



PROFESSOR AHARON KEMPINSKI (1939–1994)

IN MEMORIAM

Professor Aharon Kempinski passed away at the age of 55 after a long illness. Despite his relatively young age he was well known and respected among scholars throughout the world. In my opinion, the most outstanding characteristic of his colourful personality was his scholastic diversity. Aharon grew up in Nahariya, and, like many children of immigrants from Germany, he was educated in the classical tradition and acquired a wide knowledge in culture and history. Building upon this background, he studied archaeology, ancient history and Assyriology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and Hittitology and Anatolian history in Marburg, Germany. His Ph.D. dissertation *Syria-Palestine During the Last Stage of the Middle Bronze IIB Period (1650–1550 B.C.)*, under the guidance of Prof. B. Mazar, contained the first fruits of this diversity. Aharon Kempinski belonged to the disappearing group of scholars who were interested in, and capable of, mastering

a wide range of scientific disciplines. All of his students appreciated his dedication and enthusiasm, and his graduate students benefited from his willingness to discuss and advise. In these respects he was a perfect representative of our department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures at Tel Aviv University.

His spheres of activity covered various fields of academic research, as well as academic politics and national politics. Aharon whole-heartedly participated in every discussion or debate and enthusiastically expressed his opinions. As a field archaeologist he gained experience at numerous excavation sites: Tel Mor, Meşad Hashavyahu, 'En Gedi, Achzib, Boğazkoy and Ilica in Turkey, Megiddo and Beer-sheba. He directed (or co-directed) the expeditions to Tel Masos, Beit Haemek, Tel 'Erani and Kabri. Of special importance was his treatment of complicated stratigraphical problems at Megiddo, Tell el-'Ajjul, and Tel 'Erani. As an historian and linguist he studied and published Hittite and Akkadian texts from Hattusha and Alalakh, and hieroglyphs on royal scarabs of the "Hyksos" kings. For many years he taught the Hittite language at Tel Aviv and Ben-Gurion Universities. Kempinski's analysis and interpretation of the archaeological data cover topics such as city planning, fortifications and temples, metallurgy and pottery. His more comprehensive works include the study of urbanism in the Early Bronze Age, his summary of the Megiddo excavations, and the archaeology of the Middle Bronze Age.

Aharon Kempinski often developed an original, even controversial, view of research problems. He was a pioneer in advocating the existence of fortified cities in the Middle Bronze IIA, when this was still generally unpopular. He researched the transitional phases between archaeological periods and proposed a chronological overlap of the Late Chalcolithic Period and the Early Bronze Age I, arguing that the EB I culture was introduced into the northern part of the country while the Chalcolithic culture continued to exist in the south. More accepted was his view of cultural overlap between the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of Iron I. Aharon was familiar with the critical approach in archaeology. He bluntly criticized the simplistic identification of archaeological finds with biblical events or objects, such as the identification of "Joshua's altar" among the remains exposed on Mt. Ebal.

Kempinski was aware of the serious problem of delay in the publication of final reports of archaeological excavations. He co-authored, together with Volkmar Fritz, the final report of the Tel Masos excavations which appeared a relatively short time after the completion of the fieldwork. During the excavations at Kabri he developed a new and original solution to the problem. As this was planned as a long-term project, he decided — and succeeded — to publish an annual account of the excavation results before the beginning of the next season. The six volumes of the Kabri excavations are already a solid collection of the basic stratigraphic,

architectural and artifactual data. Now, in light of the early demise of Aharon, these volumes will serve as a firm basis for further study and the full publication.

Recently, Aharon had become interested in the important topic of the interaction between archaeology and national ideology, specifically, the role archaeology played in the formation of Israeli culture and society. This interest surely stemmed from his generally critical opinions of Israeli society, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Aharon was profoundly anti-establishment, in each and every circle of his life, including the founding of the Association of Archaeologists, which also occasionally published the journal *Archeologya*. Aharon did not build a family of his own and all his energy and time were devoted to his scientific and political interests. Behind the often controversial appearance was a warm and friendly personality, as his many friends and colleagues all over the world were aware. He is sincerely missed by the archaeological community in Israel and abroad, both by his supporters and his opponents.

Ze'ev Herzog