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PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2014 and 2015 SEASONS OF THE MADABA PLAINS PROJECT: TALL JALŪL EXCAVATIONS 2014 AND 2015

Paul Gregor, Constance Gane, Helena Gregor, Randal Younker and Paul Ray

Introduction

Andrews University conducted archaeological excavation at Tall Jalūl during the summer of 2014 and 2015. While 2014 season of excavation took place between June 1 and June 20; 2015 season took place between May 10 and June 4. Both seasons of excavation were directed by Paul Gregor. Constance Gane served as co-director with Helena Gregor as Field archaeologist, all of the Institute of Archaeology, Andrews University. Around 25 faculty, students and volunteers joined the more than 20 Jordanian workers during the excavations of both seasons¹.

Excavations at the site of Tall Jalūl began in 1992, with excavations in the Jalūl Islamic Village beginning in 2008. For background information on Tall Jalūl, the Jalūl Islamic Village, and the history of the excavations at the site, see Gane *et al.* 2010; Gregor 2009; Gregor *et al.* 2012; Gregor and Gregor 2009, 2010; Herr *et al.* 1994, 1996, 1997; Younker *et al.* 1993, 1996, 1997, 2007; and 2009; Younker, Gane and Shqour 2007; Younker and Merling 2000; and Younker and Shqour 2008.

Results of the 2014 and 2015 Seasons at Tall Jalūl (Field W)

Field W was carefully laid out on the southeastern ridge of the large depression on the southeastern side of the tell (**Fig. 1**). Work started here during the 2010 season when four squares were opened in order to find the continuation of the water channel from Field G, anticipating that it would run straight to the depression where the remains of a water system were expected to be found. The excavation of these squares brought the desired results and the continuation of the channel was revealed. However, it turned out that the channel does not connect to the water system, but rather passes the depression on its eastern ridge, going further north. By the end of the season, almost 30 + m of the water channel were unearthed, but some sections of the channel were destroyed by later stone robbers.

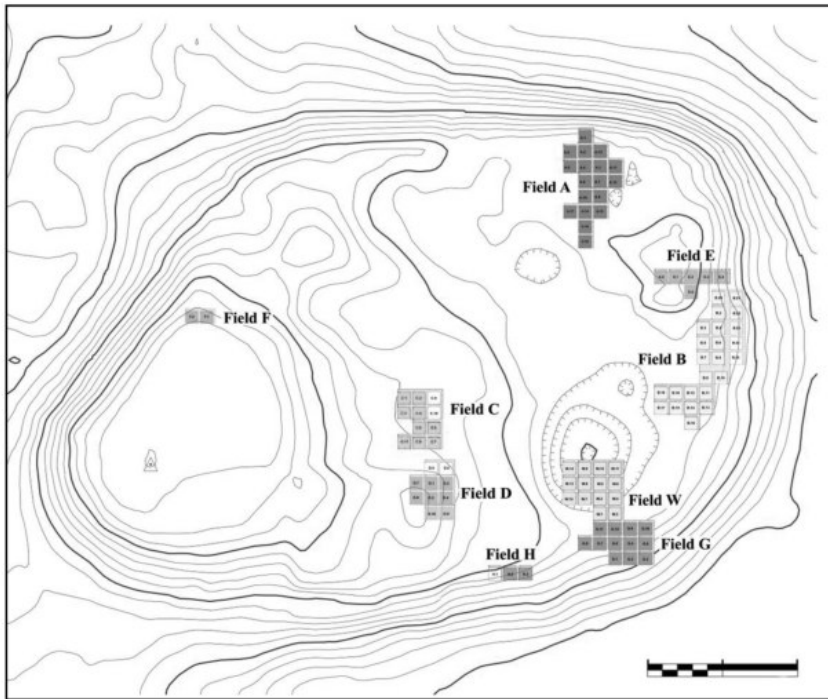
By the end of 2015, five seasons of excavation in Field W were completed with 14 squares excavated (**Fig. 2**). During the 2014 season major cleanup was conducted. A large amount of rain

1. We wish to thank Dr. Monther Jamhawi, Director General, and his staff, including Mr Jehad Haroun at the Department of Antiquities of Jordan for their support of the project during those two seasons. We would also like to thank Barbara Porter and Chris Tuttle of the America Center of Oriental research (ACOR) for their usual assistance. Finally, we appreciate the help of Adnan Rifaiah and Issa Syrianni, of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, who served as our department representatives in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

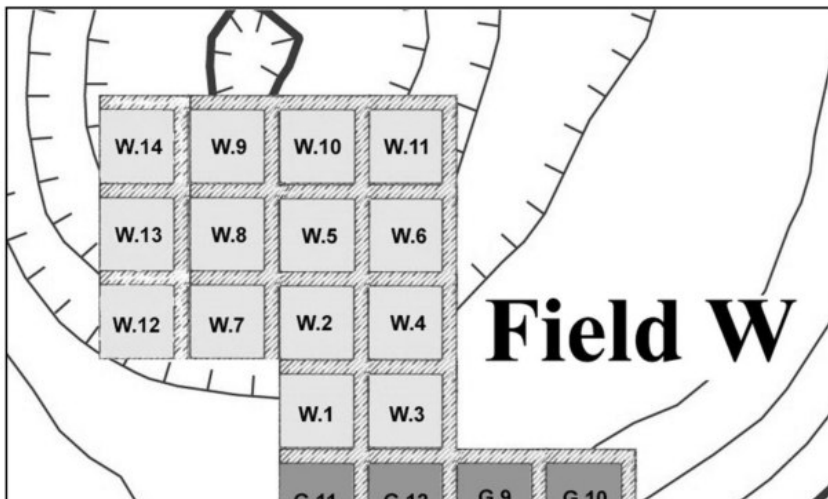
Staff for the 2014 season included director Paul Gregor, co-director Constance Gane, Field Archaeologist Helena Gregor. Jacob Moody served as object registrar and oversaw GPS

readings on the tell during the 2014 season, while during the 2015 season the object register was Constance Gane and GPS readings were overseen by Scottie Baker. Helena Gregor served as the pottery registrar for both seasons.

Square supervisors for Field W included Christine Chitwood and Jacob Moody during the 2014 season of excavation, while Scottie Baker, Edmond Seneque, Ricardo Scarfullery, Michael Orellana and Jeff Hudon were square supervisors during 2015 season. Volunteers for both seasons included Luiz Assis, Scottie Baker, Ricardo Scarfullery, Da Costa Eraldo, Claudya and Jose Berrientos, Emily Cancel, Toni-Ann Ross, Daniel Ulvocsky, Criss Jenkins and Amanda Whitlow.



1. Jalul Topographic Map.



2. Jalul Topographic Map Field W.

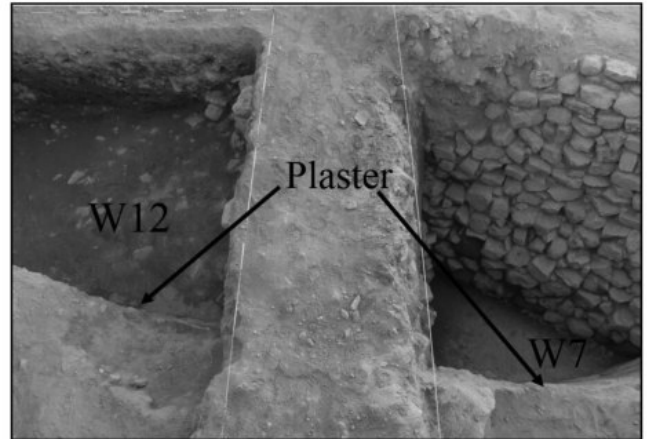
during winter periods caused most of the balks to collapse. That season additional squares were not opened but after cleanup, work continued in two squares (W.9 and W.10) which were opened during previous season (2012). Both squares are located in the middle of the water reservoir and were composed of post 7th century B.C. fill accumulation which was deposited after the reservoir went out of use and was abandoned. Apart from 7th century B.C. pottery sherds, not much was found in those fills representing the abandonment phase.

Occupational Phase 1 (10th century B.C.)

This occupational phase is represented by the reservoir walls and its plastered floors which were probably constructed during the 10th century B.C. Date of the reservoir's construction was established during 2011 season and confirmed during 2012 season. The floor of the reservoir sits on bedrock made of lime plaster. During its life span of four centuries the floor was plastered at least four times (**Fig. 3**). The plaster was hardened by adding crashed flint stone to its lime composition. It is also probable that the



3. Layers of Plaster on the Bottom of Reservoir.

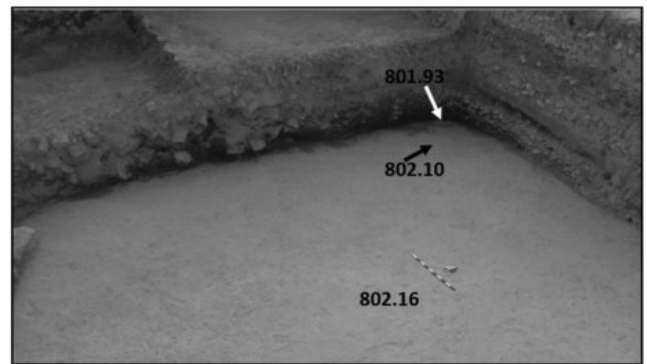


4. Plaster on Reservoir Wall.

wall of the reservoir was elevated throughout the same time, adding to reservoir's capacity.

Southernmost section of the reservoir wall was discovered in Squares W.7:22 and W.12:14. The upper section of the wall was removed during different periods in history and only plaster remains are visible (**Fig. 4**). In order to preserve the plaster, excavation on the wall and the outside section of the reservoir was not continued. However excavation proceeded on the inside of the reservoir. The excavation in Square W.7 was completed and the floor of the reservoir (W.7:27) was reached. A number of pottery sherds, consisting of bow and jar fragments, were found on the floor dating to the last part of the 7th century B.C. One typical Ammonite ware sherd belonging to the same period was also found together with a fragment of Assyrian imported ware.

The floor of the reservoir was also reached in Squares W.9:14 and W.10:13, excavated during the 2014 season, and also in Square W.8:15, with a similar pottery assemblage, indicating that the reservoir went out of use during the 7th century BC. The deepest section of the reservoir was found in Square W.9. Its northwestern corner has sudden dip of 20 cm within one meter, indicating that approach to the stairs for the reservoir might be located on its western side (**Fig. 5**). Based on preliminary estimates the reservoir is approximately 20 meters wide, 30 meters long and 3 meters deep. If so it could have contained



5. Floor of Reservoir.

about 1800 cubic meters of water, which equals to almost half a million gallons, making it one of the largest opened air reservoirs constructed during 10th century BC in the entire region.

Occupational Phase 2 (7th century B.C.)

During the 2012 season a peculiar wall was revealed in W.7:16. That season excavation in this square was not completed and the wall's nature and function were not known at that time. This season excavation revealed the full scope of this wall even though its function is not completely clear, since it was built inside the reservoir at an angle (like a revetment wall). Excavation in Square W.8, which is located north of W.7, was also completed during this season where another wall, parallel to W.7:16, was revealed in Square W.8:16. It seems that both walls (W.7:16 and W.8:16) were built at the same time and belong to the same structure. The walls were not built against each other but to keep soil mixed with

rocks between them. The structure is about 5 meter wide at the base and it peaks at the top (like a dam). While the wall found in W.7 was built under 45 degrees, the wall in W.8 was strait (Figs. 6 and 7). W.8:16 was constructed from large partially hewn boulders, while W.7:16 was constructed of smaller stones. The structure was built on the floor of the southern section of the reservoir and is attached to the reservoir's wall (Fig. 8). Since the excavation in Square W.12 is not finished, it is not clear whether this structure runs from wall to wall of the reservoir.

There seems to be another wall also laid on the reservoir's floor found in Square W.10:12 which looked like stairs (Fig. 9). It was built with a few large boulders with smaller chink stones but its function is not entirely certain. Once eastern balk of Square W.10 is removed its function will hopefully be much clearer. Both structures seemed to be constructed during the same time which was most likely toward the



6. Southern Wall of the Structure.



7. Northern Wall of the Structure.



8. Wall of the Structure Leaning on Reservoir Wall.



9. Stair Like Structure Built on the Reservoir's Floor.

end of reservoir's existence (end of 7th century BC). It may be that the source of the water supply of the reservoir was diminishing and the inhabitants needed to partition the reservoir, or it may be that after the reservoir went out of use a ramp was built as a path which connected both sides of the reservoir. Future excavation will hopefully bring more light to the function of this structure. After this occupational phase, the reservoir was not used any longer and was filled with debris, a process which continued for many centuries. It was filled with material containing pottery from all periods dating from Persian to Late Islamic periods (Mamluk). Most valuable objects this season were found on the surface among which there was one iconographic seal in very good condition (Fig. 10).



10. Seal.

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