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Fall 2016

## The Institute of Archaeology & Siegfried H. Horn Museum Newsletter Volume 37.4

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## The Institute of ARCHAEOLOGY Siegfried H. Horn Museum



### 'Umayri 2016

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NEWSLETTER

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The 2016 season of excavations at the Madaba Plains Project site of Tall al-'Umayri focused on four areas (Fields H, L, J, and P) and one survey site (Site 84), the latter for the purpose of clearing some of the features, and better documenting them photogrammetrically.

Field H on the SW part of the Acropolis was supervised by Monique Vincent. This season the team continue excavation in Square 7K02, last worked in 2014. The goal this year was to locate the southern perimeter wall of the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age I settlement, thought to underlie Wall 2. While it was earlier demonstrated that Wall 2 predated the Late Iron Age II/Persian period, the probes at that time were not deep enough to establish an exact date. This season a new probe was opened north of Wall 2, the results of which exposed an occupation phase dating to Late Bronze IIB/Early Iron Age I, along with contemporary Wall 46, that indeed predated Wall 2, likely serving as the settlement's perimeter wall. Continuing down in the probe, it was found that Wall 46 was offset from Locus 55, a possible earlier wall.

The probe also excavated a 1.03 m deep destruction layer, under which was a flagstone surface and an interior wall sealing against Perimeter Wall 46. A complete tripod quern was found under a large number of collapsed pithos sherds on an earth surface east of the wall. Groundstone artifacts, a spindle whorl and a faience bead, were also associated with this phase.

Field L on the Southern Acropolis was supervised by Owen Chestnut. The objectives for this season were to locate and date a presumed perimeter wall in the southern portion of Square 6K86 and to gain insight into the Iron Age I stratigraphy in Square 6K88.

(cont'd on p. 2)



Aerial View of Tall al-'Umayri with Excavation Fields.

In Square 6K88, the probe begun in 2012 was continued between Walls 4, 13, 14, and 28. Earth Layer 31 and Surface 32 were cleared, revealing a series of surfaces (43, 44, 46, and 50), all likely dating to Early Iron Age I. It was found that Wall 14 rests on Surface 50, with the earlier surfaces and intermittent fill sealing against its southern face, indicating that the construction date of this wall was Early Iron Age I as well. Below Surface 50 fill layer 51 and surface 52 were found, upon which a pithos base was resting, along with a small, single-rowed Wall 53, preserved seven courses high.

In Square 6K86 a probe on the eastern part of the square was opened where a stone-lined bin dating to the mid-to-late Iron Age II was found. A probe was then opened along the western portion of the square, exposing Wall 15, north of which a cobble surface with an almost intact and several smashed pithoi was revealed. This section of the square was part of a storage room, dating to Iron Age IIA. Excavation in the southern part of the probe revealed Wall 16, possibly the perimeter wall from Iron Age I, as it rests on a fill dating to that time. Two more surfaces were discovered, one of which (Surface 24) was used to construct Wall 15, date to Iron Age I.

Field J, on the Southern Slope, was also supervised by Monique Vincent. Here, four squares were reopened to explore the potential fortifications identified in the 2014 season. Bedrock was reached in three of the squares, and a firm sequence of the use and wash phases on the southern slope, as well as a complete history of this rampart system was revealed.

The first substantial use phase was dated to the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age I transition period (Stratum 12), contemporary with the rampart on the Western Slope, in Field B. The rampart in Field J was constructed immediately on top of bedrock, and consisted of several layers of earth, cobbles and small boulders. These layers provided a 1.64 m foundation for a 0.46-0.87 m earth layer of clay and nari, typical of ramparts excavated



Field H Wall Phases.

elsewhere. The earth layer above it had a thin burnt ash layer on top, probably representing the destruction of the site at this time.

The rampart system was later reconstructed and reused in the Late Iron Age II/Persian period, at which time two single-rowed walls were constructed halfway down the slope, battered against a deep earth layer to the height of approximately 1.75 m; again in a similar fashion to what was done on the western side of the mound, in Field B, at this time. A major difference between the two sections of rampart was the absence of an earlier phase dating to the Middle Bronze Age on the southern slope. In addition, no perimeter wall dating to the transitional Late Bronze/Early Iron Age I was found at the top of the slope, as in Fields B and H. However, the results from Field L (above) suggest that the perimeter wall on this section of the tell may have been located further up the slope.

The Southern Tomb area (Field P) was supervised by Friedbert Ninow. This field was opened on the southeastern shelf of the tell because it is in close proximity to the Field K dolmen (dating to the Early

Bronze Age IB) and a rock-cut cave containing multiple burials from Middle Bronze Age II. In 2013 ground penetrating radar work was performed, the data suggesting anomalies such as possible caves and depressions in the bedrock beneath the surface, after which two squares were opened in 2014.

During the 2016 season five squares were worked, two of which were continued from the 2014 season. With the exception of one square (4N72), where an ephemeral one-course wall of two stones was found, bedrock was reached in each square, without coming into contact with any structures or occupational surfaces. Hence, it would appear that the anomalies indicated by the earlier GPR data can be attributed to the fissures and crevices found on the surface of the bedrock.

‘Umayri Survey Site 84 was supervised by Amanda and David Hopkins. This site has been surveyed previously in 1989, 1992, 1994, and 2014. Since 2014 an uncontrolled fire raged through much of the survey area leading to the discovery of an additional rectilinear structure, with a chiseled threshold and door socket (Building 32), a small cistern with steps, quarry marks, and two pressing surfaces.

The goal of the 2016 excavation season was to document any new features, clean, and prepare exemplary features for photogrammetry in order to create three-dimensional pictures of the features, preserving measurement, color, and shade. Features chosen for this type of preserva-

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Umayyid Survey Site 84: Rectilinear Building 32.

tion include a three-part press, reservoir, a smaller three-part press and nearby quarry marks, a pressing surface, including basins, a possible small cistern, cup holes and post holes.

Overall there is a multiplicity of features that dominate the landscape of Site 84 including a ubiquity of water-related rock-cut features such as cisterns, reservoirs and basins. This whole constellation of features suggests a heavy investment in water conservation in connection with Iron Age viticulture. During the Roman period it would appear that there was an expansion of agricultural facilities, still heavily relying on the capture and use of water for viticulture. (Kent V. Bramlett, and Douglas R. Clark)



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# RANDOM SURVEY

## *Roman Sword Found:*

A 60 cm Roman sword wrapped in a leather sheath has recently been found in a drainage canal running underground from the Western Wall of the Temple to the Pool of Siloam in Herodian period Jerusalem. The sword may have belonged to a Roman legionnaire, and been used during the First Revolt of the Jews against Rome (AD 66-70). Other artifacts found in the canal include a gold bell, which perhaps adorned the clothing of a priest, a stone engraved with a rare five-branch menorah, coins and ceramic cooking pots.

## *New Tomb Found:*

Archaeologists have recently found the tomb of a previously-unknown Egyptian queen named Khentkaus III. The tomb was found at the Old Kingdom necropolis of Abu-Sir, in the funeral complex of the Fifth Dynasty (2994-2345 BC) Pharaoh Neferirkare. Her name and rank were inscribed on the walls inside the tomb. Grave goods included about 30 stone and metal utensils.

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## *New Palatial Complex Found:*

Three Mycenaean buildings dating to the 14th century BC have recently been excavated at Aghios Vassilios, in Laconia, Greece, overlooking the plain of Sparta. Remains within the destruction layer of one of the buildings include figurines, seals, clay and bronze vessels, and 21 bronze swords. Numerous fragments of wall paintings were found as at other Mycenaean palatial centers in Greece and the Aegean. The organization and architecture of the buildings suggest contact with Crete. Fragments of Linear B tablets were also found among the ruins.

## *More Bodies Found in Pompeii:*

Archaeologists have recently located the remains of four people in the back room of a shop near the Herculaneum Gate of Pompeii, along with three gold coins dating between AD 74 and 78, shortly before Mount Vesuvius erupted in AD 79. Besides the bodies, the volcanic ash preserved graffiti, wall paintings and even bits of food. Another shop with a spiral staircase in the center of the room, probably leading to a well underneath, was also found.

## *New Tomb Found:*

Turkish archaeologists have recently discovered a fully intact Bronze Age kurgan or tumulus near Istanbul. The warrior within, was buried with his horses and numerous arrowheads, probably needed for the afterlife.

## N E W S L E T T E R



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