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The Jamma'in EB-IV Tomb: The Impact of Urban Development on Archaeological Resources in Palestine

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Abstract:

The primary archaeological and cultural heritage resources of Palestine are under serious threat due to ongoing urban development activities. Recently, some construction work for a septic tank resulted in the discovery of an EB-IV tomb, which was immediately looted and partially destroyed. Three months later, purely by chance, the relevant authorities became aware of this discovery and of the looted material culture. The two main aims of this present paper are to highlight the impact of urban development on cultural heritage resources, especially tombs, and also the procedures involved in the vandalizing of such subterranean rock-cut tombs.

Keywords: EB-IV tombs, urban development, antiquities looting, infrastructures, Jamma'in.



مقبرة جماعين من العصر البرونزي المبكر/ المرحلة الرابعة: تأثير التطوير الحضري على المصادر الأثرية الأولية في فلسطين

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ملخص:

تعرض مصادر التراث الحضاري الأولية في فلسطين للتهديد المستمر من كافة الأعمال المرتبطة بالتطوير الحضري. وفي الآونة الأخيرة، فقد أسفرت أعمال بناء صهرج للصرف الصحي عن اكتشاف قبر يؤرخ إلى المرحلة الرابعة من العصر البرونزي المبكر، والذي تم نهب محتوياته الأثرية فور اكتشافه، ومن ثم تم تدميره بشكل جزئي. وبعد ثلاثة أشهر من هذا الحدث، وعن طريق الصدفة المحضة، فقد علمت السلطات الفلسطينية المختصة بهذا الاكتشاف وبالمواد الأثرية المنهوبة. وتهدف هذه المقالة إلى تسليط الضوء على تأثير التطوير الحضري على المصادر الأولية للتراث الحضاري، وخاصة المقابر، وكذلك تهدف إلى إظهار الإجراءات المتبعة في نهب وتخريب مثل هذه المقابر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مقابر المرحلة الرابعة من العصر البرونزي المبكر، التطوير الحضري، الأبنية التحتية، سرقة الآثار، جماعين.



1. Introduction :

Palestine's primary cultural heritage resources – in the form of major and minor archaeological sites and features, historic buildings, and the landscape itself – are often placed at risk from urban development projects¹. The kinds of development projects presenting the greatest potential threat to cultural heritage properties are, first, the construction of buildings for educational, residential, entertainment and commercial use, but also a wide variety of infrastructure constructions, such as roads, sewerage systems², water pipelines, and septic tanks³. The work of Turner, Roders and Patry shows that we have already witnessed in recent years an elevated tension between the various kinds of development activities being carried out in urban areas and the long-term safety of cultural heritage resources⁴. Others have demonstrated that these activities have caused irreparable loss, either partially or totally, of cultural heritage properties⁵.

In the Palestinian Territories, development activities – in form of new residential, commercial and industrial buildings, or infrastructure installations – have resulted during the last few years in the discovery, partial destruction, and sometimes misuse of a large number of tombs of various styles and periods. Specific examples include the following:

¹ Al-Houdalieh, S., R. Sauders, *Building Destruction: The Consequences of Rising Urbanization on Cultural Heritage in the Ramallah Province*, International Cultural Property Society, Vol. 16 (1), 2009, P.2.

² Guzman, P., *World Heritage Cities and Sustainable Urban Development: Bridging Global and Local Levels in Monitoring the Sustainable Urban Development of World Heritage Cities*, PhD dissertation, Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, 2017, Pp. 27-28.

³ Al-Houdalieh, S., *Demolishing Palestinian Archaeological Heritage: Saffa Village as a Model*, *Near Eastern Archaeology*, vol. 69 (2), 2006, P. 104, 109.

⁴ Turner, M., A. Roders, M. Patry, *Revealing the Level of Tension Between Cultural Heritage and Development in World Heritage Cities*, *Problemy Ekorozwoju* 7 (510), 2012, Pp. 23-31.

⁵ Agapio, A., D. Alexakis, V. Lysandra, A. Sarris, *Impact of Sprawl to Cultural Heritage Monuments: The Case Study of Paphos Area in Cyprus*, *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 16 (5), 2015, Pp. 1-10.



▪ **Ramallah:** A tomb located in Saffa dated to the Late Roman-Early Byzantine period was revealed by chance during the construction of a cistern. This tomb was not only looted by the landowner but was then expanded to be incorporated into the cistern⁶.

▪ **Nablus:** A tomb located at Kh. Aqabet al-Qadi, 2 km north of the historic core of Nablus, and dated to the Roman period, was first discovered by the landowner as he was creating a solid foundation for a new private building. This tomb was excavated by employees of the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage (DoA&CH), aided by an archaeologist from An-Najah National University. Later, this tomb was partially destroyed by the owner⁷.

▪ **Bethlehem:** A tomb located at Khalat al-Jam'a, 2.2 km southeast of the Nativity Church and dated to Intermediate Bronze Age (EB-IV), was first discovered during the construction of an industrial area. This tomb was excavated by DoA&CH employees and later the surrounding area was surveyed and partially excavated by a joint Italian-Palestinian team, finally documenting a total of eleven EB-IV tombs⁸. Another Bethlehem tomb, located close to the Milk Grotto and Nativity Church and dating to the EB-IV, was discovered during construction work for a private house. This tomb was excavated by DoA&CH employees as quickly as possible due to the pressure of the ongoing building activities⁹.

The main two aims of this present paper are to highlight the impact of urban development on cultural heritage resources, mainly tombs, and to detail

⁶ Al-Houdalieh, S., R. Bernbeck, S. Pollock, Palestinian Looted Tombs and Their Archaeological Investigation, *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies* 5 (2), 2017, Pp. 231-235.

⁷ Abu Alsaud, L., A. Shawamra, A. Qobbaj, J. Yasin, M. Al-Khateeb, A. Issa, A. Peraza, and V. de Dios, Stable Isotope Dietary Analysis on Human Remains: A Case Study at Khirbet Aqabet al Qadi Burial Chamber, Nablus, Palestine, *Radiocarbon* 61 (4), 2019, Pp. 1107-1120.

⁸ Nigro, L., D. Montanari, M. Ghayyada, J. Yasmine, Khalet al-Jam'a: A Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age Necropolis Near Bethlehem (Palestine), *Vicino Oriente* XIX, 2015, Pp. 185-218.

⁹ Nigro, L., D. Montanari, M. Ghayyada, J. Yasmine, The el-Atan Tomb: An Early Bronze IVB Female Burial in the Heart of Bethlehem, *Vicino Oriente* XXI, 2017, Pp. 225-256.



some of the processes involved in the vandalizing of these ancient, rock-cut structures. The methodology employed in this research study includes several components and draws on a variety of resources, such as: the reports of the Palestinian security agencies [disclosure: the second author serves as Director of the Tourist and Antiquities Police Department (T&APD), reports of the Investigation Division of the Police Department (IDoPD), reports of the DoA&CH, in-person site visits, interviews with firsthand informants, and a review of the existing literature.

2. Jamma'in: location, name, religious and political status, population, and history:

Jamma'in town (Arabic جمّاعين) is located 11.2 km south of Nablus and approximately 56 km north of Jerusalem and is surrounded by several other Palestinian small towns and villages: 'Asira al-Qibliya and 'Urif to the north, Yasuf, Iskaka and Marda to the south, 'Einabus and Huwwara to the east, and Zeita Jamma'in to the west (Fig. 1). In addition, several Israeli settlements lie nearby. Jamma'in means, in Arabic, "collectors/gatherers", a name having two possible derivations: First, it was the birthplace and gathering point for several well-known Muslim scholars¹⁰ from the 11th to the 15th centuries, such as Sheikh Abu al-Abas Ahmad al-Jamma'ini, Sheikh Abu Omar Muhammad ibn Ahmad, and al-Hafiz Abdalghani al-Jamma'ini¹¹. Second, it is said that Jamma'in was a gathering spot for Muslim armies under the command of Salah ad-Din in the late Crusader and early Ayyubid periods¹². Surveying the existing literature, we found the name of this town rendered in different ways: Jamma'il¹³, Jemma'in¹⁴, and Djemma'in¹⁵.

¹⁰ The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem, Jamma'in Town Profile. http://vprofile.arij.org/nablus/pdfs/vprofile/Jamma%27in_vp_en.pdf, 2014, Pp. 4-5.

¹¹ Drory, J., Hanbalis of the Nablus Region in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, *Asian and African Studies* 22, 1988, Pp. 93-112, cf. Al-Dabbagh, M., Biladuna filistin, fi el diar al nabulsiya, second part. Kafr Qari': Dar Al-Huda, 2002-2003, Pp. 465-477.

¹² The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem, op. cit, p. 5.

¹³ Al-Hamawi, Y., Mu'jam al-Buldan, Vol. 2. Beirut: Dar Sader, 2015, Pp. 159-160.

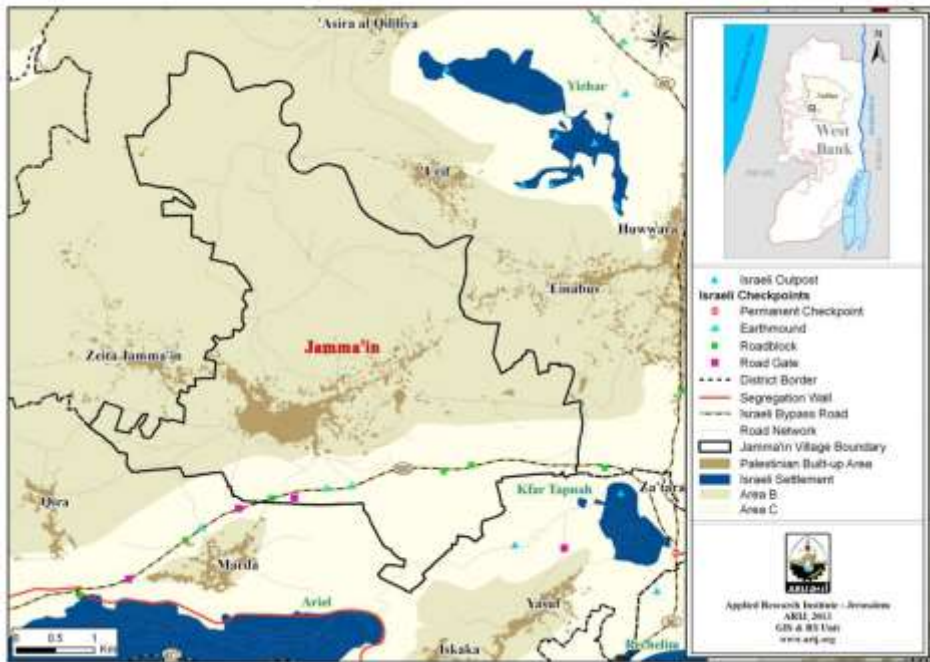


Fig. 1: Map of Jamma'in area (after The Applied Research Institute--
Jerusalem 2014: 4).

Jamma'in was also the center of the rebels opposing the Egyptian authorities in the 19th century. Sheikh Qasim al-Ahmad, from Jamma'in, was one of the notables of Jabal Nablus (Nablus mountain) and was the chief of the sub-district (*nahiya*) of Jamma'in. In 1832, Ibrahim Pasha, the Egyptian Governor of the Levant, appointed Q. al-Ahmad as an administrator (*mutassalem*) of Jerusalem, but a few months later he replaced him with his son, M. Q. al-Ahmad. In reaction to this dismissal, Q. al-Ahmad together with the notables of Nablus, Jerusalem, Hebron, and Safad organized a revolt in 1834 against the Egyptian authorities. These

¹⁴ Conder, C. R., R. E. Kitchener, The Survey of Western Palestine: Memoirs of the Topography, Orography, Hydrology: Samaria (vol. 2), London: The committee of the Palestine exploration fund, 1882, P. 285.

¹⁵ Guérin, V., Description, Géographique, Historique et Archéologique de la Palestine, vol. II, Samarie, (t. 1-2), Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1874, P. 172.



rebels, under the leadership of Q. al-Ahmad, fought several battles against the Egyptian forces, however after the defeat of his troops in Hebron, Q. al Ahmad crossed the Jordan river to al-Karak. There he was captured by Ibrahim Pasha's army, and later he was publicly executed in Damascus¹⁶.

The total area of Jamma'in is approximately 19,400 dunums (19.4 sq. km or 7.5 sq. mi.). As a result of the Oslo II Interim Agreement of 1995, the lands of Jamma'in were split between two administrative areas: Area B, under Palestinian civil control but Israeli security control (77% of the town's total area), and Area C, under full Israeli civil and security control (23% of Jamma'in's land)¹⁷. The total population of the town in 1922 was 720 persons¹⁸ and by 2017 it had grown to 7,436 persons¹⁹. The majority of the modern town's population is composed of two extended families (sing. *hamulah*) of patrilineal descent: Gazi (including al-Ahmad) and Zeitawi²⁰.

Jamma'in and its environs include five identified archaeological sites: the Jamma'in town historic core, Kh. Jarra'a, Kh. er-Ruweisun, Kh. 'Alam al-Huda, and ed-Deir²¹. Collectively these sites contain archaeological remains ranging from the Early Bronze Age through the Ottoman period²². Jamma'in town was surveyed by C. R. Conder and H.H. Kitchener in the 1870s, when they said that it was "the largest village in the district, on high ground, surrounded with olive groves. The water supply is from a pool and a well east of the village"²³. A survey conducted in the 1980s by the Israel Antiquities Authority includes an entry for Jamma'in, indicating that it is a

¹⁶ Al-Dabbagh, op. cit, Pp. 480-483.

¹⁷ The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem, op. cit, p. 4, 15.

¹⁸ Barron, J. B. (ed.), Palestine, Report and General Abstracts of the Census of 1922, Government of Palestine, 1923, P. 25, cf. Al-Dabbagh, op. cit, Pp. 484.

¹⁹ Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, Preliminary Results of the Population, Housing and Establishment Census, 2017, Ramallah: Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018, P. 70.

²⁰ Al-Dabbagh, op. cit, P. 484.

²¹ Cf Al-Dabbagh, op. cit, P. 485, cf. Finkelstein, I., Z. Lederman, eds, Archaeological Survey if the Hill Country of Benjamin. Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1997, Pp. 493-509.

²² Finkelstein, I., Z. Lederman, eds, op. cit, Pp. 506-507.

²³ Conder, Kitchener, op. cit, p. 284.



large inhabited village that overlooks its surroundings. "[M]ost of the early material was collected on the western slope. The medieval material was concentrated more on the southern slope". The pottery sherds collected during that survey were dated to the Iron Age I-III, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Crusader/Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman periods²⁴.

3. The discovery of the tomb and the interrogation process:

Based on the reports received from the IDoPD, the T&APD, and the DoA&CH of Nablus, we can summarize the story of the tomb's discovery as follows: The Police Department in Nablus had arrested a person in connection with an unrelated, pending ethics case on 27th August, 2020 (blackmail of a young girl via social media, charges which the girl dropped three days later due to mediation between the two families to resolve the situation amicably). This subject is a male, 22 years of age, single, and a resident of Jamma'in; he completed secondary school four years ago and now works in a stone quarry. During the investigation process, the police officer asked the arrested man to allow a search of his private cell-phone, thinking that it might yield evidence related to the alleged blackmail. Instead, the officer recognized some photographs of pottery vessels, and asked the subject: "What are these, and where did you get them?" His answer was: "I found them while I was digging down a septic tank". The IDoPD then sent a letter over to the director of T&APD – the offices of the two agencies are in the same building – informing him about the pottery vessels. The morning of the following day, the officers of T&APD started their own interrogation of the suspect, in order to gather all the facts related to what was now an antiquities case. They asked the subject several questions, and his answers can be summarized as follows: "I found these jars three months ago when I was digging down to build a septic tank for my newly constructed house. I cut down the bedrock for

²⁴ Finkelstein, I., Z. Lederman, eds, op. cit, Pp. 506-507.



about 2.5m deep, then found two caves, one of which included six complete jars and also some pottery sherds. My aim was just to construct a septic tank, and not to search for antiquities. I have the jars at home, and if you want them just call my father to bring all of them to you. [...] Yes, I want to add that the same day we discovered the jars we stopped digging this tank, and we immediately covered its opening with a cement layer".

Two hours after completing the interrogation of the arrestee, the T&APD consulted with the Director of Nablus' Department of Antiquities & Cultural Heritage office (located, again, very nearby), and that evaluation report on the artifacts reads: "they are all authentic and dated to the Early Bronze Age". At the final stage of this interrogation phase, the police officers compiled a detailed report of the case that was then signed by both the director of T&APD (Nablus governorate) and the suspect. The arrestee was then transferred, together with the interrogation report and the seized materials, back to the general Police Department. On the fifth day of his arrest, the man was transferred to the Public Prosecutor. There he was released until the date of his first court appearance, scheduled (as of this writing) for 10th November, 2020, while the seized materials were handed over to the DoA&CH. Two weeks later, in mid-September, the authors and the draftsman visited the DoA&CH facility in order to study, photograph, and draw these objects of material culture (see below).

4. Re-visiting the tomb and its description:

On the day of the interrogation of the arrestee by T&APD, officers of that agency along with three DoA&CH employees visited the site of the tomb, where they found the opening of the septic tank covered with a layer of cement, as the subject had stated. Therefore, they asked the family of the homeowner to assist them in making a hole in this cement cap so that they could enter the unused tank and then explore the ancient subterranean construction. After this access was gained, that team spent about two hours documenting the tomb, making both photographic and written records. The DoA&CH director shared the preliminary report of this visit with us, but it



did not include the kind of detailed, descriptive information we desired, nor any visual record of the site. Therefore, we decided to visit the tomb ourselves, for full documentation and to gather any potential information about the original diggers of this particular tomb. Our follow-up visit happened through arrangements made by the directors of DoA&CH and T&APD with the owner of the house. On our arrival at the spot, we first carried out a surface survey of the parcel of land on which this tomb is situated, including the surrounding area for a distance of 100m in each direction. The results of our survey indicate the presence of a few scattered pottery sherds from the Ottoman-Turkish period (1516-1917), but no visible traces of any ancient walls or caves. The tomb is located in a well-developed urban area of the town which includes many residential and commercial buildings and is situated approximately 700m north of the town's historic core (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Aerial photograph showing Jamma'in and the location of the tomb (Ministry of Local Government).

The septic tank is located 2m north of the foundation of the newly constructed house. The tank itself is pear-shaped with a flat base, hewn completely from the limestone bedrock. It has a round opening and measures 2.5m deep and 2.3m in diameter at its bottom (Fig. 3). Marks characteristic of both traditional excavating equipment and a rock drilling machine were clearly visible on its internal faces. Since the top surface of the bedrock lies about 1.2m lower than the present ground level, the rock-cut opening of this tank had been extended upward by a same-size shaft or chimney of dry-laid, corbelled stones (then back-filled around, to ground level). This built shaft was then covered by wooden boards and sheets, and finally capped with the 20 cm-thick cement layer (Fig. 4).

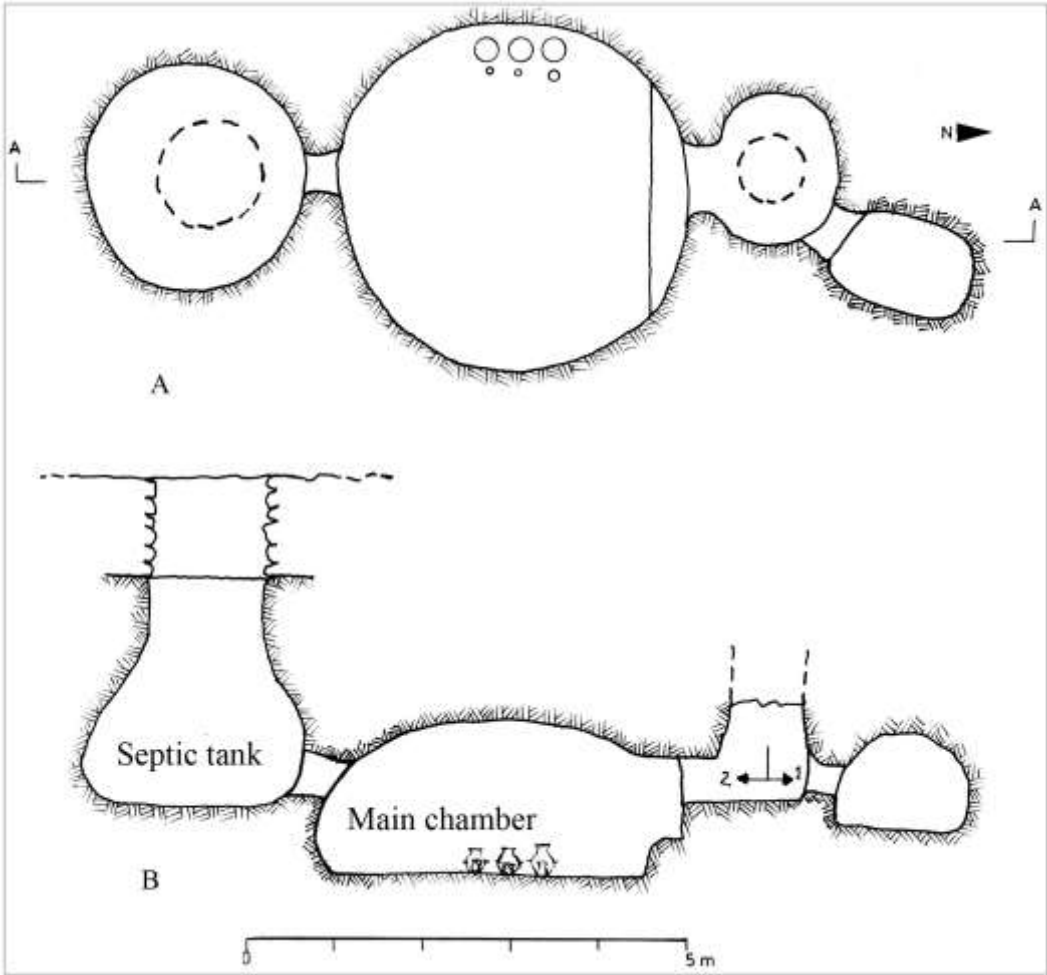


Fig. 3: (A) Top plan of the septic tank and the tomb complex (B) Cross-section A-A of the septic tank and the tomb complex.



Fig. 4: The mouth and covering materials of the septic tank, looking upward.
Photo by the authors.

The original tomb spaces consisted of a vertical shaft (now mostly blocked) and two chambers, all hewn out of the native limestone (Fig. 3). The shaft was explored only partially, from the bottom, because it was found filled with highly compacted soil mixed with small- and medium-size stones; the shaft is generally round in cross-section and 0.8m in diameter, on average. This shaft is flanked at its base by two underground chambers, one to the south and the other, smaller one to the north-east. The southern chamber (the main one) is round in shape and measures 4m in diameter. The relatively flat floor of the chamber is about 1.1m lower than the bottom of the shaft, with one intervening step carved into the bedrock. The shaft and this main chamber are connected via a doorway measuring 0.82m x 0.75m x 0.45m deep (the edges of this opening showed evidence of

recent cutting – see below). The internal walls of this chamber angle gradually inward beginning 0.2m above the floor, transitioning into a domed ceiling measuring 1.8m high at the center. Visible in the chamber's floor, walls and ceiling are some ancient cracks 0.2cm–0.4cm wide, as well as several new, dug depressions of different sizes and shapes. Furthermore, traces of the ancient hewing are clearly visible on the chamber's walls and ceiling, the tool marks measuring 3cm–4cm wide (Fig. 5). The northern part of the chamber's floor is covered with a layer 0.05m–0.9m thick of freshly-dug *huwwar* and limestone chips, debris produced in part by the break-through from the tank but mostly from the several fresh depressions dug in the floor, walls and ceiling of the chamber by the looters. Finally, two large stone slabs were found just inside the doorway of this chamber, both square in shape, one measuring 0.6m x 0.60m x 0.1m thick and the second 0.8m x 0.8m x 0.32m thick (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5: Ancient tool marks in the main chamber, looking south. Photo by the authors.



Fig. 6: The two blocking stones in the main chamber. Photo by the authors.

The much smaller northeastern chamber has an irregular oval shape and measures 1.5m x 1.2m x 1.2m high. Its doorway is situated in the center of its southern wall and measures 0.5m x 0.6m. The floor of this chamber is about 0.3m lower than the bottom of the shaft, and its walls and ceiling are roughly cut. In the floor we documented one freshly-dug trench 1m long x 0.35m wide x 0.2–0.3m deep.

This tomb resembles, to some extent, several other EB-IV tombs discovered at various places throughout historic Palestine, such as: el-Atan ²⁵ ; Khalet al-Jam'a ²⁶ ; Jebel Qa'qair ²⁷ ; Efrata and

²⁵ Nigro, Montanari, Ghayyada, Yasine, 2017, op. cit, Pp. 225-256.

²⁶ Nigro, Montanari, Ghayyada, Yasine, 2015, op. cit, Pp. 185-218.

²⁷ Dever, W., *Excavations at the Early Bronze IV Sites of Jebel Qa'qair and Be'er Resisim Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant* 6, Winona Lake, 2017, Pp. 9-65.



Kh. Kufin²⁸; el-Karmel²⁹; Dhahr Mirzbaneh³⁰; Mount of Olives, Jerusalem³¹; Hablat al-Amud in Silwan, Jerusalem³²; Tequ'a³³; Jericho³⁴; and finally, 'Ain Samiya³⁵.

5. Ethnographic account :

In hopes of gathering additional firsthand information, I (the first author) asked the suspect and his father to accompany the draftsman and myself on the above-mentioned visit for purposes of fully documenting the tomb. At the beginning of the interview with the two informants, I described the potential benefits of their participation in this study for the discipline of archaeology, both in Palestine and worldwide, and assured both of them that any new information provided – any not mentioned previously to the authorities – would not be added to the file of this particular case. The interview, which was carried out completely within the tomb and lasted two hours, consisted of two successive stages: In the first stage, which proceeded with minimal interruption from me and the draftsman, the two men provided us with the story of their discovery of this tomb, including their work procedures and the finds they encountered. The second stage of the interview, however, was carried out in a more conversational style, in an attempt to create positive interaction between the

²⁸ Gonen, Y., Excavation at Efrata. A Burial Ground from the Intermediate and Middle Bronze Ages. (Israel Antiquities Authority Reports 12), Jerusalem, 2001, Pp. 17-19.

²⁹ Dever, W., A Middle Bronze I Cemetery at Khirbet el-Kirmil, Eretz Israel 12, 1975, P. 20.

³⁰ Lapp, P., The Dhahr Mirzbaneh Tomb. Three Intermediate Bronze Age Cemeteries in Jordan. American School of Oriental Research 4. New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1966.

³¹ Kenyon, K., Excavations in Jerusalem, 1965, Palestine Exploration Quarterly 98, 1966, Pp. 73-88.

³² Sa'ad, Y., A Bronze Age Tomb Group from Hablet el Amud, Silwan Village Lands, Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan 8, 1964, Pp. 77-80.

³³ Saller, S., Recent Archaeological Work in Palestine, Liber Annus XIV, 1964, Pp. 272-292.

³⁴ Kenyon, K., Excavations at Jericho, Vol. I, The Tombs Excavated in 1952-1954, London, 1960, P. 197.

³⁵ Lyon, D., Report of the Director 1906-1907, American Journal of Archaeology Supplement 11, 1907, Pp. 42-49.



researcher and informants, and to obtain answers to specific questions. All of the information provided was immediately written down in Arabic and later translated by the authors into English. In general, the atmosphere of the interview was characterized by openness and positive interaction, and I believe both of the informants had overcome any fear of providing me with detailed, confidential descriptive information about their work in this tomb.

The first stage: I first asked them: "Please, let me know how you discovered this tomb, what did you find and see in it, and what was the procedure employed in excavating (i.e., looting) this tomb?" Their answers (with our annotations) can be summarized as follows: "In May 2020, during the lock-down related to the coronavirus pandemic, we decided to construct this septic tank. We were three persons of the same family and worked for four days. The work went quickly because the bedrock here is relatively soft. On the fourth day, based on differences in the echo received in digging this tank's wall, we became aware that a cavity existed to the north side of our new construction [note: both informants have been employed in a stone quarry for many years]. At a certain point we found ourselves in front of a small hole, which we then widened to a diameter that enabled us to slip down into it. With the help of an electrical cable [and light], we saw clean water, a few [intact] pottery vessels, and a stone [the *in situ* doorway blockage] in front of us at the shoulder of this cavity [the large chamber]. After we recognized that the water was not more than half a meter deep, one of us jumped into the cavity and collected the jars, which were immediately transferred to our house. The next step was a big challenge, to empty this cavity of the water using plastic buckets, all in the hope of extracting any further valuable objects, and to use this construction as an extension to the septic tank. On the following day, we pulled the stone that was closing a hole [doorway to the large chamber] to find a soil deposit mixed with some stones [at the base of the original tomb-shaft]. During our digging of this deposit, we recognized another stone blocking another hole [doorway of the smaller chamber], we moved it and rolled it into the first cavity, revealing yet another, smaller cavity. At that time, its floor was



likewise covered with clean water, about 0.15m deep, but it was completely empty of any other materials.

The second stage: The informants were asked eight specific questions, namely: (1) Did you find any earthen deposits on the floors of the two chambers? If so, how thick were they? (2) Did you find any skeletal remains in this tomb? If so, how many skulls, where were they located exactly, and how did you deal with them? (3) Where exactly did you find the pottery vessels, and describe their original positions? (4) How did you remove the stone blockage from the main chamber's doorway? (5) Where did the *huwwar* accumulations in the main chamber come from? (6) Why did you dig depressions in the floor and walls of both chambers? (7) According to your experience, where did the large amount of water that you mentioned come from? Lastly, (8) Why didn't you report your discovery to the relevant authorities? The responses to these questions are summarized as follows:

“The floors of both chambers were completely clean; we did not find any earthen deposits. Actually, we searched both chambers by moving our fingers over their surfaces in the hope of finding small objects. The doorways of both chambers were hermetically sealed by means of the blocking stones. Furthermore, no skeletal material was noted in either chamber, therefore we thought that they were a residential complex of a poor family. The pottery vessels, seven in total, were arranged along the western side of the main chamber as follows: four of them were found in an upright position, with the other two pots lying on their sides; they were all close to each other and full of water; and the one smashed pot was located in the middle of them. Moving the first blocking stone from its original place was, indeed, a big challenge, because it was wedged very tightly into the door opening from the opposite (external) side; therefore, we widened the hole of the doorway by carving all its sides in order to pull the stone in. The blocking stone of the second chamber, on the other hand, was easy to handle, since it likewise had been forced into its doorway opening from the external (shaft) side, and thus all its edges were free. Indeed, all of the fresh



huwwar accumulation was caused by us because we dug several trenches into the floors of both chambers in order to search for further cavities that might be located below, and we piled it close to the doorway of the main chamber. Actually, we believe that the only way for water to leak down into this construction is through the original shaft itself. The surface of our land parcel was concave-shaped, and therefore it collects a great amount of rainwater annually. OK, we will tell you the truth about why we failed to report this discovery to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities: we simply believed that if they became aware of the existence of the tomb, then they would surely prevent us from using the septic tank, and also from constructing any future new buildings on the same land parcel where this tomb is situated.”

6. The pottery assemblage :

The total number of recovered pottery vessels was seven, six complete and intact and one that was found smashed. Five of the pieces are jars, another has the form of an *amphoriskos*, and the last is classified as a juglet (Fig. 7). All of these vessels belong to types dating to the Early Bronze IV period (2300-2000 B.C.E). The jars are of medium and large size, all having a wide, flat base and ovoid-shaped body. The presence of a large number of thumb impressions on the internal surfaces of these jars – from the base up to the upper part of the shoulder, especially visible on the smashed specimen – indicates that these parts were handmade (not on a wheel) and that their internal surfaces were not smoothed. By contrast, the high-quality smoothing of both surfaces of the necks indicates that these were manufactured separately, on a wheel, and then attached to the bodies. Two wavy-edged ledge handles were attached to the sides of the three largest jars (Fig. 8, 9, and 10), whereas the medium sized one lacks any handle (Fig. 11). The *amphoriskos* has a large flat base, gently rounded body, and two small handles attached between the middle of the neck and the upper part of the shoulder (Fig. 12). The juglet specimen also has a large flat base and gently rounded body, with one loop handle attached from

just below the rim to the middle of the body (Fig. 13). All the vessels were made of fine fabric and, where visible, appeared well-fired (i.e., we did not notice a thick core between the inner and outer surfaces).



Fig. 7: The six intact Early Bronze Age pottery vessels found in Jamma'in tomb. Photo by the authors.

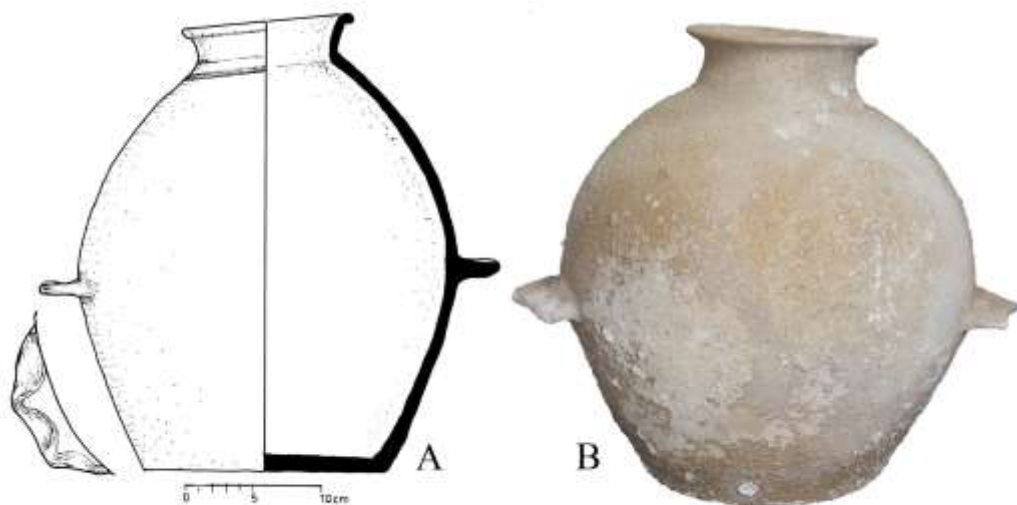


Fig. 8: (A) Drawing of a large Early Bronze Age IV jar with combing decoration, Jamma'in tomb. Drawn by Ibrahim Iqtait. (B) Photo of the same EB-IV jar. Photo by the authors.

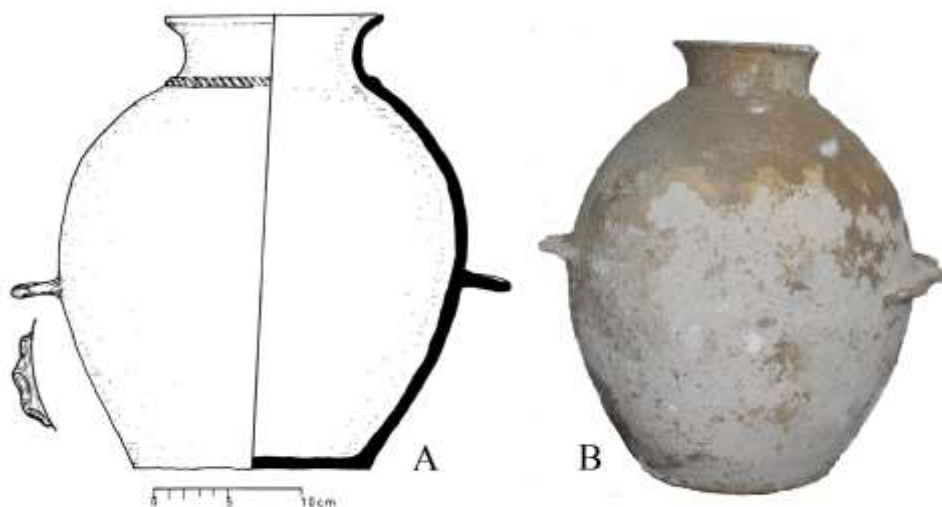


Fig. 9: (A) Drawing of a large Early Bronze Age IV jar with rope-band decoration, Jamma'in tomb. Drawn by Ibrahim Iqtait. (B) Photo of the same EB-IV jar. Photo by the authors

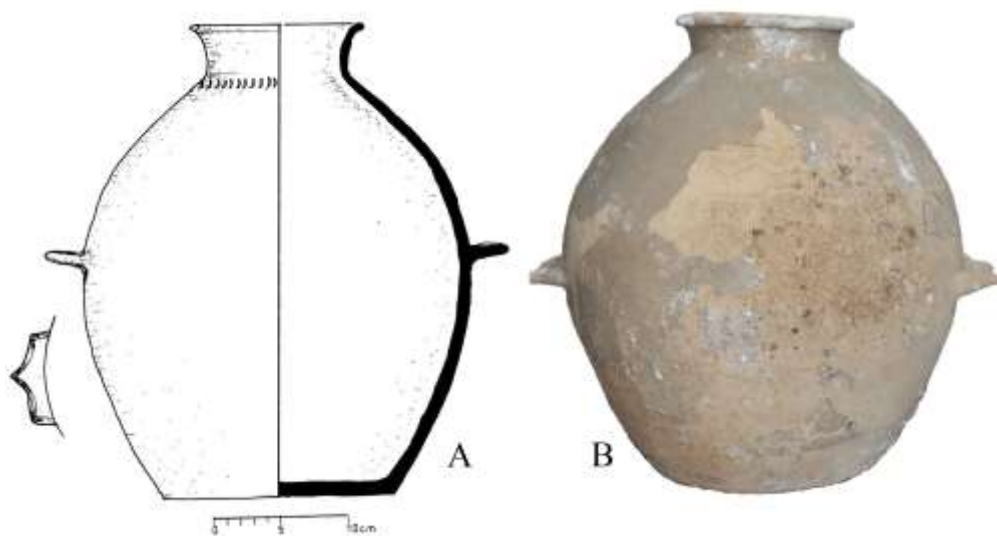


Fig. 10: (A) Drawing of a large Early Bronze Age IV jar with fingertip decoration, Jamma'in tomb. Drawn by Ibrahim Iqtait. (B) Photo of the same EB-IV jar. Photo by the authors.

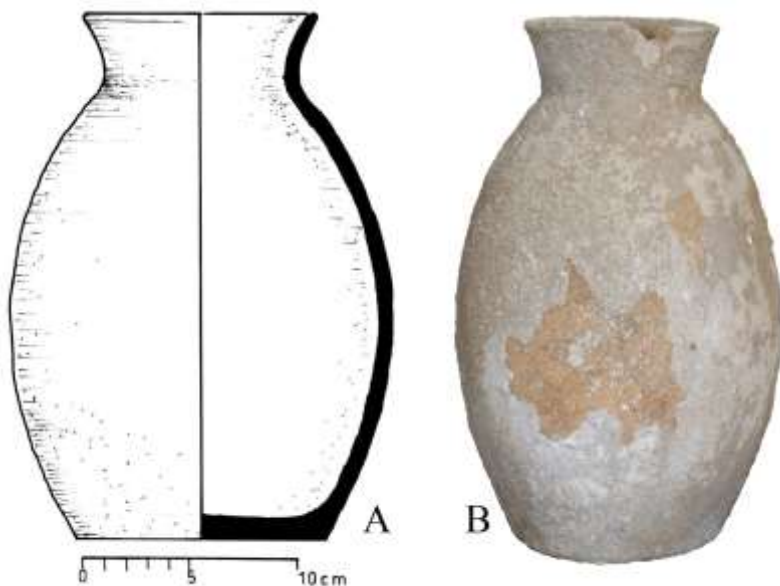


Fig. 11: (A) Drawing of a small Early Bronze Age IV jar, Jamma'in tomb. Drawn by Ibrahim Iqtait. (B) Photo of the same EB-IV jar. Photo by the authors.

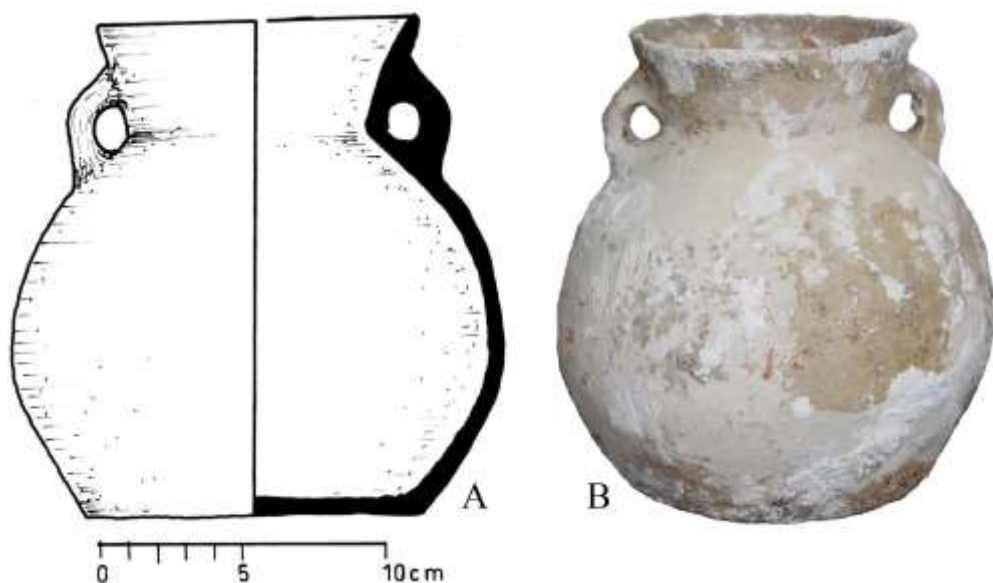


Fig. 12: (A) Drawing of an Early Bronze Age IV amphoriskos, Jamma'in tomb. Drawn by Ibrahim Iqtait. (B) Photo of the same EB-IV amphoriskos. Photo by the authors.

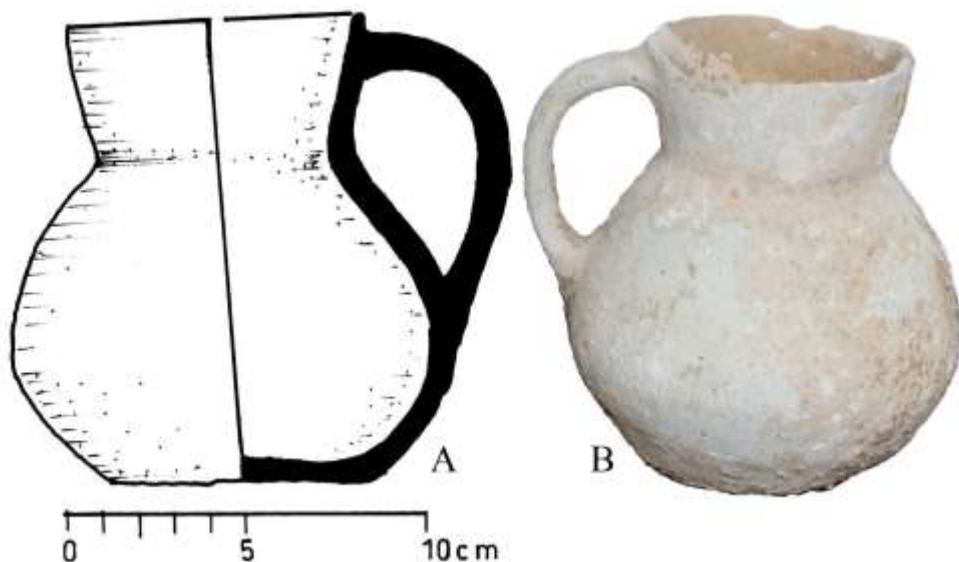




Fig. 13: (A) Drawing of an Early Bronze Age IV juglet, Jamma'in tomb. Drawn by Ibrahim Iqtait. (B) Photo of the same EB-IV juglet. Photo by the authors.

Three distinct types of decoration were noted on the external surfaces of three of the jars, all appearing as a horizontal band encircling the vessel near the base of the neck: a five-tooth combing pattern (Fig. 8a); an applied rope-band design, added as a separate strip and featuring many diagonal fingertip impressions (Fig. 9a); and a similar band but composed only of vertical fingertip impressions made in the main fabric (Fig. 10a). The surfaces of all pots show a thin-layer patina, sometimes mixed with compacted *huwwar*.

7. Conclusion :

The primary heritage resources in the Palestinian Territories are suffering from severe destruction caused by urban development, particularly private and governmental building projects. This ongoing, rapid urbanization throughout the country will surely lead, in the near future, to a dramatic destruction of this land's archaeological, historical, and cultural record. To remedy the risk and impacts that urban development activities impose upon archaeological and historical sites and features, Al-Houdalieh and Sauders have proposed several recommendations, including: improving the oversight of archaeological heritage resources; strengthening the relevant legislation; raising awareness among the general public of the value and importance of cultural heritage for their socio-political and economic well-being; and enhancing coordination between the governmental and non-governmental agencies dealing with issues of cultural heritage and urban development³⁶.

The Jamma'in tomb highlighted here exhibits architectural features common to other EB-IV tombs known throughout the Holy Land, and we

³⁶ Al-Houdalieh, S., R. Sauders, op. cit, Pp. 15-20.



believe that it likely represents part of a larger cemetery. In spite of the vandalization and partial destruction of this tomb, its discovery and documentation adds significantly to our knowledge of the Jamma'in area during the Early Bronze Age IV. As a final remark on the study of this tomb, we would like to say that, taking the looters' statement at face value, we have no reasonable explanation for the absence of human skeletal remains – for now, we must leave it in the realm of mystery.

8. Acknowledgement :

We are grateful to the Director of the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, the Director of the Tourist and Antiquities Police Department, and to the Director of the Investigation Division of Police Department, all in Nablus governorate, for sharing first-hand information with us. We are indebted also to Tom Powers for his constructive proofreading of this work.

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