

CHAPTER 2

STRATIGRAPHY AND EXCAVATED FEATURES

Yehuda Govrin

Introduction

Artifacts recovered in the test and salvage excavations in Area A (the eastern part of the site excavated by the Israeli Institute of Archaeology) provide conclusive evidence for a layered settlement, occupied in the Neolithic (8300–4400 BCE), the Chalcolithic (4400–3600 BCE), and the Middle and Late Bronze (MB: 1900–1550 BCE; LB: 1550–1200 BCE) periods.

Area B, which lies on the western edge of this *tel*, covers ca. 2000m² (eighty 5.0 x 5.0m squares; Fig. 2.2). The excavations exposed two occupation phases here, from the MB and LB periods. Architectural remains were constructed on sterile ground at an average altitude of 81.0m ASL. Remains from later periods were not found in this area, and the 28 archaeologically sterile test squares dug at the west end of Area B (Area Ba) confirmed that our excavation reached the Bronze Age settlement's western limit (longitudinal coordinate: 187030, New Israel Grid). It seems that the Area B remains constitute the western periphery of the *tel* centered in Area A, rather than a separate settlement, at least in the MB (the LB may be another story: see below).

Area B was divided into two sections, Area Ba to the west and Bb to the east.

Area Ba (west portion of the site)

Our investigation in this area consisted of 28 squares: A1–7, B1–7, C1–7, and D1–7. The following are the excavation results. The topsoil was a heavy, stoneless, dark brown clayish soil (grumosol). This soil was archaeologically sterile. The north row of squares (D) contained recent waste material deposits and the remains of a British Mandate road.

Test probes (2.0 x 1.0m) were manually excavated to a depth of 1.0m in fourteen sampled squares (see

fold-out plan on inside back cover). In all of these test probes a sterile clayish soil was found—brown in color, including well-sorted limestone chunks, and devoid of archaeological remains. In three of the test probes (B4, B7, C2), at the Israel Antiquities Authority's (IAA) request excavation was extended to a depth of 1.5m. These deep squares were also lacking in archaeological remains.

A test trench was machine-excavated along the south side of Area Ba, again at the request of the IAA. This trench measured 25.0m in length and was dug to a depth of 3.0m. The entire length of the trench was consistent in its archaeological sterility and soil type. It was concluded from these excavation results that Area Ba contained no archaeological remains.

Area Bb (east portion of the site)

Fifty-eight 5.0 x 5.0m squares were excavated in this section. The following is a summary of our findings.

Row D (the north row, adjacent to Route 3): The topsoil in these eight squares (D8–16) was a dark brown, stoneless grumosol including lime fragments, lacking archaeological remains. Only recent rubbish deposits and Mandate-period road vestiges were evident. Manual test probes measuring 2.0 x 1.0m and 1.0–1.5m deep were excavated in four sampled squares (see fold-out plan on inside back cover; L352–354, L360). In all of these squares the same archaeologically sterile soil was found.

Row C (south of Row D): This row was also divided into eight squares (C8–16). The northern halves of the squares contained only archaeologically sterile grumosol. However, in the southeast corners of the squares we found archaeological remains and therefore excavated deep test probes. In several

cases wall sections belonging to the northern wing of Building B1 were revealed (see below). These wall sections were generally one course high and two wide, and had been cut by a previous deep test probe which ran through the southern sides of the Row C squares (see fold-out plan on inside back cover).

Building B1: This building (Figs. 2.3-2.6) was located at the west end of Area Bb. The structure was

rectangular, measured ca. 25.0 x 12.0m (300.0m²), and was built along an east-west axis. For the most part only its wall foundations and surface paving survived. These architectural remains were very close to the surface, at depths of 0.1–0.4m. At the west end of the building a large stone was found *in situ* (Fig. 2.3). This was probably an entrance threshold. The partial plan of the interior suggests rectangular rooms, some of which were paved with

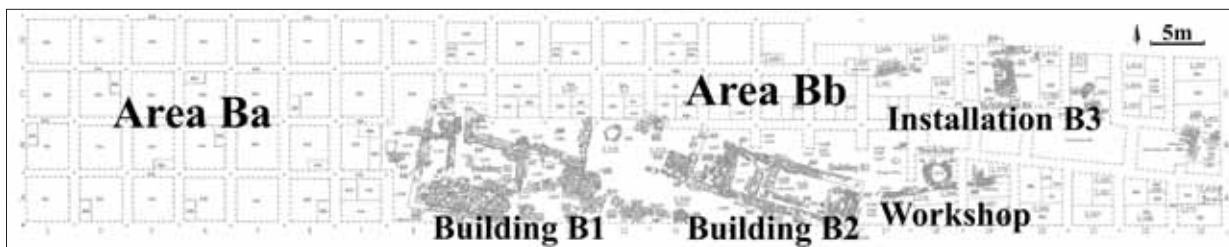


Fig. 2.1. General plan of Area B, showing sub-areas and main structural features (for detailed plan, see fold-out plan on inside back cover).



Fig. 2.2. General view of Area B (looking east), with Area Ba in the foreground. This section of the site was found to be devoid of artifacts and archaeological remains. Notice the deep test channel on the south side of the area (in the right foreground).



Fig. 2.3. Area Bb (looking east). In the foreground is a large threshold stone from Building B1. The north side of the building was destroyed (left foreground), probably during construction of the Mandate-period road.



Fig. 2.4. Building B1: the paved room in the southwest side of the building (looking east).

large flagstones interspersed with small stones. The stone paving survived best in the southwestern room (L139, Fig. 2.4), and sections were also preserved in other rooms. This paving reinforced the compact earth floor.

The structure walls were preserved only in their bottom course. The bases of the surviving walls were made of large- and medium-sized stones. Walls could be one course wide (e.g. WA091¹, an

¹ Walls are numbered according to a system whereby 'W' (standing for 'wall') is followed by the square number (e.g. 'A09') and then a sequential registration number (e.g. '1').



Fig. 2.5. Building B1.

external wall) or two courses wide (e.g. WB082, an internal wall).

In the building area we excavated two deeper test probes (2.0 x 1.5 x 1.5m). These showed that the building was constructed in a single phase. Under its initial, MB II occupation stratum was exposed sterile soil, from which no additional archaeological finds were retrieved.

The overall impression is of a structure built of sun-dried mud bricks, set on stone foundations. However, this impression must be tempered by the fact that much of the western, northern and eastern portions of the building did not survive and, despite being exposed to a length of 7.0m, the southern wall (WA091) was not fully excavated because it ran beyond the area of excavation.

The findings, which were sparsely scattered on the room floors, were comprised of one complete smashed LB cooking pot (L150, field no. 1070/1) found *in situ* between walls WA102 and WB101, and sherds of bowls, kraters, cooking pots, jugs, storage jars, Cypriot imports, groundstone and flint implements. Most of these dated to the LB period, but some to the MB. The mixed nature of these finds suggests that the building was constructed in the MB and was re-used in the LB.

Building B2: This building (Figs. 2.7-2.10) was located immediately east of Building B1, and was also rectangular in plan and oriented east-west. It measured 20.0 x 5.0m (ca. 100.0m²). The building's outline was found almost completely intact.