

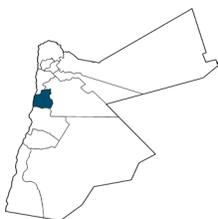
Khirbat al-Mukhayyat

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The summer of 2019 marked the fourth excavation season of the Town of Nebo Archaeological Project (TNAP). The town of Nebo (also called Khirbat al-Mukhayyat) is located at the western edge of the Madaba plateau, overlooking the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley. Previous archaeological research at Mukhayyat has focused on the Byzantine remains at the site. TNAP was conceived to address this lacuna and explore broader themes, such as pilgrimage, economy, and landscape, across multiple cultural and historical periods. The first three seasons of excavation focused on areas to the north and south of Mukhayyat's acropolis. These efforts have succeeded in exposing portions of the Iron Age (9th/8th century BCE) defensive system and evidence of Hellenistic period (3rd–1st centuries BCE) ritual activity.

Field B produced a number of interesting finds in previous seasons and thus was the focus of excavations in 2019. The presence of monumental architecture prompted the initial investigations in this area. The northwestern portion of field B is dominated by a large rectangular structure (Z2001) tentatively identified as an Iron Age tower (Fig. 1). It measures approximately 6 x 12 m and is built of large, unhewn boulders. This tower is part of Mukhayyat's Iron Age defensive system, which, along with wall W2005 that bisects field B from northwest to southeast, constitutes the earlier Iron Age phase in this area of the site. During the late Iron IIB/early Iron IIC period (8th century BCE), the inhabitants of Mukhayyat built a domestic structure directly on the bedrock to the south of wall W2005. Two superimposed beaten-earth surfaces sealing over the tops of these walls indicate that this area continued to be used after the earlier structure had gone out of use.

During the Hellenistic period, the Iron Age defensive system was renovated. The southeastern corner of the tower was rebuilt with nicely cut ashlar blocks, and large boulders were added to the top of wall W2005. In addition, what appears to be a glacis, composed of a series of alternating soil and pebble layers, was constructed against the southern face of wall W2005. While depositing these layers, the inhabitants of Mukhayyat also buried within them a significant number of complete cooking pots. To date, more than 75 complete or nearly complete cooking pots (Fig. 2) have been recovered from the area to the south of wall W2005. They are always found sitting upright, regardless of the steepness of the slope on which they were placed. The soil that surrounds these vessels contains large amounts of Iron Age pottery, suggesting that they were intentionally buried using fill from earlier cultural levels in the surrounding area. This collection of cooking pots is made up of five main types (identified by Věra Doležálková during our 2018 study season) that fit nicely into the Palestinian *koine* of Hellenistic ceramics.



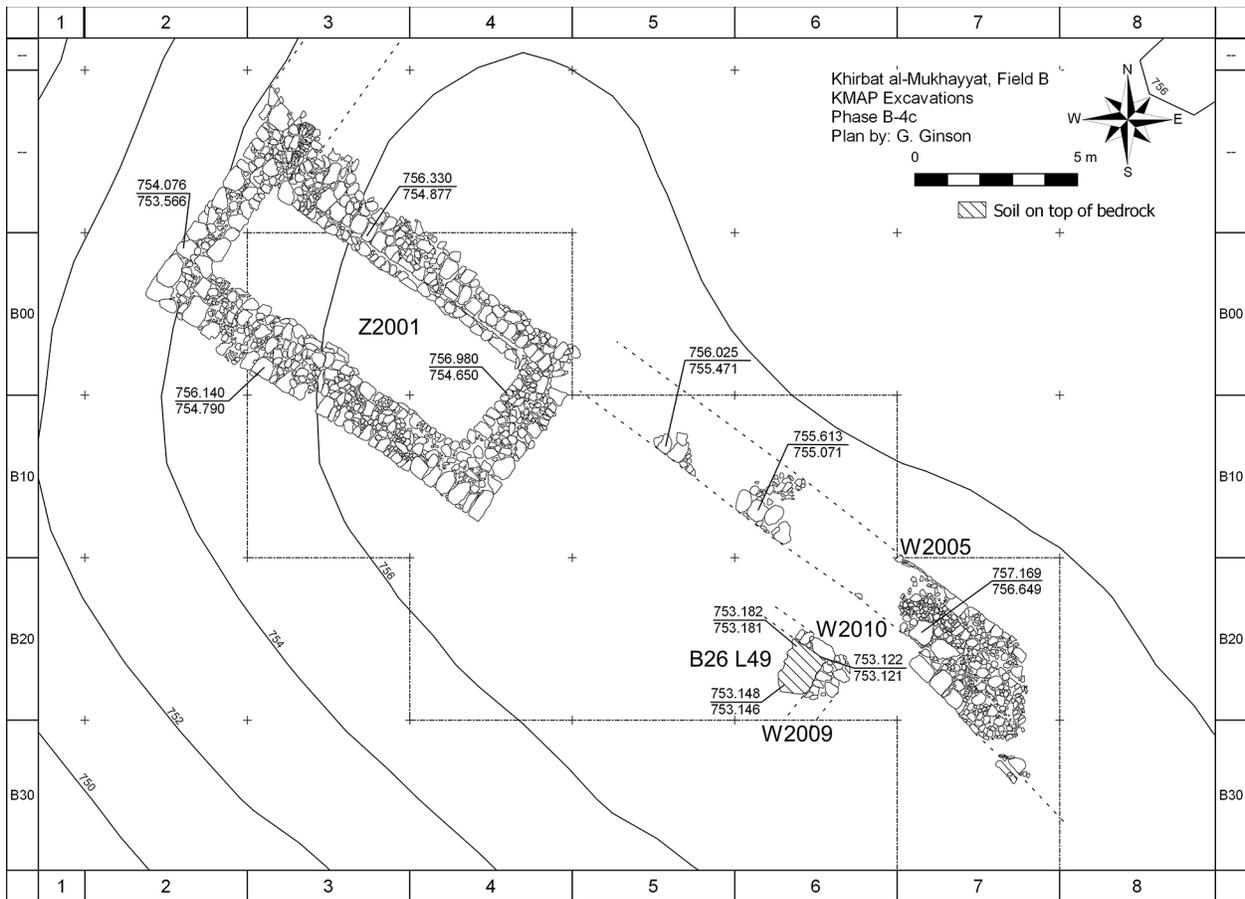


Fig. 1. Plan of Iron Age remains in field B. (Plan by Grant Ginson.)



Fig. 2. Naif Zaban with reconstructed Hellenistic cooking pots. (Photo by Barbara Porter.)

The 2019 season also saw the continuation of the survey initiated by Dr. Gregory Braun in 2017. In addition to revisiting several late Chalcolithic/Early Bronze sites in the wadis to south and west of Mukhayyat, the survey team also investigated a burial cave tentatively dated to the Byzantine period.

TNAP's 2019 season was a great success. Staff and students were very pleased with all the work we were able to accomplish during this time. We are all looking forward to returning for a fifth season in the summer of 2021, when we will, hopefully, be able to answer some of the lingering questions that our excavations have produced. For more information on TNAP, please visit our website at townofnebo.com.