

BRAP BEAT



**Balu'a
Regional
Archaeological
Project**

BRAP 2026 Week Three: Meet the Team

By Monique Roddy



Excavating the past requires an enormous amount of teamwork. Three weeks in we all feel the strain of close quarters and a demanding schedule (many rise well before our 4 AM breakfast and are still managing workloads past our 8 PM bedtime). But within these taught times we also feel the bonds that develop rapidly in a group working toward a common goal.

You'll meet the members of our 2026 team in the following pages, including those of the Friedensau group who arrived partway through this past week. For a few days mid-season we were at full strength, excavating with-

in packed squares and delighting together at each new feature we uncovered (our highlights this week included a plastered water channel, tabun fragments, and a cobble surface!).

We want to take this issue of the *BRAP Beat* to recognize and appreciate the hard work of each team member. Archaeology is a strenuous exercise, whether you're hauling rocks, hand-picking through a hard beaten-earth floor, or labeling countless registered pottery sherds. Each contribution is necessary to make sure the work we do is not only thrilling, but well excavated and well documented. Thank you, 2026 BRAP Team!

Qasr North

By Jake Hill, Area Supervisor

The third week of excavations at Qasr North has continued to define the architectural layout of a possible administrative structure and its stratigraphic sequence. We continued excavations in the southern probe, evaluating the interior of the N-S wall, where we finally hit bedrock! Under the Iron IIB plaster surface, there was a layer of compact earth, representing a possible first phase of construction. Based on the preliminary pottery readings, this phase dates to the early Iron II. Below this compact layer, there was a probable foundation trench for the structure's interior N-S wall and bedrock below. Following the successful identification of bedrock, we expanded the southern probe further south, in an area designated the "Southern Extension," to evaluate a possible entrance to the complex along the N-S interior wall. Unfortunately, the Southern Extension's preservation is extremely poor due to erosion and recent human disruption, making the articulation of the structure's architectural layout difficult.

However, this week's excavation in the southern probe has successfully revealed a large plaster-trimmed drainage system, dubbed the "Qinah" by our workers (Arabic for a drain). The Qinah

appears to have been utilized to collect water and deposit it in a depression, which was identified as a probable cistern in BRAP's 2019 survey by Susan Penacho. The exact provenance of the Qinah and whether it is contemporary with the Qasr North complex or a secondary intrusion has yet to be determined. Next week will be critical to articulate the architectural layout of the Southern Extension and determine the Qinah's stratigraphic relationship to the wider structure.

In the northern probe, we extended our excavation to the west to articulate the interior N-S wall's relationship with a possible exterior N-S wall and delineate the boundaries of the casemate room partially exposed last week. This extension confirmed the presence of a large N-S exterior wall, measuring 1.8 meters, parallel to the interior N-S wall. Both walls were abutted by a smaller 0.9 m wide E-W wall that served as a divider between casemate rooms, which created a 2.4 m wide (E-W) room within the casemate walls. The length of this room (N-S) is unknown, as it extends further north outside our current excavation area. With both exterior and interior walls now fully articulated, we will continue to evaluate the northern probe's stratigraphy in relationship to the southern probe to define the possible construction phases of Qasr North.



The "Qinah" feature in the southern probe (MR)



Team Qasr North (Southern Probe) (KB)



Team Qasr North (Northern Probe) (KB)

The Islamic Village

By Ian W. N. Jones, Area Director

Work in the Islamic Village continued apace during our third week of excavations. In the Khan, we have excavated through our Phase 2 (Early Ottoman) loci in Room K1 and have reached levels associated with Phase 3, likely dating to the Middle Islamic II (1200–1400 AD). These loci have so far consisted of very dense debris layers, which have required substantial effort to excavate. We have, however, now exposed an interesting stone feature abutting the northern wall that seems to be an arch springer, and a stone feature in the center of the room that may be another arch support, perhaps indicating a double arch spanning the room from north to south. Work next week will continue to define

these features and to reach the surface associated with the Phase 3 occupation of Room K1.

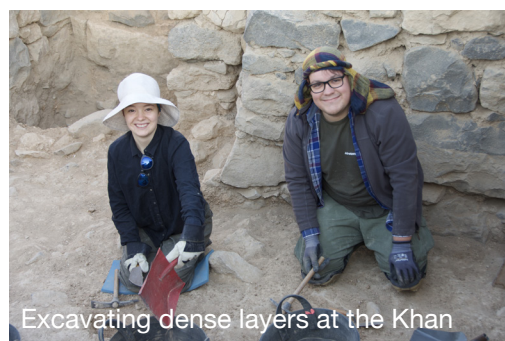
In the Bayt, as we did last week, we continued to work in Room B1 excavating through roof and wall collapse. Toward the end of the week, however, we began to see signs that we are almost through the collapse and reaching levels associated with the occupation of the house. On the south side of Room B1, we found a line of stones installed to create a bin or trough, similar to a feature found last season in the Khan, where it formed part of the Phase 2 occupation. We also uncovered the tops of two tabuns, or bread ovens, near the corner of the room, adjacent to the bin. These features are signs that we are getting close to surfaces associated with occupation of Room B1, and we are excited to see what the next week will bring.



Building collapse on the surface of the Bayt (MR)



Carbonized dates in the Bayt?



Excavating dense layers at the Khan



Omar Ibrahim supervises for a week!

Team Bayt standing in the southern half of the room (KB)



Team Khan standing in the NW corner of Room K1 (KB)



The House

By Monique Roddy

This week we reopened The House for our Phase I probes! Room A5 seemed to be our best chance at excavating below an undisturbed Phase II (Iron IIB) surface for a good look at our earlier phase. However, it quickly became apparent that between seasons someone had excavated a large pit through the southeast corner of the room. Undaunted, we carefully defined and then excavated the looter's pit and then sectioned the remaining area of the room for our probe. The results were deeply satisfying.

Below the Phase II surface a thick mudbrick debris layer covered surface buildup, which included numerous large, restorable pottery sherds, animal bones, and several stone hand tools – all reminiscent of the 2012 Phase I probe findings. A careful look at the probe's balk (a cross section of our excavation) showed a white line of phytolith remains about 10 cm above a cobblestone surface (also familiar from 2012). Surprisingly, the pottery coming out of these layers was not only the expected Iron I, but also Late Bronze Age! Work then began on the remaining section of the room to identify the separate surface layers and excavate them carefully to delineate a possible

earlier Late Bronze Age phase (the cobble surface) from an Iron I phase (the phytolith surface).

While tentatively excited at a new phase for ancient Balu'a, we are cautiously proceeding with an additional set of probes in Room A6 (again, clarifying and removing inter-seasonal looting disturbances) to check our Room A5 results. We hope work in Week 4 will help us outline the Phase I (and pre-Phase I?) architectural layout and use of this area, especially in relation to two enormous basalt bedrock boulders that divide the two rooms and cause a dramatic elevation gain in Phase II.



The cobble surface in the Room A5 probe (MR)



Team House in Room A5, looking back toward Room A6 (KB)

A Word for Our Sponsors

By Monique Roddy, Friedbert Ninow, and Doug Clark

It takes a lot of work to get a team to the field. There are those who make the journey to participate in the work in Jordan. But there are also the many who work hard behind the scenes back home. I want to take a moment here to recognize the efforts of everyone who made it possible for us to spend these four and a half weeks excavating and learning more about the past. This includes the finance and records teams at La Sierra University who manage our accounting and student registration matters. In addition, our research is financially and academically supported by our sponsoring institutions: La Sierra University and Friedensau Adventist University, and by our consortium institution, Walla Walla University.

Friedensau Adventist University (Theologische Hochschule Friedensau) began active involvement in archaeology after the re-unification of West and East Germany in 1990. Udo Worschech – who began teaching at this institution at that time – had previously started a small archaeological survey project on the al-Karak plateau in Central Jordan in the early 1980s and had also begun excavations in 1986 at Khirbat a-Balu'a. In 1997, Friedbert Ninow joined the faculty and continued to work at archaeological excavations and surveys. The administration supported these projects not only logistically but also financially. With the introduction of the Balu'a Regional Archaeological Project, Friedensau Adventist University continues to sponsor the excavations projects at Khirbat al-Balu'a, now headed by Martin Klingbeil.

Archaeology at La Sierra University began under Kenneth Vine in the 1970s through his work, along with Bailey Gillespie, at Caesarea Maritima. The program received a boost with the arrival in 1993 of Lawrence Geraty (director

of the Madaba Plains Project – Tall al-'Umayri, Jordan, excavations at the time) as president of the university. Further MPPites arrived in the 2000s: Robert Bates, Douglas Clark (2006), Kent Bramlett (2010), and Friedbert Ninow (2015). In 2012, the [Center for Near Eastern Archaeology](#) was created as a focal point for archaeology on campus, supporting collections, research, undergraduate and graduate programs, and outreach programs to the public. Support for BRAP began in 2017 with the official start of the project. Support for archaeology in Jordan currently includes not only BRAP but also MPP 'Umayri, Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project, Khirbat 'Ataruz, and the Edom Lowlands Regional Archaeological Project.

Archaeology arrived at Walla Walla University in 1987 with Douglas Clark, who brought the university as a consortium member to the MPP Umayri excavations. During the 1990s, most 'Umayri artifacts the government of Jordan allowed out of the country on long-term loans came to occupy a lab on the ground floor of Bowers Hall. Here student and community volunteers, led primarily by Monique Acosta (Roddy), Hester Thomsen, and Virginia Gonthier, curated objects and restored ceramic vessels, in particular some 70 large, ceramic storage jars and associated vessels from the early Iron Age four-room house at 'Umayri. In 2009, the artifacts followed Clark to La Sierra University. Walla Walla University became a consortium member of BRAP in 2019 with the arrival of Monique Roddy as history faculty.



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LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY



The 2026 BRAP Team

The contributions of each member of the team are essential to a great season. We want to take this opportunity to thank each participant and acknowledge their efforts in making the 2026 season a success! Now, let's meet the team!

Directors



Kent Bramlett



Monique Roddy



Friedbert Ninow

Staff

Doug Clark
Pathways



Jake Hill
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Team Bayt



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Team Qasr N



Alex Weiss
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Amr Hijazeen
Team Khan



Awwad Dwais
Team Qasr N



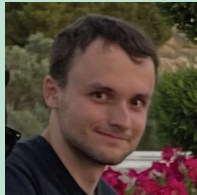
Carolyn Waldron
Team Bayt



Hasan Doweis
Team House



Jemima Klingbeil
Team Khan



Johannes Hofmann
Team Bayt



Maan Salman
Team Bayt



Majed Alazzami
Team House



Marcelo Caballero
Team Bayt



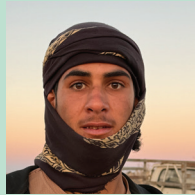
Marie Kolwe
Team Khan



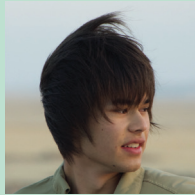
Martin Klingbeil
Team House



Mary Boyd
Team Khan



Nadal Eid
Team Qasr N



Nathaniel Bramlett
Team Qasr N



Omar Ibrahim
Team Khan



Raul Zanatta
Team Qasr N



Ryan McKee
Team Qasr N



Salem Doweis
Team Khan



Sanford Bramlett
Team Qasr N



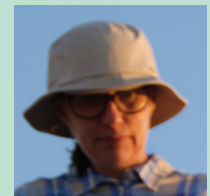
Sarah Watson
Team Qasr N



Satam Hijazeen
DoA Rep



Stefan Rebein
Team Khan



Thandi Klingbeil
Team House



Wernfried Rieck-
mann, Team Bayt



Wesal Ma'alta
DoA Rep



Yaman Zaydeen
Team Bayt



Yasser Azazmeh
Team House



Youssef Hajazin
Team Guard



Zainab Hweij
Team Khan/House

Team Members

Northern Tour

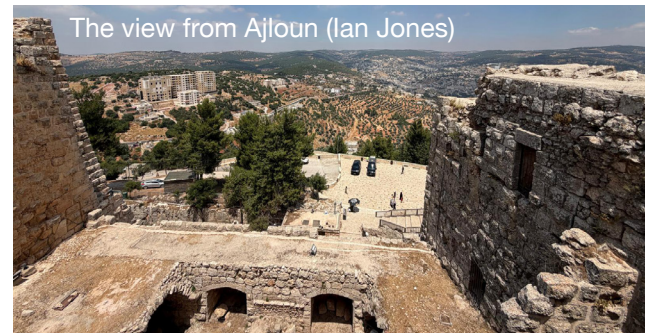
by Marcelo Caballero

As Americans celebrated the Fourth of July, BRAPs overseas were discovering the ancient wonders of Jordan. Led by Director Kent Bramlett, the scholars woke up to an early breakfast prepared by the Mujeb Hotel, and by 7 AM we hit the road for a three-hour trek through the beautiful landscapes and historic cities of Amman and Madaba.

Our adventure took us through the breathtaking ruins of Jerash, where Roman streets, temples, and theaters still tell stories from nearly 2,000 years ago. After making our way through the colorful marketplace, we were greeted by the towering Hadrian's Arch (129 CE). Standing nearly 11 meters tall, this monumental gateway was built to commemorate Emperor Hadrian's visit to the ancient city of Gerasa and continues to welcome visitors into one of Jordan's most remarkable archaeological sites. Beyond the arch, the city revealed even more of its ancient beauty. Among the ruins are incredible structures such as the Temple of Zeus, the Cardo Maximus; the grand colonnaded street that once served as the heart of the city; and standing above them all, the impressive Temple of Artemis. Dedicated to the patron goddess of Gerasa, this temple remains one of the most iconic reminders of the city's Roman past.

From Jerash, we traveled northwest to the hilltop city of Ajloun, where Ajloun Castle stands proudly above the surrounding valleys. Built in the 12th century, this fortress once guarded the region's trade routes and remains one of Jor-

dan's most impressive examples of medieval Islamic architecture. While the history of the castle was remarkable, the view from the top was truly unforgettable. Standing above the rolling hills of northern Jordan, we were able to see breathtaking views of the Jordan Valley and, on a clear day, even landmarks beyond Jordan's borders such as Mount Tabor, the traditional site associated with the Transfiguration of Jesus.



The view from Ajloun (Ian Jones)



The Nymphaeum at Jerash (Raul Zanatta)



Jerash, ancient and modern (Alex Weiss)



The author at Jerash