

Fig. 24. Photogrammetry model of Trenches 200 and 300 (by Ehab al-Jariri)

KHIRBET UM AL-GHOZLAN

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The Early Bronze Age (EBA) IV site of Khirbet Um al-Ghozlan sits on a small knoll in the middle reaches of the Wadi Rayyan in north Jordan (UTM 749729E, 3588534N). Although only 0.8 ha in area, the site is surrounded by a distinctive enclosure built as a double row of massive blocks across the entry to the site, and a single row of medium stones around the rest of the steep-sided knoll (Fig. 25).

Palumbo (1990) identified Khirbet Um al-Ghozlan as one of several small, newly-founded, enclosure sites in the EB IV settlement landscape. Other examples include Jabal Ruheil, Dhahrat Um al-Marrar and Khirbet Meiyiteh. These are all small sites (0.5–1.5 ha) that are situated on defensible positions, and located in upland zones.

We suggest that these sites may have served as processing centers for upland fruit crops such as olive and grape, and were enclosed to protect seasonally-produced caches of high value commodities, such as oil and wine.

To test this hypothesis, a small team from the British Museum undertook excavations at Khirbet Um al-Ghozlan in February and March 2017. The project was initiated in response to the recent destruction of the northwest portion of the site by a bulldozer, including part of the enclosure wall.

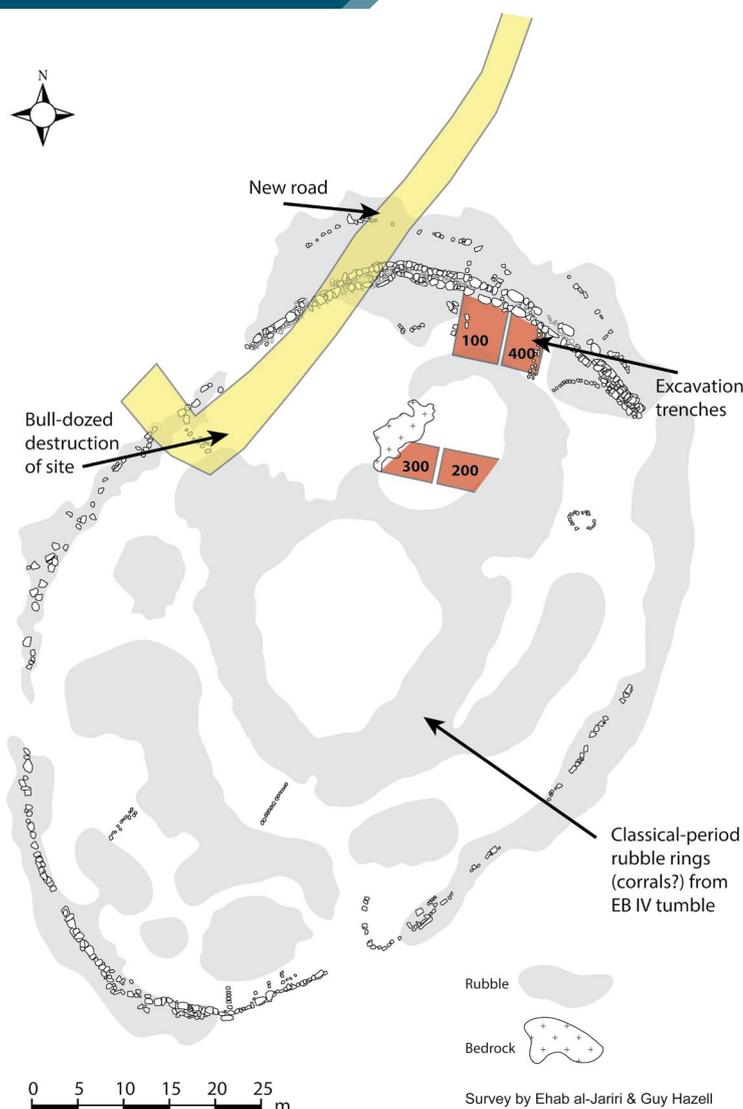


Fig. 25. Plan of Khirbet Um al-Ghozlan showing placement of trenches, area of recent destruction (Surveyed by Guy Hazell and Ehab al-Jariri)

Four trenches were opened in two areas. In Trenches 200 and 300, an architectural complex preserved several courses high was exposed against a bedrock shelf (Fig. 23). A curved bin and two adjacent square cells were likely storage features. Twelve in-situ store jars were found broken but mostly complete, as well as a spouted vat for decanting liquids.

Trenches 100 and 400 were opened against the inside face of the monumental enclosure. Two walls defined a rectangular area with a low, protruding bin. This area was probably an animal pen with a stone feeder trough. A deep, natural basin in an adjacent bedrock outcrop had been used as an EB IV dump.

Excavations indicate only short-lived occupation before the site was abandoned, leaving vessels in situ and walls in place. There is no evidence for architectural modification, and the complex contained only primary surfaces. No hearths or fireplaces were revealed, and deposits failed to produce ashy debris associated with domestic activity. Few animal bones were found, although the small assemblage contained mostly ovicaprid remains. The large ceramic corpus was dominated by narrow-necked and hole-mouth storage jars.

Few organic remains were recovered despite extensive flotation. However, by using scanning electron microscopy for the identification of species, C. R. Cartwright identified small fragments of charred olive pits, probably jift burned as fuel. In addition, all 14 wood charcoal samples were identified as olive wood (*Olea europaea*).

Together, these data suggest that the site may have been seasonally occupied when olive orchards were pruned and harvested on the surrounding hills, and enclosed to protect the cache of high-value oil before its distribution through nearby settlement systems. The implication is that so-called urban features such as fortification systems and specialized production were reconfigured within local settlement networks in the EB IV period, and may have even laid the foundations for the urban rejuvenation of the 2nd millennium B.C. Ongoing excavations are planned as a joint project between the British Museum and the University of Sydney.

REFERENCE:

Palumbo, G. 1990. *The Early Bronze Age IV in the Southern Levant: Settlement Patterns, Economy, and Material Culture of a 'Dark Age'*. Contributi e Materiali di Archeologia Orientale III. Roma: Università di Roma 'La Sapienza'.