

BRAP BEAT



Balu'a
Regional
Archaeological
Project

BRAP 2022 Week Two

By Monique Roddy



Early morning at The Wall



Wandering the streets of Jerash



Hadrian's Arch at Jerash



Khalid, Team Bus



Sheep crossing the road in front of Balu'a

Week two is complete and everyone is starting to settle into the rhythm of our daily excavation schedule. We rise before 4 AM and converge on the breakfast table laid out with yogurt, hummus, boiled eggs, and the ever-present cucumbers and tomatoes. The bus leaves for Balu'a at 4:45 AM with Khalid at the wheel, trekking the 45 minutes to site with great care over the invisible speed bumps. Once the bus arrives everyone grabs their tools - rubber baskets made from recycled tires, picks, buckets, sifts, etc. - and march off to their various areas. We take a break for falafel and watermelon around 9:30 - a heartier second breakfast! - and then work until the bus leaves at 1 PM. Work continues back at the hotel in the afternoon with pottery washing and other lab activities. It's a long day but bedtime starts early and bodies adjust.

We've noticed several changes around Balu'a this year. There are more bedouin tents out in the fields around us with flocks of sheep and goat. Our government representative Manar told me of a two-year drought and less wheat planted than usual. We watch massive clouds of dust rise from the animals moving across the plateau or from a strong gust of wind.

Last weekend we were invited to visit with young adults from one of the local churches who wanted to practice their English and get to know our team. Several team members accepted their generous offer of hospitality, enjoying an evening of games and dinner (see photo below). We also spent a day up north touring Jerash and Ajloun. Jerash is a Roman city that has been excavated and reconstructed extensively (see photos on page 1). One can walk down the main street, take a



Dinner with new friends

seat in one of the two theaters, or visit the Temple of Artemis. There are also later remains at the site including several Byzantine churches and an Umayyad mosque. Ajloun is a beautifully preserved and compact castle built by the Ayyubids in the 12th century. The castle's roof has a spectacular view of the Ajloun Forest Reserve.

The Qasr

By Craig Tyson, Area Supervisor

This week at the Qasr two main developments occurred. In the main area of our excavations the outlines of a structure that we had only partially uncovered in 2019 began to take shape. We had excavated part of a room where we found the pithos buried in the floor. Now the rest of the room is taking shape with two walls stretching north parallel to each other, along with what appear to be two doorways, one set into each wall. We have not yet reached a floor in the building but anticipate reaching it this coming week. One exciting discovery was an enormous saddle quern found upside down against the top of the western wall. A small hand stone would have been used to grind grain into flour on this quern in antiquity.

In the small probe we have been excavating up against the Qasr we are extending our knowledge of the architecture of and around the Qasr's foundations. As in 2019, we came upon a row of large stones that appear to be a pavement sealing against the base of the Qasr. The pottery from the two layers underneath this pavement will be critical for confirming the dates of the Qasr's construction that we proposed in 2019. Also of interest is what appears to be a pillar base below this pavement, possibly another remnant (along with the large mortar uncovered in 2019 under the Qasr wall) of habitation that pre-dated the Qasr.



The large quern at The Qasr

The House

By Stephanie Selover, Area Director

We moved a lot of dirt in Week 2 at The House. We are working especially on clarifying new rooms and new walls throughout the house, with great success. A small room newly excavated this season, in the southeast part of the house, revealed an unexpected reuse of the earlier Iron Age walls perhaps dating to the Hellenistic period. The inhabitants placed cobble stone floors and rubble-filled walls



Relocating a rock pile at The House



against the remaining Iron Age walls, likely for the purpose of stabling animals.

Along the northeastern edge of the house we excavated through topsoil this week to reveal a very large wall that may be part of the entryway with a possible workshop space. We are now in the top of the burnt destruction layer of the main Iron Age phase and look forward next week to seeing more of the floors associated with the walls.

Finally, along the western side of the house we have come down to the Iron Age rubble over a series of smaller rooms. We do not yet understand how these rooms were used but hope to learn more next week when we reach the floors. This area has been rich with ground stones, lithic production materials, and a few smaller finds like glass beads and ceramic figurine fragments.



The Wall

By Owen Chesnut, Area Supervisor

The hard work of rock moving in Week 1 is already paying off in Week 2. We have started to excavate down between the casemate walls on top of the fortifications and inside a later tower we hope to date this season. In uncovering part of the casemate room we have filled buckets with broken (but hopefully) restorable pottery. We have also found parts of a tabun (oven made with baked clay) and our first loom weight of the season! West of the



casemate wall we are working to expose a structure barely revealed by a 2019 probe inside the upper settlement. We have moved through all of the tumbled stones and have come down on top of the destruction debris within this building. As part of that debris we have found the organic remains (called phytoliths) of an ancient mat! We have also located a doorway in the northern wall of the room and began to excavate it on Thursday.

The Islamic Village

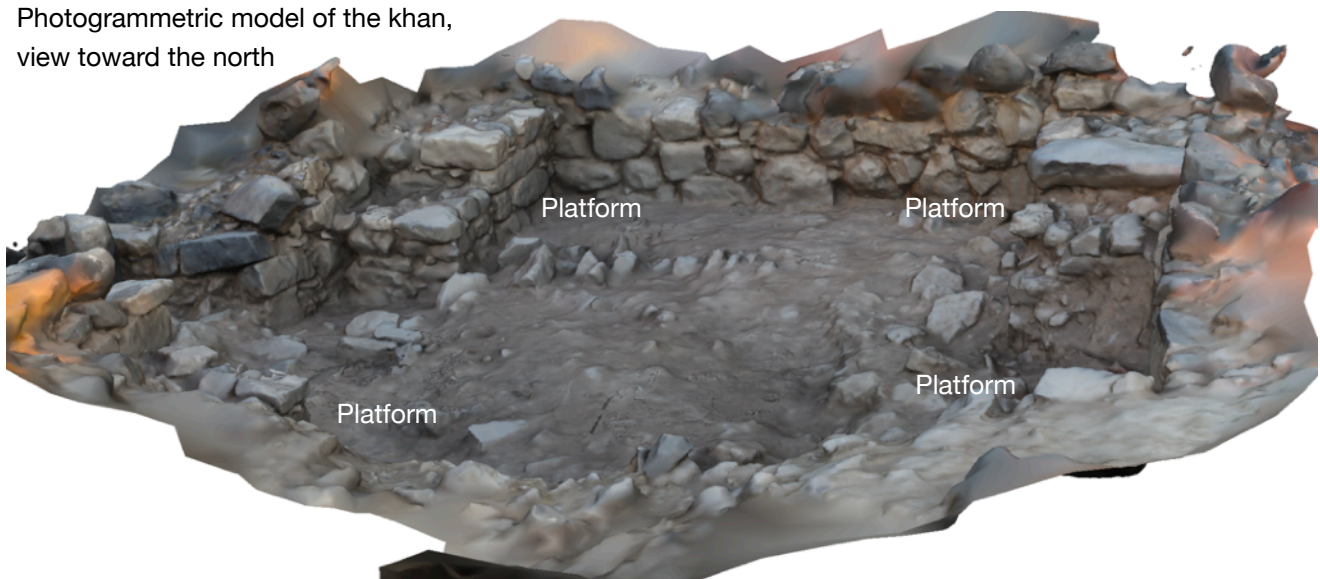
By Ian Jones, Area Director

Work has continued steadily in the Islamic village during Week 2 and we are continuing to excavate through the substantial collapse layers in the khan/road inn. Our interest continues to be piqued by the stone platforms in the four corners of the room. This week we clearly defined the two platforms in our current 10x10 m excavation square,



and we can now say that both northern platforms have two levels: a taller northern platform and slightly lower southern platform. When we started excavating these features last week, we speculated that they might be later additions to the building because the northeastern platform seemed to block an earlier doorway. Excavation in this “doorway” this week revealed something more complicated, as the exterior portion of the room’s wall is present here, but the rubble fill of the platform extends into the wall beyond the line of the interior face. We also continue to find new courses of this platform as we continue to excavate, suggesting that they are substantial architectural features that may have been built during an earlier phase of the room’s use than we originally thought. Although we now have a better understanding of their construction and stratigraphic relationship to other features in the room, we are still unsure what they were used for. We hope to get to the bottom of the platforms, and the mystery of what they are, next week.

Photogrammetric model of the khan,
view toward the north



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