

MĀDABĀ PLAINS PROJECT: EXCAVATIONS AT TALL AL-‘UMAYRĪ, 2000

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Introduction

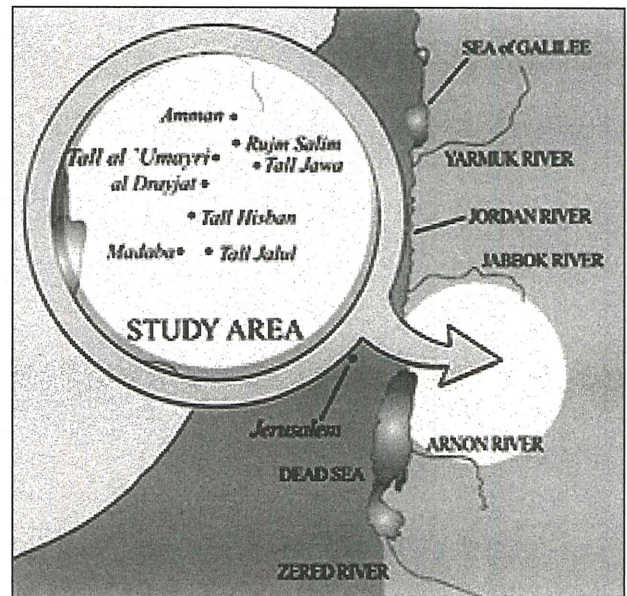
An eighth season of excavation by the Mādabā Plains Project at Tall al-‘Umayrī (تل العميري) occurred between June 19 and August 2, 2000. It was sponsored by La Sierra University in consortium with Canadian University College and Walla Walla College and in affiliation with Andrews University. Full reports have already been published for the first four 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). Preliminary reports have also been published (first season [1984]: Geraty 1985; Geraty *et al.* 1986; Geraty *et al.* 1987; second season [1987]: Geraty *et al.* 1988; Geraty *et al.* 1989; Geraty, *et al.* 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; Herr *et al.* 2000).

In the 2000 season, a team of 27 Jordanians and 56 foreigners participated in the fieldwork of the interdisciplinary project at al-‘Umayrī, located about 10km south of ‘Ammān’s Seventh Circle on the Queen Alia Airport Highway at the turnoff for the ‘Ammān National Park (Fig. 1).¹ Non-excavation camp staff included another 13 Jordanians and 11 foreigners.

In the first season (1984) four fields of excavation were opened (Fields A, B, C, and D) (Fig. 2).

1. The authors of this report are especially indebted to Dr. Fawwaz Al-Khraysheh, Director General of the Department of Antiquities; Ahmed Shami and Rula Qusous, Department of Antiquities representatives; and other members of the Department of Antiquities who facilitated our project at several junctures.

The officers and staff of the American Schools of Oriental Research and its local affiliate, the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman directed by Pierre Bikai and assisted by Patricia Bikai, provided invaluable assistance. The staff was housed in Muqabalayn at the Amman Train-

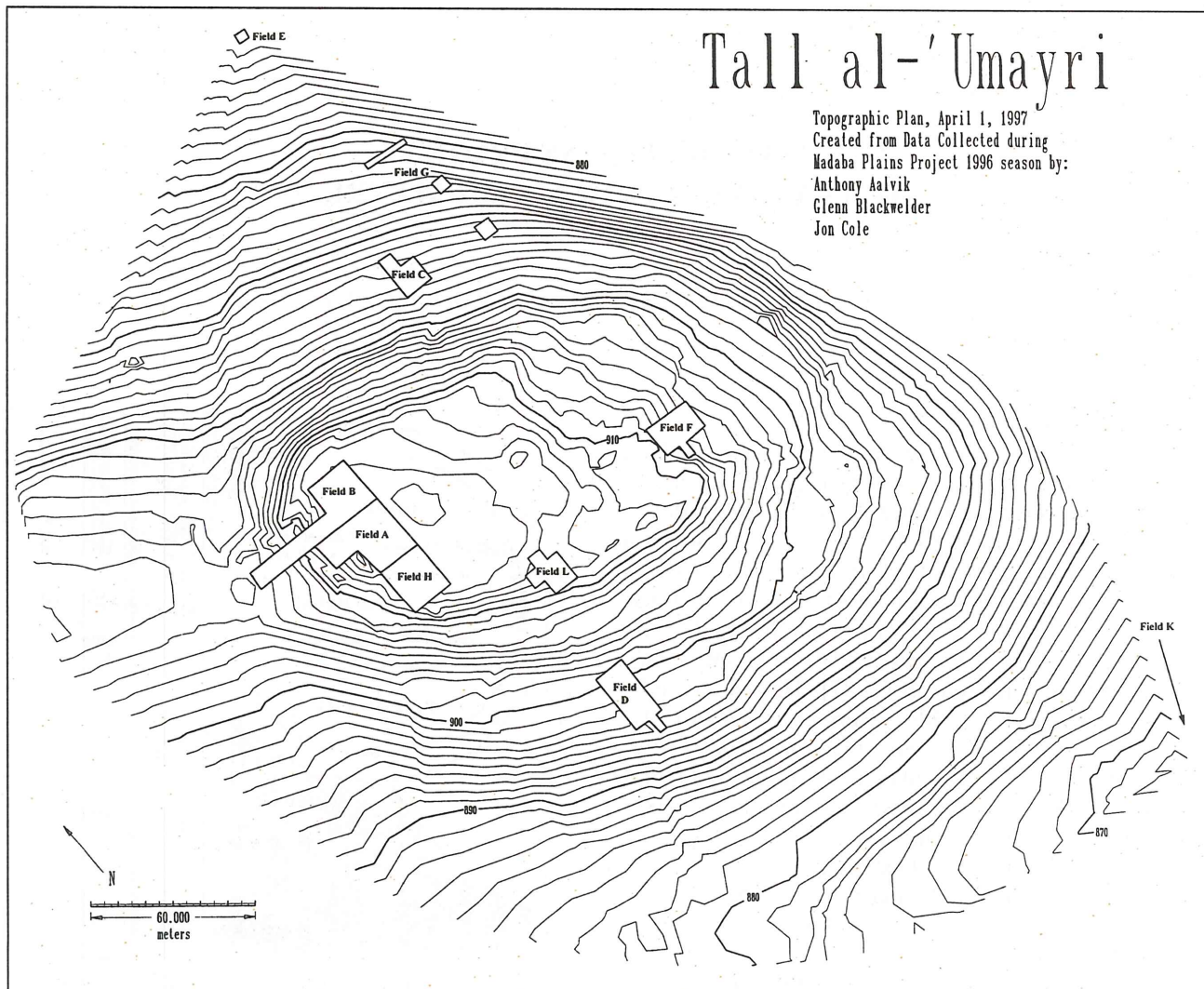


1. Mādabā Plains Project region including Tall al-‘Umayrī.

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 A), three fields reopened 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 north slope (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

ing College, an UNWRA junior college for Palestinians. We give special thanks to its Principal, Dr. Fakhri Toumleh for making our stay a genuine pleasure. The scientific goals and procedures of the project were approved by the Committee on Archaeological Policy of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

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 core staff members appear as authors of sections of this report.



2. Tall al-'Umayri: Topographic map with fields of excavation through the 2000 season.

(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 south of Field A). In the sixth season (1996) three fields expanded (Fields A, B, and H). The tomb excavations on the southeastern slopes of the *tall*, already begun under the hinterland survey in 1994, became part of the 'Umayri excavations as Field K. During the seventh season two fields deepened their squares (Fields A and B), two expanded (Fields H and K), and a new field was opened on the southern lip of the site (Field L).

This season we reopened three squares at the northern edge of Field A to expose the early Iron I building partially uncovered in Field B during previous seasons. In Field B at the northwestern corner of the site, five old squares were deepened into early Iron I and Late Bronze Age deposits. Three previously opened squares and one new one were

worked in Field H at the southwestern corner to attempt to solve stratigraphic problems encountered in earlier seasons, especially in early Iron II and late Iron I phases. On the south central edge of the site (Field L) we opened two new squares and reopened one other to expose more of the Hellenistic phases encountered in 1998 and to explore the stratigraphic transition to the southern slope. Finally, on the lower southeastern slope three new squares were opened at the dolmen in Field K. One previously opened square was cleared to bedrock to trace the limits of the surfaces surrounding the dolmen.

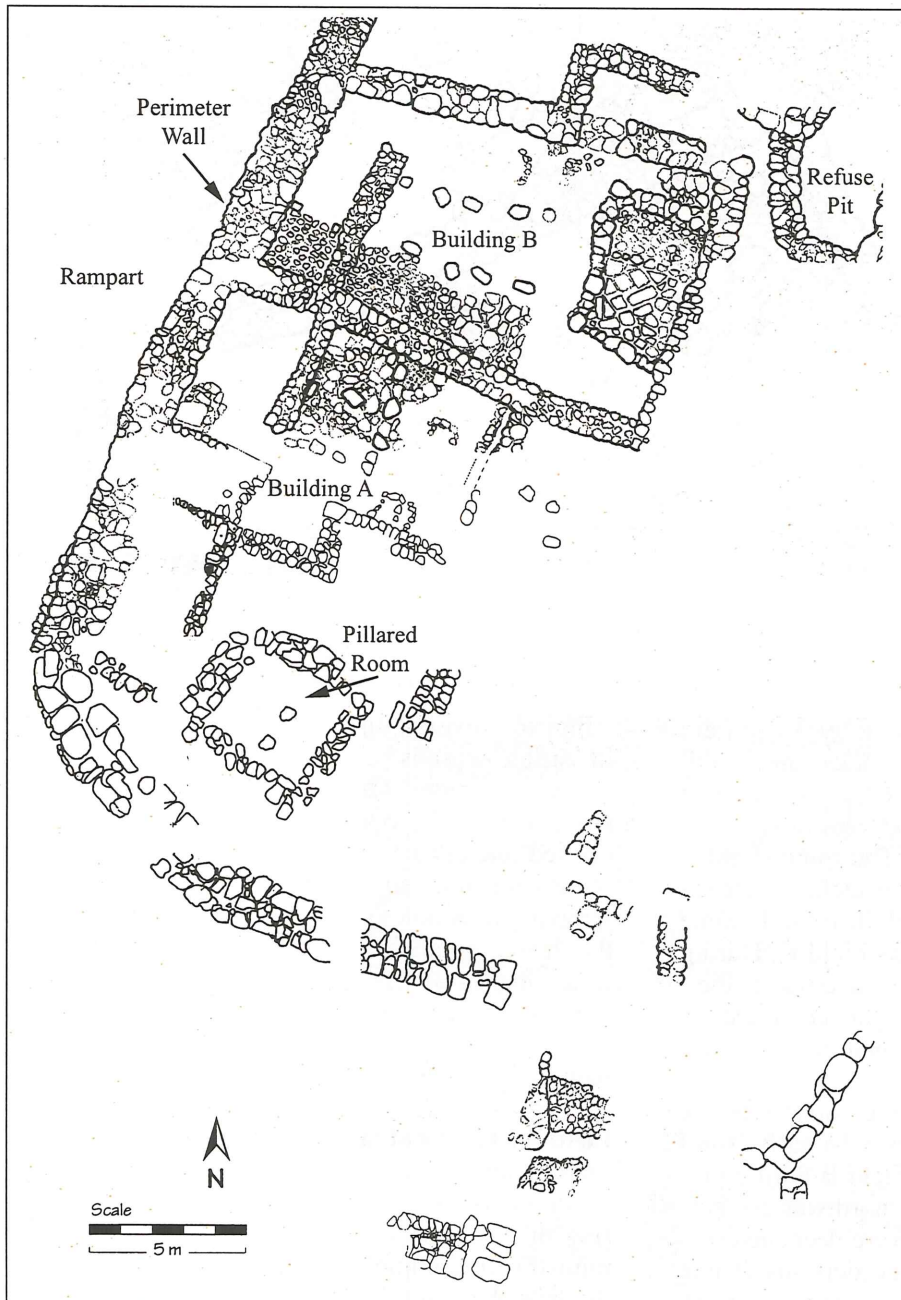
Field A: The Central Western Edge (John I. Lawlor, Cornerstone University)

Previous excavation in Field A on the western rim of the site has produced a significant administrative complex of buildings from the end of the Iron Age and the Persian period (Geraty *et al.*

1987: 189; Geraty et al. 1989: 146-149; Herr et al. 1991: 156-159; Herr et al. 1994: 148-151; Herr et al. 1996: 64-65; Herr et al. 1997: 146-148; Herr et al. 1999: 99-103). The three northernmost squares in the field (7J79, 7K70, and 7K71) and the intervening balks were excavated to expose the southern portion of a building. The northern part had been cleared in Field B several years ago. This work produced a second early Iron I house to go with the four-room house now being partially reconstructed in Field B. Previously excavated portions of this new house contained a standing stone and a probable altar, suggesting cultic functions.

Phase 14 (Late Bronze Age). LB remains were new to Field A this season and push the former "Phase 14" (Herr et al. 1999: 100) down a number to Phase 15. However, nothing from that phase was excavated this season. Indeed, only two wall fragments can be attributed tentatively to the new Phase 14. Only the tops of the walls were found poking above the early Iron I surface. The two walls may have formed a doorway.

Phase 13 (Early Iron I). The extensive remains in Field B from the end of LB and the beginning of Iron I continued into Field A (Fig. 3). Our work

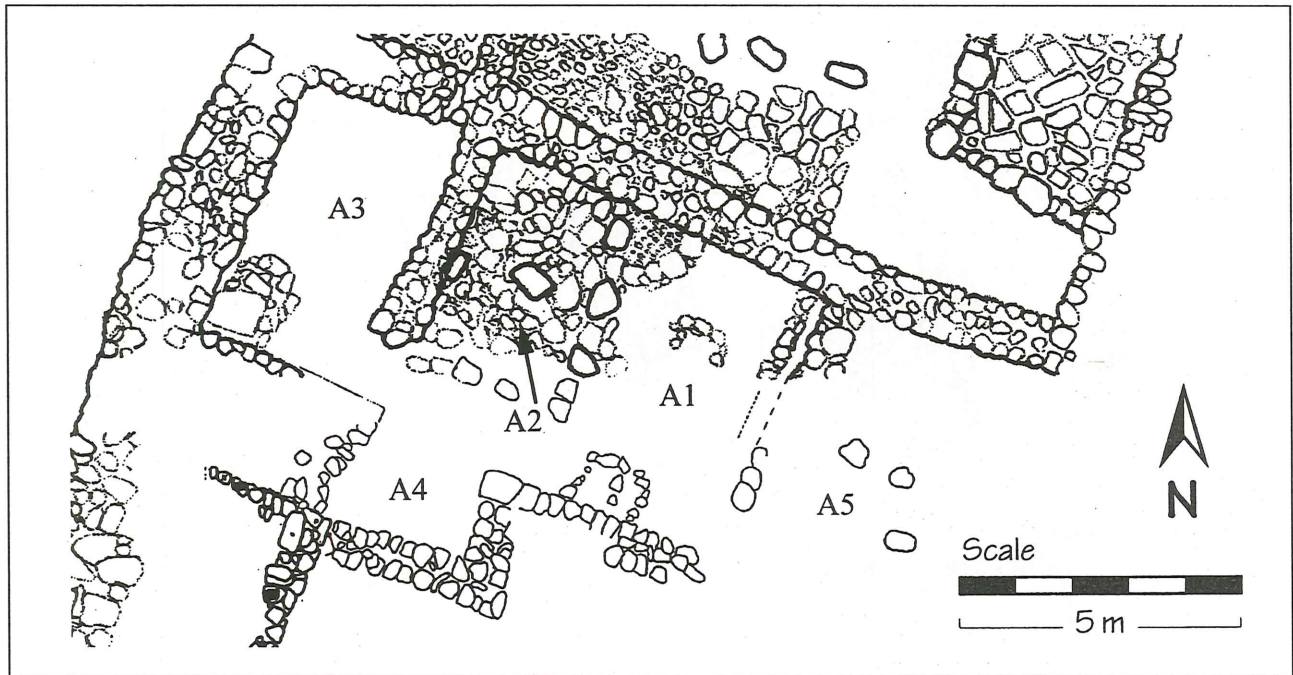


3. Tall al-'Umayri: Overall plan of the late LB to Iron I remains in Fields A, B, and H. Most of the architecture is from the earliest phase (LB/Iron I) but the Pillared Room and the wall fragments to the west of it are later in Iron I.

this season succeeded in completely exposing a second major building (Building A) at the western edge of the site (Figs. 4-5). The walls at the northern end of Room 3 stood over two meters high, while those in the southeast corner were less than half a meter high. There was a gradual diminishment in the height of wall preservation as one goes south and east. The height of the preserved walls of Room 3 and the enormous amount of roof debris (mud mixed with burned beams) and burned mudbricks filling Rooms 2 and 3 suggest the building was originally at least two stories high.

Composed of four (or five) rooms, three rectangular broadrooms (Rooms 1-3) were set next to each other and separated by a row of pillars and a solid stone wall. Room 3 is in line with the broad room of the four-room house immediately to the north (in Field B). Jutting to the south of the central room was a small room or broad alcove. Lacking a north wall and facing the room where the standing stone had been found earlier, this room seems to have had a unique function not altogether understood by us at present.

Although one is tempted to suggest a cultic



4. Tall al-'Umayri: Plan of Building A from the LB/Iron I period located in Fields A and B. The perimeter is at far left.



5. Tall al-'Umayri: Photo of Building A from the south.

function for the building, other factors indicate domestic activities as well. Room 1, 5.3 x 3.9m in size, contained a floor of beaten earth and was probably entered through an opening in the walls at the southeastern corner. From here, after negotiating around two small bins, a “walkway” or aisle along the southern side of the rooms allowed easy access to the other rooms. The bins were not constructed with great care and, although we cannot prove they had a domestic function, we do not consider them well enough made to be repositories for cultic gifts. In previous seasons another bin, paved with pebbles, was found in the northwest corner of Room 1 (part of Field B). A small hearth and a basalt quern lay in the middle of the room (Clark 2000: 73, 75). These finds are normally associated with domestic activities.

Room 2, 2.4 x 2.6m in size, was paved with flagstones up to the column bases in the east, but stopped ceased on the south in line with the southernmost pillar. It was on this flagstone pavement that the standing stone and small stone “altar” were found in Field B (Clark 2000: 76). At the southern edge of the room were two smooth, rectangular stones that looked much like the standing stone farther north in the room. We can presently only speculate whether this room had only one, or two or three standing stones.

Room 3 was completely excavated in Field B during the 1989 season (Clark 1997: 62-85) and contained several collared pithoi in the north side of the room and a stone platform in the south. In the past we have suggested the platform may have supported a ladder for access to the second story. The pithoi suggest domestic activities.

Room 4, which jutted to the south of Room 2 like an alcove and measured 2.5 x 2.4m in a broad-room plan, was paved with beaten earth. In the southeast corner was a naturally smooth, rectangular stone leaning against the south wall. Seven other, similar stones lay neatly arranged side by side with a north-south orientation in the southern half of the room. Because Room 4 faces the cultic apparatus in Room 2 and can be understood as a southward extension of it, it is difficult to avoid suggesting some sort of functional juxtaposition. However, our own vague understanding of this feature is exacerbated by a line of piled stones which hindered our ability to check whether the seven major stones lay upon the surface of the room found in the northern half of the room. Moreover, objects and pottery which may be defined as “cultic” were absent from the floors of the building in both Fields A and B. In the destruction debris well above the floors of Room 2 and 3, however, were

fragments from two chalices and a cup-and-saucer. We assume they came from the upper story or roof of the building.

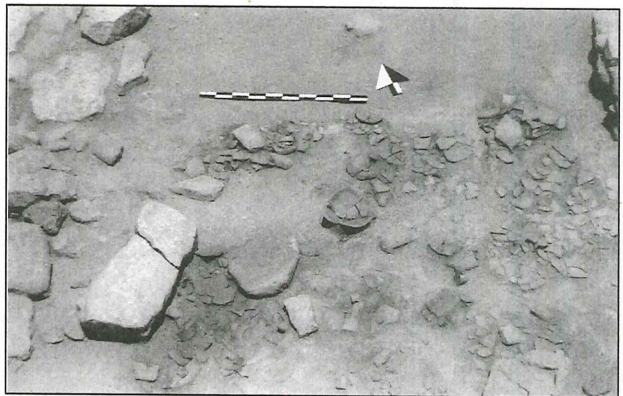
A large assemblage of broken pottery was discovered on the floors of Rooms 1 and 2 (Fig. 6). While Room 3 had been stacked with collared pithoi, the vessels in Rooms 1 and 2 were smaller, consisting mostly of jugs, small jars, kraters, and bowls. Two Mycenaean sherds (not local imitations) were discovered, one among the pottery on the surface, and one in the destruction layer above. Lying with the pottery was a quern and a loaf-shaped upper millstone.

Apparently outside the building to the east were three flat stones which may have served as pillar bases, but their stratigraphic connection to the building is not clear.

The destruction layer filling the building was over two meters deep in Room 3. At the bottom was brownish earth about .4m deep with many ash lenses and the remains of burned wooden beams. One of the latter was over a meter long. Above this debris, which we have interpreted elsewhere to be ceiling and roof collapse, was over a meter of burned brick in the western parts of the building and bricky detritus in the east. This detritus lacked signs of burning and may have eroded more readily, thus exposing the stone walls in the eastern part of the building to more rapid erosion and disappearance.

Phase 12 (Iron I). Constructed immediately above the Phase 13 walls and destruction were the fragmentary remnants of another Iron I phase forming three sides of a small room measuring at least 5.7 x 3.0m. Unfortunately, no use surface was found with the walls and no function can be posited.

Phase 11 (Iron I). The pillared room attributed to Phases 12 and 11 last season (Herr et al. 1999:



6. Tall al-'Umayri: LB/Iron I pottery and lower millstone on the floor of Room A of Building A.

101) can now be placed solely in Phase 11, based on an excavated section against the north wall of the room this season. Other fragmentary walls, associated with the room to the north, formed small parts of at least three rooms, but no clear plan can be suggested. Some of the walls may have been terrace or retaining walls. A plaster surface was found to the east of the walls, covering a large area and sloping to the south over the destruction levels of Phase 13. The stratigraphy for Phases 13, 12, and 11 was very clear in the area to the north of the pillared room and above Rooms 2 and 4 of the Phase 13 building (Fig. 3). Walls were clearly built above one another and the pottery in the earth layers that sealed against them contained corpora of clear Iron I pottery.

Phase 10 (Late Iron I). Above the wall fragments of Phase 11 we had discovered a storeroom with 18 late Iron I collared pithoi in 1996 (Herr *et al.* 1997: 148). This season, no new loci were uncovered, but two of the walls were dismantled to uncover the Phase 13 building.

Field B: Northwest Quarter (Douglas R. Clark, Walla Walla College; Kent V. Bramlett, University of Toronto)

Previous seasons in Field B have produced the fortification system for the site during the Middle Bronze Age and early Iron Age I, as well as houses from all of the Iron I period, house fragments from Iron II/Persian, and other minor later remains (Geraty *et al.* 1987: 189-192; Geraty *et al.* 1989: 151-154; Herr *et al.* 1991: 159-162; Herr *et al.* 1994: 151-155; Herr *et al.* 1996: 65-69; Herr *et al.* 1997: 148-151; Herr *et al.* 1999: 103-106). Work this season took place at the northern extent of the field (Fig. 2) and focused on answering questions raised

by work in 1996. Excavation also proceeded in one square in the southwest portion of the field. We sought to reach the floor of an apparent Late Bronze Age building, for which two rooms were exposed in 1998. We also wanted to reach Iron I levels in two areas where Iron II materials were still present. In the following account of the phases in Field B, the phase numbers are the same as in the 1998 report (Herr *et al.* 1999).

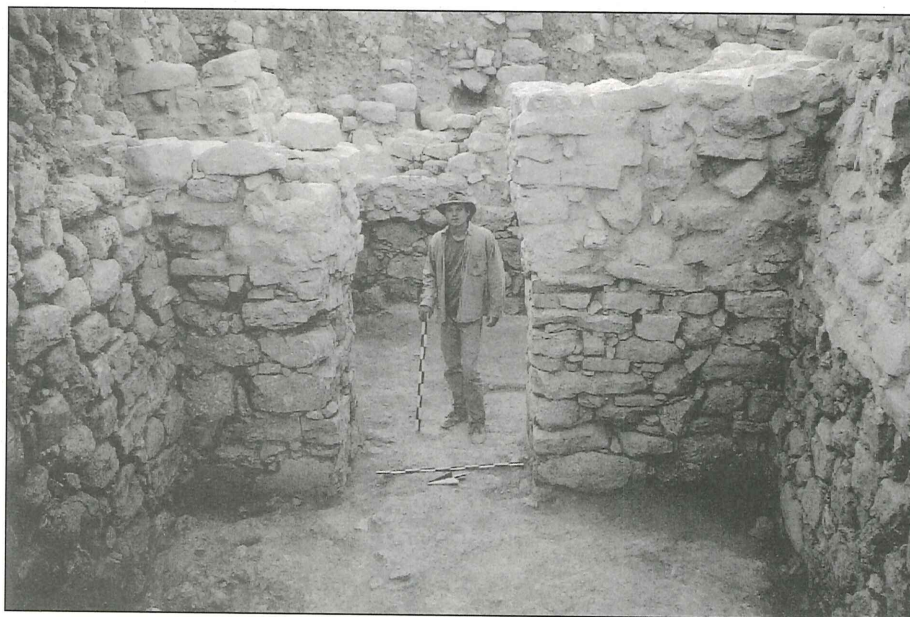
Phase 14 (Middle Bronze Age IIC). Although we had excavated several walls and other features from this period in previous seasons, our work in 2000 did not relate to these finds at all.

Phase 13 (Late Bronze Age II). In 1998 we had begun to work in two rooms of a building whose fill contained pottery from the Late Bronze Age and earlier. We had already excavated to a depth of about two meters in both rooms and made a sounding in one that suggested the depth was at least three meters. This season floor levels were reached in both rooms (Fig. 7). The highest point of the southern wall of the building turned out to be 3.5m above the floor in the eastern room (Room 1). The floor of the western room (Room 2) was slightly higher (Fig. 8). Part of the reason for this preservation was that the structure had been built partially into the MB II debris. Moreover, the early Iron I building of Phase 12 to the south was built against the preserved walls, helping them to stay in place.

Some of the stones of most walls were hewn to look like bricks interspersed with rounder small boulders. Although the walls averaged over a meter in thickness, the eastern wall of Room 1 bulged badly to the west and the western wall of Room 2 had been jumbled, possibly the result of an earthquake. A doorway leads north from Room 1 into



7. Tall al-'Umayri: The two rooms of the Late Bronze Age building in Field B viewed from the north.



8. Tall al-'Umayri: Looking from the western room of the LB building in Field B through the door, illustrating the excellent masonry and preservation of the walls. The upper courses have been consolidated with cement in 1998 to protect the walls from destruction.

the balk, suggesting more rooms in that direction. This area will be excavated next season.

The surfaces of both rooms were made of beaten earth with plaster, but very few finds were left on them. These consisted of a few LB body sherds and a bone from a large mammal. A worn step or ramp raised the level from Room 1 to Room 2. However, the fill in both rooms was a reddish brown color with many lenses of ash and, in some locations, piles of stones, and pockets of empty space, perhaps where wooden beams had originally lay. There was little sign of burning in the destruction. Although there were a few ash pockets, we could document virtually no burned bricks. However, the fill, which contained LB II pottery including one Mycenaean sherd, showed no signs of multiple layering. It was apparently deposited at one time, perhaps from second story bricks and roof debris. Indeed, small pieces of unbaked brick were found in the fill, but most of the debris was brick detritus. This must be interpreted as destruction debris because the stone walls were so well preserved. While the destruction debris in Room 1 was mostly earth, Room 2 produced a lot of stone in a huge mound interspersed with earth.

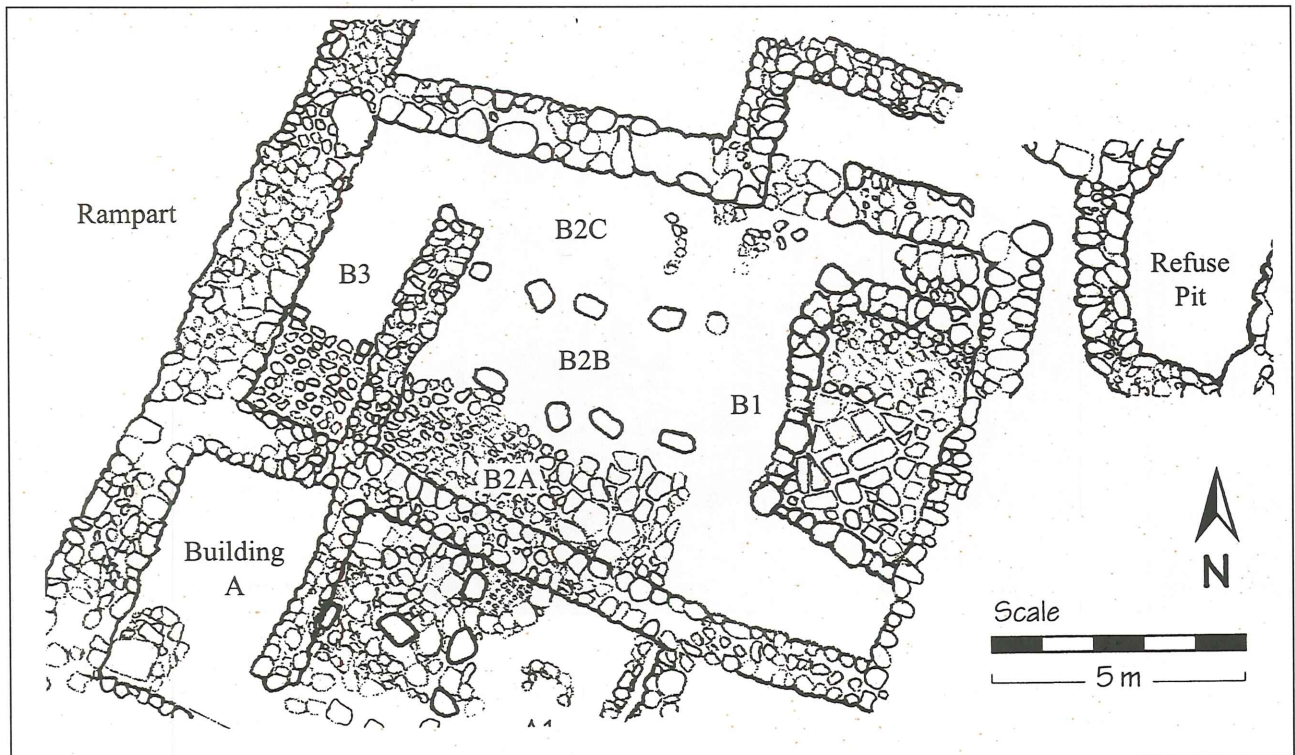
This is the best-preserved LB building anywhere in the southern Levant. Its thick walls suggest a function different than common domestic habitation. Perhaps future excavation will help us determine how the building was used, especially since a hallway to an as yet unexcavated area leads out of the building to the north.

Phase 12 (Late Bronze Age/Early Iron I). Very little has been found of the settlement from the Late

Bronze Age transition to the early Iron I period until the earthquake which begins Phase 11. Reports from previous seasons assigned a large refuse pit to the east of the four-room house of Phase 11 to this phase. This season the northern edge of the pit was partially excavated. One result of this season's work has been to cloud the definition between the pit of Phase 12 with the dwellings of Phase 11. In fact, the refuse pit may belong to Phase 11. Future excavation will attempt to answer this query. However, Phase 12 still existed, because it was the source from which the early Iron I debris in the Phase 11 rampart originated.

Phase 11 (Early Iron I). This phase included the perimeter wall, rampart, retaining wall and moat, constructed following the earthquake which brought Phase 12 to a close. It also included a four-room house with courtyard in front (Building B — **Figs. 9-10**) and parts of another house (Building A) to the south of Building B. Excavations in Field A uncovered the rest of Building A this season (above).

The 2000 season produced a new entrance for Building B at the southeastern corner. When the house was first built the south wall of the courtyard was not present and the occupants entered the courtyard through a broad opening (**Fig. 11**, minus the stone wall at left). Subsequently, the eastward extension of the south wall was added leaving an entrance facing east (**Figs. 11-12**). It seems to have led to a street or exterior open area, but distinctions between layers of earth were difficult to isolate with confidence. The layers were composed of brick detritus, nari, and ash, which harden ar-



9. Tall al-'Umayri: Plan of the LB/Iron I four-room house in Field B.



10. Tall al-'Umayri: LB/Iron I four-room house in Field B, looking west. The broadroom is barely visible at the back.

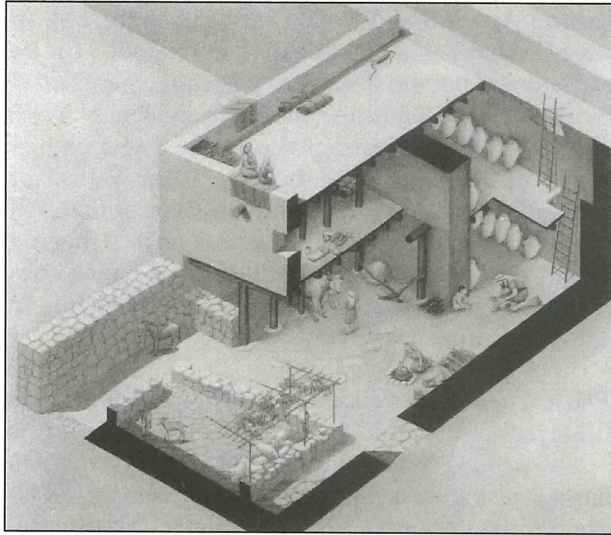
tificially into surface-like layers. It is these exterior surfaces which suggest a connection between Building B (Phase 11) and the refuse pit (Phase 12). It may be necessary to connect the refuse pit with our Phase 11 features.

At some time during a later Iron I phase, perhaps one of those isolated in Field A (above), the doorway in the southeast corner was blocked (Fig. 13) and the one in the north of the courtyard was

used. Whether both were used together in Phase 11 or the northern one was later, has yet to be determined.

Iron I levels to the north of the refuse pit have been reached but as yet it is uncertain to what phase they belong.

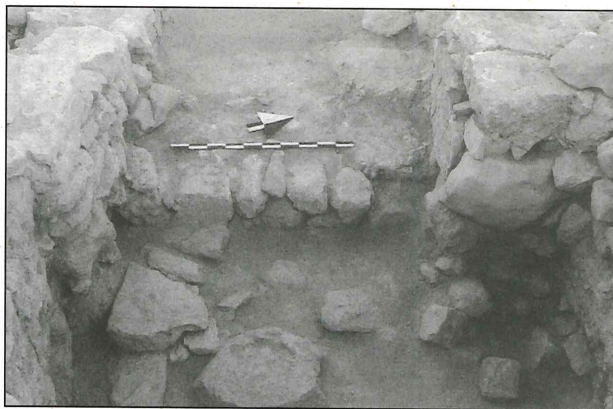
Technical construction workers helped us reconstruct part of Building B with low maintenance, yet reasonably authentic, materials this season.



11. Tall al-'Umayri: Artist's reconstruction of the four-room house in Field B based on the finds made on the floors and in the destruction (Rhonda Root, artist).



12. Tall al-'Umayri: Doorway and threshold in the SE corner of Building B, looking west.



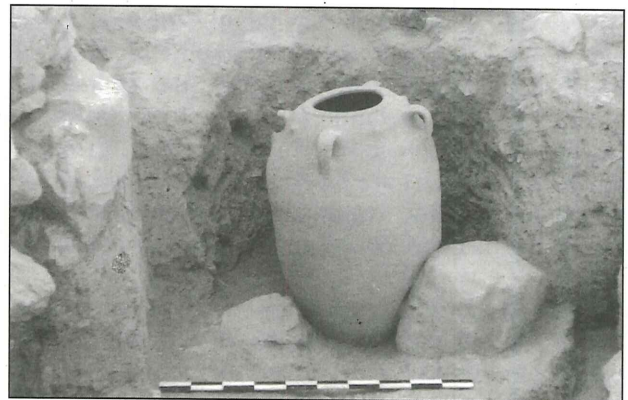
13. Tall al-'Umayri: Blocking wall above earth deposits in SE doorway of Building B, looking west.

Thick wooden posts were erected to support thick wooden beams constructed horizontally as rafters to hold up the ground floor ceiling/second story floor. However, only the western portion of the

house was covered. The roof was made with thin wooden poles laid tightly atop the beams. They were soaked in a sealant to protect them from rot. Canes from the Jordan Valley were coated with sealant and then lashed to the wood below. Then a layer of cement about 15cm thick was poured on top. The cement was colored and textured with soil from the surrounding fields to give it the look of hard mud. "Mudbricks" made of cement mixed with soil were fabricated in metal forms and placed above the walls as they would have been in antiquity. A portion of the perimeter wall was also reconstructed with stone to provide visitors with a sense of how people lived in an early Iron I town.

Phase 7 (Late Iron II/Persian). Previous excavations produced several pits into the Iron I destruction debris from the late Iron II/Persian period. However, portions of a pillared house were discovered in 1996 and excavated this season. Three segmented pillars and the stone quoins between them separated two rooms. In 1996, a hole-mouth pithos had been found near the end of the season. This season another, similar pithos was found almost totally embedded in a Phase 7 surface so that only the rim showed above the floor. The foundation trench for the pithos was very clear (Fig. 14). The surface associated with these features had been pitted in later phases and was difficult to trace with confidence. It is possible that more than one surface was connected with the pillars because one of the surfaces runs up to one of the pillars well above the founding level. The finds associated with this building were domestic in nature and included a bronze bowl found in 1996. Unfortunately, other walls of the building were not found or were fragmentary in nature.

As part of the preparation of the site for pres-



14. Tall al-'Umayri: Late Iron II holemouth pithos sunk into earlier earth layers, including the foundation pit surrounding the vessel. The original surface (at left) ran up to the mouth.

entation to the public, the moat was cleared in a wider section than had been done heretofore. All the remains down to the very bottom dated to the late Iron II/Persian period.

Field H: The Southwestern Administrative Complex (David R. Berge, Hebrew Union College)

This season was the fourth summer we excavated in Field H (Herr *et al.* 1999: 106-109). The previous three seasons of excavation in the field (1994, 1996, and 1998) exposed the southern extension of the Ammonite administrative complex uncovered in Field A directly to the north. The focus of the previous seasons was to gain horizontal exposure of the area. With that accomplished, the goal of the 2000 season in Field H shifted to answering specific and varied questions concerning the stratigraphic relationships of architectural remains uncovered in previous seasons. In large measure, these questions related to the correlation of Field H remains with those of Field A directly to the north. For this purpose, two of the three northernmost squares bordering Field A (7K30 and 7K32), first excavated in 1994, were again opened. Square 7K21 was reopened in a large room of the late Iron II administrative complex in order to expose earlier phases which had been previously found only on the slope along the western edge of the field. One new square (7K10) was opened at the southwest corner of the site in an attempt to connect the previously uncovered east-west walls near the southern slope with the north-south walls found on the western slope. New excavation uncovered several phases not previously found in Field H.

Unfortunately, because evidence for these phases is confined to limited areas in each square, very little can be said about their plans or functions. Nevertheless, our work was largely successful and we now understand the stratigraphy of Field H much better than before. However, the limited exposure makes correlation of phases from square to square highly subjective. In most cases, the proposed correlations are based primarily on sequence of phases, ceramic assemblages, and intuition since stratigraphic connections are currently unavailable.

Phase 12 (Late Bronze Age). Several wall fragments, found only in Square 7K32, may be associated with LB walls in the next square to the north in Field A, Square 7K42. The walls were made of small boulders and the only one that could be measured properly, a north-south wall, slumped strongly to the east. North-south walls of the Late

Bronze Age in Field B also slumped to the east or west. Perhaps this phenomenon is evidence for an earthquake, but the date of any such tectonic activity cannot be established (note our evidence above in Field B for an earthquake at the beginning of Iron Age I). Neither the bottom of the walls nor any surfaces used with them have been found. All of the earth layers assigned to this phase, roughly 0.75m deep, represent the filling of the area subsequent to its disuse. The pottery dated the fills to the Late Bronze/Iron I transition.

Phase 11 (Iron I; =Phase 9 in 1998). On top of the fill layers of Phase 12 was constructed a bin. It was not associated with any of the Phase 12 walls. On the surface that went with the bin were a basalt grinder, two reworked pottery spindle whorls, and a few other reworked potsherds. The connection of this material to other Phase 11 features in other squares is not based on stratigraphic connections, but on the necessity to fit several Iron I phases into a relatively short time period. Two cobble surfaces in Square 7K30, situated on both sides of an east-west wall, are best attributed to this phase. The southern cobble surface may have continued south into Square 7K20. It may therefore have been fairly extensive.

To the north of the cobbled surface was a massive wall 2.5m thick (**Fig. 15**). Although the wall was reused in the late Iron II period for the administrative complex, it may have terminated near the western limit of Field H. There is no indication of such a huge wall anywhere farther west. The lowest earth layers running up to the wall on the south contained no pottery later than the early Iron I period. If this date corresponds with that of the wall's construction, it is contemporary with a parallel wall to the north in Field B, also ca. 2m thick



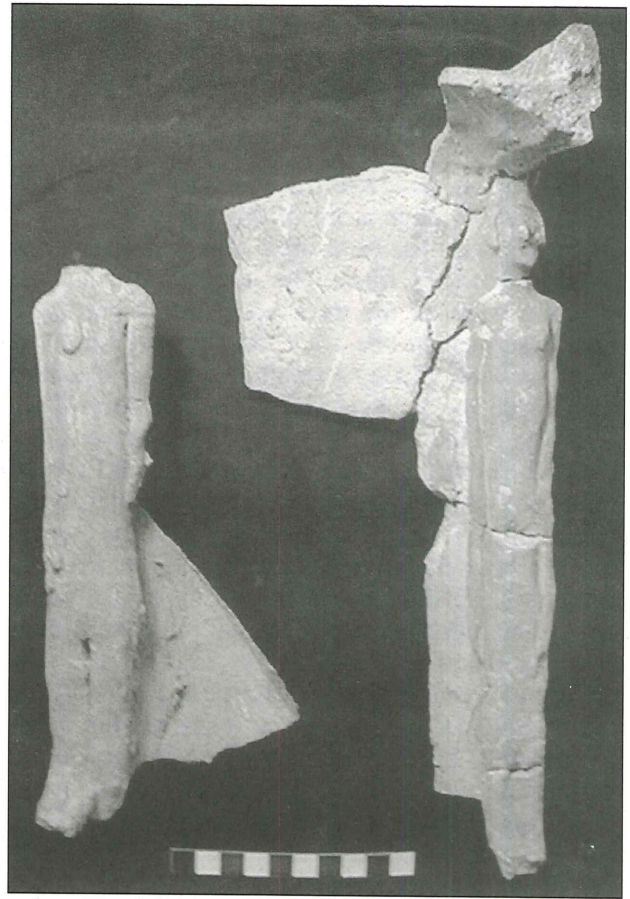
15. Tall al-'Umayri: Thick early Iron I wall (left and under the meter stick) in Field H that paralleled the perimeter wall after it had turned east (see Fig. 3). A small storage chamber was carved out of the wall and a new northern face was built on to the right of the meter stick.

and made of very large boulders. The Field A wall is actually a continuation of the north-south perimeter wall of the site after it curved eastward into the site (Herr *et al.* 1999: 102). The newly discovered wall in Field H is ca. 5m south of the Field A wall. More excavation will have to take place in this area in future seasons, but it is possible the two thick walls form part of a gate system.

Phase 10 (Early Iron I; =Phase 8 in 1998). Again, ephemeral walls and a surface were found in Square 7K32 above the Phase 9 features. Likewise, in Square 7K10 at the southwest corner of the site, a wall fragment and a cobble surface fragment probably belong to this phase. Although the connections are not clear, additional major walls discovered in previous seasons to the north in Squares 7K20 and 7K30 may belong to this phase.

Phase 9 (Late Iron I). Only wall fragments appeared from this phase in Square 7K32. However, more major finds came from beneath the plaster floor of Phase 6 in Square 7K21. Excavation here revealed that the large wall, previously thought to make up the western limit of the late Iron II administrative complex, was actually built earlier. A cobble surface extending more than 4m long by 2.9m may have sealed against it. The limits of the cobble surface have not yet been reached except on the western side. Late Iron I pottery lay on the surface.

Phase 8 (Late Iron I). Very little new architecture is associated with this phase. Instead, the previous walls were reused and new surfaces were laid above the Phase 9 floors in Square 7K21 and 7K10. On the beaten-earth surface in 7K21 were one scattered pithos, a broken cult stand (registry nos. 6852 and 6853 — **Fig. 16**), a limestone dish (registry no. 6754), a stone bead (registry no. 6858), a small quartz stone (registry no. 6748), and other pottery fragments. The pottery associated with these objects dates to the late Iron I period. These finds suggest a cult installation, but no structure is currently apparent. It should be noted that in the 1998 season in Square 7K12 to the southeast, a small collection of terra cotta fragments of one or more virtually life-size statues was found in a fill layer dating to the late Iron II period. It was hypothesized then that these fragments had been placed there in secondary context by ancient pitting activity. Although it cannot be demonstrated, it is possible that they too belong to this same installation. An additional fragment of an ear was also found this season in the topsoil of Square



16. Tall al-'Umayri: Some of the fragments from a ceramic cult stand found on a late Iron I floor in Field H. The figures originally faced each other across an opening.

7K10 (registry no. 6759).

Elsewhere, in Square 7K32, new wall fragments and surfaces most likely date to Phase 8.

Phase 7 (Late Iron II; =Phase 7 of 1998). Above the ash layer which often separates the Iron I layers from those dating to late Iron II, more walls were constructed in Square 7K10. Only fragments remain, however. These seem to have been outside of, but probably in association with, the administrative complex to the north. Most of these walls were reused in the succeeding three phases. Surfaces, including a cobbled one, were found in fragmentary form in Square 7K21. Square 7K32 saw major building activity as the walls for the initial phase of the administrative structure were founded.

Phase 6 (Late Iron II/Early Persian; =Phase 6 in 1998). Although the finds from this phase were very extensive in previous seasons, including the administrative complex of Fields A and H, new material this season was limited to fill layers and sur-

face fragments. This season, a portion of the large plaster surface and its cobble underlayment were excavated in Square 7K21 and found to date to the late Iron II/Persian period.

Phase 5 (Late Iron II/Early Persian; =Phase 5 in 1998). While much more of this phase was found in earlier seasons, excavation this year produced only fragmentary finds. The most significant one was the reuse of the thick early Iron I east-west wall described in Phase 11. Stones were removed from the wall creating a small rectangular chamber 1.5m wide by 2m long and 0.75-1.0m deep (Fig. 15). One of the very large boulders in the original wall which was so large and deep it could not be removed, was chiseled away so that it matched the corner of the chamber. Access to the "room" seems to have been from the east, because that side was irregularly finished, possibly forming a crude stairway. The most apparent use of a subterranean room of this size would be for storage. The discovery of numerous pithos sherds and several virtually whole lamps appears to confirm this interpretation. There was no sign of a plaster lining. The layers which filled the chamber contained a basalt potter's wheel fragment (registry no. 6749), a whetstone (registry no. 6725), slingstones/pounders (registry nos. 6729, 6762, 6763), three-quarters of a basalt mortar (registry no. 6751), a hand grinder (registry no. 6731), a pestle (registry no. 6752), a weaving spatula (registry no. 6746), a spindle whorl, and several reworked sherds. It was thus rich in domestic-related artifacts.

The subterranean nature of this room makes its

assignment to a particular phase difficult. However, a Phase 4 wall appears to run over the fill in the chamber. The pottery in the fill was the typical late Iron II/early Persian assemblage so frequent at al-'Umayri.

Phase 4 (Persian; =Phase 4 in 1998). A foundation trench cutting the plaster surfaces of Phase 6 confirmed that the major east-west wall in Squares 7K21 and 7K22 postdated them. Persian pottery was found in the foundation trench fill.

Phase 1. Topsoil and sub-topsoil layers ran up to and covered the architecture in Square 7K10. As previously, these layers were relatively rich in material culture. Among the artifacts found in these layers were a bronze fibula (registry no. 6701), a coin (registry no. 6716), a cowry shell bead (registry no. 6727), basalt grinder fragments, a broken basalt mortar (registry no. 6753), and several slingstones.

Field K: The Dolmen (Elzbieta Dubis, Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, Krakow, Poland)

A dolmen was uncovered in the 1994 season with 20 burials and copious objects inside, including complete pottery vessels and jewelry from the EB IB (Herr *et al.* 1996: 75-76). In 1996 it also produced multiple exterior plastered and semi-plastered or pebbled surfaces which dated to the same period (Fig. 17). This is the first time in the entire Mediterranean basin that patterns of use have been associated with the exterior of a dolmen. We counted seven surfaces, one on top of the oth-



17. Tall al-'Umayri: The dolmen and surrounding surfaces in Field K. Note the very fine plaster surface in the center.

er. Work in 1998 had traced the primary surfaces at least eight meters away and had discovered a cobble hearth, a stone table or platform, and the bottom part of a large EB storage jar. This season, four squares were laid out surrounding the dolmen to trace the extent of the surfaces and to see if they could be associated with other structures or features.

Generally, the further we proceeded from the dolmen the weaker the surfaces became, and only the strongest ones could be traced more than five meters away from the dolmen. We found no new evidence for associated structures. The surfaces gradually disappeared. In the two squares to the east of the dolmen we discovered a very well made plaster floor, which also incorporated bedrock. Part of the surface had actually been found in 1994 and again in 1998. For the first time we examined the area immediately south of the dolmen and found a weak plaster surface used with bedrock until it ended at a natural terrace. Ten meters to the northwest we found the weak remnant of only one surface which soon disappeared. Apparently the ceremonial activities associated with the dolmen were performed completely outside and close to the structure with no associated buildings.

Field L: The Southern Edge (David C. Hopkins, Wesley Theological Seminary)

Ever since the beginning of excavations at al-'Umayri in 1984, one of our goals was to examine a topographic low near the center of the southern edge of the site (Fig. 2). On either side of the dip the wall line of the apparent fortification line was clearly visible with large boulders to the west and a wide line of smaller stones to the east. Ground penetrating radar produced anomalies that seemed to suggest the presence of a casemate wall to the west of the dip. We began excavations here in 1998 with three squares and discovered remains of a Hellenistic structure on top of the late Iron II/Persian buildings and surfaces. This season we opened two new squares and deepened one begun in 1998 in hopes of delineating the Hellenistic structure more fully and relating it to the upper slope of the site.

Phase 6 (Iron I). Excavation revealed evidence of the utilization of the southern lip of the *tall* during the Iron I period, but the remains are as yet too disarticulated to permit any functional characterization. The most extensive Iron I remains emerged five meters downslope (south) from the late Iron II buildings which ended at the lip of the site. Builders erected a narrow (0.63-0.73m wide), but tightly laid, two-row boulder-and-chink wall excavated so

far to a height of 1.15m (Fig. 18). The wall ran east-west, parallel to the upslope constructions. Artifact-poor fill behind the wall contained nothing later than late Iron I ceramics. The absence of living surfaces associated with the wall suggests that it functioned as a terrace. A postulated continuation of this wall to the west beyond the boundaries of the square would position it to have created a platform for an architectural unit constructed in relationship to a substantial (single row, ca. 1m wide) wall stub or pillar. Also dating to Iron I, this incompletely excavated pillar survived to play a role in the construction of both the Iron II and Hellenistic periods.

Phase 5 (Late Iron II/Persian). No additional loci could be securely added to this phase, which consisted of the corner of a building and associated earth layers at the eastern edge of Field L.

Phase 4 (Persian). We uncovered significant late Iron II/Persian features beneath the north-south ranging Hellenistic structure (Building D) of Phase 3 (Fig. 19). Reused in the Hellenistic period, one of the walls continues the run of previously excavated walls from the 1998 season near the edge of the *tall*, while another formed a corner with it. The existence of an apparent entryway was visible in the upper courses of one of the walls. A very dark gray ashy soil layer with a smattering of late Iron II/Persian ceramics sealed against both walls, demonstrating their contemporaneous use. Excavation has not cleared enough yet to learn about the circumstances of the foundation of the walls or the extent of their preservation.

Three and one-half meters to the south, another, stratigraphically later, Iron Age wall abutted one of the above walls and represents a later sub-phase. However, its orientation creates a rather acute angle with the earlier wall, and its role in relation to



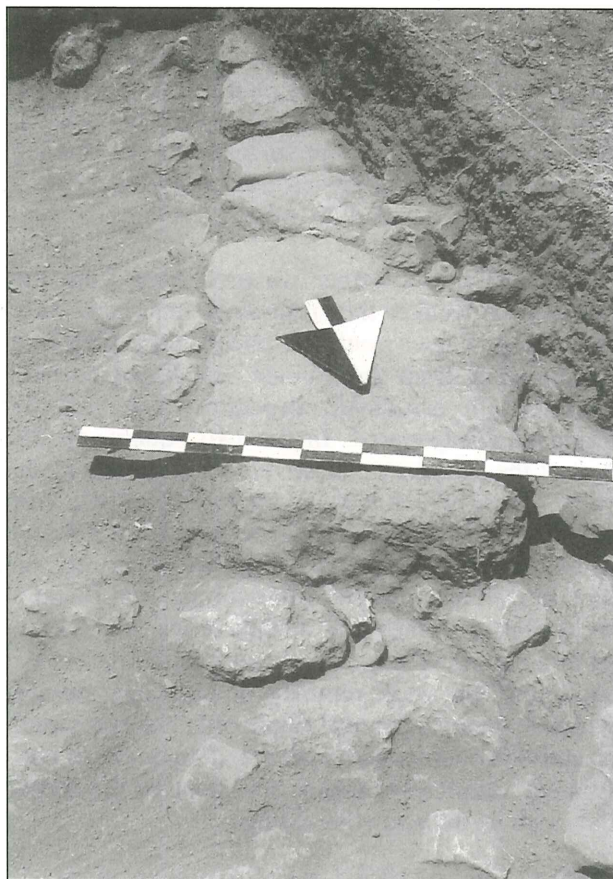
18. *Tall al-'Umayri: Late Iron I terrace wall in Field L.*



19. Tall al-'Umayri: Long Hellenistic room in Field L looking south. Other contemporary features are at left. Cutting across the room in the foreground and at center are Persian period walls.

any structure is not plain. These walls plus those found in 1998 create a room measuring 6.5m wide and at least 10m long, the dimensions of this structure resemble those of Building B in Field A, Phase 6B.

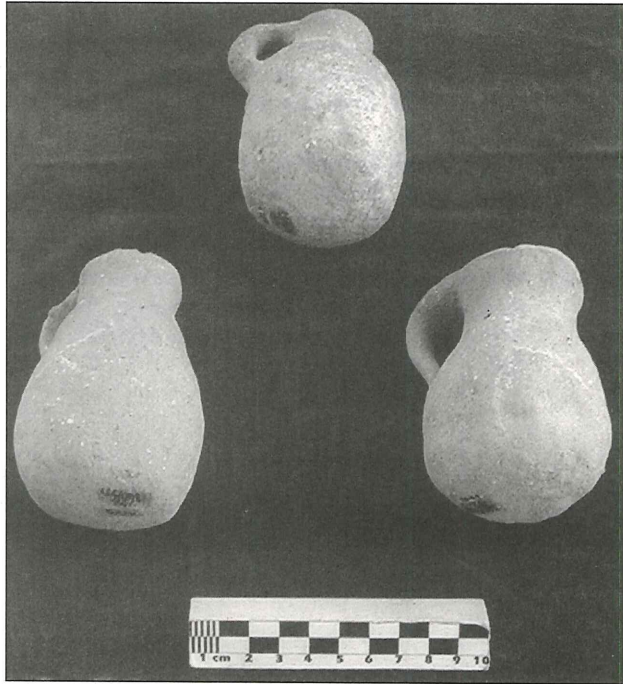
Phase 3 (Late Hellenistic). Extending to the north of the previously excavated Hellenistic architectural remains (Herr *et al.* 1999: 111), lengthy lateral walls created a structure at least 12m long in its north-south dimension (Building D) (Fig. 19). Its presumed northern wall lay beyond the limits of excavation. Late Hellenistic builders relied upon one of the Phase 4 walls as the foundation for their eastern wall. This insubstantially constructed wall possibly represented a non-load-bearing enclosure wall that demarcated a courtyard workspace. Builders used orthostats to construct the western wall *de novo*, following the slope of the site and beginning adjacent to the Phase 6 “pillar.” Five meters from this southern corner, sitting in the wall and rising slightly above it, an apparent pillar base — around which we discovered three intact lamps (Fig. 20) — suggests that the wall did not climb any higher in antiquity. It constituted a portico looking out on an adjacent courtyard, as yet unexcavated. A flagstone pavement led to a threshold



20. Tall al-'Umayri: Hellenistic wall line in Field L with a large stone, possibly use as a pillar base. Above and below the large stone are two Hellenistic lamps completely preserved between the stones.

that penetrated the low front, eastern wall at a point opposite the pillar base. Upon the latest surface associated with the courtyard's use, abandoned household items included numerous intact and reconstructable ceramic vessels (pithoi, jars, cooking pots, lamps, and a unique group of hand-made juglets [Fig. 21]), stone grinders and pounders, a few metal objects, beads, a scaraboid seal, and bronze coins. The beaten earth floor corresponded with the latest use surface of the room previously excavated in 1998. Two parallel, but staggered wall lines south of Building D, each ca. 3-4m long, also belonged to this phase and served as field walls or formed part of some sort of enclosure.

Phase 2 (Post Hellenistic, probably Byzantine). Two differently constructed wall lines running across the slope likely constituted the foundations of terrace walls utilized in different episodes of the Byzantine agricultural exploitation of the hillside. Earth layers from the Byzantine period — fill deposits imported from the valley — made possible the agricultural use of the *tall* surface as well.



21. Tall al-'Umayri: Three complete, handmade Hellenistic juglets from Field L. Several other more fragmentary examples were found.

Phase 1 (Pre-Modern). Two substantial wall segments running along the lip of the tall — originally, but mistakenly, understood by us to be parts of an ancient perimeter wall — belonged to the pre-modern or modern utilization of the tall, probably as terrace walls.

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