

Excavations at Khirbat al-Karak and Nahal Tavor

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In the first season of excavations at this important site on the south end of the Sea of Galilee, in 1952/53, an early Christian church was completely excavated and Early Bronze occupation levels were reached at several points. The final report on the church was published in 1960, *A Byzantine Church at Khirbat al-Karak*. After an interval of ten years it became possible to resume work in 1963 owing to a grant from the Counterpart Funds in Israel made available under Public Law 480. This time we devoted our attention to the problems of the early settlements. During the season of 1963 the scope of the expedition was enlarged, at the invitation of the Director of the Department of Antiquities, to include the excavation of Chalcolithic and Bronze Age tombs at Nahal Tavor fifteen kilometers south in the Jordan valley, opposite Kibbutz Gesher. The contents of these tombs were in danger of being removed without

proper archeological recording. A second campaign at Khirbat al-Karak was conducted in the summer of 1964, when the work again included clearing of tombs at Nahal Tavor. A third season in the autumn of 1966 was devoted solely to the mapping and excavation of the cemetery at Nahal Tavor.

While the program of investigation at Khirbat al-Karak is not yet complete, some important results have already been achieved. It has been established that a town of considerable dimensions, about fifty acres, existed there during the Early Bronze II period (*ca.* 3000 B.C.). The finds that can be dated to this period witness close connections not only with other sites in Palestine and Syria in the north but also with Egypt. In the following phase of the Early Bronze period (EB III) the city was apparently greatly reduced in area. This coincided with the appearance of the typical Khirbat Karak black, gray, and red burnished ware, which, as we now know, originated in the Kura-Araxes region of the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia. It is tempting to relate the contraction of the city to the influence of the people who brought in the new pottery. These observations are of prime historical interest, for they shed light on the development and fortunes of early cities and the effects of folk migrations in Palestine at a time long before we can rely on the help of written documents.

The tombs of Nahal Tavor proved of great value in that they provided complete specimens of pottery types for which only fragments were obtained from the city ruins excavated at Khirbat al-Karak itself.

The material from both sites is being processed for publication, in Chicago as well as in Jerusalem. We estimate that our original program of examining the distribution of settlements during the various periods of occupation at Khirbat al-Karak is about two-thirds completed. Under favorable conditions two or three additional campaigns would see the completion of this task and would provide a unifying basis for a final publication of the archeological evidence and for its broader historical interpretation.