

BRAP BEAT



Balu'a
Regional
Archaeological
Project

BRAP 2022 Week Three

By Monique Roddy



BRAP 2022 Team Mid-Season

The midpoint of our season has arrived! Week three is the one week of overlap between our first-half and second-half season participants. It was a great week with (almost) everyone in the field, and not just for the group photo! The new arrivals kept busy learning the techniques of excavating alongside their more experienced co-diggers. Some stayed busy back in the lab, registering materials, floating soil samples, sorting heavy fraction, processing photogrammetric models, and photographing artifacts. We'll close this week's newsletter by introducing the entire team as we've done in the past. It takes a lot of team work to keep an excavation going, so none of this would be possible without the serious contributions of each and every participant. For those heading out now, we extend gratitude for their efforts and hopes that we'll see them again in a future season!

Last weekend our team tour headed out into the Eastern Desert to visit several Early Islamic sites commonly called the "Desert Castles". These sites date largely to the Umayyad Period. Some of the sites served as estates, others as meeting places with local political entities. The preservation



Visiting Qasr Kharana

and restoration completed at each make them impressive and beautiful structures to visit and explore. Dr. Ian Jones, a specialist in Islamic Archaeology, prepared us for our visit with a lecture last week on the Byzantine and Islamic periods in Jordan, and then raised further details as we reached each site. Visiting the Eastern Desert is always a hot trip, but a good breeze and shady interiors provided some respite. Our tour included Qasr Mshatta, Qasr Hallabat, Qusayr ‘Amra, and Qasr Kharana.



The Qasr

By Charles Hughes-Huff, Area Supervisor

This week at the Qasr we uncovered the surface we mentioned last week. We discovered three pithoi dug through that surface. In a burst of creativity, we named these pithoi “Pithos A,” “Pithos B,” and “Pithos C.” A pithos is a large storage container — you may remember we discovered one at the Qasr last season. People dug pits for them and used them to store grains in convenient locations. In this case, Pithos A and Pithos B had many mends and were discovered buried upside down. Pithos A had burned stones and a layer of ash in it — perhaps it was converted to an oven after a long life as a storage jar. Pithos B had no ash at all, so it must have proven secondarily useful in some other way.

We raced the clock to remove the pithoi before the weekend, pulling long hours to carefully excavate the pits around the pithoi, the soil inside the pithoi, and the pithoi themselves. They’ll be restored as full vessels.





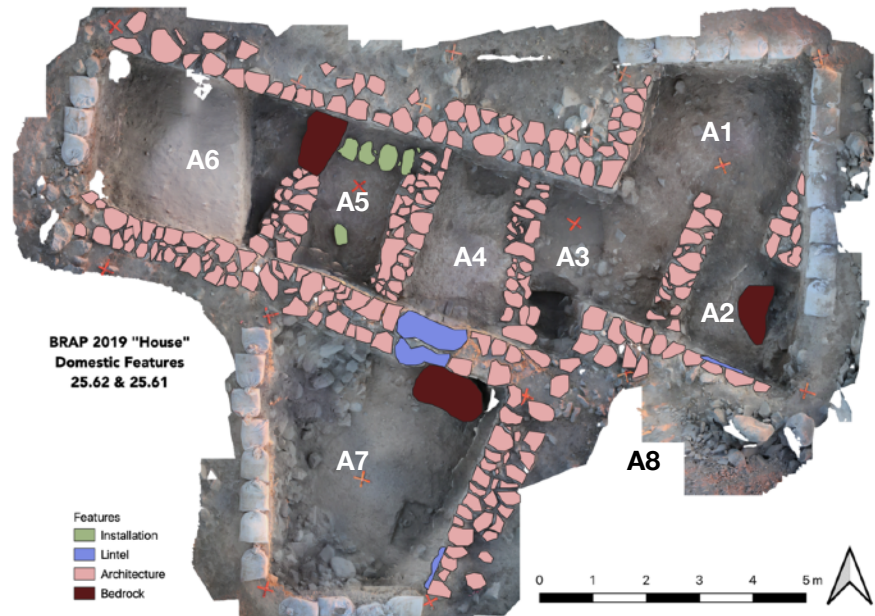
Carefully defining the pits around the pithoi

We're not the only ones working furiously. We've been joined by a creature we've named Turbo the Molabite. Turbo leaves several piles of dirt for us each morning — and sometimes even when we're digging. He is an example of a phenomenon called bioturbation, whence his name. Turbo wishes to convey that he did not agree to his name or our probe, wishes we would all go away, and notes that history is written by the victors who bring modern plastic deep into formerly secure layers of dirt.

The House

By Stephanie Selover,
Area Director

The House continues to excite and surprise here in Week 3. In Room A1 our team excavated the destruction layer just above the floor. By the end of the week they were nearly through it, finding burnt mudbrick, nari, ash, and even the remains of a carbonized wooden beam within the earthen fill. Surprisingly, two new walls were discovered along the eastern edge of this



area, revealing that the House continues even further to the east than expected, leaving new rooms to excavate in future seasons. Along the southern Room A8, another new wall was discovered, splitting this room in two, so what was once thought to be one larger room is now two smaller areas. Otherwise, the team has made steady progress through the earthen fill and will reach the floor level next week. Finally, in the western rooms, some unexpected discoveries revealed that the final western room (A6) was built directly over the natural bedrock, causing this floor to be a step higher (approx. 50 cm) than the other rooms to the east. This means we were able to excavate the Phase 2 floor of Room A6 this week, revealing a small amount of broken pottery and bone on the surface as well as a large natural bedrock boulder that was carved into a tapered parabola-like shape, set directly into the floor. With this complete, we decided to extend the trench further west, to include the visible western wall of the house, which we will report on next week.

The Wall

By Owen Chesnut, Area Supervisor

We continued to make a lot of progress in both squares at the Wall. Within the casemate fortifications we excavated down through a leveling surface in the northern room and in the southern room came down on an extremely hard, compact plaster floor. In the building west of the casemate wall we finished clearing the doorway found last week and have started to excavate the destruction material located on a cobble floor. Some exciting finds have been turning up from this destruction layer including a restorable storage jar, several loom weights, a lot of burnt organic material (good for Carbon-14 dating), and a few other small finds.



Inside the casemate room



The NW platform in the khan

The Islamic Village

By Ian Jones, Area Director

In the Islamic village, work continued in the khan/road inn during the third week of excavations, and our results continue to be intriguing. In the last week, we have reached the bottom of the thick layer of large, collapsed stones that we were excavating during the first two weeks, and the occupation of the room is becoming clearer. The stone platforms in each corner of the room continue to be mysterious, and although we have made substantial progress, we have not

yet reached the bottom of any of them, demonstrating again that these features are more substantial than we initially thought. At the end of last week, however, we uncovered a curvilinear installation built against the south side of the shorter platform in the northwestern corner of the room. This feature is built at a much lower level than the platforms, and although containing several courses of stone, is a later and probably more ephemeral feature. Currently we suspect that this installation may be a hearth built during a later phase of domestic reuse of the khan, but excavations this week will give us more information about this feature. Whatever its purpose, this does tell us we are now through the collapse and getting close to occupation surfaces in the main part of the square, and we are looking forward to Week 4!



Carolyn's net for moving large stones

Moving the fallen lintel stone

After the team, with some much-appreciated help from site guard Youssef, our bus driver Khalid, and Kent, removed the two pieces of the large lintel stone (which was carefully set aside for restoration, hopefully during an upcoming season, see photos above) on the western side of the doorway, Jadah, who flew home at the end of the week, excavated a probe in the room's doorway and reached a threshold stone and partially preserved stone pavement, which are very exciting because they are probably at the original floor level of the room. We will continue this probe during week four to investigate the foundation level of the room's walls. Although the team said goodbye to Jadah this week, we also welcomed our newest member, London, who we're excited to have digging with us for the rest of the season!

The Pithos on Display

The Iron IIC pithos that we brought to the Karak Museum at the beginning of the season is now on display (see issue 3.1). The BRAP donated the funds to commission a metal stand to hold the pithos upright so that it could be displayed prominently in the Bronze & Iron Age room next to the other artifacts in the museum from Khirbat al-Balu'a. The timing was perfect, as we just uncovered this pithos' three fellows this week (see "The Qasr" above). All four pithoi were once buried together in a structure north of the Qasr. We hope that the three new pithoi might one day join the first one at the museum, though they might need a special pithos wing if we find any more.



Balu'a's Iron IIC pithos at the Karak Museum

جرة خزين	pithos
الموقع : البالوع	Site: Balu'
العصر الحديدي	Iron Age IIC
فخار	Pottery

The 2022 BRAP Team

The contributions of each member of the team are essential to a great season. We want to take this opportunity to thank each participant and acknowledge their help in making the 2022 season a success!

DIRECTORS



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Monique Roddy



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Area Sup, Qasr



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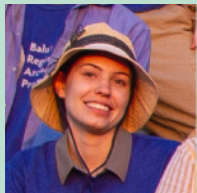


Sarah Richardson
GIS Manager

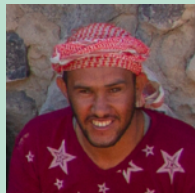


Stephanie Selover
Area Director, House

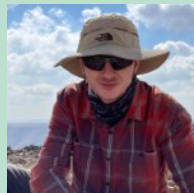
TEAM MEMBERS



Adrienne Baker
Team House



Ahmad Alazazmeh
Team House



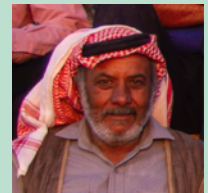
Alex Roddy
Team House



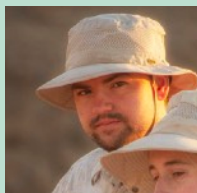
Amer Hjazeen
Team Isl. Village



Asante Crews
Team House



Awwad Dwais
Team Wall



Craig Fisher
Team House



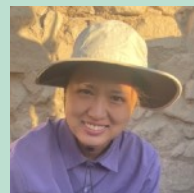
Dagmar Niemeijer
Team House



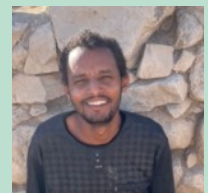
Daniel Curtis
Team Wall



Douglas Clark
Team Balu'a



Enjing Zhou
Team House



Fantahun Sisay
Team House

					
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Kacey Garcia Team House	London Perlis Team Isl. Village	Majed Alazzami Team House	Manar Yazadine DoA Rep	Maggie Apffel Team Qasr	Marlene Iten Graf Team Wall
					
Mary Boyd Team Qasr	Megan Johnson Team House	Michaela Kraft Team House	Mohammad Tarawneh DoA Rep	Naif Dwas Team House	Oliver Jue Team House
					
Paul Richards Team Wall	Peter Tucci Team Isl. Village	Regina Puratich Team Qasr	Riyadh Majali DoA Rep	Roma Aatifi Team Isl. Village	Salem Doweis Team Isl. Village
					
Sam Otto Team Qasr	Sam Fisher Team Wall	Saraa Myran Team Isl. Village	Shaun Eccles Team Wall	Stelle Gray Team House	Suleiman Alsbeiheen Team Qasr
					
Sully Sullivan Team Wall	Wisal Ma'alta DoA Rep	Yassir Azazmeh Team Wall	Youssef Hajazin Team Guard	Zoe Luderman Miller Team House	Khalid Team Bus!