

MĀDABĀ PLAINS PROJECT: EXCAVATIONS AT TALL AL-'UMAYRĪ, 1998

by

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Introduction

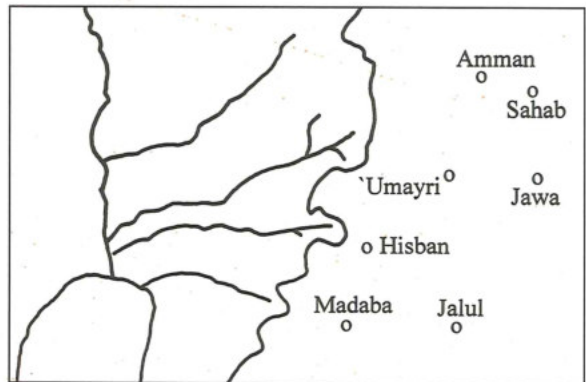
A seventh season of excavation by the Mādabā Plains Project occurred between June 21 and August 5, 1998. It was sponsored by Andrews University in consortium with Canadian University College, La Sierra University, and Walla Walla College. Full reports have already been published for the first three seasons (see *ADAJ* 1997: 145).

This season, a team of about 87 persons took part in the interdisciplinary project at Tall al-'Umayri, located about 10 km south of Amman's Seventh Circle on the Queen Alia Airport Highway at the turnoff for Amman National Park (Fig. 1).¹

During this season, Fields A and B - which were first opened in the first season (1984) - had their squares deepened into Iron I and Late Bronze Age remains; Field H - first excavated in 1994 was expanded to the south, uncovering late Iron II, Persian, Hellenistic, and Byzantine remains; more surfaces around the dolmen were found in Field K to the west and north; and a new field, Field L, was opened on the southern lip of the site.

Field A: The Upper Western Slope (John I. Lawlor)

Previous excavation in Field A on the



1. Map of the Mādabā Plains region.

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). Small hints of Iron I and early Iron II material were found at isolated locations, especially in the northern parts of Field A. This season one new square was opened to the west of the central portion of Field A and three squares from earlier seasons were deepened; these straddled the rim of the site to the west of the administrative complex in order to catch the outer fortification wall and the buildings immediately inside that wall, which we have dated to the early Iron I pe-

1. The authors of this report are especially indebted to Dr Ghazi Bisheh, then Director-General of the Department of Antiquities; Ahmed esh-Shami and Zuheir az-Zoubi, Department of Antiquities representatives; and other members of the Department of Antiquities who facilitated our project at several junctures.

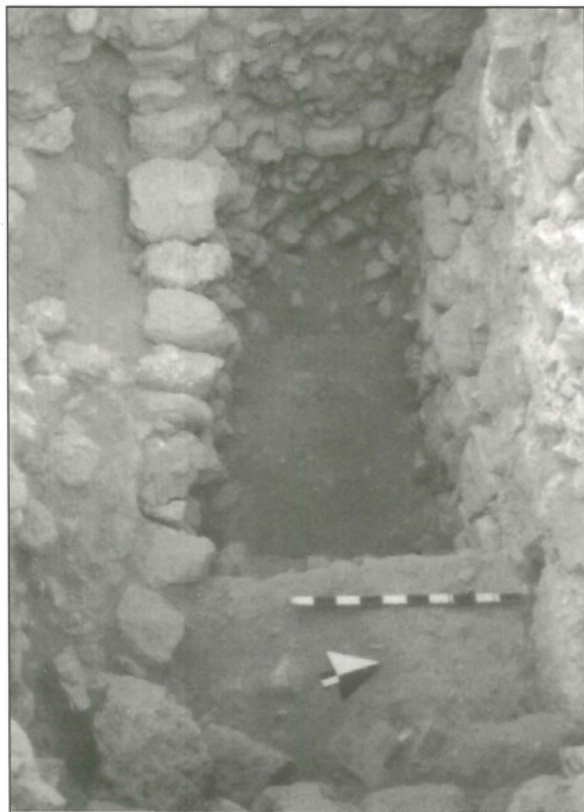
The land owner of Tall al-'Umayri, Dr Raouf Abu-Jaber, was again generous in facilitating and encouraging our research. The officers and staff of the American Schools of Oriental Research and its local affiliate, the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman directed by Dr Pierre Bikai and assisted by Dr Patricia Bikai, provided invaluable

assistance. The staff was housed in al-Muqabelein at the Amman Training College, an UNWRA junior college for Palestinians. We give special thanks to its Principal, Dr Fakhri Toumleleh 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 to each member of our 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.

riod. Because these excavations were outside the Ammonite administrative center excavated in previous seasons, we will list only the phases encountered this season with tentative suggestions as to how the phasing connects with that mentioned in earlier reports.

Phase 14 (Middle Bronze IIC? Or Early Iron I). Beneath the outer fortification wall of the subsequent phase was a lower “skirting” which extended a few centimeters from under the later wall in three squares where the wall turns from a north-south orientation to east-west (Fig. 2). Although the earth layers running against it contained early Iron I pottery, we have not yet reached its founding level and there is some stratigraphic reason to suggest that it may be a continuation of the Middle Bronze Age wall uncovered in Field B. Alternatively, it could be from an early Iron I phase earlier than any we have



2. Tall al-'Umayri, Field A (Phases 14 and 13): The lower phase of the perimeter wall extends beneath the upper phase; the skirting is visible above the right end of the meter stick.

so far found in Fields A and B. A parallel wall only 1.5 m south of the easternmost portion of the wall is as yet unexplained (Fig. 2), but the earth layers running against it were also early Iron I and its founding level has also not yet been attained.

Phase 13 (Early Iron I). The major early Iron I fortification wall was built on top of the Phase 14 wall line (or “skirt”) but inset 0.15-0.20 m (Fig. 2). A surface sealed against the south face of this wall in the southwestern extent of our excavations and covered the Phase 14 walls. At the same location the wall stands at least 3.30 m high (nine courses) and shows evidence of having been plastered (Fig. 3). Fragments of the plaster also lay upon the surface. Where the wall turns to the east, the masonry style changes from small boulders to large boulders set in two rows (Fig. 4). This phase of the wall now stretches from the northern ex-



3. Tall al-'Umayri, Field A (Phase 13): Elevation of the early Iron I perimeter wall; note the plaster remnants in cracks.



4. Tall al-'Umayri, Field A (Phase 13): Early Iron I perimeter wall from above.

tent of Field B (the northwest corner of the site) into Field A where it curves east and was cut by the late Iron II Ammonite administrative complex (Fig. 5). We may have picked it up again in Field H where it was heading south and then may have turned east again. If the plan has been reconstructed correctly, then we have traced it for approximately 85 m.

Remains of the buildings inside the wall were uncovered in the northern two squares. These were probably parts of Building A, partially uncovered in Field B during the 1989 to 1994 seasons (Herr *et al.* 1996: 68). The floors discovered this season are at the same level as those of Building A and contained fragments of collared pithoi. More excavation is needed to show coherent house plans. Above these remains was a brick destruction layer identical to that found in Field B.

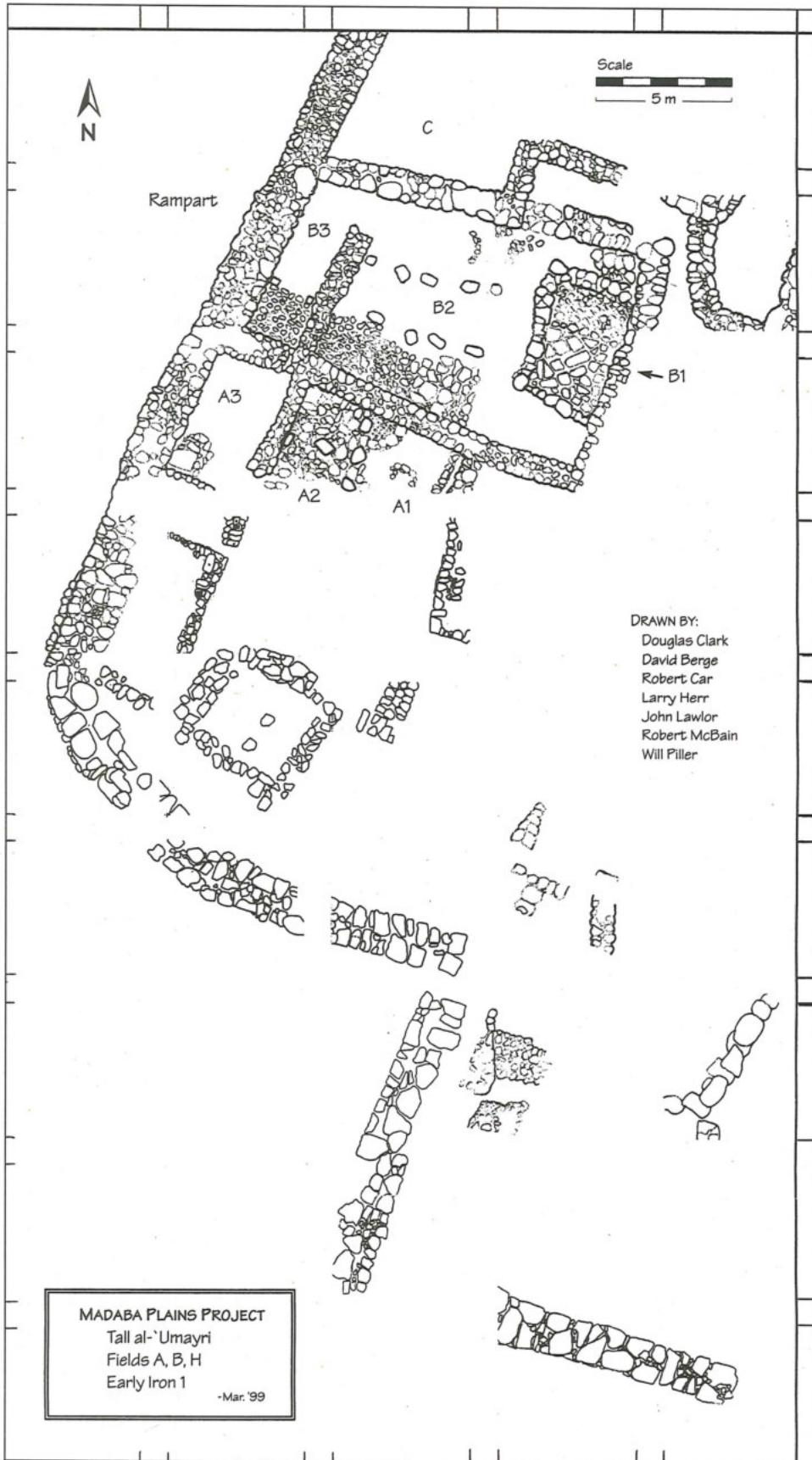
Phase 12 (Early Iron I). Inside the curve of the wall was a square room with two stone pillars somewhat off center (Fig. 6). The northern wall was clearly founded within the Phase 13 destruction debris. A surface joined all these architectural features but no objects or pottery were found on the surface. We have not as yet answered the question about why the pillars were off center and why no door is apparent except for a possible 0.75 m opening halfway up the wall in the northeast corner and about 0.60 m above the surface. Approximately 0.85 m of loose ashy soil filled the room, apparently deposited after the room had gone out of use because it covered the collapsed southern pillar. The ash did not contain any artifacts and was deposited in such a way as to suggest rapid deposition, perhaps when the burned destruction of Phase 12 was leveled for the next settlement. If so, it may have been deposited at the beginning of Phase 11. Half of a large scarab (Object No. 6510) came from the ash.

Northwest of this room were two wall fragments from a room that most likely abut-

ted the interior of the fortification wall. It may have been used with another east-west wall fragment immediately west of the two-pillared room. A small wall fragment may have framed a door that opened to another room. No surfaces have yet been found inside these rooms, but the floor levels of Building A in Field B have not yet been reached. In the destruction debris to the east of the rooms a bronze cymbal (Object No. 6615) was found which probably formed a pair with a slightly differently shaped object from the 1996 season (Object No. 6199) (Fig. 7). More wall fragments were found about seven meters east of these rooms, but no coherent plan or surfaces have yet been found.

Phase 11 (Iron I). The fortification wall from Phase 13 continued in use as did the pillared room which may now have been used to deposit the ash layers of the Phase 12 destruction. Two wall fragments which formed a door jamb found during the 1987 season (Geraty, *et al.* 1989: 146) may have been part of this phase as was a plastered surface covering the Phases 13 and 12 destruction layers in the northern part of the field. Other fragmentarily exposed remains in the southern portion of the field may come from this period; they include wall lines and a cobbled floor.

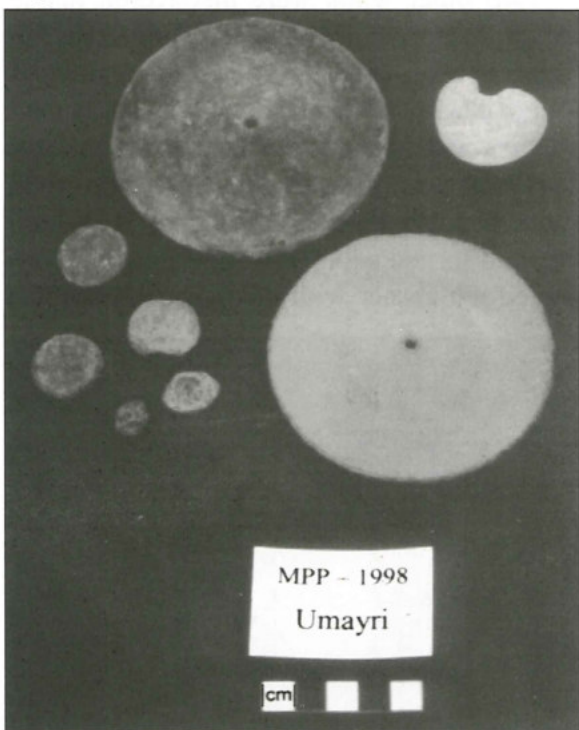
Phase 10 (Iron I). Two north-south walls that define Phase 10 were built upon the plaster surface of phase 11. The eastern wall may have served as a terrace wall to support a store room to the west; our western wall was the eastern wall of this room which, in the 1996 season, produced 18 collared pithoi embedded into the destruction of Phase 11 or 12 and in various states of preservation. Flotation samples from the pithoi yielded grape, chickpea, barley, wild legume, and other unidentified seeds. Small fragments of walls found in previous seasons to the southeast were probably part of this phase. The



5. Tall al-'Umayri, Fields A (Phase 13), B (Phase 11), and H (Phase 9): Plan of the early Iron I perimeter wall as we reconstruct its plan at the western edge of the site.



6. Tall al-'Umayri, Field A (Phase 12): Early Iron I pillared room and surface.



7. Tall al-'Umayri, Field A (Phase 12): Pair of cymbals from destruction (with other miscellaneous objects); the upper cymbal was found in 1996.

earlier fortification wall continued in use. All Phase 10 remains were covered by an ash layer separating Iron I layers from those of Iron II.

Phase 9 (Early Iron II). This phase is represented by a layer of debris that overlay the Phase 10 destruction ash and contained early Iron II pottery.

Phase 8B (Iron II). Two earth layers overlying that of Phase 9 contained Iron II pottery.

Phase 7B (Late Iron II/Early Persian). Debris layers outside, covering, and inside the Iron I fortification wall suggest that the wall was no longer in use. Other earth layers with Late Iron II/Early Persian pottery also covered most of the other features. A rubbly line of stones may have been added to the northern wall of the pillared room. From a layer sealing against this stone line came an Athenian tetradrachma (Object No. 6530).

Phase 4 (Hellenistic?). One black terra sigillata sherd came from an earth deposit above the Phase 7B loci. Elsewhere, a pit may belong to this phase. The Hellenistic phase in Field H has also revealed pits.

Phase 3 (Roman). The latest pottery in the topsoil of three squares contained Roman sherds.

Phase 2 (Byzantine-Late Islamic). Five earth layers contained pottery from the Byzantine to Late Islamic periods.

Phase 1 (Modern). Modern activity, such as sift deposits from previous seasons of our excavation, was detected in two squares.

Field B: Northwest Domestic Quarter (Douglas R. Clark)

Previous seasons in Field B have produced the fortification system for the site during the Middle Bronze Age and early Iron I, as well as houses from the latter 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). Work during this season took place at the northern extent of the field and focused on answering questions raised by work in 1996. What pe-

riods could be found preceding the early Iron I houses? Why was so much Middle Bronze Age pottery coming up near the northwest corner of the site? What kind of building lay north of the Iron I structures and did it date to early Iron I, as well? What was the stratigraphic connection between Fields A and B? These questions were approached by excavating deeper in the eastern part of the field to reach the bottom of a large pit just east of the early Iron I house uncovered completely in the previous season. Excavations were also deepened north of the early Iron I house in order to understand the emerging architecture. As well, the northernmost remains of the late Iron II/Persian administrative complex which stretches into Field A was excavated.

Phase 14 (Middle Bronze Age IIC). For the first time, work during this season produced coherent MB IIC architectural features at the top of the site (fragmentary remains had been found on the north slope in 1987 [Herr *et al.* 1989: 154-155]). It was expected to find an early Iron I house north of Building B, but this season's work showed that the MB IIC rampart rose originally to a high point at the northwest corner of the site. Founded within the rampart was a major wall which dates to this period, but was discovered to be in precise alignment with the later Phase 11 perimeter wall. Whether this was part of a MB IIC perimeter wall or part of a tower at the northwest corner of the site is not as yet clear. Farther to the south, the wall was reused as part of an early Iron I rebuild after an earthquake caused the collapse of the rampart and wall around 1200 BC (Herr *et al.* 1996: 66). It had been long noted the different masonry style on the surface of the tall (small boulders and large cobbles—definitely not Cyclopean) in this portion of the wall, but could not document its date. It was assumed to be early Iron I, like the rest of the wall. But the debris layers inside the wall clearly dated it to MB

IIC. Just where the MB wall stops and the early Iron I addition starts has not yet been clearly determined. It was also not clear as to whether this wall was part of a perimeter wall that encircled the site on top of the rampart or was part of a tower at the northwest corner of the site. Because no corner has been found which would represent the southern wall of a tower, it would appear most likely that the wall was a perimeter wall which was destroyed to the south. The wall was founded on top of the chalky rampart (Fig. 8).

Two other walls were discovered inside the perimeter wall and were founded on top of the rampart (Fig. 9). One of the walls was founded with several courses of neatly laid cobbles and had a superstructure of bricks. This wall was oriented east-west and turned south beneath Phase 11 Building B. Where the wall turned south, a stone extension connected the corner with the perimeter wall to



8. Tall al-'Umayri, Field B (Phase 14): Perimeter or tower wall founded on top of the rampart.



9. Tall al-'Umayri, Field B (Phase 14): Two wall fragments; the cornering wall in the middle had a superstructure of bricks; the stone wall going out of the picture at the top center was added slightly later.

the west. On the south side of this extension was part of a finely plastered pool (Fig. 10) with an east-west width of about two meters. Because it extended beneath Phase 11 Building B, its north-south dimension could not be determined.

Farther inside the site, about 18 meters east of the crest of the rampart, was the bottom course of a MB IIC structure made of large boulders (Fig. 11), the closest masonry style to Cyclopean at the site so far. Because the wall seems to corner to the west, the semi-plastered surface (plaster patches and/or a thin layer of chalk on top) found on its east side was probably an exterior surface. No objects were found there.

Phase 13 (Late Bronze Age II). After a hiatus during the early part of the Late Bronze Age, the site was again occupied at some point during LB II. Two rooms from a single building on an east-west axis were



10. Tall al-'Umayri, Field B (Phase 14): North end of a plastered pool; it goes beneath a balk to the left.



11. Tall al-'Umayri, Field B (Phase 14): Wall with large stones beneath stone rubble of Phase 13.

found immediately north of the Phase 14 walls near the northwest corner of the site (Fig. 12). A doorway led from the western room to the north where it has not been excavated yet. The western room contained a very hard, but irregular beaten-earth surface; this floor was very easy to trace in the room but could not be followed through the door into the eastern room where no corresponding surface was found. Perhaps this room was used much less intensively. But no objects were found in either room to sug-



12. Tall al-'Umayri, Field B (Phase 13): Building with two rooms and brick-like stones.

gest functions. A probe beneath the surface in the western room revealed another destruction layer and showed that the walls of the building keep descending and an earlier floor phase may still be found. The south wall of the building has so far been exposed to a height of approximately three meters. The brick-like masonry style of the stones in all the walls is unique at the site.

Southeast of this building were the remains of another LB building immediately above the MB IIC structure. Another beaten-earth surface was found here running up to a wall constructed of large boulders. This wall runs west beneath Building B of Phase 11 and was cut by the large Phase 12 garbage pit to the east.

Phase 12 (Late Bronze Age/Early Iron I). During the 1996 season a large pit filled with homogeneous debris containing almost 15,000 animal bones was excavated. This season, the bottom of the pit was located (immediately above the Phase 14 building with large stones) and the bones were preliminarily analyzed by Joris Peters of the Institut für Palaeoanatomie in Munich, Germany. His oral preliminary report was that the bones were from similar parts of primarily sheep/goat carcasses and that these parts were the edible portions of the animals. A few pig and cattle bones were also found. This analysis certainly fits our interpretation of the pit as a garbage depository that was in use intensively for a relatively

short period of time. The debris layers in the pit sloped downward to the east, suggesting they had been thrown into the pit from the west. Was this a large garbage pit for people living in an earlier phase of Buildings A and B? We have uncovered evidence for such an earlier phase in these buildings during previous seasons. The pottery from the pit contained many LB sherds, and also had a few that were similar to those found in the destruction of the Phase 11 Buildings.

Phase 11 (Early Iron I). Most of Buildings A and B were excavated in previous seasons. One wall was found during this season just southeast of Building A. However, considerably more destruction debris from this phase was removed in the southeastern corner of the field. No surfaces or architectural features were found.

Phase 7. A pit into the Phase 11 destruction was excavated in the southeastern corner of Field B. Several other pits were excavated in this area in earlier seasons. The pottery from the pit was the typical late Iron II/early Persian corpus from 'Umayri that dates to the sixth and fifth centuries BC.

Field H: The Southwestern Administrative Complex (David R. Berge)

This season was the third summer we excavated in Field H (Herr *et al.* 1996: 69-70). Excavation expanded to the south in order to extend our research to the very edge of the site. The southern extent of the Ammonite administrative complex was found. Outside these remains to the south were walls and surfaces from later periods above apparent domestic remains contemporary with the administrative complex.

Phase 9 (Iron I). A thick north-south wall at the western edge of the site from this phase was uncovered in previous seasons (Figs. 5 and 13). We now suspect it may have been part of the early Iron I perimeter

wall found in Fields A and B. During this season the top courses of an apparently similar wall were found running east-west slightly to the southeast (Figs. 5 and 14). Although no Iron I remains have yet been found in association with it (excavation is not deep enough), it may be part of the same perimeter wall system. But this is by no means certain. The Ammonite administrative center to the north seems to end at this wall, perhaps reusing it.

Phase 8 (Early Iron II; =Phase 7 in 1996). Added to the finds from last season, was a possible flagstone pavement at the southeast corner of the field; the stones may also belong to a large wall; the only reason to apply these stones to this phase is because



13. Tall al-'Umayri, Field H (Phase 9): The north-south stretch of the early Iron I perimeter wall, possibly the same wall as that of Phase 13 in Field A.



14. Tall al-'Umayri, Field H (Phase 9): The east-west stretch of a possible early Iron I wall (beneath the meter stick); it may be the same perimeter wall as that of Phase 13 in Field A.

they precede the structure of Phase 7.

Phase 7 (Late Iron II; =Phase 6 in 1996). The walls from this phase were built upon and into the fill layers that covered Phase 8. The phase includes the large wall we have tentatively suggested may be part of the Phase 9 perimeter wall, now reused (?) as the southern wall of the Ammonite administrative center. Another wall was connected to it by a cobbled surface which was at least 3 x 3.15 m in size, but has not yet been all excavated. Another small patch of cobbled surface which probably belongs to this phase was found to the north. Disruption by later constructions does not allow a coherent plan of the buildings.

Phase 6 (Late Iron II/Early Persian; =Phase 5 in 1996). This phase represents a major remodeling of Phase 7. Doors were blocked and new ones were constructed with added walls. However, except for a few of the walls, none of the foundation levels were reached, so our phasing must remain tentative. In the debris immediately above the surface (Fig. 15) of a room in the southwestern part of the field a complete juglet, several half bowls, a grinder, a whetstone, a weight, one ballistic missile, and a horse-and-rider figurine were found. The earth layers which surrounded and covered the walls were the result of the collapsing walls; no destruction debris was observed. The pot-



15. Tall al-'Umayri, Field H (Phase 6): Earth deposits above a surface with finds *in situ*.

tery belonged to the typical late Iron II/early Persian corpus of southern Ammon.

Phase 5 (Late Iron II/Early Persian; =Phase 4 in 1996). Although a few walls seem to be new to this phase, most of the Phase 6 walls were reused, but one of the doorways was blocked. A combined flagstone beaten-earth surface was found in the southeastern portion of the field; on the surface was a broken cooking pot. Farther to the northwest was also a cobble surface with plaster on top; a similar floor was found in the room to the west. These plastered floors (on top of a cobbled foundation layer) are to be equated with the similar construction of the plaster floor found in the large room to the north in the 1996 season (Fig. 16). The lack of a doorway into this large room was noted in last season's report; excavation this season likewise did not produce a door. Although this large room was clearly part of the administrative complex, the smaller rooms excavated to the south during this season could have been residential.

Phase 4 (Persian; =Phase 3 in 1996). This phase constituted of a reuse of all the architecture of Phase 5 except for two walls, and should be seen as a minor remodeling. It most likely corresponded to the second plaster floor in the large administrative



16. Tall al-'Umayri, Field H (Phase 5): Large room of the administrative center with plastered floor discovered in 1996.

room to the north excavated in 1996. A second plaster floor, extant only in patches, was also found in the rooms immediately to the south of the large room. Several later pits intruded upon this surface.

In one of the debris layers above the surface were numerous fragments of one or more ceramic statues or anthropomorphic cult stands (Fig. 17). Although some mends were possible, they were not enough to clarify the form of the object(s). The fragmentary nature of the finds match similar pieces from Field H found in earlier seasons. The pieces this time were, however, the most important yet found and included a larger-than-life-size eye dramatically painted; a life-size chin and mouth with painted beard or tattoo; a slightly smaller-than-life-size ear; two possible fragments of a life-size heel; parts of arms or legs smaller than life-size; and a possible shoulder, much smaller than life-size. The ceramic ware was generally the same, except for the eye, which was also painted with a different color scheme than the other pieces. Whether these finds were in secondary deposit or not is unclear at present. That they were not on the surface might suggest secondary deposition, but they were clumped together into a corner of the room indicating that they were intentionally placed there. The finds from



17. Tall al-'Umayri, Field H (Phase 4): Fragments from ceramic statues; the eye is in the center.

this phase were so close to the surface of the site, that it is possible that other pieces could have been taken away with the erosion of topsoil.

Phase 3 (Hellenistic). No new developments were found from this phase during this season.

Phase 2 (Byzantine/Early Islamic). The western edge of a building from the Byzantine period was discovered in the eastern half of the field. A Byzantine potsherd was found in the foundation trench of one of the walls. Several possible surfaces were discovered in association with the walls. This season, it was found that a pit excavated in 1996, which cut the surfaces of Phases 5 and 4, seems to have been dug from this phase; it contained a Byzantine coin. Since only a small portion of the building was uncovered, its plan and function are not clear. This is the second evidence of limited Byzantine activity at the site. The other was discovered in 1987 in Field F at the eastern edge of the site. We have suggested it was the remains from a small farm (Geraty *et al.* 1989: 162).

Phase 1. Topsoil and sub-topsoil layers ran up to and covered virtually all the architecture in Field H. Objects of material culture, as is normal of such layers at 'Umayri, were profuse; three to four times the number of material culture items are found in topsoil layers than from *in situ* deposits. The objects included seals, beads, a glass bangle, a medallion, an incense altar fragment, spindle whorls, an eye-shaped bone object (found in 1996), a Roman coin, a metal ball, figurine fragments, basalt querns and grinders, slingstones, and a metal bowl fragment.

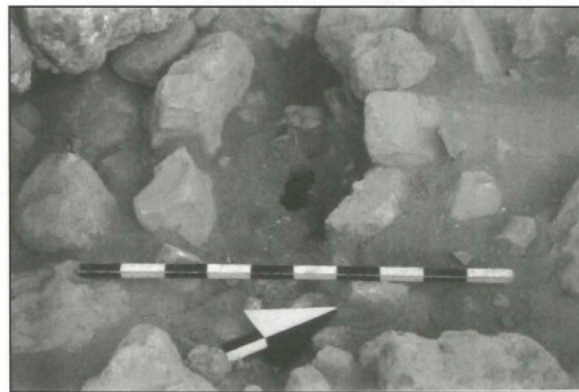
Near the southern edge of the tall was a burial of a single infant (under six months old) in a shallow stone-lined cyst dug against one of the walls (Fig. 18). Along with the burial were a small bronze bell and

black and white beads, items commonly occurring with young female burials in recent burials.

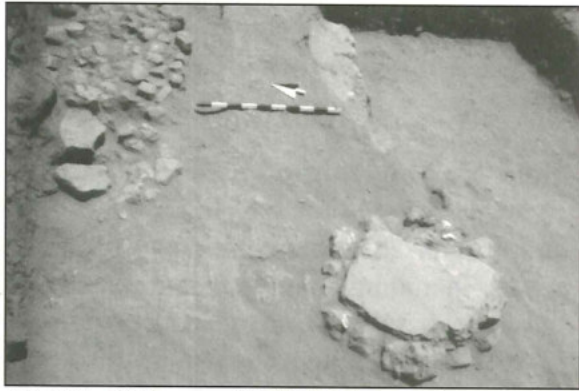
Field K: The Dolmen (Elzbieta Dubis)

A dolmen was uncovered in the 1994 season with 20 burials and copious objects inside, including complete pottery vessels and jewelry from EB IB (Herr *et al.* 1996: 75-76). In 1996, the excavation also produced multiple exterior plastered and semi-plastered surfaces which dated to the same period. This is the first time in the entire Mediterranean basin that patterns of use have been associated with the outside of a dolmen. Seven surfaces were counted, one on top of the other. This season, three squares were laid out north and west of the dolmen to examine the extent of the surfaces and to see if any other architectural features could be associated with the use patterns around the dolmen.

Generally, the farther one proceeded from the dolmen, the weaker the surfaces became, but by no means their end was reached, neither in the west nor in the north. Embedded in one of the surfaces about five meters west of the dolmen was a patch of cobbles tightly laid, perhaps forming the base of an unknown feature (Fig. 19). Nearby and about a meter farther west was a large flat stone surrounded by cobbles at the same level as one of the surfaces; it looked very much like a small table. Could it have been



18. Tall al-'Umayri, Field H (Phase 1): Infant burial; the cracked skull is at top above the hole.



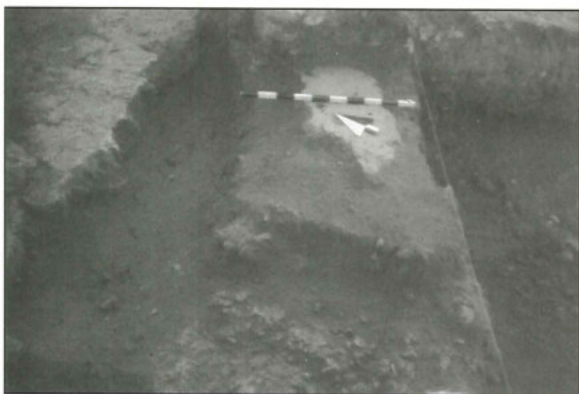
19. Tall al-'Umayri, Field K: Features in one of the surfaces west of the dolmen.

used to receive votive or funerary gifts? Placed into one of the surfaces about five meters to the north of the dolmen was the lower third of a flat-based jar; no contents were found. About three meters northeast of the dolmen was a small patch of a very well made hard plaster floor (Fig. 20); similar patches had been found between it and the dolmen in 1994. If a surface of this quality originally surrounded the dolmen when it was used, it was not simply the result of people walking in the area, but was carefully laid for a specific (ritual?) function.

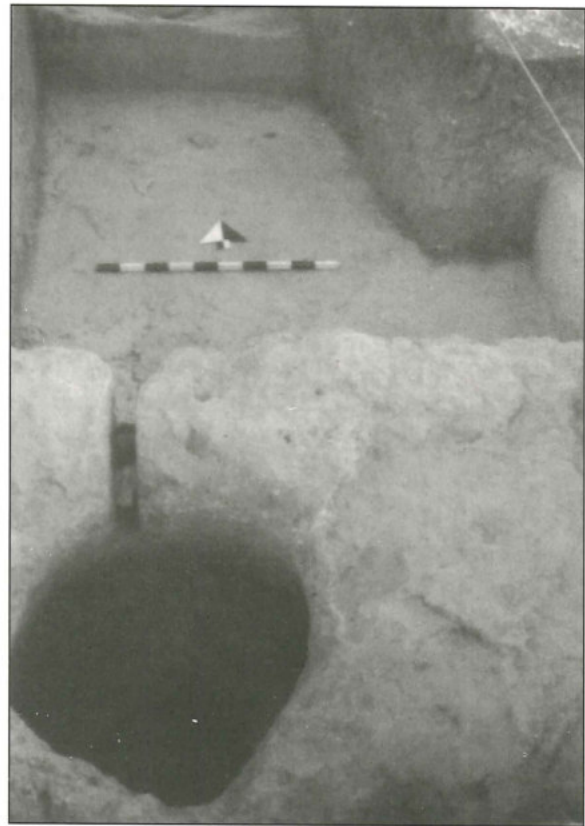
A small team looking for other tombs on the southern hill of al-'Umayri excavated the major part of a winepress (Fig. 21). It could not be clearly dated.

Field L: The Southern Edge (David C. Hopkins)

Ever since the beginning of excavations at



20. Tall al-'Umayri, Field K: Patch of well made plaster surface northeast of the dolmen.



21. Tall al-'Umayri, Field K: Winepress found at the southeastern bottom of the site.

al-'Umayri in 1984, we have been wanting to examine a topographic low near the center of the southern edge of the site. On either side of the dip, the wall line of the apparent fortifications of the site are 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 case-mate wall to the west of the dip. A vertical line of stones descends the slope of the mound from this area. Some have suggested that this could be associated with an ancient road, although the slope is quite steep at this point (ca. 20 degrees). Because we have not yet found a gate to the site, we decided that we should examine this location for such a possibility. Three squares were opened, but, after the topsoil was removed, work was limited to the northern two squares.

Phase 6 (Late Iron II/Persian). A fragmentary building consisted of two walls (Fig.

22). The eastern row of stones of the north-south wall has moved off of its foundation, suggesting that the structure experienced some damage at the end of the phase.

Phase 5 (Late Iron II/Persian). This damage to the wall of Phase 6 supplied the reason for the construction of the Phase 5 walls near but not directly on top of the damaged structure. This phase consists of two well-built walls (ca. 0.75-1.0 m thick) and associated plaster floors (Fig. 23). The east-west wall of the building runs more or less parallel to the lip of the tall and into both the south and west balks. It may reappear at a higher level about 4 m to the west in the next square. Perpendicular to it, the north-south wall may be an interior wall since plaster surfaces existed



22. Tall al-'Umayri, Field L (Phase 6): This phase is made up of the two inner walls below the Phase 5 walls upon which the meter stick lies.



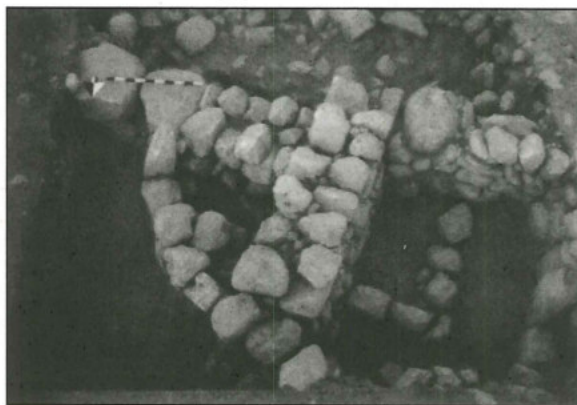
23. Tall al-'Umayri, Field L (Phase 5): Two walls with plaster surfaces and diagonal drain (just emerging beneath the surface near the intersection of the two walls and under the meter stick).

on both sides. Associated with these walls, a narrow drain beneath the plaster splits diagonally the space they enclose.

Phase 4 (Persian). Wall lines were discernable beneath the Hellenistic features of Phase 3 (Fig. 24) west of the Phases 6-5 structures. This phase consists of a ca. 2.0 x 2.5 m right-angled corner, but the bottoms of the walls have not yet been reached. The stub of another wall was also visible beneath the later Hellenistic structure. But it possesses a slightly different direction and was not aligned with the east-west running wall of the corner. As mentioned above, this stub may belong to Phase 5, because it aligns with the east-west wall of Phases 6-5 to the east, though it is considerably higher.

Phase 3 (Hellenistic). Hellenistic walls west of the Phases 6-5 structures (Fig. 24) consist of the beginnings of a large structure, as yet not completely exposed, made up of a semicircular bin or platform, a small room (1.6 x 1.5 m), and a smaller bin (1.0 x 1.0 m).

Phase 2 (Post Hellenistic Period). The southernmost square quickly dispelled any notion that the apparent wall lines on the surface were remnants of an Iron Age gate or fortification system. Two phases of activity accounted for the observed remains. The evidence suggests that the remains were



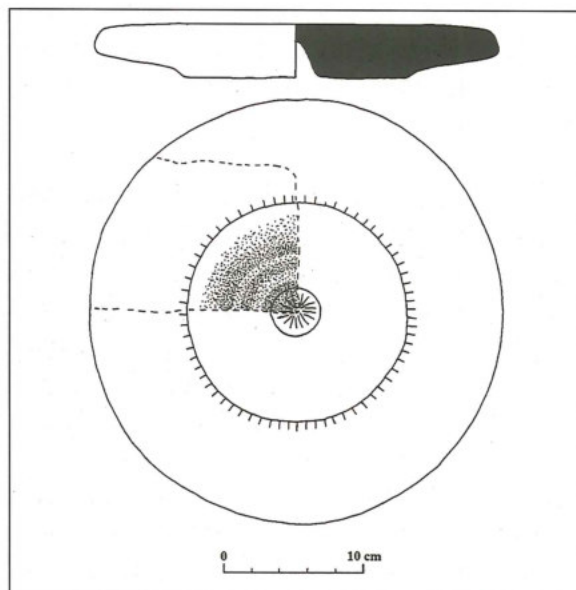
24. Tall al-'Umayri, Field L (Phase 3): Hellenistic structures; The wall upon which the meter stick rests is probably somewhat earlier.

later than the Hellenistic structures to the northwest, but could not be dated well because of a lack of contemporary pottery in an agricultural field setting. The earliest of the two phases consists of a one-two course, predominantly two-row boulder and chink wall which projected some two meters into the square from the east. Possibly a terrace wall, the somewhat random courses of the structure were founded on dirt immediately below topsoil.

Phase 1 (Post Hellenistic Period). Abutting the terrace wall of Phase 2 was a curvilinear single row field wall stretched across the square from south to north. The wall apparently created a stable spot for workers to deposit stones removed from the fields on the top of the site.

An EB III Potter's Turntable

We must publish a very significant find discovered during the 1984 season and, at that time, called a stone platter. However, we have recently noticed certain features which make that identification incorrect and another as most likely (Fig. 25). Its top is completely flat, more like a disk than a platter; it contains a small hollow exactly in the center of the disk, probably on its under side; and it carries circular wear patterns, some of which are highly polished including the small hollow. All this indicates that it functioned as a disk that spun on a support beneath it and which extended up into the hollow to keep it in place. The best suggestion for the function of this stone is an upper turntable, most likely for the manufacture of pottery. Only about a sixth of the turntable is preserved but a complete radius has been preserved and we can thus reconstruct the piece completely. There is no doubt about neither the archaeological date nor the find spot of the piece. It came from the destruction debris above a storeroom of an EB III house in



25. Tall al-'Umayri, Field D: EB III potter's turntable.

Field D (Phase 4 in the 1989 seasonal report, Harrison 1997: 113-174), the same room which produced almost 30 pottery vessels during the 1989 season. Tim Harrison has pointed me to a parallel turntable found at EB III Megiddo (Loud 1939: Pl. 268:1-3).

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