

KHIRBAT ‘ATARŪZ: AN INTERIM OVERVIEW OF THE 10 YEARS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHITECTURAL FINDINGS

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The archaeological site of Khirbat ‘Atarūz is situated on the ridge of Jabal Ḥamidah between the Wādī Zarqā’ Mā’in on the north and the Sayl al-Hidān on the south. The ruin is near the modern town of Jabal Ḥamidah, approximately 10 km west of Libb and 3 km east of the Hellenistic and Roman ruin at Machaerus.

The vicinity of Khirbat ‘Atarūz was surveyed by Schottruff (1966) some decades ago. This survey showed that it was one of the few permanently settled sites from the Iron Age in the Jabal Ḥamidah region. Niemann (1985; see also Glueck 1939: 135) also examined the site and found Iron Age pottery as well as a portion of a terracotta figurine. This earlier effort notwithstanding, much of the ‘Atarūz region has not yet been properly researched for archaeological remains, since no excavations had previously occurred specifically at Khirbat ‘Atarūz.

Prior to further discussion, the excavation team expresses its sincere gratitude in particular to the Versacare Foundation for its multi-year financial support for the ‘Atarūz excavation and the survey of the Dhībān Plateau and ‘Atarūz region. My appreciation also goes to the Korean Research Foundation, Dr. Lawrence T. Geraty, the former president of La Sierra University, and Dr. Jong Keun Lee, professor of religion at Sahm Yook University, Korea, for their technical assistance and financial contributions to the project.

In addition, I wish to thank Dr. Fawwaz al-Khraysheh and Dr. Ziad al-Saad, Directors-General of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan for facilitating and supporting the excavations of Khirbat ‘Atarūz during the past ten years. Last but not the least, the project is also deeply indebted to the Department of Antiquities representatives, Adeeb Abu Shmais, Khalid

al-Hawari, Issa Seryani, Ashraf al-Khraysheh, Basem al-Mahamid, and Husam Hjazeen. Their professional and collegial support and assistance are much valued and appreciated.

History of Excavations

The La Sierra University team has long been interested in Khirbat ‘Atarūz and its vicinity for archaeological research since 1996 when the Dhībān Plateau Survey Project (Ji and ‘Attiyat 1997; Ji and Lee 1998; 2000, 2003, 2007) was launched, given that the ‘Atarūz area is just north of the survey area across the Sayl al-Hidān. Both the Dhībān and ‘Atarūz areas are closely connected in terms of geography and archaeological history (*cf.* Ji 2009). Accordingly, it was deemed essential to study the two regions together in order to understand the occupational history of central Jordan as a whole.

Accordingly, in 1998, as an extension to the Dhībān Plateau Survey Project, Dr. Lawrence T. Geraty and I arrived at Khirbat ‘Atarūz for a brief reconnaissance surface survey of the site, which produced a collection of diverse pottery dated to the Iron Age as well as some belonging to the Hellenistic, Roman, and Islamic periods. In particular, at the acropolis of the site were several ancient wall lines clearly visible and traceable above the ground. It was apparent from this visitation that Khirbat ‘Atarūz was rich in archaeological materials and evidence for the study of the Iron Age, classical era, and Islamic period. The ceramic evidence of Khirbat ‘Atarūz was also assessed to be compatible in shape and style with those from the Iron Age, Hellenistic, Roman, and Islamic sites in the Dhībān Plateau.

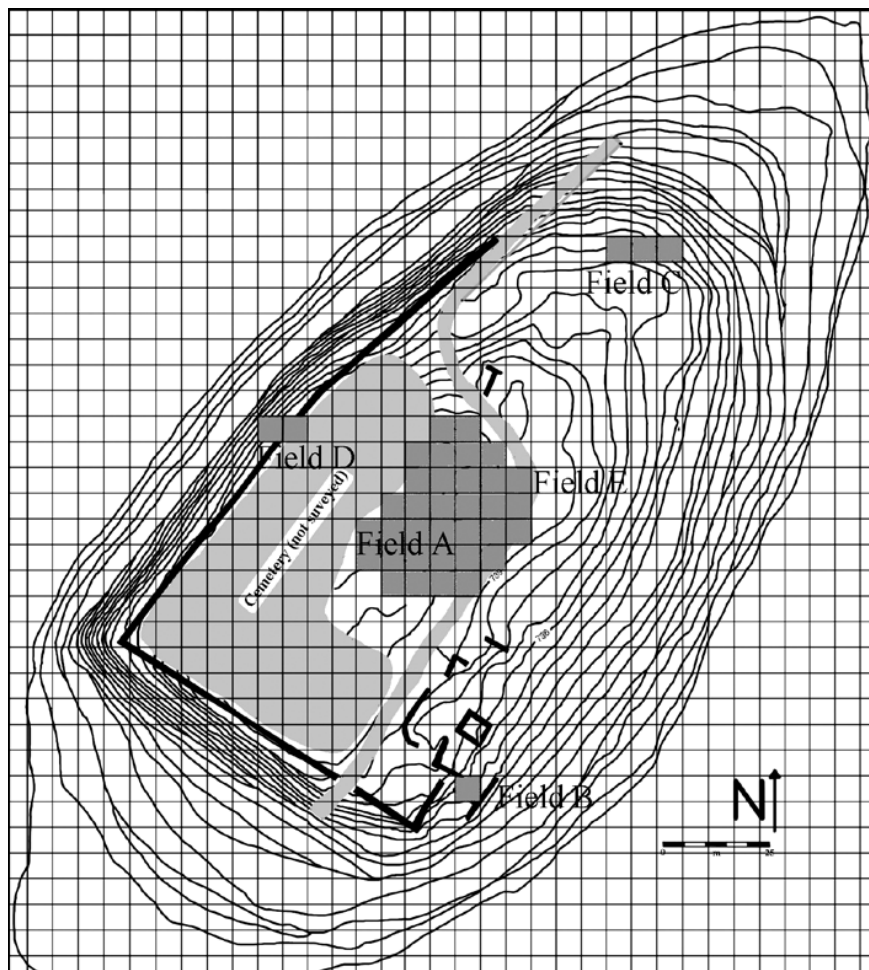
In 2000, upon completing the Dhībān Plateau Project, it was determined that I would be-

gin with two 6 m x 6 m squares at the acropolis area in hopes of engendering a preliminary stratigraphy for future full-blown excavations. Thereafter, six seasons of excavation took place between 2000 and 2011 under the auspices of the Versacare Foundation and the 'Atarūz Regional Research Project, centering on four areas: the acropolis (Fields A and E), the southwestern slope (Field B), the northeastern slope (Field C), and the western defense wall (Field D) (see **Fig. 1**).

To be more specific, the initial field activity (2000) at the acropolis consisted of a reconnaissance type excavation that opened two 6 x 6 m squares in Field A, an operation designed to explore whether the ancient residents made use of the area. The fieldwork led to the discovery of part of an Iron Age building with many cultic vessels. In 2001, the excavation team continued in the squares opened in the previous season and concurrently opened three new squares (3 m x 6

m for one and 6 x 6 m for the other two). The third to sixth seasons of excavation took place in the summers of 2004 to 2011, expanding activities with 25 new 6 x 6 m squares in Field A and nine additional 6 x 6 m squares in Fields B to E. At the same time, work in the squares partially excavated in the previous seasons was resumed to completely expose wall remains in the squares and to understand their connections to the remains in other squares. The excavation of the central buildings at the acropolis was virtually completed during 2010, uncovering a building complex that most likely represents a temple dated to the period of Iron IIA (ca. 920 - 800 BC) - Iron IIB (ca. 800-700 BC).

This paper intends to present an overall summary of archaeological stratigraphy and major architectural findings from the 2000-2011 seasons of fieldwork, and is soon to be followed by a series of detailed reports centering on the architectural characteristics of the Iron Age



1. Khirbat 'Atarūz Contour Map and Excavated Areas (Fields A-E).

temple and ceramic evidence for the purpose of dating the temple. Those articles will also depict selected objects found inside the temple building, evidence considered to offer support for my identification of the building as a temple or cultic complex (refer to Ji 2012 for selected objects from the temple area).

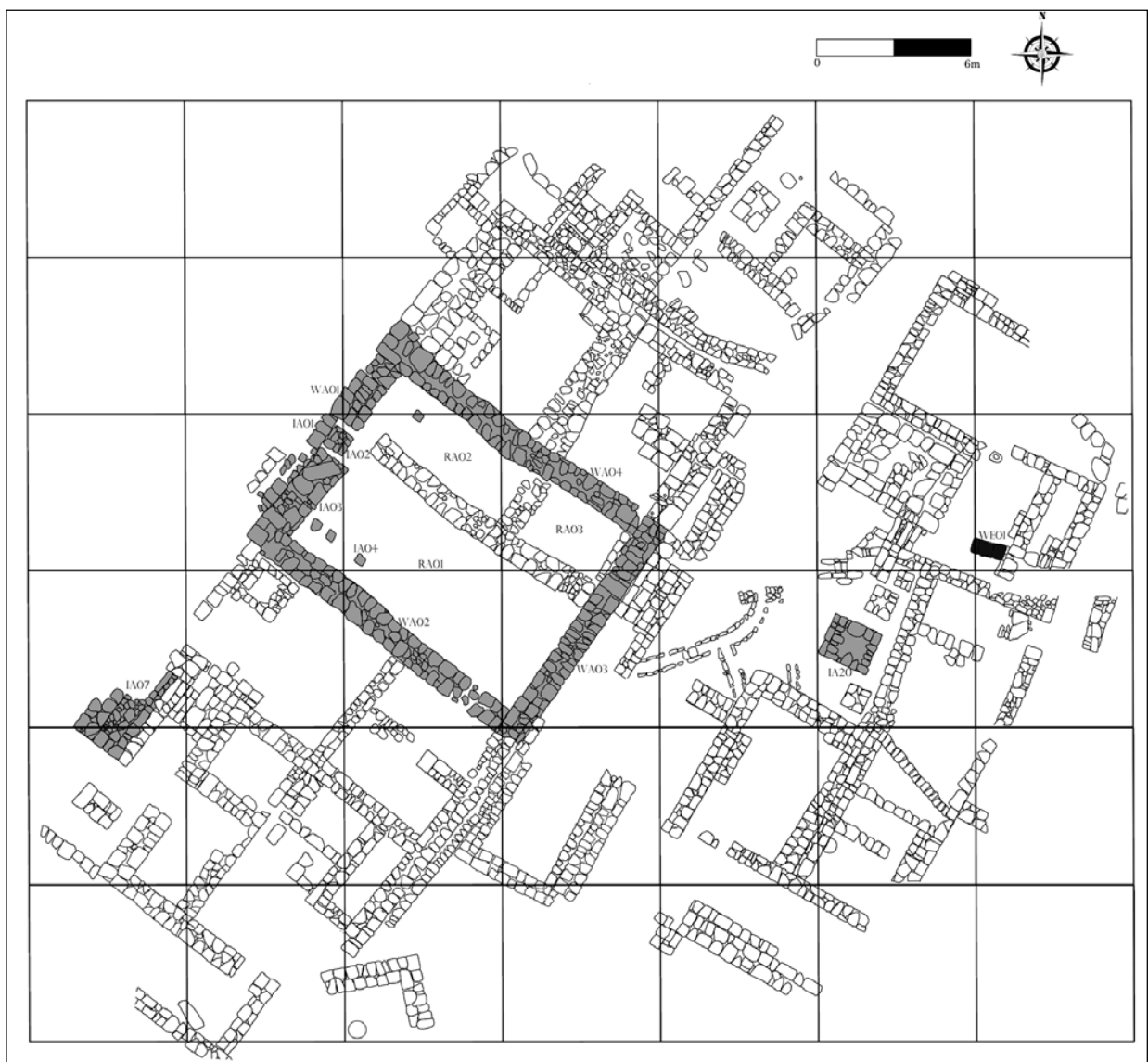
Iron I (Stratum 12)

The earliest evidence that has so far been uncovered from Khirbat 'Atarūz is Iron I that was attested to in Fields B and E. In Field B, the Iron I era is represented by several diagnostic sherds that appear in fills beneath the Iron II

defense wall, a wall remaining on the southwest part of the site along the direction of northeast-southwest. As in Field B, Iron I sherds were recovered in earth and rock fills in Field E, fills made to build the earliest earth-beaten floor or surface for the Iron II temple courtyard. Here, a wall line (Wall E01) was found running along the east-west axis, which was about 1m long and 70 cm wide (see Fig. 2). It was erected with medium to large unhewn limestone blocks.

Early Iron IIA (Temple Phase I; Strata 11-10)

Above the Iron I fills in Field E is a large floor (Stratum 10) built on top of earth fills (Stratum



2. Late Iron I-Early Iron IIA Building Remains in Fields A and E (Strata 12 and 10) (Black Color: Stratum 12, Gray Color: Stratum 10; R: Room, W: Wall, I: Installation).

11) mixed with cobbles and small rocks. Also, Stratum 10 is very clearly represented in Field A where a large Iron Age IIA temple complex (see below) was discovered. What I know at this point for certain is that Stratum 11 lacks any building remains and is ubiquitous over the entire acropolis area of Khirbat ‘Atarūz, a fact positing that Stratum 11 is an earth fill put by the early Iron IIA residents to flatten bedrock preparatory to building the temple in Stratum 10.

The first major building activity at Khirbat ‘Atarūz is assigned to Stratum 10. According to the excavations, most of the temple walls in Stratum 10 were erected directly on top of bedrock. As to the floors, bedrock was also skillfully used in the construction of the temple floor; part of the floor was composed of the earlier earth-fill surface (Stratum 11), while the builders added beaten earth where the bedrock dipped or fell away. The temple proper, as shown in Figure 2, seems to have initially been built according to a simple, rectangular long-room plan that was composed of three internal elements: an offering platform, a sanctuary room, and a cella with a pedestal-like installation. In addition to these remains were a possible “high place” and an altar in the western and central courtyards, respectively (see the Temple Phase II section for the altar).

Specifically, the northwest corner of the sanctuary room was equipped with an artificially raised three-step platform upon which religious and votive objects were placed. The platform, labeled as Installation A03, was constructed along the rear wall (Wall A01) of the temple room and consisted of small to medium unworked stones with several flat-topped boulders. To the right of the offering platform was the recess-like inner cella that contained a pedestal (Installation A02), again made up of unhewn boulders set atop a beaten-earth floor against the rear wall. This pedestal currently stands about 1.3 m high and has a base measuring approximately 1 x 1 m. A standing stone (Installation A01), measuring 0.5 x 0.5 x 1.5 m in size, stood upright on top of this pedestal. The cella measures approximately 1.5 x 1.5 m. During this period, the sanctuary room (Room A01-A03) seems to have been accessed from two directions. The main entrance was proba-

bly in the middle of the southeastern wall (Wall A03) with a secondary access likely from the northeastern corner of the room.

Four stone bases (Installation A04) belonging to Stratum 10 were located inside Rooms A01 and A02 along the northeastern and southwestern walls (Walls A02 and A04), which seem to have been used to support the roof. Yet, such installations were absent in the middle and southeastern sections of the main sanctuary room. This perhaps suggests that only part of the northwestern section of the room was roofed, while the other remained uncovered. This being the case, the main sanctuary chamber appears to have been a partially open-air building consisting of a roofed and canopied section on the northwest side and a courtyard-like open space on the southeast side.

Approximately 10 m west of the sanctuary room (Rooms A01-A03) was a rectangular tower-like structure (Installation A07) with at least two construction phases, evidenced by one early structure (Stratum 10) and the addition of one row of walls or faces (Stratum 8) against the original one. This tower-like structure was possibly a “high place”, one here named the Western High Place, where priests offered up prayers and worship during the first and second temple periods (see **Fig. 3**). This high place was only partially excavated due to the presence of a modern cemetery immediately west and north of the structure. Thus it is difficult to estimate the exact size of the structure. To be sure, however, the Western High Place was at least 2.5 x 4.0 m in size and higher than the adjacent courtyard by at least 1 m. It was reached by four steps, each about 25 cm high, leading to the top of the structure. This description stands for both phases of the high place.

Roughly 60 cm west of the staircase was a small fireplace (Installation A08 in **Fig. 4**; 50 cm in diameter) circled by a line of natural stones. I found fine ashes inside the fireplace, and fragments of an iron II jug were uncovered *in situ* right outside of the stone circle. This fireplace was only linked with Stratum 8, however.

Early-Mid Iron IIA (Temple Phase II; Strata 9-8)

The plan and walls of the original sanctuary room were preserved when the temple was ex-



3. The Western High Place and Entrance to the Hearth Room (View from Southwest) (Photo by J. H. Park).

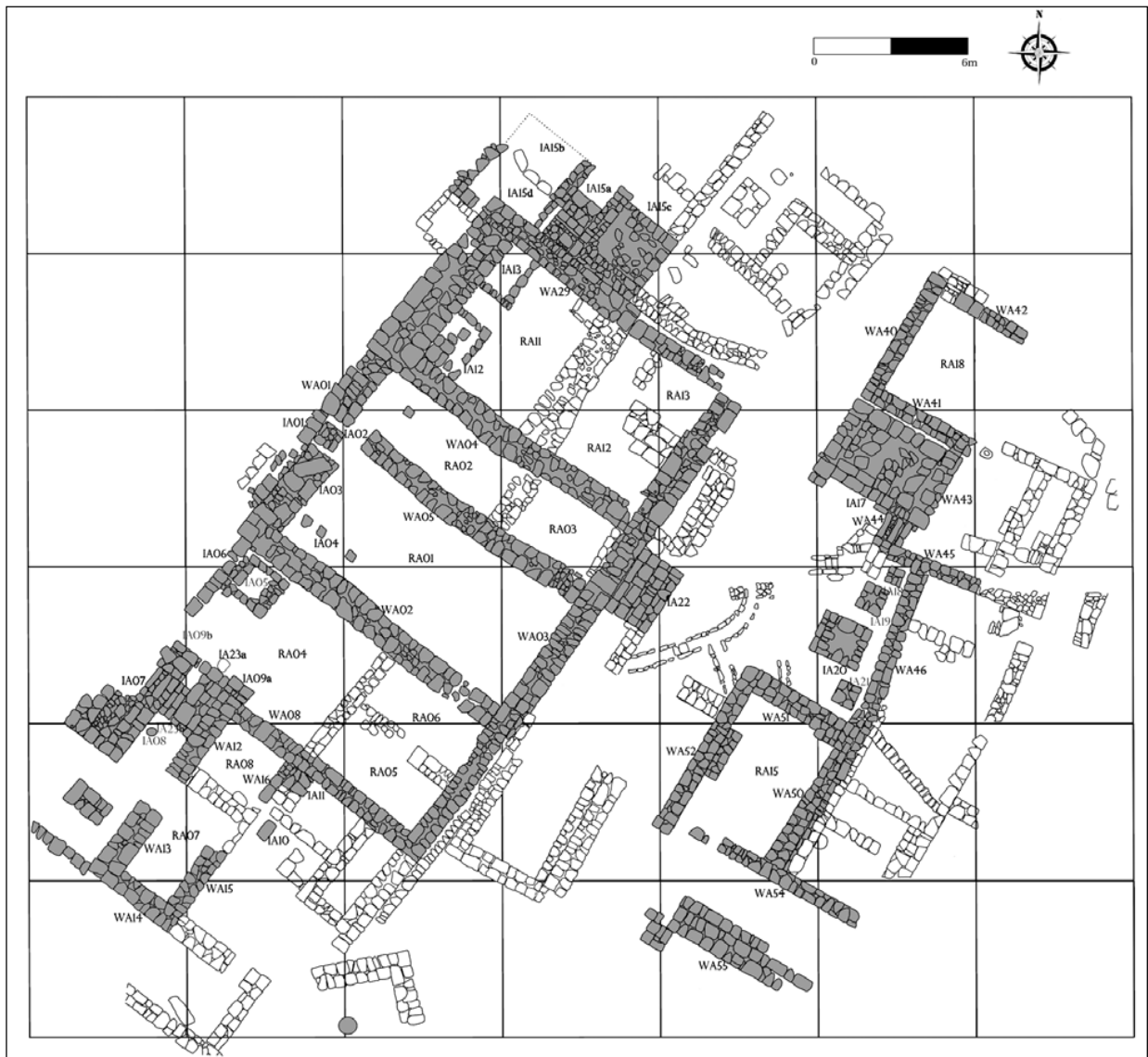
panded during the second temple phase. As presented in Figure 4, expansion was carried out purposefully on three fronts. First, Stratum 8 builders reorganized the original sanctuary room into two smaller rooms (Rooms A01 and A02-A03) by subdividing it with a long compartment wall (Wall A05) in the northwest-southeast direction between the two outer walls (Walls A02 and A04). This inner wall, like the outer walls, was erected on top of either bedrock or a shallow terra rosa layer above bedrock after sections of the Stratum 10 floors were eliminated. The builders then put a layer of soil (Stratum 9) on top of the earlier floor (Stratum 10) in Rooms A01-A03 to construct a new floor (Stratum 8) inside the sanctuary and auxiliary rooms. Second, additional rooms or courtyards were created west and east of the sanctuary room, appreciably enlarging and elaborating the cultic precinct. Third, concurrently added to the precinct was a large stone terrace most likely identified as a second high place and equipped with five stairs for access situated at the northeast face of the

structure. The second phase buildings were destroyed by fire. But most of the walls survived this destruction and part of them were used to construct residences during the late Hellenistic, early Roman, and mid Islamic periods.

The Main Sanctuary Room (Room A01)

The architectural expansion and modification in Stratum 8 notwithstanding, the centerpiece of the second-phase temple should be perceived as Room A01 (hereafter the Main Sanctuary Room), which roughly corresponds to the western two-thirds of the first-phase sanctuary room (see Fig. 5). The length of this second-phase Main Sanctuary Room is 12 m or more and the width about 5 m. The primary entrance into the Main Sanctuary Room continued to be in the southeastern wall, yet its location seems to have been moved to the southwest by about 1 m as compared to the earlier entrance. The northeastern entrance remained in use during the second phase but this time as an outer door leading to the inner entrance via Room A02. Also, four doors were added to the Main Sanctuary Room. One opening was attested to near the southeastern end of the southwestern wall; the other openings were in the compartment wall and connected the main room with an auxiliary sanctuary to the east (Room A02-A03).

The aforementioned cultic installations and furnishings in the Main Sanctuary Room also appear to have remained unchanged, suggesting continuation of the principal rituals practiced at the temple despite the expansion and modification of the temple building. The artifacts found in association with the pedestal (Installation A02), both whole and fragmentary, include a four-horned terracotta altar, incense cups, and various ceramic and iron oil lamps (Ji 2012). Such findings perhaps indicate that the pedestal stand was erected not only to hold the standing stone but also to support a terracotta altar and the lamps and cups used for burning incense and oil. Like the pedestal, the two lower stairs of the platform (Installation A03) continued to be in use as offering tables or benches; a large number of votive objects were also found *in situ* on its two lower stairs. Additional objects associated with the platform were a bronze belt-like plate decorated with serpents, iron fragments, terracotta lamps, chalices, bowls, and stone vessels;



4. Early-Mid Iron IIA Building Remains in Fields A and E (Stratum 8) (R: Room, W: Wall, I: Installation).



5. The Main Sanctuary and Auxiliary Sanctuary Rooms (View from Southeast).

fragments of a clay cultic stand or shrine model (see **Fig. 6**) was discovered on the platform as well as on the floor around the standing stone cella (*cf.* Ji 2012).

East of the Main Sanctuary Room was the Auxiliary Sanctuary Room (Rooms A02-A03), a long rectangular room mainly made up of Walls A04 and A05, the two walls running parallel at a distance of approximately 2 m. When the northernmost section of Room A02 was cleaned up in 2004 and 2011, the team found pot sherds and fragments of cultic objects, all similar to those from the Main Sanctuary Room (see **Fig. 7**). As noted above, there were three doors in the Aux-



6. *The Two Male Cultic Stand from the Main Sanctuary Room (Photo by J. S. Burnett).*



7. *Cultic Objects in situ in the Auxiliary Sanctuary Room (Photo by B. J. Kim).*

iliary Sanctuary Room leading to and from the Main Sanctuary Room.

In my view, an auxiliary room adjacent to a main sanctuary room is reminiscent of a small room located inside the “fosse temple” of Lachish dated to the fifteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century BC (Mazar 1990: 492). Like the side chambers found near the altars at Tel Dan, the Auxiliary Sanctuary Room appears to have been used for cultic as well as storage purposes (*cf.* Nakhai 2001: 184).

The Hearth (Rooms A04-A06) and Double Altar (Rooms A11-A13) Rooms

Southwest of the Main Sanctuary Room was Rooms A04-A06, named the Hearth Room, with a couple of important cultic architectural features. Most importantly, in this room stones were elaborately stacked to make Installation A06 against the rear wall, although the exact

template of the installation evades our imagination since its middle section was badly plundered when the temple was destroyed. One sure thing, however, was the presence of a rectangular niche (*ca.* 30 x 50 x 20 cm) incorporated roughly in the center of the installation. The niche should have served as an essential component of and been used in conjunction with the cultic activities in this room since it is situated right behind a cult hearth (Installation A05) and can be seen over the hearth from the middle of the room. Priests or worshipers possibly placed a statute or image of the temple’s deity in it. This suggestion seems plausible given that plunder centered on this niche and its surrounding section when the installation was vandalized; the excavation team did not find any clear evidence of destructive activities in other portions of the room, only in the area of the niche installation.

In front of the niche installation was the aforementioned square hearth (Installation A05; approximately 2 x 2 m; see **Fig. 8**), the inside of which was filled with very fine ash when excavated. Animal bones were completely absent from the hearth, positing that the hearth was probably used to keep a flame alight rather than to burn offerings or sacrificial animals. The flame may have signified a sort of “eternal” flame in honor of a deity who was worshiped at the ‘Atarūz temple, perhaps associated with the image or statue inside the niche.

The Hearth Room floor was covered with beaten earth as was the Main Sanctuary Room. The eastern entrance to this room was located on the southeastern end of its northeastern wall (Wall A02), which divided the Main Sanctuary and Hearth Rooms. About 4 m southwest of



8. *The Hearth in the Hearth Room.*

the hearth were two tables or benches (Installations A09a and A09b) built against the side wall (Wall A08) on either side of the entrance to the Hearth Room. Each bench measures 0.5 x 1.0 m and now stands 80 cm above the floor. North of these tables/benches were two stone-paved steps (Installation A23a) down from the Western High Place to the room through a stone pavement (Installation A23b).

The floor of the Hearth Room was partially covered with ash with its highest concentration in the hearth area. The ash layer was relatively sparse or absent on the southern side of the room, potentially indicating that ash originated either from the hearth or from fire in the wooden roof above the cultic installation. This incongruity suggests that the Hearth Room did not have a roof or at best was only partially roofed like the Main Sanctuary Room. The Hearth Room is likely to have been roughly the same size as the Main Sanctuary Room in terms of its length and shape and was deliberately built west of the main cultic room in a parallel manner.

East of the Auxiliary Sanctuary Room (Rooms A02-A03) was an open-air room (Rooms A11-A13) labeled as the Double Altar Room, measuring 6.5 x 11 m with a single entrance on the southeastern side of the room. Most conspicuously, this room included two altars (Installations A12 and A13; see **Fig. 9**) roughly parallel in shape and size, each measuring roughly 1.5 x 3 x 1 m and built side by side against the rear northwestern wall.

The Eastern High Place (Installation A15)

In 2008, on the northeast side of the Double Altar Room the excavation team uncovered a



9. *The Double Altars in the Double Altar Room.*

rectangular tower-like stone terrace that was built during the second phase of the temple (Stratum 8). As for its western counterpart, it most likely functioned as a high place. This structure currently covers an area of about 5 x 8 m and originally rose at least 2 m above the ground. The structure's impressive size as well as its location in close proximity to the temple buildings point to the cultic nature of the structure, probably justifying my identification of the structure as a high place (Installations A15a-A15d; the Eastern High Place hereafter). This structure, when initially constructed, was probably larger than what presently remains given that the northern and eastern parts of the structure were badly damaged by the Hellenistic and Mid Islamic settlers who removed stones from these sections in order to build walls and buildings (e.g., Wall A30 in Figure 15; Walls A35 and A37 in Figure 18) that currently stand abutting the eastern and southwestern faces of the high place. The upper surface of the high place was floored with medium to large undressed stone blocks, seemingly without any superstructures or surface installations.

Attached to the high place were ruins of a staircase (Installation A15a) made up of five steps for priests or people coming to the structure from the east side. The staircase appears to have been the sole means of ascent to the top of the high place. The steps, measuring 1.2 m long, 50 cm wide, and 40 cm high on average, were comprised of several medium-sized stone boulders except for the lowest one that was built of a stone slab. The excavation also showed that the Eastern High Place area was probably conveniently accessible from the Main Sanctuary Room through the back door of the sanctuary.

The investigation of the Eastern High Place indicates that it was built in three architectural phases. For the construction, the builders first constructed a rectangular structure (Installation A15b), which probably served as the principal facility where religious rites took place. The staircase (Installation A15a) was then added to the east facade of the rectangular structure, followed by two tower-like square structures (Installations A15c and 15d) flanking the stairs, one on each side. The uppermost step of the staircase appears to have functioned as a stepping stone or a small platform on the way lead-

ing up to the rectangular structure and the two square towers.

The Courtyards

The entrance from the western courtyard to the Western High Place and the Hearth Room was two-chambered, with rooms of similar size (*ca.* 2.2 x 2.6 m) on either side of the central aisle (see **Fig. 10**). These two chambers were fully exposed in 2010 and 2011 and subsequently named the Eastern (Room A08) and Western (Room A07) Entrance Rooms. The Western Entrance Room had a series of beaten-earth floor surfaces: the earliest floor date to early-mid Iron IIA with two subsequent late Iron IIA-Iron IIB floors and two Hellenistic soil layers (see below for the later floors). Equally challenging was the stratigraphy of the Eastern Entrance Room. As for the western room, the Eastern Entrance Room also had one layer of early-mid Iron IIA beaten-earth floor followed by two late Iron IIA-Iron IIB floors, one of which was plastered, and two late Hellenistic floors. The plastered Iron IIB floor was absent in the Western Entrance Room. The early-mid Iron IIA floor was assigned to Stratum 8; several fragments of cultic vessels were collected from these early-mid Iron IIA floors inside the two entrance rooms.

In front of the two entrance rooms was the Western Courtyard that contained a standing stone (Installation A10), one set vertically in the ground of the courtyard surface that is apparently dated to the early-mid Iron IIA period (see **Fig. 10**). The standing stone, reminiscent of the one in the Main Sanctuary Room, measures approximately .5 x .6 x 1.3 m and still stands up-



10. The Entrance Rooms and Standing Stone in the Western Courtyard (View from Southeast) (Photo by B. J. Kim).

right *in situ* in the Western Courtyard. Immediately northeast of this standing stone was a small square-type bench or table (Installation A11; *ca.* 50 x 50 x 30 cm). This seems to have been built for the placement of offerings for those who accessed the Western High Place or temple buildings through the Western Courtyard.

Turning to the southeast of the sanctuary complex, the excavation team identified a courtyard, named the Central Courtyard, with an array of square or rectangular altars (Altars A1-5; Installations A17-A21) in various sizes, ranging from .5 x .5 m to 3.5 x 4.5 m. All these altars were associated with the second phase of the temple period (Stratum 8), except for Altar A3 (Installation A20) which was built and reused during the first and second phases of the temple construction, in the order specified. Altars A1 and A3 (Installations A17 and A20), respectively, had a stair attached to the installation, one buttressing the lower portion of the altar walls. In particular, the step for Altar A1 (Installation A17) was impressive: it was made up of three rectangular stones in a row measuring a total of 3 m in width together (30 cm long and 30 cm high). A cluster of several altars in a relatively small open area leads one to postulate that this area corresponded to the main courtyard of the temple where animal sacrifice took place for offering and other religious rites.

Two more architectural features appear in the Central Courtyard. Between Altar A3 (Installation A20) and the Main Sanctuary Room was a stepped structure (Installation A22) adjacent to the southeastern wall of the sanctuary, which apparently was carefully built against the wall during the second phase of the temple. The entire structure was comprised of four broad steps, each step measuring about 20 cm high and 7 m wide. In addition, to the west of Altar A5 (Installation A21) was a rectangular building (Room A15) without any interior compartment walls except for a possible bench or doorstep located along the northwestern wall. Inside the building were three Iron II soil layers or beaten-earth floors under a Mid Islamic layer of occupation. The last two Iron II floors contained a large number of cultic objects and vessels including a large terracotta bull statue (see **Fig. 11**), but the exact nature of the room remains uncertain.

Turning to the east side of the courtyard, im-



11. The Bull Statue from the 'Atarūz Temple (Photo by J. H. Park).

mediately east of Altar A1 was Room A18 (approximately 6 m x 10 m) without any interior installations. This room was only partially excavated, but it appears to have been part of the second phase temple complex. The walls of this room are preserved up to 1.3 m. Several walls in Field E seem to have adjoined to this room; their construction dates await further excavations, however. This is also the case for several wall lines uncovered to the east of the Eastern High Place.

Defense Wall

My investigation in Field D uncovered portions of the enclosure wall that once surrounded the entire city of 'Atarūz (see Fig. 12). The wall was constructed of undressed blocks of local limestone. It was three rows wide (measuring *ca.* 80 cm) and currently stands 5 courses high to a height of 1 m. This wall system was most likely built to protect the city as was the dry moat dug outside of the defense wall.



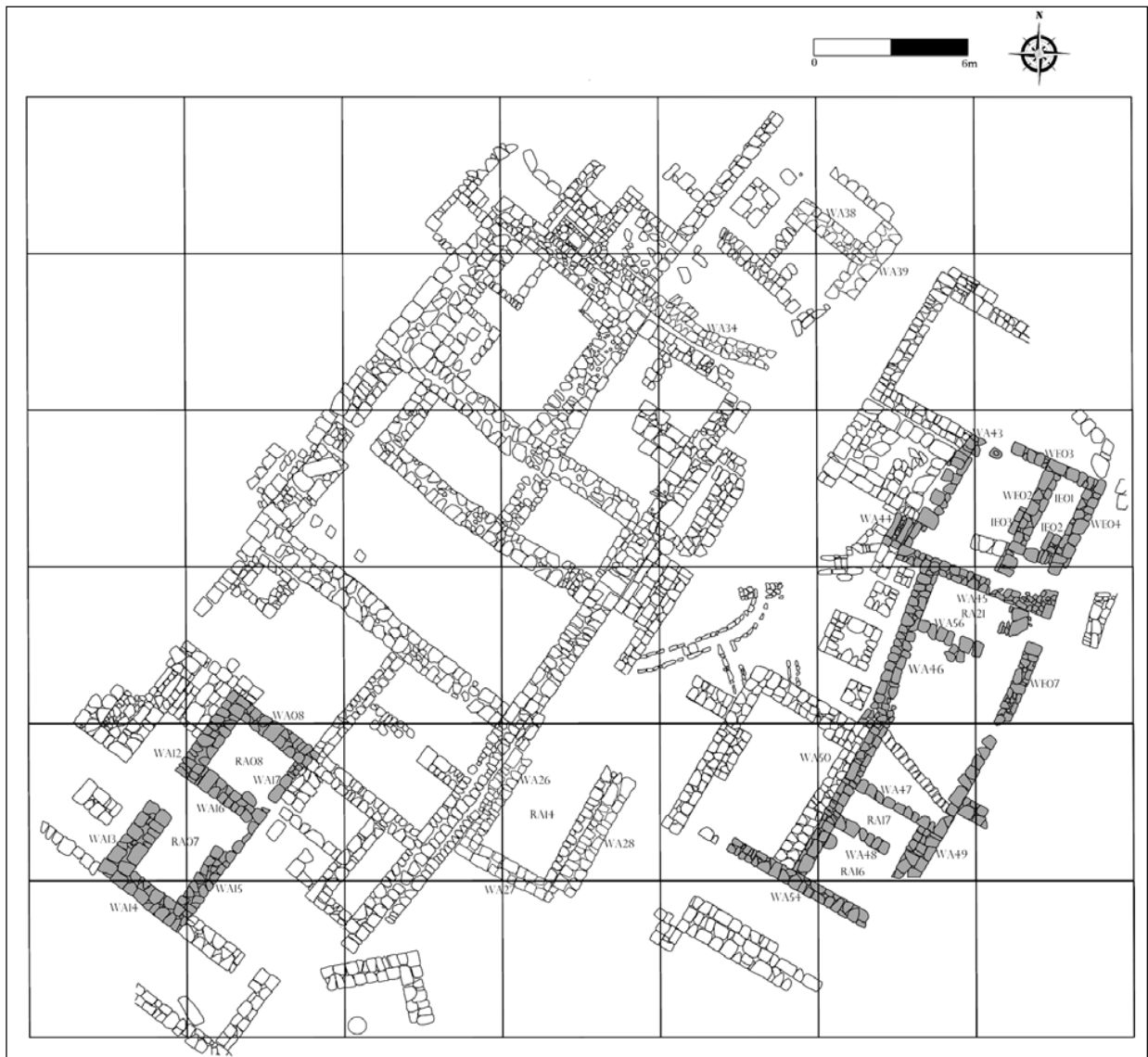
12. The Defense Wall in Field D (Photo by J. H. Park).

Work in Field D immediately west of the defense wall revealed a beaten-earth floor or surface associated with the construction of the defense wall. Ceramic forms from this floor include early Iron II bowls and storage jars that are characteristic of the Strata 9-8 floors inside the temple complex. This ceramic affinity indicates that the defense wall was associated with the temple in Fields A and E and most likely built concomitantly with the second phase of the temple.

Late Iron IIA-Iron IIB (Temple Phase III; Strata 7-6)

Stratum 7

As shown in Fig. 13, the end of the early-mid Iron IIA era was marked by the abandonment of the main cultic buildings and high places adjacent to the temple, suggesting a possible decrease in the prominence of 'Atarūz as a religious center. Khirbat 'Atarūz nevertheless continued to function as a cultic place in late Iron IIA and Iron IIB as attested to by a rectangular tower-like altar (Installation E01) in Field E. This altar, unlike Altars A1-A5 in the central courtyard, took the form of a rectangle measuring 3 x 6 m in size that now stands about 50 cm high. A small step (Installation E03), measuring 0.2 x 1.0 x 0.3 m, led to the top of the altar from a beaten-earth floor to the west of Altar E1. Near this step an almost complete stone column was found *in situ* in front of Altar E1 along with a couple of broken cultic stone objects. These cultic objects and Altar E1 together indicate that as for early-mid Iron IIA, a religious community existed at 'Atarūz during the late Iron IIA and



13. Late Iron IIA- Iron IIB Building Remains in Fields A and E (Stratum 7) (R: Room, W: Wall, I: Installation).

Iron IIB periods.

What is also evident from Field E is that a couple of small-scale building projects were carried out principally by adding a new course of walls outside of the Stratum 8 temple courtyard. This building project might have led to the completion of a series of rather small rooms (Rooms A16, A17, and A21) all sharing the southeastern wall (Wall A46) of the Iron IIA temple courtyard as their party walls. Those rooms were located southwest of Installations E01 and appear to have been used mainly for kitchen and storage purposes. This architectural development postulates that upon the destruction of the Iron IIA

temple, 'Atarūz was transformed from a massive urban cultic center to a medium-sized town for residence but one continuously supporting important cultic activities. The lion's share of all these building remains was centered at the east and southeast side of the Iron IIA Central Courtyard, implying that the late Iron IIA-Iron IIB buildings (Strata 7-6) were clustered outside of the enclosure of the early-mid Iron IIA temple.

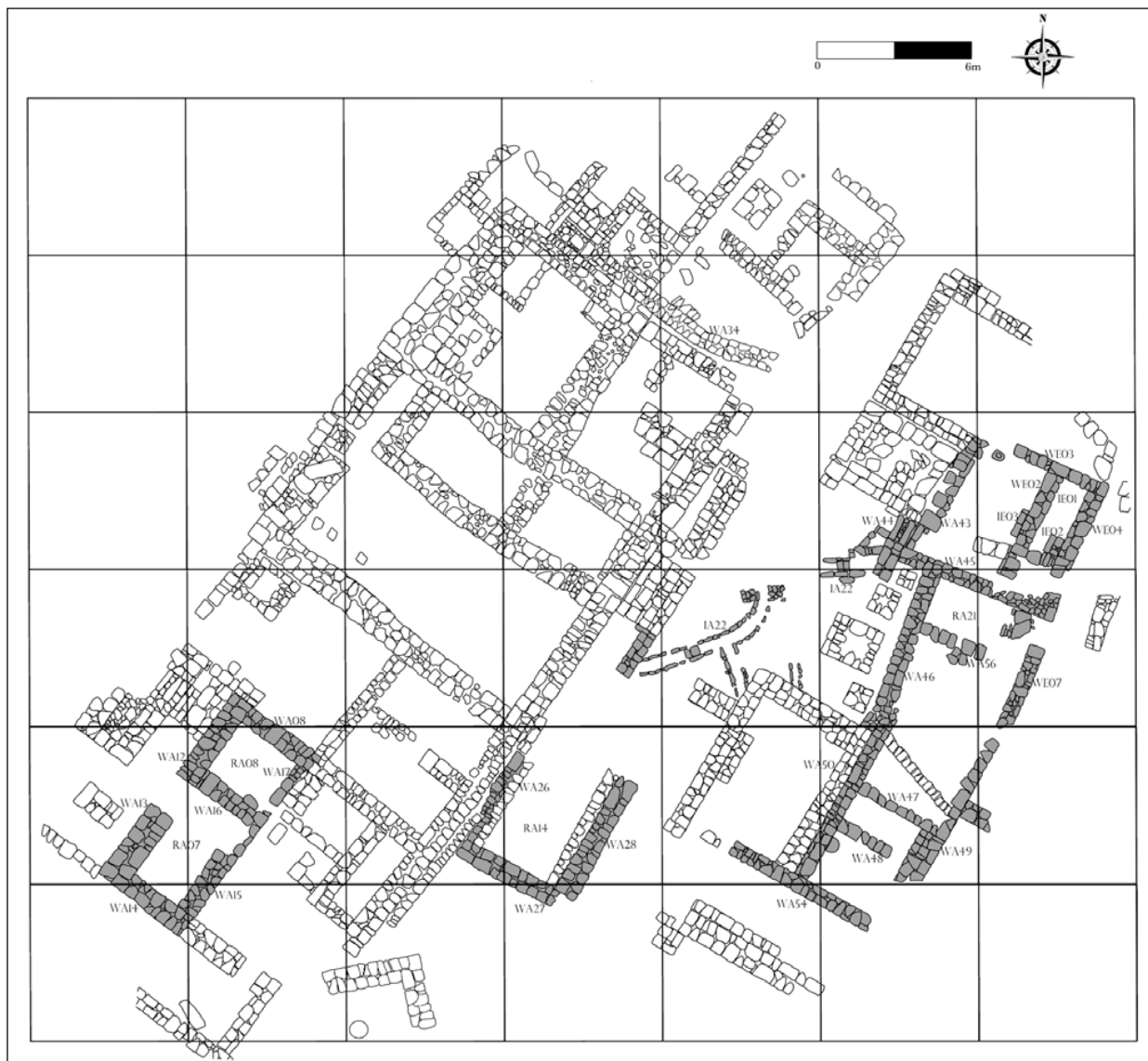
Turning to the Western Courtyard area, the two aforementioned entrance rooms (Eastern and Western Entrance Rooms) were reused by late Iron IIA-Iron IIB settlers. Two thin 20 cm soil layers were put above the early-mid Iron

IIA floor, a fact which separates the late Iron IIA-Iron IIB period into two sub-phases, one to Stratum 7 and the other one to Stratum 6. As stated above, the remains of an earlier floor and early Iron II sherds, which are attributed to the late phase of the early-mid Iron IIA temple period, were exposed under these two late Iron IIA-Iron IIB floors. This finding clearly points to the fact that late Iron IIA settlers reused the early-mid Iron IIA entrance rooms with some renovations such as putting a cross wall (Wall A16) between Walls A12 and A17 and blocking the outer gate of the entrance to the Western High Place. But, unlike early-mid Iron IIA when the entrance rooms were used together for religious

purposes, they were transformed into two separate, enclosed rooms for residential purposes during the periods of late Iron IIA and Iron IIB.

Stratum 6

The period represented in Stratum 6 is characteristic of the frequent appearance of fine and coarse painted ware with strong Ammonite influence. **Fig. 14** illustrates that the most notable new architectural feature from Stratum 6 was a network of water channels (roughly 30 cm wide and 30 cm deep) cut into the early-mid Iron IIA temple courtyard. The channel system (Installations A22) carried rainwater collected from various parts of the ground surface of the acrop-



14. Iron IIB Building Remains in Fields A and E (Stratum 6) (R: Room, W: Wall, I: Installation).

olis to the temple courtyard area. No cistern or pool connected with this water catchment and delivery system, however, has as yet been found. The interior of the water channels were carefully plastered and then covered with small stone slabs to minimize water evaporation. Other parts of the acropolis area were examined, but for a full comprehension of the aqueduct system and its basic plan more excavations are warranted. This limit notwithstanding, the water channels demonstrate that the Iron IIB settlers at 'Atarūz employed better water management skills as compared to their Iron IIA predecessors in collecting and bringing water to their residential area.

Excavations in the southern area of Field A uncovered a rectangular room (Room A14) roughly 3.5 m wide and at least 6 m long. This room is assigned to Stratum 6. The northwestern wall (Wall A26) of this room was built against the southeastern exterior wall of the early-mid Iron IIA temple complex. In addition, the late Iron IIA-Iron IIB altar in Field E (Installation E01) was continuously in use during this period. The presence of a new beaten-earth floor on top of the late Iron IIA-Iron IIB floor, both closely associated with the altar, attests to a peaceful transition from Stratum 7 to Stratum 6 with religious and settlement continuity.

As previously stated, the later phase of the Iron IIB floor inside the Eastern and Western Entrance Rooms in the western courtyard must be assigned to Stratum 6 as well. In the Eastern Entrance Room, a mixture of lime and sand, strengthened with small rocks, was applied to the surface of the earlier Stratum 7 floor to harden it. This plastered Stratum 6 floor is reminiscent of the partially plastered courtyard to the west of Altar E1 (Installation E01), which is also attributed to Stratum 6. Further, recall the aforementioned water channels in the central temple courtyard. Plastering seems to have been a common architectural feature of Stratum 6 at Khirbat 'Atarūz.

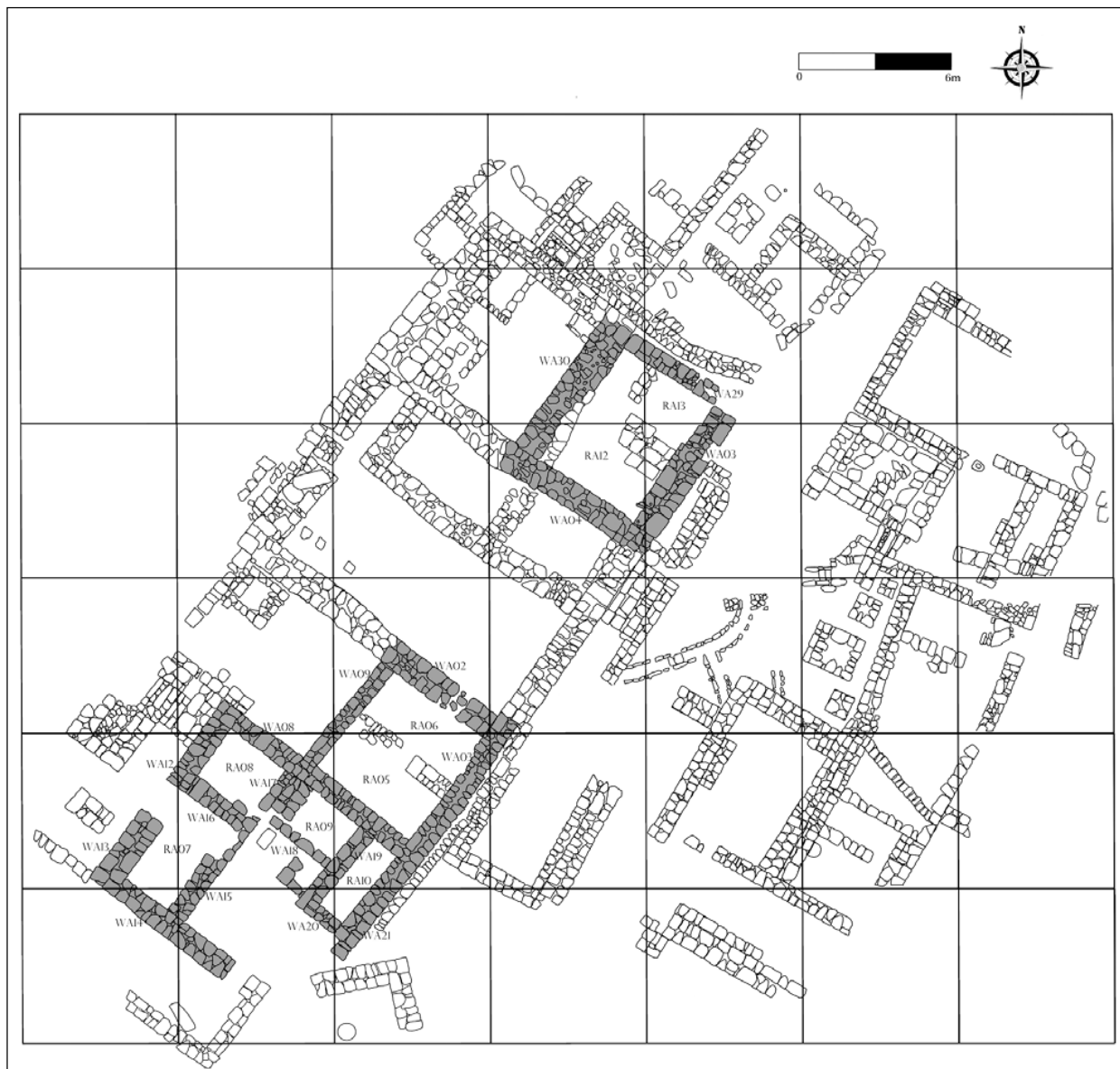
Finally, before turning to the Hellenistic period, it is appropriate to note that in contrast with that of Iron IIA and Iron IIB, late Iron II and Persian evidence is sparse at Khirbat 'Atarūz, except for some possible late Iron II pot sherds. No distinctive building remains can as yet be securely assigned to these periods. The

absence of the late Iron II and early Persian period is particularly striking because the seventh-fifth centuries BC were prosperous times at other major Iron II sites in the region, such as Tall al-'Umayrī (Herr and Clark 2007), Tall Jalūl (Younker 2007), Khirbat Mudaynat ath-Thamad (Daviau and Chadwick 2007), and Dhibān (Porter, Routledge, Steen, and al-Kawamliha 2007). It is possible at this point to make a provisional remark that 'Atarūz was likely abandoned during the Iron IIB period, and a long occupational gap ensued until the second century BC when Hellenistic settlers re-occupied the site.

Late Hellenistic Period (Strata 5-4)

At Khirbat 'Atarūz, as presented in **Figs. 15 and 16**, late Hellenistic remains are ubiquitous and well displayed in Fields A and C. First, Figure 15 shows that the southern half of the Hearth Room was used by late Hellenistic residents who divided the Hearth Room by building a cross compartment wall (Wall A09) between its northeastern and southwestern end walls. Besides the wall remains, one beaten-earth floor was identified inside the room (Rooms A05 and A06). The rooms and floors appear to have been used for the purpose of storage, granted that the majority of late Hellenistic sherds found in the area were from storage jars and pithoi. Cooking pots, bowls, and kraters were relatively sparse in the room. The late Hellenistic compartment wall still remains almost intact standing about 1 m high above the ground. Later, the wall was reused in the early and mid Islamic residents who used the same southern part of the Hearth Room area for both cooking and storage.

To the south of the Hearth Room, Rooms A09 and A10 constructed of undressed fieldstone were unearthened, rooms about 10 m southeast of the Western High Place. As for Rooms A05 and A06, these rooms and their adjacent area were apparently used for storage purposes, granted a large number of storage jar sherds found within and outside the rooms. Two successive Hellenistic beaten-earth floors were associated with Rooms A09 and A10, which were reminiscent of two thin Hellenistic soil layers (Strata 5-4) inside the Western and Eastern Entrances Rooms, in the order given. Probably, unlike Rooms A09-A10, the two entrance rooms were utilized for residence during the Hellenistic period.

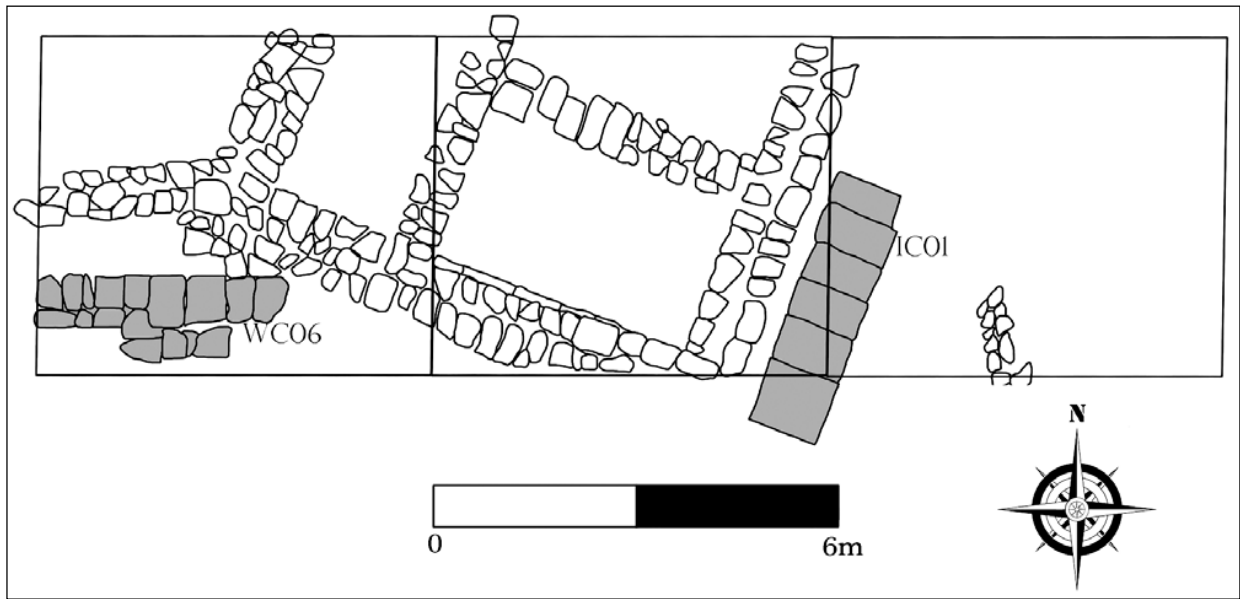


15. Late Hellenistic Building Remains in Fields A and E (Strata 5-4) (R: Room, W: Wall, I: Installation).

Another impressive late Hellenistic wall was found in the northern part of Field A, in which the residents built a thick and high wall (Wall A30) to separate the southern half of the Double Altar Room from its northern half. Late Hellenistic residents then used the southern part of the room (Rooms A12 and A13) for domestic and residential activities. They cleared Iron II temple floors in this area and put one new layer of beaten-earth floor as they did in Rooms A05 and A06.

Turning to the southeastern slope, as depicted in Figure 16, a wall line (Wall C06) and

small plastered bath in Field C seem to date to the late Hellenistic period. The bath was cut into limestone bedrock along with a set of five stairs (Installation C01) descending down to a small rectangular subterranean bedrock court, one at the same level as the doorway into the bath (see **Fig. 17**). Five steps led down into the bath from the doorway in the western wall of the bath. The inside of the bath was plastered. Apparently, the steps were cut for human entrance into the pool. The bath area was later inhabited by Mid Islamic residents. Two potsherds from inside the broken plastered wall of the bath, however, point



16. Late Hellenistic Building Remains in Field C. (W: Wall, I: Installation).



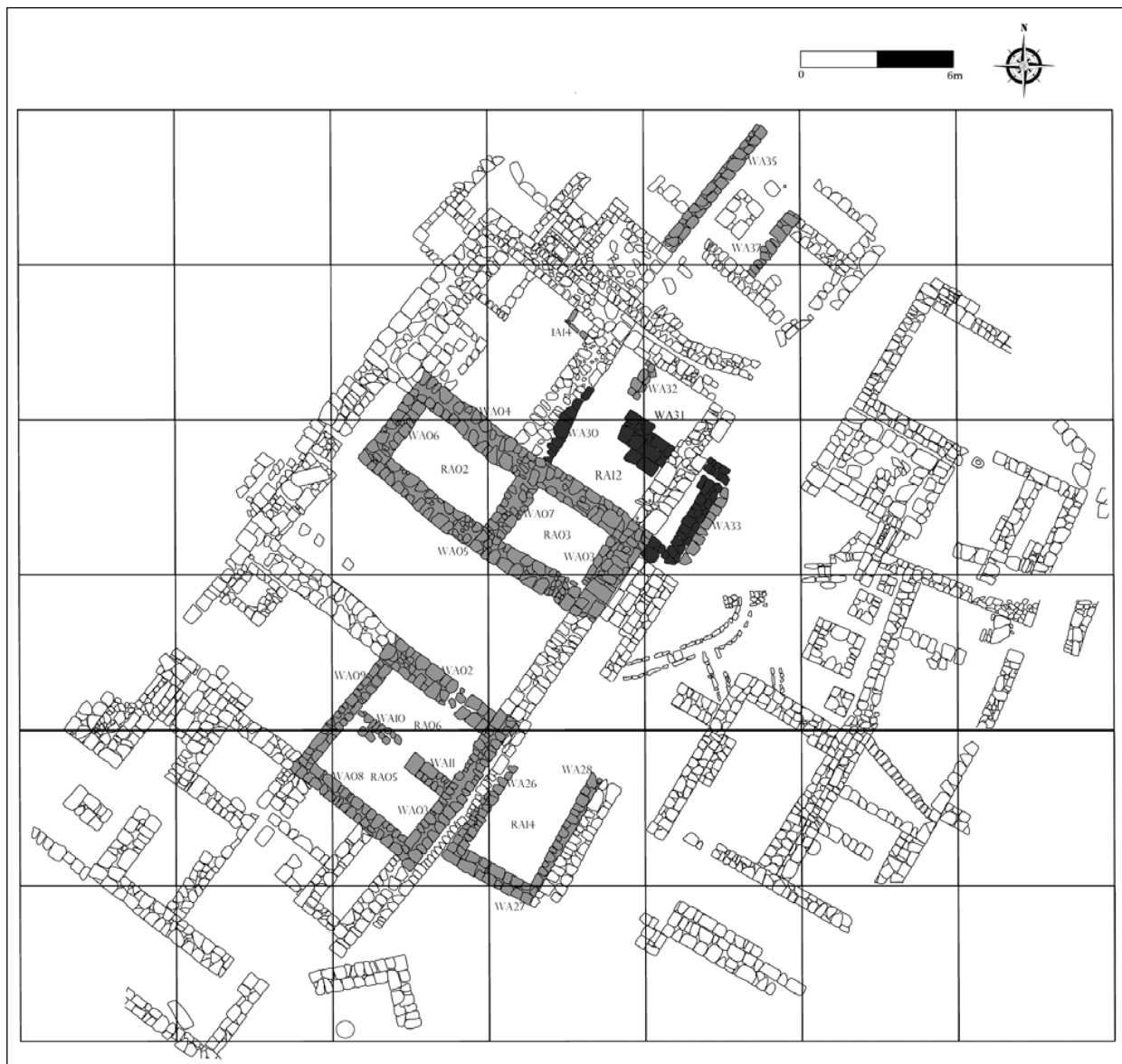
17. The Late Hellenistic-Early Roman Bath in Field C.

to the late Hellenistic-early Roman period as its construction date.

Early Islamic Period (Stratum 3)

After a rather long hiatus in the late Roman

and Byzantine periods, a human settlement was again established at 'Atarūz probably near the end of the Early Islamic period. In light of the excavation results shown in **Fig. 18**, thick but fragmentary walls (Walls A31 and A33) built by



18. Islamic Building Remains in Fields A and E (Strata 3-1) (Black Color: Early Islamic, Gray Color: Mid Islamic; R: Room, W: Wall, I: Installation).

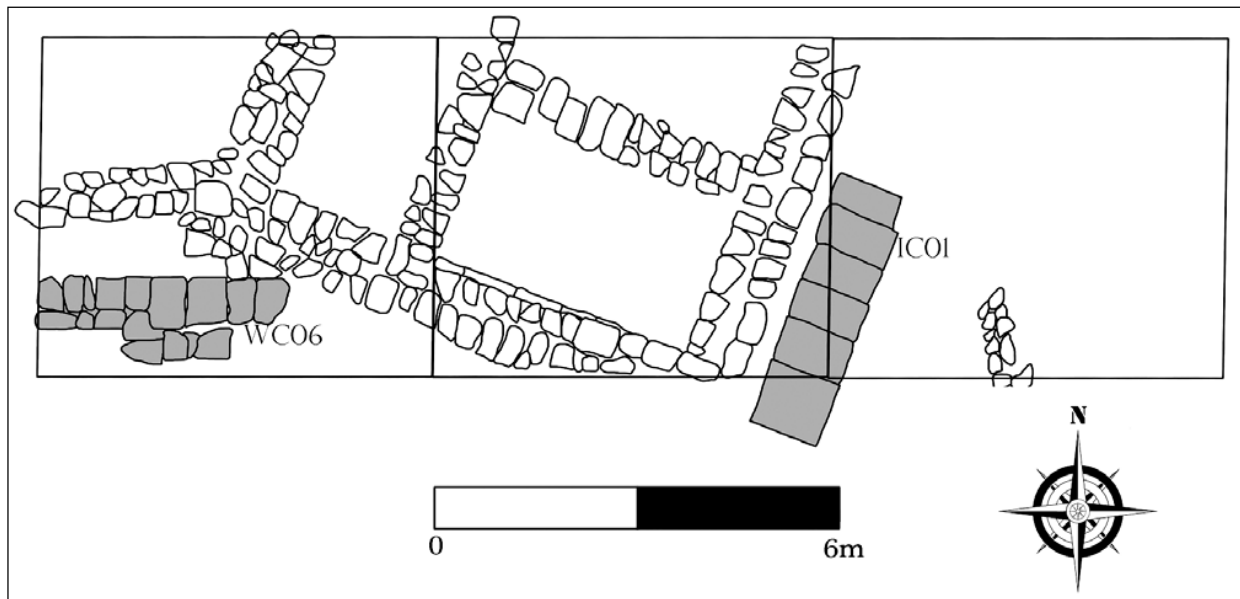
Early Islamic residents are present in Field A. In addition, they put buttress walls (Wall A30) against the Iron II and late Hellenistic walls to reuse the late Hellenistic room (Room A12) for domestic purposes. As in the late Hellenistic period, Early Islamic people used large rectangular stone blocks for their houses. One possible floor surface associated with the Early Islamic period was discovered at the northeastern edge of the temple's Central Courtyard, one containing several diagnostic Early Islamic and Iron II sherds but without any Mid Islamic remains.

Overall, Early Islamic evidence is as yet

scanty and preliminary relative to the Iron II, Hellenistic, and Mid Islamic periods. Distinctive Early Islamic walls and buildings are yet to be found. Further work is necessary to suggest a basic picture of Early Islamic settlement at Khirbat 'Atarūz.

Mid-Islamic Period (Strata 2-1)

The remains of a three-room house complex in Field C, mostly excavated in 2006, belong to the Mid Islamic period (see Fig. 19). The buildings were built above a bedrock slope between the seemingly Iron Age city wall south to Field



19. Mid Islamic Building Remains in Field C (Strata 2-1) (Gray Color: Stratum 2, Black Color: Stratum 1; R: Room, W: Wall, I: Installation).

C and its dry moat that surrounded the entire city for defense purposes. The three rooms (Rooms C01, C02, and C03) were all rectangular in shape and were built side by side in a row. They appear to have been accessed directly from the northern courtyard or street; they were not connected to one another by entrances. These rooms represent the only original Mid Islamic buildings found so far at 'Atarūz, buildings built by Mid Islamic populations without reusing earlier walls. Rooms C01 and C02 had two building phases (Strata 2-1), evidenced by two raised floor levels and the addition of an arch (Installation C02) inside the eastern room (Room C01).

Apart from Field C, Mid Islamic walls are also scattered in Field A, but they mostly represent compartment or buttress walls built against or across Iron II and Hellenistic remains to renovate the early architectural remains. As in Figure 18, the Mid Islamic buildings here lack any cohesive town building plans. For example, two walls (Walls A10 and A11) southeast to the Hellenistic wall in the Hearth Room should be assigned to the Mid Islamic period. These walls are nothing but 2 m. long walls erected in a haphazard manner as compartment walls to divide the Hellenistic room into two parts (Rooms A05 and A06), one (Room A05) of which appears to have been used primarily for food storage. This was also the case for the two compartment walls

(Walls A06 and A07) built across the Auxiliary Sanctuary Room in order to create two rooms (Rooms A02 and A03), probably for residence. Further, Room A14 appears to have been reused as an animal pen after putting one course of buttress walls inside the mid Iron II walls.

Mid Islamic residents also used the area east of the Eastern High Place for cooking and for some unknown activities. Walls A35 and A37 probably belong to the Mid Islamic period. These building activities almost completely destroyed most of earlier Iron II remains in the area, clearly removing part of the Eastern High Place as well as several cultic installations that were possibly erected east of the high place.

Conclusion

The excavated evidence from Khirbat 'Atarūz highlights four phases of cultic activities at the site during the period of late Iron I to mid Iron II. During this period, Khirbat 'Atarūz was apparently a thriving cultic center, which seems to have been built and maintained by a national or at least regional political entity.

Archaeological and ceramic evidence suggests that 'Atarūz was founded near the end of the Iron I period or slightly later and lasted about one century or less before it was violently destroyed in the middle of the Iron IIA period. The stratified evidence points to a rather short-

term cultic and human occupation during the early-mid Iron IIA period despite two phases of extensive building activities at the site, those corresponding to Strata 10 and 8.

Although descriptions of the entire plan of the second phase Iron IIA temple and its precinct may warrant some modest modifications if further excavations are ever allowed to expand to the modern cemetery area located north of the acropolis area, it now seems obvious that during the second phase, the main section of the cultic area contained a large impressive building with a bipartite central sanctuary hall along with at least two courtyard-like long rooms adjacent east and west of the sanctuary and two high places built at the northeast and southwest sections of the temple precinct. That is to say, the central part of the second phase Iron IIA temple was a multi-chambered structure comprised of at least three long parallel rooms built side by side with varied cultic installations including high places and several altars for animal sacrifice.

Khirbat 'Atarūz was then reused and rebuilt, which is attested to by two successive strata (Strata 7-6) attributable to the late Iron IIA and Iron IIB periods. Pottery from this post-early-mid Iron IIA temple period suggests a relatively long-term human occupation that is contemporaneous with the late Iron IIA-Iron IIB towns in the Mādabā Plains and the Dhibān Plateau. Kitchen remains, storage facilities, and aqueducts provide a rather clear portrait of normal village life, even though part of the earlier Iron IIA courtyard and its building remains were possibly continuously used for animal sacrifice and other cultic activities. Clearly, 'Atarūz functioned as an urban cultic center before and after the destruction of the early-mid Iron IIA temple.

Khirbat 'Atarūz was reconstructed during the late Hellenistic period. The original late Hellenistic structure contained two long walls inside the Hearth and Double Altar Rooms in the early-mid Iron IIA temple. Also several walls and rooms in the southwestern part of Field A should be attributed to the Hellenistic period. Although the entire town plan of the late Hellenistic settlement is as yet unclear, I can provisionally suggest that the rooms inside the early-mid Iron IIA temple complex would be residential, rather than administrative, industrial, or military. Also, in Field C, excavations along the north side of

Khirbat 'Atarūz have revealed late Hellenistic walls and bath installations. The recovery of a large volume of storage jar sherds testifies to the agricultural wealth of the late Hellenistic settlement as a whole. The late Hellenistic town of Khirbat 'Atarūz was most likely engaged in cereal farming probably along with oil or wine production. The evidence for industrial activities such as metal, weaving, and textile production is as yet relatively sparse for Hellenistic 'Atarūz compared to the Iron IIA and IIB periods.

The Mid Islamic residents re-established 'Atarūz as a medium-sized village as indicated by a number of walls possibly associated with this period. But there are difficulties in determining the exact plan and size of the Mid Islamic town, since Mid Islamic residents chose to reuse earlier walls as much as possible, rather than erecting new walls, in constructing their domestic buildings and residential rooms. For this reason, many of the building blocks of the early-mid Iron IIA temple complex were dismantled during the Mid Islamic period, a practice that was particularly extensive in the area to the north of the acropolis. Notwithstanding, it is clear that 'Atarūz was a rather populous and thriving village during the Mid Islamic period.

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