CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND RECORDING TECHNIQUES

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INTRODUCTION

Two research goals were of primary importance in the excavation of Building 600; first, the full exposure of this structure in order to understand its plan, internal room arrangement, and function, and secondly, the determination of the stratigraphic relationship of this structure to the earlier Iron Age occupation at the site. The pattern of collapse in Building 600 made it difficult to grasp the plan of the building prior to excavation. Rockfall covered the rooms on the west, south, and east sides, and filled a large central depression. This depression had been disturbed repeatedly in modern times by local people in their attempt to investigate this ruin. Visible in the rockfall above the western rooms were two stone architectural elements, a doorframe bearing an inscription in Arabic and a doorframe with several locking holes; both features added to the complexity of initial identification and dating of this structure. The boulder-and-chink construction of the exterior walls of B600 that resembled the building techniques in the Iron Age buildings exposed during the first excavation season (1989) also made it difficult to assign a date to this structure prior to excavation.

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND EXCAVATION METHODS

It was decided to excavate Building 600 using the same methods as those employed in Fields A, B and C, where Iron Age buildings were preserved just below top soil. This meant that Field D would have an excavation grid of 6.00 × 6.00 m squares (Fig. 2.1),1 with Squares

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1 Abbas Khammash, Technical Survey Studies Office, Amman, Jordan, established the control points for Fields C-west and D in 1991. Control Point 2 (924.462 m asl) marks the western edge of Field C; it is located 3.80 m east of the east balk of Square A53 (in A63), and 2.30 m north of the northwest corner of C7; Control Point 3
D1–D10 running south to north and Squares D1–D91 running west to east. Within each square, the balks were set on the north and west sides, rather than on the north and east, which was the system of the Madaba Plains Project. This working grid facilitated exposure of the exterior wall on the west during the first season and was then used in following seasons, unless the line of a wall or major feature fell in the balk. As much as possible, the section of each balk of every square was drawn at the end of the season. Individual plans were drawn for each locus, with top and bottom elevations, artefacts, and concentrations of pottery or glass in situ plotted on the plan.

The goal was to excavate the building both horizontally and vertically. After documentation, balks were removed in order to expose complete rooms and uncover all of their architectural features and material culture components. This goal was achieved for the early Islamic period remains (Stratum III). However, deep probes below the upper-storey rooms revealed the stratigraphic history of this two-storey house, which had been built originally on bedrock and used during the late Iron Age II (Building 700, Stratum VII, 750–600 BC). Only certain areas, where Iron Age material was still in place, were excavated completely (Daviau 2003:343–370). When Building 700 was destroyed and abandoned, the upper storey rooms and their contents collapsed into the lower rooms, filling them completely. Over time, the site was completely buried by wind-blown soil and was not immediately resettled. Only in the late Byzantine–Early Islamic period were the walls of this house chosen as the foundations for a new structure. Following its use in the early Islamic period, Building 600 was again abandoned and remained a ruin until the investigation of the tall by the Tall Jawa Project in the late 20th century.

(926.202 m asl) marks the southwest corner of D1; it is located due east of CP 2 and 3.33 m east of the east balk of C27. Thus the south balk of Field D (Squares D1–D51) is located north of Squares C47–C97 (each of the northern squares in Field C measured 8.30 m north-south). These points were linked to Field A by Control Point 1 (925.003 m asl), located in Square A3 on the inner casemate wall. The west side of Field D (Squares D1–D3) was in line with the east balks of Squares C31–C37 and of expanded Squares A93 and A94, forming a north-south section.

This change was due to the position of Building 600 and was not used in other excavation fields, unless there was a specific need.

Deep probes revealed 2.00 m of collapsed upper-storey Iron Age debris left in place above the lower-storey surface remains of certain rooms. The debris in these rooms had not been removed by the new settlers; instead, the debris served as support for rooms built above the debris.