

# Remains of Minoan-style painting discovered during excavations of Canaanite palace

9 November 2009

The remains of a Minoan-style wall painting, recognizable by a blue background, the first of its kind to be found in Israel, was discovered in the course of the recent excavation season at Tel Kabri. This fresco joins others of Aegean style that have been uncovered during earlier seasons at the Canaanite palace in Kabri. "It was, without doubt, a conscious decision made by the city's rulers who wished to associate with Mediterranean culture and not adopt Syrian and Mesopotamian styles of art like other cities in Canaan did. The Canaanites were living in the Levant and wanted to feel European," explains Dr. Assaf Yasur-Landau of the University of Haifa, who directed the excavations.

The remains of a Canaanite [city](#) from the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1550 B.C.) have been exposed at Tel Kabri, next to Kibbutz Kabri near Nahariya. A palace for the city's rulers stands in the center of the city, which was the most important of the cities in the Western Galilee during that period. Excavations began at Tel Kabri in 1986, conducted by the late Prof. Aharon Kempinski, and were halted in 1993. Over the past years, excavations have been renewed by teams directed by Dr. Yasur-Landau of the Leon Recanati Institute for Maritime Studies at the University of Haifa and Prof. Eric Cline of The George Washington University. Tel Kabri is unique in that after the city was deserted, no other city was built over its remains.

Therefore, this is the only Canaanite city that can be excavated in its entirety. The palace too, which has been measured with geophysical tools at 1 to 1.5 acres, is the only such palace of this period that can be excavated fully. "The city's preservation enables us to get a complete picture of political and social life in the Canaanite period. We can reveal whether or not it had a central government, whether taxes were levied, what sort

of agriculture there was and how politics were conducted at the time," Dr. Yasur-Landau explains.

The recent [excavation](#) season has enabled researchers to conclude what the rulers' cultural preferences were. While excavations at Tel Hazor in the northern Galilee, the largest Canaanite city of that period, revealed numerous remains of sculpture works of Syrian and Mesopotamian style, no such evidence of this style of artwork were discovered at Tel Kabri. Until now the remains of a fresco in a style that had been common on the island of Santorini (Thera), discovered during previous seasons at the Tel Kabri site, might have been considered a solitary occurrence. However, the remains of additional works reinforce the conjecture that this was a city that not only had trade relations with Mediterranean kingdoms, but also preferred to be culturally associated with them. "Unlike Hazor, which held trading and cultural ties with Syria and Mesopotamia, the rulers of the city at Tel Kabri consciously chose the Mediterranean alternative, relating to Aegean cultures, which doubtlessly seemed more exotic to the local inhabitants," Dr. Yasur-Landau explains.

Additional findings during the past season illuminate other angles of day-to-day life in the Canaanite city. The researchers discovered that the rulers confiscated privately owned lands in order to build both the palace and a ceremonial path encircling the palace. The researchers also began digging a corridor that had been discovered last year and found tens of pottery vessels there, such as storage jars, shallow bowls, cups, and jugs. The corridor, which probably served as a storage area, was blocked off by the ancient inhabitants, and therefore remnants of the substances held in these pottery vessels still remains, as did many animal bones. "We sent the bones and substance remains to be examined, so we should soon be able to

know more about the standard diet of that time and in this particular area," Dr. Yasur-Landau added.

Source: University of Haifa ([news](#) : [web](#))

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