



Fig. 54. View of the EB III mudbrick horseshoe-shaped tabun at Khirbat Iskandar (photo by G. Kochheiser)

KHIRBAT ISKANDAR

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In view of the substantial rural Early Bronze IV occupation at Iskandar, the project has concentrated on investigating this enigmatic period, demonstrating that there was a high level of complexity and continuities of urban-like traditions with the preceding period. Excavations over several seasons have revealed a substantial EB III settlement with multiple phases and rebuilds of the fortifications. This report presents the results of our 2016 season in a summary of exposure-by-season objectives.

The latest (phase C1) EB III settlement on the mound was discovered under a massive destruction phase. Horizontal exposure of the latter revealed a central room, possibly a storage area, along with courtyard and ancillary buildings. To expose more of the earlier EB III (phase C2) phase, we reopened Square B1 at the NW corner of the mound in Area B where excavation had exposed a series of hearths in the western half of the square. In 2016, the eastern half of Square B1 revealed an activity area with an unusual mudbrick platform and a horseshoe-shaped tabun (Fig. 54). The mudbrick debris and ash across the area in association with the tabun and hearths appear to represent an extensive work area, possibly a kitchen.

To further investigate the fortifications on the western perimeter, we reopened Square B4A in Area B. In 2013, a new perimeter

wall (B4A006) was discovered abutting the NW corner of the tower, running parallel to and outside a later EB III/IV western perimeter wall (B2A053). In 2016, we determined that the remains of the new wall stand to a height of 1.75m, which with its 2m width represents a substantial fortification in the EB III Phase C. To further investigate the relationship between these two walls, we expanded Square B5A/5B downslope, where a segment of a major wall line was apparent. In the small area, results were ambiguous. To uncover further evidence for connections between EB IV Phases A–B and the fortifications (the later W.B2A053), we expanded with half a Square (B21A) to the west. While the season ended before we could clarify the relationship between the Phase B domestic area and the wall, it appeared that the upper Phase A domestic structures were built against the defensive line.

We returned to the Area C "gateway" on the southeast corner of the mound to test the three-phase EB IV stratigraphy that we articulated in Richard et al., 2010. To address this objective, we reopened Squares C6 and C8 on the eastern edge of Area C. In Square C6, we further exposed Phase 2 Wall 6039 as well as Phase 1 Wall 6034. A series of surfaces associated with these walls emerged, the pottery of which will be critical in determining whether or not Phase 1 is transitional EB III/IV. In Square C8 (extended to a full square), we uncovered Phase 3 walls and surfaces. Our excavation also confirmed the continuation of Phase 1–2 architectural features between C6 and C8, along with associated surfaces (Fig. 55). We are confident that the reexamination of the stratigraphic sequence will allow us to reevaluate the EB III/IV nexus at the site.

While the findings are preliminary, the 2016 season of excavation at Khirbat Iskandar exposed more of the EB IV and earlier EB III levels and helped further clarify the phasing in the fortifications during the Early Bronze Age.

REFERENCE:

Richard, S., Long, J.C. Jr., Holdorf, P.S., and Peterman, G. 2010. *Khirbat Iskandar: Final Report on the Early Bronze IV Area C 'Gateway' and Cemeteries*. American Schools of Oriental Research: Archaeological Reports 18. Boston: ASOR.



Fig. 55. View of the Area C Squares 6–8 with continuation of Phase 2 architecture, looking west (photo by G. Kochheiser)