

Excavations on the Sea of Galilee – The 2004 Season of the German-Finnish-Swiss Expedition to Tel Kinrot

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From August 1-27, 2004, the Kinneret Regional Project continued archaeological excavations on Tel Kinrot under the directorship of Stefan Münger (University of Berne), Juha Pakkala (University of Helsinki) and Jürgen Zangenberg (on behalf of the University of Mainz)¹. Up to 50 volunteers and over 20 staff members from six countries participated in this season and, through their hard work, made the success of the campaign possible.

Work concentrated on four areas of excavation on the Tell (for a plan cf. Münger, *this volume*, fig. 1) and a number of specialized research projects.

Area D

In area D, a team supervised by Wolfgang Zwickel (University of Mainz) removed the last unexcavated area of soil in the SE corner of the Iron Age II tripartite pillar building excavated by Volkmar Fritz in 1982-1985 (Locus 663; Fig. 1)². Under a massive destruction debris, a thick layer of burnt material could be isolated that covers the entire stone-paved floor of the building to a height of up to ca. 25 cm. The layer contained much ash, few pieces of burnt wood and several accumulations of charred grain that apparently had been stored in baskets or sacks, before the building went up in flames when the area around the two-chambered gate was attacked in the course of the Assyrian conquest in 734/3 BCE. Thus, it is clear that at least this Iron II pillared building from Kinneret definitely served for storage in its last phase of use which is an important contribution to the ongoing debate about the purpose of tripartite buildings in general. Final palaeobotanical examination will be carried out by Marlu Kühn and Marlies Klee (University of Basel).

A team under Eliakim Maman (Israel Nature and Parks Authority) restored the Southern, excavated part of the Iron II chamber gate. During restoration work, a small probe was sunk into the semi-circular platform attached to the gate chamber (Locus 662). The probe revealed a circular bin of uncertain purpose in the center of the platform (Locus 3811). It furthermore showed that platform 662 sits on the courtyard pavement to the inside of the gate (Loci 658 and 615). Therefore, the platform and the bin must be later additions to the original gate.

Area R

A group supervised by Eliot Braun (Israel Antiquities Authority, ret.) refined the stratigraphy in Area R at the foot of the Tell. The careful removal of several balks in the upper, northern sub-area (R-1) complemented our assessment of the architecture and stratigraphy of the Iron I domestic complex already excavated in 1998 and 1999 (Figs. 2-3). The refinement of the architectural plan and a meticulous study of the stratigraphy (strata V and VI overlap at several spots) will help to prepare the entire Iron I domestic complex in area R for final publication; this work is planned to be completed in 2005.

¹ Tell el-‘Oreimeh, coordinates of the triangulation point 25259.200791 Palestine Grid, 7378/6399 UTM on the Tell’s peak. – We are grateful to the *Deutscher Verein vom Heiligen Land* for the permission to excavate on their premises. We wish to thank the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority for issuing for their continuous support. For additional financial support we are grateful to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Fachhochschule Mainz. – For further information consult: J. PAKKALA — S. MÜNGER — J. ZANGENBERG, *Tel Kinrot – Tell el-Oreime – Kinneret. Kinneret Regional Project: Tel Kinrot Excavations, 2004* (Finnish Institute of the Middle East Report 2/2004); G. FABBECK — S. FORTNER — A. ROTTLOFF — J. ZANGENBERG (eds.), *Leben am See Gennesaret. Kulturgeschichtliche Entdeckungen in einer biblischen Region, 2003* (Sonderband Antike Welt) and www.kinneret-excavations.org.

² For a plan of Area D see V. FRITZ, *ADPV* 15, 1990, Fig. 16.

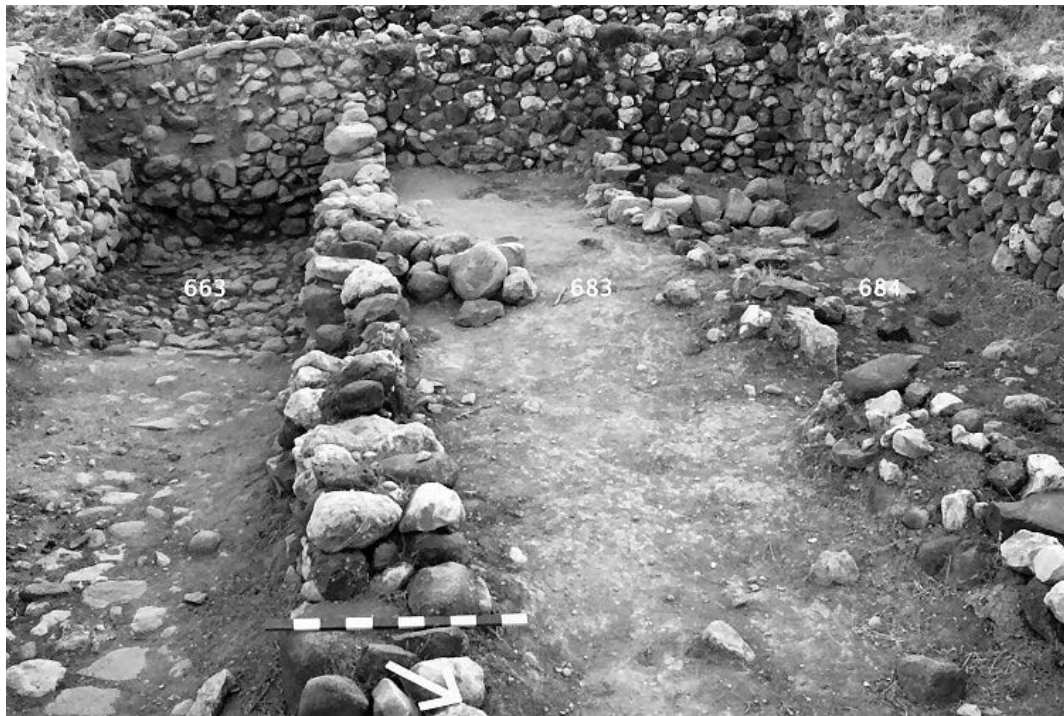


Fig. 1: Tripartite pillar building in Area D before restoration. Note the now fully excavated wing Locus 663.

Refinement in the deep trench in the lower, southern sub-area (R-2) aimed at pre-Iron I layers. Under some more Iron I material (incl. a possible part of the inner revetment of the Iron I city wall) the team found a series of superimposed white plaster floors in conjunction with a wall that is cut by the supposed city wall. According to the pottery, these features belong to the LB I period. Below this horizon, several succeeding structures equally dating to the earlier Late Bronze Age or even to the last stages of the Middle Bronze Age were found. However, excavated space was too limited to warrant any conclusive results in this part of the area.

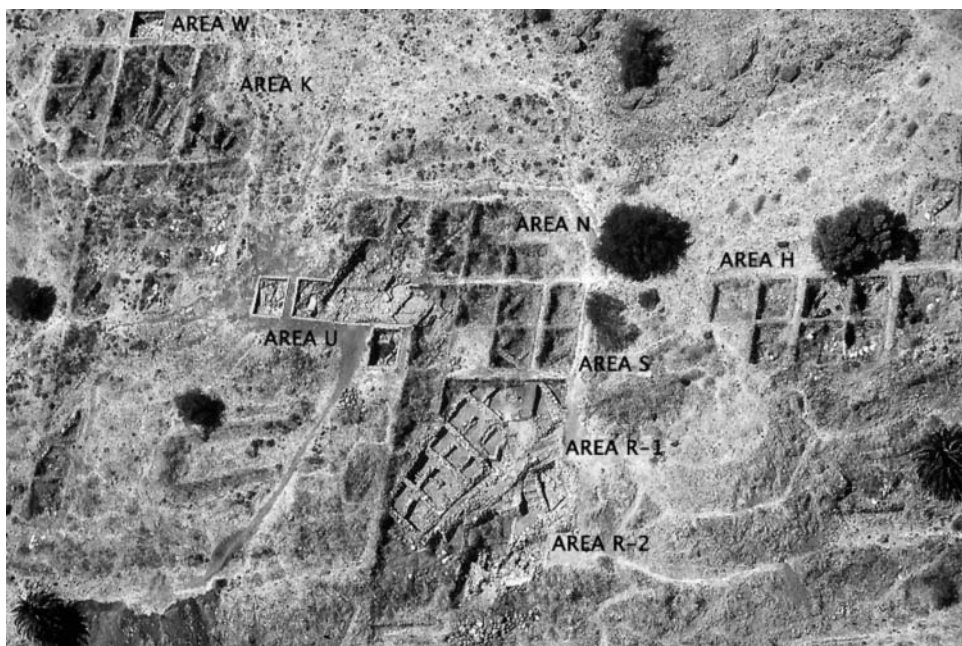


Fig. 2: Aerial view on the excavation areas close to the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

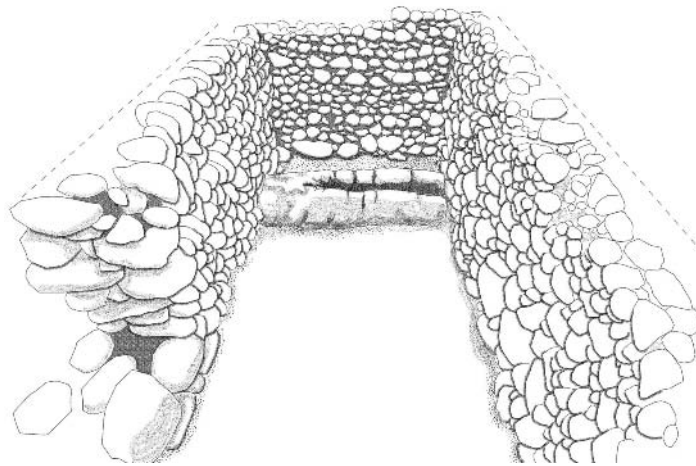


Fig. 3: Room with a trough installation (Locus 4155) in the Early Iron Age domestic complex in Area R

Area U

Area U was opened in 2003 to clarify the stratigraphic relationship between already excavated areas N-J and K-M. This area was supervised by Merja Alanne and Kirsi Valkama (University of Helsinki). Due to considerable reuse of the space and sometimes deep erosional damage, the area proved again very difficult. Excavations revealed mostly remains from the Iron I (domestic complexes along a street, courtyards and working installations), sometimes built directly upon or even re-using Early Bronze architecture that clearly follows a much differently oriented grid. Especially noteworthy is a cache of complete vessels that significantly enriches the Early Iron Age I ceramic repertoire of Tel Kinrot (Fig. 4) – though found in an ambiguous stratigraphic context, but surely belonging to one of the last phases of Stratum V. This cache further corroborates the relative contemporaneity of the last Early Iron Age phases at Tel Kinrot with, e.g., Tell Qasile XI-X, Jokneam XVIII-XVII, Megiddo VIA-B, Hazor XII/XIX or Dan V-IVB.

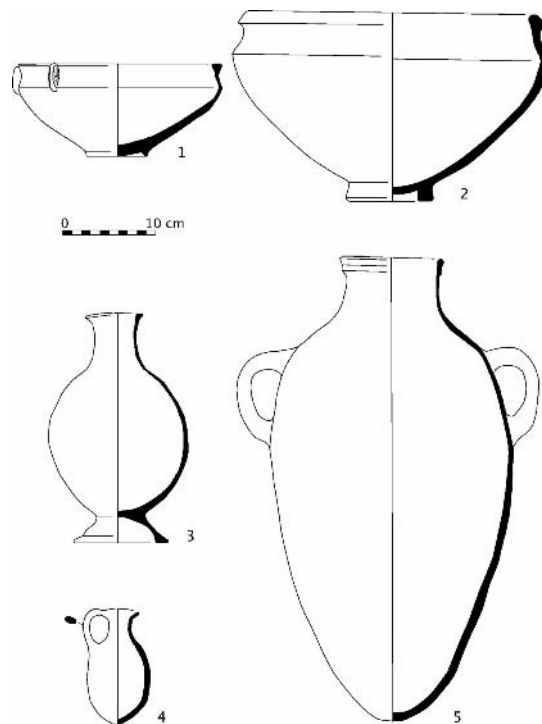


Fig. 4: Selection of complete vessels from a cache (Locus 4269) in Area U (Reg.-nos. 10433/1, 10416/1, 10407/1, 10432/1, 10410/2).

Area W

Half way down the hill new Area W, supervised by Virpi Holmqvist and Juhana Saukkonen, was opened (University of Helsinki). Again, several layers of IR I habitation with very well preserved architecture detected. In addition to parts of houses, courtyards and the continuation of a channel coming up from old area K, another massive terrace wall could be unearthed, shedding further light on the well organized town plan of the Early Iron Age I city and thus demonstrating the high potential of Tel Kinrot. Given the complex nature of the Iron I habitation, especially in area W, final evaluation will have to deal with the close stratigraphical overlap of remains previously assigned to separate strata VI and V. In the end it might be more appropriate to speak of a complex, multi-layered Iron I „horizon“ instead of separate strata, currently labelled VI-IV. One of the most outstanding finds from area W is a decorated skyphos (fig. 5) that was found in topsoil and thus is unfortunately not stratified. It has a fine parallel in Megiddo VIA and dates to the Iron Age IB.

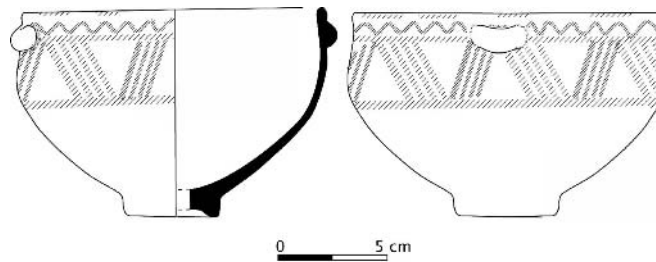


Fig. 5: Skyphos from Area W (Locus 5409, Reg.-no. 12030/1).

Other Activities

A survey team conducted by Mareike Beckmann (Fachhochschule Mainz) carried a systematic measurement as a basis for a three dimensional model of the entire Tell and the Iron Age I courtyard house in R. Architect Axel Maurer (Fachhochschule Mainz) systematically documented upcoming architecture and prepared previous plans for future publication. Two restorers Rebekka-Maria Vornkahl and Kerstin Schier from the Römisch-Germanische Zentralmuseum in Mainz carried out on-site restoration of pottery from the 2003 and 2004 seasons. We are glad that we were able to start a fruitful cooperation with Guy Bar-Oz (Zinman Institute of Archaeology, University of Haifa) who, together with his colleagues, will examine the palaeozoological remains from the 2001 season onwards.

As in previous years, the registration of the finds was in the hands of Tuula Tynjä (University of Helsinki). Drawings were prepared by Ronja Kratz and Christa Lennert (University of Mainz); photographs were taken by Julia Männistö (Academy of Pekka Halonen, Tuusula). Asko Alhoniemi served as camp-manager.

Future Work

In accordance to IAA and NPA policy, much future effort will be invested into the continuing process of restoring key areas on the Tell. Thanks to a generous grant from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs restoration on the gate complex in the Iron II acropolis excavated by Volkmar Fritz in 1982-1985 will continue by stabilizing the tripartite building in 2005. The domestic complex in area R will also be prepared in 2005 for subsequent restoration in the following year. Other areas will be back-filled in accordance with IAA policy. It is hoped that we will eventually be able to present the most important architectural features of the Tell to the public. Surveys in the vicinity of the Tell will help clarify the infrastructure and settlement history of the local surroundings.

Final Word

Tel Kinrot is a site with an unusually high archaeological potential that can significantly contribute to the ongoing debate about the transition of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I-IIA periods and the

material culture in the North of Israel. The site is open to visitors during excavation upon request. Please contact us via our website.

Figures: All figures belong to the Kinneret Regional Project. Responsables are: Fig. 1: J. Männistö; Fig. 2: K. Valkama; Fig. 3 and 5: Ch. Lennert; Fig. 4: R. Kratz – Ch. Lennert.