Tall Jalul
Project Name: Excavation and Survey at Tall Jalul / Madaba Plains Project (MPP)
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Sponsor: Institute of Archaeology, Andrews University / USA
Director: Karen A. Borstad
Representative: Reham Haddad

Survey Report
The goals of the 2007 season were to locate built roads in the vicinity of Tall Jalul and plot them in a digital map (GIS). The research method for an 8-day pilot season was ethnographic interview. Reham Haddad, the Department of Antiquities representative, interviewed our informants and Dr. Theodore Burgh, University of North Carolina – Wilmington, assisted with site photography.

Ethnographic interviews in the village of Jalul led to the location of road remains described variously as the “old way” and “the road from Mumiy to old Jalul”. Extant sections of this road were located in three discontinuous segments and mapped from the northwest to the southeast as Sites JR1, JR2, and JR3.

Site JR1. The visible road extended for approximately 350 meters, with termini at a field boundary fence (northwest) and at a modern house (southwest). In the northwest half no built roadbed was visible between the edging stones, estimated generally as four meters apart. A series of stone clusters lined the eastern edge for a length of 150 meters; they appear to have been cairns, but are now reduced to one course above a mostly below-ground level. The shape of these clusters was generally oval with varied lengths (1.7 to 3.8 m) and widths (1.5 to 2.9 m). Their spacing along the eastern edge was irregular, ranging from 1.3 to 7.7 meters apart, thus appearing to be roadside burials rather than road markers. The final 10 meters of JR1, up to the modern house, appeared as two edges approximately 6 meters apart, relatively undisturbed and distinct but with no apparent built roadbed. Preliminary analysis of the 110 pottery sherds collected from within the roadbed were primarily Iron Age and Byzantine.

Site JR2. The site extended for c. 125 meters with a well near the center of the site to the east side of the road and a rock cut cistern at the northwest end. A built roadbed was visible only to the northwest, although occasional flat stones (c. 20 – 50 cm) on end forming irregular straight edge lines continued to the southeast end. Nine sherds of pottery were found within the roadbed area of JR2, predominately Iron Age, with Byzantine and Islamic.

Site JR3. The visible road extended for approximately 200 meters. Neither the road’s reported continuation, nor its terminus of “Tall al-Khadir” could be discerned across a cultivated field further to the southeast. The built roadbed was in the form of a heaped ridge of stones, with upright stones forming a center line. A rock-cut cistern was found at each of the three coordinate points taken. Pottery collected from the JR3 roadbed was all post-Iron Age, predominately Iron Age and Byzantine.

At the local perspective, the acropolis overlooks this road as it passes by the western end of the tall, as well as a wide extent to the northwest and southeast. The acropolis also overlooks the eastern surface of the tall where a possible entrance ramp (Field B) has been partially excavated. The road’s location and alignment will help clarify Tall Jalul’s approach topography. From an inter-regional perspective, the northwest-southeast alignment of the ancient road past Tall Jalul, plus the presence of Roman and Byzantine sherds, is consistent with reports of “Roman” roads lying southeast of Tall Jalul, specifically from Nilt to Umm ar-Rasas (Piccirillo 2001). Future exploration to discover further travel connections will enhance our understanding of Tall Jalul’s regional interactions.

Reference