

MĀDĀBĀ PLAINS PROJECT: EXCAVATIONS AT TALL AL-‘UMAYĪ, 2004

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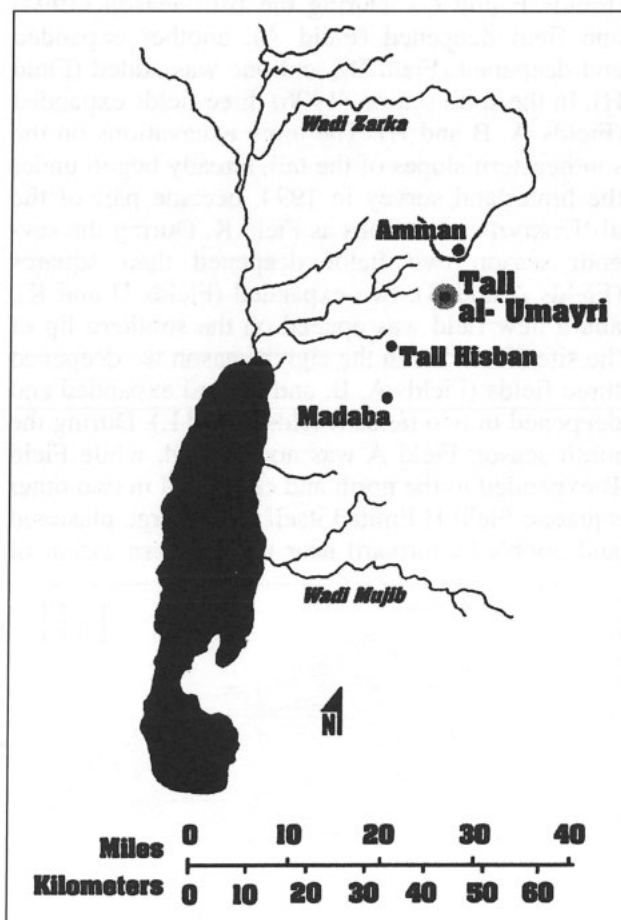
Introduction

A tenth season of excavation by the Madaba Plains Project at Tall al-‘Umayri occurred between June 23 and August 4, 2004. It was sponsored by La Sierra University in consortium with Andrews University School of Architecture (Michigan, USA), Canadian University College (Alberta, Canada), Mount Royal College (Alberta, Canada), Pacific Union College (California, USA), and Walla Walla College (Washington State, USA). Full reports have already been published for the first five seasons (first season [1984]: Geraty *et al.*, eds. 1989; second season [1987]: Herr *et al.*, eds. 1991; third season [1989]: Herr *et al.*, eds. 1997; fourth season [1992]: Herr *et al.*, eds. 2000; fifth season [1994]: Herr *et al.*, eds. 2002). Preliminary reports have also been published (first season [1984]: Geraty 1985; Geraty *et al.* 1986, 1987; second season [1987]: Geraty *et al.* 1988, 1989, 1990; third season [1989]: Younker *et al.* 1990; Herr *et al.* 1991; LaBianca *et al.* 1995; fourth season [1992]: Younker *et al.* 1993; Herr *et al.* 1994; fifth season [1994]: Younker *et al.* 1996; Herr *et al.* 1996; sixth season [1996]: Younker *et al.* 1997; Herr *et al.* 1997; seventh season [1998]: Herr *et al.* 1999, 2000; eighth season [2000]: Herr, Clark and Trenchard 2001, 2002; ninth season [2002]: Herr and Clark 2003, 2004).

In the 2004 season, a team of 26 Jordanians and 44 foreigners participated in the fieldwork and camp activities of the interdisciplinary project at al-‘Umayri, located about 10km south of ‘Ammān’s Seventh Circle on the Queen ‘Alia Airport Highway at the turnoff for Amman National

Park (Fig. 1).¹

In the first season (1984) four fields of excava-



1. Map of the central plateau of Jordan with the major sites of the Mādabā Plains Project.

1. The authors of this report are especially indebted to Dr. Fawwaz al-Khraysheh, Director General of the Department of Antiquities. Aktham Oweidi served as representative of the Department of Antiquities for the first three weeks followed by Samia Khoury for the last three weeks. We also wish to thank other members of the Department of Antiquities who facilitated our project at several junctures. The American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, directed by Pierre Bikai and assisted by Patricia Bikai, provided invaluable assistance. The staff was housed in Muqābalayn at the Amman Training College, an UNWRA


junior college for Palestinians. We give special thanks to its Principal, Dr. Saleh Naji for making our safe and secure stay a genuine pleasure. The Committee on Archaeological Policy of the American Schools of Oriental Research approved the scientific goals and procedures of the project. Thanks are also due each member of the 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.

tion were opened (Fields A, B, C and D) (**Fig. 2**). During the second season (1987) three of the four were expanded (Fields A, B and D), one was completed to bedrock (Field C), and two new fields were opened (Fields E and F). In the third season (1989) one field expanded (Field A), three fields reopened old squares and expanded slightly (Fields B, D and F), another reduced excavation from two squares to one (Field E), and a new field was opened on the northern slope (Field G). In the fourth season (1992) three fields deepened previously opened squares (Fields A, D and F), one deepened existing squares while expanding by one square (Field B), and two fields were discontinued (Fields E and G). During the fifth season (1994) one field deepened (Field A), another expanded and deepened (Field B), and one was added (Field H). In the sixth season (1996) three fields expanded (Fields A, B and H). The tomb excavations on the southeastern slopes of the tell, already begun under the hinterland survey in 1994, became part of the al-'Umayri excavations as Field K. During the seventh season two fields deepened their squares (Fields A and B), two expanded (Fields H and K), and a new field was opened on the southern lip of the site (Field L). In the eighth season we deepened three fields (Fields A, B, and H) and expanded and deepened in two fields (Fields K and L). During the ninth season Field A was not worked, while Field B expanded to the north and continued in two other squares; Field H limited itself to the large plastered and cobbled courtyard near the northern extent of

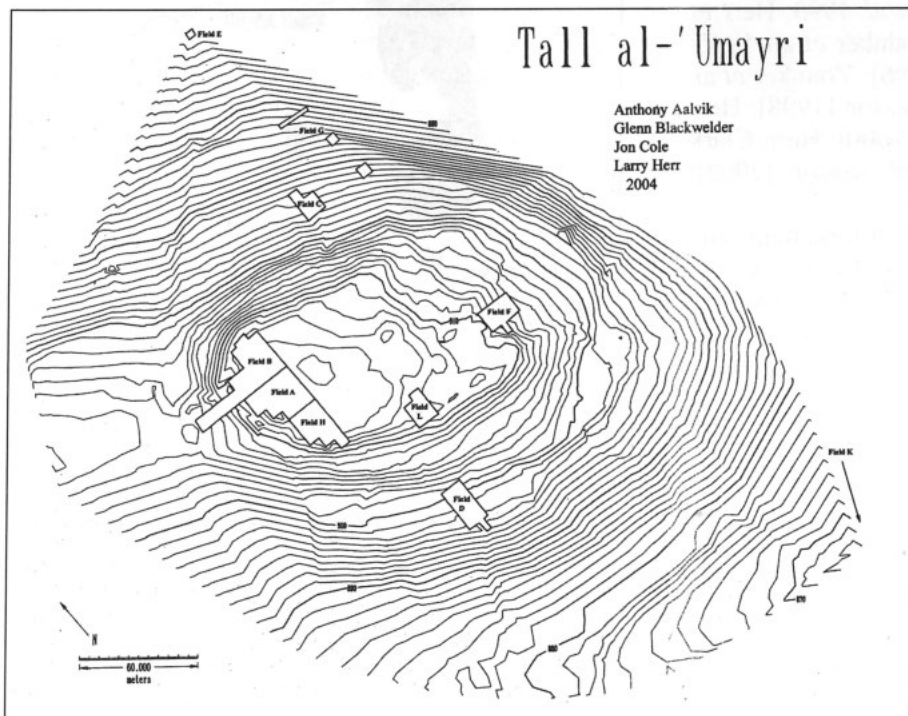
the field (next to Field A); in Field L we exposed more of the Hellenistic structure by opening two new squares and reopening one other.

This season (**Figs. 2, 3**) Field A returned to

					8K00	8K01	8K02	B	
				7J98	7J99	7K90	7K91		7K92
7J84	7J85	7J86	7J87	7J88	7J89	7K80	7K81		7K82
				7J78	7J79	7K70	7K71	7K72	A
				7J68	7J69	7K60	7K61	6K62	
				7J59	7K50	7K51	7K52		
					7K40	7K41	7K42		
					7K30	7K31	7K32		
					7K20	7K21	7K22	H	
						7K11	7K12		
							7K02		



3. Tall al-'Umayri: Schematic grid of squares for Fields A, B, and H.



2. Tall al-'Umayri: Topographic map through the 2004 season with the location of the fields of excavation.

three squares last dug in 1984 and 1987 with the aim to uncover early Iron 1 remains west of the late Iron 2 administrative complex and south of the early Iron 1 houses in Field B. In Field B excavation centered on uncovering the northern extent of the remarkably preserved LB building, opening two new squares and re-excavating three others from previous seasons. Excavation in Field H concentrated on bringing the northern part of the field into phase with the lowest cobble floor so far uncovered in the Iron 1-2 courtyard sanctuary and showing that it was considerably larger than later phases. Field L, on the southern lip of the site, sought to excavate to Iron 2 levels beneath the Hellenistic farm, and expanded to the north by one square.

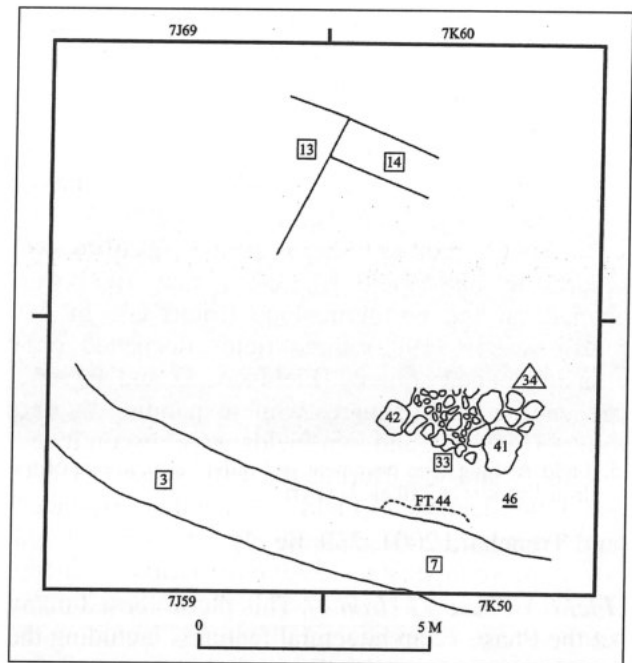
Field A: The Western Edge of the Administrative Complex (John I. Lawlor)

Grand Rapids Theological Seminary

Field A is located at the central western edge of the site (Figs. 2, 3). Eight previous seasons in Field A had discovered a large administrative complex from the end of the Iron 2 period extending into the Persian period. Domestic dwellings, perhaps belonging to the officials who worked in the administrative complex, were built to the north and south of the complex. To the north and west, outside the area of this complex, were Iron 1 remains, including very significant structures from the earliest decades of that period. These were found primarily in Field B to the north, but also somewhat in the northwestern parts of Field A.

The goal of our work in Field A this season was to begin the exposure of more Iron 1 structures by removing the late Iron 2 remains at the very western edge of the Ammonite administrative complex and to the east of the late Iron 1 pillared room found in earlier seasons (Herr *et al.* 1999: 102-103). We hoped to excavate to early Iron 1 remains (Phase 13) that could be connected with the two houses discovered earlier in Field B and the very northern edge of Field A. We anticipated two or three later Iron 1 phases along the way. We reopened two squares last dug in 1984 (7K40 and 7K50) and a third begun in 1987 (7K60). In the southernmost square (7K40) we hoped to examine a small part of a possible gate into the Iron 1 city. For various reasons, including the complexities of wall removal and the emergence of sub-phasing, the work proceeded more slowly than we had anticipated and more work will be needed to accomplish our goals.

Field A Phase 12 (Iron 1) (Fig. 4). In 1998 we dis-



4. Field A: Sketch plan of Phase 12 (sketch by John I. Lawlor).

covered that the north-south early Iron 1 perimeter wall found farther north in Fields A and B curved to the east in Square 7J59 (Herr, Clark and Trenchard 2001: 239 [for the location of the remains in Fig. 4, see Herr, Clark and Trenchard 2001: 239, fig. 3, immediately southeast of the pillared room]). A major wall in 7K50 seemed to be the eastward continuation of this wall, which we also suggested was the northern wall of the gateway. Excavation in both 7K50 and a very small portion of 7J59 (the northeastern corner of the square) confirmed the connection of the two walls. However, its founding level was not reached nor are we certain that the late Iron 2 administrative complex did not truncate its eastern end. We thus do not know for certain how far into the city the wall went, but it did indeed extend far enough into the heart of the city to strengthen our suggestion that it might be part of a gateway (with a parallel wall to the south). This wall may also have been founded earlier in Phase 13, but we have it most clearly in Field A from Phase 12.

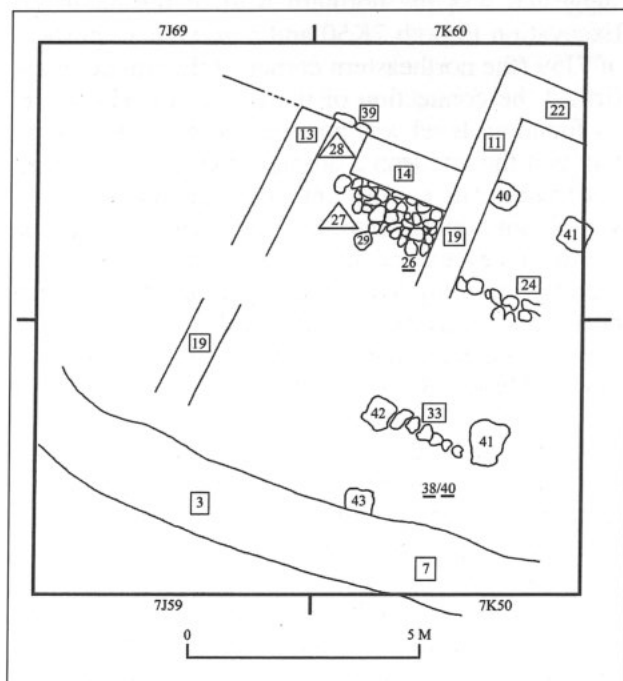
Stone walls and pillar bases together with flagstone and beaten-earth floors probably represent parts of a domestic structure situated within the curve of the perimeter wall (Fig. 5). The finds are presently too fragmentary to suggest a coherent plan. Although Building A was earlier than this phase, no structures from our period seem to have been constructed on top of it, except perhaps for its southernmost area. Thus, there is room only for one major house or two small ones (Herr, Clark



5. Field A: Flagstone pavement and pillar bases in one of the Iron 1 rooms at Tall al-'Umayri.

and Trenchard 2001: 239, fig. 3).

Field A Phase 11 (Iron 1). This phase reused many of the Phase 12 architectural features, including the curving perimeter wall. The wall fragments suggest perhaps two houses north of the perimeter wall using it for a back wall (**Fig. 6** [for the location of the remains, see Herr, Clark and Trenchard 2001: 239, fig. 3, at the northeastern corner of the pillared room]). The space north of the structures (top) may have been a street or alleyway. It is important to remember that these structures are later than the early Iron 1 Building A to the north. Threshold 39 (**Fig. 7**) probably entered the easternmost house into a room that was paved with flagstones (Locus



6. Field A: Sketch plan of Phase 11 (sketch by John I. Lawlor).



7. Field A: Pillar base and flagstone paving in eastern Iron 1 (Phase 11) house with a doorway in the upper left.

27) and contained a stone pillar base immediately south of the flagstones (Locus 29) (**Fig. 7**). It probably included the room surrounded by Walls 22/11/19, but Wall 19 must have stopped near the balk line because of the divider Wall 33/41/42 with two pillar bases to the south. Two more pillar bases were found in a line parallel to these in the northern part of the house. The stones labeled 24 and 33 were not flagstones but ephemeral divider walls. We have not recognized a specific plan to this building as it is so far excavated. More work still needs to be done. The second house may have existed to the west of the wall labeled 19. A threshold may have existed for this house just to the west of Wall 19.

Field A Phase 10 (Late Iron 1). The large walls of Phase 11 continued into the next phase, which was characterized by a surface made out of a mud brick destruction layer with a smashed pithos. We connect it with a nearby storeroom of pithoi found in the 1996 season, also set into a destruction layer of mud brick (Herr *et al.* 1997: 148, fig. 5). It is from this level that a foundation trench descended to the upper courses of the perimeter wall, indicating that it had been reconstructed toward the end of the Iron 1 period. Another patch of beaten earth lay between Walls 7K60:11 and 22 in the northeast (see **Fig. 6** for location). The pillared room in Square 7J69 was also from this period (Herr, Clark and Trenchard 2001: 239, fig. 3) and may be part of a second building to the west.

Field A Phase 9 (Early Iron 2). This was a very ephemeral phase with a poorly constructed wall line built against Wall 7K60:14, which, along with Walls 11 and 22, continued to exist (**Fig. 6**). We could determine no function for the wall. No floors or other surfaces could be identified.

Field A Phase 8B (Late Iron 2). By this time the walls of the preceding phases had gone out of use and new structures were built over them, except for parts of the earlier walls, which were serendipitously reused in the new buildings. Earlier seasons had proposed Phase 7B for these walls (Geraty *et al.* 1989: 148 [Phase 4B at that time]), but new evidence points clearly now to Phase 8B. This was the construction of the large Ammonite administrative complex excavated in most of our previous seasons. The most important surface sealed against reused walls from earlier phases as well as a new wall (Herr *et al.* 2002: 24 [fig. 3.1]).

Field A Phase 7B (Late Iron 2/Persian). This was the major phase of the Ammonite administrative complex in Field A. This season saw work in removing a small part of the relatively weak westernmost walls and the clarification of stratigraphy there. Some of the older walls were reused, most notably the curving perimeter wall in Square 7K50. But there was no gateway associated with the wall at this time. Instead, part of the administrative complex was built south of the older perimeter wall (Herr *et al.* 2002: 24 [fig. 3.1]) with upper walls slightly offset at times from Phase 8B below]). In the northern part of the complex, east-west Wall 14 continued as did Wall 21=4, creating a doorway into a large room west of Wall 21=4 (the western wall of this room does not seem to have been constructed until Phase 6). Several beaten-earth surfaces were found with these walls.

Field A Phase 7A (Late Iron 2/Persian). Small additions to Phase 7B constituted Phase 7A. West of Wall 8 was a rectangular bin (Fig. 8), while, to the south, was an ephemeral wall that retained earth to the north while allowing a passageway to a major



8. Field A: Bin in late Iron 2/Persian Phase 7A.

room to the east of Wall 8 (Fig. 9). Debris layers were encountered elsewhere, although most earth associated with the phase had been removed in earlier seasons.

Field A Phase 6 (Persian). Major adaptations were made to the administrative complex by the addition of a retaining wall at the western end of the northern room (Herr *et al.* 2002: 24 [fig. 3.1]) with wall fragments going over the more coherent walls of Phases 8B and 7B). Rooms were enlarged by rebuilding walls. Most of the surfaces and debris had been removed in earlier seasons.

Field A Phase 5 (Persian). Some of the doorways were filled with blocking stones. The results from earlier seasons suggested that the complex reverted to a less grand scale, judging by the quality of stonework in the construction of the complete administrative complex. Our limited excavations this season did not disconfirm that suggestion.

Field A Phase 2 (Byzantine-Ottoman). Topsoil usually contains a few potsherds from the late Classical and Islamic periods.

Field B: The Western Defense System and Northwestern Domestic Area (Kent V. Bramlett, Walla Walla College)

The primary objective for excavation in Field B this season involved the discovery of the northern limits of the Late Bronze Age palatial building discovered in the four previous seasons. With this in mind, we opened two new squares, 8K20 and 8K21 at the very northern edge of the site, while digging deeper in 8K10, 1811, and 8K12 just south of the



9. Field A: Passage way between walls in Phase 7A leading down from the west into a basement room of the Ammonite administrative complex.

two new squares. We expected to uncover a few more Late Iron II/Persian domestic walls and surfaces, especially in 8K21, that hopefully would help us draw a more coherent picture of the late Iron II/Persian activity in this field from the fragments afforded us in previous seasons.

Fieldwork in 2004 has not altered our understanding of Field B phasing deriving from the most recent past seasons. Our work this year involved primarily remains from the Late Bronze Age and the late Iron Age 2.

Field B Phase 14 (Middle Bronze Age). More of the Middle Bronze Age rampart was uncovered this season in Square 8K20. Though not excavated, just over one square meter was exposed of the 10YR6/2 light brownish gray hard packed layer typical of the top of the rampart beneath all later architecture. It is unclear without further excavation whether the northern continuation of the Crest Wall (**Fig. 10**) is sealed against by the rampart or has settled minimally into it.

Field B Phase 13 (Late Bronze Age) (Figs. 11-13). The Late Bronze Age remains at al-'Umayri are contributing to the understanding of this sparsely represented period in the highlands of Jordan. Pre-



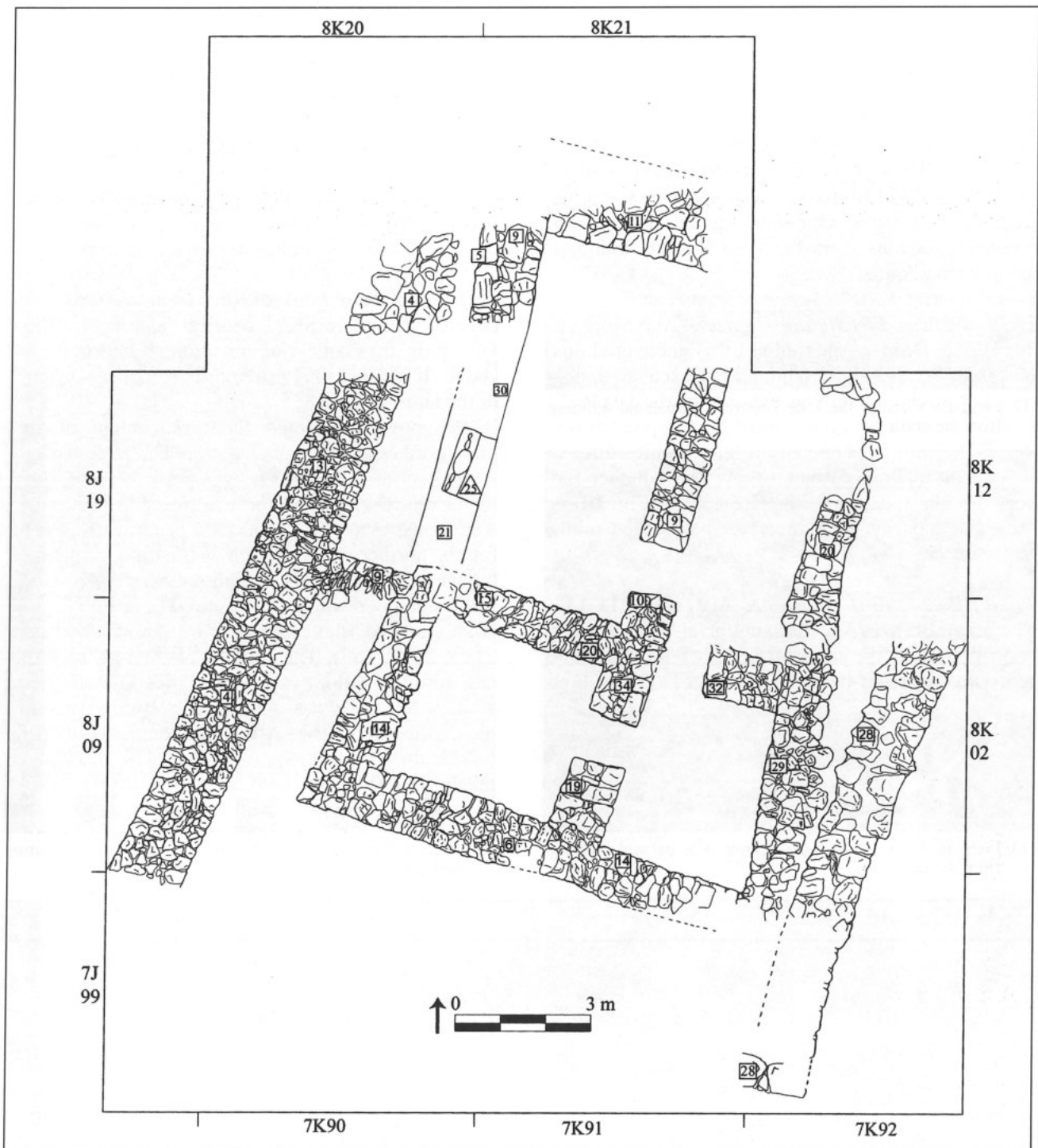
10. Field B: Northern perimeter wall of the site from the east.

vious seasons of excavation revealed two well-preserved rooms in the south, the size and construction of which tentatively suggest identifying it as a palace, certainly not a domestic dwelling (Herr *et al.* 2001: 242-243). Then, in 2002, we uncovered the tops of walls from at least two more rooms to the north. This season, the walls of three rooms in the north were clearly delimited, but we have as yet encountered no surface, except in the northwest where the floor is higher due to the height of the MB rampart.

The northern wall of the complex was discovered in Square 8K21 beneath later walls (**Fig. 10**). It is the same one mentioned in Phase 14 above. It is most likely the northern perimeter wall of the site.

We now understand the arrangement of the three northern rooms much better. The largest room is the central one, measuring 2.5m wide (E-W) by 8.0m long (N-S). The north, south, and east walls were constructed of stone, but a brick wall (except for its northern part, which was stone) separated the western room from it. This western room was a small chamber where we discovered a goblet and crude unfired clay figurines in 2002 (Herr and Clark 2003: 285). The room was entered from the east through a doorway 1.2m wide. The southern wall of Room 3 was coated with mud plaster almost to its top course. Although we are about 2.0m below the tops of the walls, we have not yet reached the floor of Room 3.

In the western brick wall of Room 3 was a cultic niche carved out of the wall and coated with white-wash or a thin layer of plaster (**Fig. 14**). Into a thick, stepped layer of plaster worshippers firmly installed five naturally shaped oval standing stones. The middle one was by far the largest and had a unique "domed" top. It was surrounded on either side by smaller oval stones, one of which was a naturally decorated chert nodule with solution deposits in shapes that seemed almost *avant garde* (**Fig. 15**). Normally, standing stones represent deities, but we found no indication of the identity of the gods. Stacked above the stones on the right side were several LB vessels (**Fig. 16**). The assemblage consisted of parts of four lamps, a complete small carinated bowl, a chalice with broken flared rim (**Fig. 17**), and, on the lower step, a large carinated bowl. This cultic installation suggests that the largest room in the building functioned at least partially in a religious way. Whether or not the whole building was a temple is still being researched. Certainly, there was no sign of a sacrificial altar, but the religious functions were probably limited to votive activities. The cultic installation was covered at the



11. Field B: Plan of the Late Bronze Age palatial building in Phase 13.

end of the season to protect it. We hope to conserve it and prepare it for presentation next season.

The room to the west of the brick wall and was long and narrow, possibly functioning as a *favissa* for the cultic center. This would explain the presence of the goblet and crude unfired clay figurines, one or two more of which were found this season. A doorway into the room has not yet been clearly

defined. We probably have found at least one floor in this room. It was considerably higher than those in the rooms to the east and south, possibly because the Phase 14 rampart was high at this point.

In the eastern room the top of its eastern wall was considerably lower than the other walls in the building, probably because late Iron 2/Persian architecture dug into it. It was a long (N-S) room. A



12. Field B: View of the Late Bronze Age palatial building from the north.



13. Field B: View of the Late Bronze Age palatial building from the east.



15. Field B: Close-up of the chert nodule with natural solution deposits.



14. Field B: The cultic niche in Room 3 of the Late Bronze Age palatial building.



16. Field B: The cultic niche with pottery vessels *in situ*.



17. Field B: The broken chalice from the cultic niche.

doorway from the south led into the room, but an exterior door for the complex has not yet been located.

The pottery in all the fill layers was clearly LB. We estimate one to two more seasons to complete excavation in the building.

Field Phase 7 (Late Iron 2/Persian). Although we have heretofore lumped most of the late Iron 2 remains into Phase 7, we must now consider at least two phases for them. We will most likely assign some of the remains to later phases. They all belong to at least one, perhaps two, houses for which

only fragments of walls, pillars, and surfaces remain. Several of the walls were built in the quoin and pier construction technique (Fig. 18). The building reused some of the LB walls for foundations and may have even excavated slightly into them to lay their floors. Because of the neat LB masonry, it was relatively easy to separate the less carefully constructed late Iron 2 walls from their earlier foundations. A shallow destruction layer was discovered overlying the surfaces.

Field H: The Open-Air Courtyard Sanctuary

(David R. Berge, Portland, Oregon)

Field H is located at the southwestern corner of the flat top of Tall al-‘Umayrī (Figs. 2, 3). Excavations in this field began in 1994 for the initial purpose of exploring the southern extension of the Ammonite administrative complex in Field A, directly to the north. This season we reopened several squares in which the paved courtyard sanctuary was discovered in previous seasons. We worked in parts of several squares: 7K11, 7K12, 7K20, 7K21, 7K22, 7K31, and 7K32, each of which was excavated in previous years.

In 1996, an extensive plaster floor was uncovered within parts of three squares, 7K21, 7K22, and 7K31. In 2000, we excavated one corner of this plaster floor, with its varied plaster, cobble, and earth surfaces, as well as later pits cut into the floors, to a lower cobble layer in Square 7K21. During the 2002 season this lower surface was exposed over a much larger extent, but the walls marking the excavation limits on the north and south were later walls (Herr and Clark 2003: 289, figs. 20-21). The purpose of this year's excavation was to extend the removal of debris and later walls



18. Field B: Late Iron 2 pillars (on either side of the meter stick) in the quoin and pier domestic construction technique; some flat-lying sherds are visible on the surface.

above this surface to discover the full extent of the late Iron 1 paved courtyard.

Work took place primarily in the northern and southern areas of the courtyard and the walls and rooms bounding it. On the north were Squares 7K22, 7K31, and 7K32. On the south were Squares 7K11, 7K12, 7K20, 7K21, and the southwestern corner of 7K22.

Field H Phase 9B (Late Iron 1) (Figs. 19 and 20).

Under the large later walls the northern limit of the cobble surface was not distinct. It is not clear whether the surface incorporated earlier walls or whether the walls continued in use through this phase. To the east, it appears that the cobble surface was limited by the wall already noted in 2002. To the west, the cobble surface was bounded by another wall discovered during the 2000 to 2002 seasons; it also continued in use from the previous phase.

Excavation along the southern edge of the cobble surface revealed several previously unidentified walls. Until more excavation takes place, the stratification of the walls will remain unclear, but it seems that small rooms flanked the courtyard on the south. The resulting extent of the cobbled surface thus covers an area of about 6.5 by 10.5m, an area much too large to have been roofed. In the middle of this open space was a large stone against which the cobbles were laid. Its function is not yet known. As preserved the surface slopes downward toward the east about 0.4m. The surface is comprised of a matrix of cobblestones set with plaster, which appears to have undergone at least one substantial repair (see Phase 9A). The cobble surface may have been constructed in Phase 10B and continued into Phase 9A or may have been part of the surface repair that took place in Phase 9A.

Although well preserved, there were no clear indications as to the function of the large cobbled



19. Field H: The courtyard sanctuary in Phase 9B from the east.



20. Field H: The courtyard sanctuary in Phase 9B from the north.

area. The walls, which surrounded it do not appear to be unified, suggesting that they belong to different structures rather than one consistent building. This fact, along with its significant size, also suggests that the area was not an interior of a building but rather an exterior courtyard. The discovery of a possible pillar base near the northern wall, however, suggests that at least a portion of the area may have been covered. In 2002, we found considerable remains of burnt wooden beams in the northeastern corner, as well.

Because there is no altar of sacrifice in the space, we may speculate that the sanctuary functioned more for the presentation of gifts. In the middle of the pavement was a large stone laid before our cobbles were installed. It rose above the cobbles by ca. 0.30m. It is possible that this stone was an altar of presentation for votive gifts. It is too far from the walls to have functioned as a pillar base.

Given its size and the nature of the construction of the buildings around, it is clear that this courtyard was a significant space. Although no cultic objects were found within the earth layers excavated belonging to this phase, the presence of the ceramic shrine (Herr and Clark 2003: 291, fig. 23), figurine, and statue fragments in this area in later phases suggest that this area functioned as a courtyard for a shrine during this period also. This supposition is supported by the fact that much of the later architectural activity with which these religious artifacts were associated imitated or incorporated the remains of the earlier phases. It is possible that this area functioned as a courtyard sanctuary from as early as the late Iron 1 period (or earlier) to as late as the Persian period.

Field H Phase 9A (Late Iron 1). All of the architecture from Phase 9B appears to have continued in use during this phase. As noted above, the large

cobbled area underwent at least one significant repair as evidenced by a second cobble/plaster surface with the same composition as the cobblestone plaster matrix beneath it. A small wall fragment and two ash layers probably belonged to this phase, as well.

Field H Phase 8 (Early Iron 2). In the early Iron 2 period, the structure directly to the south of the courtyard area was remodeled by adding walls to those that already existed from Phase 9. The result was that the southwestern area, which had been part of a small room in Phase 9, was now included in the courtyard area by a beaten-earth surface over the walls. In the southeastern area was a small room communicating with the courtyard through a doorway (Fig. 21).

Along the northern edge of the courtyard, several new walls were constructed on top of the Phase 9 cobbles. These are visible on the right side of Fig. 22. The northern face of the primary wall was unclear, likely due to its integration with walls extending to the north that have been disrupted by later construction activity on the Ammonite administrative complex. This new wall was located slightly south of the Phase 9 phase wall effectively narrowing the courtyard area to about 5m. At its eastern end a north-south stub wall was constructed to create an entrance into the courtyard (Fig. 22).

More anomalous is the installation made of five large stones along the southern face of the wall (Fig. 22). Already discovered in 2002 (Herr and Clark 2003: 290, fig. 21), it is not clear whether they were intended to widen an already thick wall or whether they functioned as an installation of some kind. Similarly, several possible pillar bases excavated in previous seasons were located within the courtyard area during this phase. Although their spacing does not reveal any clear pattern,



21. Field H: Room to the southeast of the courtyard sanctuary in Phase 8.



22. Field H: The courtyard sanctuary in Phase 8 from the east.

their existence suggests some form of partial superstructure during this period. However, the size of the courtyard and the wide spacing between these possible pillar bases suggests that any superstructure would have been insubstantial.

Instead of the cobble/plaster surface of the previous period, the surface of the courtyard in this phase was made of beaten earth. While this surface was previously dated to the late Iron 1 period based upon the pottery found lying on it, the discovery of clear early Iron 2 forms in earth layers beneath the northern wall necessitates re-dating this surface and its related architecture to the early Iron 2 period. The religious nature of this area is clearly indicated by the discovery of the ceramic model shrine, figurines, and statue fragments on this surface. Although its exact form is not well preserved, it is likely that this area functioned as a courtyard sanctuary, possibly with some form of covered shrine area. The presence of several smashed vessels on the surface that are clearly late Iron 1 forms (mostly long-lasting pithoi) suggests some form of continuity with the earlier use of this area. One could imagine that vessels used in the Phase 9 structure were preserved and reused in the Phase 8 shrine.

Several ash layers covered the surface and were probably post occupational buildup over the area before it was again used in the late Iron 2 period.

Field H Phase 7 (Late Iron 2). Although it is not certain since construction in later phases appears to have disrupted many of the earth layers, it appears that many of the Phase 8 walls remained in use during this phase. Several new loci in the area contained within the NE corner of courtyard likely belonged to this phase. These consisted primarily of wall fragments founded above the earth surfaces of Phase 8. Remnants of a cobble surface, partially overlaid with a plaster surface, went with these

walls. It is difficult to understand the function of these walls and surfaces, though the continued use of the area as a courtyard sanctuary seems most likely.

Field H Phases 6 (Late Iron 2/Persian). Although specific evidence is limited, it appears that the walls along the northern edge of the courtyard sanctuary went out of use during this phase when a beaten-earth surface was laid directly over the walls. It is unclear whether the courtyard was expanded to reach a wall farther north or if some other wall was constructed which has not been preserved. A layer of cobble was laid alongside one of the Phase 7 walls.

Pitting activity has confounded our full understanding of the surfaces in this phase. Although the dating of the excavated layers to the late Iron 2/Persian period is clear, further excavation may refine the specific phase to which several of the loci belong.

No clear surface has been identified in the rooms to the southeast of the courtyard due to later pitting activity. A possible fragment of a cobble surface and surrounding earth layers were uncovered but not excavated. In this area a pithos base was found *in situ*.

Field H Phases 5 (Late Iron 2/Persian). Due to pitting activity, no Phase 5 surface has been identified in the southeast rooms. In the western part of the area was a rectangular pit measuring up to 1m wide and 1.6m long and 0.7m deep. It was dug into the earlier remains in a corner created by two walls. The two sides of the pit not abutting the walls were lined with flat cobble sized stones tipped up on end and the bottom was lined with a cemented earth layer but contained no artifacts (Fig. 23). The fill



23. Field H: Rectangular pit from Phase 5.

layers of earth were well compacted suggesting that they were laid down during periods of regular use. Within the fill were 8 grindstone implements and the fragments of a handled bowl (Fig. 24). Six of the stone implements were grouped together in the NE corner of the pit.

Field H Phase 4 (Persian). In the southeastern part of the area was a large circular pit measuring over 2m wide and 0.3m deep. It was dug into the fills of the previous phases. As previously identified in the 2000 and 2002 seasons, a foundation trench was dug into the Phase 5 plaster surface to found the Phase 4 walls.

Field L: The Southern Edge (David C. Hopkins, Wesley Theological Seminary and Mary Petrina Boyd, Coupeville, Washington Methodist Church)

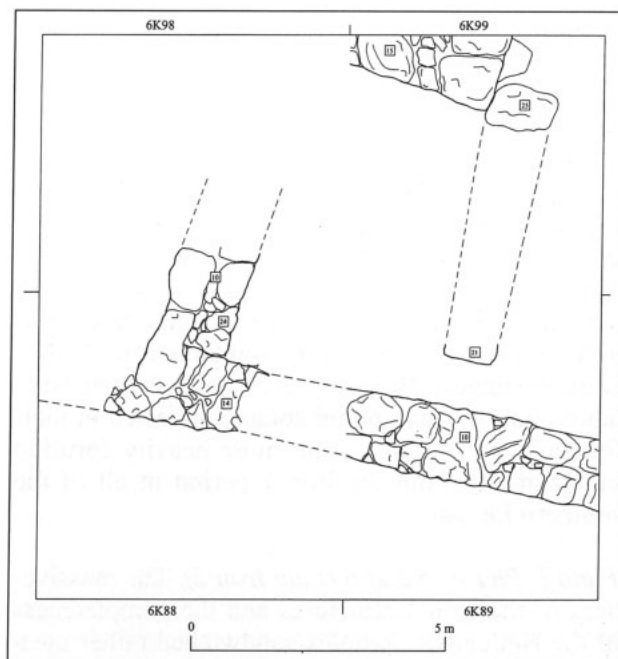
Field L is located at the southern edge of the flat top of Tall al-'Umayri (Fig. 2). Excavations in this field began in 1998 for the initial purpose of exploring the transition of the top of the site to the southern slope where several surface architectural features were visible. This season, Field L excavators worked to expose the northern extent of the Hellenistic complex excavated in earlier seasons, to test the integrity of the plaster surface that appeared to unify two major rooms of the building, and to articulate and date several major wall lines beneath the Hellenistic building. Diggers opened a new square (6K99) at the northern extremity of the field, removed the balks between several squares, and worked to bring into phase several circumscribed areas of previously excavated squares. The gathered data produced greater certainty about the structure and phasing of the Hellenistic building, added major architectural loci to the Iron 1 period at the site, and necessitated the reassignment of a



24. Field H: Rectangular pit from Phase 5 with partial fill and objects in the fill.

number of major architectural elements. More architecture can now be attributed to the Hellenistic building, while the remains of the Iron 2 period diminished. The Iron 1 period claimed massive new architectural features.

Field L Phase 7 (Iron 1) (Fig. 25). Excavation in the newly opened Square 6K99 at the northern end of Field L uncovered a massive wall (Locus 15) constructed with very large boulders and running east-west (Fig. 26 — Wall 15 is the lowest wall in the foreground). While digging has not yet reached the foundations of these stones and walls, they belong stratigraphically to a pre-Hellenistic phase. Wall 15 may be the northern wall of a large structure with a parallel wall in the two adjacent squares to the south (Wall 6K89:10=88:14) and a north-south wall (Wall 6K88:24=6K98:10) (Fig. 26 — the walls immediately to the south and west respectively of the standing balks of Square 6K99). Plotting the continuation of Wall 15 towards the west end of Walls 6K8888:14 and 24, towards a northern point of intersection outlines a rectilinear structure with three sides. Measuring a minimum of 9.6 by 9.3m, this building would boast an interior space no less than 45m² (7.5 by 6.1m). Other data link these wall segments. First, very large boulders occupy a prominent place in their shared dry-laid, two-row, boulder-and-chink construction technique. Second, the southern wall has a consistent deposit of loamy, ashy material sealing against it with Iron 1 ceramics. Third, the top of



25. Field L: Plan of Phase 7.

Wall 6K98:10 was reused during the Iron 2 period.

Other architectural fragments, identified but not yet excavated, probably belonged to Phase 7 if not to the above building. At the northern edge of Square 6K89 a door jamb made of large semi-hewn boulders (6K89:21) aligns with the east end of the northern wall. The two could constitute a north-south wall of a room within the building. Other massive stones just emerging in Square



26. Field L: Overview of Field L from the north with Square 6K99 in the foreground.

6K99 may be part of this complex. So far, no surfaces have been discovered with these walls. Not enough has been excavated to know whether the Iron 1 remains in Field L occurred in more than one phase.

We have not yet been able to determine if these large structures infer a social context different from that in the other fields where the Iron 1 remains were not nearly so monumental. Moreover, structures like this do not seem to fit the relatively primitive social structures most highland Iron 1 sites seem to suggest. However, it fits with the intensive labor and care that the inhabitants invested in their fortification system — the most heavily fortified highland site from the Iron 1 period in all of the southern Levant.

Field L Phases 5 and 6 (Late Iron 2). The massiveness of the Iron 1 structures and the completeness of the Hellenistic complex sandwiched rather meager remnants of Iron Age 2. This season it became clear that major parts of the architecture we had previously assigned to the late Iron 2/Persian period must now be reassigned to the Hellenistic period. Nor did we uncover significant new loci in compensation.

In Square 6K99 was a pair of thin wall fragments beneath a Hellenistic wall of Phase 4 (**Fig. 26** — just south of Wall 6K99:15). However, there is no other reason to suggest that they may be Iron 2 in date. Balk removal and excavation in Squares 6K79 and 6K89 clarified the lines of two pre-Hellenistic walls. The Hellenistic builders scavenged from both walls and, despite their individuality, it is not difficult to imagine simultaneous use of the walls: their foundations occur at only marginally different depths, and though their orientations (18° versus 10°) place them on a collision course beyond their extant lengths, exact parallel alignment is not necessary. The earth layers immediately below the walls yielded late Iron 2 ceramics.

Field L Phases 4, 3 and 3A (Late Hellenistic). The Hellenistic settlers (Phase 4) of this section of the tall laid a plaster floor in the southern part of the field (Squares 6K79 and 6K89) (**Fig. 27** — just fragments in the balks were excavated this season). Though we had provisionally dated it to late Iron 2 in earlier seasons, the quantity of Hellenistic sherds sealed beneath it unequivocally indicated that it was, instead, a Hellenistic surface. In every location, save one, where excavators delved into the Hellenistic building, they encountered the plaster floor. The one exception was a small area near the



27. Field L: One fragment of the Phase 4-3 plaster surface; earlier seasons saw much more of the surface excavated in several squares.

northern wall of the structure. Overall, this plaster floor represents one of the hallmarks of Phase 3. Elevations made it clear that the ancient workers were attentive to consistency of level as the following series of elevations suggests: 910.70, 910.69, 910.50, 910.80, 910.72, 910.50, 910.30, 910.50, and 910.65.

We do not yet know what specialized purpose led to this major investment. The drain that we uncovered beneath the plaster floor (6K79:17) in a previous season suggests an occupation involving a significant amount of waste water such as olive processing. The tool inventory contains agricultural implements (hand pick and sickle) as well as an enigmatic two-piece stone artifact that may be related to a crushing process. However, nothing in this collection is cultivar specific.

We were able to pin down all but a few corners of the Hellenistic architecture preserved in the rooms so far exposed (**Fig. 26**). Diggers revealed the full length of the central wall (the wall beneath the meter stick in **Fig. 26**). It spanned the whole building from south to north where the building's northern limit was demarcated by Wall 6K99:3 (located near the southern balk of the square in the foreground of **Fig. 26**). The length of the central wall was 11.75m. This leaves the northern wall of the building with an offset. While this building style may have been otherwise motivated, the offset of Wall 6K98:7 may have been an accommodation to the configuration of stone reused from a previous phase. It may suggest that additional features of the building lay farther north.

Wall 6K99:3 terminates a short distance from the building's eastern wall. This feature may have served as a door jamb. The opposite jamb must be just outside our excavated area to the east. Phase 4 builders also built a bin (6K99:16) north of Wall 3 (**Fig. 26** in the east balk). Its construction style

matches other Hellenistic walls and installations at times: orthostatic with a foundation of cobbles.

Inside the building diggers unearthed one of the building's several *tābūn*(s). Because no *in-situ* plaster surface turned up in this quadrant, no direct observations about the stratigraphic relationship between this surface and the plaster surface could be made. Given the overall level of the plaster surface throughout the field, it would not be out of the question that the *tābūn* was used prior to the surface. North of Wall 3, outside of the building presumably, excavators encountered no plaster surface, either intact or fragmentary.

A later phase is represented by a platform of stones built north of Wall 6K99:3 (Fig. 26). The role of this construction in the building complex is unknown. One may speculate that this served as a buttress for Wall 3 or, perhaps, the platform constituted one side of the foundation for a tower. If square, such a tower — a frequent feature of Hellenistic rural building complexes — would measure ca. 4m on a side, a good fit with known examples of Hellenistic field towers (e.g., at Yoqne'am and numerous examples in the highlands north of Jerusalem).

We were also able to show that the southern wall of the complex was wholly Hellenistic and did not exist in the late Iron 2/Persian period as we had previously suggested. Work this season in Squares 6K79 6K78. Clear Hellenistic layers sealed against the bottom courses of the walls. Indeed, the earth layers below the wall produced a clear Hellenistic pithos rim (Fig. 28). This means that we must divide our Hellenistic phasing into two, making Phase 3A and 3B. The later phase saw the addition of bins, the blocking of doorways, and the construction of second phases of walls.

Materials from later periods were almost non-

existent this season, except within topsoil of the new square.

Ammon Seal Impression

We discovered our fifth Persian-period Ammon seal impression this season in Field B, Square 8K10, Locus 2 (sub-topsoil) (Fig. 29). It was on the upper part of a jar handle. Like the four earlier seals (Herr *et al.* 2002 [MPP 5]: 253, 263, 265, 275), this one contained a personal name in one of the registers and the word Ammon in the other. In this impression the top line carries the Ammonite personal name, 'lšr, but the script is an Aramaic type best dated around the turn of the sixth to the fifth century BC.

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28. Field L: Hellenistic pithos rim beneath wall.



29. Field B: Seal impression of the Persian province of Ammon.

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