

A Series of Iron Age Domestic Buildings in Field C at Tall Jalūl

Introduction

Excavations in Field C, located roughly in the center of Tall Jalūl, immediately east of the Acropolis, on the western side of the tall, were begun in 1994, focused on the remains of a pillared house, parts of which covered the original four squares (C1-4) of the field. Unfortunately, the western wall of this building was removed, due to stone robbing, not long after the building went out of use. In an effort to locate its southern end, an additional square (C5) was opened to the south, in 1996. Not only was this side of the building found, but two walls of another building were also unearthed. Hence, while the general contours of this pillared house have been known since the late 1990s, with most of it excavated to bedrock¹, the intriguing nature of the new building dictated that operations move laterally, to the south, where work in this part of the field concentrated for several more seasons.

However, in the decade following the work in the northern part of the field, the elements eroded part of the previously-unexcavated balk, north of the pillared building, exposing several stones that appeared to be part of a wall, and in

2011 the last remaining section of this building, including its northern wall and entrance, were completely uncovered (FIG. 1).

Phase 3

Phase 3 remains were originally found in Field C, in 1996, consisting of the bottom course of a well-built wall (C4: 29), located immediately above bedrock, beneath the eastern wall of a later building. The exposed section was 3.2m long and protruded 0.55-0.60m, beyond a later slightly offset wall, to the east, and is dated to Iron Age I on the basis of sherds from this period found in the lowest earth layer, next to it, to the east (Herr *et al.* 1996: 74, 1997: 155). A complementary section of this same wall, three stones in length, protruded beneath the upper wall, in Square 2, about 0.30m to the west, and was designated Wall C2: 30. The top elevations of both of the exposed sections of this wall were similar, being 809.52m and 809.50m respectively. This feature represents part of the eastern wall of a building, much of which was later robbed and reused as part of the Phase 2 building, above it, with much of the

1. At the base of the acropolis, bedrock is relatively close to the surface of the mound, becoming greater in depth toward the southern

edge of the tall.



1. North balks of field C squares 1 and 2.

Phase 3 building reconstructed on the basis of its 1.50m and 1.90m wide southern and eastern walls.

In addition to Wall C4: 29 (=C2: 30), on the east, the building also consists of Wall C4: 34 (=C3: 29) on the south, and Wall C2: 31 on the north. A Robber from Phase 2 indicates the location of a missing western (Ghost) Wall C1: 35 (=C3: 51). On the basis of the later east-west blocking wall (C1: 32), from Phase 2, the original entrance of the building, measuring 1.0m wide, appears to have been in the north wall, slightly west of center. The missing western end of the northern wall of the building can reasonably be reconstructed as Hypothetical Wall C1: 36, between the entrance and the west wall.

Partition Wall C4: 31 was located on the east side of the building, apparently indicating the division of the building into a separate room at the southern end of the house. The remains of several pillars were found on the eastern side of the building. Only two pillars were found on the west side of the building, with the southernmost perhaps also representing the eastern end of a now-missing partition wall (Hypothetical Wall C3: 52).

The Phase 3 building was constructed directly on bedrock, and on the basis of the above ev-

idence, would appear to be a typical four-rooms house, with three long rooms (A- C) separated by pillars, and a broad room (D) at the rear. On the basis of the reconstruction here, its north and south walls average 10.0m in length, with the length of its east and west walls estimated between 12.5-13.5m.

The building was constructed directly on bedrock, Walls C4: 29 and 34 being free-standing; their large, in some cases almost 1.5m stones, bonded together. Between the perimeter walls, was a surface consisting of a mixture of nari plaster, cobbles, and beaten earth. Roughly in the center of the floor, was the entrance to a subterranean bedrock cave installation, which probably served as a storage facility, the lack of cement seemingly ruling out its function as a cistern. A stone basin (Locus C3: 48) was set into the floor, just north of Pillar C3: 27, southwest of the Storage Cave. Within the broad room, immediately above the surface, was an earth layer that yielded an assemblage consisting of a chalice base, two lamps, a carinated bowl, and numerous beads made of carnelian, faience, frit, and quartz.

This phase appears to have ended with the collapse of the building, perhaps due to a flash flood, with water, silt and debris moving at a

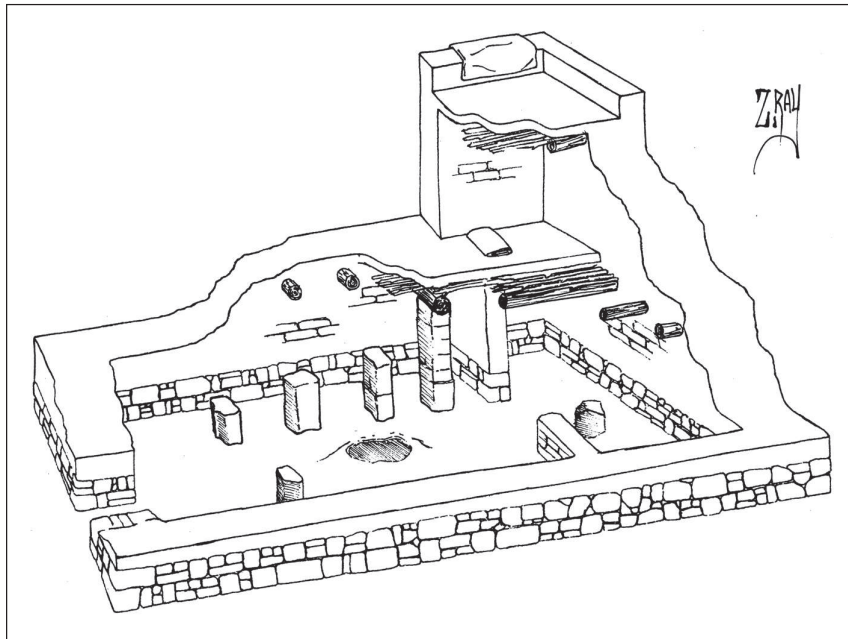
considerable pace down from the acropolis, to the west of the building. The fact that its walls were built directly upon bedrock, without the benefit of foundation trenches to help support them, may have contributed to its collapse. In the broad room, there is a large stone (Locus C3: 50), *ca.* 0.80m wide × 0.40m deep, and 0.50m high, sitting on the surface. Its location, considerably out of line with the two pillars on the western side of the building, as well as its squat, somewhat tapering shape, would seem to rule out another pillar. This stone may have rolled down the hill from the acropolis in the flood that destroyed the house at the end of Phase 3, and hence represent part of the destruction debris, or alternatively, connected with the above-mentioned assemblage of artifacts, served as a standing stone.

As previously mentioned, it would appear that the inhabitants of Phase 3 constructed a typical four-rooms house. The building, as reconstructed here, is *ca.* 130m², which is the average size of a rural house of this type. However, at the same time, is not out of line for an upper-class family with the economic means to maintain a large house in an urban setting (Faust 1999: 240, 245-46), especially since it is located next to the acropolis, where public

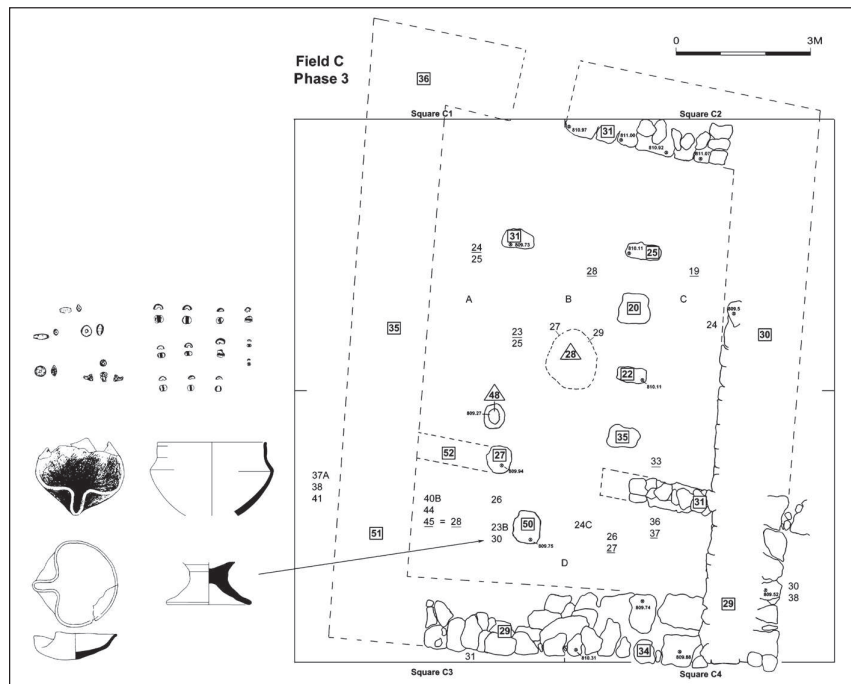
buildings would have traditionally been erected (Faust 2003: 131, 2012: 53). The walls of this building are thick enough to have supported a second story (FIG. 2), but since the majority of the destruction debris, incorporated into the building in the following phase, were found only in the broad room, a reconstruction with a second floor only above this part of the Phase 3 building seems more accurate. If this surmise is correct, it would still have somewhat incremented the actual size of the building.

The assemblage of artifacts in the broad room (FIG. 3), including the chalice base, the lamps, the carinated bowl, and beads, all Category B cult objects, according to Schmitt's typology (Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 60-75), along with several nearby Category C cooking pots, located a short distance away from the stone basin embedded in the floor, would seem to represent some kind of domestic cult activity. If that is the correct, Zevit's behavioral correlates 3, 10? and 11, *i.e.* the ritual took place in a room set aside for its performance; food or drink were presented, consumed or libated; and votives may have been presented (Zevit 2001: 82), might have been associated with the presence of these artifacts.

The ceramics of Phase 3 represent the earli-



2. Isometric drawing of the phase 3 pillared house.



3. Phase 3 pillared house and cultic artifacts.

est *in situ* material found in Field C. While the majority of the pottery dates to Iron Age I and seems to be consistently connected with loci associated with the construction and use of the four-rooms house, the Iron Age II sherds within the destruction debris would seem to indicate a date of early Iron Age II for this phase.

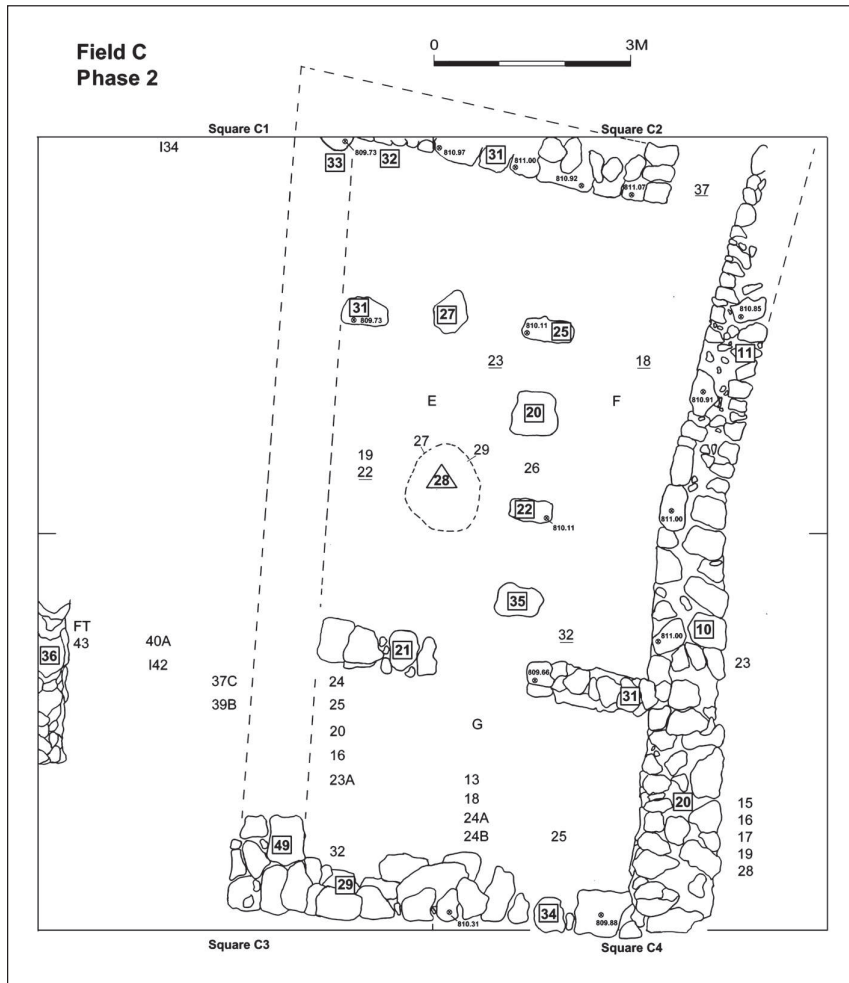
Phase 2

It would appear that the damage to the Phase 3 building was considerable. When the inhabitants of Phase 2 rebuilt the pillared house (FIG. 4), they decided to remove the stone foundation courses of the western wall of the earlier building, as evidenced by Robber Trench C1: 34 (= C3: 42). They also removed the western end of the northern wall down to the entrance of the Phase 3 building. A short section of the western end of wall, on the south, was either destroyed in the event the ended the Phase 3 building, or was also removed at this time. A new western wall (C1: 33 = C3: 49) was laid, probably with stones mined from its predecessor, now a little over a meter to the east. The footing for this new wall was dug into the debris on top of Phase 3 floor, on the west. In addition, this wall partially covered the stone basin, set into

the floor of the earlier building, indicating that the new western wall was laid upon the original (Phase 3) surface.

Overall, the new building was much smaller in size than its predecessor. In addition, although the remaining walls of the Phase 2 building were in some places realigned on top of the remaining courses of the earlier building, they were now somewhat narrower. The southern wall was now only 1.20-1.30m in width. The new eastern wall (C: 2, 11 = C4: 10, 20), now ranging only 0.70-1.30m in width, was laid on top of, but offset to the western edge of its 1.90m wide predecessor, on the southern end, but seems to have just about completely replaced the earlier wall on the northern end, now running diagonally to the northeast. The north end of the building, was now only .75m in width, down from an estimated 1.4m in the previous phase. The original, Phase 3, entrance was now blocked by Wall C1:32, forming a corner with the new western wall. The new 1.14m wide Phase 2 entrance was relocated to the northeast corner of the building, with a large, flat stone, at its base, that probably served as its threshold.

The eastern partition wall continued in use,



4. Phase 2 of the pillared building.

along with the addition of Wall C3:21, the latter serving the same function on the western end of the Phase 2 building. The pillars of the previous phase were also reused from the previous building, with Pillar C1: 31, now abutting the new western wall, perhaps serving as a pilaster. Pillar C2: 27 was added at the northern end of the building to help support the roof. Although more of the Phase 2 pillared house is extant than its predecessor, its precise dimensions are still in need of some reconstruction. The east wall measures 12.0m in length, with the reconstructed length of the west wall estimated at *ca.* 13.0m. Its north and south walls measure 7.75m and 7.25m long respectively. Overall, the Phase 2 building is a narrower, three-room subtype of a four-room house, with two long rooms (E and F) and a broad room (G).

It would seem that another building was

constructed just west of the pillared house, with Wall C3: 36, serving as part of the eastern wall of that structure.

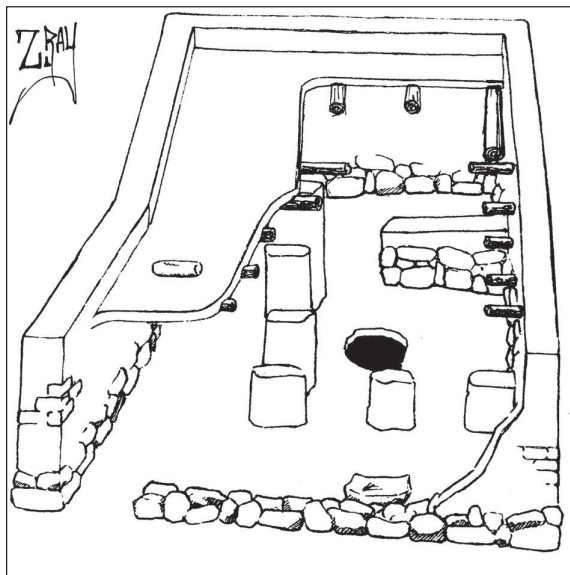
After removing most of the Phase 3 destruction debris within the building, the builders of Phase 2 laid a nari surface throughout the long rooms. The Storage cave continued in use, with its bedrock rim now aligned flush with the new floor. In the broad room, the builders apparently just tamped down the remainder of the mud-brick detritus and earth layers of the previous phase, for the floor.

The destruction of the building may have been the result of an attack upon the site, as at least twenty disarticulated skeletons were found in the bedrock storage cave, along with two ballistic stones, an axe head, and part of a horse figurine. On the surface, above it, an arrowhead, a dagger? blade, and two more ballis-

tics were found among an otherwise domestic repertoire, including a complete quern, among the debris. A roof roller, which fell with the roof debris, was also found. At the rear of the building, in the broad room, which was probably used mostly for storage, another ballistic was found, along with a large portion of a collared-rim pithos set in an upright position, and a complete basalt Iron Age lamp, were found among the destruction debris.

It would appear that the Phase 2 structure was a smaller, narrower (reconstructed at *ca.* 90m²), three-room version of its four-room predecessor. This is typical for Iron Age II urban houses, which averaged 60-70m²; the majority also being the three-room subtype of a four-room house (Faust 1999: 238, 246). Due to its relatively thinner walls during this phase, and a roof roller found in the destruction debris immediately below, it seems unlikely that the building had a second floor at this time (FIG. 5). There are numerous parallels, perhaps the closest being the Stratum V, House 9, at Tall as-Sa‘īdīyah (Pritchard 1985: fig. 179).

Phase 2, like its predecessor, existed for a long period of time. The ceramic evidence would suggest that the pithos, found *in situ* in the destruction layer in the broad room, dates to early Iron Age IIA, while several black-



5. Isometric drawing of the phase 2 pillared house.

ware bowls date to the (early) sixth century BC (Herr 2006: 526, figs. 1:9, 2:13), suggesting an Iron Age II C date for this phase. Although out of context, the scaraboid-shaped *Naqab ben Sedeq'el* seal, with seventh century BC palaeography (Herr *et al.* 1997: 156, fig. 14), evidently belongs to this phase. The destruction of this building may have been connected with the Babylonian invasion of the area in 582 BC, mentioned in Josephus (*Antiquities* 10.9.7).

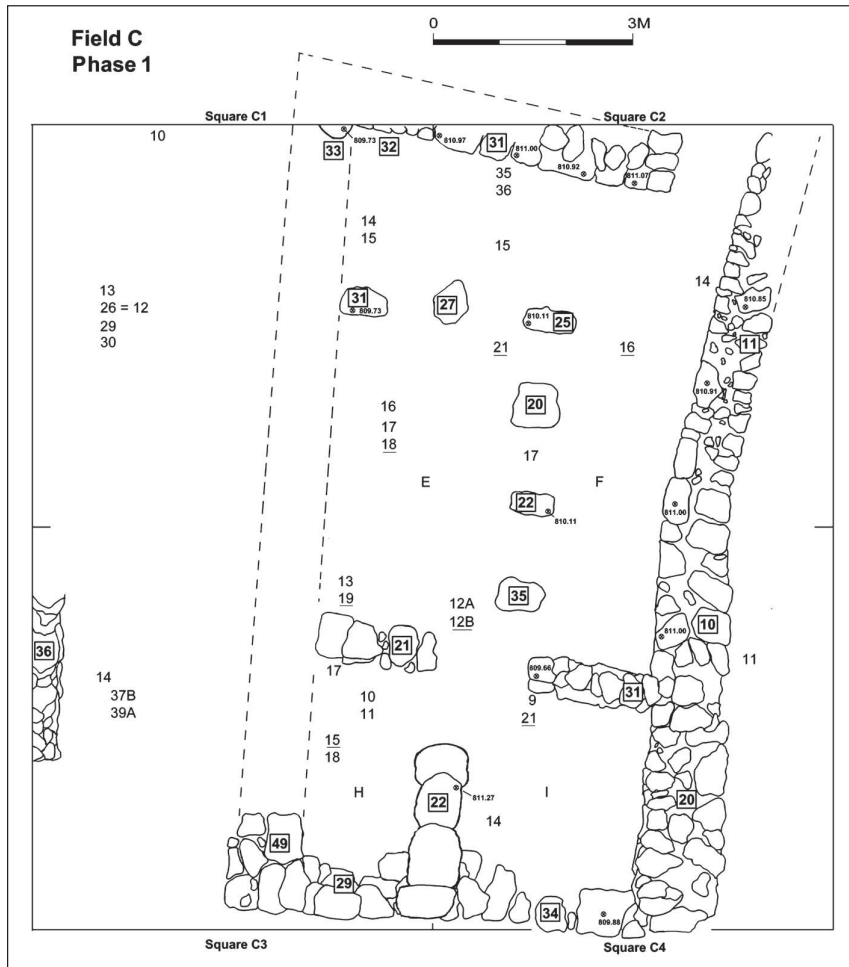
Field Phase 1

Following the destruction at the end of Phase 2, the pillared house was rebuilt again, this time slightly modified (FIG. 6). The builders of the Phase 1 reused all of the perimeter and partition walls of the previous phase. The pillars were also reused, dividing the building, as in the previous phase, into two long rooms (E and F). The entrance to the building remained in its northeastern corner. New to the building in Phase 1 was the subdivision of the broad room into two smaller rooms (H and I), with the addition of Wall C4: 22, built on top of a considerable amount of mudbrick detritus from the caved-in superstructure of the previous phase.

The builders of the Phase 1 pillared house brought in up to 1.40 m of earth fill, burying the destruction debris of the previous phase, putting the storage cave out of use, and creating a beaten-earth floor on top, in the long rooms. The entryway was filled with large stones and a layer of earth, even with the floor level. At the rear, in the broad room, earth layers were also added, filling in the gaps between the mudbrick destruction debris of the previous phase, and the partition walls, the uppermost of these layer used as the floor of these storerooms.

The Phase 1 building seems to have been destroyed by an earthquake. Massive amounts of debris were found, including a layer of mudbrick detritus, probably representing part of the superstructure; and rubble layers, indicating a southern direction for the landing of fallen ar-

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6. Phase 1 of the pillared building.

chitectural debris from the northern and perimeter walls.

The Phase 1 pillared building, as noted above, was a minor modification of its predecessor. Several artifacts were found in association with the floors of this building, including an arrowhead, two ballistics, a gaming piece, and a figurine fragment. Phase 1 pottery is typical of the Late Iron II C/early Persian period in Transjordan.

Geologically, Jordan occupies part of the northwestern portion of the Arabian Plate. The Dead Sea Transform, a left-lateral strike slip fault, between it and the African plate, to the west, allows motion between the two plates, also causing tectonic activity (al-Isa 1991: 22-23; Klinger *et al.* 2000: 769). During seismic events there is northward horizontal movement of the Arabian Plate (Atallah 1991: 17- 18),

with architectural elements tending to fall in the opposite direction, to the south. Many high magnitude earthquakes along the Dead Sea Transform have been documented and dated from sediment cores taken at three sites along the western shore of the Dead Sea, with the ‘Ayn Gedi core tracking the longest sequence. On this basis, we suggest that the event which destroyed the Phase 1 pillared house was a 7.5 magnitude earthquake that occurred in 525BC (Migowski *et al.* 2004: 306, Table 2).

Conclusion

The results of the excavations of the northern end of Field C, at Jalūl, are the remains of two superimposed domestic buildings, the earliest one a traditional four-rooms house, on top of which two phases of a three-rooms house were built.

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