

NEWSLETTER

The Institute of ARCHAEOLOGY Siegfried H. Horn Museum



Table of Contents

	Page
<i>Tall al-ʿUmayri 2006</i>	1
<i>ASOR 2006</i>	2
<i>Transitions</i>	3
<i>Al-Maktāba</i>	3
<i>Random Survey</i>	4

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM
NEWSLETTER

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Tall al-ʿUmayri 2006

The eleventh field season of excavation of the Madaba Plains Project at Tall al-ʿUmayri, took place between June 28 and August 2, 2006. Excavations occurred in four fields (A, B, H and L) on the top of the mound.

The main goal for Field A this season was to more clearly outline the possible Iron Age I entrance into the city. The curve of the perimeter wall from a north-south to an east-west orientation was the first clue that a gate area might be discovered. It was also noticed that another large wall paralleled the east-west portion of the perimeter wall about 4.00 m to the south. Could these walls represent two sides of a gate into the city? Could the southern wall curve around to the south similar to its northern counterpart? We determined to examine this possibility by excavating the space between the walls. This necessitated the removal of later (Iron Age II) remains.

After removing an Iron Age II wall and a series of earth layers containing pottery from the eighth century BC, which had not previously been found *in situ* at ʿUmayri, we discovered a large pier bonded to the end of the wall. The identification of this structure as a gate now seems certain. Although the floor of the passageway through the gate has not yet been found, its northern portion contains a six-course battered wall running east-west, cutting the width of the passage in half. The debris running up to the wall are Iron Age I, but probably date to a late phase within the period. Thus, for as yet undetermined reasons, the gate was narrowed at some point within Iron Age I.

The prime objective for Field B was to excavate the five-or possibly six-room Late Bronze Age palace/temple that has been progressively revealed over several preceding seasons along the

(Cont'd. on p. 2)



Field B palace/temple at Tall al-ʿUmayri.

north edge of the site. With the removal of a balk and the clearance of destruction debris, two plastered floors and an altar in front of the cultic niche were located. The northern wall of the structure and two doors leading into the room from the east were also discovered. The northern door had been blocked during a second phase, when a series of stones were placed along the eastern wall of the room, probably for use as benches.

Elsewhere in the field a monumental entranceway with orthostats lining a broad stairway that led down into the entrance room from the outside was discovered. Visitors had to surmount an earlier wall before descending into the building. The 2.5-3 m of destruction debris suggest a second floor. The construction of the building dates to the end of the 14th or the early 13th century BC.

In Field H, at the southwest corner of the tall, excavators dug beneath the cobblestones of an open-air courtyard sanctuary. The upper phases of this structure had been paved with plaster or cobbles and produced parts of model shrines, figurines, and statue fragments. The area was much too large to have been roofed and many signs of burning were apparent. A single large stone stood at the center of the courtyard. Pottery from the cobbled floor suggested it had been used toward the end of Iron Age I or at the very beginning of Iron Age II. With the cobbles removed the excavators encountered hard layers with concentrations of plaster used to support the cobbles. They then uncovered layers of eroded brick material with rubble from the destruction of the Iron Age I phase below. Walls and surfaces of domestic dwellings were also uncovered.

Earlier seasons in Field L, on the southern lip of the site, have uncovered extensive remains of a Hellenistic farmstead similar to those found in the hinterland regions. This season we sought to understand the eastern and northern extent of the structure. Three squares were opened, one in the northwestern part of the building and two to the east. We were able to locate the northwest corner of the complex and parts of earlier struc-

tures beneath the Hellenistic walls.

In the eastern squares, Hellenistic-period features were significantly reduced. Indeed, the fine plaster surface and drain encountered in squares farther to the west, though uncovered here, were very thin and disappeared in the eastern half of the squares. Whereas in the squares to the west we had encountered clear evidence for two phases of Hellenistic remains, in the eastern squares we found only one phase before clear late-Iron Age II levels were located. Hellenistic period finds included three coins. The plan of the Hellenistic farm remains much as we projected after last season—a series of long rooms in the first phase, then subdivided with bins in the second phase.

Half of the artifacts found this season came from Field L, the vast majority including broken basalt and sandstone-grinding tools, sherds reused as spindle whorls and jar stoppers, spherical chert pounders, corroded metal wire, and limestone mortars. Other objects included a figurine head, two crude seals made of volcanic ash (tuff), and several beads. (Larry G. Herr)



ASOR 2006

This year's annual meeting of the *American Schools of Oriental Research* was held in Washington, D.C. from November 15-18, 2006. Forty-nine sessions were offered, with 600 people attending the 220 presentations that were made. Also the annual meetings of the *Near East Archaeological Society* and the *Society of Biblical Literature* were held November 15-17 and 18-21 respectively. The *ASOR* plenary session featured Col. Matthew Bogdanos, who gave a very lively presentation entitled "Thieves of Baghdad: One Marine's Passion to Recover the World's Greatest Treasures," which focused on his efforts to recover artefacts stolen from the Baghdad Museum.

As is typical, a number of Madaba Plains Projects members and affiliates participated in various aspects of the program. Those who chaired sessions this year included: Rhonda Root and Gary Christopherson (A Poster Session: New Technologies and Their Uses in Archeology); Gary Christopherson (Geographic Information Systems, Remote Sensing and Archaeology); Michael Hasel (Egypt and Canaan II); Bert de Vries, Bethany Walker and Øystein LaBianca (Material Culture in Ottoman Syro-Palestine); and David Graf (Arabia). In addition, Lawrence T. Geraty chaired the Madaba Plains Project Staff Consultation; Øystein LaBianca presided over the Madaba Plains Project Reception and the ASOR Honors and Awards session; and Bethany Walker headed up the Consultation of Dig Directors in Jordan.

Individual submissions were made by Keith Mattingly (Caesaropapism and the Social Order of Byzantine Civilization); Timothy Harrison (The Tayinat Archaeological Project Excavations, 2004-2006); Larry Herr and Douglas Clark (Tall al-ʿUmayri Excavations, 2006); Darrell Rohl with Øystein LaBianca (Culture Contact and Parochialization: A Theoretical view of Culture Change in Roman Transjordan); Gary Christopherson (The Great Communicator: GIS as Storyteller); Douglas Clark with James Flanagan (The



Darrell Rohl gives presentation at *ASOR*.

3

ETANA Workshop I: Present and Future Prospects); Michael Hasel (The Identification of Pa-Canaan in Egyptian Narrative Accounts); Øystein LaBianca (Theorizing Contact Zones and Crossroads: Civilizations, Empires, Cultural Worlds and Identity Spaces in the Levant); Kent Bramlett (A New Late Bronze Age Temple from the Transjordanian Highlands: Economic Transitions Reified in a Temple); and P. M. Michèle Daviau (Altars Large and Small in the Gate, Temple, and the Industrial Buildings).

At the annual meeting of the *Society of Biblical Literature* Randall Younker presented a paper entitled "Rise of the Ammonites." (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)

Transitions

In the spring of 2006 David Merling resigned as Curator of the Museum in order to pursue new career opportunities. Constance E. Gane was appointed as Acting Curator, starting July of 2006. She continues the work of Dr. Merling in steering the Museum's activities into the future. Since joining the Institute/Museum staff Professor Gane has shown her exuberance by designing a new interim exhibit, giving the Museum lectureship some added attention and promoting this summer's excavation at Jalul, in Jordan. (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)



Constance E. Gane.

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RANDOM SURVEY

New UNESCO Site:

Iran has successfully registered Behistun as a World Heritage Site. Behistun is a historical site approximately 30 kilometers northeast of Kermanshah. Besides the famous trilingual (Akkadian, Elamite and Old Persian) inscriptions of Darius I, whose decipherment by Henry Rawlinson and others in the 1840-50s opened the key to the languages of Mesopotamia and Persia, the site contains other historical remains including a Median Temple, a Seleucid statue of Hercules, and a Sassanid monument.

Ancient Etruscan Sanctuary Found:

Archaeologists from Florida State University have found a building that may have been a sanctuary at Cetamura del Chianti, Tuscany, Italy. A number of vessels and 10 iron nails were found. Etruscans treated nails as sacred items in ritual practices connected with the deity Nurtia.

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Earliest Coptic Book of Isaiah:

Tomasz Górecki, head of the Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology at the Warsaw University mission in Gournah, recently found two papyrus books in a rubbish heap of an ancient monastery near Luxor in Upper Egypt. Research indicates that this manuscript contains the entire biblical book of Isaiah in Coptic. This is the first known complete translation of this book in Coptic and is the first discovery of any Coptic manuscripts in Egypt since 1952. The volume may date back to the 9th-10th centuries.

Earliest Semitic Texts Found in Egypt:

Some texts discovered a century ago inscribed on the subterranean walls of the pyramid of the 5th Dynasty King Unis, at Saqqara, had long puzzled scholars who tried to read them as Egyptian texts. While written in Egyptian hieroglyphic script, the texts are now known to have been composed in the Semitic language spoken by the Canaanites in the 3rd millennium BC, an archaic form of the languages later known as Phoenician and Hebrew.

Remains from the Peloponnesian War:

Graves of Athenian warriors have been uncovered at Kerameikos in Athens, a site dedicated to warriors and prominent citizens shortly after the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC. It is also believed to contain the grave of Pericles, the builder of the Parthenon.

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