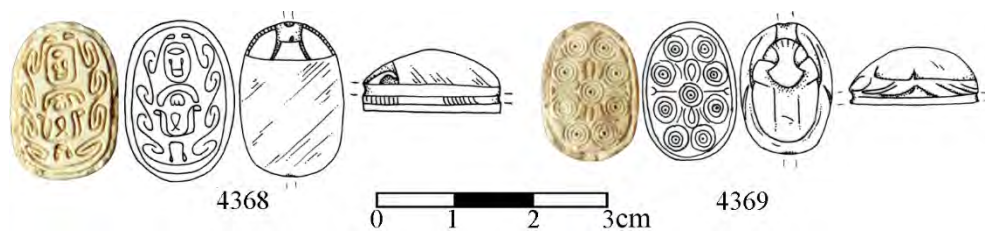


Fig. 13 - Scarabs from Chamber 1 of Tomb A2 (1:1).

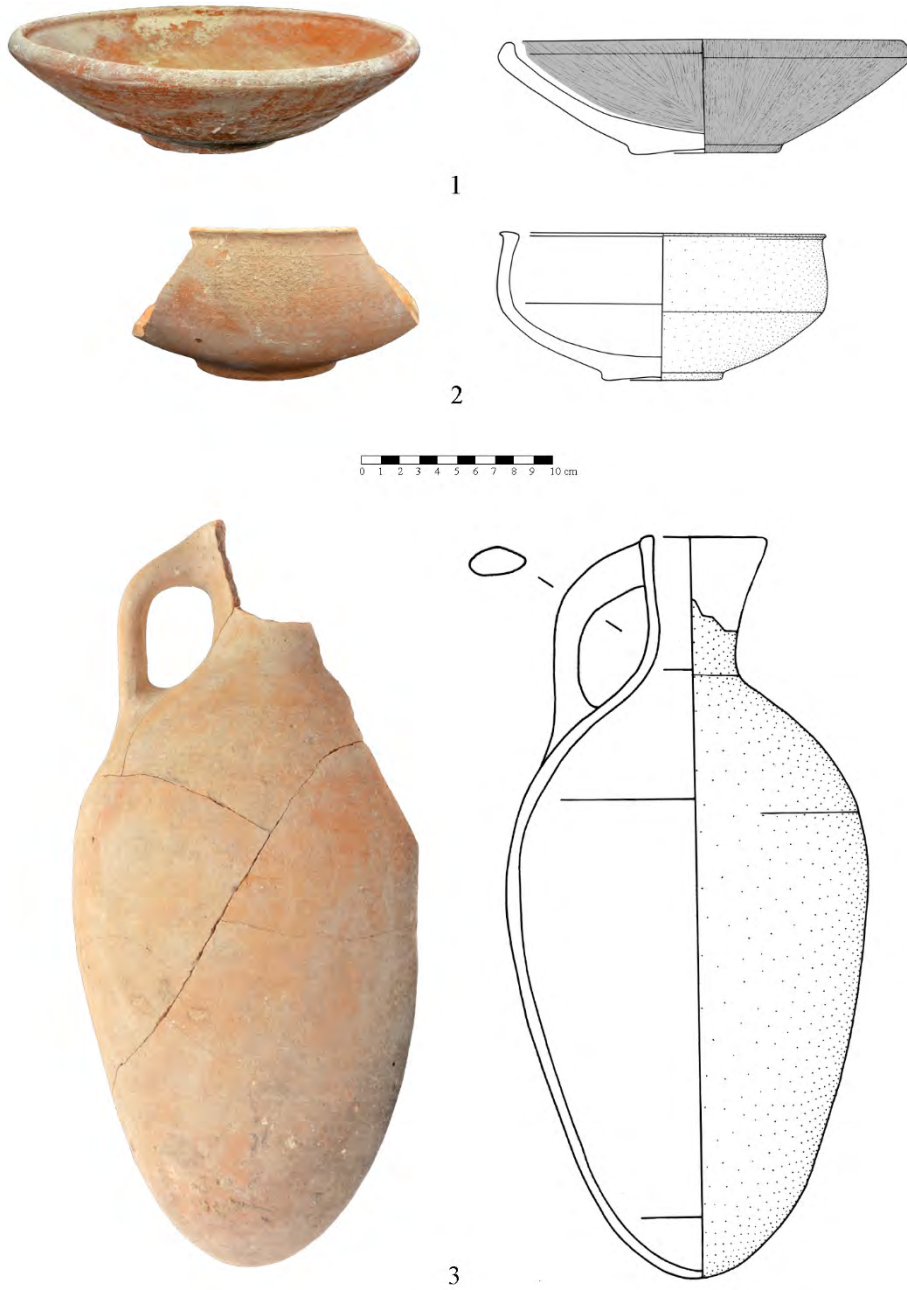


Fig. 14 - Middle Bronze pottery from Chamber 2 of Tomb A2 (1:4).



Fig. 15 - The niche on the north-eastern side of Chamber 3 of Tomb A2; from the south-east.

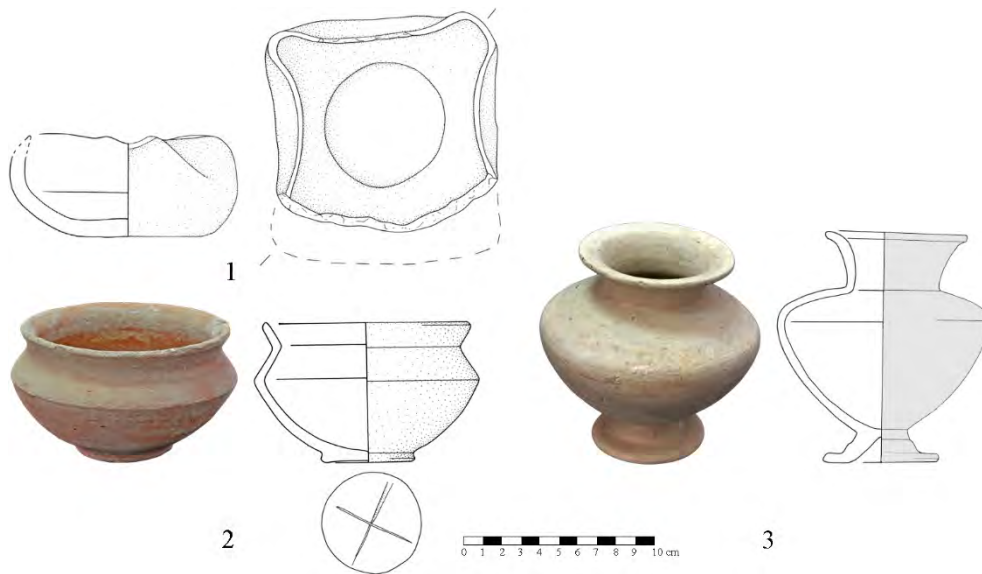


Fig. 16 - Early Bronze IV (n. 1) and Middle Bronze (ns. 2-3) pottery from Chamber 3 of Tomb A2 (1:4).

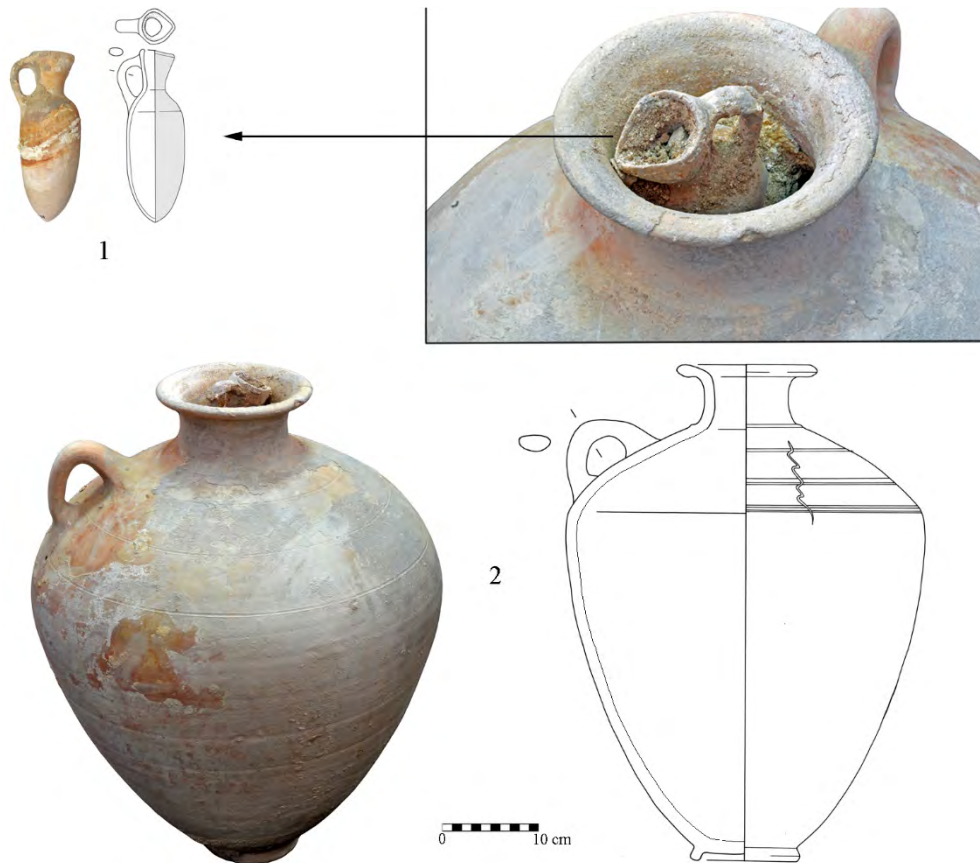


Fig. 17 - Dipper juglet 6243 and jar 6233, retrieved one inside the other, from Chamber 3 of Tomb A2 (1:4).



Fig. 18 - Tomb A3 from the south-east.



Fig. 19 - Tomb A4 from the south-east.



Fig. 20 - Shaft of Tomb A7, in the foreground, and the Herodion, in the background; from the south-west.



Fig. 21 - Underground chamber, left, and small partition, right, of Tomb A7.

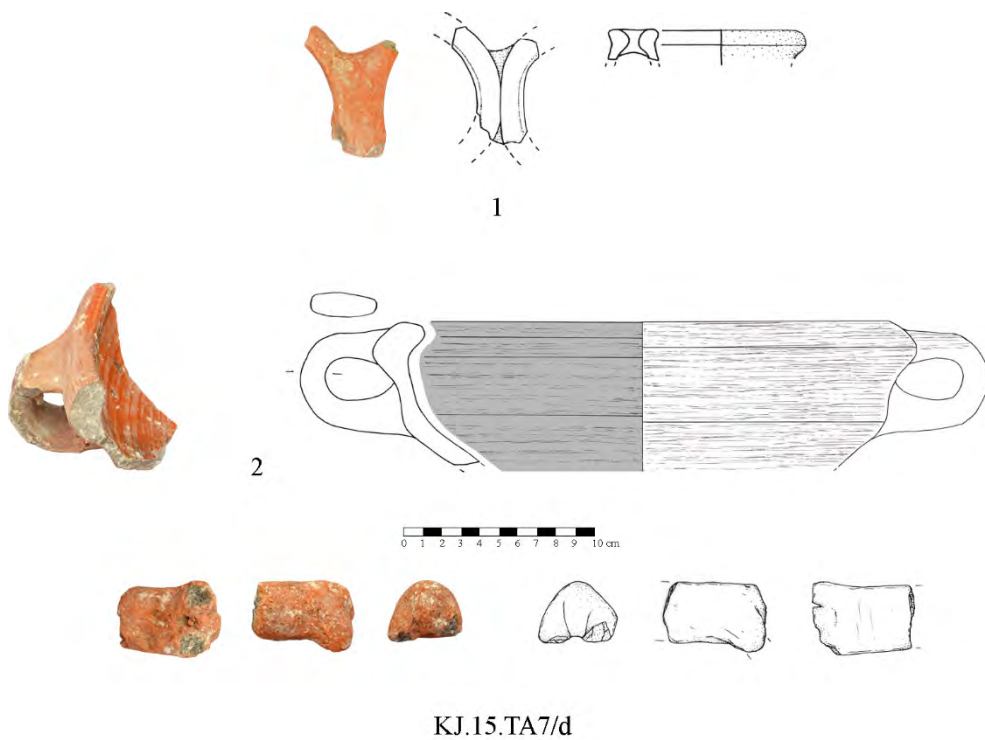


Fig. 22 - Iron Age pottery, and clay figurine from Tomb A7 (1:4).



Fig. 23 - Jar 6236 from Chamber 1 of Tomb B9 (1:8).

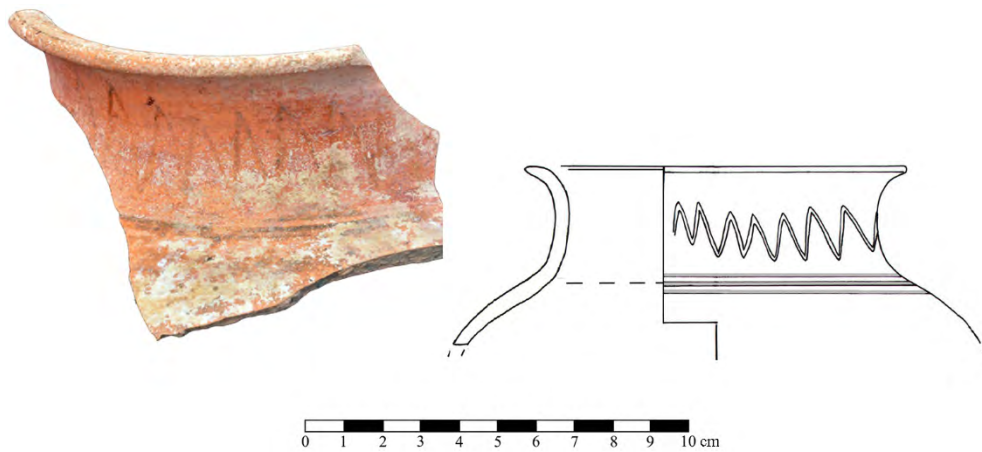


Fig. 24 - Jar KJ.15.TB1.2/2 from Chamber 1 of Tomb B9 (1:2).



Fig. 25 - Early Bronze IVB jar 6173 from Tomb B10 (1:4).



Fig. 26 - Tomb B11 from the south.

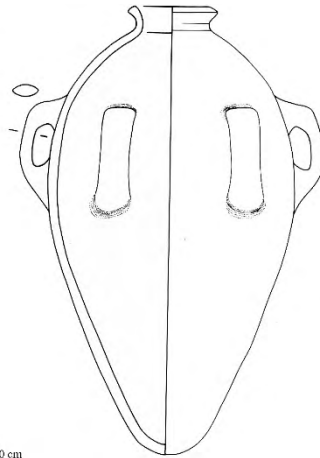


Fig. 27 - Jar 6249 from Tomb B11.

0 10 cm



Fig. 28 - EB IV inhumation from Tomb C12.

0 10 cm

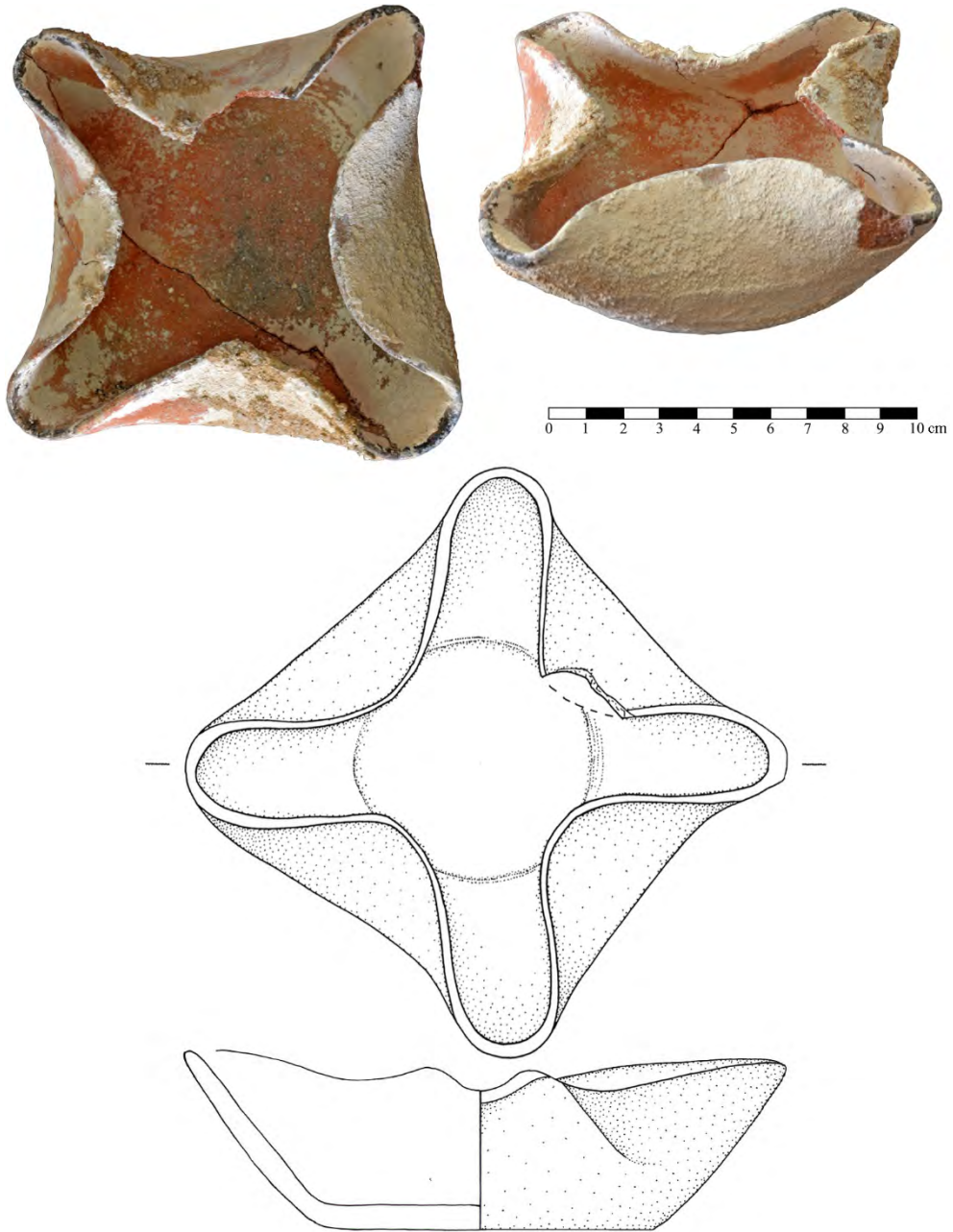


Fig. 29 - Early Bronze IV four spouted lamp 6040 from Tomb C12 (1:2).



Fig. 30 - Shaft of Barmils' Tomb in Area D (top), from the south-east; main chamber of Barmils' Tomb (down), from the south-east.



Fig. 31 - Iron Age Black Ware juglets (n. 1), and lamps (n. 2) from Barmils' Tomb.



Fig. 32 - Iron Age pottery from Barmils' Tomb (1:4).

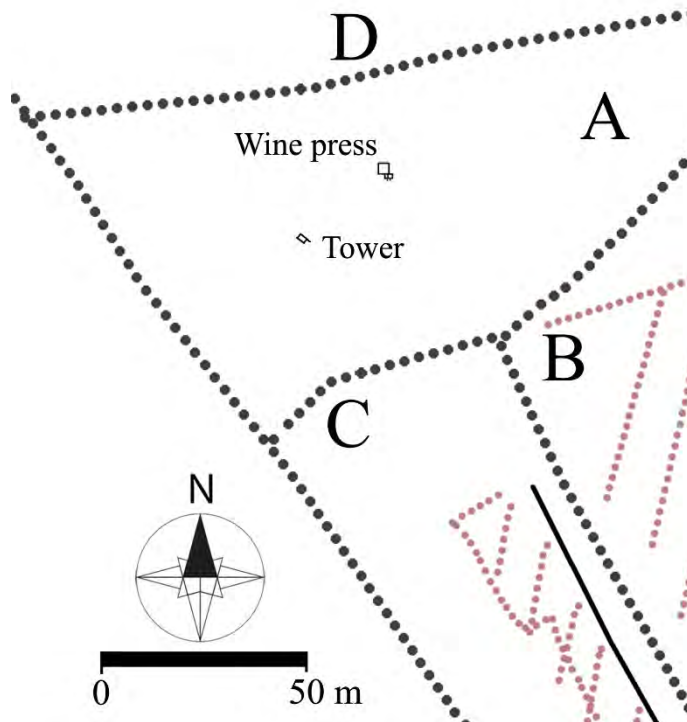


Fig. 33 - Sketch plan of Area A with wine press and tower.



Fig. 34 - Wine press of Area A, in the foreground, and Herodion in the background; from the north.

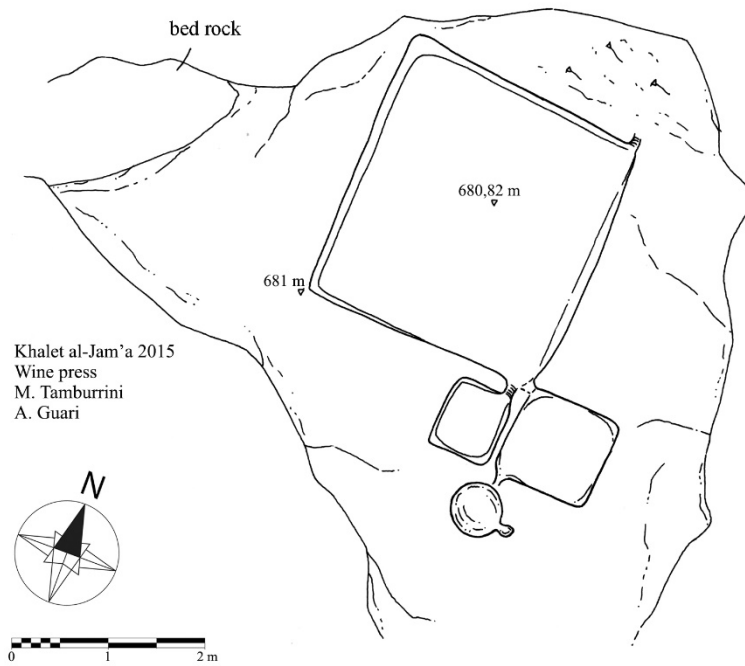


Fig. 35 - Plan of the wine press in Area A.



Fig. 36 - Iron Age tower of Khalet al-Jam'a; from the north-east.

ARABIC ABSTRACT

مقبرة خلة الجامع الأثرية

الموقع: تقع خلة الجامع على الضفة الشمالية لوادي ارطاس و هو من أخصب الأراضي في منطقة بيت لحم منذ العصر الحجري النحاسي حتى اليوم ، إذ يشتمل على العديد ينابيع المياه ، وضمن أراضي قرية هندازه التي تبعد حوالي 2.2 كم إلى الجنوب من مدينة بيت لحم تمتاز بأراضيها الخصبة ذات التربة الحمراء حيث تكثر فيها أشجار الزيتون واللوز والممتدة إلى الجهة الشرقية والجنوبية من القرية . كما أن هذه المقبرة تقع على السفح الجنوبي لجبل هندازه والذي تشتمل على منطقة صخرية كلسية ترتفع حوالي 683م عن سطح البحر . تجدر الإشارة إلى أن هذه المنطقة لم تجر من قبل فيها أو حولها أية حفريات أثرية منتظمة أو عرضية إذا ما قورنت ببقية المواقع في المنطقة وخاصة في منطقة الفريديس (هيروديوم، وخربة تقوع ، ووادي خريطون، وخربة بيت بصة).
طريقة الكشف

بناء على الاتصال الهاتفي الذي تلقاه مدير آثار بيت لحم (السيد محمد غياظة) من قبل الشرطة السياحية بتاريخ 2014/4/14 الذي يفيد بضبط احد لصوص الآثار أثناء قيامه بمحاولة بيع بعض القطع التي عثر عليها في خلة الجامع . وفي الحال قام كاتب هذا التقرير بالكشف على الموقع حيث تبين أن أعمال التجريف بواسطة الآليات الثقيلة قد أتت على بعض المدافن بالكامل. وذلك خلال عمل البنية التحتية للمنطقة الصناعية التي تعود إلى مدينة بيت لحم والممولة من قبل الحكومة الفرنسية. كما لوحظ أن بعض من المواطنين قد قاموا بالعبث في القبور ونبشها إلا أن ذلك لم يمنع البدء وعلى الفور بالتنقيب من قبل دائرة آثار بيت لحم وتحت إشراف الكاتب .

أعمال التنقيب ووصف بعض المدافن :
بعد إزالة الأتربة والكتل الصخرية الناتجة عن أعمال التجريف والتي كانت تغطي مساحة من حجرات الدفن قمنا في البداية بعملية تصوير وتقسيم الموقع إلى ثلاثة مناطق وإعطاء كل مدفن رقم خاصا به حسب المنطقة ، حيث اشتملت المنطقة (أ) على ستة قبور كان أعناها القبرين (رقم 1،2) وأما باقي القبور فقد تعرضت إلى النهب ولكن تم العثور فيها على كسر من الفخار والعظام (3،5) أما قبر 4 فقد تم فتحه من قبل الدائرة إلا انه قليل اللقى أما المنطقة (ب) والتي تقع إلى الشرق من منطقة (أ) إذ يفصلها شارع ترابي وتشتمل على ثلاثة قبور قطعت أجزاء من هذه القبور ، ومع ذلك تم العثور على بعض الأواني الفخارية مثل الاسرجة والزبادي والجرار حيث تبين أن البعض يرجع إلى العصر البرونزي المبكر الفترة الرابعة
أما المنطقة (ج) والتي تقع في الجزء الجنوبي من المقبرة وتبعد عن مدرسة العبيبات الثانوية للبنين بحوالي 100م غربا فقد تم العثور على قبر عمودي له حجرة واحدة واشتمل على هيكل عظمي لاثنتين من المدفونين بالإضافة إلى سراجين وكسر لأواني فخارية
تجدر الإشارة إلى أن أعمال الحفر تم توخي الدقة فيها قد الإمكان من حيث تصوير اللقى الأثرية بعد الكشف عنها وقيل تحريكها من موقعها الأصلي مع اخذ بعض القياسات ورسم ألي لهذه القطع .

المعثورات

شملت المعثورات هذا العام العديد من النوعيات المميزة كالمعادن من خناجر وبلطات صنعت من معدن البرونز ، كما عثر على العديد من الأواني الفخارية والتي تمثلت في الأباريق ، وجرار تخزين ، واسرجة وصحون ، وزبادي ، وأواني عطور ، أما أنفس المعثورات تتمثل في العثور على جعرانين . ما ناحية أخرى لم تتمكن من العثور إلا على القليل من الهياكل العظمية في حالة شبه سليمة . أما ماعدا ذلك فقد وجدت المدافن منبوثة والعظام مبعثرة غير واضحة المعالم
الخلاصة

بناء على ما تقدم يمكن القول أن هذه المقبرة كبيرة وغنية باللقى الأثرية إذا ما تم استكمال الحفر بها فهي تشتمل على العديد من المدافن التي تتألف من حجرة منفرة أو مزدوجة أو متعددة الحجرات . كما أن مداخل هذه القبور تنوعت فمنها الدائري ومنها المربع ومنها المستطيل وبعضها اهليجي غير منتظم الشكل، أما تاريخ هذه القبور فإنها ترجع إلى العصر البرونزي المبكر الرابع والعصر البرونزي المتوسط والعصر الحديدي الذي وجد في المنطقة الغربية من المنطقة (أ) والذي تعرض للنهب من قبل لصوص الآثار (بالإضافة إلى وجود بعض الجدران التي ربما تعود إلى مساكن ومدرجات زراعية وبرج مراقبة ، وعلاوة على ذلك فإن هذه المنطقة تشتمل على فريين لعمل الشيد أو الكلس الذي يستخدم في البناء والقصارة وهذه المنشآت بحاجة إلى استكشاف من أجل تاريخها بشكل دقيق . علاوة على ذلك فإن المنطقة

الشمالية من (أ) معصرة لنبيذ مقطوعة في الصخر وتقع إلى الغرب من القبر رقم 6 اشتملت على حوض كبير مربع الشكل لعملية الهرس وحوضين آخرين احدهما في الجنوب والأخر في الجنوب الشرقي من أجل تجميع العصارة ويتصلان بالحوض الكبير بواسطة فتحة صغيرة مع قليل من الانحدار لحوض الهرس إلى جهة الشرق .
إعداد محمد غياظة
مدير آثار محافظة بيت لحم

SOMMARIO

DIPARTIMENTO SCIENZE DELL'ANTICHITÀ
SEZIONE DI ORIENTALISTICA



SAPIENZA
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VICINO ORIENTE XIX - 2015

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