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Fall 2011

## The Institute of Archaeology & Siegfried H. Horn Museum Newsletter Volume 32.4

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## The Institute of ARCHAEOLOGY Siegfried H. Horn Museum



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## Jordan Field School 2011

When one thinks of popular historic cultural attractions in the country of Jordan the Nabatean city of Petra immediately comes to mind. What Petra and other popular historical sites in Jordan have in common is that they offer the visitor places to enter and walk around, sheltered areas that provide protection from the sun, architectural and artistic points of interest, and most important, connections to one or more significant past events. Many of these places also include docents who have been trained to highlight to visitors the most important connections to the past.

The challenge that archaeological ruins such as Tall Hisban present is how to make a visit to the place worthwhile given that the site has few of the above-mentioned features found at popular destinations. In the case of Tall Hisban, this challenge is compounded by the fact that the site's history spans multiple millennia.

In the summer of 2011 a team of 27 faculty and students from Andrews University came to work at Hisban for 21 days during the month of May, under the umbrella of the *Jordan Field School (JFS)*. The main mission of this field school is to address the challenge of how best to present the story of Tall Hisban to visitors. To this end, the *JFS* consisted of five teams: 1) archaeologists tasked with finding ways to improve how specific archaeological features on the tell should be presented; 2) architects, whose job was to draw up plans for low-impact construction of a Visitor Center; 3) ethnographers, who focused on gathering stories about four decades of cultural encounters between foreigners and local residents as a consequence of the dig at Tall Hisban; 4) a media team shooting film footage to be used in producing short documentary films telling the story of Tall Hisban and its excavators; and 5) a community development team helping to identify

(cont'd on p. 2)



Jordan Field School Team at Tall Hisban.

possible job and business opportunities in connection with establishing of a visitor center at Hisban.

Leaders of the *JFS* were Øystein LaBianca, Senior Director; Bethany Walker, Chief Archaeologist; Maria Elena Ronza, Andrews University Agent in Jordan and Codirector for Site Presentation and Community Participation; Martin Smith, Administrative Director and Supervisor for Architecture Team; Robert Bates, Academic Coordinator and Supervisor of the Field B Reservoir Excavation Team; Patricia Jones, Supervisor for the Media Team; Kristin Witzel, Supervisor of the Ethnography Team; and Melody Johnson, Architect Team Assistant Supervisor. Amanda Cochran and Madiha Barrari spearheaded the Community Development effort; and Paul Reid made the film *Deep-time at Tall Hisban*.

Given this rallying of various teams to help tell the story of Hisban—what will be the story that visitors to Hisban will hear when they pass through the visitor center; tour the site; or take a virtual tour on the web? One answer is the opposite of what they typically hear on visiting Jordan’s most popular tourist attractions. It is the up-side-down story of how local people have survived underneath the march of empires.

Indeed over forty years of research at Tall Hisban has brought to light two closely intertwined stories (see <http://vimeo.com/14107807>). The first is the story of the march of empires through Jordan which have left their foot-prints in monumental buildings and finely-crafted artifacts. The second is the story of deep-time local practices and traditions that have enabled the local population to survive and even thrive despite foreign domination by a succession of empires.

While the accomplishments of various elites and foreign-sponsored projects are what typically are showcased at Jordan’s most popular destinations, at Tall Hisban we have the opportunity to highlight deep-time local practices or “little traditions” that have been critical to human survival in Jordan throughout the



Adam Ajarmeh (l) and Jonathan Thompson (r) excavating at Tall Hisban.

millennia. These are practices that have come to light through four decades of anthropological research on daily life at Hisban through the ages. Better known in the scholarly literature as “food systems research,” this type of investigation has brought to light the following seven examples of ways that the local residents of Hisban have accommodated and outlasted a long succession of imperial conquerors:

1) local water harvesting and conservation.. The mound of Hisban is honeycombed with cisterns and water reservoirs; 2) devotion to mixed agropastoralism. The ancients at Hisban were subsistence farmers who depended primarily on dry-farming and herding for their daily sustenance, as revealed from an analysis of animal bones and ancient seeds from the site; 3) a commitment to sustainable housing, made from local materials. The ancients at Hisban knew how to live in a traditional stone house, caves, and tents. They would shift back and forth between these types of dwellings depending on the season of the year and the type of work they had to accomplish; 4) their management of common lands. The ancients at Hisban did not own land privately, but had use-rights to lands held in common by their families and tribes. What was

considered common lands by one tribe might at times overlap with what was considered common lands by another, leading to conflict; 5) providing hospitality. The tradition of welcoming strangers is very ancient. Its deep-time history is attested in the practice of cutting sheep and goat meat into small pieces—a practice that can be inferred from the study of animal bones. Hospitality is not only about good manners, it is a means to building the bonds of reciprocity which can be called upon in times of need; and is also a means to vital information about opportunities and threats; 6) the use of honor and shame. The ancients at Hisban used these techniques to manage social order and to affirm right-doing and punish neglect of duty; and 7) kin-based social order, or tribalism, as the primary source of identity and belonging. Clans and tribal membership provided the local population with rights of land-use and water, as well as a means of conflict resolution and security.

Our rallying to make Hisban a tourist destination is thus because we have a special, well-researched story to tell at this site which is unique when compared to the stories told at most other touristic destinations in Jordan. (Øystein S. LaBianca)





## Umayri 2011

The 2011 season of excavations of the Madaba Plains Project at the site of Tall al-Umayri were conducted during the month of July. The site incorporates nearly 11 hectares (10 at the base, and almost one hectare on the acropolis). Located along the airport highway, Tall al-Umayri is surrounded on the north, west and south by hills higher in elevation than itself, making defense a major challenge. This fact led the inhabitants to take extra measures in construction of its defensive systems over time. Major architectural features at the site include an Early Bronze Age Dolmen, a Middle Bronze Age IIC moat and rampart, a Late Bronze Age temple, domestic buildings and a pillared house from the early Iron Age I, a late Iron Age II administrative center, and a Hellenistic farmstead. A team of 10 participants was divided into two Fields (H and L) during this mini-season.

The goals for Field H, which was supervised by Monique Vincent, included further investigation of the massive E-W Wall 4 that runs through Squares 7K10, 7K11 and 7K12. This was done to better understand the activities along the southern edge of the tell and to prepare for the eventual removal of the wall, which is one of the last substantial architectural features remaining in the open areas in this field that belonged to the Late Iron Age I/Early Iron Age II open-air courtyard sanctuary, previously excavated and now mostly removed. Investigation to the south of the wall indicates that activity extended further, its southern face used to form other rooms. Without any apparent doorways in the wall, this series of rooms could only have been accessed from the east, or possibly the west. Previous excavations in these squares had identified occupational phases dating to the Persian, Late Iron II/Persian, and Late Iron II periods. Our work this season allowed us to excavate along the length of the southern face of the wall for a better understanding of the earliest phases associated with it,

and of the phases of the wall itself, including its foundation.

Excavations in Squares 7K10 and 7K11, south of the wall, revealed a narrow, funnel-shaped space between it and Wall 7, with the area wider on the eastern end and narrowing between the walls, as one moves west, ending with less than a meter separating the two walls at their westernmost point. In the Late Iron II/Persian period, there was a series of small rooms to the east of the funnel-shaped room. The Late Iron Age II phases preceding these rooms included a plaster surface and a large stone bench. A possible foundation trench along the north face of Wall 7 cuts through several earth layers, including a surface and postoccupational debris, which would make Wall 7 a later construction than the stone-bench phase. A pit also cuts through these layers on the west, against Wall 7. Above this pit fragments of a chalice, with a figurine applied to its outer wall, and a tripod bowl were excavated.

Field L was supervised by Amanda and David Hopkins. The goal for the 2011 season was to remove the walls of the Hellenistic-period agricultural complex. Work in previous seasons clarified the internal structure of the Hellenistic-period building, and the remains of Iron Age strata had already begun to emerge throughout the field. These excavations identified wall lines that had been built or reused during the Hellenistic period. Of the seven walls examined, only the NE perimeter Wall 3 in Square 6L80 represented a new wall. Four of the other walls were reused without substantial alteration and another one sat directly on top of earlier Iron Age construction.

Wall removal this season proceeded row by row and course by course. Within each locus, courses and rows varied greatly and stones between courses did not necessarily overlap. The builders often adopted something along the line of a quoin-and-pier-type construction in which pillars marked out wall lengths and heights, between which stones and chinkers were placed in a more-or-less random pattern.



Field H Walls at Tall al-Umayri.

A careful study of the walls used in the Hellenistic-period building confirmed earlier observations made in the hinterland excavations (e.g., at Rujm Miriam) that the Hellenistic-period builders tended to choose previously-founded sites and reused the earlier constructions. They also reduced the thickness of walls and size of the stone. In Field L, the Hellenistic-period building is oriented structurally upon a massive E-W wall from the early Iron Age. When studying this Hellenistic-period reuse, one becomes freshly aware of the extent to which human lives are lived in the shadow of previous human communities.

This season a 13 m tripod-mounted photo boom was added to our approaches to excavation for high overhead shots. The excavation continues to use a GPS system to provide full geospatial data for all points, and combined with the photo-boom photos, will georectify the recently uncovered four-room building in Field H. In addition, X-ray Fluorescence was introduced in order to determine the elemental composition of soil samples to help confirm soil separation into different loci. (Douglas R. Clark)



# RANDOM SURVEY

## *Synagogue Found:*

Excavators have recently uncovered a 1,500 year-old Samaritan synagogue near Beth Shean, in Israel, the oldest such structure to be found so far. The building features a 40 sq m rectangular hall which faces Mount Gerizim, the sacred mountain of the Samaritans, near ancient Shechem. A mosaic floor with geometric patterns and an inscription reading "this is the temple," was found in the hall. The synagogue is believed to have been built in the fifth century AD and existed until the eve of the Muslim conquest, in 634 AD.

## *Ramses II Temple Found:*

Archaeologists have unearthed the remains of a 3,300-year-old temple built by pharaoh Ramses II, the Great, at Ahnasia, in Upper Egypt. Ten cartouches of Ramses II were uncovered and a relief saying that the ruler had ordered the construction of the temple.

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## *Temple of Apollo Located:*

The remains of a bilevel building complex, dating to the Hellenistic and Roman periods, has been discovered at the site of Anogyra-Vlou, in Russia. It is probably part of a sanctuary of Apollo. Two service rooms, the main cult room and a courtyard have been excavated. A stairway connects the two levels, beside which there is a sarcophagus in secondary use as a drain. Large quantities of ceramics and broken tiles were also found along with glass, textile tools and a copper coin. The complex appears to have been destroyed by an earthquake.

## *Shipwreck in Turkey:*

Archaeologists have uncovered a shipwreck at the 4th century port of Theodosius, near Istanbul, Turkey. The 15-16 m long x 6 m wide wreck is in near-perfect condition in terms of its wood as well as its cargo, which contained dozens of amphorae. Its bronze nails indicate a 4th- or 5th-century date, prior to which only wooden nails were used. Thirty merchant vessels and 5 galleys sunk between the 5th and 11th centuries have been found at the port.

## *New Linear B Tablet Found:*

A fragment, roughly 2.5 x 4.0 cm tablet written in Linear B was recently found at Iklaina, in Greece, and appears to be the oldest-known decipherable text in Europe. It was written by a Greek-speaking Mycenaean scribe between 1450 and 1350 BC.

# N E W S L E T T E R



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