

Final report Area K-2021
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The objectives of the 2021 season in Area K were further excavation of the northern room of K-2 Building 7613 (bordered by Walls **7613**, **7607** and **7630**) where restorable jars were found in 2019, and clarification of the general layout of that building in the eastern part. The excavation lasted for about 2.5 weeks, during which the area was expanded to the east by 5.5-6 m, most of Square R/5 and the northern part of Square R/6 were excavated. A balk was left in the northern part of the excavation, 3.3 m long and 0.5 m wide. The newly excavated area amounts to c. 39 sq.m.

Alla Rabinovich was the area supervisor, assisted by Miriam Shaish. Photos were taken by Alla Rabinovich, unless stated otherwise.

Two local strata were excavated in 2021 – K-1 (late, possibly Mameluke or Ottoman, tombs) and K-2 (Iron IIA building). See Table 1 for itemization of loci and walls per stratum.

Table 1. Summary of stratigraphic phases, loci and walls, Area K

| Local Phase | General description | Loci and Walls |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Topsoil | Grey and brown loose dirt and stones | Locus 9601 |
| K1 | Fill below topsoil, tombs and burials, stone features | <i>Squares Q-R/5 north of W7607:</i> Loci: 9602, 9603, 9606, 9607, 9610, 9611, 9615, 9617, 9618. <i>Squares Q-R/5-6 south of W7607:</i> Loci: 9604, 9605, 9608, 9613. |
| K2 | Building 7613: walls, floors and debris | <i>Squares Q-R/5 north of W7607:</i> Loci: 9609, 9614, 9616. Wall: 9612. |

Phase K-2

The northern room of the building was completely uncovered, up to the eastern wall (**9612**). The continuation of the northern (**7613**) and southern walls (**7607**) were uncovered further to the east, with remains of plaster. Within the debris, at least 30 restorable jars were found, many of them in a very good state of preservation. Numerous samples were taken of the debris and the contents of the jars. The walls and the debris were, as in the previously excavated area, cut by late tombs of K-1. The southern and eastern walls of the building in the southern part of the area were probably exposed, very close to topsoil. However, more work is needed to delineate them, to distinguish them from the collapses and the late tombs and to evaluate the damage done by the latter.

Construction Phase

The northern wall of the building **7613** was further uncovered up until the border between Squares Q/5 and R/5. Only the southern face of the wall, one stone wide, was exposed. The wall continues into the unexcavated area in the north. The new section of the wall is 2.5 m long, five courses were exposed, including an additional top course that was not preserved in the previously excavated stretch of the

wall. The floating elevation was not reached. The wall's overall length now amounts to 9.8 m. The projected length of the wall up to the (unexcavated) corner with Wall **9612** would be c. 12 m, making the northern room about 4.7 m long and 2.7 m wide. Remains of plaster were preserved on the wall in the north-western corner of this year's area, behind Jar R (Figs. 1, 2, 12).

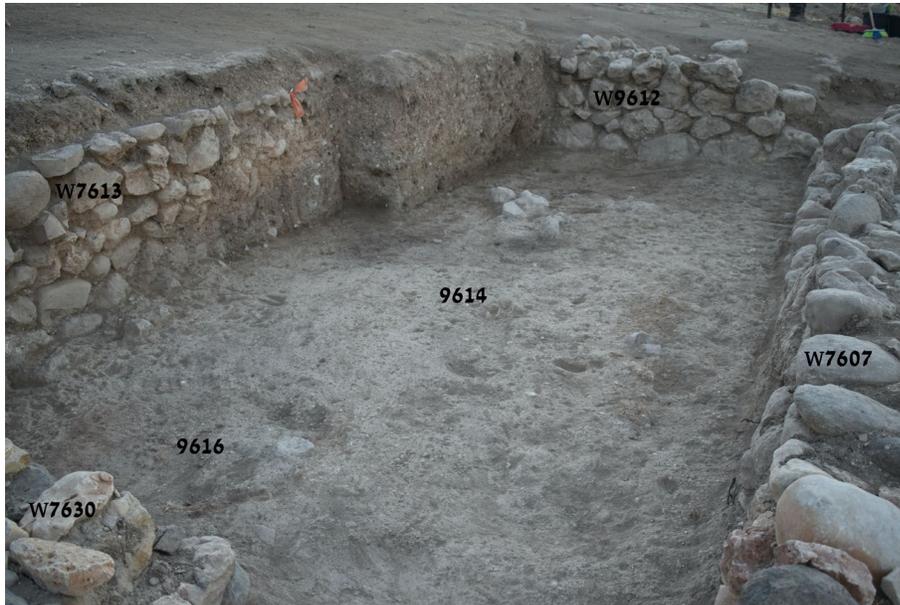


Fig. 1. ABM21-K-102 DSC_0201. 22/07. Squares Q-R/5. Northern room of the building, looking north-east. Wall 7607 in the right corners with Wall 9612 in the upper right. Wall 7613 and Wall 7630 in the left.



Fig. 2. ABM21-K-149 DSC_0248. 22/07. Squares Q-R/5. Northern room of the building, looking north-west. Wall 7607 in the left, cornering with Wall 9612 in the bottom. Walls 7630 and 7613 in the top.

Of the middle wall of the building **7607** additional 4.5 m were exposed, making its overall preserved length reach 7 m. The newly exposed part is poorly preserved, at least at the top course. It seems to

have been extensively robbed and/or ruined due to the burying activities (tomb **9606** and burial **9615**). The wall meets **9612** at a right angle, but nothing can be said at the moment of the nature of the connection because most of it has not been uncovered yet and has been damaged in the upper courses by Burial **9615** (Figs. 1, 2). Remains of plaster were preserved on the wall in the south-western corner of the area next to Jar D (Fig. 3), and in the south-eastern corner next to Jar L.



Fig. 3. ABM21-K-134 DSC_0233. 22/07. Squares Q-R/5. Looking south. Wall 7607 (cut by Tomb 9606) with remains of plaster in the center of the picture.

The continuation of the southern wall of the building **7648** has probably been unearthed in the south-eastern part of the excavation area, where a large concentration of medium-size rocks and rubble has been uncovered just below topsoil and not deeper than the top course. However, this group of stones is much wider than the wall is expected to be, based on the character of the other walls of the building (Fig. 4, 5). This may be due to collapsed stones on the sides, later burials built next to the wall, or some additional in situ construction, such as a retaining wall. Further work will clarify this.

An eastern closing wall connecting **7648** with **7607** may have been unearthed but this wall too needs further clarification (Fig. 4, 5).



Fig. 4. ABM21-K-130 DSC_0229. 22/07. Squares Q-R/5-6. Looking west. Topsoil with continuation of Wall 7648 and possible eastern K-2 wall. Tomb 9605 in the upper center of the picture.



Fig. 5. ABM21-K-145 DSC_0244. 22/07. Squares Q-R/5-6. Looking north. Topsoil with continuation of Wall 7648 and possible eastern K-2 wall.

In the northern part of the area a north-south Wall **9612** was uncovered (mainly its western face). It is 1.8 m long and 1 m width (same width as the other walls of the building), built of well-fitted fieldstones 0.15-0.3 m large. However, the top surface consists of rubble and some large boulders. Four courses were uncovered as of the end of season 2021, the floating elevation was not reached. We suspect that the wall has been cut by a later cist-tomb (yet unnumbered), and it is not quite clear which of the large boulders in the top course are in situ and which belong to the tomb (Fig. 1, 2). Although the connection between Walls **9612** and **7607** was uncovered in a very small area, and its anticipated connection with

Wall **7613** is concealed in the northern baulk, we believe that Wall **9612** is the closing eastern wall of the room.

Habitation Phase

Debris **9609** were filling the room delineated by Walls **7613**, **9612**, **7607** and the western border of this year's excavation area (small part of this room, bordered on the west by Wall **7630**, was excavated in 2019). The debris contained at least 30 restorable jars and were cut by several late tombs and open burials.¹ The sediment around the jars was mainly brown fine-grained, with hard whitish "concrete" material partly covering the jars and found in patches between the jars (except in the north-east part of the locus which is disturbed). Several samples of the material were taken. It could be lime or plaster (for example, collapsed ceiling) or decayed mudbrick. In some areas the sediment was reddish-brown, similar to what was noted in Locus **7629** in 2019 (Fig. 6, 7, 8). Flotation samples of the sediment from several places in the room and at different heights were taken.



Fig. 6. ABM21-K-044 DSC_0057. 14/07. Squares Q-R/5. Looking south-east. Locus 9609 with restorable jars. The reddish shade of the debris is visible in the center of the picture. Taken by Noam Sivan.

¹ Beyond Wall **9612**, immediately to the east, there is possibly another restorable jar, at least its bottom half.



Fig. 7. ABM21-K-048 DSC_0061. 14/07. Squares Q-R/5. Looking north-west. Locus 9609 with restorable jars, Wall 7607 in the left of the picture. Jars D (in the upper left), DD and Q (in the bottom right) cut by Tomb 9606. Taken by Noam Sivan.



Fig. 8. ABM21-K-023 DSC_0119. 08/07. Square R/5. North in the top of the picture. Jar K to the left of the stick is covered in “concrete-like” material. Taken by Shalom Ariel.

There were some random medium-size stones between the jars. Fragments of tabun material or of a coarse clay vessel were found scattered in the eastern part of the room, next to Wall **9612**, in the vicinity of jars L, M and P. More pieces were found in the floor layer **9614** below the jars too.

The better preserved jars were removed with the bottom half of the sediment intact, and the rest of the sediment was sampled for flotation. Some of the jars were standing upright or slightly leaning and were filled with sediment, while others had collapsed into themselves and contained almost no sediment (Fig.

9, 10, 11). It seems that this difference should reflect differences in the contents of the jars. Maybe some of them contained liquid that had evaporated by the moment the building collapsed onto them, crushing those jars, while the others that had contained dry materials, withstood the collapse, and the contents disintegrated with time and mixed with dust. [See Table 2 for details of each jar.](#)



Fig. 9. IMG_5953. 15/07. Removing Jar M with sediment in situ. The arrow points at the signs of burning on the inside of the jar.



Fig. 10. IMG_5970. 16/07. Looking west. Group of jars in the center of the room, in various states of preservation. Jars A and B were completely preserved and are standing almost upright (their rims had been collected earlier). Jar D had been cut by Tomb 9606. Jar J had been smashed and flattened. Jar K has been very well preserved, it is being prepared for removal with the sediment in situ.



Fig. 11. IMG_6008. 19/07. Looking south. Jar A – the first uncovered jar – has been almost completely preserved and is standing upright. Jar KK – the last uncovered jar – has collapsed into itself.

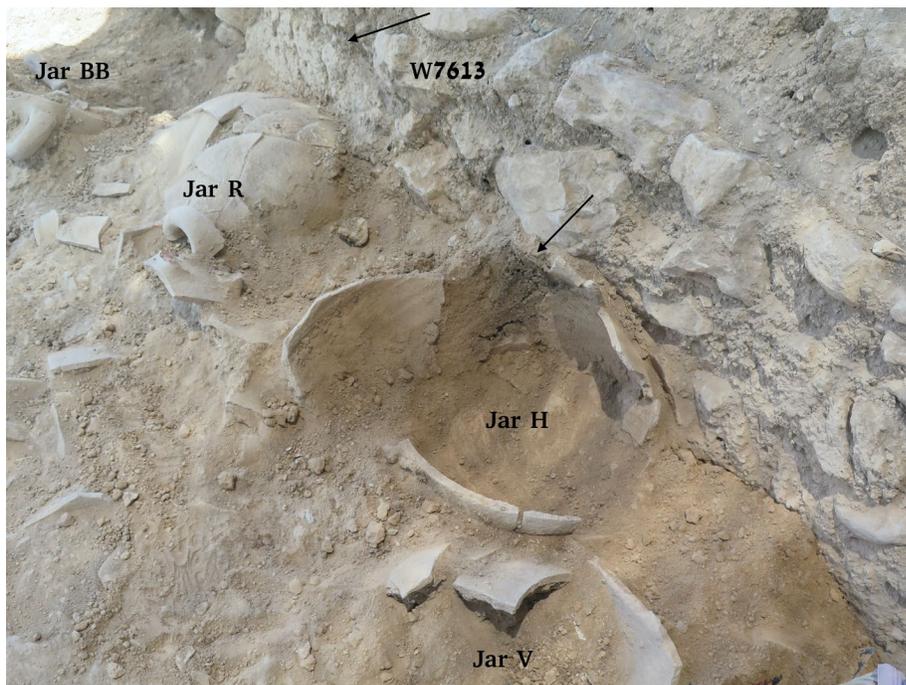


Fig. 12. IMG_5915. 14/07. Looking north-west. Excavating jars next to Wall 7613. The left arrow points at remains of plaster above Jar R. The right arrow points at dark sediment next to Jar H, where a lamp and a patch of black soil on the floor were found later.

The jars seem to be lined in rows diagonally in SW-NE direction. One row of jars could be very clearly discerned: Jars U, C, B, A, G and J, with Jar KK leaning on Jars B and A (Row 5)². Other rows can be guessed, although they had been disturbed by the later intrusions. Jars D, CC and K probably comprise another row to the south, with one jar missing because of tomb **9606** (Row 4). Jar DD might be a remnant of Row 3 together with another jar eliminated by tomb **9606**, and Jar P is in the same line. However, this jar might have just been leaning on Jar M, since there seems to be no later disturbance to the west of Jars P and M that would count for the absence of another jar in Row 3, so this area might have been left empty for access to the jars, or the jars that used to stand there might have been taken out some time before the abandonment. Jars Q, FF and M seem to make a short row in the SE corner of the room (Row 2), with Jar L standing behind them in the corner (Row 1). To the north of Row 5 there is a gap, possibly for going through (although this might be just an illusion caused by the jars leaning in different directions). Then Jars Y, Z, JJ, X and HH form Row 6. Jars T, AA, GG and V form Row 7. Jars EE and H form Row 8. Jars R and BB form Row 9. Jar F forms Row 10.³ (Fig. 13).

² Jar U is leaning on Wall **7607**, and next to it leaning on the wall were at least two more jars excavated in 2019 further to the west (Baskets 76372 and 76147). This seems to have been the original arrangement, similar to Jars P and M along Wall **9612**.

³ Two restorable jars were found in 2019 in Locus **7650** (76376 and 76385), lying on the side leaning on Wall **7630**, so that there was a gap between them and the border of the excavated area. Below them there possibly were two more jars, completely crushed. It seems likely that the four jars belong to rows 8-10 and rolled aside, crushing each other.

southern end. Some sherds were found in that area too. There were no jars in this part of the room so this might be contemporary with the jars (although the absence of the jars might be due to the burial cutting the debris here).

- Further to the west, in NE corner of Square Q/5 was an area of dark sediment, several burnt bones were found in it and near it. An oil lamp was found just above here in **9609** (close to and lower than Jar H, see Fig. 12).
- A clay feature (**9616**) was found in the west of the area, continuing the find of 2019 in Locus **7650** below the jars. It is an oval-shaped contour made of tabun-like material. The eastern part of the contour is missing. In the south-eastern corner of the contour there is some yellow clayish material. In the southern part of the contour there is another line of white limestone material going around the contour.
Some more pieces of tabun-like material were found scattered around. Two olive pits were collected to the north-east of the clay feature (96197, 96203). The sediment in that area was grayish and fine-grained, as if mixed with ashes.
There were jars above this feature – Jars BB and F, and the jars found in Locus **7650** in 2019. If these are remains of a tabun, it must have existed before the jars were stored here. However, the nature of this feature is unclear.
- Another olive pit was collected in the south-western corner of the 2021 excavation area (96201). An olive pit was also found in this area in Locus **9609**, about 35 cm higher, between Jars Y and Z (96092).
- Patches of yellow, orange, brown hard material (mudbrick?) were found in the SW part of the area, along Wall 7607. Jars B and C seem to have been situated above part of this feature.
- Pottery and bones with signs of burning were found scattered in the locus.



Fig. 14. ABM21-K-090 DSC_0189. 22/07. Square Q/5. Looking south-east. Clay Feature 9616 on Floor 9614 next to Wall 7630. Patch of decayed mudbrick (?) next to Wall 7607 (cut by Tomb 9606) with remains of plaster in the top of the picture, Wall 7613 in the bottom left.



Fig. 15. ABM21-K-107 DSC_0206. 22/07. Squares Q-R/5. Looking north. Floor 9614 with the stone feature and the area of black soil in the center of the picture. Wall 7613 in the top left.

Phase K-1

Numerous tombs and burials cut into K-2 debris, in some cases penetrating all the way down to the jars and making use of the walls. Some of the tombs were left unexcavated this season.

The fill just below topsoil and down to the bottom elevation of Tomb **9607** was excavated as Locus **9602**, it contained mainly grey-brown and brown fine-grained sediment, as well as areas of white and yellowish packed material in the vicinity of Tombs **9603** and **9607**. Patches of hard whitish material was found around the jars, partly covering some of them (Fig. 8). As noted above, it might be remains of plaster from the ceiling, or decayed mudbrick, or something of that kind that belongs to the room with the jars, as opposed to the previously described materials that may have something to do with the tombs. A line of three large stones (with a gap size of another stone) aligned east-west and looking like a wall (possibly of a tomb) were found in the NE corner of the room (Fig. 17), however, there was no continuation to the line and there does not seem to be connection with burials **9611** and **9617** situated further to the west and deeper. This locus is understood as late disturbed fill into which the tombs were excavated, even though the tops of some of the jars already appeared here.

Tombs and burials to the north of Wall **7607**

A small Tomb **9603**, possibly of a child, was found in the western part of the excavation area. It was made of one course of stones about 10-20 cm large, arranged in an oval, about 75 cm by 50 cm. Only some of the bones were preserved, including part of the skull, most of them were found outside of the tomb next to it – probably disturbed and washed out. Inside the tomb was brown sediment. The eastern part of the tomb was covered by white packed sediment, that can possibly be understood as lime poured over the tomb, or the daily surface of the cemetery that had been exposed to the elements (cv. Tomb **7603**). At the bottom height of the tomb, to the north and to the south of it were patches of yellowish sandy material (excavated as part of **9602**). This material could have been placed intentionally at the bottom of the burial pit (cv. Tombs **7609** and **7617**) (Fig. 16).



Fig. 16. IMG_5771. 07/07. Looking west. Tomb 9603 in the right part of the picture, Locus 9602 with the first jars uncovered in the left part of the picture.

Tomb 9603 was separated by a thin layer of brown sediment from Tomb 9607 right below it, built in a similar fashion, probably also of a child. It was made up of one course of stones about 20-40 cm large, arranged in an oval shape about 1 m by 50 cm. Inside was brown fill. Almost no bones were found (Fig. 17).



Fig. 17. ABM21-K-012 DSC_0108. 08/07. Squares Q-R/5. Looking west. Locus 9602 with the first jars unearthed. Wall 7607 and Tomb 9606 with Collapse 9610 in the left of the picture, Wall 7613 and Tomb 9607 in the upper right. Taken by Shalom Ariel.

Just below Tomb **9607**, an articulated burial **9611** was found, unmarked by stones neither on the sides, nor on the top. The stretched body was less than 1.5 m long (possibly of an adolescent?). The soil around the bones was brown and relatively soft, the soil around the legs was dark and soft. The burial pit penetrated down to the jars, and the head of the interred was placed on the smashed Jar GG, which seems to be a conscious decision by the gravediggers (Fig. 18). Notably, the skull was barely preserved, only some pieces were found within the jar. As noted above, we suggest that the sediment in the jar, influenced by its contents, maybe due to its higher acidity, could have caused the skull bones to disintegrate.



Fig. 18. IMG_5828. 13/07. Looking west. Burial 9611 with articulated skeleton (bones of arms and legs can be discerned). In the western end of the pit remains of Jar GG.

It is possible that the persons in the three burials **9603**, **9607** and **9611** were buried at the same time and were members of one family.

The upper part of the body was below Tombs **9603** and **9607**, and the lower part of the body was below fill that had been initially excavated as debris of K-2 (**9609**). Upon uncovering the burial **9611**, the fill above it had to be redefined as backfill of the burial pit **9618** (essentially continuation of Fill **9602**), several baskets of **9609** were therefore reassigned to that new locus. The matrix of the backfill was brown relatively soft sediment, not strikingly different from the debris surrounding the jars (which was the reason it had not been identified during the excavation), apart from the fact that this area contained no jars.

Another burial **9617**, seemingly unmarked too, was revealed upon cleaning the northern section. It is very possible that this burial uses the unexcavated continuation of Wall **7613** as its northern wall but no southern wall or capstones were noted. Apparently some of the remains from this burial have been removed while excavating Burial **9611**, but some more are still visible in the section. The fill of the burial pit can be seen in the section and is characterised by grey colour, different from the surrounding and the underlying brown sediment (Fig. 19).



Fig. 19. ABM21-K-059 DSC_0158. 21/07. Square R/5. Looking north. Section of the northern baulk. The light-grey sediment with curving bottom line in the middle part of the section probably marks Burial 9617. The brown sediment in the bottom part of the section belongs to K-2 Debris 9609.

Another open burial **9615** was found on the intersection of Walls **7607** and **9612**. We did not identify a built tomb, but there were several stones on top of the burial (that may not be part of it). The body was an articulated skeleton. Several large sherds on top of the skull might have been placed intentionally to cover it. The burial pit cut through Walls **7607** and **9612**, covering the corner of the walls. Only the western part of the body was excavated and removed, within the excavation area of this year, approximately at the width of Wall **9612**. The rest of it is in the unexcavated ground to the east.

There might be a cist-tomb immediately to the north of this burial, with at least one wall made of large boulders, cutting Wall **9612** or just on top of it (Fig. 2).

A cist-tomb **9606** was excavated in the southern part of the room, partly integrated into Wall **7607**, as has been noted numerous times in 2019. The tomb had no capstones. It was about c. 1.75 m long, its total width was c. 75 cm, inner width c. 35 cm. The southern row of the tomb was inserted into the northern face of Wall **7607**, replacing some of its stones. It is built of one course of squarish boulders up to 40 cm large. The northern row was built up of two courses. The bottom course is made of boulders about 40 cm large, the upper course is made of 20-30 cm large stones that may have been robbed from Wall **7607** (Fig. 17, 20, 21). Notably the wall seems to be rather damaged in this area, at least in the top course. The tomb was cut through some of the jars (mainly Jars D, CC and Q), leaving halves of them in place just outside the tomb (Fig. 7). The fill inside the tomb was brown, in the area of the legs it was dark. The skeleton was articulated, in a stretched position, with the head to the west.

The southern part of Tomb **9606** was covered by a group of medium-size stones (Collapse **9610**) – most probably a random concentration of stones (Fig. 17).

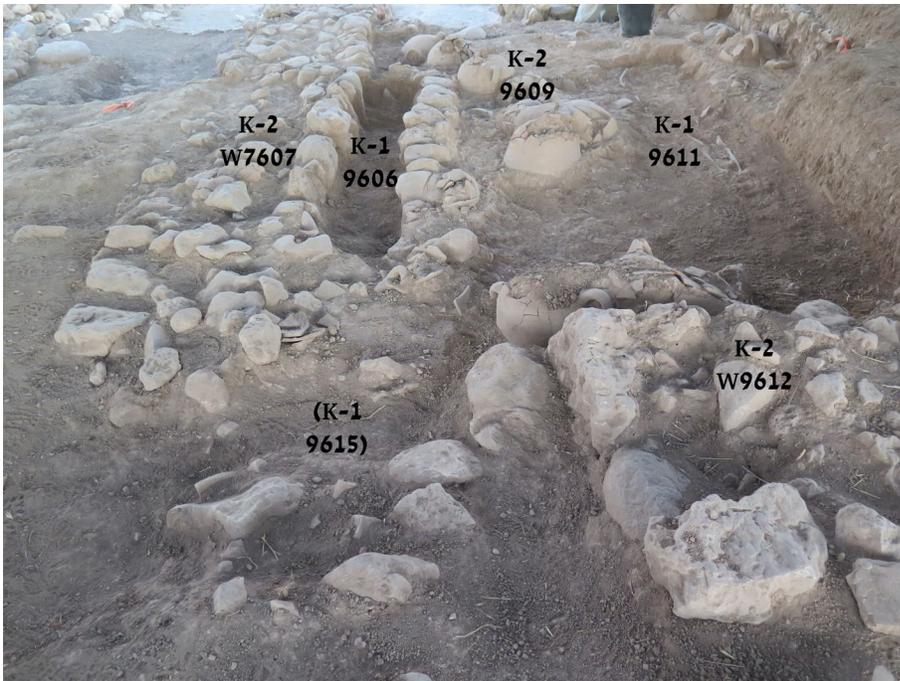


Fig. 20. IMG_5831. 13/07. Looking west. Tomb 9606 cutting into Wall 7607 and into Debris 9609. Burial 9611 in the top right. Burial 9615 was found later below the dirt and rocks in the bottom left.

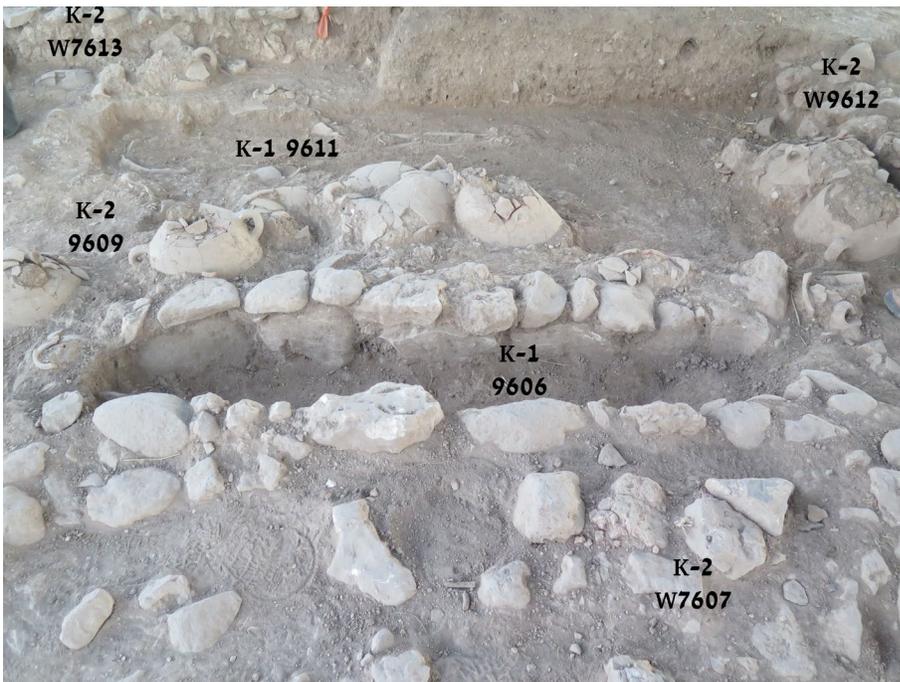


Fig. 21. IMG_5833. 13/07. Looking north. Tomb 9606 cut into Wall 7607 (in the bottom) and Debris 9609. Burial 9611 in the top.

Loci to the south of Wall 7607

The daily surface of the area to the south of Wall 7607 was much lower than to the north of that wall, since the beginning of the excavation, due to the sloping of the excavation area. The work here was brief and shallow. Notably, at the end of the season, after not much excavating, the absolute final height that

we arrived at is the same as the absolute final height on the floor of the northern room emptied of the jars. So, in case the floors of both rooms had been at the same elevation and not terraced, the Iron Age remains here might have been lost to erosion and/or disturbances before the excavation began. It is indeed possible that the rooms were terraced, since the walls of the building are terraced (the lower elevation of Wall **7613** in the north is about 40 cm higher than the lower elevation of Wall **7607** opposite it). But even in that case, it should be noted that during the excavation to the south of Wall **7607** in 2019, only topsoil with mixed pottery and late disturbances (Locus **7634**) was found against the wall down to its floating elevation, with no in situ accumulation (although an LB scarab was found on the floating level next to Wall **7607** and could be connected to it).

Fill **9604** was excavated below topsoil. It contained hard brown material (possibly decayed mudbrick), with some flat sherds and a group of sheep/goat (?) bones (Fig. 22). A complete articulated skeleton was found there, within fine brown sediment, with no stone lining or cover. It was removed without opening a separate locus. A skull of another burial was found at a lower elevation in the eastern section. There is possibly one more burial in the SW corner of the area, next to Wall **7648**, since a skull was unearthened and removed from the baulk there in 2019 (Locus **7656**).

Stone Feature **9608** was uncovered in the southern part of the area near Wall **7648**. It is a group of medium-size stones, piled along a line roughly east-west. In the eastern end of the line there is a flat round slab (stone tool?) about 40 cm in diameter. In the western end, but somewhat off to the north, is a similar slab. The whole feature is about 1.5 m long. This group of stones might represent a built tomb (maybe connected with the burial **7656** mentioned above) or another constructed feature, or just a pile collected together to clean the area (Fig. 22). It was not excavated.

9605 is likely a built tomb in line of Wall **7648**. At least four large slabs, the largest of them 50 cm long and about 30 cm wide, probably comprise the capstones. The line of four slabs is altogether about 1.5 m long. It was not excavated (Fig. 22).



Fig. 22. ABM21-K-035 DSC_0048. 14/07. Squares Q-R/5-6. Looking north. In the left Locus 9604 and Stone Feature 9608, in the bottom Tomb 9605. Restorable jars in the background. Taken by Noam Sivan.

9613 is a very shallow burial, probably of a child, found among the stones in the south-eastern part of the excavation area, where the continuation of Wall **7648** might corner with the eastern wall of the building.