

MADABA PLAINS PROJECT: EXCAVATIONS AT TALL AL-'UMAYRĪ, 2008

Larry G. Herr and Douglas R. Clark

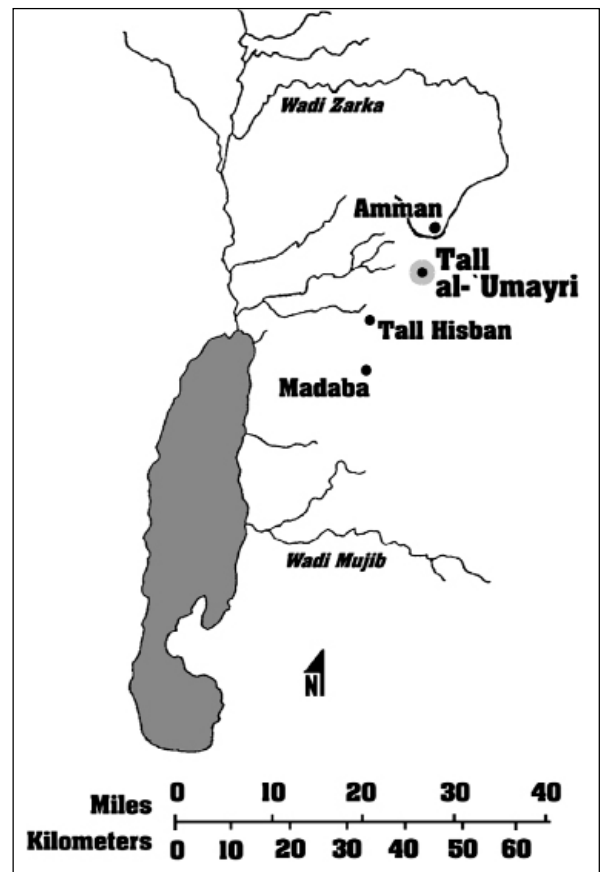
Introduction

A twelfth season of excavation by the Madaba Plains Project at Tall al-'Umayrī occurred between 25 June and 30 July 2008. It was sponsored by La Sierra University in consortium with Andrews University School of Architecture (Michigan, USA), Canadian University College (Alberta, Canada), Mount Royal College (Alberta, Canada) and Walla Walla University (Washington State, USA). Full reports have already been published for the first five seasons (first season [1984]: Geraty *et al.*, eds. 1989; second season [1987]: Herr *et al.*, eds. 1991; third season [1989]: Herr *et al.*, eds. 1997; fourth season [1992]: Herr *et al.*, eds. 2000; fifth season [1994]: Herr *et al.*, eds. 2002). A sixth full report (1996-1998) is in press and a seventh (2000) is being edited. Preliminary reports have also been published (first season [1984]: Geraty 1985; Geraty *et al.* 1986; 1987; second season [1987]: Geraty *et al.* 1988; 1989; 1990; third season [1989]: Younker *et al.* 1990; Herr *et al.* 1991; LaBianca *et al.* 1995; fourth season [1992]: Younker *et al.* 1993; Herr *et al.* 1994; fifth season [1994]: Younker *et al.* 1996; Herr *et al.* 1996; sixth season [1996]: Younker *et al.* 1997; Herr *et al.* 1997; seventh season [1998]: Herr *et al.* 1999; 2000; eighth season [2000]: Herr, Clark and Trenchard 2001; 2002; ninth season [2002]: Herr and Clark 2003; 2004; tenth season [2004]: Herr and Clark 2005a; 2005b; and eleventh season [2006]: Herr and Clark 2008a; 2008b).

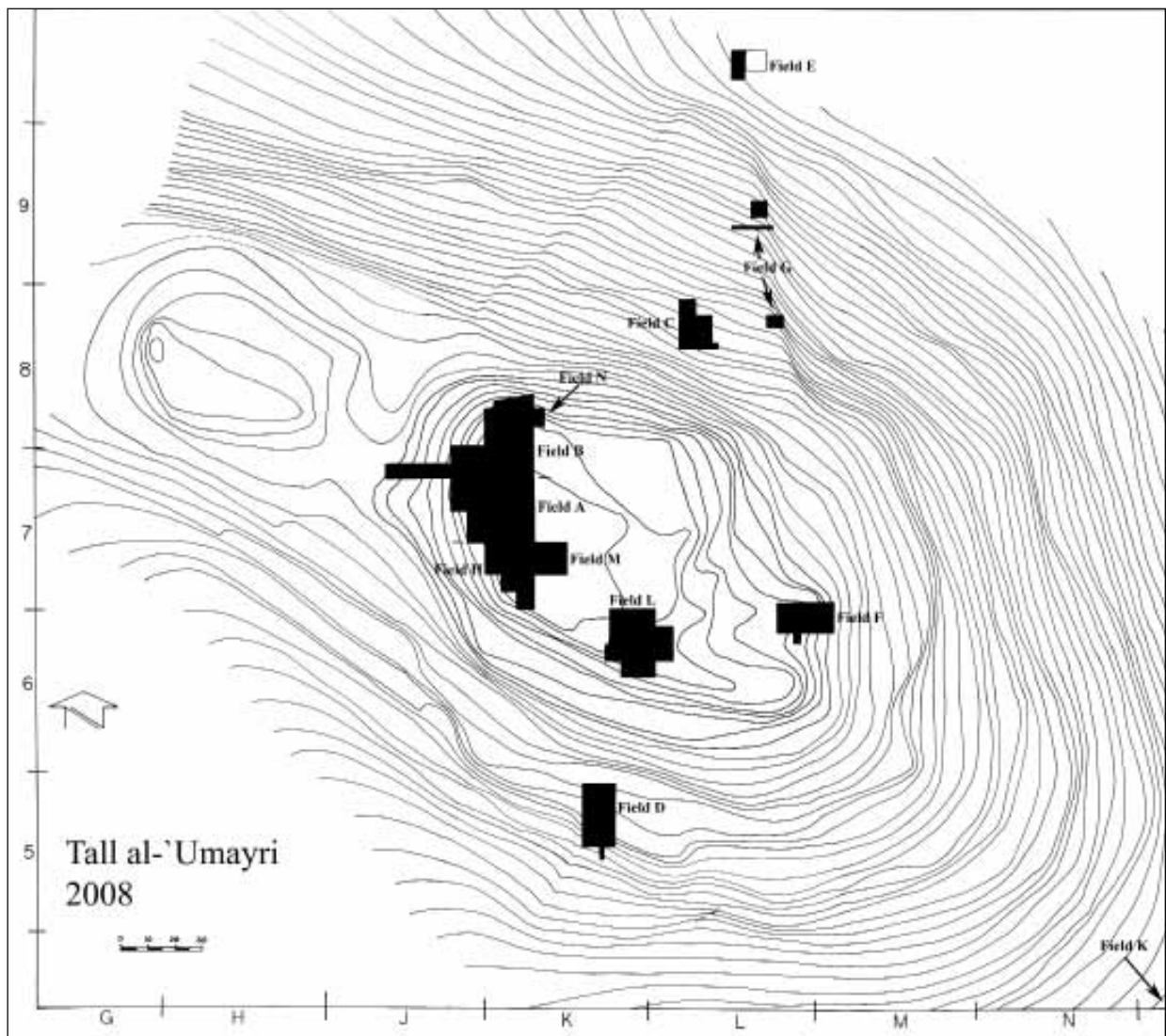
In the 2008 season, a team of 34 Jordanians and 96 foreigners (18 of whom were only present during the first or second half) participated in the fieldwork and camp activities of the interdisciplinary project at al-'Umayrī, located 12 km south of Amman's Seventh Circle on the

Queen Alia Airport Highway, at the turnoff for Amman National Park (Fig. 1).

In the first season (1984), four fields of excavation were opened (Fields A, B, C and D) (Figs. 2 - 3). During the second season (1987) three of the four were expanded (Fields A, B and D), one was completed to bedrock (Field C) and two new fields were opened (Fields E and F). In the third season (1989), one field expanded (Field



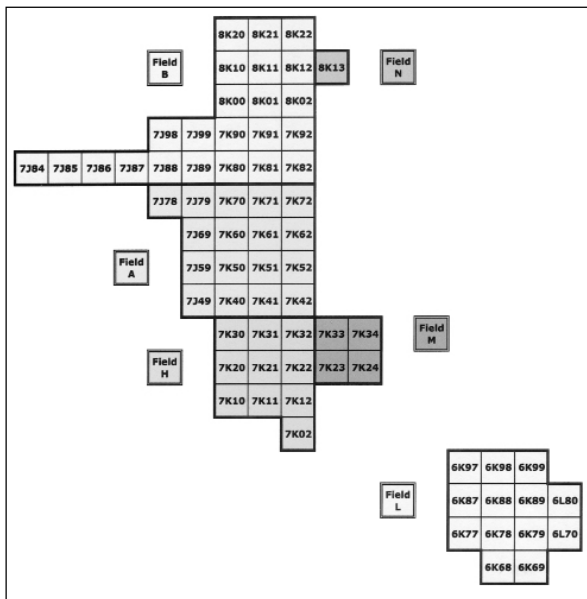
1. Map of the central plateau of Jordan with the major sites of the Madaba Plains Project (unless otherwise noted, all plan and photos are from the Madaba Plains Project - al-'Umayri).



2. Tall al-'Umayri: 2008 topographic map with the location of the fields of excavation.

A), three fields re-opened old squares and expanded slightly (Fields B, D and F), another reduced excavation from two squares to one (Field E), and a new field was opened on the northern slope as a series of three soundings (Field G). In the fourth season (1992), three fields deepened previously opened squares (Fields A, D and F), one deepened existing squares while expanding by one square (Field B) and two fields were discontinued (Fields E and G). During the fifth season (1994), one field deepened (Field A), another expanded and deepened (Field B) and one was added (Field H). In the sixth season (1996), three fields expanded (Fields A, B and H). The tomb excavations on the south-eastern

slopes of the *tell*, already begun under the hinterland survey in 1994, became part of the al-'Umayri *tall* excavations as Field K. During the seventh season (1998), two fields deepened their squares (Fields A and B), two expanded (Fields H and K) and a new field was opened on the southern edge of the site (Field L). In the eighth season (2000), we deepened three fields (Fields A, B and H), and expanded and deepened two fields (Fields K and L). During the ninth season (2002), Field A was not worked, while Field B expanded to the north and continued in two other squares; Field H limited itself to the large plastered and cobbled courtyard near the northern extent of the field (next to Field A); in Field



3. Tall al-'Umayri: Schematic grid of squares for Fields A, B, H, L, M and N, without regard to the relationship of Field L with the other fields. Field L should be moved to the right for its correct location; compare with the topographic map (Fig. 2).

L we exposed more of the Hellenistic structure by opening two new squares and re-opening one other. During the tenth season (2004), Field A deepened squares begun during the 1980s; Field B deepened three earlier squares and expanded to the north to intersect the northern edge of the site; Field H deepened earlier squares in its northern part; Field L deepened three previous squares and opened one new square. During the eleventh season (2006), Field A concentrated on removing balks and small areas between walls to deepen the western part of the field to late Iron 1 levels; one square was opened at the south-west corner of the field to examine the possible existence of a gateway. In Field B, excavation concentrated on uncovering floors in the northern part of the remarkably preserved LB building. Excavation in Field H concentrated on bringing the southern part of the open-air sanctuary down to late Iron 1 levels. Field L, on the southern edge of the site, expanded to the east and north with three new squares.

This season (2008), Field A aimed to expose the third LB / Iron 1 house in the southern part of the field by going deeper in most squares. Field B completed the excavation of the LB building and added a square to the east with a new field designation, Field N. Field H went

deeper in four squares, exposing the top of the LB / Iron 1 levels and locating the bottom of the southern portion of the perimeter wall. Field L went lower in three squares and added two more squares to the west. We also added a new field, Field M, east of Field H in our overall goal of connecting Fields H and L. This season also saw the start of our use of high-resolution GPS for the location of fields, squares and architecture. It forced a slight change of orientation to align all our squares with true north and we chose to locate squares on primary grid lines, causing some squares to be smaller in their east - west measurements. In the process we established and cemented into place three permanent benchmarks on the site.

Finally, after 12 seasons, we can begin to talk about stratum numbers for the site. We think, reasonably, that no new significant settlements will be discovered beyond those we have already found. We thus include a stratigraphic chart (Fig. 4).

Field A: The Western House Structures (Robert D. Bates, La Sierra University)

Field A is located at the central western edge of the site (Figs. 2-3). Ten previous seasons (the field was not excavated during the 2002 season) had exposed a large administrative complex from the end of the Iron 2 period, extending into Persian times. Domestic dwellings, perhaps belonging to the officials who worked in the administrative complex, were built to the north and south of the complex. To the north and west, outside the area of this complex, were multiple phases of Iron 1 remains, including very significant structures from the earliest decades of that period (initially we referred to this period as early Iron 1, but have now determined it best to call it LB / Iron 1 to emphasize that there are significant LB features). These were found primarily in Field B to the north in earlier seasons, but also to a lesser extent in the north-western parts of Field A.

This season, we began to expose the top of the destruction layer of the LB / Iron 1 stratum (Stratum 12) in all areas of the field. Not enough has yet been excavated to suggest a coherent plan for the third house from this period that seems to be in this area, just south of two other houses in Field B and the northern part of Field

| Stratum | Date | Fields | Finds |
|---------|---------------|-------------|--|
| | Neolithic | E&W slopes | Flint scatters |
| | Chalcolithic? | East valley | Sherds on surface |
| Hiatus | EB 1A | | No remains so far |
| 21 | EB 1B | K | Dolmen and associated surfaces |
| 20 | EB 2 | D | Wall fragments above bedrock |
| 19 | EB 3 | CDG | Houses & streets on terraces on S & N slopes |
| 18 | EB 4 | D | Ephemeral one-room houses widely separated |
| 17 | EB 4 | D | Small walls of cobbles, perhaps animal pens |
| Hiatus | EB 4-MB 2A-B | | No remains so far; cemetery east of the airport highway |
| 16 | MB 2C | BC | Sherds in Field B rampart; wall frags & floors in Field C |
| 15 | MB 2C | BCK | Moat, rampart & wall frags in Field B; wall frags & floors in Field C; cave tomb in Field K |
| Hiatus? | LB 1 | | No clear remains so far |
| 14 | LB 2 | BF | Palace/temple in Field B; terrace wall in Field F |
| 13 | LB/Iron 1 | B | Sherds in Field B rampart |
| 12 | LB/Iron 1 | ABFH(L?) | Perimeter wall, gate & houses in Fields A, B & H; walls frags in Field F; large stone walls in Field L? |
| Hiatus | Iron 1A | | Significant typological difference between pottery of Strata 12 and 11 |
| 11 | Iron 1B | AH | Wall frags above Str 12 destruction in Field A; wall frags in Field H |
| 10 | Iron 1B | AH | House with rooms & floors in Field A; lowest courtyard sanctuary in Field H |
| 9 | Iron 2A | ABH | Few red-slipped, hand-burnished sherds; poss continuation of courtyard sanctuary in Field H |
| 8 | Iron 2B | A | House in Field A with pottery of the late 9th to 8th centuries |
| 7 | L Iron 2/Per | ABCFHL | Administrative complex & houses in Fields A, B, C, F & L; well in Field E; sanctuary in Field H |
| 6 | L Iron 2/Per | AH | Major changes to administrative complex in Field A; houses in Field B; sanctuary in Field H |
| 5 | Per | AH | Prob domestic wall frags in Field A; poss continuation of sanctuary in Field H; Persian provincial seals |
| Hiatus | Late Per | | No remains so far; poss also very early Hel |
| 4 | Hel | HLK | Pits in Field H; farmstead in Field L; tomb with Greek inscription in Field K |
| 3 | ER | AB | Ritual pool was prob part of a farmstead or villa |
| Hiatus? | LR | H | One pot found outside the settlement |
| 2 | Byz | F | Farmstead wall fragments and pottery |
| 1 | Islamic | ABCDEFHL | A few sherds in topsoil represent agricultural activity: Early Islamic, Middle Islamic, Late Islamic, Modern |

4. Tall al-'Umayri: Stratigraphic chart.

A. We were also able to demonstrate the absence of a gate where the Stratum 12 perimeter wall turns into the city. Instead, we discovered the southern extension of the perimeter wall to the south of that curve. We also discovered parts of a house from the Iron 2B period (Stratum 8) that produced significant amounts of broken pottery on the floors of the rooms. This is the first time we have found architectural remains from that period. We re-opened Squares 7J59, 7J69, 7J78, 7J79, 7K40, 7K50, 7K60 and 7K70. Many of the operations were very small and square supervisors hopped from square to square as we tried to bring the excavation of the field into phase.

Stratum 12 (LB / Iron 1 Transition; Field A Phase 13)

In the 1998 season we had discovered that the north - south perimeter wall curved into the city in Square 7J59 on an east - west orientation (Herr et al. 1999: 102). This season we traced the wall as it continued into the city through Squares 7K50 and 7K40, where it seems to have been robbed by the builders of the late Iron 2 administrative basement structures. We thus have no idea how far it originally ran toward the east. As early as the 2002 season we had wondered if a large parallel east - west wall about four me-

ters to the south could be the southern side of an entrance way into the city. We could discern no gate tower structures or piers lining the entrance, but posited a simple entrance between two parallel walls. We further suggested that a large north - south wall at the western edge of Field H, whose founding level had not yet been reached, could be the continuation of the perimeter wall around the southern part of the site.

In 2006 we discovered the end of the monumental southern wall, with one stone measuring 2.4 x 1.2 x 1m. We even discovered the tops of walls that appeared to be small piers jutting into the entry way, dividing it into very shallow chambers. We thus hoped to find more of this gate or entrance during this season's excavations.

Unfortunately, our finds this season seem to have laid any talk of a gate to rest. Extending south of the perimeter wall just after its curve to the east was a large north - south wall that crossed the expected 'entrance way' and passed under the south wall of the expected gate (Fig. 5). Indeed, it continued south and became the large north - south wall we had already suggested was the perimeter wall around the south - western part of the town. At least this part of our hypothesis was correct. The extent of the pe-

rimeter wall is thus clear: it stretches south from Field B, curves eastward into the town for about 7 meters where it apparently ended; another north - south wall then was built to defend the south - western portion of the site (**Fig. 6**). The east - west wall we had originally hoped would



5. Tall al-'Umayri: Field A, Stratum 12: The newly discovered perimeter wall at lower left passes under a later Iron 1 wall.



6. Tall al-'Umayri: Field A, Stratum 12: A small portion of the stone perimeter wall that protected the south-western portion of the site; at left is the later Iron 1 wall also visible in Figure 5.

be the southern side of the gate area turned out to be a later wall (it was constructed over the south - western perimeter wall). Its precise function is unclear, though we can suggest that it may have been associated with the Iron 1 open courtyard sanctuary found just to the south in Field H.

The northern portions of a third house (House C) were excavated this season immediately south of Houses A and B, found in earlier seasons. The northernmost house in Field B (House B) was the well-known "four-room house" that was fully excavated in 1996 and has been partially reconstructed. The second house (House A) was in both Fields B and A and was fully excavated in 2000. As was true with the other two houses, the new one produced copious amounts of pottery on the floors of two rooms, especially early forms of collared *pithoi*, almost exactly similar in form to those found in the other two houses. We estimate another 12-15 *pithoi* were unearthed this season. But this time, they contained many more potters' marks on the handles, sometimes on both handles. There was one type of potters' mark that was most frequent, but two others also were discovered. We are in the process of trying to determine if there is a correspondence between the form of the vessels and the potters' marks.

The destruction layer was much shallower here than in the other two houses. This one may have had only a ground floor, although later Iron 1 structures were built on top, possibly destroying the upper courses and upper portions of the destruction in this area. In one of the rooms of this house was a small grinding installation with the lower millstone in situ and the upper millstone lying nearby (**Fig. 7**). Other parts of the destruction were found in three other locations in probes, but none of them reached the floors. There is room for only one other house between House A and the curve of the perimeter wall. We thus suggest that all remains from Stratum 12 found this year in Field A belong to House C. We hope to complete excavation of this house next season.

Strata 11 - 10 (Iron 1B; Field A Phases 12 - 11)

Above the destruction of Stratum 12 were small wall fragments discovered in earlier seasons. This season, a few very small wall fragments were added to the list, as were a few thin



7. Tall al-'Umayri: Field A, Stratum 12: Small grinding installation in one of the rooms of House C.

earth layers that seem to go with them. These appeared above the Stratum 12 destruction, but were under the walls of Stratum 10 (as exposed in earlier seasons).

South of the perimeter wall, beyond its eastern curve, the parallel wall previously thought to be the southern side of a gate complex must belong to this stratum, though its function at present is unclear (Fig. 5). As suggested above, it may be related to the courtyard sanctuary in Field H.

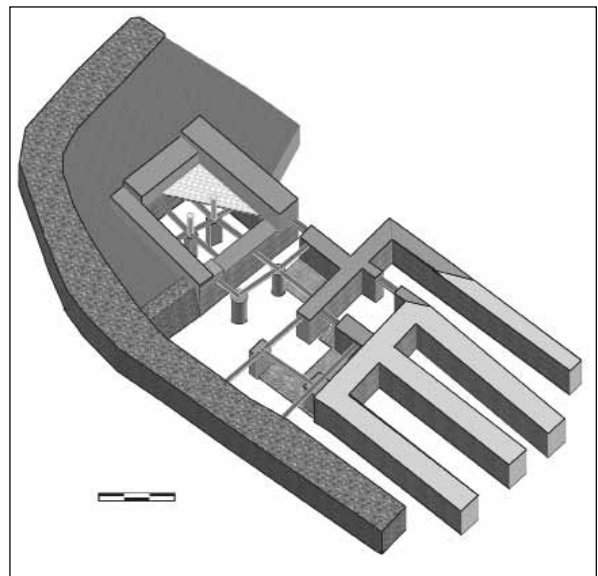
Stratum 8 (Iron 2B; Field A Phase 8B)

Although we began to find earth layers for this phase in 2004 and 2006, this season, for the first time, we established clear stratigraphic evidence for the Iron 2B period at the site. Previously, we had collected only potsherds. This time, in Squares 7K50 and 7K60, we discovered three to four rooms surrounded by stone walls, and cobbled and beaten-earth surfaces covered with pottery (Fig. 8). The western wall of the structure is still preserved to a height of almost 1.5m. We had mistakenly ascribed this wall to the Iron 1 period in previous publications. The 2006 excavations also demonstrated that the pillared room further to the west, with no visible entrance, was actually also from this period. Thus, our previous latest Iron 1 phase must now be re-dated to the Iron 2B period (Fig. 9).

The pottery from the floors consisted primarily of bowls, with some cooking pots. Relatively few vessels were storage jars. Separating the rooms were stone walls, as well as large solitary stones that must have been bases for wooden pillars. A fragmentary staircase was found at one side of the structure in earlier seasons,



8. Tall al-'Umayri: Field A, Stratum 8: Composite photo (hence the white areas) of the eastern two-thirds of the Iron 2B house, from the west.



9. Tall al-'Umayri: Field A, Stratum 8: Computerized isometric reconstruction of the Iron 2B house by Robert D. Bates.

when we thought it was part of the Ammonite administrative complex of Stratum 7. The eastern portion of the building is not clear because the basement structures of the Stratum 7 Ammonite administrative complex seem to have destroyed it. The northern entrance to the structure, with the door jambs standing over a meter high, may have been the primary entrance to the house, of which the southern limits are not yet well understood. It must have extended to the perimeter wall, after the latter curved into the town, although we did not find a surface there, perhaps owing to its use as a storeroom. The present southern extent of the house cannot be its orig-

inal limit because there is no wall there, only two large pillar bases. Elsewhere in the building there was a wide opening between two stubby piers that led from the north-eastern room into the room to its south. Perhaps it was hung with a blanket or carpet.

Field B: The Late Bronze Age Building (Kent V. Bramlett, University of Toronto)

Field B is located in the north-west acropolis of the *tall*. A new field, Field N, was opened adjacent to and east of Field B with only one square (**Fig. 3**). The excavations of the past twenty years in Field B revealed Middle Bronze Age fortifications along the north-west slope of the *tall*, a Late Bronze Age monumental building, an Iron 1 residential district with two houses exposed and evidence of attempts at re-fortification, and three levels of Iron 2C residential structures.

This season, excavations aimed to complete the exposure of the Late Bronze Age building of Stratum 14, which had been excavated in several previous seasons but still needed further work in several areas. We also sought to answer questions concerning phasing, the function or interpretation of certain walls, and the delineation of certain exterior wall faces and corners. These objectives were all achieved. Excavation resumed in ten squares: 7K91, 8K00, 8K01, 8K02, 8K10, 8K11, 8K12, 8K20, 8K21, 8K22 and, in Field N, the one new square was 8K13. Although we have not yet reached bedrock, excavation in Field B is now complete. Only the massive MB rampart layers lay beneath the LB building.

Stratum 15 (MB 2C; Field B Phase 15)

More of a mud-brick wall that had been excavated 10 years previously somewhat further to the west was discovered under a later wall of the LB / Iron 1 four-room house (Building B; Stratum 12). The date previously assigned, MB 2C, was confirmed.

Stratum 14 (LB 2; Field B Phase 14)

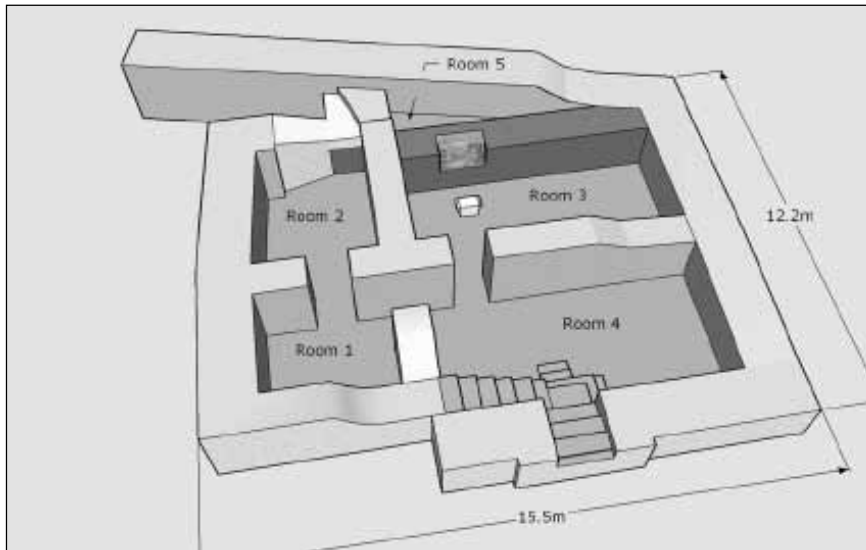
The season's primary objective was to complete excavation of the Late Bronze Age building (**Fig. 10**). The discussion and explanation of findings will proceed clockwise around the building following the sequence of room numbers assigned in the isometric drawing (**Fig. 11**).

The southern wall of Room 1 and the south-east corner of the building had remained obscured by Stratum 7 walls (late Iron 2 / Persian). Excavation and removal of those later remains revealed the full 1.5 m width of the eastern half of the south wall. The southern part of the east wall was actually made of two walls built together, but in different masonry styles.

Work along the west wall of Room 2 clarified what had been a confusing mass of tumbled stones, compacted debris and mud brick where we expected the wall of the room to be. Indeed, the southern portion of a west wall was found bonded to the south wall of the room. However, this season, where it seemed to disappear, we found mud bricks with stones over them. The west wall was thus laid against and over a pre-existing mud brick wall. We were able to prove that the LB builders had cut into older ruins and had incompletely removed these



10. Tall al-‘Umayri: Field B, Stratum 14: Composite photo (hence the white areas) of the LB building after excavation, from the east.



11. Tall al-'Umayri: Field B, Stratum 14: Schematic computerized isometric drawing of the LB building by Kent V. Bramlett.

earlier elements. Instead, they battered the new wall against the old brick wall and continued its construction on top of the old mud brick and consolidated detritus. These bricks predate the construction of the LB building and were thinner than the bricks found in the LB destruction layer. The stone courses of the south end of the west wall were battered against the mud-bricks. Dating evidence was not conclusive for the mud bricks and debris. Probably, the builders cut back into a larger heap of debris at the west end of Room 2 where Wall 14 was built.

This season, final work in Room 3 — the room with the cultic niche and the building's most important room — resolved several questions and altered our understanding of some aspects of the building as a whole. Our excavation of Room 1 in previous seasons had established that there were three discernable phases of use in that room: the original floor, a second surface with traces of use, and a final accumulation of laminations containing ash, dirt, bones and pottery. In the 2006 season, in a narrow strip across the northern part of Room 3 (separated from the rest of the room by an excavation balk) we thought we had missed the later surface and cleared down to the original floor. That was not the case and we can now describe the whole room as a unit. The original floor of the room consisted of plaster and sloped gently to the north. On this floor had accumulated a surface build-up about 7cm thick. When identified last season (2006), we suggested this might

represent a later phase floor, but it is now better interpreted as a product of room use over time. Ashy deposits occurred in the vicinity of the altar and niche and may partially account for the greater depth of build-up in this area. However, the large proportion of Middle Bronze Age ceramics suggests the ancient users spread sanitizing layers of earth excavated from nearby on the *tall*. However, the ceramics removed with its excavation are important (two bases shaped and re-used as offering stands, according to ceramic technologist G. London) and may be combined with the partial bowls and bones removed from the later surface in the 2006 season. Removal of the laminated layers of the surface build-up in Room 3 where it had accumulated against the altar at the base of the niche (Installation 32) showed that the altar had been plastered all the way to the base (Fig. 12). At the base, the plaster smoothed out and sealed onto the floor, showing that it was constructed before the surface build-up began to accumulate. Another surprise was the discovery that the altar was founded on a stone foundation 0.1m thick.

Further refinement in our understanding of the cultic installation wall (the western wall of Room 3) came about inadvertently. Inter-season damage to the facing of the wall on either side of the cultic niche revealed that, from about the elevation of the niche floor down to the room floor, a height of 1m, the wall was constructed of stone with a very thick mud-plaster facing. Removal of the mud-plaster facing revealed the



12. Tall al-'Umayri: Field B, Stratum 14: LB building, Room 3, with the cultic niche and small plastered altar in front on the original surface of the room; the two stones flanking the meter stick are extraneous.

composite nature of this wall with stones and bricks.

A 1 x 1m probe in the north-west corner of Room 3 revealed layers of ash and Late Bronze Age diagnostic sherds. We wanted to determine the foundation level of the northern wall of the room, which was also the northern perimeter wall of the site. It continued four courses below the original floor of Room 3 and the sections revealed no evidence of a foundation trench. In contrast, the bricks of the cultic installation wall did not extend beneath the surface. The perimeter wall thus seems to predate the cultic installation wall. In previous probes it was shown that the south wall and the interior room dividing walls were laid in shallow foundation trenches in the Stratum 15 (MB 2C) rampart layer. It may be that the apparent similarity of this layer to (1) the rampart and rubbly 'rampart' matrix encountered in probes at the south-west corner of Room 2 and in Room 1 below the original floor and (2) to the confirmed Stratum 15 Middle Bronze Age rampart excavated in other parts of Field B is misleading, and that later fills coincidentally resembled the rampart matrix. Regardless of the origin of this layer, it is certain that several pre-existing elements were utilized by the LB builders, *viz.* the western and northern outer walls, the mud brick identified in the west walls of Rooms 2 and 3, and the north wall of Room 5. However, the construction date and function of the earlier structures has not yet been estab-

lished with certainty.

Another objective fully accomplished this season was the excavation of the full length and width of the northern wall of the building (also the perimeter wall of the site), including the north-west corner where it joined, or became, the western perimeter wall. It measured 1.6m wide along its entire length and was sealed on its north (exterior) face by the as yet unexcavated Stratum 12 rampart.

Excavation in Room 4, the entrance into the building, identified a more complicated series of surfaces with two across the entire room, and a third intermediate surface identified only in a limited area against the western wall. The blocking stones that filled the blocked northern door between Rooms 3 and 4 were laid on the earliest surface and the full depth of the later one ran up to them, with no foundation trench evident. Thus, that doorway was blocked before accumulation on the surface began. The north-eastern corner of the room was laid with about three rows of, usually, five mud bricks. The bricks were carefully aligned with intervening mortar. A probe through four of the bricks led to the conclusion that they were laid to cover and level the top of the rampart or building foundation fill. The probe also showed that some earth fill was used in places in addition to the bricks.

Several other features of Room 4 shed light on its possible function. Near the north end of the room, two flat stones were positioned end-

to-end on the floor, seemingly as offering tables. Alternatively, the larger may have been a standing stone which had fallen from its position at some earlier date (**Fig. 13**). The larger of the two was 1.03m long by 0.42 - 0.43m wide and the smaller 0.37m long by 0.31 - 0.33m wide. Beneath the smaller, and supporting it, a vertical stone was buried in a pit. The surface appears to run up to the two stones. If it had been a standing stone erected on a stone platform comprising the small flat stone supported by the buried stone and dedicatory fill, it had fallen at a time coinciding with the impoverishment of the building and its cult apparatus. During the continued use of the building represented by the layers of surface build-up in Rooms 3 and 4, maintenance appears to have been more careless or less well endowed (destruction phase cult vessels were evidently being used in a broken condition) and the fallen stone slab became an offering bench. Behind the larger flat-lying stone, two vessel bases, re-used as little offering tables according to G. London, were found in the surface against the northern wall of the room. Unfired clay figurine fragments were found throughout Room 4 and, adding to its cultic associations, three miniature cult vessels and partial chalices were also found. A mud brick and plaster table measuring about 0.48 x 0.40m stood near the base of the entrance steps. This table was badly damaged in the destruction of the building and its original height could not be determined. Its extant height was 0.13m. A LB juglet was found on this table among broken plaster and brick debris, just above the preserved portion. Lying above the surface near the table was a fallen standing stone



13. Tall al-'Umayri: Field B, Stratum 14: LB building, Room 4, with standing stones and other possible cultic features in the entrance room.

measuring 1.09 m long by 0.380.43m wide and 0.16 - 0.19m thick.

The problem of the eastern walls and the entrance to the building are now quite well understood. Excavation in Square 8K13, Field N provided the accessibility to the east needed to clear the entrance to the building, as well as defining the east faces of the exterior walls north and south of the entrance gate. Excavation there reached the level of the entrance and exposed more of the extensive earthquake damage (**Fig. 14**). The eastern front of the building showed more damage than any other part. The exterior east wall fell eastward, with brick debris preserving the scatter in various degrees of collapse. Mid-level stones slipped further outward than the lowest building stones, but were prevented from falling by debris from higher up that had already collapsed. We did not reach the LBA surface outside the building.

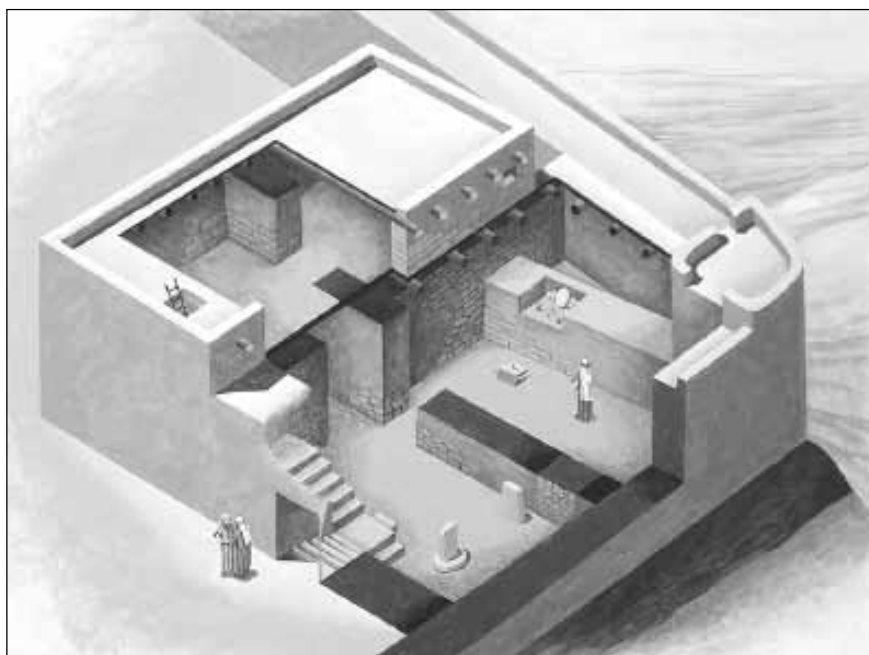
We also now understand the curious use of double walls back-to-back across much of the eastern side of the building. The outer wall was the building wall, against which an inner wall was constructed as support for internal stairs ascending to the second floor over Rooms 1 and 2, and probably to the roof of the structure. Thus the stair wall began at entrance level in Room 4 and continued southward at increasing height across the east end of Room 1 (**Fig. 15**).

Stratum 12 (LB / Iron 1 Transition; Field B Phase 12)

The LB building was surrounded with higher Phase 12 constructions. Building B, the four-room house, occupied the space immediately to



14. Tall al-'Umayri: Field N, Stratum 14: LB building entrance showing earthquake damage to the east wall of the structure at the entrance.



15. Tall al-'Umayri: Field B, Stratum 14: Painting of the LB building as we reconstruct it, by Rhonda Root.

the south. The northern entrance to this building was laid on top of the Stratum 14 debris. On the western and northern slopes outside the LB building, a glacis ascended high against the outer building walls. Though unexcavated, this rampart layer can logically be identified with the Phase 12 rampart additions documented on the western slope outside Building B.

Excavation in the newly opened Field N produced more Phase 12 walls and associated earth layers. Though the area of exposure is very limited at just 3 x 5 m, two bonded wall fragments possibly date to this phase. Both walls stood to a height of 0.7 m. In the angle formed by the two walls was an associated cobble surface. The structure is tentatively dated by the pottery to this stratum, though small pieces of Stratum 7 pottery were also found. However, evidence of bioturbation was pronounced and frequent. Large rodent holes in the south-west corner were clearly evident, with small pieces of pottery visibly spilling out of them. It thus seems best, on the basis of such evidence as is currently available, to interpret the typically small late Iron 2 / Persian pottery sherds as intrusive and tentatively associate this structure with Stratum 12.

Stratum 7 (Late Iron 2 / Persian; Field B Phase 7)

Several clearance operations removed isolated Stratum 7 deposits and wall fragments to

expose the LB architecture beneath.

1. Most prominently, along the south wall of the LB building next to Room 1.
2. Clearance of an earth layer above the eastern wall of the LB building.
3. Clearance of the remainder of an earth layer that covered the entry steps into the LB building showed no more steps leading down and out of the building beyond its east face, or where it had been prior to its catastrophic collapse.
4. Excavation of another layer where the full width of the LB building's northern wall was still obscured by later material.

Excavation in Field N yielded several Stratum 7 attributions. More elements of an extensive domestic building, the quoin-and-pier house excavated over several seasons in the north-east quadrant of Field B, were uncovered. These included another quoin-and-pier wall, which was built over a layer which may be equated with the famed "Corsican Layer" found across the north of Field B. The "Corsican Layer" (so named because of the battle fought on the eponymous island in 866 AD; the layers comprising it were 8K10:8, 8K11:6, 8K12:6!) represents the post-destruction abandonment layer derived from Phase 7 re-use and additions made to the ruins of the LB building. The later Stratum 7 structure, Building D, partly overlapped and was

stratigraphically above the “Corsican Layer” where it occurred. Another transect quoin wall could be seen in the south balk. Each of these two quoin walls connected, respectively, to the two large piers which were a part of a north - south quoin-and - pier wall.

Strata 1 - 2 (Byzantine and Islamic periods; Field B Phases 1 - 2)

Byzantine and Islamic pottery was evident in small quantities in topsoil layers excavated in Field N.

Field H: Below the Open-Air Courtyard Sanctuary (Monique Vincent, University of Chicago)

Field H is located at the south-western corner of the flat summit of the site (**Figs. 2-3**). Excavations began here in 1994 for the initial purpose of investigating the southern extension of the Ammonite administrative complex in Field A, directly to the north, but instead found a large courtyard sanctuary paved by alternating floors of cobbles and plaster. Its religious interpretation is based on the presence of figurines and model shrines found on the surfaces (Herr and Clark 2003: 290-291). This season we excavated beneath the lowest cobble floor of the late Iron 1 open-air sanctuary in Squares 7K11, 7K12, 7K20, 7K21 and 7K22 to reach the Iron 1 levels encountered last season in Square 7K31. Excavation in all squares stopped at the Iron 1 destruction levels. We also excavated much deeper along the exterior of the southern perimeter wall in Square 7K30, showing that the wall indeed dates to the LB / Iron 1 transitional period, the same date as northern parts of the perimeter wall.

Stratum 12 (LB / Iron 1 transition; Field H Phases 13 - 12)

Earlier excavations in Square 7K30 had uncovered a large, north - south wall at the western edge of the site (Wall 46). We had speculated that it might be the southern extension of the LB / Iron 1 perimeter wall, but small amounts of Iron 2 pottery persisted in most layers on the western, external, side of the wall. The sediment was typical of exterior deposits. On the interior we had already reached what we considered Iron 1 levels. This season we widened the exterior

exposure because the debris, being very rubbly, was too unstable for safe working. While we were unable to reach the bottom of the probable perimeter wall this season, after excavating a further two meters down its western face we did find the bottom of a major, but later, east - west wall - Wall 49 - that may have formed a tower (our earlier hypothesis that this was part of a gate was incorrect) (**Fig. 6**).

It is possible that here in Field H, on the south-western outskirts of al-‘Umayri, we have an extension of the rampart system in Wall 46, similar to the situation in Field B (see Clark in *MPP 2 and 3*). However, so far no hint of a rampart has been discovered. But the size of Wall 46, preserved to a height of nearly three meters so far, and the wall’s strategic location in line with the other section of the perimeter wall in Field B, is a strong case for locating the south-western extension of the LB / Iron 1 settlement, along with its defense system here in 7K30.

Although we cannot make a stratigraphic connection because the sounding against the Phase 13 perimeter wall was on its exterior side, domestic structures within the wall most likely belong to Phase 12 on the basis of their pottery assemblages. We may thus need to combine Phases 13 and 12. Stone walls, a surface and a bin were discovered last season in limited excavations in one square (7K31), but similar finds had already been made in earlier seasons in Square 7K30 and 7K20 immediately inside the perimeter wall.

This season, the tops of walls continuing these structures were discovered to the south in Squares 7K21 and 7K22, under a thick destruction layer. No surfaces have yet been discovered, but a probable oven and ash deposits suggest that one is near. Next season, we anticipate uncovering the floors of at least one large domestic structure in this area.

Stratum 11 (Iron 1B; Field H Phase 11)

Although Stratum 11 became clearer this season, it was still fragmentary in nature and seemed to reflect domestic structures that sometimes incorporated earlier walls. Cobbled and beaten-earth surfaces were also exposed, along with one external surface. The large northern wall of the structure was built, at latest, during this period and may be even earlier.

Stratum 10 (Iron 1B; Field H Phase 10B)

It was in this stratum that the courtyard sanctuary, with its cobbled and plastered floors and central pillar base or, more likely, altar, was first established (see previous reports for photos). This season, we excavated the cobble floor and some of the walls of the courtyard sanctuary to reach earlier Iron 1 levels below. The southern portion of the complex, however, still needed to be exposed. Unfortunately, it appears that later construction projects inside the southern room have so greatly disturbed the stratigraphy that it is difficult to assign any particular deposits or interior structures to this phase. The room's function is therefore uncertain and, with no clear threshold connecting the southern room and courtyard along the length of Wall 48, it is even more difficult to reconstruct their stratigraphic relationship.

Stratum 7 (Late Iron 2 / Persian; Field H Phase 8)

Excavated remains in the southern room of the courtyard sanctuary which date to this phase are the first since Stratum 11 to yield any traces of use. What took place in this southern area during the previous three phases remains a mystery; part of this confusion is the result of construction which took place in this and successive strata. During this period, the occupants divided the large southern room in two, constructing a wall about a third of the way across the room. In the new middle room, sandwiched between smaller rooms to the east and west, a cobble floor was laid. As noted in earlier seasons, this also seems to have been the period during which the old walls defining the southern area were consolidated and had new courses constructed upon them, thereby establishing the integral importance of the southern rooms to the entire courtyard complex. Unfortunately, much of this phase was, in turn, disturbed by construction carried out in the following phase. Only remnants of the one floor and fill deposits testify to its existence in the south. Beaten-earth floors and fill layers were in all these rooms.

Stratum 6 (Late Iron 2 / Persian; Field H Phase 7)

Although most of the architecture that defined the southern three rooms in Stratum 7 continued

in use during this phase, the three rooms were reduced to two as, following several periods of re-use, the dividing wall was now covered by a cobble floor. This season we finished removing one cobble surface, discovering a fragment of the previous stratum's cobble floor immediately beneath.

On the western edge of the field (and of the *tall*), a pit was utilized during this period. Previously, an earth layer had been assigned to an earlier stratum on the basis of Iron 1 pottery from a probe. However, when this and underlying layers were excavated in their entirety, a mixed assemblage of pottery was recovered which included Hellenistic sherds. These loci therefore add further support to hypothesis of a mixed pit on the western side of the field.

Stratum 2 (Byzantine; Field H Phase 2)

Earlier seasons in Field H had noted a stone layer consisting almost entirely of large pebbles beneath topsoil. Very little sediment was mixed in with the stones. This season we excavated more of the layer along the western side of Square 7K30 in order to provide a safe workspace for excavations at the bottom of the square. The layer had been described as a stony build-up on the western side of an agricultural retaining wall, because the *tall* drops down to the valley at this point. Although the part of the layer excavated this season was not nearly as stony as higher up the hill, it was still full of an abnormal quantity of pebbles, heavily worn (topsoil-like) pottery and small pockets of air. The lesser concentration of stone in our excavations this season could be the result of the increased distance from the agricultural terrace wall. The previous interpretation of the layer, not disproved by this season's excavations, had surmised that the deposit of pebbles and potsherds had resulted from a single episode of 'field clearance' dumped over the terrace wall during agricultural activity on top of the *tall*.

A number of interesting artifacts showed up in this layer alongside the stones and worn pottery sherds. These included a particularly nice female figurine, whose head, shoulders and abundance of hair were preserved (Object Number B080011; **Fig. 16**). Another interesting artifact from this locus was a fragment from an anthropomorphic juglet, preserving a complete



16. Tall al-'Umayri, Field H, Stratum 2: Head of a female figurine; although Stratum 2 dates to the Byzantine period, the figurine itself comes from the late Iron 2 / Persian period.

rim with two little eyes or breasts on either side of the spout (Artifact Number A080049). Other artifacts of note included a large needle, a grindstone and a jar stopper. Like the pottery, most of the objects / artifacts probably dated to the late Iron 2 / Persian period. However, these loci are stratigraphically dated to the Byzantine period and are probably associated with a few farm walls found in earlier seasons, near the southwestern corner of the site. Was there another small farmstead here, similar to the one in Field F found in 1987?

Stratum 1 (Islamic; Field H Phase 1)

The portion of this stratum excavated this season is a modern phase, comprising accumulated and eroded topsoil from the top of the entire field. It was full of pottery and artifacts, especially — as is true of every topsoil layer across the *tall* — from the late Iron 2 / Persian periods, which have been turned up by farmers' plows over the years. Excavations this season revealed a few grindstones, jar stoppers and spindle whorls, all domestic in character. No artifacts or pottery were found that could be dated to the Islamic periods, but the stratigraphy was clear.

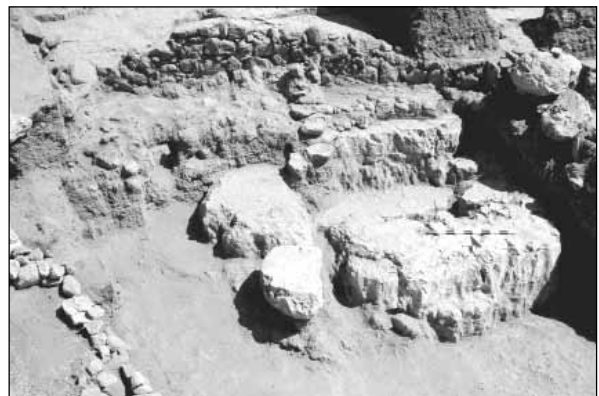
Field K: The Dolmen (Larry G. Herr, Canadian University College; Elzbieta Dubis, Krakow, Poland)

After a gap of eight years, a small team returned to the EB 1B dolmen in Field K on the lower south-eastern slopes of the *tall*, about 100 m north of the modern petrol station, in order

to re-draw previously excavated balks and excavate two balks. All finds were from Stratum 21.

Earlier excavations around the dolmen had uncovered a series of surfaces, with a few small features embedded in them (Herr *et al.* 1999: 109-110). No walls whatsoever had been found in the immediate area before the surfaces petered out. The most interesting of these features was a small stone table or platform, made of a large stone slab surrounded by supporting cobbles (Herr *et al.* 1999: 110), that was embedded into the surface about five meters from the western side of the dolmen. This season, when we removed the balk to the north of the stone table, we discovered four wall fragments that formed part of a probable stone shelter. The walls were very poorly constructed and are unlikely to represent even the humblest of domestic dwellings. More likely the stones were part a small shelter constructed by users of the dolmen during ceremonial activities, perhaps to shelter them from winter storms that would have made feasting at the site uncomfortable (**Fig. 17**). The walls may never have stood more than a meter high.

An east - west wall formed the northern wall of the structure and may have been the primary windbreak. Extending south from that wall were three other short fragments, probably the surviving portions of originally longer walls, which divided the space into two 'rooms'. These may have been open on the south side, which faced the stone table. Along with several surfaces surrounding the structure, which probably reflect ritual circumambulation of the dolmen, the newly discovered feature and previously discovered stone table suggest that ritual feasting also took place.



17. Tall al-'Umayri, Field K, Stratum 21: Wall fragments from a small shelter west of the dolmen.

Field L: The South Central Edge (Larry G. Herr, Canadian University College; David C. Hopkins, Wesley Theological Seminary; Mary Petrina Boyd, University Temple United Methodist Church, Seattle)

Field L is located at the southern edge of the flat top of Tall al-‘Umayrī, roughly in its center (**Fig. 2**). Excavations in this field began in 1998 for the initial purpose of exploring the transition from the top of the site to the southern slope, where several surface architectural features were visible or had appeared in ground-penetrating radar images. This season we opened two new units in Squares 6K87 and 6K97 and deepened Squares 6K89, 6L70 and 6L80 (**Fig. 3**). The goals of these excavations were to ascertain the eastern and western limits of the Hellenistic farmstead, uncover the top of Iron 2 remains and probe to the bottom of at least one of the large walls constructed of massive boulders that had been uncovered in earlier seasons. We found that last season’s assessment that we were nearing the eastern limit of the farmstead seems to be correct. We also found no Hellenistic architectural remains in two squares opened at the western limits of the field, and managed to reach the foundation level of one massive wall.

Stratum (?) 12 (LB / Iron 1 Transition; Field L Phase 7)

In the northern part of the field, earlier seasons had produced the tops of massive stone walls constructed of very large boulders, some approximately two meters long and over a meter wide (**Figs. 18 and 20**). The tops of similar walls have been found in Field H. As we have excavated the fill layers running up to them at a few limited locations in Field L, the latest pottery has been from the Iron 1 period. This season we continued a probe begun in 2006 to reach the bottom of one of these massive walls and achieved our goal. The latest pottery clearly dated to the Iron 1 period.

Because the number of diagnostic potsherds was not high, it was not clear to which part of the period the sherds dated. There were no signs of the massive destruction of Stratum 12, as found in Fields A, B and H in the west and Field F in the east, but those manifestations of the destruction could have been localized. There were also no signs of a clear surface in the admitted-



18. Tall al-‘Umayrī, Field L, Stratum (?) 12: The top of a large wall of massive boulders is visible in the left side of the photo as the dark stone wall under the lighter one; the location of our probe is visible against a connected wall running east at the right side of the photo.

ly limited probe. Similarly, the probe was not deep enough to determine that the stratum below dated to the Late Bronze Age (Stratum 13). We have, therefore, only tentatively ascribed the walls to Stratum 12 and that primarily for one reason: the walls are so huge that they seem to fit better with the major structures of Stratum 12 than with the less impressive, later structures of Strata 11 and 10. If this was the case, we should note that there are two fundamental ways in which the architecture of Stratum 12 is manifest. There are the well preserved, domestic structures in Fields A, B and H, with small to medium boulders in the walls, and there are these structures in parts of Fields H and L that are truly massive. Perhaps they represent structures from a more public part of the settlement. If we are correct, these structures, along with the very impressive fortification system found in Fields A, B and H, would indicate that the site was much more than a simple, small highland village.

Stratum 7 (Late Iron 2 / Persian; Field L Phase 6)

Along the eastern and western edges of the field, in the areas where the remains of the Hellenistic farmstead seem to be dwindling, we discovered late Iron 2 / Persian remains beneath shallow layers and features of the Hellenistic period. Indeed, in one square at the south-east corner of the field (Square 6L70), we discovered nothing but remains from Stratum 7.

The most interesting find was a large, well

preserved *ṭābūn* (oven), constructed of a thin clay wall (ca 3 - 4 cm thick) with large potsherds and stones lining at least the lower exterior part of the structure (Fig. 19). Nothing but fill occupied the interior. The *ṭābūn*, located near the south balk of the square, sat upon a beaten-earth surface which stretched north to two large boulders that probably functioned as pillar bases. Part of the floor may have been cobbled, as it was between the two pillar bases (Fig. 20). These finds undoubtedly made up the courtyard and northern room of a domestic dwelling. Above these Stratum 7 features were layers of archaeological sediment containing late Iron 2 / Persian pottery that probably represent the post-abandonment phase of the settlement.

On the western edge of the field, the two new squares - open only for two weeks - produced stone walls forming two partial rooms (Fig. 21) immediately beneath Byzantine sub-topsoil.



19. Tall al-'Umayri, Field L, Stratum 7: *Ṭābūn* from a domestic dwelling in the south-eastern corner of the field.



20. Tall al-'Umayri, Field L, Stratum 7: Two stone pillar bases with a fragment of cobbled surface between them; at right is one of the Stratum (?) 12 large walls with massive stones.



21. Tall al-'Umayri, Field L, Stratum 7: One of the partial rooms excavated at the western side of the Field.

Excavations stopped at a beaten-earth surface in both rooms.

Stratum 4 (Hellenistic; Field L Phases 4-3)

In Field L, excavations are gradually moving beneath and beyond the Hellenistic structures. However, a few Hellenistic features were excavated, especially in the north-eastern part of the field. In the north-eastern square (6L80) were a few wall fragments preserved from the farmstead, most of which was discovered farther west. Evidence for both Hellenistic phases was found here with the discovery of two very fragmentary walls, one built on top of the other. However, the fragmentary nature of the remains was emphasized by the lack of discernable surfaces of any kind. In one other nearby square, balk removal located a filled doorway from this stratum, probably representing the transition from Stratum 4 to 3.

Above the Stratum 7 walls, in the two new squares at the western edge of the field, was a shallow layer with Hellenistic pottery but no other features. We are convinced that we have reached the western extent of the farmstead at this point.

Stratum 2 (Byzantine; Field L Phase 2)

A few Byzantine potsherds are almost always present in sub-topsoil layers of every square in Field L, but only one small stone wall was discovered. It was most likely a terrace wall for the Stratum 2 farmstead found during previous seasons in Field F farther to the east.

Stratum 1 (Islamic; Field L Phase 1)

Topsoil contains pottery mostly from the late Iron 2 / Persian period, but a few more recent

vessels are also included, some of which could be Early Islamic. One stone wall appeared on the surface that was probably a field wall, part of the agricultural activity going on at the site during the Islamic periods. Its construction and layout were very similar to other walls found elsewhere around the rim of the site from this time period.

Field M: Structures East of Field H (Aren S. LaBianca, Andrews University)

The new Field M was opened on the summit of Tall al-'Umayri during the 2008 season. It was located directly east of Field H, which lies on the south-western edge of the *tall*. The goals for Field M were to find the continuation of the Iron 1 and Iron 2 architecture found in Field H, and to begin to make a connection between Fields H and L, which lie on the southern edge of the site.

Four 5 x 5 m squares with one meter balks between them were opened in a square grid directly east of Field H, creating a 12 meter-square field. The walls in Field M do not line up neatly with magnetic north, but since the walls all follow the same approximate alignment, in this report I will refer to them as being north-south walls or east-west walls. North-south walls in this report have an orientation that is actually closer to 30° NNE by 210° SSW, while east-west walls have an orientation that is closer to 300° WNW by 120° ESE.

Stratum 12 (LB / Iron 1 Transition; Field M Phase 6)

Though we never reached deposits from this phase, we discovered the top two courses of a wall that had the same constructional features and was aligned with a wall from this period found earlier in Field H to the west (Square 7K12). In our field, the wall was 2.4 m long by 0.88 m wide at its widest point. It was constructed purely of limestone using boulder-and-chink construction, with two rubble-filled rows. This wall ran from the middle of the western half of 7K33 into the south-west corner of 7K33 (**Fig. 3**). There is little doubt that the removal of the balk between Fields H and M will show that they are indeed the same wall. Until more of the wall is excavated, its purpose and full context will remain unknown.

Stratum 8 (Iron 2B; Field M Phase 5)

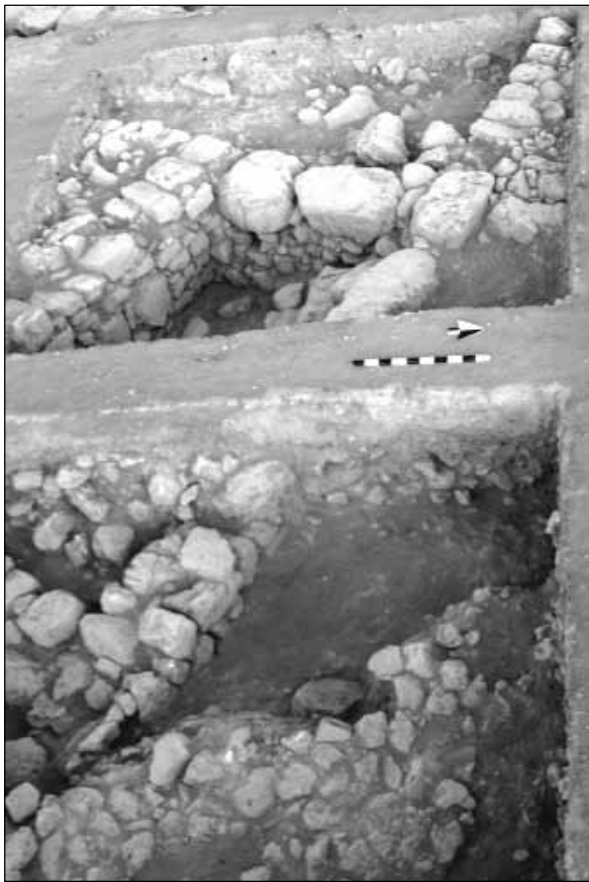
Only one large earth layer and some 800 potsherds could be dated to this stratum. It lay in Square 7K34, situated in the eastern portion of the field towards the center of the *tall*. Even though no architecture was found, the presence of this material with, surprisingly, no late Iron 2 / Persian pottery (except for five very small intrusive pieces, probably derived from bioturbation), suggests that significant Stratum 8 remains may be found in future seasons. It may also suggest that the basement structures of the Ammonite administrative complex found in Field A to the north-west, and the northern squares of Field H to the west, ended before reaching our area. Perhaps the Stratum 12 wall was the separation and significant Stratum 7 layers will be found there.

Stratum 7 (Late Iron 2C / Persian; Field M Phase 4C)

Phase 4C can probably be associated with Stratum 7, though more excavation is required to be certain. It is the earliest phase reached in Squares 7K23 and 24, and the earliest phase of archaeological sediment reached in the whole field with the exception of the Stratum 8 layer in Square 7K34. Interestingly, Stratum 7 does not appear in that square.

Much of the architecture in this phase could well have been re-used from an earlier period. For now, all architecture that we have not fully exposed will be tentatively dated to the earliest fill layer excavated thus far, which run up to that particular wall or installation. All walls in Phase 4C were constructed using unhewn and semi-hewn boulder-and-chink limestone masonry.

During this period, what appears to have been a domestic complex (Building A; **Fig. 22**) was constructed in the southern half of the field. There were several possible rooms in Building A, but only one room (Room A1) had four walls within the squares of Field M. The room (**Fig. 23**) was a rectangular room with a floor space of approximately 4.5 by 2.5 meters. Other rooms were only partially exposed in our excavations, but they seem to have been part of the same domestic complex. Like the walls of the Ammonite administrative complex, none of the walls had foundation trenches, suggesting that they may have been basement structures. How-



22. Tall al-'Umayri, Field M, Stratum 7: Walls from Building A.



23. Tall al-'Umayri, Field M, Stratum 7: Building A, Room A1.

ever, not enough of the building or the walls has been excavated with which to reconstruct a clear stratigraphic context. In the south-west corner of Room A1, two possible bins were found, one nested inside the other (Fig. 24). A partly restor-



24. Tall al-'Umayri, Field M, Stratum 7: Building A, two nested bins in Room A1.

able pot (thought to be *in situ*) dating to the late Iron 2 / Persian period was found inside the inner bin.

Stratum 6 (Late Iron 2C / Persian; Field M Phase 4B)

The complex described in Stratum 7 appears to have been re-used during Stratum 6, but in a slightly different manner. The chronological gap, if any, between the two strata could not be ascertained. What is clear is that during Stratum 6, Room A1 was used as a basement. Not enough excavation was done to show whether or not the other rooms in Building A, described above for Stratum 7, could have been in use in Stratum 6 as well. For this report they have been treated as if they went out of use at the same time as Room A1, namely at the end of Stratum 6. A new, beaten-earth surface was laid directly above the Stratum 7 surface, running up to the walls of the structure.

Stratum 5 (Early Persian; Field M Phase 4A)

At the beginning of this stratum, Building A went out of use and Room A1 with its bins was filled with various earth layers. This fill was brown, silty, moist, loose and pebbly, and attained a depth of 0.29 m.

What appears to have been a temporary, one or two course, boulder-and-chink wall was built during this stratum approximately in the center of Square 7K24. It was built more or less over the top of a pre-existing wall of Stratum 7. There was, however, more than half a meter of earth between the top of the old walls and the bottom of the new ones. The two strata were thus well separated. The wall measured 1.36 m long (east -

west) by 0.81m wide and at no point stood more than 0.41 meters high. It may have been a merely temporary wall, the purpose of which is so far unknown. An extensive cobble and sometimes plaster surface was laid during this phase. It covered most of the eastern half of the field.

Stratum 4 (Hellenistic; Field M Phase 3)

During this phase, three new, most likely temporary, walls were built (Fig. 25). They had an approximate average width of 1 m (though they were quite irregular in construction) and, bonded together, they formed a Z-shape. All of these walls, of which two courses survived, were constructed with hard, unhewn limestone boulders using boulder-and-chink construction. All had two rubble-filled rows.

The dating for these walls was mainly stratigraphic. One wall seemed to continue into 7K32, the square in Field H that was directly to the west of 7K33, and had been stratigraphically dated to the Persian / Hellenistic period in an earlier season. Another wall appeared to continue into the east balk of 7K22 (also in Field H). However, that wall had been stratigraphically dated to the Persian period during previous seasons.

Strata 2 - 1 (Byzantine - Islamic; Field M Phase 2)

During Phase 2, no construction took place, but there was an accumulation of topsoil and sub-topsoil layers. All of these layers, with one exception, were made up of firm, dry soil, with pale colors ranging from pinkish-gray in 7K23 to pale browns and yellows in the other squares. Soil texture ranged from loam-silt loam to silty-clay loam. *Tesserae* were found in most of them. Byzantine and Islamic sherds showed up



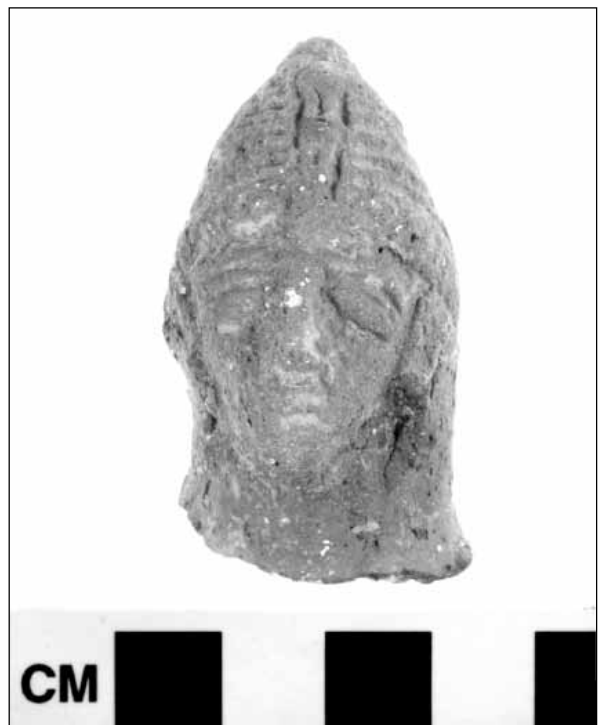
25. Tall al-'Umayri, Field M, Stratum 4: Hellenistic walls.

repeatedly. Objects and artifacts included many grindstones and pounders, two uninscribed iconographic seals, a metal arrowhead and three ceramic figurine fragments. The figurines included a horse head (Fig. 26), a human head (Fig. 27) and an unidentified fragment.

An articulated burial was discovered in this phase in Square 7K33 (see Fig. 28). Physical



26. Tall al-'Umayri, Field M, Stratum 2: Horse head figurine.



27. Tall al-'Umayri, Field M, Stratum 2: Human head figurine.

anthropologist Julie Cormack noted that the body was of a young post-adolescent male. It was laid in a pit grave, with the same earth being used to cover the body.

Stratum 1 (Modern; Field M Phase 1)

Bulldozers were used before excavation began to remove our sift debris from earlier seasons, in order to clear the site for excavation in Field M. In three out of four of the squares, this seems to have been effective. In 7K34, however, a significant amount of sift debris remained, which included fragments of a modern water jug. This stratum went quite deep, reaching almost a meter in some places in 7K34. The debris included unidentified stone objects and grindstones, as well as two pendants.

Al-Umayrī Ostrakon (Object No. B080019)
(Christopher Rollston, Emmanuel School of Religion)

On 10 July 2008, an ostrakon was found in Field L, Square 6L70, Locus 28 (Fig. 29). This locus was the earth fill from a very large, well-preserved *ṭābūn*. Four buckets of pottery were recovered from the *ṭābūn* and dated to the late Iron 2 / Persian Period (late 7th century to 6th century BC). A small fragment of a Hellenistic bowl was also found in this locus, but is considered intrusive. The ostrakon weighs *ca* 73 grams. It is *ca* 7.8 cm long, *ca* 7.6 cm wide and *ca* 1.4 cm thick. It is a body sherd from a closed bowl or small krater with a neck.

The inscription consists of one visible line of text, with just three letters preserved. The left side of the line is fully preserved, but the right side (i.e. the beginning of the inscription) is not,



28. Tall al-'Umayri, Field M, Stratum 2: Ottoman period burial.



29. Tall al-'Umayrī, Short ostrakon fragment in Ammonite or Aramaic script.

because of breakage in Antiquity after it was written. The ink of this inscription is black, as was normally the case with Iron Age and Persian period ostraca.

The first letter of this ostrakon is a *šin*, although the right side of the letter is not preserved because of the location of the break. Nevertheless, because a sufficient amount of the letter is preserved, the reading *šin* is not in doubt. The second letter is definitely a *lamed*, consisting of a deft single stroke of the pen. The third letter is a very finely formed *mem*, consisting of three strokes: two strokes forming the head and a single downstroke forming the spine of the letter. The sequence of the strokes cannot be determined with certainty. The script is arguably Ammonite, but a plausible case could also be made for Aramaic. Note that the Ammonite script derived from the Aramaic, hence the difficulty in making definitive statements about such a brief and fragmentary ostrakon. The most striking feature of this ostrakon is the stance of the *lamed*: it is the reverse of the normal stance. There could be two explanations for this: (1) It could be a scribal error with regard to stance, perhaps committed by a student, or (2) This could be a rare, but alternate form of the stance. After all, within the later Nabataean and Arabic scripts, this stance is well-attested.

The root of the attested word, or word segment, is apparent: the common root *šlm*. Nevertheless, it is not possible to ascertain whether the preserved portion is the final component of a personal name, there being many that conclude

with this root, or simply a verb, noun or adjective functioning within a broader sentence or clause.

Conclusions and Prospectus

The remarkably well preserved remains of the LB building in Field B were completely unanticipated when we began excavations in 1984. It is however an excellent representation of a Canaanite (sometimes referred to as Amorite in the Bible) structure in the highlands of Jordan, where so few remains from this period have so far been found. The building may have been a temple or a palace with a shrine.

The LB / Iron 1 transitional period was again well represented in Field A. This was perhaps the most important settlement of the site. Certainly, in terms of understanding the Biblical period of the Judges, the discoveries have been very great, including typical house plans and functions (including religious behaviors). More large storage jars or *pithoi* (over 100 in all) have been discovered at al-‘Umayri than at almost all other sites in the Holy Land combined. The lab housing them has recently moved to La Sierra University where they are being restored.

The new discovery of the Iron 2B house in Field A was another important find for the site.

This twelfth season marks the end of Phase 1 of the Tall al-‘Umayri excavations. With the complete excavation of the LB building in Field B, that field is finished. One more season will finish Field A, Field H is beginning to yield more Stratum 12 structures over a wide area of exposure, and Field M is beginning to connect Fields H and L.

Acknowledgements

The authors of this report are especially indebted to Dr Fawwaz al-Khraysheh, Director General of the Department of Antiquities. Romel Gharib and Husam Hejazeen served us wonderfully as representatives of the Department of Antiquities. We also wish to thank other members of the Department of Antiquities who facilitated our project at several junctures, especially Rula Qasous. Ali al-Khayyat, Director of the Madaba District Museum, where al-‘Umayri objects are stored and displayed, assisted in the removal and preservation of a Hellenistic tomb inscription from a small bedrock terrace on the lower south-eastern slopes of the site. He also

supervised the consolidation of architecture exposed during the season. We are also grateful for the help of the Royal Geographic Society in establishing three permanent benchmarks on the site; these will facilitate our use of sophisticated GPS technology in the future. The American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, directed by Barbara Porter and assisted by Chris Tuttle, provided invaluable help. Excavation staff were housed in Muqabalayn at the Amman Training College, an UNWRA vocational college for Palestinians. We give special thanks to its Principal, Dr Khalid Abu al-Hayja, for making our safe and secure stay a genuine pleasure, to Vice Principal Hussam Shahroor, who worked with us on a daily basis, and to our cook Muhammad Ahmaru, for his excellent meals. Vickie Khano of Guiding Star Travel Agency helped with many logistical concerns. The Committee on Archaeological Policy of the American Schools of Oriental Research approved the scientific goals and procedures of the project. Thanks are also due each member of the staff, which was divided into two sections: field excavation and camp logistics. In charge of planning and overall execution of the project were the authors, Co-Directors of the project. Other field staff members appear as authors of sections of this report.

Larry G. Herr
Canadian University College

Douglas R. Clark
La Sierra University

Bibliography

- Geraty, L. G.
1985 The Andrews University Madaba Plains Project: A Preliminary Report on the First Season at Tell el-‘Umeiri. *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 23: 85-110.
- Geraty, L. T., Herr, L. G. and LaBianca, Ø. S.
1986 Madaba Plains Project: A Preliminary Report of the 1984 Season at Tell el-‘Umeiri and Vicinity. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research Supplement* 24: 117-119.
- 1987 The Madaba Plains Project: A Preliminary Report on the First Season at Tell el-‘Umeiri and Vicinity. *ADAJ* 31: 187-199.
- 1988 The Joint Madaba Plains Project: A Preliminary Report on the Second Season at Tell el-‘Umeiri and Vicinity (June 18 to August 6, 1987). *An-*

- drews University Seminary Studies* 26: 217-252.
- 1989 Madaba Plains Project: The 1987 Season at Tell el-'Umeiri and Vicinity. *ADAJ* 33: 145-176.
- 1990 Madaba Plains Project: A Preliminary Report of the 1987 Season at Tell el-'Umeiri and Vicinity. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research Supplement* 26: 59-88.
- Geraty, L. T., Herr, L. G., LaBianca, Ø. S. and Younker, R. W., eds.
- 1989 *Madaba Plains Project 1: The 1984 Season at Tell el-'Umeiri and Vicinity and Subsequent Studies*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University/Institute of Archaeology.
- Herr, L. G. and Clark, D. R.
- 2003 Madaba Plains Project: Excavations at Tall al-'Umayri, 2002. *ADAJ* 47: 279-294.
- 2004 Madaba Plains Project—Tall al-'Umayri, 2002. *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42: 113-127.
- 2005a Madaba Plains Project: Excavations at Tall al-'Umayri, 2004. *ADAJ* 49: 245-260.
- 2005b Madaba Plains Project—Tall al-'Umayri, 2004. *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 43: 229-246.
- 2008a Madaba Plains Project: Excavations at Tall al-'Umayri, 2006. *ADAJ* 49.
- 2008b Madaba Plains Project—Tall al-'Umayri, 2006. *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 46: 65-81.
- Herr, L. G., Clark, D. R., Geraty, L. T. and LaBianca, Ø. S.
- 1999 Madaba Plains Project: Excavations at Tall al-'Umayri, 1998. *ADAJ* 43: 99-114.
- 2000 Madaba Plains Project: Tall al-'Umayri, 1998. *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 38: 29-44.
- Herr, L. G., Clark, D. R., Geraty, L. T., Younker, R. W. and LaBianca, Ø. S., (eds).
- Madaba Plains Project 4: The 1992 Season at Tall al-'Umayri and Subsequent Studies*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University/Institute of Archaeology.
- 2002 *Madaba Plains Project 5: The 1994 Season at Tall al-'Umayri and Subsequent Studies*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University/Institute of Archaeology.
- Herr, L. G., Clark, D. R., and Trenchard, W. C.
- 2001 Madaba Plains Project: Excavations at Tall al-'Umayri, 2000. *ADAJ* 45: 237-252.
- 2002 Madaba Plains Project: Excavations at Tall al-'Umayri, 2000. *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 40: 105-123.
- Herr, L. G., Geraty, L. T., LaBianca, Ø. S. and Younker, R. W.
- 1991 Madaba Plains Project: The 1989 Excavations at Tell el-'Umeiri and Vicinity. *ADAJ* 35: 155-180.
- 1994 Madaba Plains Project: The 1992 Excavations at Tell el-'Umeiri, Tell Jalul, and Vicinity. *ADAJ* 38: 147-172.
- Herr, L. G., Geraty, L. T., LaBianca, Ø. S., Younker, R. W. and Clark, D. R.
- 1996 Madaba Plains Project 1994: Excavations at Tall al-'Umayri, Tall Jalul, and Vicinity. *ADAJ* 40: 63-82.
- 1997 Madaba Plains Project 1996: Excavations at Tall al-'Umayri, Tall Jalul and Vicinity. *ADAJ* 41: 145-168.
- Herr, L. G., Geraty, L. T., LaBianca, Ø. S. and Younker, R. W., eds.
- 1991 *Madaba Plains Project 2: The 1987 Season at Tell el-'Umeiri and Vicinity and Subsequent Studies*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University/Institute of Archaeology.
- Herr, L. G., Geraty, L. T., LaBianca, Ø. S. Younker, R. W. and Clark, D. R., (eds).
- 1997 *Madaba Plains Project 3: The 1989 Season at Tall al-'Umayri and Vicinity and Subsequent Studies*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University/Institute of Archaeology.
- LaBianca, Ø. S., *et al.*
- 1995 Madaba Plains Project: A Preliminary Report on the 1989 Season at Tell el-'Umeiri and Hinterland. Pp. 93-120 in W.G. Dever (ed.), *Preliminary Excavation Reports*, ed. W. G. Dever. Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 52. Atlanta: American Schools of Oriental Research.
- Younker, R. W., *et al.*
- 1990 The Joint Madaba Plains Project: A Preliminary Report of the 1989 Season, Including the Regional Survey and Excavations at El-Dreijat, Tell Jawa, and Tell el-'Umeiri (June 19 to August 8, 1989). *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 28: 5-52.
- 1993 The Joint Madaba Plains Project: A Preliminary Report of the 1992 Season, Including the Regional Survey and Excavations at Tell Jalul and Tell el-'Umeiri (June 16 to July 31, 1992). *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 31: 205-238.
- 1996 Preliminary Report of the 1994 Season of the Madaba Plains Project: Regional Survey, Tall al-'Umayri and Tall Jalul Excavations (June 15 to July 30, 1994). *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34: 65-92.
- 1997 Preliminary Report of the 1996 Season of the Madaba Plains Project: Regional Survey, Tall al-'Umayri and Tall Jalul Excavations. *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 35: 227-240.