

The Institute of ARCHAEOLOGY Siegfried H. Horn Museum



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INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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ʿUmayri 2012

The 2012 season of excavation at Tall al-ʿUmayri, one of the three main Madaba Plains Project sites, was conducted from July 4 to August 8. A team of about 40 participants excavated in three fields (A, H, and L) and one hinterland site (Site 84), also cleaning two fields (B and K) in preparation for digital recording. The objectives for each of the fields were achieved this season.

Field A was supervised by Stephanie Brown. This season five squares (7J68, 7J69, 7J78, 7K50, and 7K60) were excavated, the primary objective to expose the fourth of five Early Iron Age I houses that are located along the western perimeter wall of the site. The first three houses, Buildings B, A, and C (N-S), were excavated in previous seasons. The fourth house (Building D) was partially exposed during 2010, but its full extent was obscured by a later Iron Age IIB house that was preserved above its eastern half.

All five of the houses in this section of the Early Iron Age I village were found beneath destruction debris. In Buildings B and D this destruction layer reached a height of almost two meters. During Iron Age IIB, a house was constructed directly on top of the remains of Building D. Though its courtyard was removed in 2006 and the Early Iron Age I levels, below it, reached during the 2008 and 2010 seasons, other parts of this later house were still standing at the beginning of the 2012 season, obscuring the eastern portion of the building. During the 2010 season the existence of a foundation trench that cut through the house in order to build wall 19 of Square 7K60 confirmed that the Iron Age IIB house was constructed in two phases. During the first two weeks

(cont'd on p. 2)



Aerial View of Tall al-ʿUmayri.

of the 2012 season the earlier of the two phases was removed.

The second half of the season focused on the removal of the enormous amount of destruction debris that covered the surface of the Building D. While so doing, it became obvious that there were two different surfaces associated with this building, and that both were brought to an end by a disaster of some kind. The upper surface represented the more dynamic of the two destructions, leaving meters of burnt mudbrick above the surfaces of all five of the Early Iron Age I houses, after which they were not reoccupied. Several bronze weapons were found among the debris. The lower surface seems to have been destroyed by an earthquake, perhaps associated with a break and repair in the rampart, noted in earlier seasons. After this destruction the houses were rebuilt with slight modifications. The exposure of this house, and especially the discovery of multiple surfaces have added greatly to our understanding of the Early Iron I period at Tall al-ʿUmayri.

The excavations in Field H were supervised by Monique Vincent. The goals for the 2012 season included bringing the remainder of the field into phase with the Early Iron Age I domestic structure dug in earlier seasons, to excavate several key probes to more-firmly establish the date of this structure and the origins of its exterior walls, and to understand the phasing and construction of the large southern wall.

With the entire structure now fully excavated it is possible to reconstruct its history. Occupation began with the construction of three large, well-built exterior walls against a “perimeter wall” to the west. Inside this larger rectangular structure several large pillars joined by smaller, less-substantial walls were constructed to divide the inner rooms. The center of the complex is built on a “four-room house” type plan, with three long rooms running E- W and a broadroom on the south. The broadroom is accessed from the eastern long room, and is divided into smaller storage spaces by flimsy, single-row walls. In addition, there is a series of

three rooms to the west, adjoining the “perimeter wall,” and another series of three rooms to the north, with an entrance in the northeastern room. These additional rooms were accessed through doorways off of the western long room. Stairs led down from the entry room to the central long room. Two of the long rooms and two of the western side rooms were paved with cobbled floors, the other rooms made of beaten-earth and plaster surfaces covered with ash. Cooking pots were found in nearly every room of the building. Two ovens, a hearth, and several grinding stones indicate food-preparation activities. Spindle whorls suggest textile activities while tuff pendant seals indicate an interest in personal sealing practices. At the end of its use phase the building appears to have been abandoned.

A probe against, and the removal of the top two courses of the large southern wall indicate that it was constructed when the Early Iron Age I domestic structure was built. In Late Age Iron I the wall was widened, and later rebuilt with enormous boulders in Iron Age II, continuing in use to the Persian period. It is not yet known whether or not this structure served as the perimeter wall of the site.

Work in Field L this season was supervised by Carrie Duncan, the goal being the removal of the Hellenistic period occupation in order to reveal the Iron Age structures below. Specific objectives included determining the date of the large E-W wall that runs across the breadth of the area, also investigating the relationship of this wall to a N-S line of monumental stones to the north.

A probe along the south side of the E-W wall yielded exclusively Iron Age I ceramics. A probe on the north side of this wall, however, yielded mixed Iron Age I and II sherds. Excavation on the north side of the wall, adjacent to the latter probe, revealed an Iron Age II room with a cobble floor, incorporating the northern edges of several stones of the lowest course of a wall. It appears that the foundation course of the E-W wall dates to the Iron Age I, being reused in Iron Age II as both a foundation for the new wall, built

on top of it, as well as the cobble surface against it.

A probe along the west side of the monumental N-S wall revealed two large *in situ* pithoi in a small room bounded by walls on all sides, the lack of a doorway suggesting a basement storage area accessed by a ladder. Initial analysis indicates that one pithos dates to the Iron Age II/Persian period while the other is typical of the Hellenistic period. The jars were set into a beaten earth surface, located immediately below a cobble surface, preserved only in the NW corner of the room. It appears that the original surface was removed during a later phase in which the pithoi were placed in the lower surface, possibly originally a bedding layer for the upper one.

The ʿUmayri Survey Site 84 was supervised by David and Amanda Hopkins, focusing exclusively on clarifying the nature and function of a large rock-cut feature previously identified as a wine cellar following the excavations in 1994. The purpose the 2012 excavation was to clarify the use of this rock-hewn feature and to recover any material remains. The entrance of this feature consists of a curvilinear opening on a limestone ledge located near a farmstead.

While the full extent of the cavity is not yet known, the excavators made observations about its construction and use, which included chiseling and remnants of plaster on the walls and ceiling, as well as possible dissolution channels running further underground. The little pottery that was found was consistent with the site’s utilization during the late Iron Age II/Early Persian period. The preliminary excavation results suggests that the feature functioned as a cistern.

The data was recorded digitally in the field with iPods and iPads, achieving the goal of moving to paperless-digital data harvesting and recording. The excavation fields were photographed with a 13.0 m tripod-mounted photo-boom for georeferencing documentation which will be turned into composite architectural drawings. (Douglas R. Clark)



Student Support

Several students were able to participate in Madaba Plains Project-sponsored excavations in the summer of 2012 due to the generous support provided by the ASOR Heritage Summer Field and Platt Excavation Fellowships as well as the BAR Scholarship.

Stephane Beaulieu and Abalardo Rivas, both PhD students from Andrews University, taking Old Testament Studies and Near Eastern Archaeology respectively, participated in the Andrews University-sponsored excavation at Tall Jalul, after receiving Heritage fellowships. The Fellowship also enabled Abalardo to excavate at Khirbat Ataruz.

Christine Chitwood, an MA student in Near Eastern Archaeology at Andrews University, was able to excavate at the sites of Khirbat Ataruz and Tall Jalul, and Amanda Hopkins, a student at Wesley Theological Seminary, participated at the Umayri Survey Site 84, as a result of each receiving a Heritage Fellowship. Also working at Tall Jalul, but coming from the University of Puerto Rico, undergraduate student Mariana Garcia de la Noceda was able to participate due to the Platt Fellowship she received.

In addition, Jacob Moody, an MA student in Near Eastern Archaeology at Andrews University, received a BAR Scholarship which enabled him to participate at Jalul this summer. (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)



Jacob Moody.



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RANDOM SURVEY

New Discoveries at ed-Dur:

Surveys at ed-Dur, a multi-period site in the United Arab Emirates, dating from 200 BC - 300 AD, have found a 1st-century AD temple, with altars, a basin with the Aramaic word "Shamash," the name of the sun god, and many coins. Hellenized coins depicting Heracles and Zeus are the earliest known coins from the UAE. The name Abi'el, along with the female features on many of the local coins, suggests female rulership of this ancient site which was an important trade center between Mesopotamia and India.

Ancient Road Found in Greece:

A 70-m section of a marble-paved road built by the Romans has recently been located in Thessaloniki (ancient Thessalonica). Several paving stones were etched with the board games or marked by cart wheels. Column bases and the remains of tools and lamps were also found.

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Coins and the Jerusalem Temple:

Archaeologists have recently found four bronze coins beneath the massive foundation stones of the Western Wall of the Temple in Jerusalem, that were stamped by the Roman procurator of Judea, Valerius Gratus, in AD 17/18, ca. 20 years after the death of Herod the Great, who is usually credited with the construction of the Temple complex. The new evidence actually confirms ancient written sources such as John 2:20, in the NT, and the Jewish historian Josephus that noted that Herod's building program continued long after his demise.

Roman Ship Found:

A 2,000 year-old ship has recently been discovered in Ostia, the ancient Port of Rome, near the mouth of the Tiber River. So far only the starboard side of the ship, which dates to the First Imperial Age, and some ancient ropes have been excavated. Found in the middle of a plain, which is now 3-4 km further inland than the ancient harbor, the wooden vessel measures 11 meters in length, the largest ever excavated in the area.

Dog Catacomb Found in Egypt:

A catacomb complex built 12 m underground in the Saqqara desert, dated to ca. 2,500 years ago, has yielded an estimated 8 million dog skeletons. The dogs were mummified in the hope of currying the favor of the canine-headed Egyptian god, Anubis.

NEWSLETTER



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