

RJ Hall

Subject: FW: TeHEP UPDATE 14 JANUARY 2010

Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project

Trinity Southwest University,
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

in a Joint Scientific Project with the

Department of Antiquities,
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

TeHEP UPDATE

14 January 2010

An Exclusive Report for TeHEP Alumni, Financial Supporters, and Friends

IGLOSSARY OF CHRONOLOGICAL TERMS FREQUENTLY USED IN TeHEP UPDATES:

Chalcolithic Period = Copper/Stone Age, 4400-3300 BCE; EBA = Early Bronze Age, 3300-2350 BCE; IBA = Intermediate Bronze Age, 2350-2000 BCE; MBA = Middle Bronze Age, 2000-1550 BCE; LBA = Late Bronze Age, 1550-1200 BCE; IA1 = Iron Age 1, 1200-1000 BCE; IA2 = Iron Age 2, 1000-586 BCE; IA3 = Iron Age 3/Persian Period, 586-332 BCE; HP = Hellenistic/Greek Period, 332-63 BCE; ERP = Early Roman Period, 63 BCE-168 CE]

Hello All:

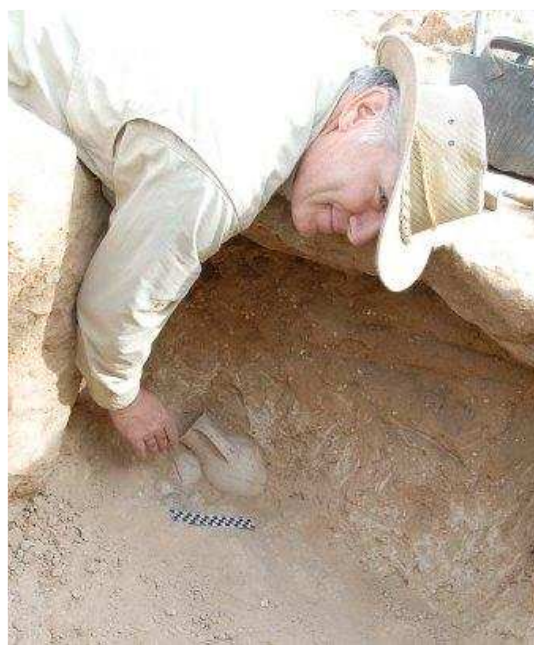
Today was dramatically better than OK for a variety of reasons...

(1) The weather was just slightly short of perfect. (2) My dear friend Dr Leen Ritmeyer, who arrived late last evening, was out at the site for a walkover in preparation for making site plans, section and reconstruction drawings for Tall el-Hammam. (3) Only one other intact dolmen tomb had ever been discovered and excavated in Jordan (some 20 years ago), until today. (4) Yesterday the banana field probe was a blank slate, today it became the location of a monumental Canaanite temple complex. (5) All of our squares were working on very important finds. (6) Three fresh copies of the just-published 2009 edition of the *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (ADAJ)* arrived at the site carrying within its cover our first published excavation report. And (7) the dig day started off with a hilarious practical joke (perpetrated deftly by Carroll Kobs)!

Dr Ritmeyer arrived at the hotel just after 11pm last night. He is one of the leading (I think the top) archaeological reconstruction architects on the planet. I thought it was of critical importance that we get him involved in the project, because it's now imperative that we publish good site plans, section drawings, and reconstruction representations of Tall el-

Hammam/Sodom. The time is right, and it simply has to happen. This will be a significant expense for TeHEP, but if we're to carry forward in an acceptable scientific manner, it is a pressing necessity. And it was immediately obvious that bringing him from Wales at this time was the right decision.

During our walkabout over the fall I got a phone call from Ken who's supervising the excavation of one of our dolmens. "The tomb is intact and we've got many vessels," he said in what I could tell was a forcibly-restrained tone. Leen and I immediately headed SE across the main road toward the dolmen site. Going in, this particular dolmen had all the earmarks of being intact and, within minutes, Leen had his measuring and drawing tools out and was making a section drawing of the dolmen. It's simply amazing to watch him work. What a pro!

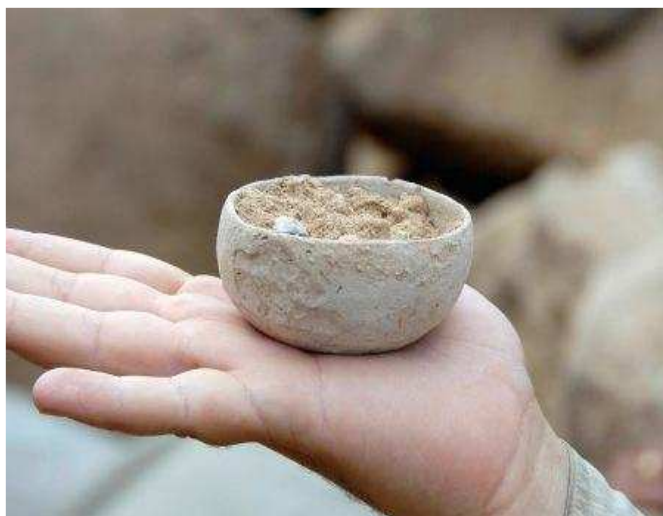


KEN SUPERVISED THE DOLMEN EXCAVATION



GAIL REMOVES AN EBA JUGLET FROM THE
DOLMEN TOMB

At about 1x3.2m, this dolmen's burial chamber is one of the largest in our 'collection' of these ancient funerary monuments which number in the hundreds. The excavation of a dolmen is a rigorous and complicated process, especially if it's intact as this one is. First, it has to be photographed from every conceivable angle. Then the circular stone platform on which it sits must be cleaned and defined. Next, the multi-ton main cap-stone has to be removed, along with (in this case) several secondary cap-stones (still too heavy for several men to lift). Once the tomb cavity is exposed, the 'blown-in' debris has to be cleared down to the original *in situ* material covering the burial and accompanying objects. It then has to be 'sub-balked' or 'sectioned' and excavated one segment at a time, both horizontally and vertically. All objects and bones must be carefully exposed, then photographed, measured, and recorded *in situ*. The first burial encountered was that of an infant, with associated small juglets, a small bowl, and a medium-sized jug (= a jar with a single handle). That's where the excavation stopped today. On Sunday the process will proceed. We think there will be multiple burials and many, many more vessels and other artifacts.



SMALL EBA BOWL FROM DOLMEN EXCAVATION



EBA JUGLET AND FLY

Meanwhile, back on the main tall, Tom was continuing to clear dirt and stones from our probe in Abu Musa's banana field. I didn't look too promising right off the bat, but what a difference a few centimeters makes! We now have a massive wall 3.7m thick that obviously belongs to some kind of monumental temple. It dwarfs the walls of the 'banana palace' a short distance to the west. Leen's expertise with ancient architecture is a big help. His opinion at this point is that we've got a huge temple/sacred precinct area sitting on top of a raised platform that's bigger than a football field. I'm simply staggered by this development.

And things were far from boring a couple of hundred meters to the S in Trench LA.28. Walls, walls everywhere, and surprises galore. I'm still trying to sort all that out in my mind, but that's an ongoing and often confusing process. Eventually we'll get it worked out, but it just takes time. What we do know from this trench is that the site was occupied for a really long time, and there were few, if any, occupational gaps until its destruction toward the end of the MBA.



DOLMEN EXCAVATION WITH VESSELS IN SITU



DENISE WORKING ON A VESSEL EXTRACTION



JENNIFER EXCAVATING AN EBA JAR

Seeing our *ADAJ* article was pretty exciting. This lays the foundation for all our future publications. It's an important milestone for TeHEP. Because of your support and the labors of our staff and volunteers, I was able to invest the needed time and energy to produce that article, and now we'll let it do its work introducing Tall el-Hammam to the archaeological world. I'm very pleased (understatement). And I'm humbled to be involved with such a project. It's just...well, amazing. I hope you sense the progress that's being made through your generous donations and earnest prayers.

Oh, and then that little practical joke perpetrated by Carroll... Mohammad, whose been our dig bus driver for five years, has a big black mustache that would be perfectly grey-white if he didn't dye it (and the hair on his head, too). Well, we've teased him mercilessly about that over the years (often pointing to the white chest-hairs fluffing out of his shirt's open collar and observing aloud that he forgot to dye those!). So, Carroll and hubby Jeff bought fake, stick-on, black mustaches for everybody and secretly passed them out on the bus on the way to the site this morning. When we arrived, Mike (our dig photographer) made sure that Mohammad got off the bus first. Then we all filed off the bus with our black 'Mohammad' mustaches. It was great fun, and absolutely hilarious!



A LITTLE PRACTICAL JOKE



EVERYONE WITH A MOHAMMAD MUSTACHE

It was a good day.

Digging the Bible,

Steven Collins, TeHEP Director
Dean, College of Archaeology, Trinity Southwest University

P.S. Please forward this to whomever you like!

You can make donations to TeHEP at the TSU shopping website: www.shop.tsu.edu.us.

Donations can be mailed to: [TSU; 5600 Eubank NE, Suite 130; Albuquerque, NM USA 87111](#).

For detailed information about the Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project, visit the official TeHEP website: www.tallelhammam.com.