

period, is oriented toward the Late Hellenistic podium Temple I on the northeastern preliminary terrace. In front of the north facade of the stage building, exactly on the central axis with the North Theater, podium Temple II was erected in the Early Imperial period. In our recent campaign, we found possible evidence for a Hellenistic building beneath Temple II. The function of this structure is still obscure.

During excavation in September 2006, trenches were placed in selected areas at the Early Roman North Theater and in the surrounding area of the Hellenistic–Roman city wall and Temple II to clarify the sites' stratigraphy. Particular attention was paid to the stratigraphy beneath Temple II.

In 2006, we clarified the access system and road network outside the cavea between the North Theater and the city wall, including a direct entrance from the settlement on the hilltop to the cavea. The entrance T5 on the southeastern side of the cavea was closed in the Early Byzantine period (fig. 4). The trenches in the orchestra confirm the theory that the North Theater was converted to an amphitheater in the Late Roman period (fig. 5). During this time, the scaenae frons was completely dismantled.

In addition, a survey with a special focus on the system of water support and drainage in the Hellenistic–Roman city was conducted in the settlement on the hilltop, where 76 cisterns were found. These were all documented on the topographical map of the site. Of these, 44 were found to be dry and so it was possible to take interior measurements. The volume of the cisterns fluctuates from about 20 m<sup>2</sup> to 500 m<sup>2</sup>. The construction of the cisterns also varies. The smaller cisterns were built in sections in the shape of a bottle or pear; most of the larger ones have a quadratic floor space. In the urban area, in particular the western city expansion, an additional 36 cisterns were located and documented for comparison.

The excavation of the North Theater has produced great quantities of pottery, building materials, and small finds. Current research is helping to establish a corpus of dated pottery from the theater area, and we can see some trends and changes over time. The earliest pottery dates from the late third and early second centuries B.C.E. Sherds of a faience vessel of Egyptian origin, West Slope ware, Megarian bowls, and Campanian dishes constitute further evidence for long-distance trade to Gadara. In most of the Hellenistic and Roman layers, the amount of tableware is high. In most cases, the Early Roman pottery was found together with high percentages of Hellenistic sherds. For the second to

third centuries and later, however, the archaeological record of the supply of finewares is poor. In later Roman and Byzantine layers, large amounts of Brittle ware and storage jars of local origin were accompanied by different mortars and various vessels of uncertain provenance. This highlights the differences between the theater-area assemblages and those recovered from several buildings situated in the western parts of the city where African Red Slip ware, Late Roman C ware, and others are frequently found. By examining these finds, it is possible to see that there was a geographical progression of the settlement. The supply of Mediterranean foodstuffs to Gadara in late antiquity is poorly represented by settlement material.

Some Gray ware bowls with combed decoration and brown-slipped, white-painted jars evidence comparatively poor human activity during the Umayyad period. It is noteworthy that a few painted sherds of large storage vessels were also found. The thick-walled pseudo-prehistoric ware is thought to date from the end of the 11th to the 16th, or even 20th, century. These sherds represent the final occupation at the site. Unfortunately, pottery analysis did not constitute dating evidence for the theater. In many cases, the pottery findings were stratigraphically isolated, and many of the structures are heavily disturbed.

Fragments of white and gray marble are frequently found at the theater, most of them used as floor tiles. The sources of these marbles are unknown. Some fragments of *opus sectile* wall decoration were discovered. Three oval-shaped pieces are made from white and yellow marble. It is not clear if they can be viewed as remains of the theater because they occurred in abandoned levels together with Umayyad pottery. Little is known about the workshops of Gadara. In the theater area, some evidence of metalworking survived. Some pieces of iron shreds were recorded, but it seems certain that the workshops must be located outside the investigated area. Small pieces of metal are clearly not artificial, but they were probably used as tools, possibly in a tannery. The dating of these activities is uncertain.

#### GADARA REGION PROJECT

Jutta Häser, German Protestant Institute of Archaeology, and Dieter Vieweger, Biblical Archaeological Institute, Wuppertal, report:

The Gadara Region Project was initiated in 2001. After intensive surveys on Tall Zira'a in 2001 and 2002, the excavations began in 2003 and continued in 2004 (fig. 6).<sup>4</sup> Two more campaigns of excavation were car-

<sup>4</sup> See Vieweger 2003; Häser and Vieweger 2005; Vieweger and Häser 2005; Vieweger and Häser (forthcoming).





Fig. 4. Umm Qeis/Gadara, view to the east side of the cavea of the North Theater; the entrance T5 was closed in the Early Byzantine period (C. Bührig).



Fig. 5. Umm Qeis/Gadara, the structures of an amphitheater on the stage of the North Theater, view from the west (C. Bührig).



ried out in 2005 and 2006. They were conducted by the Biblical Archaeological Institute, Wuppertal, and the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology, and were directed by Dieter Vieweger and Jutta Häser.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Excavation Area I*

Excavation area I is situated on the northwest slope of the tall. At the end of the excavation in 2006, 31 squares (5 x 5 m) totaling 775 m<sup>2</sup> were opened. Strata from the Early Bronze Age to the Roman-Byzantine period could be identified.

The 2001 survey of the tall revealed a high concentration of Early Bronze Age pottery in area I. Due to the overlying strata, however, only the outer layer of a massive Early Bronze Age fortification could be excavated. This was accomplished by a step trench of three squares placed beyond the Late Bronze Age city wall. The remains of two Middle Bronze Age strata with residential buildings have been uncovered in the same part of area I, at 2 m below the Late Bronze Age casemate wall (fig. 7).

In the Late Bronze Age, at least two subsequent settlements existed. For the time being, only the latest Late Bronze Age stratum could be exposed. The most remarkable architecture of this stratum is the massive casemate wall. A charcoal sample from the collapsed wall gave a radiocarbon date of between 1450 and 1300 B.C.E. with 95.4% probability. In one of the casemates, a drainage canal meets with three more tributaries from the residential area. At this point the water flowed into a deep shaft built with undressed stones.

South of the casemate wall, a large interior tower was uncovered. The northern room was connected with the southern part of the casemate wall. The southern room was later divided by a small wall with two bases for wooden columns. A cultic stone and the special layout of the room indicate a small gateway sanctuary, and a gate has been discovered south of the tower. The gate was bordered on the south by a room with a remarkable bell-shaped "pit." At the end of the spring 2006 campaign, remains of residential buildings with massive walls of the Late Bronze Age were found on Tall Zira'a for the first time.

The Iron I settlement shows a clear change of culture. A fortification of the settlement could not be proved. The inhabitants used the walls of their Late Bronze Age predecessors. One part of the settlement could be interpreted as an agricultural working and storage space. In the southern part, a large building was probably used for administrative purposes or as

a residence for a high-ranking person. Two charcoal samples give a radiocarbon date for this stratum: 1220 to 970 B.C.E. and 1270 to 1040 B.C.E. with 95.4% probability.

The architecture of the earlier phase of the Iron IIA/B stratum leads to the assumption that the tall's population increased and that the settlement had an urban character. The Iron II settlement was protected by a city wall. Various modifications to the houses were made so that two building phases can be distinguished. Building remains give the impression of a dense agglomerated plan containing both residential and public buildings. A radiocarbon sample from the earlier phase of the Iron II stratum gave a date between 1120 and 900 B.C.E. with 95.4% probability.

Remains of the Hellenistic–Early Roman period indicate that area I was used but not inhabited in this period. The area was predominantly used for waste disposal and storage facilities, and a large amount of "Hellenistic buff" ware was noted in the area. The Hellenistic–Early Roman installations here have been completely covered by later Roman-Byzantine houses and a small street.

The Roman-Byzantine period is represented in the uppermost stratum in area I. Five houses, some with elaborate room arrangements, can be distinguished. A stone-paved street following the contour line of the slope divided the buildings into a western and an eastern section. A thick wall of dressed stones constructed with stretchers and headers, which is visible halfway down the slope to the east of the tall, leads to the assumption that the settlement was fortified during this period. It is uncertain, however, that this wall surrounded the tall completely. Two coins that have been cleaned and classified can be dated to the era of Hadrian (117–138 C.E.); 13 additional coins that date to between 400 and 450 C.E. are being studied. Pottery finds include 438 sherds classified as Red-Black Slip White Painted ware, which was produced in the Byzantine and Umayyad periods. This may indicate that the transition of the settlement from the Roman-Byzantine to the Umayyad period occurred without a break in occupation, as in many places in Palestine. Some remains of walls and some pottery sherds indicate that the buildings of the Roman-Byzantine period were reused in the Islamic period.

Several interesting—and in some cases unique—finds come from the different strata in area I. A red- and black-painted pottery jar was found in the Late Bronze Age stratum. The painting shows an animal

<sup>5</sup>We would like to extend cordial thanks to Fawwaz al-Khaysheh, the director general of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, for his generous support of our work, as well as to our sponsors, colleagues, and volunteers.





Fig. 6. Tall Zira'a, view to the southeast.



Fig. 7. Tall Zira'a, casemate wall of the Late Bronze Age stratum in area I.



scene with a human figure holding a lyre. The unique vessel can be dated to between 1440 and 1300 B.C.E. with 95.4% probability. A scarab of Hyksos ruler Aporhis (ca. 1590–1550 B.C.E.) was excavated in a room of the Late Bronze Age residential building. Two cylinder seals of the “Common Style” of the Mitanniglyptic were discovered in the Late Bronze Age and the older phase of the Iron II stratum. They can be dated to between the 15th and 11th centuries B.C.E. Another intriguing find is the head of a terracotta figurine found in the earlier phase of the Iron II stratum. It is a depiction of the goddess Ashtarte with a Hathor wig. A specific feature is the shape of its face. The frontal view shows the face of a woman, while the side view shows the profile of a lioness. This kind of presentation is unique in Palestine. A basalt sculpture of a male head was found upside down in the wall of a house in the later phase of the Iron II stratum.

#### *Excavation Area II*

In the 2006 spring campaign, excavation continued in a new area, in the north of Tall Zira'a. Five new squares (125 m<sup>2</sup>) were opened, and a Roman-Byzantine and an Umayyad stratum could be distinguished. In the Roman-Byzantine stratum, different building phases of a large structure with several rooms and courtyards are recognizable. This extensive structure was paved on a higher level and reused in the Umayyad period.

#### BARSINIA

Lamia El-Khoury, Yarmouk University, Jordan, reports:

The first excavation season began on 9 July 2006 and lasted for six weeks. It was carried out by an archaeological team from the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at Yarmouk University, Jordan, in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. The project was directed by El-Khoury.

Barsinia (JADIS 2221030) is about 112,000 m<sup>2</sup> and is located in the northwestern part of Jordan, 15 km west of the modern city of Irbid and 1.5 km east of the small village of Deir es Se'neh. The site was first mentioned by Schumacher, followed by Glueck.<sup>6</sup> It was then visited during the West-Irbid Archaeological Survey in September 2005.<sup>7</sup> Barsinia is one of the most prominent sites, rich in surface finds and potsherds, and some of its structures could be traced above the ground.

The work was carried out in area A, at the western part of the site, and in necropolis A, at the eastern and southern parts. The main architectural remains encountered in the excavated squares are of a domestic nature (fig. 8), and many rooms were used continu-

ously from the Hellenistic to the Umayyad periods with some modification. The uncovered walls are of a medium quality, mostly built with hewn and unhewn medium and large stones. These walls were rebuilt during various phases, evidenced by the blocked opening of some entrances. The uppermost levels of the walls were built with different types of reused stones, and the quality of the stones used and construction techniques vary. One important characteristic of the structures is the paved floors used during the Byzantine and Umayyad periods. Some of these floors were later disturbed, while others were restored and treated with lime mortar. Only one of the rooms has an intact pavement.

Iron Age and Hellenistic strata were encountered after two soundings in the lower level of two squares were excavated. These strata, together with surface finds, clarified the history of occupation at the site, which started at least in the Iron Age and continued to the Ottoman period. In the Iron and Hellenistic strata, two silos (grain containers) built of small- to medium-sized rubble were discovered.

In the squares, which were partially excavated to bedrock, there was considerable evidence of disturbance in the lower levels, particularly in the Roman and early levels of the Byzantine strata. The paved floors, constructed in the Early Byzantine period, were destroyed in the Late Byzantine and Umayyad periods. Traces of these damaged floors can still be seen protruding from the walls and are still intact in some places. Thus, the paved floors were constructed early in the Byzantine period when the older walls were used as foundations of the Early Byzantine structures. In the Late Byzantine/Early Umayyad period, the Early Byzantine structures were reused with some changes in the arrangement of rooms. Some paved floors were removed, and we found that the lower levels immediately under the Early Byzantine paved floors (i.e., the Roman phases) were disturbed. The pavement stones were reused to block the earlier entrances and rebuild the uppermost levels of the walls. This explains the presence of Late Byzantine and Umayyad potsherds under the levels of the destroyed paving floors. The condition of the Roman floors was not clear.

Four types of tombs were excavated east and south of the residential area: a chamber tomb with a shaft entrance (Tomb 1), a cave chamber tomb with horizontal entrance (Tomb 2) (fig. 9), an individual simple carved tomb (Tomb 3), and a monumental built-up tomb (Tomb 4). The recovered bones from all tombs are extremely fragmentary and were in great disorder as a result of robbery in recent, and perhaps ancient,

<sup>6</sup>Schumacher 1889, 1890; Glueck 1951.

<sup>7</sup>El-Khoury et al. (forthcoming).





Fig. 8. Barsinia, architectural remains encountered in the excavated squares.

times. The shaft tomb (Tomb 1) contains three graves: one individual grave (Grave 1) on one side of the shaft entrance and two in a chamber (Graves 2, 3) on the other side. Tomb 2 (see fig. 9) consists of a semisquare, small burial chamber reached by a downward staircase and through a wide doorway. The chamber contains three single graves of rectangular narrow *loculi* extending lengthwise into the rock. Tomb 4 was a new type at the site. It is a built-up tomb or mausoleum; only two courses of its outer walls, built of large-sized stones, were preserved. In the middle part of the monument, a long grave was constructed using well-cut, smoothly dressed large stones. The floor of the grave was paved with irregular flagstones. The entrance of this structure faces west, and only the threshold was found in situ.

#### KHIRBET ES-SAMRA'

Jean-Baptiste Humbert, École biblique et archéologique français, Jerusalem, and Alain Desreumaux, CNRS Paris, report:

The archaeological work at Khirbet es-Samra' began as an epigraphic project. In an attempt to date the Aramaic inscriptions from the Christian cemetery, the excavations through 2000 were devoted to the Byzantine remnants. The oldest funeral stelae, as well as the presence of Safaitic, Nabataean, and Latin inscriptions, indicated an even older past for the site. It was evident that the founding and development of the site were linked to the establishment of the Via Nova Trajana and its evolution. To outline the historical and archaeological record of Samra for the final report, a program of investigative probes was decided

upon in 2000. We provide here a synopsis of the results achieved to the present day.

Samra is located between two tracks of the Via Trajana. The earlier road passed by Samra to the east, whereas the later roadway crossed to the west. An isolated building constructed on the older road during Samra's fluorescence has been thoroughly excavated and interpreted as a *mansio* (fig. 10). Extending behind the building is an enclosure delimited by low walls that conducted rainwater runoff into a *birkeh*. The structure is preserved only at the level of its foundations, its building material having been plundered in antiquity. The plan of the 30 x 24 m building, however, is still clear. The central core of the building is square, 19 m to a side, and contained six chambers around a 9.0 x 7.5 m courtyard. It would have been

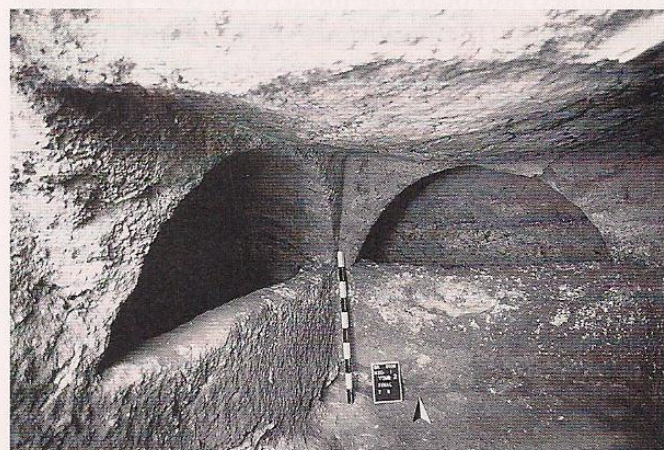


Fig. 9. Barsinia, interior of Tomb 2.