

## **TELL MADABA EXCAVATIONS, 1998**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

Timothy P. Harrison  
 Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations  
 University of Toronto  
 4 Bancroft Avenue  
 Toronto, ON, M5S 1C1  
 CANADA  
 Tim.harrison@utoronto.ca

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The Tell Madaba Archaeological Project (TMAP) represents part of a larger, ongoing multidisciplinary regional research effort that is investigating the range of adaptive strategies and social institutions developed by human communities in the semi-arid Highlands of central Jordan, a geographical area distinguished by its climatic variability and environmental diversity. TMAP was initiated for the primary purpose of gathering archaeological data from the presumed urban center of a regional settlement network for comparison with existing data sets from rural village sites in order to test prevailing theories about the development of centralized urban institutions and the rise of early state-ordered societies in the region. A preliminary field season, funded by the National Geographic Society, was conducted in 1996 to define the extent of the tell, and assess the feasibility of carrying out long-term excavations at the site. The effort succeeded in identifying specific areas of the site that were accessible to archaeological exploration. Excavations focused on the southeastern slope of the site (Field A), and resulted in an 8 m vertical profile of the existing stratigraphy spanning the Early Bronze through Iron Ages.

The 1998 field season marked the start of the second phase of excavations, and aimed at clarifying the archaeological history of the western slope of the tell acropolis (Field B). The specific goals of the 1998 season were to (1) begin assembling extensive, quantifiable collections of botanical, faunal, ceramic, and lithic materials for each of the principal phases of occupation at the site, (2) map and record associated architectural remains, (3) conduct the preliminary processing and laboratory analysis of the material evidence recovered, and (4) integrate the architectural and artifactual records in a relational database that will permit detailed comparative analysis with compatible data sets already available from excavated rural sites in the region.

By the end of the season, excavations had succeeded in uncovering a five-phase stratified sequence that spanned four broad cultural horizons tentatively dated to the Late Ottoman (Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and later), Early Roman/Nabatean (1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C.E. to 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D.), Late Hellenistic (2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> Centuries B.C.E.), and Iron IIB (9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C.E.) periods. The results of the excavations included the discovery of: (1) a massive 5-7 meter thick Iron Age wall (in use until the 8<sup>th</sup> or early 7<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E.), preserved to a height of 4-6 meters, and exposed for more than 15 meters; (2) a series of superimposed structures and associated surfaces dating to the Late Hellenistic-Early Roman/Nabatean Periods; (3) several Late Byzantine/Early Islamic (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>/early 8<sup>th</sup> Century C.E.) rooms (possibly shops) that backed on to the outer face of the Iron Age wall; and (4) the foundations of a building constructed during the resettlement of Madaba in the late nineteenth century.