

## Madaba Plains Project: Tall al-‘Umayri Publication Project

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The Tall al-‘Umayri excavations were conducted by the Madaba Plains Project during two phases. Phase 1 comprised twelve seasons directed by Lawrence T. Geraty, Larry G. Herr, and Douglas R. Clark between 1984 and 2008. Herr was the designated primary editor for those seasons. Phase 2 included another six seasons directed by Clark and Kent V. Bramlett from 2010 to 2016, when excavations were forced to cease due to land ownership claims.

Prior to 2015, six of the planned eleven Madaba Plains Project seasonal volumes (*MPP*) for phase 1 had appeared at irregular intervals. However, with the recent retirement of Herr and Clark from teaching and other university commitments, a serious push is on to finish the seasonal reports. The editors of phase 1 remain L. Herr (Burman University), D. Clark, and L. Geraty (both from La Sierra University). Three more volumes have appeared (*MPP* 7 in 2017, *MPP* 8 in 2019, and *MPP* 9 in 2020) (Fig. 1). *MPP* 10 is almost complete, with a projected publication date of 2021. This will allow us to publish the final volume of phase 1 (*MPP* 11) in 2022.

Our first six volumes were ably prepared by the Institute of Archaeology at Andrews University (primarily by its publications director, Paul Ray) and printed by Andrews University Press. But starting with *MPP* 7, publication responsibility was transferred to the new Center for Near Eastern Archaeology at La Sierra University, directed by Clark. We also arranged for a longtime participant at ‘Umayri, Monique Vincent at Walla Walla University, to be our new publications manager. She now prepares the volumes, which are then sent as camera-ready copy to Eisenbrauns, now as an imprint with Pennsylvania State University Press. This has become an excellent relationship, operated with efficiency and mutual respect.

After the publication of the well-preserved “four-room” or “pillared” house in earlier volumes, the last two (*MPP* 8 and *MPP* 9), have presented the impressive remains of the five-room Late Bronze Age II monumental building whose function is debated by our team. Some suggest that it was a palatial structure that contained, in three of its rooms, a significant cultic shrine, while others posit the whole building as a temple. It included a cultic niche with an associated presentation altar, standing stones, and a favissa with crude human figurines.

The second major find was a late Hellenistic agricultural estate, probably with ties to Hisban and, perhaps, Iraq al-‘Amir. The finds included Ptolemaic coins, closed lamps, stone walls that reused Iron Age walls, and curious handmade juglets that look similar to wheel-made Iron II juglets. This was probably one of the many rural agricultural estates that surround our site, several of which we have excavated,

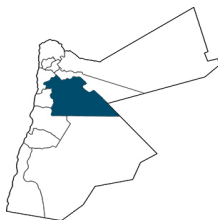




Fig. 1. *MPP 8* being delivered by Douglas R. Clark to Barbara Porter at ACOR, with *MPP 1-7* on the shelves behind.

including one reported fully in *MPP 8*, Rujm Salim.

A third important find was a courtyard sanctuary that contained a model shrine, figurines, and ceramic statue fragments. The sanctuary lasted for centuries with multiple cobble-and-plaster pavements. A fourth find was a house from the Iron IIB period. This house has enabled us to provide a complete stratigraphy of the Iron Age from strata 13 to 5. Small finds of interest include the sixth Persian-period Ammon seal impression.

When the seasonal reports are completed (*MPP 10* [2006 season], *MPP 11* [2008], *MPP 12* [2010], *MPP 13* [2011–2012], *MPP 14* [2013–2014], and *MPP 15* [2016]), we will move to the production of the final reports. The strata of the site will be divided into general periods with a primary author (or authors) for each. Editors are projecting completion of these volumes before 2030.

To document the entirety of the phase 1 excavations (up until 2008), which began in hardcopy formats, the project has moved to digitize all research documentation, including photos, locus sheets, drawings, published reports, etc., all to be stored and made accessible at the searchable online Tall al-‘Umayri Dig Database, [umayri.opendig.org](http://umayri.opendig.org), created by Matt Vincent.