



Fig. 1. Tell Ushayer, viewed from the south.

Tell Ushayer

Dominik Bonatz
Freie Universität Berlin
bonatz@zedat.fu-berlin.de



Tell Ushayer is located 3 km west of Irbid in northern Jordan. It is a circular, freestanding mound that rises 14 m above the natural ground to overlook the surrounding area. At its base, the mound measures 150 x 140 m, and, at its top, 80 x 80 m. It is of a perfectly circular shape, with an intramural settlement area of 5771.3 m² on the top (Fig. 1). Tell Ushayer has never been systematically excavated. Therefore, a new research project was launched in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities in Jordan in 2018 and continued in 2019.

The preliminary analysis of the diagnostic sherds collected from the complete surface of the site has allowed major chronological assemblages from the Late Bronze Age II to the Hellenistic period to be distinguished. Striking is the absence of pottery types that date earlier than the Late Bronze Age. This result has led to the speculation about the nature of the site as a Late Bronze Age new foundation.

Furthermore remarkable is the very small percentage of potsherds dating to the Iron Age II. This evidence could indicate a significant decrease in settlement activities after the Iron Age I.

In two parts on the top of the mound, the visible remains of an impressive fortification wall were cleaned and documented (Fig. 2). The wall was built using big, irregular blocks of limestone and filling the spaces in between with smaller ones. It consists of four rows of large blocks in width and up to six rows in height. The average width of the wall is 3.00 m. Several loose bigger and smaller blocks located in front of the wall resulted from a partial collapse.

The excavated trench is located at the northern edge of the tell summit and partly on the slope. It was chosen to investigate the building technique, stratigraphy, and age of the fortification wall. The small excavated part of the wall consists of three rows of big blocks in width. The outer fourth row seems to have been destroyed when the whole structure collapsed. The massive stone collapse, as unearthed in this trench, reaches down to the foot of the mound and attests to the impressive height of the fortification wall before it came tumbling down. Potsherds, especially from so-called collared rim storage jars, which were



Fig. 2. Part of the fortification wall at the western edge of the mound.

found under the stone collapse and over two floor levels in the casemate-like structure at the inner side of the wall, date from the Late Bronze Age II to the Iron Age I. The architecture investigated in this small trench thus belongs to a fortification system, which, on the basis of the associated pottery finds, seems to have been erected in a later phase of the LBA and was used until the beginning of the Iron Age, when the walls collapsed. After that, the fortification was not reconstructed, but parts of its intra-mural features were apparently reused for different functions.

The geomagnetic survey carried out by the geophysical company Eastern Atlas confirms the existence of a massive circular fortification wall, which completely surrounds the top of the settlement. Now, with the image of the magnetometry, it is possible to view all parts of the wall and its preservation.

An important new result of the magnetometry is the location of two city gates. One is situated on the northern side of the settlement, the other at its eastern edge. The entrance is clearly visible, and it seems to be flanked by two tower-like structures. The intramural area of the settlement shows several stone structures, some of which clearly belong to large-scale buildings.