

The Institute of ARCHAEOLOGY Siegfried H. Horn Museum



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INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
HORN ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM
NEWSLETTER

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Balu'a 2019

The 2019 season of excavation of Khirbat Balu'a, part of the Balu'a Regional Archaeological Project (BRAP) was conducted from June 24-July 31. The directors of the project are Kent V. Bramlett, Monique Vincent, and Friedbert Ninow from La Sierra and Walla Walla Universities. The international sponsors of the project are La Sierra University (USA) and the Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, Germany. Riyadh Majali, Wesal Ma'alta, Arwa Massaseh and Manar Yazadine served as the Department of Antiquities representatives this season.

The ca. 25 hectare site of Khirbat Balu'a is located on the Wadi Balu'a, a tertiary tributary of the Wadi Mujib, that controlled the major north-south road in the pre-Classical periods as well as access from the north to the *Ard al-Karak*. The archaeological periods represented at the site include ceramics from the Bronze Age and Iron Age I, excavated remains from Iron Age II through the Early Roman period, and Middle Islamic period ceramic material on the surface. Major architectural features include: a massive fortress structure still preserved to a maximum height of 7 meters, a casemate defensive system, extensive visible wall lines of residential and public buildings, a Nabataean cultic platform, and an Ayyubid-Mamluk caravanserai and village. The seasons excavations continued in the same three areas (H, Q and W) as in 2017.

Area H, was supervised by Stephanie Selover, and consists of a substantial area of domestic architecture that was previously excavated in 2012 and 2017. Earlier excavations indicated that the building was a domestic structure, with two phases of floors and walls. This area was reopened this season with the goal of opening a larger horizontal exposure of the house, and learning more about domestic architecture at the site during the Iron Age. A total of seven rooms were excavated in House A this season, all reaching an Iron Age II floor level (Phase II), found in the 2012 and 2017

(cont'd on p. 2)



Area H House at Balu'a.

seasons. The earlier floor level, Phase I, was not reached this season.

The architecture of House A, while not completely known, consists of a number of well-constructed and well-preserved stone walls. Three doors between rooms were found preserved with intact door lintels, suggesting the likelihood that the entire first story of the house is preserved. Given the thickness of the walls, all two rows wide, and stone courses preserved on top of the intact doorways, it is likely that this house was originally two stories high. The finds above the house floors include ground stone tools, beads, figurine fragments, spindle whorls, loom weights, fragments of bronze and iron objects, two complete bowls and a juglet.

The Building has an open-air, clay-lined entry courtyard in the northeast that leads south to a smaller entry room. This entry room contains a possible tabun in the southeast corner, and a doorway that leads south to a larger room. A small partition wall in the southwestern corner of the entry room leads into a series of four small rooms towards the west. These rooms were roofed with earth and plaster.

House A is centered around a central open-air courtyard, or possibly two courtyards. The eastern half of the western courtyard has a hard-packed beaten-earth floor. To the north, a doorway with intact lintel and threshold connects the sections of the house. A second doorway in the southeastern side of the courtyard connects it to an unexcavated room to the east. A later, Hellenistic reuse of the courtyard resulted in much of the earlier Iron Age floor being cut or reused in such a way that little remained from the earlier Iron Age phase.

Area Q was supervised by Craig Tyson along the exterior of the north wall of the Qasr. The goal of the 2017 season was to excavate a probe up against this wall in order to locate and date the founding level of the Qasr, which has been a matter of some speculation. The 2019 season provided an opportunity to attain the goal set in 2017. However, when excavations began in this season, it was immediately apparent that all of the backfill and

some of the earth that had been left unexcavated in 2017 had been removed by looters in the years between seasons. This season we expanded the 2017 3.0 x 3.0 m probe to 4.0 x 4.0 m.

The latest Iron Age II phase is represented by Wall 6, which is at the north edge of the probe. This wall is associated with a beaten-earth surface that had a complete, but cracked Iron Age IIC pithos buried in it. Wall 6 is likely part of a domestic structure. An earlier Iron Age II phase is represented by Wall 11, which went deeper than Wall 6 and is associated with a cobbled floor, a separate beaten earth surface, and possible pillar bases. The complex appears to date to the early part of the Iron Age II.

In order to achieve our main objective of dating the Qasr, Walls 6 and 11 were removed. Both Wall 11 and the Qasr were constructed on top of a hard-packed layer of clay, which was itself laid over an uneven bedrock surface. A large stone mortar was set into the hard-packed clay surface under the Qasr, suggesting that it was part of an earlier building over which the Qasr was then built.

The 2019 excavation at the Qasr gives us an idea of when the Qasr was built, which seems to be the early part of the Iron Age II. It has also raised other questions about the precise stratigraphic relationship between the Qasr and the other Iron Age walls and features that were located. In future seasons, we hope to open more squares and to gain a fuller understanding of this fascinating building and its history.

Excavation in Area W, supervised by Dawn Acevedo, included two squares, an eastern square begun in 2017 and a western square newly opened this season. The goals for this season were to determine whether the large western fortification wall matched up with the apparent phasing of the large eastern fortification wall that was excavated down to bedrock in 2017; to confirm that this is, in fact, a casemate fortification; and to determine the layout, function, phasing, and destruction details of the inner room, the excavation of which was also begun during the

2017 season. Both squares were excavated down to bedrock in subsidiary probes so that we are confident that all of these goals were accomplished this season.

The eastern fortification wall, as shown in 2017, was built on bedrock, most likely during late Iron Age I. After its construction, two superimposed surfaces to the west of the wall suggest that there was an occupation associated with this time period that made use of the eastern fortification wall. A foundation trench was then dug into the two western surfaces for the construction of the western fortification wall. The eastern wall was reconstructed from the seventh course upward to match the height of the new western wall, creating the casemate fortification. The entire fortification system is particularly large with a width of 7.2 m from western to eastern faces. A surface was then added inside the new casemate room. Finds from this level include jar stoppers, a faience bead, and pottery datable to the late Iron Age I/early Iron Age II.

During Iron Age II, two walls running east-west were built against the western fortification wall. A beaten-earth surface was associated with numerous ground-stone artifacts, indicating that this was a domestic structure. During Iron Age IIB/C, a renovation was made inside the casemate room, with the additions of a partition wall, a new beaten-earth surface, and an upper mudbrick construction. This level included domestic occupation with mortars and pestles as well as 45 clay loom weights, and a number of spindle whorls. Evidence of burning was found in the debris from this occupation and the number of remaining finds suggest that this room was destroyed. Meanwhile, to the west of the casemate wall, another possible surface appeared. The ceramic finds above this surface date almost unanimously to Iron Age IIB. High amounts of boulder tumble, found above this surface imply that the upper courses of the east-west walls fell into this room, possibly related to the same destruction noted inside the casemate room.

Earth layers outside the casemate system produced pottery sherds dating

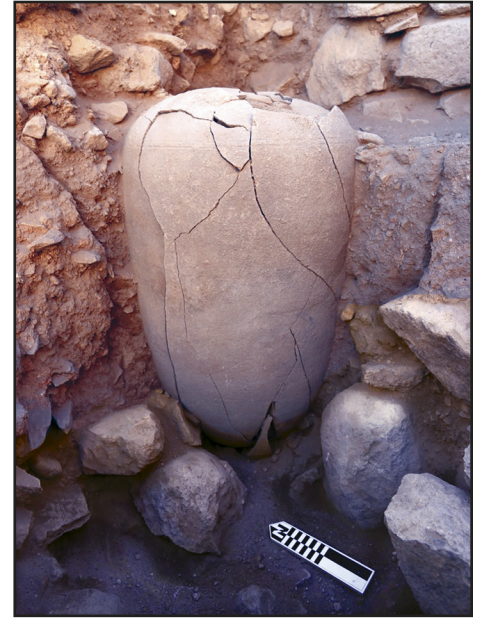
almost entirely to the Iron Age IIC. A series of towers were built on top of the casemate wall. These have yet to be excavated and therefore cannot be dated at this time. The towers fell at a later time and their boulder tumble covered the entire earlier fortification system.

In addition to the on-going excavation in the above areas, botanical sampling was carried out by Geoffrey Hedges-Knyrim, with the goal of prioritizing the sampling of contexts likely to yield botanical remains for analysis. These contexts included, but were not limited to floors, occupational debris, doorways, pits, hearths, tabuns/tannurs, and cooking areas. Further, a geospatial survey, along with the identification and surveying of a number of cisterns was

also carried out, the under the direction of Susan Penacho.

Yet, another development of the 2019 field season was the launching of the new BRAP Paleo-environmental Research Program (BRAP-PER), under the direction of Adam Schneider, in order to provide important new information about the past environmental contexts for Balu'a and its immediate vicinity.

Finally, Douglas Clark and two workmen developed new pathways across the site, connecting the current excavation areas, which are helpful in facilitating the movement of people and equipment. (Kent Bramlett, and Monique Vincent, and Friedbert Ninow)



Iron Age IIC pithos in Area Q.

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RANDOM SURVEY

Stone Bowl Found:

A fragment of a chalkstone bowl, with the name "Hyrkanus" engraved on it, was recently found beneath the foundations of a *miqvah*, (a ritual bathing installation), in the Givati Parking Lot excavations, in Jerusalem. It dates to the Hasmonean period (140-37 BC), and is one of the earliest of this type of vessel, common from the second half of the 1st century BC until the end of the Bar Kokhba revolt (135 AD). Along with *miqvaot*, chalkstone vessels, that unlike their ceramic counterparts could not become unclean, reflect Jewish dedication to purity at this time.

Ancient Theater Unearthed:

Excavations in the city of Magarsus, in Adana, Turkey, have unearthed parts of its ancient theater. The city was named after Magarsia, the priestess of the Temple of Athena, where Alexander the Great sacrificed an animal before his battle with Darius III, of Persia, in 333 BC. The history of the city can be traced back to as early as the fifth century BC.

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Ancient Greek Tomb Found:

A 0.2 x 0.1 m shaft grave has recently been found near a *Tholos* tomb and other structures, on a hilltop, near Pylos, and the ancient Palace of Nestor, built by the Mycenaeans, ca. 1450 BC, on the SW coast of Greece. In the tomb, thought to belong to the earlier Minoan occupants of the area, archaeologists found a largely intact skeleton, along with bronze basins, weapons and armor, gold and silver cups; hundreds of amethyst, amber, carnelian, and gold beads, over 50 stone seals with carved goddesses, lions and bulls, and four gold rings.

Causeway Discovered Near Aswan:

Archaeologists have recently found a 133 m. causeway leading up from the Nile River to the tomb of Sarenput I, the first Middle Kingdom nomarch (governor) of Elephantine Island, near Aswan, during the reign of King Senusert I of the 12th Dynasty. The north wall of the causeway is decorated with engravings, depicting men pulling a bull, for an offering to Sarenput. Canopic jars used in mummification, were found in a pit within the causeway.

Warrior Grave Found:

An urn grave of a warrior, with cremated human remains, dating to the Roman period has been discovered in the necropolis at Czelin, Germany. Besides the urn, a bronze belt, with a buckle, a fibula, a knife, a spearhead, and two drinking horns were found.

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