

**Preliminary Report on the Results
of the 2011 Excavation Season at Tel Kabri**

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The 2011 excavations at Tel Kabri, the capital of a Middle Bronze Age Canaanite kingdom located in the western Galilee region of modern Israel, lasted from 19 June to 28 July 2011. Highlights of the season included the discovery of a previously-unknown MB building adjacent to the palace in Area D-West, with orthostats still in situ, additional fragments of painted wall plaster and a Second Intermediate Period scarab on the crushed limestone floor of a room in Area D-South1, as well as a terrace structure, possibly connected with a monumental structure, in Area D-South2.

The 2011 excavation season at Tel Kabri in Israel was co-directed by Assaf Yasur-Landau of the University of Haifa and Eric H. Cline of The George Washington University. It was undertaken with grants from the Israel Science Foundation (ISF) and the Institute for Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP), with additional funding provided by the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences and the Institute for Middle East Studies at The George Washington University as well as private donors, including Ralph and Mary Grace Crosby and Jeffrey Leach. Equipment was provided by Dr. Alon Shavit, Director of the Israeli Institute of Archaeology. Assistance in conservation and storage was provided by the Leon Recanati Institute for Maritime Studies, directed by Dr. Yaacov Kahanov. We are most grateful to all of these institutions and people.



Fig. 1. Team members from the first half of the season (18 June – 7 July 2011) at Tel Kabri

Senior staff members included Nurith Goshen (University of Pennsylvania), Alexandra Ratzlaff (Boston University), Inbal Samet (University of Haifa), and Helena Tomas (University of Zagreb, Croatia), with Assistant Area Supervisors Matt Schaeffer, Dan Devery, Charlie Friedman, and Kyle Leonard. Personnel conducting scientific analyses included Andrew Koh (Brandeis University), Felix Höflmayer (German Archaeological Institute in Berlin), Ruth Shahack-Gross (Weizmann Institute), David Ben Shlomo (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), and Guy Bar-Oz and Nimrod Marom (University of Haifa). Conservation work and pottery restoration are being conducted by JJ Gottlieb and Roe Shapir (University of Haifa). The international team of some 60 people included volunteers and staff from the United States, Israel, England, Canada, the Netherlands, and Croatia (Fig. 1).

Excavation Results

During the 2011 season, our efforts were concentrated in three main areas: 1) Area D-West; 2) Area D-South1 (DS-1); and 3) Area D-South2 (DS-2).



Fig. 2. Aerial photograph showing Area D-West (upper left) and Areas DS-1 and DS-2 (lower right)

D-West

Our excavations in Area D-West during the 2011 season initially focused on identifying the northwestern corner of the palace and continuing to follow the causeway/road (Wall/Road 2129) identified in this region in 2009. Following discoveries during the first week of the season, it became clear that this area of the palace did not contain the northwestern corner of the palace, as previously hypothesized, but rather that the palace continues to both the north and the west. Instead, we exposed the remains of an MB building with orthostat blocks still in situ, apparently set into walls and floors of the palace during the latter phase(s) of its existence.



Fig. 3a-b. MB Orthostat Building during excavation, looking south from the back (left); plan of the Orthostat Building, looking north through the entrance (right)



Fig. 4a-b. Overhead view of MB Orthostat Building in D-West, looking west (left); view from the south, looking north, with floors and walls labeled (right)

The Orthostat Building is an elongated tri-partite structure with a S-N axis. It has at least two individual rooms as well as an entrance area, 2405 (Figs. 3-4). Only the plaster floors and the stone foundations of the walls were still preserved *in situ*. A plastered mud brick superstructure is conjectured from the collapse deposits found inside the rooms and on the floor. Wall 2370 creates the western side of the building, while wall 2355 forms the eastern side; both apparently ran the entire length of the original building. The main room is rectangular, measuring 6.8m x 3.6m, with a fine plaster floor. On top of the entire floor was a thick layer of collapse, characterized by dense chalky intrusions in a mud-brick matrix with large chunks of plaster, probably fallen from the walls and the ceiling. The back room is smaller, probably c. 4x3.5 m, and is paved with flat-lying stone blocks covered by plaster (Fig. 5a). The occupation debris of this room has not yet been fully excavated, but the matrix is filled with pottery sherds belonging to a number of pithoi. Orthostats line the walls on all sides of both rooms, with the floor plaster running up onto the orthostats. These blocks varied in length, ranging from 90-150cm, and in width, from 20-30cm. In the top side of most of the orthostats, a square dowel hole had been cut (Fig. 5b).



Fig. 5a-b. Paved/plastered back room of MB Orthostat Building, looking east (left); detail of orthostat with a square dowel hole and floor plaster running up the side of the orthostat (right)

The excavation of this building is not yet complete, but it is already possible to picture its former glory. It seems clear that this structure was added near the end of the palace's life, perhaps at the expense of a portion of the palace that was torn down to make room for this building, for it seems that this structure occupied a space that was previously part of the palace, perhaps cutting into earlier walls and resting upon their lower courses after the upper courses had been deliberately removed. The evidence, however, is not conclusive at this point and further excavations, below the floors of the orthostat building and around it, will perhaps yield a clearer picture.

Area D-South1 (DS-1)

Our excavations in Area DS-1 during the 2011 season focused on exposing as much as possible of Building 3079, first detected during 2009, as well as retrieving additional fragments of painted plaster lying on the crushed limestone floor of this room.



Fig. 6a-b. Overhead view of Building 3079 in DS-1, looking northwest (left); plan of Building 3079 in DS-1 (right)

During the course of the season, it became clear that the building to date measures 7.5 m × 9.1 m, with a protruding buttress. One entire room of this building was exposed, including portions of all four walls and the plaster floor (Fig. 6). Artifacts found directly on the floor included additional painted plaster fragments in white, blue and red, with black delineating lines, and a locally-produced Second Intermediate Period scarab dating to 1650-1550 BCE (Fig. 7), as well as an intact stone bowl with a pedestal foot. In addition, outside the room, portion of additional walls were found, continuing to the east, indicating other rooms or perhaps even other buildings in this area.



Fig. 7a-b. DS-1 finds on the crushed limestone floor: painted plaster fragments (left) and a Second Intermediate Period scarab (right)

Outside the room, and to its west, a cobblestone pavement was uncovered lying between Building 3079 in DS-1 and the Upper Courtyard or Terrace Building with associated drain in DS-2. It is possible that this cobbled pavement is later than both of the buildings and the drain, but this remains to be determined.

Area D-South2 (DS-2)

Our excavations in DS-2 during the 2011 season had multiple goals, including the continuation of our efforts to link our 2005/2009 area with Kempinski and Niemeier's Area F located just to the south. In so doing, we discovered that the wall fragments uncovered in previous season were part of a zigzag wall defining the edge of a building, now called the Upper Courtyard or Terrace Building (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8a-b. Overhead view of DS-2 looking north, with zigzag wall of the Upper Courtyard or Terrace Building and nearby drain, plus Area F to south with its massive walls and drafted stone podia (left); plan of Areas DS-2 and F, with wall and drain at northern end (right)

This entire area is characterized by extensive construction of various structures, including walls designating both interior and exterior space. It still remains to be determined if the architecture found here lay within the core of the palace or is from ancillary buildings with functions supporting the adjacent palace. The main features of Area DS-2 uncovered during this season are a series of four walls joined diagonally at 90 degree angles running east-west and creating a “zigzag wall,” all belonging to the so-called Upper Courtyard or Terrace Building. Within this area, just inside and to the south of the zigzag wall, was a crushed limestone floor covering the entire surface of what was either the courtyard or the interior of the building, although a large part of it had been removed by a later pit. There is also an associated staircase leading to the north and down, possibly to a Lower Courtyard, and an extensive drain complex constructed perpendicular to, and cutting through, the eastern-most wall, running off in a northeasterly direction (Fig 9). The entire complex may be connected to the massive walls and drafted stone podia found by Kempinski and Niemeier to the south of our excavation area, most likely belonging to a monumental structure or additional wing of the palace which has yet to be exposed.



Fig. 9a-b. Area DS-2: details of drain running to northeast (left) and staircase (right)

At a lower level in this northern region, in an area previously excavated during the 2005 and 2009 seasons and below the possible Lower Courtyard of the palace, was revealed an earlier beaten earth surface and walls, perhaps from private buildings preceding the extension of the palace to the south and east during the MBII period.

A Note on Scientific Analyses

Scientific analyses conducted at the site, or that will be conducted on material retrieved during the season (Fig. 10), included residue analysis by Andrew Koh (Brandeis University), radiocarbon dating by Felix Höflmayer (German Archaeological Institute in Berlin), geoarchaeology by Ruth Shahack-Gross (The Weizmann Institute), petrography by David Ben Shlomo (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), and zooarchaeology by Guy Bar-Oz and Nimrod Marom (Haifa University). Results from these analyses will hopefully be forthcoming in the immediate future.



Fig. 10a-b. Examining radiocarbon samples (left) and wet-sieving for zooarchaeology (right)

The results of these studies will hopefully provide confirmation of the relative, and perhaps absolute, date for the occupation of the palace; identification of the food and drink being consumed in the palace; the origins of the mudbricks used in the construction of the palatial structure; and insights into the movements of goods within the Kabri polity and the Kabri palace.