

## CHAPTER 2

### THE IRON AGE TOMB (PHASE 1): THE TOMB AND ITS CONTENTS

This tomb (Figs. 2.1-3) was comprised of a shaft cut into the *nari* bedrock, leading to a roughly-hewn chamber. The shaft—or what remained of it after truncation by the later quarry—sloped down steeply and unevenly from the southwest, and measured ca. 1.0m in diameter. The chamber was irregular in shape (3.5 x 2.5 x 1.8m) and was oriented NNW/SSE. This form is typical of Iron Age IIA tombs to which the majority of the finds are dated (below).

Within the tomb seven human burials in varying degrees of articulation were found amidst a fill of loose, brown, sandy silt and occasional stones. Grave goods included ceramic vessels, scarabs, beads, shells and metal objects.

The Tsur Natan tomb is consistent with Bloch-Smith's (1992: 36-40) description of the cave, chamber and shaft tombs of the Iron Age southern Levant. This was the preferred burial type in the Late Bronze and early Iron Age (Gonen 1979; Bloch-Smith 1992: 55-9), mostly in the southern highlands west of the Jordan River as well as along the coast (Akhzib, Tel Mevorakh), in the north (Megiddo, Nazareth, Tubas, Tekoa), in the Shephelah and southern highlands (Aitun, Khirbet Beit Lei, Bethlehem, Ez Zahariyah, Jerusalem, Lachish, Manahat, Khirbet Zataq), in the Jordan Valley (Jericho, Tell el-Farah - South), and east of the Jordan (Dhiban, Sahab).

Bloch-Smith (*ibid.*) sees shaft, chamber tombs and cave tombs as variations on a common design, differing only in their regularity of plan and access. All tended to be located in 'tell slopes or wadi cliffs, in outcrops in soft chalk or limestone' (*ibid.* 36). Cave tombs have rounded or irregular cavities, while chamber tombs are cut into spaces that are even and level. In some cases topography necessitated that the cave or chamber be reached by a shaft, as at Tsur

Natan. The shaft both gave access to the tomb and facilitated its closing off.

Finally, Bloch-Smith (*ibid.* 40) saw no clear patterns when comparing cave tombs and shaft and chamber tombs in terms of pottery and other mortuary goods, of body treatment, and numbers of individuals interred.

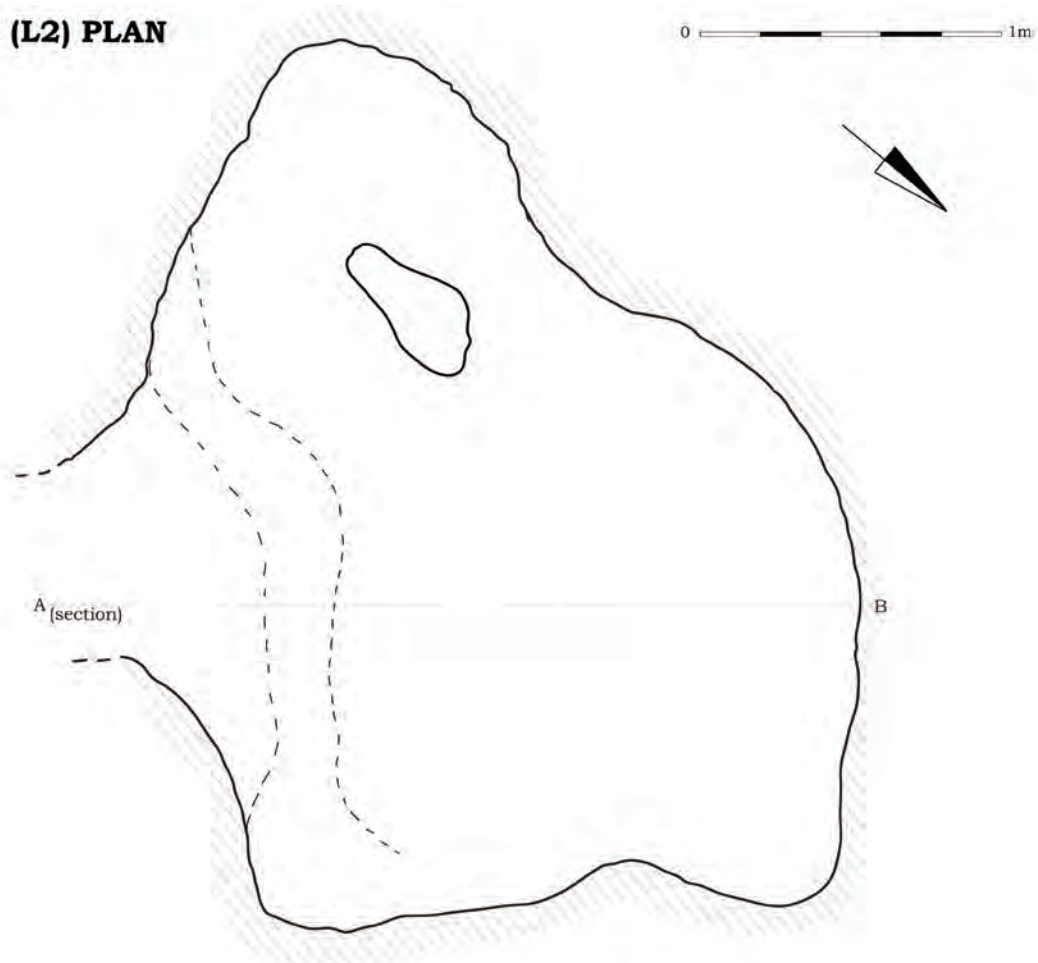
#### ARTIFACT ASSOCIATIONS

Within the tomb at Tsur Natan we identified several clusters of artifacts (Fig. 2.3). These clusters may represent the remnants of discrete burial kits left for the interred, and may allow us to infer information about the deceased and their socio-cultural environments. We have postulated to which human remains we believe each burial kit most likely belongs. However, this is a tentative interpretation based on our spatial analysis, so we must be cautious in drawing conclusions regarding gender or age associations for these grave goods.



Figure 2.1. Aerial photograph close-up of the L2 tomb (top center), truncated by the quarry.

**TOMB (L2) PLAN**



**TOMB (L2) SECTION**

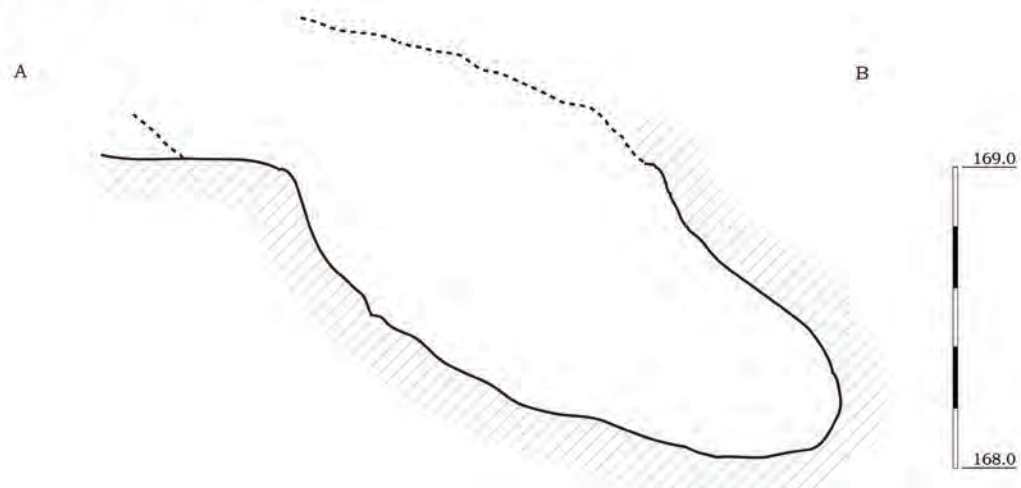
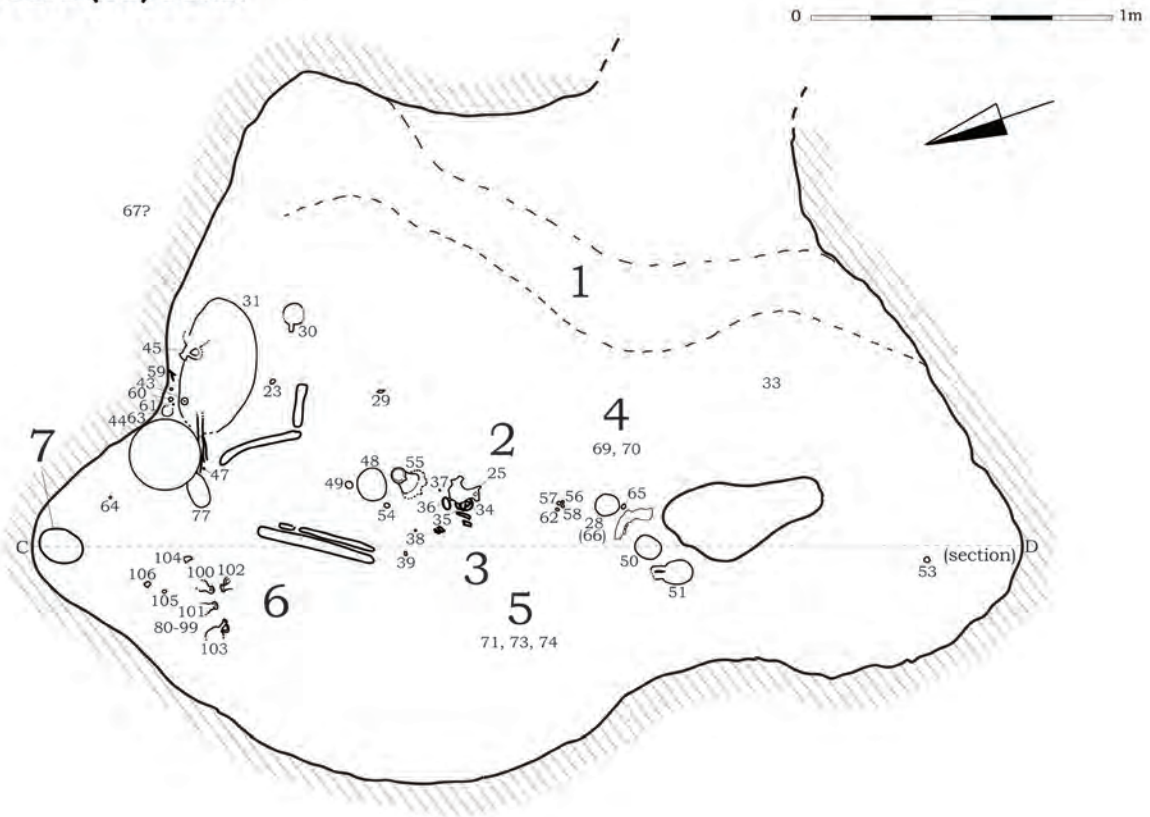


Figure 2.2. Plan and section of the tomb, showing the shaft on the east side and the irregular and sloping cave shape.

**TOMB (L2) PLAN**



**TOMB (L2) SECTION**

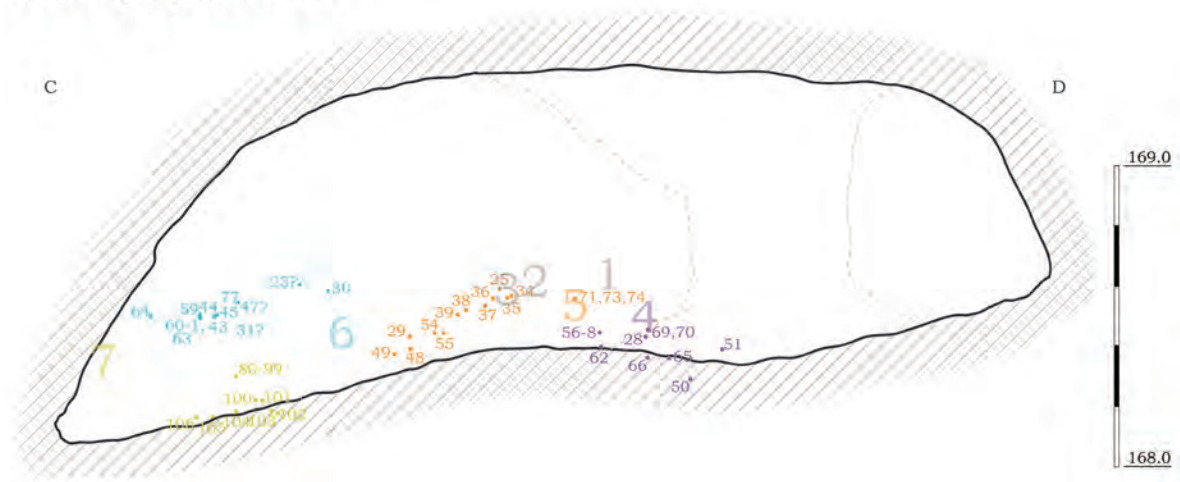


Figure 2.3. Plan and section of the tomb from the west, with the shaft marked on the east side, as well as several identified human interments (large numbers) and the finds, which according to our tentative spatial analysis seem most likely associated with each interment (this is discussed in further detail in Chapter 8). Note also the irregular cave shape and the non-anthropogenic bedrock column near the south side.



Figure 2.4. A selection of the most important finds from the tomb.

#### REFERENCES

- Bloch-Smith, E. 1992. *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament/The American Schools of Oriental Research Monograph Series 7). Sheffield.
- Gonen, R. 1979. *Burial in Canaan of the Late Bronze Age as a Basis for the Study of Population and Settlements* (PhD. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem). Jerusalem.