

UDRUH. 1980 AND 1981 SEASONS

Report from
A.C. Killick

The village of Udruh lies 20kms north-west of Ma'an and 11kms east of Wadi Musa, at a height of 1300 above sea level. The area has an annual rainfall of less than 20cm and a perennial spring has consequently attracted settlement to the site throughout antiquity.

The site of Udruh and the immediate area was surveyed in 1980. A more accurate architectural and photographic record was required than that of the only other major study, a five day survey in 1887/1898 (Brunnow and Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia*, 1904). Surface artifacts from the site of Udruh indicated occupation during the Lower Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Iron Age, Hellenistic, Nabatean, Late Roman, Byzantine, Early and Late Islamic and Ottoman periods. The trade route from Arabia northwards to Syria passed through Udruh in the Nabatean period. That same route later became the 'Via Traiana Nova', the Roman road constructed (A.D.111-A.D.114) between Syria and the Red Sea coast.

The main architecture at Udruh lies to the west of the village and consists of a large trapezoidal shaped fortress with 200m long walls and projecting defensive towers. (Pl. CXLIX,1). The area within these walls is strewn with large masonry rubble and building debris. The site falls 30m from west to east and projects over the spring source at the north-east corner.

The town of Udruh is first mentioned in the second century A.D. listings of Ptolemy, although by the fourth century A.D. it is missing from the military listings of the *'Notitia Dignitatum'*. The Justinianic tax edict from Beersheba clearly refers to Udruh paying the highest tax at

the top of the list of the towns of Palestina Tertia. The Islamic sources highlight the importance of the site as the scene of the conference in A.D. 658 between Muawiya Ibn abi Sofian, the governor of Syria, and the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, Khalif Ali ibn abi Talib. The sources continue to mention the site throughout the later periods.

In the 1980¹ season, in preparation for excavation, all the major building elevations were drawn and photographed, some of which have since collapsed. Several new sites in the immediate area were located and planned. These include: Tell Udruh, an Iron Age and Nabataean hill top tower with a ring ditch; a series of watch towers protecting the Nabataean and Roman route, running north-west towards Shobek; a very extensive limestone quarry for the main site of Udruh. The whole area was intensively field walked and recorded. The first season of excavation in 1981² concentrated on the excavation and clearance of a corner tower of the fortress as well as in four other areas on the main site. An important pottery sequence was recovered running from Nabataean through to the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. (Pl. CXLIX,2).

The architecture of the site indicated that it was clearly a strong military fortress and it is plausible to suggest that it was originally constructed in the Tranjanic period at a similar time to the Roman road astride which it lies. All areas however underwent significant rebuilding in the Early Islamic period.

Work in 1982 will concentrate on establishing a basis for the internal plan of the fortress, clearing a complex water

¹ In 1980 the project was funded by the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, the British Institute at Amman for Archaeology and History and the author.

² In 1981 the project was funded by the British

School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, The British Academy, the British Institute at Amman for Archaeology and History, the Palestine Exploration Fund, the Ashmolean Museum, the Manchester Museum and the author.

ravine system, further excavations of the head-quarters building and a rescue excavation of the further corner tower under threat of demolition. The site is threatened by the growth of the modern village and this was noted in 1971: "An enormous amount of archeological work remains to be done in Jordan...While Lejjun is unlikely to dis-

appear in the near future, Udruh is already fading as its village begins to encroach' (G.W. Bowersock, *Journal of Roman Studies*).

A preliminary report of all three seasons will appear in the next *ADAJ*.

A.C. Killick