

Selected Iron IIB Pottery Types from a Stratum 8 House at Tall al-‘Umayrī

Work at Tall al-‘Umayrī has produced a well-stratified corpus of Iron IIB pottery in Stratum 8 earth layers and a surface associated with several rooms in a house in Field A (Herr and Clark 2008: 186-191; forthcoming). My aim in this paper is to describe the house and its stratigraphy briefly and then to present the most frequent pottery forms in the corpus. It seems to me that these forms should also be prevalent at contemporary sites in the ‘Amman to Mādabā region.

The Iron IIB House

Although the house was truncated in the east by the construction of the Ammonite Administrative Complex in Stratum 7 (the late Iron II / Persian period), most of its rooms are probably still present (FIGS. 1-4). The western room (FIG. 5), excavated in the 1990s, seems to have been an add-on. No door entered it from the house, or indeed from any other direction. It must have been a sunken, enclosed storage area, at least partially below the

level of the exterior surface. Nothing was found in its fill or on the floor.

The main entry to the house was through a well-preserved door on the north side (FIG. 1), the western jamb of which was discovered in 1987. However, nothing more was done in the house until the western room of the Stratum 7 Ammonite Administrative Complex was removed in 2004, when we discovered the room into which the door entered. It led into a room partially paved with cobbles and the rest with beaten earth. Again, nothing was found on this floor and the fill above contained mixed pottery. Thus, like the sunken storage room to the west, we could not yet date the house. Indeed, we erroneously dated both rooms to the late Iron I period.

Then, in 2006, we excavated several layers and surfaces just south of the perimeter wall where it curved eastward into the settlement (FIG. 3). Unfortunately, these floors were associated with very fragmentary walls. However, the pottery from the



1. The Stratum 8 house from the Iron IIB period from the north. Note the doorway into the building roughly in the center of the picture. To the right the walls of a western room have been removed but their foundations can still be seen.



2. The Stratum 8 house from the west showing the interior rooms. It was from these floors that most of the pottery in this paper was discovered. The western room, whose walls had been removed, is not pictured.

surfaces seemed to belong to just one ceramic horizon, which I tentatively dated to Iron IIB. In the 2008 season we excavated the remaining floors of the house to the east of our earlier excavations. It was in these small rooms (FIGS. 2 and 4) that most of the pottery this paper is based upon was discovered. There were no complete vessels, but a few were close to it. We have now also uncovered this ceramic horizon in other locations of the site, primarily to the east of Field H in Field M.

We are not certain that the house continued south to abut the perimeter wall (FIG. 3). No surface or other remains were found here until we encountered the destruction layer of Stratum 12, the LB / Iron I transitional period. Parts of the rooms were paved with cobbles but most of the floors were beaten earth. Whether the house continued much farther to the east is not known, but if it did, it would have been a very large house indeed. We thus suspect we have uncovered most of the house. The walls of the house are well-preserved, sometimes reaching 6-7 courses high. Large stones, probably used as pillar bases, and the well-constructed walls suggest a fairly prosperous household. However, few remains beyond the pottery were found on the floors. Indeed, we can make no suggestions about the various possible functions of the rooms.

The Pottery (FIG. 6)

In the 2006 season we excavated several Stratum

8 earth layers that made up the possible terrace south of the Iron IIB house with associated wall fragments (Herr and Clark 2008). These included at least one beaten-earth surface and destruction debris immediately above. The pottery from these layers contained no earlier or later material, so we published 115 sherds as the first *in situ* Iron IIB pottery from 'Umayri (Herr and Clark 2008: 186-191). In earlier seasons we had already discovered the pottery in later strata and had published a few of the collared pithoi from those secondary deposits to illustrate how that particular vessel continued to be produced into the Iron II period in Transjordan, including Edomite territory in southern Jordan (Herr 2001). It was a typological study and did not have the advantage of secure stratigraphic deposits. The excavation of the floors in our Stratum 8 house and the destruction debris immediately above them now give us indisputable *in situ* pottery on the floors of a clear architectural structure. Both the 2006 and 2008 assemblages reflect the identical horizon of ceramic wares and forms. However, for the purposes of this paper, we have chosen the clearest pottery forms primarily from the house, because of its superior stratigraphic context, but also a few examples from the exterior surface layers to fill out the picture, especially those that are virtually identical to others from the house.

This corpus is very easy to recognize at 'Umayri, perhaps because Stratum 8 is sandwiched between



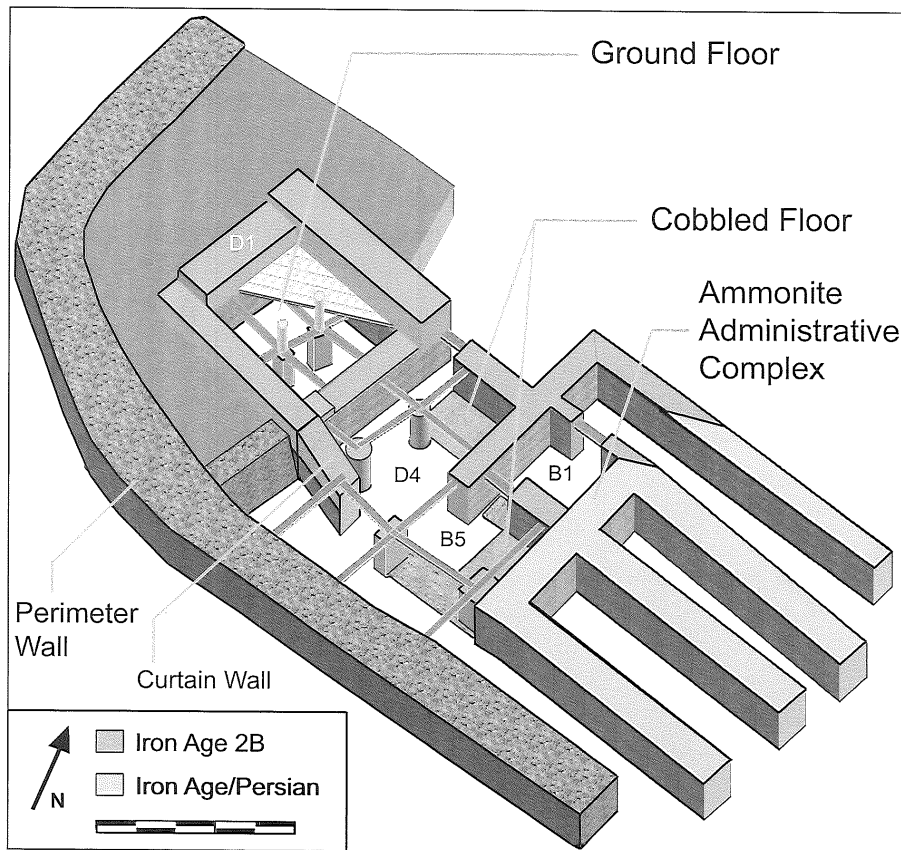
3. Plan of the Stratum 8 remains in Field A; the computer plan was generated by Robert Bates, Field Supervisor of Field A in 2006-2008.

two periods of hiatus during the Iron IIA and early Iron IIC periods. The assemblage can be readily separated from that of the much more frequent Iron IIC / Persian corpus of Strata 7-5 that dominates the upper strata of every field of excavation at 'Umayri. The most distinctive and ubiquitous forms of the Stratum 8 assemblage that are not found in earlier or later corpora at the site are the inward-leaning collared pithoi, the small slipped and burnished bowls with mostly upright simple rims, and the inward-leaning cooking pots with a ridge or wide groove below the rim. Forms that continue (or develop) into the following Iron IIC period, but are very frequent in our assemblage also, are the hol-mouth kraters, bowls with in-turned right-angled rims, globular bowls and plates. The most distinc-

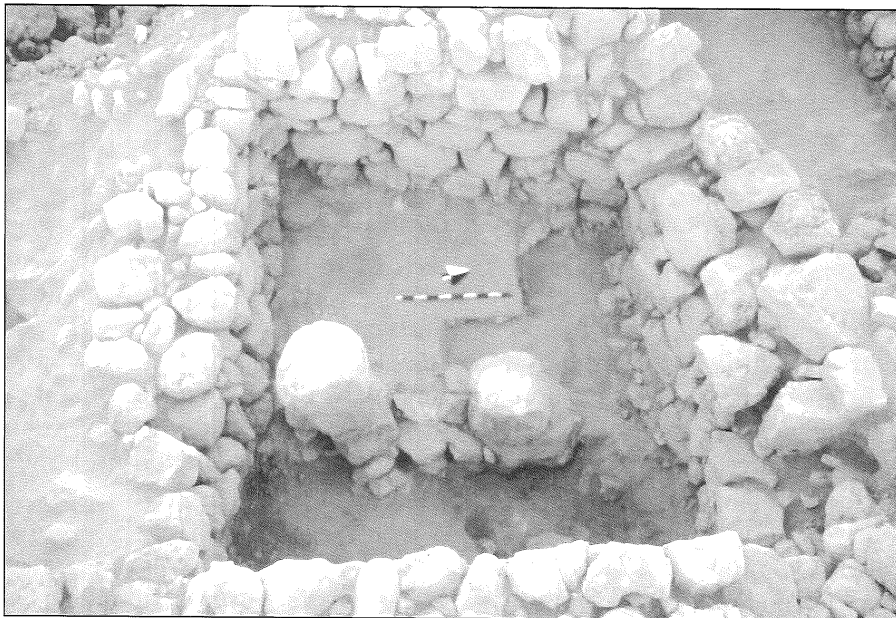
tive feature of the ware is the rusty red color of the medium to heavy slips that cover many of the bowls and the relatively thick wheel burnishing, mostly done with a thinner tool than on the Strata 7-6 bowls. A few of the vessels, including bowls and jugs, have painted bands.

Collared Pithoi (Nos 1-2)

The pithoi in the house are virtually identical to those we discovered in the 2006 season on the terrace (Herr and Clark 2008: Figures 6: 1-10 and 7: 1-5) and are the same basic form I projected in my typological study (Herr 2001). The present examples with their consistent inward-leaning stance (but not yet as horizontal as the later Iron IIC / Persian forms), and the consistent presence of a 'col-



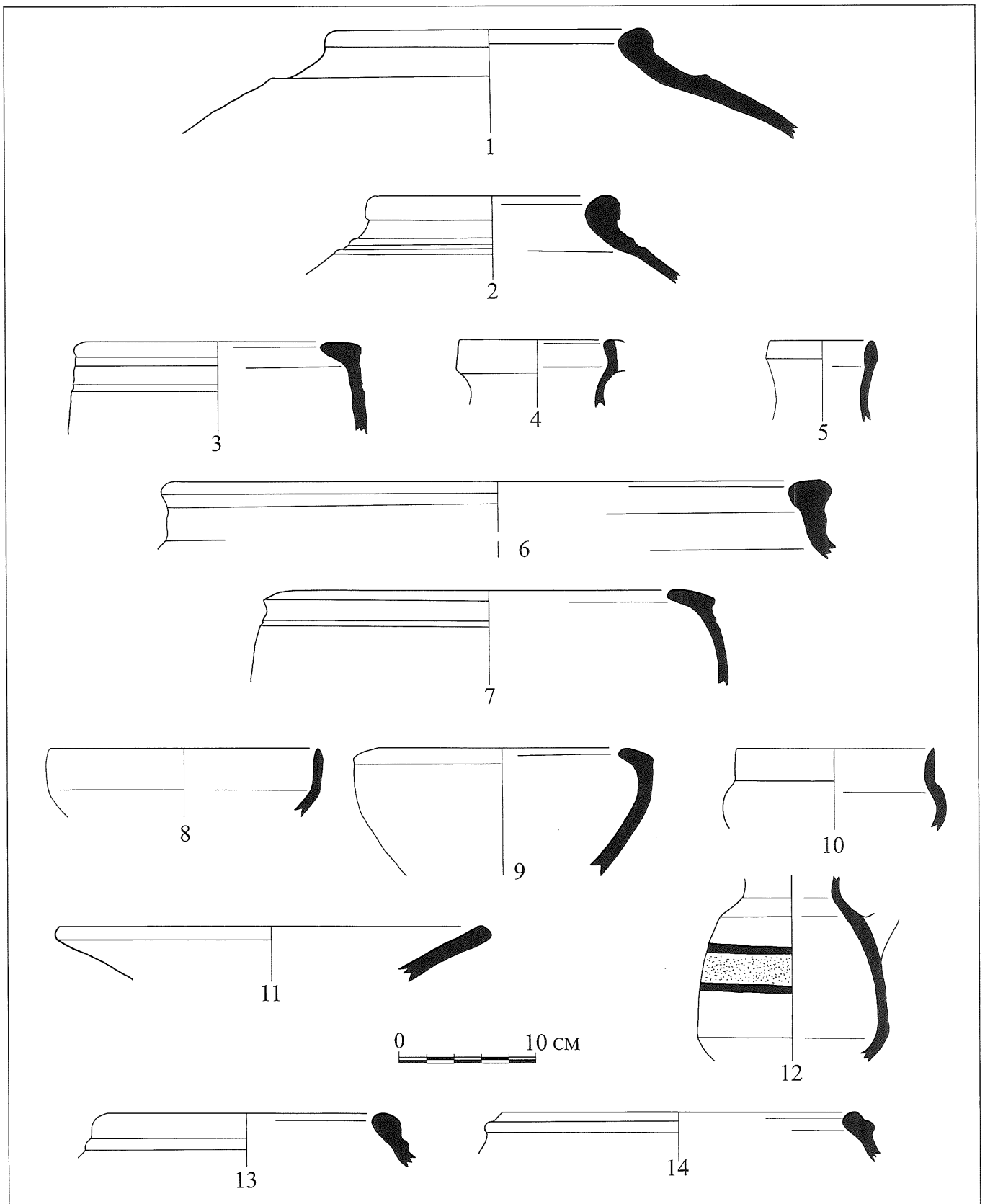
4. A computerized isometric drawing of the house by Robert Bates.



5. The western room with two pillars before removal of the walls.

lar' when enough of the form has been preserved, should put to rest any more discussion of collared pithoi ceasing to exist with the end of Iron I in Jordan as apparently occurred in Cisjordan (Finkelstein 1992; Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2009: 209). It should be noted that, when we talk about

'collared pithoi' in the Iron II period, we are not talking about the upright neck and rim forms that appear in Iron I on both sides of the Jordan Valley, but the 'holemouth' or 'near-holemouth' type that is a direct descendent of the upright Iron I types. Our forms catch that development in mid-stride, so



6. Selected pottery forms from the house.

to speak. The Iron II rims in our assemblage tend to be bulbous and the inward slope of the necks is moving toward the horizontal forms so typical of our Iron IIC / Persian forms (see, for instance, Low 1991: 191, Fig. 8.13: 1-6).

Jar (No. 3)

There are surprisingly few jars in our assemblage, but a holemouth form with vertical sidewall (No. 3) is present. There are necked examples, as well, but no clear type dominates. Those with a ridged neck tend to be more frequent than other types, but they do not dominate.

Jugs (Nos. 4-5)

Whereas there were not very many jars in our assemblage, there are a few more jugs with over half belonging to a rim form that represents varieties of a slightly thickened offset rim (No. 4). Most of the jugs in the group from the 2006 season were also this same type (Herr and Clark 2008: 187, Figure 7: 15-22). No. 5 could be a variant of this type with a very small offset. These two forms are intended to illustrate the range of the offset.

Kraters (Nos. 6-7)

There was a relatively high number of kraters in our assemblage. Perhaps they make up for the relatively low quantity of jars and reflect storage patterns more conducive to large open vessels than closed ones (but note the presence of the pithoi, also fairly frequent). The majority of the kraters are of the large holemouth variety with long thickened rims that continued into the Iron IIC / Persian period (No. 7). This was also true for the 2006 corpus (Herr and Clark 2008: 188, Figure 8: 5-10). The rims are often almost horizontal and the thickening usually projects beyond the curve of the body below the rim. Sometimes there is a groove or ridge on the upper wall just below the rim. Like the Iron IIC / Persian examples, which are also ubiquitous during that time period, there is often burnishing on the upper part of the rim. The color of the interior is often gray owing to stacking of the vessels in the kiln. Whereas the holemouth kraters look forward to the future in Iron IIC, most of the remaining forms with various profiled rims tend to remember earlier krater types (No. 6).

Bowls (Nos. 8-10)

Almost half of the vessels in our corpus are bowls,

as was also the case in our 2006 assemblage (Herr and Clark 2008: 188-190, Figures 8: 11 to 10: 12). Most of the bowls were coated with a relatively heavy, rusty-red slip and wheel burnished, usually with a somewhat thin tool. Added elements, such as knobs and handles, can sometimes occur. The most frequent type of bowl has a gentle carination in mid-body and a simple (or slightly pointed) rim that is normally upright, but can also turn in or out somewhat (No. 8). This form occurs *in situ* in no other stratum at the site. The vessel is fine enough to be considered a semi-fine ware.

A second form that characterizes the bowl corpus of Stratum 8 has a rim that turns sharply inward at almost 90 degrees (No. 9). There are actually more of these bowls in the collection from the house than the preceding form, but they are almost totally absent from the 2006 assemblage (Herr and Clark 2008). Moreover, this type of bowl continues into Strata 7 and 6 but in reduced numbers. The bowls from Stratum 8 contain a slip that is a deeper red or rusty-red color than the Iron IIC / Persian examples. Sometimes there is a slight thickening on the top of the rim where it turns inward. Whereas the section of the preceding bowl was thin, this vessel is much thicker and heavier, probably used in more utilitarian activity patterns than the previous, finer bowl.

Closed globular bowls with short, vertical, upright simple rims are another frequent form (No. 10). They also continue as a frequently attested form into Strata 7 and 6, but with a lighter colored slip. The rims can turn out slightly or, more rarely, turn in. They are not as frequent in our 2006 corpus (Herr and Clark 2008).

Plate (No. 11)

The presence of shallow bowls or plates with straight sides and squared rims in our corpus came as a surprise. The one example from the 2006 corpus (Herr and Clark 2008: 190, Figure 10: 13) had seemed like an intrusive element. But the presence of six examples in the assemblage from the house suggests they were already present in Iron IIB. Like the example found in 2006, most of our rims are squared.

Painted Forms (No. 12)

Monochrome or bichrome painted lines occur on several vessels, especially amphorae, jugs, juglets (our example here) and flasks. A mostly complete

example of the last type was discovered on the floor of the house in 2008 (not illustrated). The painted lines were thin and are reddish brown in color. This is the same color as on the juglet published here. Two small amphorae were discovered in secondary deposit in the area of this house during the 1984 season (Herr 1991: Fig. 19.6: 17-18), although they were published as Iron IIC / Persian.

Cooking Pots (Nos. 13-14)

The cooking pots discovered in the Stratum 8 house are very similar to those we found during the 2006 season (Herr and Clark 2008: 190-191, Figures 10: 14 to 11: 5). The stance of the rims is inward-leaning, but not nearly as much as those of Strata 7-6. Almost all are thickened on the exterior and contain a groove or small ridge below the rim, with a great variety of subtle (and not so subtle) differences.

Conclusion

The cooking pots and bowls are very easy to place into the Iron IIB period. While one or two researchers may not believe the collared pithoi belong to this period (Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz 2009), there is no doubt that our inward-leaning forms belong here. The cooking pots, with their relatively upright lean are also clearly earlier than the Iron IIC / Persian vessels of Strata 7-6. This corpus precedes and develops into the Iron IIC / Persian one, though our assemblage of Stratum 8 does not seem to be directly prior to that of Stratum 7. We thus posit a hiatus at the site for the early Iron IIC period.

Acknowledgements

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