

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON A SURVEY  
OF BYZANTINE AND ISLAMIC SITES  
IN JORDAN 1980

by  
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In June-August 1980 a number of sites in eastern and north-eastern Jordan were surveyed, primarily to examine the Byzantine and Islamic presence in the area. Attention was concentrated on the area from Azraq through Qasr Uwaynid, Qusayr Amra, Qasr Harana to Qasr Mushash, and although this area was dealt with only briefly, Qasr Mushash in fact was the single most important discovery of the season. The second main area of attention was the line of towns and villages stretching from Mafraq to Deir el-Qinn on the southern slopes of Jabal Hawran, as far as the border with Syria; and Qasr Burqu to the east. The sites in Jabal Hawran were studied in detail by the Princeton Expedition early in the century<sup>1</sup>, and were subsequently re-examined by Glueck<sup>2</sup>, Lankester Harding<sup>3</sup>, de Vries<sup>4</sup>, and Parker<sup>5</sup>. For the Christian period, Butler's Princeton Expedition publications remain the main source for the area, although the Islamic period is inadequately dealt with. Only Qasr Burqu has been carefully published from among the Islamic sites of the *harra* area of Jordan<sup>6</sup>. Using the Princeton Expedition reports as a basis for the survey, it was found that there were discrepancies of some importance, and that several sites, or buildings at par-

ticular sites, were overlooked. This season's survey suggests that important information was ignored at Umm al-Surab and Sama, while some confusion surrounds the account of Umm al-Quttayn. Saba Siyar and Khirbat Amra apparently have not been noted before. The evidence of sherds is rather confusing for the Islamic period, for while a sequence of Byzantine and Umayyad surface sherds is reported from the Jordanian sites of Jabal Hawran, there is also evidence of Ayyubid and Mamluk sherds, and an Ayyubid and Mamluk presence in the area attested by historical sources. As a result, alterations undertaken to Byzantine buildings in the Islamic period might be attributable to the early Islamic period, or the Ayyubid or Mamluk presence in the area. A complicating factor in the Jabal Hawran, noted by all visitors to the area, is the destruction of monuments caused initially by the settlement of the Druze in the 19th century. Prior to this, the sites appear to have been abandoned, and indeed, many remained abandoned during much of this century until settlement by bedouin led to further destruction of ancient buildings. Very confusingly, Druze and bedouin have built new buildings with earlier materials in good imitation of the anc-

1. H.C. Butler et al., *Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904-5 and 1909*, Leyden II.A.2 (1909); III. A (1910-1921); also see R. Dussaud and F. Macler, *Voyage Archéologique au Safa et dans le Djebel ed-Druz*, Paris (1901); *idem.*, "Rapport sur une Mission Scientifique dans les Régions Désertiques de la Syrie moyenne", *Nouvelles Archives des Missions Scientifiques* (1902) X, pp. 411-744; G. Schumacher, "Unsere Arbeit im Ostjordanlande VII", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palastina-Vereins* (1915) XXXVIII, pp. 136-49; S. Mittmann, *Beiträge zur Siedlungs- und Territorialgeschichte des nördlichen Ostjordanlandes*, Wiesbaden (1970).
2. N. Glueck, "Explorations in Eastern Palestine IV, part 1: text", *The Annual of the American Schools*

*of Oriental Research* (1945-1949), XXV-XXVIII, pp. 1-45.

3. G. Lankester Harding, unpublished Notebooks in the Documentation Centre, Department of Antiquities, Amman.
4. B. de Vries, "Research at Umm el-Jimal, Jordan, 1972-1977", *Biblical Archaeologist* (winter, 1979), vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 49-55.
5. S. Thomas Parker, "Archaeological Survey of the *Limes Arabicus*: A Preliminary Report", *ADAJ* (1976), XXI, pp. 19-31.
6. H. Gaube, "An examination of the ruins of Qasr Burqu", *ADAJ* (1974) xix, pp. 93-100.  
A.M.H. Shboul, "On the later Arabic inscriptions in Qasr Burqu", *ADAJ* (1975) xx, pp. 95-98.

ient local techniques throughout the basalt country; this sometimes makes the identification of early buildings difficult, but occasionally it has the advantage of clearing stones and revealing earlier foundations.

### Qasr Mushash (Pls. XIII-XVI, 1-7)

Qasr Mushash was visited on 20th August <sup>7</sup> in the course of a journey from Azraq to Muwaqqar, via Qasr Uwaynid, Qusayr Amra and Qasr Harana. It is just over 16kms. north-west of Harrana which is visible from Mushash; Muwaqqar is about 20 kms. to the west. The site is situated on the edge of the north bank of Wadi Mushash which runs eastwards like other *wadis* in the vicinity towards Azraq. Qasr Mushash does not appear to have been described hitherto, although it is mentioned on several maps <sup>8</sup>. The name is something of a misnomer, inasmuch as it consists of several units rather than a single *qasr*, stretched out in a roughly east-west line: the easternmost unit is a square stone-built enclosure, preserved in several courses (smaller enclosure); a second larger enclosure, west of the small enclosure (large enclosure); and finally, to the west, a large *birka* and possible remains of a furnace beside it.

#### a) The smaller enclosure (Pls. XIII-XV, 1-5)

This easternmost unit is the best preserved part of the complex, and it is situated on the very edge of the *wadi*. The enclosure is marked off carefully as a square and it is oriented generally towards the cardinal points. Only the south-west corner of the *qasr* is difficult to measure as it has collapsed, being on the edge of the *wadi* bank:

indeed, to prevent such erosion, this corner was reinforced from below by the use of well-cut stones set into the face of the *wadi* (Plate XIV). The building material of the small enclosure is quite well-cut limestone, some probably reused, and a natural concrete-like aggregate which also appears at the base of the *wadi* cliff beneath. The walls of the enclosure survive to several courses, and the interior sub-division of the building into rooms around a courtyard is clear, although there is also a great deal of collapsed stone. There is a single entrance to the enclosure, set in the centre of the eastern side. The partition walls of the rooms around the courtyard seem to break bond in some cases with the enclosure wall. There also seem to be traces of the springing of arches that would have originally supported the fallen roofing of the rooms.

On the exterior of the north wall of the enclosure there is a trace of a wall running parallel to the *qasr*, extending for much of the width, although its significance is not immediately obvious. On the western side of the enclosure, there have been collapses of the wall because of undermining by the *wadi*. The movement of the *wadi* bank that caused this collapse appears to have been recent; it results perhaps from the rains of the winter of 1979-80. However, although the *wadi* bank has recently moved close to the west wall at these points of collapse, the reinforcing of the south-west corner of the enclosure indicates that the enclosure was originally intended to stand on the edge of Wadi Mushash.

Some distance north-east of the small enclosure is a roughly circular stone-lined *birka*. It was once spanned by three arches, all lying parallel to each other: of these, two remain intact, but the third has collapsed.

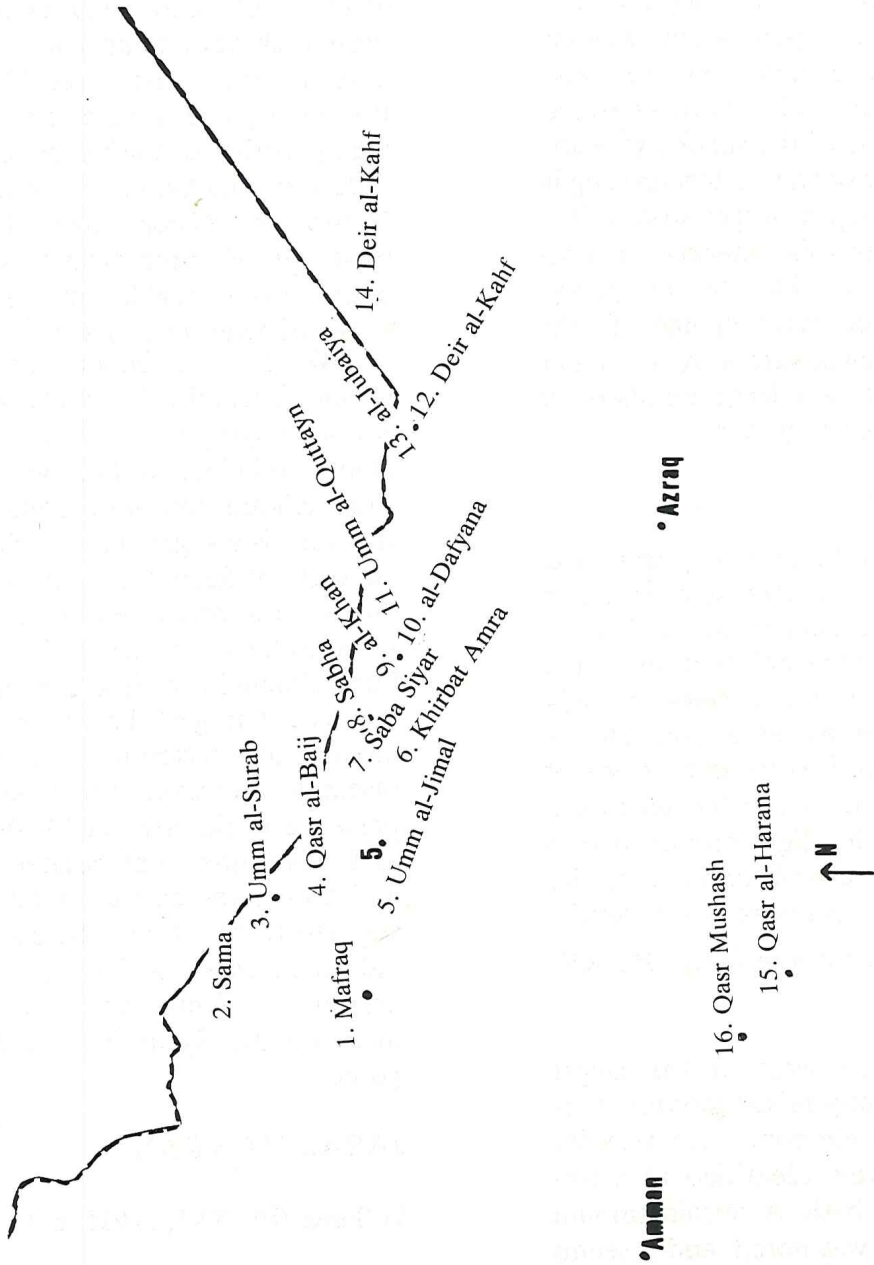
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7. For the field survey, the Jordan 1:50,000 maps were used. For Qasr Mushash see sheet 3253 1, series K 737: reference BR 458 232. Qasr Mushash was visited with Dr. Ghazi Bishah and Mr. Brian Bowen.

8. Qasr Mushash is mentioned in *The Archaeological Heritage of Jordan*, Amman (1973), part 1, no. 288a and appears in the following maps in the same volume:  
Map1: General Map of Sites

Map 2: Prehistoric  
Map 3: Chalcolithic  
Map 11: Early and Medieval Arabic and Crusaders  
However, the site is not incorporated in the various period listings. Also indicated on the 1:500,000 series 1404, Sheet 446-A, edition 2-GSGS, "El Azraq", War Office and Air Ministry, 1960; and the Road Map, Jordan National Geographic Center, Directorate of Military Survey (1979).

Key to map



The voussoirs are stone, some cuadrated and rusticated. The arches are round-headed and are akin to those familiar from the Jabal Hawran, or the west at Umm al-Rasas. The roofing stones of the *birka* have either collapsed or have been removed, like much of the stone-work of the smaller enclosure. To the east of Qasr Mushash a number of bedouin enampments have sheep-pens whose well-cut stone may well have come from the Qasr.

Running generally north-westerly from the north side of the small enclosure, there is a long line of stones, terminating in an incoherent group of larger stones. It is unclear whether this line marked the enclosure wall of a *hayr* like that at Qusayr Amra, or a covered water channel. To the east of the small enclosure were a number of worked stones and large numbers of sherds concentrated together.

#### b) Large enclosure

The large enclosure was not examined in any detail. It lies a short distance west of the small enclosure, near to the *wadi* bank, but not as close as the small enclosure. It is much larger in size, but its sides are indicated by earth ramps rather than stone-walls. There seemed to be some trace of internal subdivisions when the enclosure was viewed from the slight prominence to the west by the western *birka*: however, the central area of the enclosure is very level.

#### c) Furnace (?) and western *birka* (Pls XV, XVI, 6,7)

These units lie west of the larger enclosure. On slightly raised ground overlooking the large enclosure are remains which are tentatively identified as a furnace, perhaps of a bath. A certain amount of collapsed stone was noted, and it seems that the building was oriented towards the cardinal points, although in view of the degree of destruction, this is said with caution. Several large fragments of fired clay pipe were found on the surface; remark-

ably, there was a heavy deposit of blackish ash on the inside of these pipes, but not on the exterior. There was no evidence of any fires on the ground in the vicinity, recent or otherwise. The presence of the pipes and the ashy substance, as well as the rectangular *birka* immediately west of the ruined building, all suggest that this was a furnace of a bath. Close to the pipes, fragments of a fired brick were found which it was possible to reconstruct; it measured 70 cm. a side. In the same place, several fragments of fine highly polished marble panelling of four different thicknesses (14mm., 16mm., 18mm., and 27mm.) were also found; the fragments of 16mm. thickness had rounded edges. Considerable numbers of sherds were collected in this area<sup>9</sup>.

West of the remains identified as the furnace is a *birka*. It is rectangular, its longer sides lying on an east-west axis. It is empty and close to its original floor level. The walls are stone-lined, and at the foot of the walls is a slight step. Corbels are set at an angle bridging the corners of the *birka*. At the south-west corner there has been some collapse. Immediately west, a stone-lined channel runs into the *birka*.

The dating of the site in the apparent absence of inscriptions must await further research. However, the heavy Umayyad presence in the area at Mushatta, Qastal, and Muwaqqar immediately westwards, and also to the east at Harana and Amra suggests that an Umayyad occupation should be expected, a view confirmed by the presence of Umayyad sherds at the site; interestingly, Byzantine sherds were also noted.

## JABAL HAWRAN

### I) Sama (Pls XVI, XVII, 8,9)

Sama is about 14 kms. north of Mafraq via the road to Irbid<sup>10</sup>. Butler described the site and published a ground-plan, elevation and photograph of the Monastery of St. George<sup>11</sup>; the inscriptions were published

9. The sherds, marble and pipe-fragments are presently stored at ACOR, Amman.

10. Map ref. BR 404 958, Sheet 3254 IV, ed. 2. Sama

was visited 23rd July, 30th July, 17th August, 1980.

11. Butler, op. cit., II. A. 2, pp. 83-87; III. 64, III. 65.

by the Princeton Expedition<sup>12</sup> and also by Mittmann<sup>13</sup>. Attention was concentrated on the church and the monastery dedicated to St. George according to its foundation inscription. The monastery is dated by an inscription on a lintel which is still in place to the year 519 of the Province (624-625 A.D.)<sup>14</sup>. Butler expressed surprise at the date of the inscription, so late in the Byzantine period in the area, and instead suggested that the church and its dependences were in fact 5th or 6th century, while the dating inscription was added later.

Examination of the church, the monastery complex against the north wall of the church, and the church tower built against the north-east side of the church and its apse, indicates that these represent successive stages of work on the site. The church is of well-cut basalt; the original building was a simple rectangle with an apse but no tower or other appendages, and in quality sufficiently good to be of a 5th or 6th century date as Butler suggests, rather than the 7th century date mentioned in the foundation inscription in the monastery.

Subsequently, the complex of buildings to the north of the church was added. The walls of these structures are of more roughly cut basalt than the church, and they uniformly break bond at those points where they abut the north wall of the church and the apse. There seems every reason to accept that the inscription provides the date at which the monastery where the inscription is situated was added to the earlier church. The late date of 624-5 A.D. seems appropriate for the poor building quality of the monastery. In general, the ground-plan published by Butler is correct as far as the church itself is concerned, but some hesitation must be expressed regarding the extent of the complex to the north as described by Butler; those rooms which may be considered with certainty as appendages of the church were perhaps fewer than he suggested. Furthermore, monastery walls

which abut the apse and the tower break bond, contrary to the indications of Butler's plan.

The third stage of building in the complex is represented by the addition of the tower which is built resting on the surviving north side of the church's apse, and on the north-east corner of the church; on the east side, the tower rests on top of a wall of the monastery. This method of constructing the tower caused a considerable amount of disturbance to the walls beneath it. This is marked in the apse, most of which was pulled down either before or at the time that the tower was added. The chancel arch preceding the apse has been closed off by a wall which Butler does not mention, but whose construction is apparently contemporary with the reconstruction in the ruined apse that was necessary to support the new tower. As to the base of the tower, the means by which it is inserted into the pre-existing church and monastery is such that it was necessary to make the lower part of the tower solid; its entrance is on the west, approached from within the church. Butler noticed a staircase of corbels approaching this entrance, but they have now vanished. He also states that the staircase inside the tower is crude and attributable to the early Islamic period, while the tower itself he regarded as early Christian. There is no evidence to suggest that the tower and the staircase are of different dates. It seems reasonable in fact to attribute the entire tower and the walling off of the destroyed apse to the Islamic period. It is therefore to be assumed that the well-built tower is a minaret, and that the church was transformed into a mosque, although there is no *mihrab*. Nevertheless, there is a space in the centre of the south wall of the church, very precisely set, with much fallen stone inside the church in front of it. If it was a *mihrab* perhaps built on the site of an earlier door to the church, nothing remains of it, but in an area where inscribed, deco-

12. Ibid., III. A. 2, pp. 44-46.

13. Mittmann, op. cit., pp. 196-199.

Also S.J. Saller and B. Bagatti, *The Town of Nebo*, Jerusalem (1949), p. 223; K.A.C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, Oxford (1969),

I, part 2, p. 492.

14. For confirmation of the view taken by Mittmann in Butler, op. cit., III. A. 2, p. 45, no. 25 on the issue of the dating of the monastery of St. George, see Mittmann, op. cit., p. 196, no. 33.

rated or otherwise distinguished stones are removed, this would not be unusual. The problem of dating the change of the church into a mosque is more difficult. There are Byzantine and Umayyad sherds at Sama, and the monastery shows that it was occupied until the eve of the Muslim conquest. On the other hand, the presence of the Ayyubids and the Mamluks in the area is well-attested, so the work could belong to either an earlier or later period on the evidence so far available.

## II) Umm Al-Surab (Pls XVII, XVIII, 10,11,12)

Umm al-Surab lies about 13 kms. north-east of Mafraq and 8 kms. south-east of Sama.<sup>15</sup> It was visited by the Princeton Expedition and Butler produced a description, ground-plan, elevation and photograph of the main antiquity, the Church and Monastery of Saints Sergius and Bacchus<sup>16</sup>; the inscriptions have also been published<sup>17</sup>. There are a number of other brief references to the site<sup>18</sup>. Although Umm al-Surab was deserted when Butler visited it, it is now populated; the church and monastery are protected by a fence erected by the Department of Antiquities, and are in a remarkably good state of preservation.

The church of Sergius and Bacchus is dated by a foundation inscription over the main west door to the year 384(?) of the Province (489 A.D.). Re-examination of the church and the monastery on the north side of the church indicates that again Butler's descriptions and his plan are generally correct, but with serious omissions and misinterpretations. The most important of these are the following:

1. Whereas Butler shows the church with a complex identified as a monastery on the north side, there are also wall traces of rooms to the south whose precise chr-

onological relationship to the church remains a matter of doubt.

2. The walled-up apse, the destruction of the apse and the addition of the tower should all be attributed to the Islamic period. As at Sama, the church tower appears to be a minaret.
3. There is evidence that plain mosaics formed part of the decoration of the interior walls of the church. There is also evidence of polychrome stone and glass mosaics. A small fragment of polished marble was found a few meters west of the church.

### *Structures south of the Church*

South of the church are further basalt-built structures which appears to form an enclosure around an open courtyard, although breaks in bond at key points make it impossible to state that this southern enclosure was originally an extension of the church. Built against the southern side of the apse, and bonding with it, is a room identified by Butler as a *diaconicon*. This is a part of the original church. Built against the south wall of the *diaconicon*, but not bonded with it, are a pair of rooms on a north-south axis which may well have been of more than one storey. However, the quality of their construction is poor and they may be late. Parallel to the south wall of the church at just under 11m. the foundations of three related rooms, apparently built in a single campaign, are visible. If this is indeed a courtyard enclosure, then it would seem that this group of rooms marks its southern boundary, but the date of this addition remains at present uncertain. Against the exterior of the south wall of the church, at the west end, is a large amount of collapsed rubble. There is a doorway in the south wall of the church that gives access to this area, but it is not shown on Butler's plan. It is

15. Map ref., BR 473 911, Sheet 3254, I, ed. 1.  
Umm al-Surab was visited 23rd July, 27th July, 29th July, 17th August, 19th August, 1980.

16. Butler, op. cit., II. A. 2, pp. 94-99; fig. 78, III. 79.

17. Ibid., III. A. 2, pp. 57-59.

18. Mittmann, op. cit., pp. 199-200.

Also Saller and Bagatti, op. cit., p. 223; R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Pelican (1965), p. 108 and fig. 41 (after Butler); Creswell, op. cit., I, part 2, p. 491 and fig. 549 (after Butler); Lankester Harding, unpublished Notebooks.

possible that this southern doorway indicates some appendage of the church built against its south side. There has been a great deal of destruction in this southern area which has been exacerbated by quarrying among the fallen masses of stone; there are quantities of stone-chippings which result from this work. The same work has possibly uncovered the south wall of the church to a greater extent than when Butler's plan was made. There is a space just over 2 m. wide in the centre of the wall. West of the church are a number of structures which it would be unwise to associate with the original church; indeed, some may be of the present century.

### *The tower and the apse*

Butler regards the tower as being of one fabric with the rest of the church; this is only true of its base. The tapering walls of the upper part were added later. He regards the staircase as being later Muslim work, but it is quite clear that staircase and upper tower are one period of building. Furthermore, he makes little of the fact that the apse has been largely demolished and walled-off in its chancel arch, with a doorway set in the centre of the additional wall. The sequence of work appears to have been as follows. The original church had an apse which was flanked on either side by a rectangular room entered by a door from the church; the south-eastern room (identified by Butler as a *diaconicon*) survives, while the north-eastern room (identified by Butler as a *prothesis*) provides the base of the tower and its west doorway is blocked up.

Both of these rooms had rectangular openings facing west, perhaps doors to galleries, on the upper floor, that of the *diaconicon* still having its base and one corner intact, while the opening of the *prothesis* is *in situ* but blocked up, again as a result of the construction of the tower. The tower was built along with its staircase of corbels, steps and platforms inside the old *prothesis*, with the result that the earlier lower door and upper storey opening were blocked off, and a new door was set in the south side of the tower. However, contrary to Butler's ground-plan, this new door is not one with the north wall of the apse. It would appear that the apse was demolished, if it had not already fallen, to make way for the new door to the tower. Access to the tower from the church interior was now through the doorway in the walled-off chancel arch. The assumption is that the destruction and walling-off the apse took place when the church was transformed into a mosque, with the tower added to serve as a minaret. As with St. George at Sama, there is a damaged area in the southern wall of the church where the *mihrab* may have been, but there is no trace of any *mihrab* recess as such<sup>19</sup>.

### *Mosaic decoration*

Within the church several mosaic cubes were found, mainly loose but some fixed in plaster, apparently from the wall of the church. These were fairly large and plain white. However, on the roof of the northern enclosure room immediately beneath the tower numerous smaller polychrome *tesserae* were found, including

19. An interesting point arises in the case of two churches at Umm al-Jimal, the West Church and the Numerianos Church. The West Church has a walled-off apse, but the southern wall of the church in the direction of the *qibla* is visible only in foundation traces; excavations might determine if there had once been a *mihrab* there. Butler was quite certain, and with some reason, that the Numerianos Church was converted for use as a mosque (II. A. 3, 191-194; III. 171-3). He suggests that were the southern (*qibla*) wall of the church not ruined, a *mihrab* would be found. In fact, in examining the inner face of the south wall on 28th and 30th August, what seemed to be a rectangular recess was identified at app-

roximately its midpoint, made by removing stones from the inner surface of the wall. As Butler points out, the apse has been walled off, but not with the high wall of Umm al-Surab or Sama. The passage from the complex north of the church has also been sealed with carefully placed stones.

Assuming that this recess is indeed a *mihrab*, it may illustrate the means whereby *mihrab* recesses were inserted in the southern walls of churches throughout the region. Dr. B. de Vries plans to excavate the Numerianos Church in 1981 and it is hoped that his findings will throw further light on the possible use of this church as a mosque.

some glass cubes. They were mixed with earth and had been thrown there in the process of re-roofing the building. These *tesserae* presumably came from the church.

As at Sama, the transformation of the church into a mosque is difficult to date. Sherds of the Byzantine period abound, with some Umayyad, at Umm as-Surab, but there are also less frequent sherds of Ayyubid and Mamluk date. The possibility of a later rather than earlier Islamic rebuilding must therefore be considered; nevertheless, the intensity of the Umayyad presence in the region is well attested.

### Qasr al-Baij (al-Baiq)

Qasr al-Baij<sup>20</sup> was visited by Butler<sup>21</sup> when it was still intact: even when Glueck visited it in 1944 it was occupied by only a single family, although the site was destroyed. Since then, the place has been rebuilt and is well-inhabited. As a result, Butler's plan of the Roman fortress of 411 A.D. is unrecognisable. Only parts of the chapel could be identified with any certainty. Much of the floor of the chapel and its western end have vanished. The apse is no longer visible. Nor are the fortress walls which Butler describes. Numerous plain white *tesserae* were found and mosaic floors were mentioned by the local people, but it was said that they had been destroyed. Butler also noted a number of mosaic fragments.

### Khirbat 'Amra

Khirbat 'Amra<sup>22</sup> does not seem to have been noted previously. It lies 6.5 kms

east-south-west of Umm al-Jimal. It is an extensive ruined site with a number of recent buildings constructed from the basalt of earlier buildings. Traces of an apse of a church exist, although any other remains of the church are obscured by the recent enclosures for animals that have been constructed.

### Saba Asir

Saba Asir is about 8.5 kms east of Umm al-Jimal and apparently has not been mentioned by other visitors<sup>23</sup>. The site is largely ruined, but it has a number of inhabitants living in recent houses which are built with earlier basalt. The village has several cisterns of earlier houses, now generally disused. Among the overturned basalt blocks, traces are visible of a building whose foundations indicate that it is oriented on its longer side on an east-west axis, but it lacks a curved apse. This building is rather tentatively identified as a church and from such as can be seen of its foundations might have been a double church. (PL. XIX, 13).

### Sabha (Pl. XIX, 13)

Sabha lies about 11 kms east of Umm al-Jimal, beyond Saba Asir<sup>24</sup>. Butler visited it and regarded the town as one of the larger sites of Jabal Hawran, although it was deserted at the time.<sup>25</sup> Glueck visited it about forty years ago and found that the ancient carved basalt was being re-used, a process that has continued so that now it is a sizeable inhabited village. Butler published a photograph of the skyline in which a tower appears, but this has now vanished.

20. Map ref. BR 500 845, Sheet 3254 I, ed. 1.  
Qasr al-Baij was visited on 23rd July and 29th July, 1980.

21. Butler, op. cit., II. A. 2, pp. 80-83.  
Ibid., III. A. 2, pp. 42-44.  
Parker, op. cit., p. 23.  
Glueck, op. cit., pp. 18-19.  
Mittmann, pp. 200-201.

22. Map ref. BR 588 773, Sheet 3254 I, ed. 1. Khirbat Amra was visited on 3rd August, 1980.

23. Map ref., BR 612 810, Sheet 3254 I, ed. 1.  
Saba Siyar was visited on 23rd July and 4th August, 1980.

24. Map ref. BR 648 802, Sheet 3354 IV, Series K 737. Sabha was visited on 23rd July, 4th August and 19th August.

25. Butler, op. cit., II. A. 2, pp. 112-115.  
Ibid., III. A. 2, 73 ff.  
Saller and Bagatti, op. cit., p. 224.  
Glueck, op. cit., pp. 19-24.  
Mittmann, op. cit., p. 201.



He also published ground-plans of a small church and a double church in the north-east of Sabha, but only one could be identified. Instead, a quite different church was found, or at least, its foundations; it is to the south of the village, with its apse surviving to several courses, but the rest of the church to the west has disappeared. A second larger church was found to the north, close to the post-office: it was destroyed some fifty years ago by a local *shaykh* who had then built a new construction above using ancient stones and sometimes incorporating part of the foundations of the earlier church and parts of its walls. Thus, traces of the southern wall of the church are visible in front of the modern building, whereas the western wall of the church is actually incorporated into the west end of the modern building. The north wall and the east end of the church are built over. The west wall is very clearly delineated by breaks in bond indicating the corners of the original church, and sealed entrances in this end are also visible. A broken *colymbium* for holy water also projects from the wall. A number of *tessarae* were found south and west of the church. All these *tessarae* were plain white, but our Department Representative, Mr. Mufleh al-Ghuraibi, said that one of the destroyed mosaic floors had been of polychrome *tessarae*. This northern church might at first sight seem to coincide with Butler's church on the north-east side of Sabha but his measurements do not entirely coincide with any available from the present ruin.

Among the ruins of Sabha are the remains of a number of quite substantial buildings, although their date and individual purposes are not clear. In the courtyard of the modern post-office building there are several column capitals and bases of good workmanship. Being close to the north church beneath the modern house of the *shaykh*, it is tempting

to suggest that they came from this church, although there is no knowledge among the local people about the origin of these capitals.

### Al-Khan

Al-Khan is 4 kms east of Sabha<sup>26</sup> and it is no more than a few modern buildings and a ruined structure, north of the road. Butler mentions a building with some pointed arches which he took to be of the "middle ages", but there was no sign of such a structure<sup>27</sup>. Today, there are modern buildings and threshing floors; there is also a single storey basalt building without a roof of indeterminate date but probably modern. This was shown as "al-Khan" but it did not coincide with Butler's description. However, north of this second building there are the foundations of yet another building, constructed of large roughly shaped blocks of basalt. It is rectangular, subdivided internally into a number of chambers. Its roof-bearing arches have all collapsed. It is possible that this is all that remains of the building that Butler saw at the site. North of these ruins and to the north-west are further mounds, wall-traces, and possible water storage tanks. Although never extensively settled, al-Khan once was more important than it has been in recent times.

### Al-Dafyana

Al-Dafyana is a little over 6 kms east-south-east of Sabha and just under 3 kms south-east of al-Khan<sup>28</sup>. Butler and Glueck refer to it<sup>29</sup>. The site has numerous recent houses built in re-used basalt blocks, and it is difficult to distinguish recent from earlier buildings. At least some recent buildings rest on earlier foundations and may incorporate earlier walls into their construction. Extensive areas of collapsed

26. Map ref. BR 690 802, Sheet 3354 IV, Series K 737.

Al-Khan was visited on 23rd July and 4th August, 1980.

27. Butler, op. cit., II. A. 2, pp. 114-115.

28. Map. Ref. BR 703 775, Sheet 3354 IV, series K 737.

Al-Dafyana was visited on 26th July, and 4th August, 1980.

29. Butler, op. cit., II. A. 2, p. 116.

Glueck, op. cit., p. 24.

stone-work indicate the degree to which the place was once settled, although it is a site of limited extent. A tower which Butler recorded as ruined and which he attributed to the Islamic period is no longer visible. He states that it was south-east of al-Dafyana, but it must have vanished not long after his visit as Glueck did not see it. Butler considers that there was an occupation of the site in the "middle ages".

#### Umm al-Quttayn (Pls. XIX-XXI, 14-17)

Umm al-Quttayn is about 12 kms east of Sabha.<sup>30</sup> It has been described by Butler<sup>31</sup> and at the time of his visit he described it as a large village and it seems to have been comparable to Umm al-Jimal. When Butler saw it, Umm al-Quttayn was entirely deserted, as it was when Glueck visited it in 1944, except for a police post. However, Lankester Harding found it destroyed and could not identify Butler's buildings. Today it is clear that it was once a large site but it is badly damaged and not one of Butler's buildings can be identified with any confidence. Some of the local people claimed to remember a tower-house that was demolished some years ago, but otherwise surprise was expressed at the photographs published of the town by Butler.

Although Butler's churches could not (with one possible exception) be identified, four quite different churches or chapels were found. Only the Monastery mentioned by Butler is a matter of some doubt, for an extremely badly damaged church with extensive appendages is known locally as "*al-Deir*": it is reduced to its foundations, and densely covered by collapsed stones which impeded measuring the plan, but such measurements as could be made

had no relation to those of Butler's Monastery. The other four churches located are as follows: one lies on the southern edge of the town, a second is opposite the *Umda's* house to the east; a third is in the north-eastern part of the town near the house of Shaykh Muhammad Bakhayt Maara; and a fourth is to the north, which may have been re-constructed recently, but which is flanked on either side by ancient buildings. These are in addition to "*al-Deir*":

#### Al-Jubaiya

Al-Jubaiya is about 4 kms north-west of Deir al-Kahf<sup>32</sup>. It is recorded by Butler<sup>33</sup>. Its interest lay in a 12m. high church tower with the ruins of the church and an apse which Butler believed belonged to a monastery. The place is now a scattered hamlet with a number of buildings constructed recently in re-used basalt. This modern building activity may well explain the complete absence of Butler's tower or church. The local people remembered an ancient tower and pointed out its former position on the northern side of al-Jubaiya.

#### Deir al-Kahf (Pls. XXI-XXII, 18,19)

Deir al-Kahf<sup>34</sup> is one of more the easterly *castella* of the *Limes Arabicus* within Jordan, and is the furthest point east within Jordanian territory reached by Butler and his colleagues<sup>35</sup>. Like Baij, which is also a Roman *castellum*, the site has changed since Butler's visit and it is now no longer possible to identify major elements that are included in his ground-plan. It is dated by inscriptions once on the site to 306 A.D. and 367-375 A.D., although the chapel which Butler marks in the courtyard was

30. Map ref. BR 770 780, Sheet 3354 IV, Series K 737. Umm al-Quttayn was visited on 26th July and 18th August, 1980.

31. Butler, op. cit., II. A. 2, pp. 137-142.  
Ibid., III. A. 2, pp. 116-121.  
Glueck, op. cit., pp. 24-25.  
Saller and Bagatti, op. cit., p. 224.  
Lankester Harding, unpublished Notebooks.  
Mittmann, op. cit., pp. 201-207.

32. Map ref. BR 927 757, Sheet 3354 I, Series K 737.

Al-Jubaiya was visited on 27th August, 1980.

33. Butler, op. cit., II. A. 2, p. 145.

34. Map ref. BR 964 739, Sheet 3354 I, Series K 737. Deir al-Kahf was visited on 26th July and 27th August, 1980.

35. Butler, op. cit., II, A. 2, pp. 145-148.  
Ibid., III. A. 2, pp. 126-129.  
Glueck, op. cit., pp. 25-30.  
Parker, op. cit., p. 23.

perhaps a still later addition. While the enclosure walls of the *castellum* are intact, the chapel has vanished: traces of the side walls seemed visible but not the apse. Considerable re-building inside the *castellum* has taken place, using the material of the enclosure walls and the chapel. Inscriptions in the enclosure walls have been carefully removed from the positions in which Butler saw them, although the spaces from which they came can be identified. The pool south of the enclosure has been improved for use and covered. To the east of the *castellum*, overlooking a *birka* is a guard tower on the northern side of the *birka*.

#### Deir al-Qinn (Pls. XXII-XXIV, 20, 23)

Deir al-Qinn is about 10.5 kms. north-east of Deir el-Kahf and it seems to have been generally ignored<sup>36</sup>. It is a basalt-built site with a few inhabitants. It stands on high ground overlooking a large *birka* to the north which is thus securely defended. The present inhabitants are concentrated to the southern and eastern sides of the site. Deir al-Qinn consists of a rectangular enclosure, its western and northern walls surviving in elevation and in fairly good condition. The enclosure is in poorer condition to the south and east. Internally, room partition walls are visible against the western wall, with the springing of roof-bearing arches still intact, although the arches themselves have fallen. The central area of the enclosure is dominated by a well-constructed stone wall (Pl. XXII, 20), built with ashlar, squared and rusticated on the exposed faces. A stone with an incised cross was found among stone debris on the top of the mound.

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36. Map ref. CR 045 808, Sheet 3354 I, Series K 737. Deir al-Qinn was visited on 27th August, 1980. Butler's map of his 1904-1905 expedition in the Jabal Hawran mentions "Der il-kunn", but he

seems to have passed the site by without visiting it.

A. Poidbard, *La Trace de Rome dans le Desert de Syrie*, Paris (1934), pp. 60,97.