

## FURTHER EXCAVATIONS AT KHIRBAT AL-KARAK AND NAHAL TAVOR IN ISRAEL

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The report on the 1963 season at Khirbat al-Karak described the aims of our renewed work on that site, namely, to chart the development of this very early and very large urban center and the ramifications of its cultural relationships through the early, and most important, phases of its existence. The large size of the site and the fact that much of its area is no longer available for excavation because of modern buildings and agriculture pose some problems as to how to pursue these aims most effectively and economically.

The method of testing in suitably located areas by trenching from the surface down to virgin soil, which we adopted in the previous season, was continued in the summer of 1964, though for practical reasons (some of them temporary, such as the vintage in a vineyard on the site), we were not entirely free in the choice of the areas to be tested. Again, as in 1963, our season in the field had to be confined to the summer, mainly during university vacation.

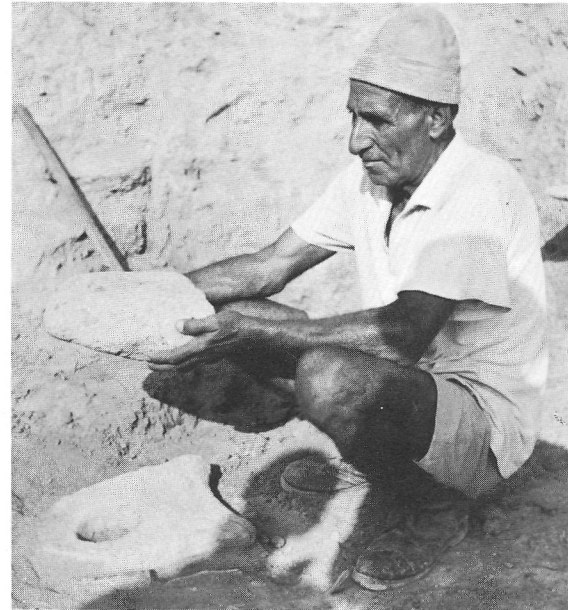
A somewhat larger staff, consisting of Professor Helene J. Kantor, myself, two of our own graduate students, and a varying number of Israeli assistants, made it possible to work on a considerably greater scale than in the previous season. At Khirbat al-Karak we opened eight new trenches, varying in size between 12 and 80 square meters, and carried all of them but one to virgin soil. In addition, at the request of the Department of Antiquities, we undertook to test two strips along the west side of the main road which bisects the site as a preliminary to the necessary widening of that road (the cost of labor for this operation was contributed by the Public Works Department of the government of Israel). The most promising of them were also carried down to virgin soil, thus providing additional, very useful stratigraphic information.

Virgin soil was reached at varying depths below the surface, indicating that the original terrain

at the time of the first major settlement on the mound had been far from flat. Thus we are beginning to form a rough idea about the original topography of the site. All soundings gave good stratigraphic sequences with building remains and voluminous pottery collections. A careful "quantitative analysis" was begun in the field under the direction of Dr. Kantor. When this work is completed for final publication, it will enable precise definitions of cultural periods, their subdivisions, and transitions from one to another.

In addition to the work at Khirbat al-Karak, the excavation of tombs at Nahal Tavor, begun in 1963 at the request of the Department of Antiquities, was continued in 1964. Five tombs were completely excavated; one, badly disturbed, belonged to the Middle Bronze-Late Bronze period; the others, though disturbed, were fairly coherent chronologically and produced excellent collections of whole vessels of the Early Bronze I period, which are a welcome supplement and a tangible illustration of the contemporary pottery material represented by innumerable potsherds at Khirbat al-Karak itself.

In summing up the results of the brief season at Khirbat Karak, one may say that the campaign provided new materials and information valuable not only for the understanding of the history of the site itself but leading to very interesting general implications. As to the



*Two door sockets. The earlier one still in position on its floor; the later one held at the position in which it was found.*

material itself, we added considerably to both ends of the spectrum as it were. At the later end we obtained a considerable collection of Persian-Hellenistic pottery and some structures associated with it that are of great interest to scholars engaged in research concerning these relatively little known periods in Palestinian archeology. On the other, earlier, end, which is of the greater interest to us, we were fortunate to have discovered pottery preceding the Early Bronze I age, which apparently belongs to the neolithic-chalcolithic age. Unlike the earliest Early Bronze I pottery, this earlier pottery was found only sporadically; its largest concentration was in a pit dug into virgin soil and filled with coarse sand or fine gravel. One may safely conclude that while the site was settled during the neolithic-chalcolithic period, the occupation was not uniform and did not cover the whole site. In contrast, Early Bronze I pottery was found on virgin soil in every one of our soundings without exception, indicating that at that period a massive settlement—a truly urban agglomeration—must have existed. The same situation continued during the Early Bronze II period, when very close relations with Syria, on the one hand, and Egypt, on the other, have been firmly established. In contrast, the following Early Bronze III period seemed to have witnessed considerable contraction of the inhabited area. This is the period during which the characteristic and famous Khirbat Karak pottery makes its first appearance. Recent discoveries in northeast Anatolia and in Russian Armenia and Georgia provide tangible evidence that this type of pottery is intrusive in Palestine, perhaps with its bearers coming eventually from the Kura-Araxes area. The coincidence of the intrusion of a new type of pottery, with the apparent contraction of the inhabited areas and the eventual abandonment of the site for a long period, begins to form a picture as to how the arrival of the intruders affected one of the largest known urban centers in early Palestine.