

UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN EXCAVATIONS AT KHIRBET SALAMEH, 1993

by
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The 1993 season of excavation at Khirbet Salameh was the second season of work at the site as a class in field archaeology of the University of Jordan. For the location of the site, history of excavation, and interpretation, see P. Bikai in *ADAJ* 37 (1993), pp. 521-532. At present, approximately 14 rooms of different sizes and functions can be traced around a courtyard (see Fig. 1).

Excavation Strategy

The excavation strategy has been changed from the previous year. The first season of excavation focused on digging the 5 m x 5 m squares in a checkerboard pattern as that strategy is the most economic and simple way to understand the layout of a site, particularly since the students worked only part of the day and had to attend other classes during the excavation period. In the 1993 season, a new strategy was introduced—open plan excavation. We worked room by room wherever rooms can be clearly defined. Thus the function of each room can be easily observed. This also helps to avoid mistakes during the processing of materials. Excavation in systematic squares continued in the areas where the floor plan was still not clear.

The 1993 Excavation

One objective was to completely clear four rooms that are located in a row on the eastern side of the building; this was partially attained and added new information about the site.

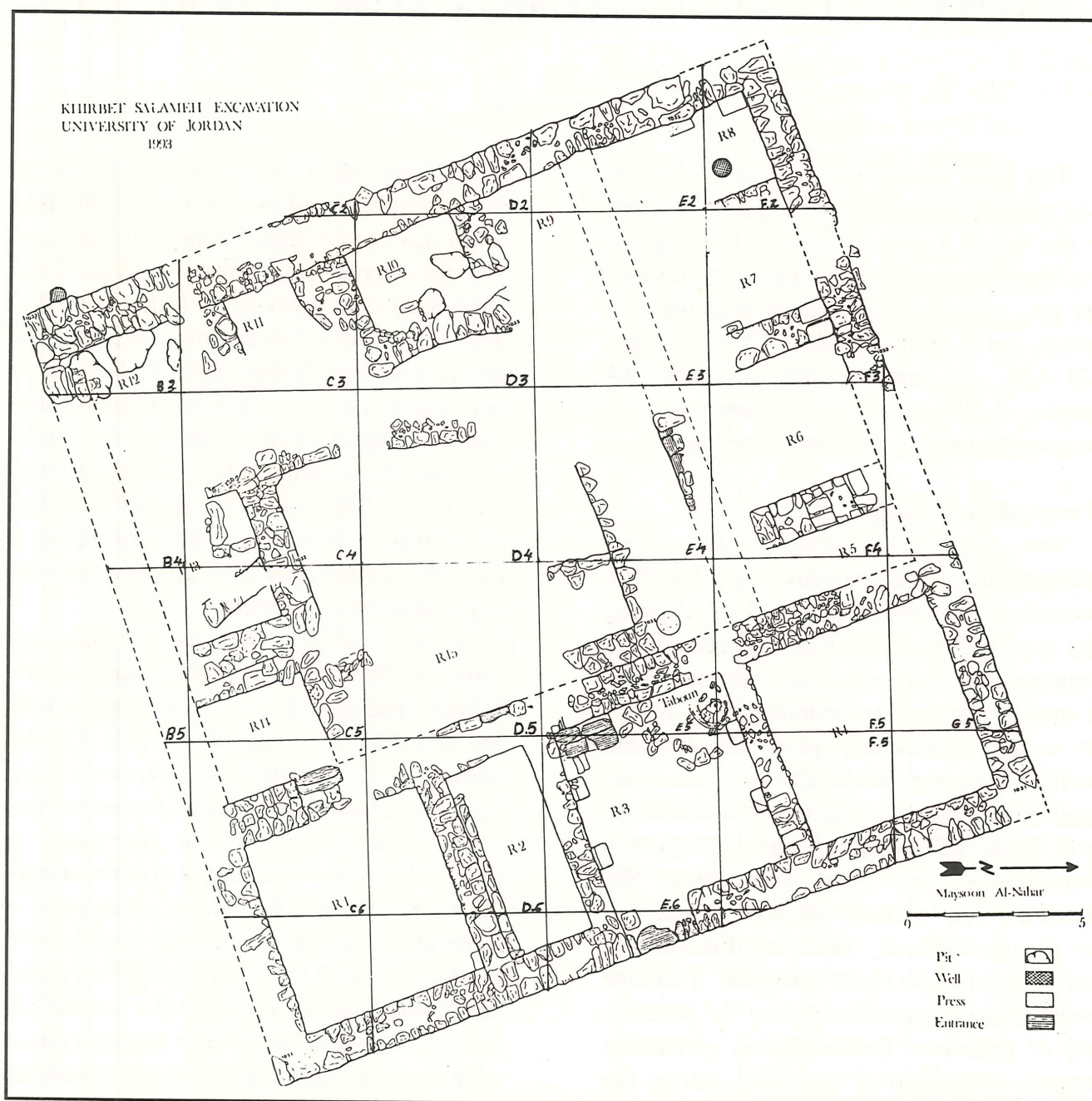
Room 1 is the largest room in the structure so far, and it was partially excavated. The walls in this room are still preserved to a height of ca. 1.5 m.

Room 2 is the narrowest room in the structure so far. The floor of this room is

much lower than that of Room 1 and its walls are preserved to a height of 2 m. This room has two springers, one from the east and the second from the west. This must have been to support an arch that extended across the room. On it, stone beams were laid as a surface for the roof. The floor level was not reached, but a row of stones was found arranged all the length of the southern wall. This feature may have been used as a bench. There must be several steps between this room and the courtyard which is much higher in elevation. Future excavation will reveal the connection.

Room 3. This room was the main entrance to the complex during parts of its history. The entrance is in the eastern wall but is not in the center of the wall. On the western wall opposite this door, stone steps against the southern wall lead to another entrance which opens to the courtyard. A large *ṭabun* was found in the northwest corner of the room. The *ṭabun* consists of a large upside-down storage jar. This is surrounded by a 12 cm thick layer of clay and small stones which is preserved to a height of 20 cm around part of the circumference of the jar. The *ṭabun* was set in an enclosure of irregular large stones, forming a curve starting from the western wall and abutting the steps, then turning toward the north. A layer of ca. 25 cm. of ash was found covering the whole enclosure. Neither the steps nor the *ṭabun* belong to the earliest period of occupation of the site as they are built over a layer of a previous settlement which will be investigated in the future. A coin was found in this room belonging to Flavius Galerius Constantinus (=Constantine the Great), dated to between A.D. 313 and 337.

Room 4. Part of the floor of this room was reached in the 1992 season and work



1. Plan of the excavation.

continued in 1993. We were not able to clear all the debris over the floor, because of its large size. However the function of this room as a storage room has already been established by the evidence of the large number of storage jars that stood in a row by the western wall.

Square Excavations

Except for one square, excavation this season began in all of the remaining grid covering the square building. The intention

of this strategy is, first, to understand the architectural divisions of the building and the function of each room, and, secondly, changes that may have occurred during the history of occupation. Two types of squares were excavated, those that were not yet completely dug last season, Sq. E-4, and Sq. F-3, and the new squares, B-4, C-3, C-4, F-2, and F-4.

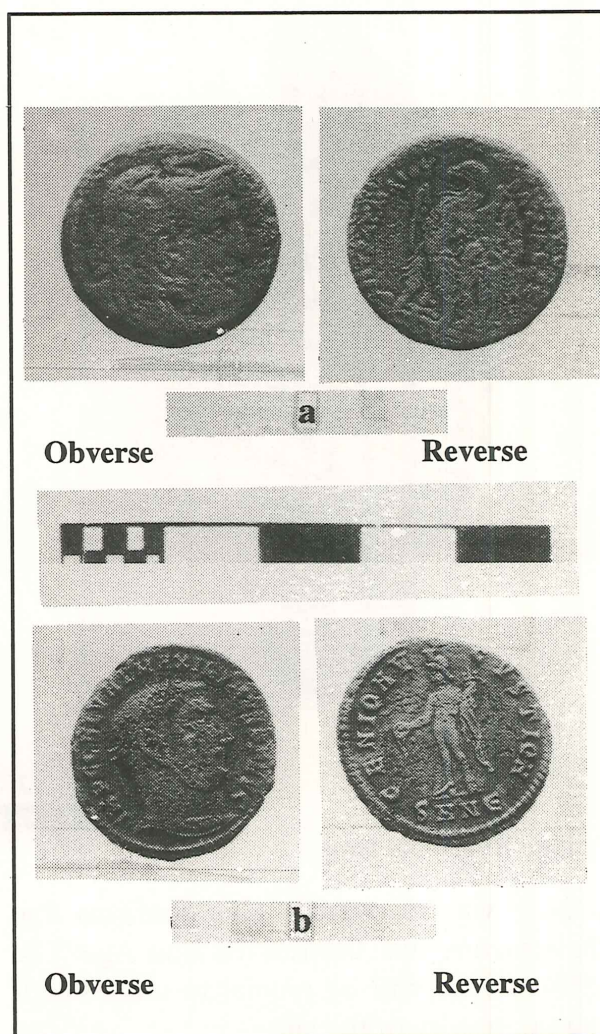
Square E-4 is located at the north center of the courtyard. In this square, a door leading to a room north of the courtyard was

found in the 1992 season. The task in 1993 was to clear the courtyard and find the extension of a low wall which parallels the door at a distance of 2.1 m. On the southern side of this wall, we found an accumulation of large stones and debris. This goes down 2.5 m into what is apparently a cave or a cut into bedrock below the level of the courtyard. Another wall joins that one at a 90 degree angle on the eastern side of this wall; it is preserved to a height of 1 m. It is possible that this is an entrance to an underground cave used for some purpose, perhaps storage.

Square F-3 is located towards the center of the northwest side of the building. In 1992, this square revealed only the northern outer wall. In 1993, the excavation reached and partly cleared the floor of two rooms separated by a wall that survives only to a limited height. At locus 11 of this square a bronze coin of Maximianus II (Galerius Valerius Maximinus, also known as Daja; see Fig. 2b) was found; this is dated A.D. 305-313. In locus 12, which is below locus 11, a late Byzantine lamp (Fig. 3) was found indicating reversal of the stratigraphy. In locus 13, another bronze coin was found which is dated to Ptolemaeus III (Euegetes I, 247-222 B.C.; see Fig. 2a). Materials from a large basin in the lower levels of this square were collected for further study.

Square B-4 is located on the southwestern side of the building, over the southern wall. The excavation in this area was not so deep, a layer of deposit between 10 to 20 cm was cleared revealing stones laid over bedrock. This wall is part of the southern outer wall. The pottery recovered from this square is all washed, mixed and from different periods, including Iron II and Roman-Byzantine.

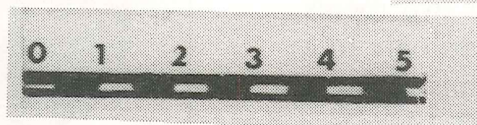
Square C-3. This square revealed the highest floor in this complex. As previously reported, the floors of this building are not all at the same level as they follow the landscape of the natural bedrock. In this square



2. a. Coin of Ptolemaeus III (Euegetes I, 247-222 B.C.); b. Coin of Maximianus II (Galerius Valerius Maximinus, also known as Daja, A.D. 305-313).

we found the latest pottery from the site. It can be dated to the Umayyad period. Additionally, there were a few small yellow-glazed sherds that are perhaps from the Ayyubid/Mamluk era. However Roman-Byzantine pottery was the preponderant type. The floor of the room in this square is bedrock, but in some places flat flagstones were added to even the surface.

Square C-4. In 1992, the lower levels of this square yielded three spindle whorls (Fig. 4), an Ammonite black ware rim, and a fragment of a Phoenician plate. In 1993, excavation continued on the other side of a wall that was interpreted as being possibly Ammonite; in the lower levels more Iron II



3. Late Byzantine lamp.

pottery was recovered. This confirms that the structure was used in the Iron Age. The 1994 season will be crucial to understanding the history of the site.

Square C-5. This square revealed Room 14 on the southern side of the building. This room has a bench built next to the western wall. From this room there is a door leading into room 1. There must be another gate from this room toward the courtyard, and future excavation will clarify this.

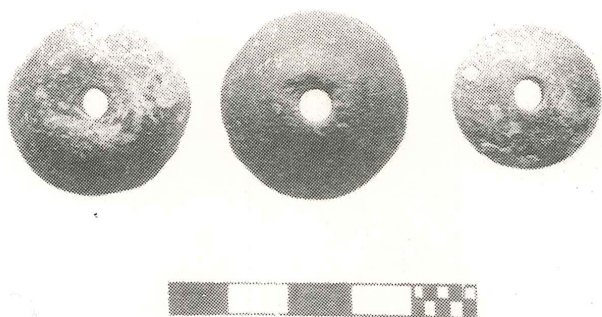
Square F-2. This square is located at the northwestern corner of the building. Two walls, the western and northern ones, were visible before the excavation started; now a third wall has been found to the east. They enclose a room which is only 2.6 m wide. In the lower level of this room a bronze coin was found just on the bedrock floor. It belongs to Flavius Constantinus (= Constantine the Great) and can be dated to between A.D. 313 and 326. A well was found close to the center of the room. It measures 55 cm at the mouth and had been closed

with two large stones. Another well was found in 1992 at the southwestern side of the building. It has also been sealed closed. The fact that these wells were sealed may indicate that when the inhabitants of Khirbet Salameh left, they intended to return.

Square F-4. This square revealed the narrowest room in this complex; it is 1.7 m wide. The western wall of this room is different from all the rest of the walls in the structure. It has a large number of ashlar stones, built like piers and filled in the middle with small stones. This wall has also a cornice, but since the floors in this area were not reached this season the relationship of the cornice to the floor is as yet unknown.

Conclusion

The evidence from the coins and the preliminary reading of the pottery confirm what was found in the 1992 season, namely that the site was occupied during the Iron



4. Spindle whorls.

Age, the Early Hellenistic, the Late Roman-Byzantine to the Umayyad era, and possibly in the Ayyubid period. The layout of the building became much clearer in the 1993 season. It consists of a large courtyard surrounded by 14 rooms of varying sizes and function. The 1994 season will focus on finishing the excavation of the rooms inside the building, and preparing the materials for the final interpretation of the site.

Acknowledgements

Excavation at Khirbet Salameh is a summer class in field archaeology for University of Jordan students (Fig. 5) and is a joint project of the university and ACOR. The team in 1993 consisted of 33 students. Photographer Sarkis Labejian, foreman Ayesh Abou Hilal, architect Maysoun al-Nahar, and a driver were supplied by the university as well as the necessary equipment; 12 laborers were supplied by the Department of Antiquities and the assistance of the Director General of Antiquities, Dr. Safwan Tell, is much appreciated, as is the assistance of Dr. Nabil Khairy of the university for organizing this project and assisting with the ceramics reading, and of Dr. Zbigniew T. Fierma for assistance with the coin readings.

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5. View of the site.

