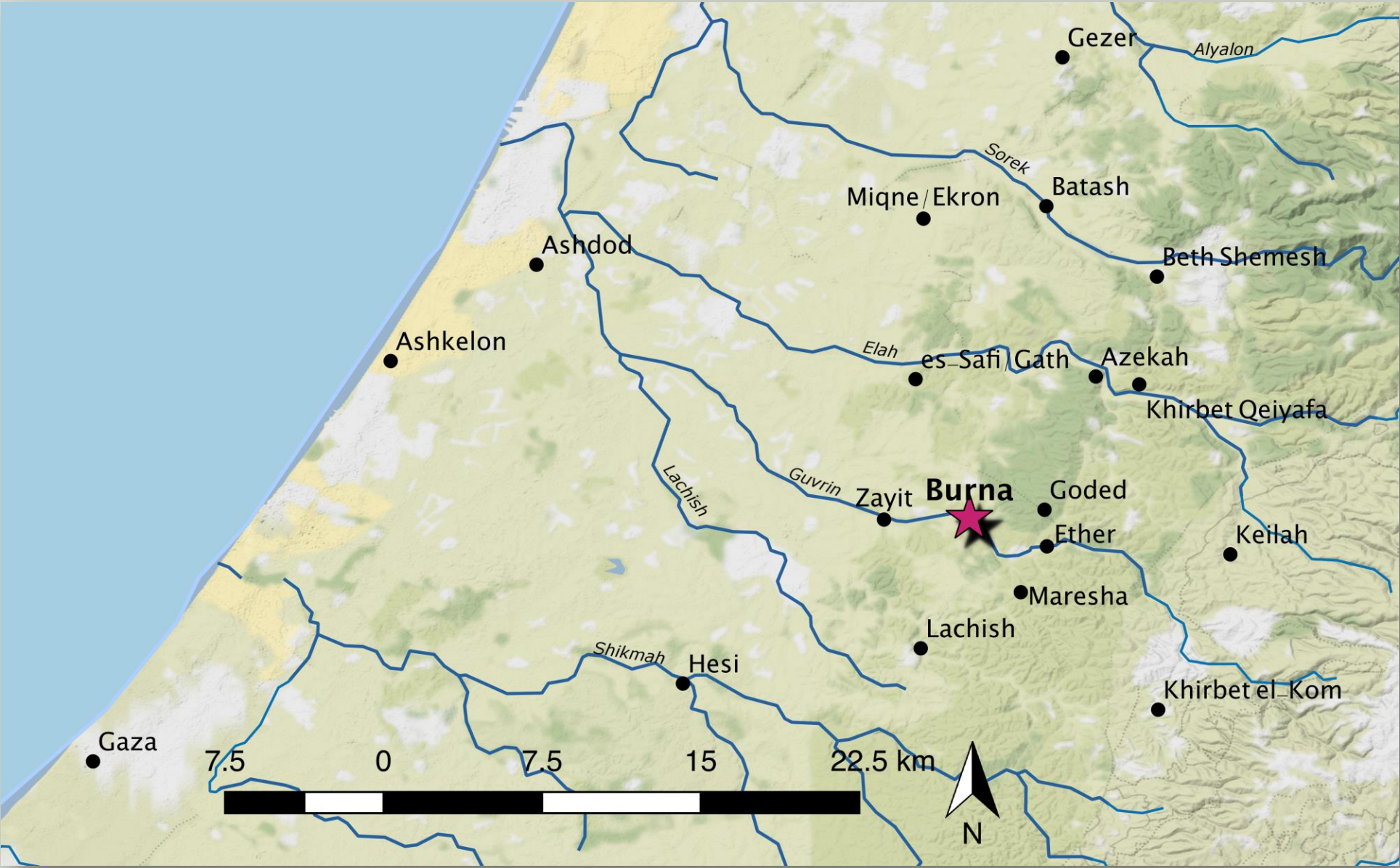


UNDERSTANDING LATE BRONZE AGE CANAANITE CULTIC SPACE: TEL BURNA, ISRAEL

TINA GREENFIELD¹, CHRIS MCKINNY², JANE GAASTRA³, ANDREA ORENDI⁴, SARA DOUGLAS¹, AND ITZICK SHAI⁵



Tel Burna is situated in the western Judean Shephelah along Nahal Guvrin. The site was settled almost continuously from the Early Bronze through the Persian period (c. 3500-400 BCE). Since 2009 Tel Burna has been investigated by a team led by I. Shai (Ariel University).

Cultic and Prestige Related Finds



Three standing stones (*masseboth*) including a large rectangular piece of chalk with a perforated hole through its center.



c. 370 charred grass pea seeds (*Lathyrus sativus*) from a set of storage jars lining the western side of the wall of the cultic enclosure. Compare Late Bronze contexts from Tel Miqne/Ekron and Tel Batash.



A unique three-cupped votive vessel that was determined to have different types of oil in each one of its cups. This votive vessel was purposefully placed on a flat rock in the center of the courtyard where it was found in situ.



A Mittanian glyptic cylinder seal and scarab of Thutmose III found directly above the three-cupped votive vessel.

Area B1 has a uniform chronological picture throughout the area, and a homogeneous architectural layout across the platform. The majority of the area appears to be related to a very large stone enclosure constructed on bedrock (Building 29305). This building has a series of small rooms on its eastern edge just below the rise of the tell. There is also another set of rooms west of and along the western wall (W29305). This enclosure is characterized by bedrock courtyards with varying degrees of preservation depending on the proximity of an excavated area to the tell and W29305. On the eastern side of W29305, a bedrock courtyard (L33112) was uncovered filled with in situ finds of a cultic and prestigious quality dated to the 13th century BCE.

Composite Aerial Image of Area B1 and Building 29305 at Tel Burna



Despite its significant Iron II settlement, it seems that the 13th century BCE/Late Bronze IIB was the peak of settlement activity at Tel Burna - at least in terms of size. While we have yet to reach this period on the summit, we have exposed a wide area (c. 350 square meters). On a lower platform located to the west of the summit - known as Area B1, there are indications that the site was settled in earlier parts of the Late Bronze. The platform was only inhabited during the 13th century BCE with a monumental building (29305) situated directly beneath the top soil and the bedrock.

Legend for bioarchaeological remains

- Greater than 300
- Between 100 and 300
- Less than 100
- Highest Levels of Burnt Bone
- Botanical deposit

Faunal material from Area B1 shows the highest concentrations of both animal bones and high-value bones in rooms adjacent to the cultic area. Burned bones from these rooms indicate primarily roasting and other cooking activities.

The Cultic Space at Tel Burna

The variety of prestige and religious related items in Area B1 conclusively point to its cultic quality. As such, its discovery is a significant source for furthering our knowledge of Canaanite cult. Numerous other cultic contexts have been excavated previously (e.g., Lachish, Megiddo, Hazor, etc.). However, most of these were excavated in much earlier stages of archaeological research and did not use the up-to-date archaeological field methodology and techniques (e.g., archaeobotanical and zooarchaeological analyses, archaeo-magnetometry, etc.). Area B1 has also served as a test case for the adaption and implementation of digital tools such as digital registration using PlanGrid (McKinny and Shai 2017, 2018b) alongside photogrammetric imaging using PhotoScan. In light of all of the above, we hope to continue to expose more of this important area of Tel Burna in the 2019 season and beyond.

Area B1 Publications

Greenfield, T.; McKinny, C.; and Shai, I. 2017 "I Can Count All My Bones": A Preliminary Report of the Late Bronze Faunal Remains from Area B1 at Tel Burna, Israel, in *The Wide Lens in Archaeology: Honoring Brian Hesse's Contributions to Anthropological Archaeology*, eds. J. Lev-Tov, A. Gilbert, and P. Hesse. Atlanta: Lockwood Press, Inc.

McKinny, C. and Shai, I. 2017 Adapting PlanGrid to Archaeology | Popular Archaeology - exploring the past. *Popular Archaeology* 28.

2018a Canaanite Religion at Tel Burna in the 13th Century BCE. *Ancient Near East Today* 6.

2018b Using Tools in Ways in Which They Were Not Intended: A Test Case of the Use of PlanGrid for Field Registration at Tel Burna. Pp. 51-66 in *Cyber-Archaeology and Grand Narratives*, eds. T. E. Levy, and I. W. N. Jones. Springer.

McKinny, C.; Tavger, A.; and Shai, I. in press Tel Burna in the Late Bronze - Assessing the 13th Century BCE Landscape of the Shephelah. in *"And the Canaanites were then in the Land": New Perspectives on the Late Bronze Age of Southern Canaan and its Surroundings*, eds. A. M. Maeir, I. Shai, and C. McKinny. Eisenbrauns.

Orendi, A.; Smejda, L.; McKinny, C. et al. 2017 The Agricultural Landscape of Tel Burna: Ecology and Economy of a Bronze Age Iron Age Settlement in the Southern Levant. *Journal of Landscape Ecology* 10: 165-188.

Shai, I. 2018 Two Late Bronze Age Ceramic Masks from Tel Burna, Israel. Pp. 133-140 in *The Physicality of the Other: Masks from the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean*, eds. A. Bellejunga, and J. E. Filtz. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Shai, I.; McKinny, C.; Spigelman, M. et al. in press Late Bronze Age Trade as Seen through the Eyes of Two Cypriot Pithoi on a Shephelah Hilltop. *Tel Aviv*.

Shai, I.; McKinny, C.; and Uziel, J. 2015 Late Bronze Age Cultic Activity in Ancient Canaan: A View from Tel Burna. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 115-133.

Sharp, C.; McKinny, C.; and Shai, I. 2015 Late Bronze Age Figurines from Tel Burna. *Strata* 33: 61-76.

University affiliations

- University of Saskatchewan, Departments of Religion and Culture and Archaeology and Anthropology, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada
- Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, Texas
- University of Exeter, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Exeter, United Kingdom
- Archaeobotany Workgroup, Institute for Archaeological Sciences, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
- Institute of Archaeology, Ariel University, Ariel, Israel

Two massive Cypriot Wavy-Band pithoi in (at least) secondary use, sunken into the crevices of the bedrock of the courtyard. As residue analysis did not reveal any chemical signature, these were probably used to store grain or water perhaps in relation to a ritual ceremony (Shai et al. in press).

Two clay human-sized masks that were likely used in a cultic ritual within the building (Shai 2018).