



# THE BIR ABU-MOYA PROJECT

---

## My excavation Diary

Gosh, I've been so busy with the start of the dig I've gotten behind in this diary. Up at 4 am every morning, on site at dawn, work till two then lunch and a quick snooze and back in the lab to write up notes and record finds (phew!). We began with a survey of the impressive Tell at Bir Abu-Moya. The locals say that the spring here was made by Moses, who struck his staff and water came gushing out. Is that cool or what!? Once we'd finished that we started a step-trench along the steep south side of the tell - to take advantage of natural erosion and expose all the different occupation strata at the site. I'm supervising a group of a dozen workmen, and we have a zooarchaeologist, paleoethnobotanist and metallurgy specialist in our well-equipped dig-house. I just met with the Expedition Director and he wants ME to write up this year's preliminary report. He even called me a Research Collaborator! Wow, what a great opportunity!! This is why I slaved 10 years to get a Ph.D.! I just need to make sure I do the bestest job possible! Boy, then I can really call myself an Archaeologist - Indiana Jones eat my shorts!

Dear ~~underling~~ Research Collaborator,  
I'm so impressed with your work so far that I'd like to ~~saddle~~ reward you with the ~~more~~ important task of writing up a preliminary report on this season's work, so that I can ~~get fame & fortune~~ fulfill my ethical obligations to my colleagues and the public. I'll be giving you my summary reports from our Sondage to the Syrian Antiquities Authority. For now, describe the following for each level in the step trench:

1. Date.
2. Cultural Affiliation(s).
3. Economy
4. Social complexity

I'll have some more points for you to address at the end of the dig.

Your Fearless Leader



# The Bir Abu-Moya Project

Report #1 to the Syrian Antiquities Authority.

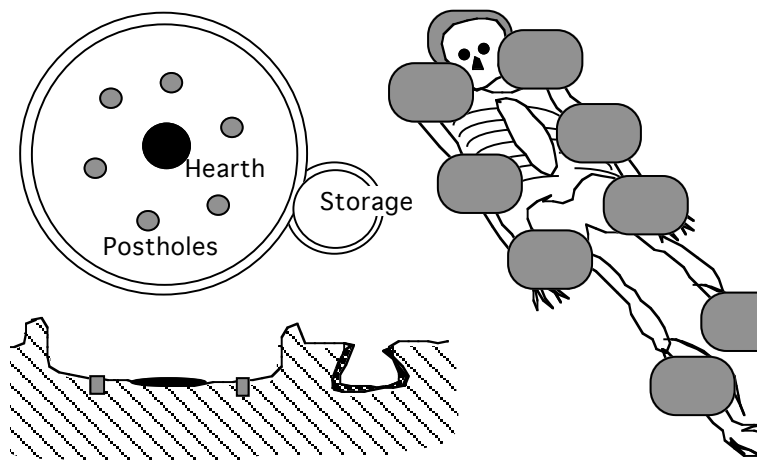
Began work on a step trench at along the south side at the base of the Tell.

Step #1:

Came immediately upon aceramic levels with a small hut illustrated here. The storage pit had a few grains of Einkorn wheat with rachis still attached.

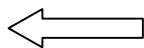
Finds include basalt groundstone in large amounts, mainly mortars and pestles. A notched piece of basalt was also found.

The lithic technology included both macro- and microliths, but the assemblage was dominated by the latter. Most of the microliths were lunates using Helwan retouch. Macroliths included burins and fish gorgettes.



Tell  
Bir abu-

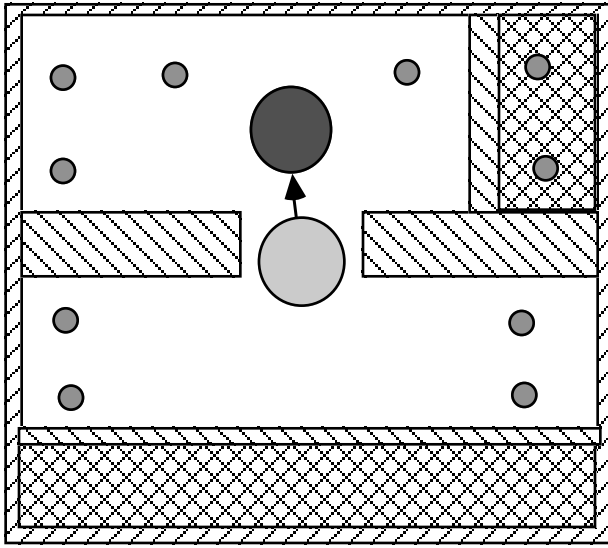
Moya



Sondage

North

One very curious  
Burial was found  
with a stone "pillow"  
& stones over all his joints.



Step #2 was also aceramic, but had a more substantial house shown here made of hand made domed topped mud brick with finger impressions, but also including post holes. The hatching indicates burnt deposits, and the internal walls were added after the external walls were built. A central hearth was shifted at the same time the internal walls were added.

Red ochre was used to decorate the floors and the wall, including faint

traces of a bull image. A simple mud figurine of a pregnant women between two lions (?) was recovered. Two small clay cones and a sphere appeared here, along with a cowry shell eye set in bitumen and a small geometric stamp.

Among the burnt material were numerous plant remains including flax, barley, both einkorn and emmer wheat, and legumes (mostly lentils). Some goat bone was found near the hearth, although only the longbones and ribs appear.

Finds include basalt groundstone and lithics, including a number of obsidian. Several projectile points were also found in addition to long blades.

Under the plaster floor we found a flexed articulated burial, but missing the skull – although the mandible was still *in situ*. The floor was patched twice, first to cover the burial pit, next to cover a smaller hole directly over the head.



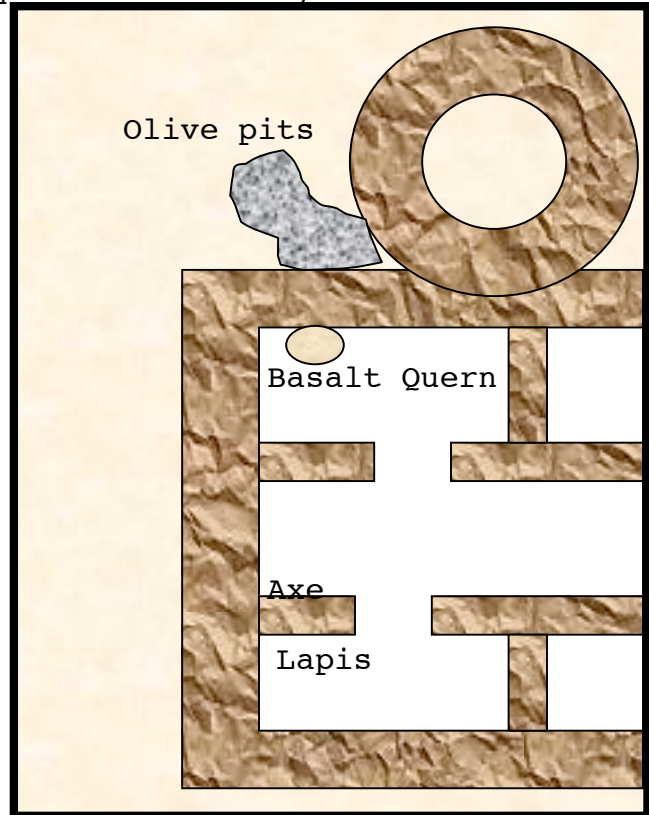
# THE BIR ABU-MOYA PROJECT

---

Report #2 to the Syrian Antiquities Authority.  
Step #3 contained a mud-brick structure, and an odd circular foundation.

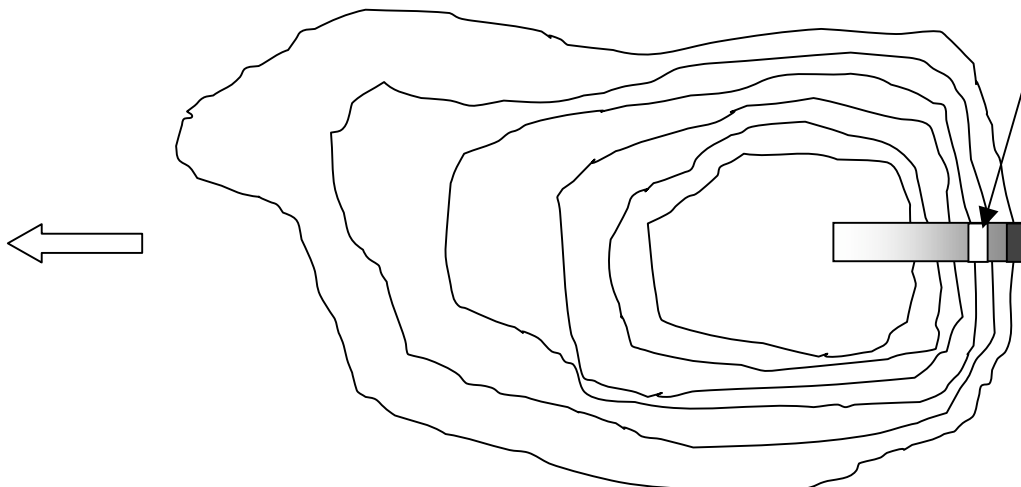
Pottery included numerous sherds of Abydos ware, some Khirbet Kerak ware, and a Bevel Rimmed Bowl. One room of the house had an emplacement with a basalt quern and handstone nearby. In another room we found a Tanged Axe. Our metals specialist suspects it is made of arsenical copper. Small finds included a Lapis Lazuli Cylinder Seal

Our Paleoethnobotanist found numerous Olive pits between the house and circular foundations.



Edge of Excavated area.

The house was burnt and the layer was capped by a layer of charcoal and burnt debris. A deeper test pit revealed a layer of sterile soil (without any artifacts) beneath these structures.





## The Bir Abu-Moya Project

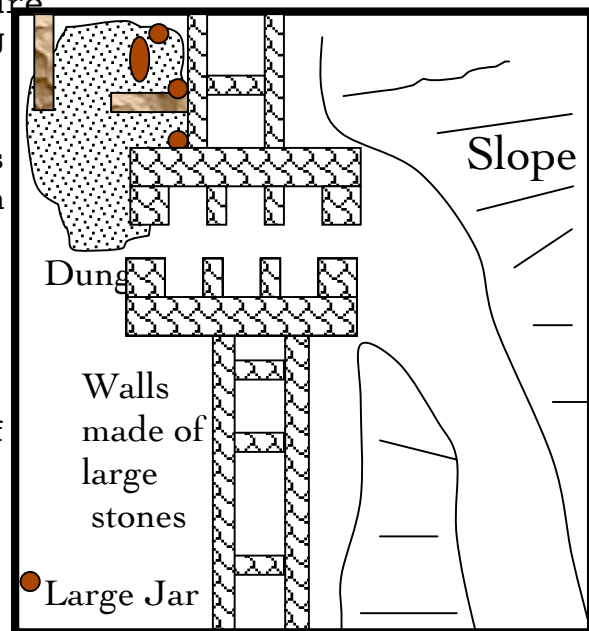
### Step 4

Uncovered a casemate wall system with a substantial gate. All along the south end of this step was evidence for a man made slope with a road running parallel to the wall and into the gate. The walls and a gate were made of massive stone boulders, up to 2 meters long. In one corner of the gate there was a cache of bronze arrowheads. The walls were destroyed and the layer above heavily burnt.

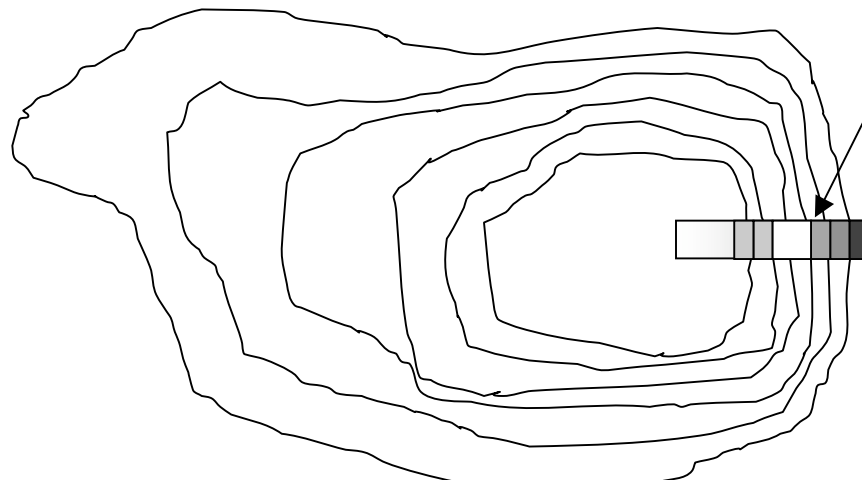
To the east was a small structure w/ a thick layer of animal dung & several large jars. In one corner found several beads of Lapis and a small gold falcon's head inscribed on the back with the cartouch of Amenemhet I. Also found here was a bronze "duckbill" axe and a trident.

Nearby was a tablet:

"Speak to Yarim-lim, the Man of Yamhad, thus Mukannishum, your Servant: My lord wrote to me About having the cedar door made from timber which they brought from Carchemish, studied with silver stars... [broken]"



Other notable finds included Tell el-Yahidiya ware sherds.



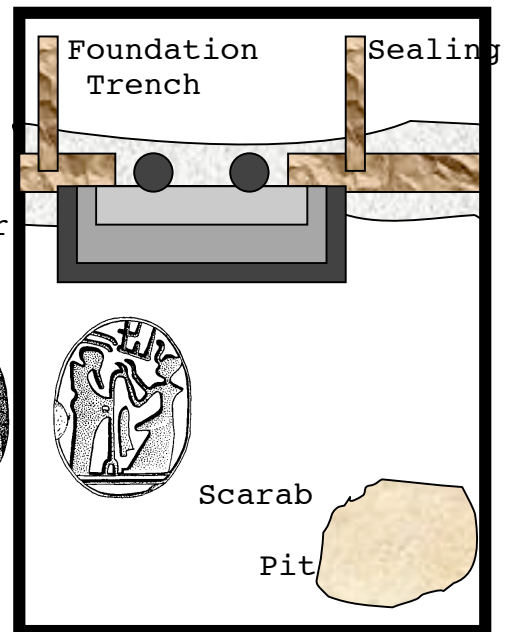
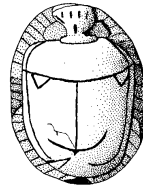
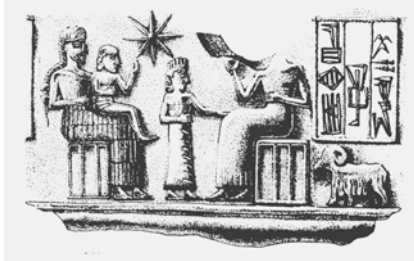


## THE BIR ABU-MOYA PROJECT

Step 5: Above the burnt layer was a well constructed Building with steps leading up to a portico entrance. The building was destroyed, and on the floors we found Several pieces of ivory, including two women shown back to

back and several openwork panels in Egyptian style. At the back we also found a blurred round stamp sealing.

The Walls were set on a substantial. Foundation, within the trench cut for



It we found this Hurrian sealing.

To the west the area was very clean, except for a carefully sealed pit.

In the pit we found much burnt material, the bones of goats and cows, a gilded striding male bronze figurine with uplifted hand and a tall knobbed headdress, along with this scarab of Ramesses II.



This pottery was found within the building



Base Ring Ware



'Pilgrim Flask'







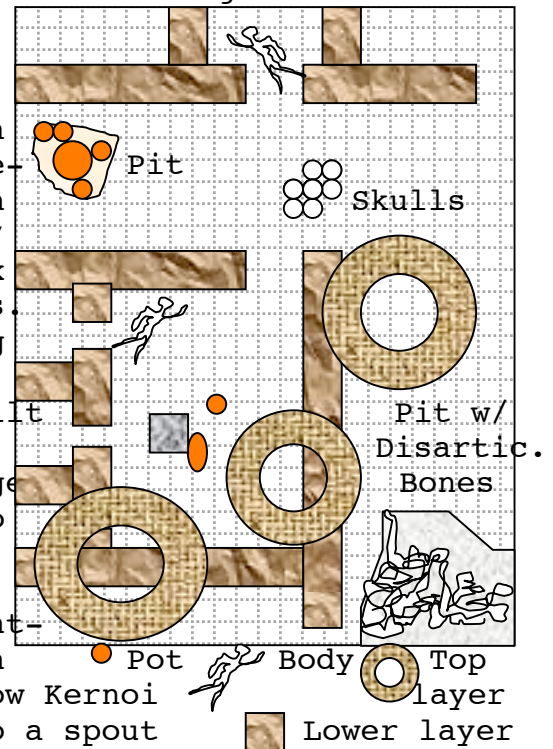
# THE BIR ABU-MOYA PROJECT

Step 6: Above a burnt layer of Step 5 was a pavement and parts of two well constructed buildings. Both were destroyed with signs of heavy burning. Under the collapsed walls were two bodies, one in the eastern structure, the other in the western. The east body had scale-mail armor and a massive wound to the head. The western body wore no armor, but below it were a gold and silver vessel inscribed:

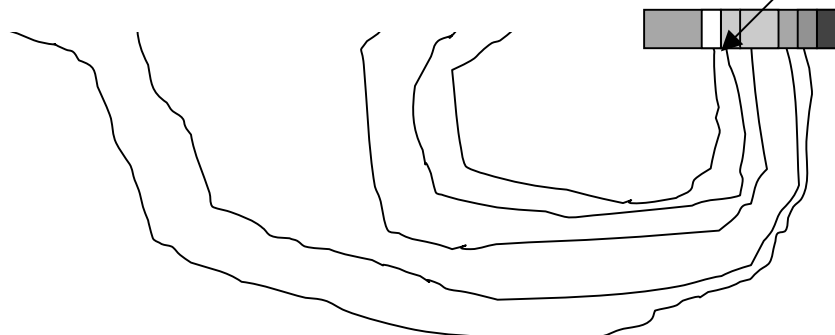


Beneath the paving to the north was a pit holding a large krater with a cremated burial inside, and inscribed in Proto-Canaanite: "Goliath of Denyen." The pottery is decorated with complex geometric patterns and stylized birds. A pile of 10 skulls was found resting on the burnt layer to the south.

In addition to the body, the well-built western structure had a basalt stone about waist high w/ horns at each edge. Much organic material was adhering to it, heavy on top and running down the sides. Several pots were nearby, including an elaborate stand representing a woman with lions, and bowls with incense residues. There were also cow Keruoi dishes with hollow rings leading to a spout out of the mouth of a cow's head.



The entire step was overlaid with ashy deposits full of heavily burnt, usually cracked and deformed potsherds, some of which resembled Assyrian bowls. The foundations of three large hollow circular structures made of burnt brick were above the walls. Just below this layer and cut into the burnt layer was another pit. Here we found remains of dismembered bodies, at least 45 according to our Physical Anthropologist. The pit continues to the SE and could hold the remains of many more.





a) Kernos



b) Pottery from below pavement



c) Ceramic Altar



d) Basalt Horned Stone

a, b and c are from the large Western Structure beneath burnt layer





# THE BIR ABU-MOYA PROJECT

## My excavation Diary

Golly gee whillakers! I don't know where the time went! We've already ended our season and didn't quite finish the step trench - but boy did we find lots of stuff!! The Great Man likes my summaries so much that he's having me draft the interpretation too! Wow, I've really hit the big-time now, even if I don't get to go on Leno and talk about our Goliath inscription. The Director did hook me up with Geraldo a lot - he promised I'll be on the Fox special - Bad Boys of the Bible - the Search for Goliath LIVE. Have to keep him from sketching plans of the site in the dirt, though, don't want looters to know where the goodies are! Boy, this is really going to make my career take off! Here's his note:

Dear Research ~~Slave~~ Collaborator,

Your descriptions are ~~OK~~ so good that I'm going to further ~~burden~~ reward you with the ~~tedious task~~ responsibility of drafting an interpretive section for the preliminary report on this season's work. I would do it myself, but I have to talk about that Goliath inscription ~~on Leno~~ at the Biblical Archaeology Society Meeting, and that Geraldo guy is taking up all my time! Here is what I want you to do:

1. Reconstruct the history of the site by tying in the larger historical and archaeological picture. Be sure to account for any gaps and destructions.
2. As you are doing this, interpret some of the specific features that we found:
3. Be sure to CITE REFERENCES!!!
4. Include a BIBLIOGRAPHY!!

Your Fearless Leader

Golly! I'd better get cracking! Here is a list of things to include:

- Step 1. What's up with that weird burial with stones over every joint!
- Step 2. What is the history and use of the building - ie: what about the burning and different walls and change of plan?
- Step 3. What was the round foundation used for?
- Step 4. What's up with the dung building next to the gate?
- Step 5. What could the building be? What about the pit with the cool stuff?
- Step 6. What were the buildings used for? What were the circular structures and do they seem out of place with the earlier buildings? Who piled up those skulls and hacked the bodies (pretty creepy!!)??