Tall Jalul
Project Name: Madaba Plains project at Jalul
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During the 2008 season, Andrews University conducted excavations at Tall Jalul and initiated excavations at the Islamic Village located immediately south of Tall Jalul and 5km east of Madaba, Jordan.

The Aims of the Project
Two previous excavations of the Jalul Village have been undertaken; one by Ibrahim Zabn in 2002 and one by Ali Khayyat in 2004. The work this summer was intended to expand and clarify the results of these previous two excursions.

The goals of the 2008 season were modest in that the team had only a couple of weeks to conduct excavations. In view of Ali Khayyat’s suggestion that there was a khan located in the village immediately east of the oldest free standing square building in the center of the east quadrant of the site (it has been suggested that the freestanding building dates anywhere from Roman to Byzantine times, although no definitive archaeological evidence has been produced to confirm the actual date), it was decided to open a couple of squares across what appeared from the surface to be a couple of vaulted rooms that opened into an open area to the west (Fig. 1). The layout was suggestive of a khan. The SW corner of Square A1 was located by GPS at N125134.00 and E 231292.00. The SW corner of Square A2 was located by GPS at N 125126.00 and E231292.00. Each square was approximately 5 x 10 meters, although excavation was concentrated on the inside of the two rooms. The north room was the largest measuring 7.5m by 4m. The doorway was .75m wide. It was not possible to measure the length of the southern room, but it was nearly 3m wide. The door was approximately 7.5m wide.

The Results of the 2008 Fieldwork: Jalul Village
The excavations in the two squares (A1 and A2) exposed parts of two vaulted rooms (Fig. 1); the “north room” and the “south room.” The team was able to reach bedrock only in the north room. The debris in the north room consisted of roof fall.
Phase 1—initial construction
The North Room was initially built on bedrock in most places as far as can presently be discerned. The walls from this phase include the west wall (L. 40, L. 22) of the north room; and the east wall (L. 24, 35) of the north room (Fig. 1). These walls are all about 1.20m thick and are built mostly of fairly large hewn stones. The size and style of the stones represents a considerable investment by the constructors and suggests the importance of Jalul at the time this, and adjacent buildings, were constructed. While there were early Islamic sherds in the cracks of the bedrock, most of the sherds in the fills under the various surfaces or floors in the North Room were Mamluk suggesting this as the prominent period of use.

Only the southern part of the North Room was excavated this season. In this southern section, a number of wall lines were revealed that were founded upon bedrock, creating at least three small rooms (Rooms 63, 64, 65) (Fig. 2). It is uncertain at this point whether these wall lines were established during the initial construction or represent a later addition or sub-phase. Some of the smaller wall lines seem to create stone bins, possible for holding feed for animals. Indeed, the bins, and small rooms with low walls suggest the possibility that animals were kept in the southern part of the North Room.

Phase 2—disassembling and destruction of North and South Rooms
At some point during the Mamluk period, the southern half of the North Room was systematically disassembled apparently to enable the reconstruction of the South Room which had been completely destroyed. Well hewn stones from the destruction of the South Room were seen covering its floor (L. 61) (Fig. 3). The destruction in the South Room proper looks more random and haphazard, but the original south end of the North Room was clearly taken apart carefully by hand.

Phase 3—remodeling
During the remodeling phase, a new partition wall (L. 3) was constructed to separate the North Room from the South Room Wall L. 3 is not as substantial as the external walls (L. 40, 22) of the North Room. Rather, L. 3 was built with a narrower width. While the height of partition Wall L. 3 is uncertain, it does not seem to be founded on bedrock as were the exterior walls. This can be surmised from the fact that in the south balk of the north room, there is a pile of collapsed rock below the Wall L. 3 that protrudes from the balk and seems to run under the Wall L. 3. Also, the view of the Wall L.

Inside the bin (L. 16) seems to indicate that the base of the Wall L. 3 was reached (however, this is not 100% certain and must be checked next season).
South Room. The north door jam and west Wall (L 11) of the South Room were also built at this time; its width is also narrower than the original external west wall to the north (L. 40, 22). The east wall (L 10) of the South Room was also built at this time and also was not founded on the original bedrock. In summary, it would seem that walls 11, 3 and 10 of the South Room were built as a unit at the same time. The original floor for this room was made of hard packed nari (L. 51). It runs right up to the base of the east wall L 10.

North Room. That the bin and the wall lines were part of the remodeling and not part of the original layout is supported by the fact that the bin in the north room cuts into the area where the wall was cut. The silo was not founded on bedrock, rather, it seems to have been established at about the same level as the walls in the south room. Its floor (L. 45) was hard packed nari. Under the nari the silo was built of smaller stones. This probably does not represent an earlier phase of the silo, rather, it is the foundation for the silo above L. 45.

Phase 4—South Room remodeling
There was an additional phase of remodeling that, at this point, seems limited to the South Room. A bin (L. 16) was constructed along the north partition wall (Fig. 3). The base of the bin, and indeed the floor of the South Room, is at a higher level, suggesting some time had gone by since the original remodeling. The precise date is impossible to determine at present. Most ceramics continue to be Mamluk, although perhaps this room continued to be in use into Ottoman times. It is also possible that the North Room continued to be in use during this time (the silo, etc). Some pits were dug into earlier levels during this period; eg. the sw corner of the south room.

Phase 5—final destruction and abandonment.
Eventually, both the North and South rooms ceased to be used. Both rooms were later filled with fallen stones and earth up to the surface, whether from a sudden destruction or gradual abandonment is hard to say at this point. In the north balk of the north room, there is a layer of ash below the layer of fallen stones, which suggest that there was a fire in part of the North Room. However, the fire does not seem to have spread throughout the entire room (no evidence for this in the south part of the North Room) and was probably localized. Rather, it seems the final collapse is part of a gradual period of abandonment.
The Results of the 2008 Fieldwork: Field D on the Tall

Excavations in Field D on the tell concentrated on two rooms in D1 and D2. The objective was to date the walls of these rooms and this objective was met. The excavation team was able to reach the base of the walls and establish the building was founded in the Late Iron II period (7th-6th centuries BCE) and continued to be used into the Late Iron II/Persian period (5th and possible 4th centuries BCE). Of interest was the fact that in the south eastern room, walls were found below the Late Iron II walls. The earlier walls were built on a different axis and plan. While no firm dates could be established for these earlier, lower wall lines, pottery from the LB IIB/Iron I transition were recovered—including a burnished bowl and a jar with a slightly everted rim (Fig. 4).

Conclusion

While more work is necessary to fully understand the date and function of the North and South Rooms in the eastern sector of Jalul, everything found is consistent with a residential unit or even a khan. There were pens and bins, and tethering holes for animal and grain storage, but also ceramics representing the full range of functions of a residential unit for food preparation and consumption (plates, cups, kraters, store jars, cooking pots, imported wares, etc). Plus there were food preparation tools such as millstones, grinding stones, pounders, etc and some possible textile tools (loom weights, bone awl). There were also a couple of Arabic ostraca, something more likely to be found in a residential area. As for the question of a mosque, time did not permit an excavation of the so-called mihrab but a visual inspection did not reveal anything indicative or determinative of such a structure. This impression was confirmed by a visual examination by Dr Ghazi Bishah who visited the site during excavation. Thus, the function of the structures in the eastern sector of the Jalul village seem unlikely to have served as a mosque, but are not incompatible with those of a khan. Further work will hopefully shed more light on the issue.

Fig. 4: Field D on the Tall. Room D1 and Room D2