

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE  
THIRD SURVEY SEASON IN THE  
NORTH-WEST ARD EL-KERAK, 1985

by  
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The third season of the reconnaissance survey in the northwest Ard el-Kerak was carried out in August and September 1985. The project was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Bonn, Germany) and the Theologisches Seminar Marienhöhe (Darmstadt, Germany). The members of the survey-team of this season were Ursula Worschech, M.-L. Jauch, U. Rosenthal, and the author. Mr. E. Masa'deh was the helpful and able representative of the Department of Antiquities.

This survey owes its importance to the fact, that the territory of the slopes extending from the Transjordanian plateau to the Dead Sea between the Wādī el-Kerak and the Wādī el-Mūjib have never been before the object of archaeological campaigns. I want to express my gratitude to J. Maxwell Miller (Atlanta, USA) and S. Mittmann (Tübingen, Germany), who suggested this project to me and were helpful in many regards.

The initial campaign of this reconnaissance-survey took place in the spring of 1983. Another campaign followed in the summer of 1984. For a complete coverage of the results reached during the two initial campaigns see the already published booklet, where methods, goals, and objectives are presented in detail, as well as site descriptions and drawings pertaining to the more important discoveries.<sup>1</sup> The following catalogue of sites is a continuation of the already published material, continuing also the figuration of the sites

(Fig. 1).

CATALOGUE OF SITES

Site No. 72

*Pal. Grid: 168768 Elev.: 950 m. Name: Umm Sidreh*

This site is located ca. 500 m. north-west of ed-Dimnah close to a small wadi flowing into Wādī Ibn Ḥammād. At the westside of the compound the remains (subsurface and curbstones) of an ancient roadway can be seen and followed for ca. 200 m. northward where it disappears on a rocky plateau. Between Umm Šidreh and Yarūt (ca. 2 km. to the east) recent and old lines of field borderstones can be seen dividing the fertile land into larger and smaller units. The building remains of this site are 16 x 11.50 m. The perimeter wall, which is 1.10 m. thick is standing 2-3 courses high (especially at its southern and eastern side). A smaller wall (ca. 0.50 m. thick) is encircling a courtyard at the eastern side of the building covering an area of ca. 16 x 10 m. ca. 10 m. in easterly direction is a cistern which is still in use. A fairly large tombstructure (3.50 x 1.20 m.) built of undressed stones is ca. 10 m. northeast from the courtyard walls. The installation is below the surface. A burial had taken place there recently. The rock outcroppings in the vicinity show considerable quarrying. Pottery: Chalco-EB flints (13 pieces); Nab (1 rouletted ware, Nab-R, ER/LR, Byz.

<sup>1</sup> U. Worschech, et. al., 'Northwest Ard el-Kerak' 1983 and 1984. A Preliminary Report, *BNB* 2. Munich, 1985.

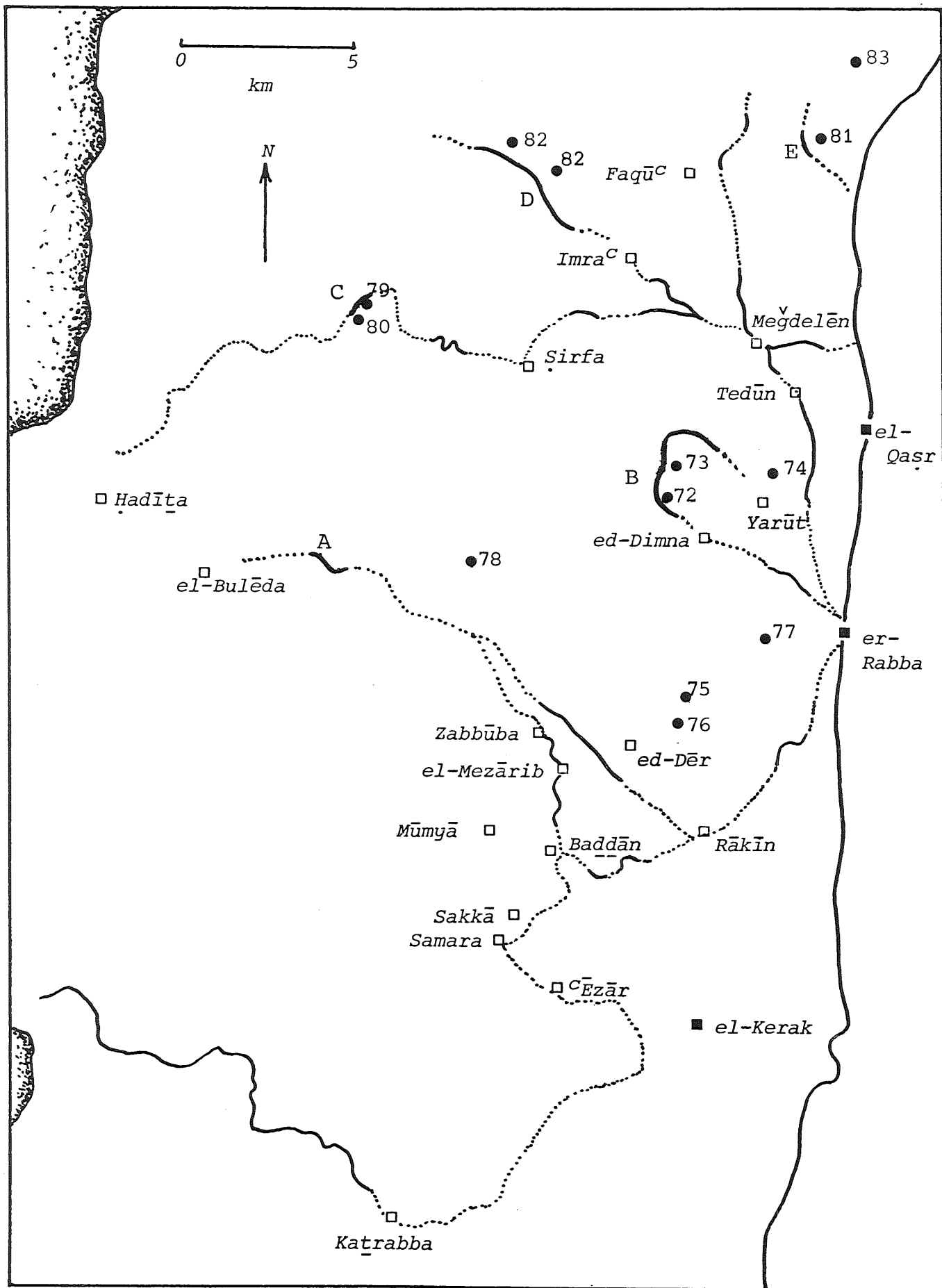


Fig. 1: Map of Sites and Roads.

### Site No. 73

*Pal. Grid: 167791 Elev.: 950 Name: Sweimeh*

This dolmen-like tombstructure is built of very large stone slabs forming a square of 5.20 x 5.20 m.<sup>2</sup> The fairly dressed boulders are ca. 0.40-0.70 m. wide and between 1 to 2 m. long. The stones forming walls are set upright on their oblong sides, ca. 0.50 m. above ground. The square is covered by two huge fairly dressed stone slabs forming a chamber (Fig. 2 and Plate XXV, 1). The square tombstructure was once encircled by an oval shaped ring of stones of which only few seem to have remained *in situ*. The length of its axis running east west is ca. 11 m. No pottery.

#### Sub-Site No. 73.1

Only about 10 m. to the southwest of the tomb a stone slab measuring ca. 1 x 0.80 m. with numerous cupholes and grooves connecting some of the cupholes. The diameter of the largest cup is ca. 0.12 m, the smallest 0.04 m. (see Pl. XXV, 2). There are several (cultic?) slabs like this one in Transjordan<sup>3</sup>; however, also in this case no clear pattern of the cuphole arrangement can be discerned giving clues to the function, meaning, and use of these installations. No pottery.

### Site No. 74

*Pal. Grid: 185795 Elev.: 920 m. Name: Ez-Zaqiba*

This site is located immediately beyond the head of Wādī Yarūt when following a sand track in northwesterly direction into a small forested area. The large stone enclosure found there measuring 85 x 85 m. can be tentatively interpreted as a medieval Islamic compound. At its four corners are the remains of small towers ca. 2 x 2 m. At the eastside are two towers measuring 6 x 6 m. (flanking an entrance?). The enclosure wall is 1 m. thick consisting of two rows of fairly

dressed outer lines of stones which are filled with smaller fist-to headsized stones. A probe trench revealed that the wall was sunk into the ground by only one row of stones with no further foundations. Since there were no wall lines within this compound it is very likely that it had served only as a protective walled enclosure for tents. The enclosed area has mainly large flat rock outcroppings into which rock tombs were cut. Some LR and several pieces of Ayy/Mam pottery were found.

#### Sub-Sites 74.1 and 74.2

Due to extensive digging by the local people in this area several tombs had been opened, two were not completely excavated. Permission was granted by the Department of Antiquities to continue the excavation.

Tomb 74.1 which is close to the north wall of the compound has one small and two large loculi (both are 0.70 m. wide, 1.60 m. and 2.05 m. long, the opening is ca. 0.70 m.). All loculi had been excavated before. However, a large soil heap had remained in the chamber containing bones and LR and Mam pottery. All are unstratified.

Tomb 74.2 contained two child interments associated with broken pieces of LR and Mam. pottery. The much disturbed stratigraphy and the disarticulation of the human remains are partially due to the reuse of the tombs in Mamluke times and to the uncontrolled digging there recently.

#### Sub-sites Nos. 74.3 and 74.4

Site 74.3: this enigmatic structure (Fig. 3) consists of two parallel N-S running lines of heavy boulders forming a straight "lane" ca. 4 m. in width and 107 m. long. At its southend the boulders are remarkably large - if not megalithic (one measuring 3 x 2 x 2 m.) forming a funnel-shaped enclosure in a slight depression at the headwaters of the Wādī Yarūt. Since the ground is slightly sloping

<sup>2</sup> For comparison see A. Dajani, *ADAJ*, 12/13 (1967), 56ff.

<sup>3</sup> For further parallels see J. Undeland, 'A Cultic Stone Slab at Damiya', *ADAJ* 18 (1973), 55-59.

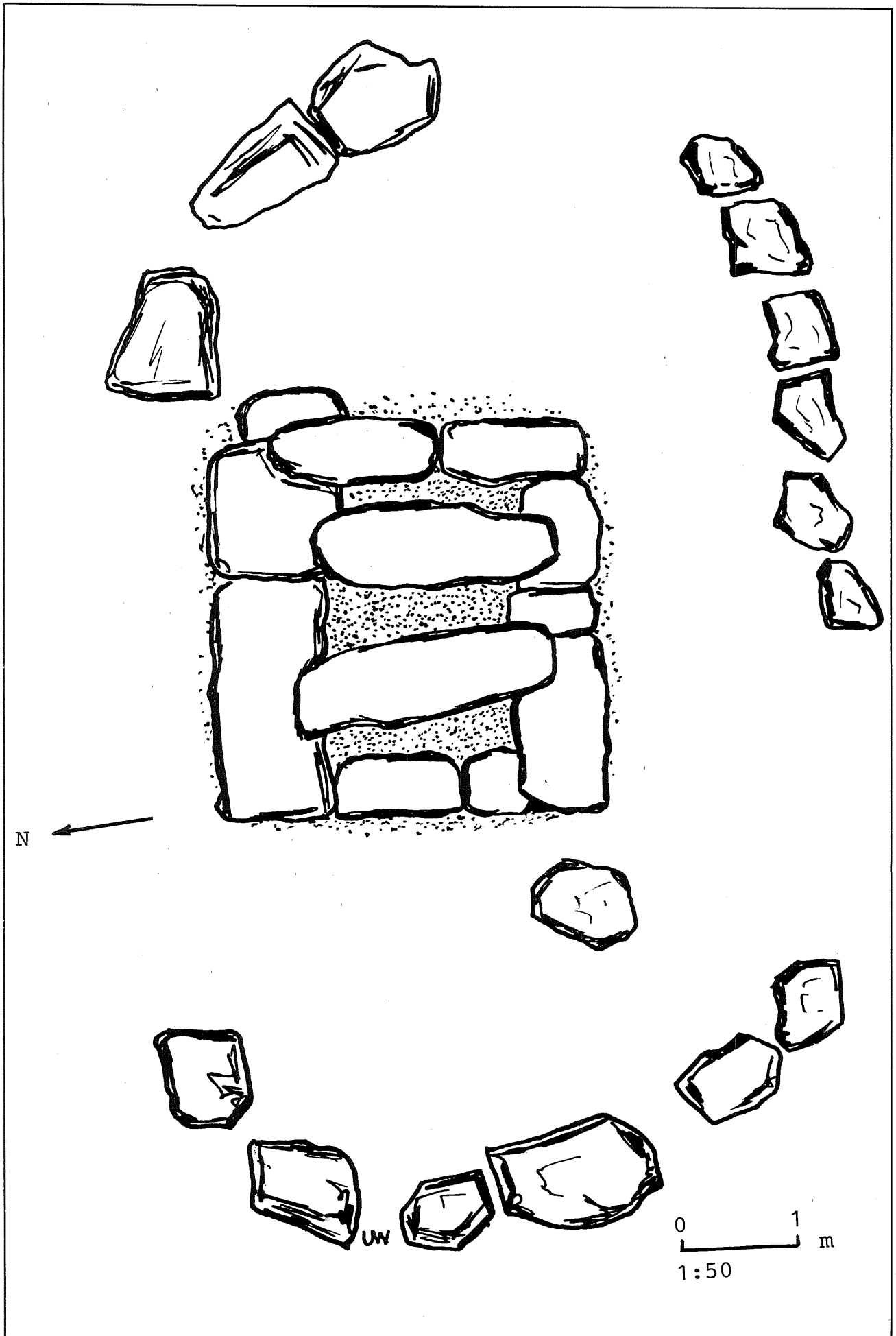


Fig. 2: Sketch of dolmen-like tomb.

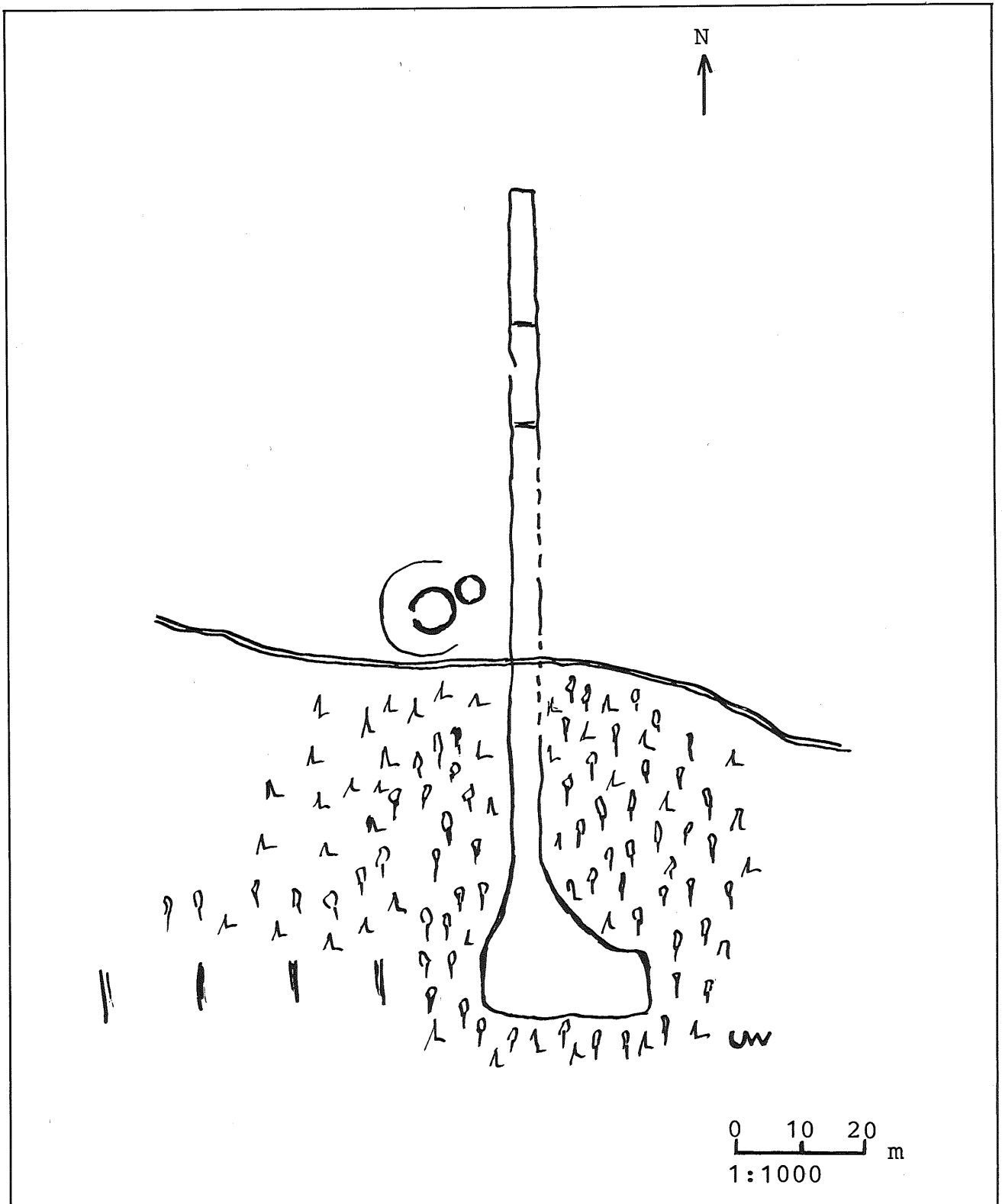


Fig. 3: "Lane" and funnelshaped enclosure of prehistoric (?) site.

from north to south the enclosed platform is ca. 4 m. lower than the northend of the parallel lines of boulders. No pottery.

Site 74.4: there are two stone circles in the immediate vicinity of No. 74.3 built of heavy boulders. The larger circle (8 m. in diameter) has a well set entrance (ca. 0.80 m. wide) at its westside. The enclosure

walls are resting on a pavement which can also be found inside the structure. The smaller circle (6 m. in diameter) is built of smaller boulders and has no pavement inside. There is a semi-circle of small stones to the west of the entrance circumscribing both stone circles; its diameter is 22.50 m. No pottery.

### Sub-site No. 74.5

About 250 m. to the northwest of Nos. 74.3.4 following a sandtrack is a monolithic limestone block (Fig. 4) set upright on its oblong side measuring at its base 2.10 m; at the south end it is 1 m. high, at its northern end only 0.40 m., its width is ca. 0.40 m. Viewed from the top it has a streamlined shape. There are three cupholes of various sizes (ca. 0.08-0.14 m. deep) cut into its top surface: the longitudinal axis of the largest is 0.50 m., its width 0.30 m.; the smaller cupholes are 0.15 and 0.12 m. in diameter. The cupholes are connected by two groove lines (0.40 and 0.15 m. long). No pottery.

### Site No. 75

*Pal. Grid: 173733 Elev.: 1015 m. Name: Kh. Qabū, Deir el-Maḥrūq*

This site is located on a high ridge above a deep wadi flowing into Wādī Ibn Ḥammād. Ca. 1 km. south of No. 75 is the small village of Zāhiriye. The entire region between Batir and Rakin is very fertile and it is thus very likely that Kh. Qabū is another of the typical isolated fortified farmhouses<sup>4</sup>. The size of the relatively well preserved building is 21 x 15 m. with a towerlike structure (6.50 x 6.50 m.) at its northwest corner and another tower or courtyard (7.80 x 6.50 m.) at the northeastern side (Fig. 5). The interior and exterior wall lines are still standing three to five courses high. Two cisterns were located inside the building. The apse in the room at the southeastern corner of the building could date from Islamic times, however, the older name of the site - Deir el-Maḥrūq - seems to have preserved the Christian tradition of Baptism at this site. It could, therefore, well be that this room was rebuilt and used in Byzantine times as a small chapel. There is a cellar entrance ca. 35 m. to the east. A water reservoir is located ca. 50 m. to the southwest. Pottery: Ir I, II, Nab, ER, LR, Byz, Um, Mam.

### Site No. 76

*Pal. Grid: 177725 Elev.: 1028 Name: ez-Zāhiriye*

Today the Khirbeh (ca. 200 x 150 m.) is covered by a number of recently erected farmhouses, corrals, and walls protecting entrances to large caves which are also in use today. The ancient remains are difficult to follow, and whatever wall lines were found do not allow to draw groundplans of individual compounds. In addition, the older houses were partially built with stones from the ancient buildings. The only building from antiquity of which the perimeter walls are still standing three courses high was found on the highest point of the Khirbeh. Its massive walls are built of undressed stone slabs. The walls are 1.30 m. thick enclosing an area of 14 x 12.80 m. In the northeast corner an old farmhouse had been erected mostly built from the stones of the ancient building, whose remaining walls serve as an enclosed courtyard. The farmhouse measures 10 x 7 m. Four cisterns were counted located in close proximity to what appeared to be the former village or town centre.

Pottery: Nab-R, ER, LR, Byz, Um, Mam.

### Site No. 77

*Pal. Grid.: 175744 Elev.: 960 m. Name: Butayyir*

Butayyir is located just beyond a small wadi to the east (ca. 500 m.) of the village of Batir. Slight rises and depressions in the area (ca. 150 x 100 m.) as well as some exposed foundation walls are indicative of a small settlement. However, due to the little erosion here no individual building complex could be identified and drawn. Some exposed walls are 0.60 to 1 m. thick. Six cisterns were counted of which two are still in use. A late Mamluke farmhouse is at the east side of the site. The excavation of one cistern by a villager brought to light excellently executed pottery and glass frag-

<sup>4</sup> U. Worschech, 'Die Šehburgen am Wādī Ibn Ḥammād', *BN* 28 (1985), 66-88.

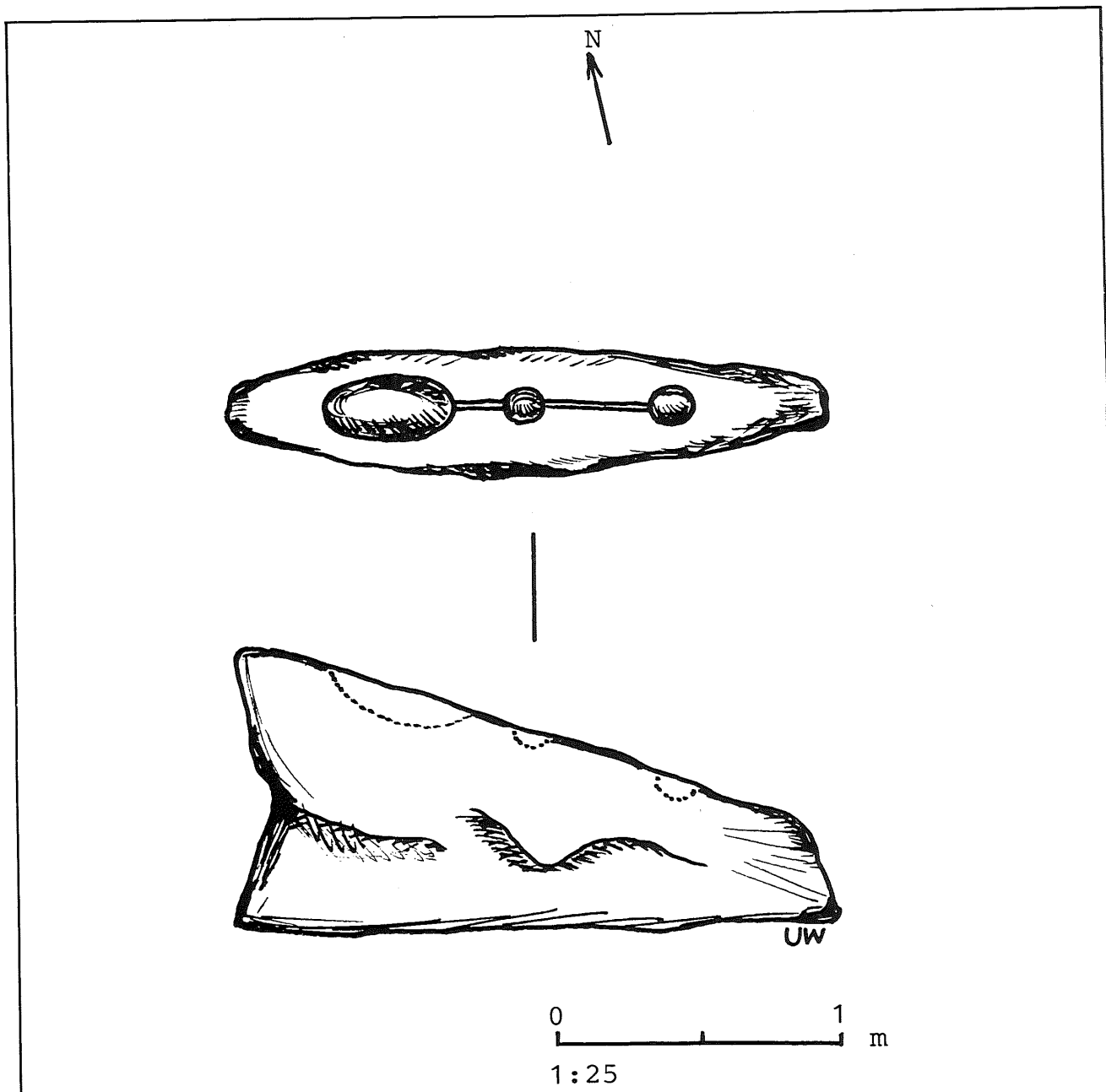


Fig. 4: "Standing stone" with cup holes.

ments which may point to the importance of this site. The pottery is exclusively ER and LR, with only few pieces from Byzantine times.

#### Site No. 78

*Pal. Grid.: 118783 Elev.: 420 m. Name: Umm Qal'a*

There are two building remains to this site.<sup>5</sup> They can be reached on a difficult roadway from Abū Mudawer (No. 14) or Khrēishiya (No. 71). The remains of the larger complex measure 28 x 19 m. (Fig. 6). There is a well preserved tower (4-5

courses high; 7 x 7 m.) at the southeast corner, and a smaller one (8 x 3 m.) at the north-west corner of this complex. Despite of the debris of the collapsed interior walls it is possible to reconstruct the room arrangement. Four rooms seem to have surrounded an open courtyard which had an entrance at its east side. There is also an entrance to the large tower from the south (1.10 m. wide). Close by the tower is a large cistern, which is still in use. The site is located on a terrace above Wādī Ibn Ḥammād, and is surrounded by fields. There is also evidence of ancient terracing towards the westside of the building.

<sup>5</sup> A. Musil, *Arabia Petraea, I: Moab* (1907), p. 157.

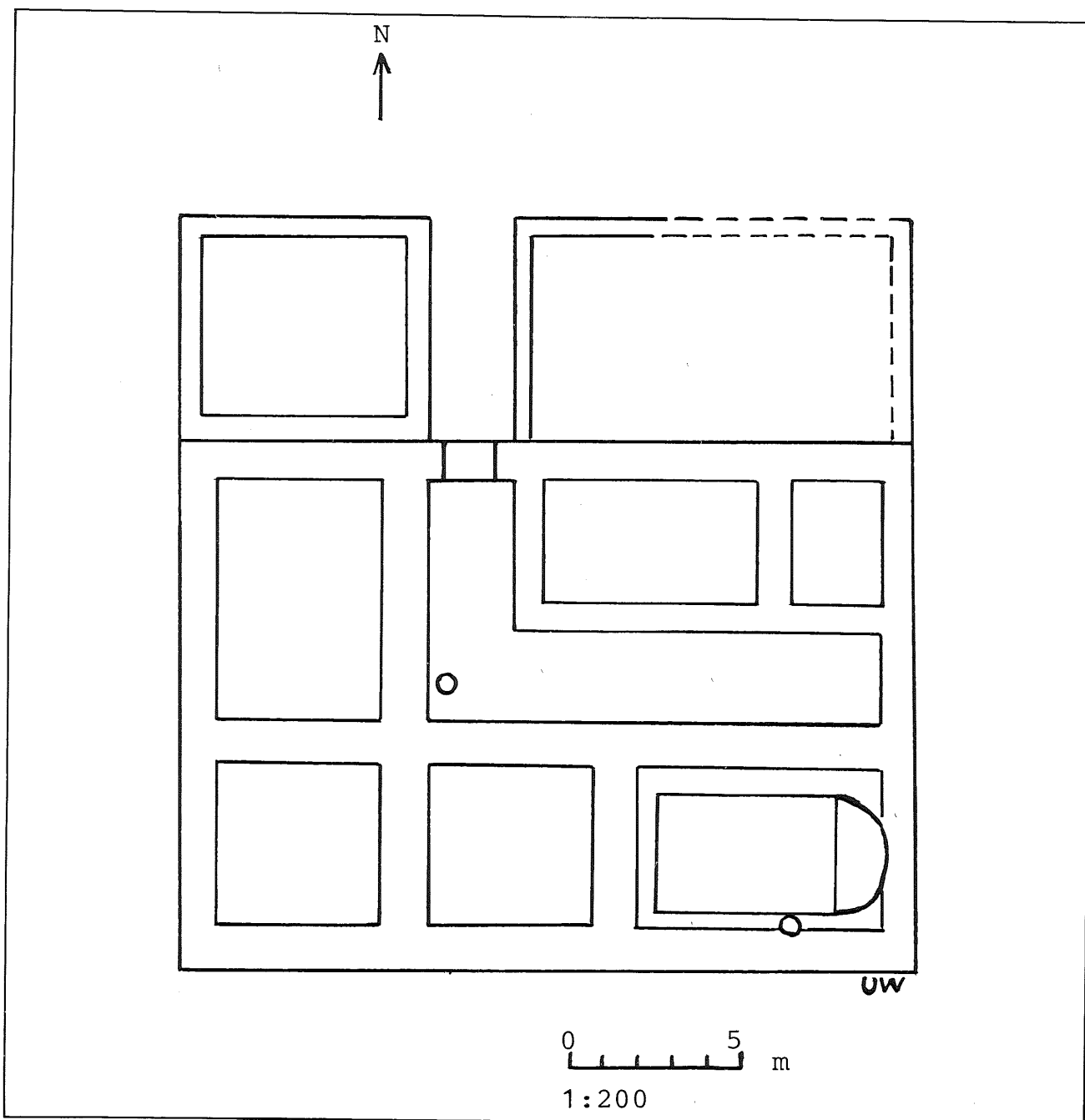


Fig. 5: Plan of Khirbet Qabū with apse in room at lower right.

Pottery: Poss. Ir I/II, Nab, Nab-R, ER, LR, Byz, Mam; one Roman coin.

#### Sub-site No. 78.1

*Pal. Grid: 115784 Elev.: 430 m.*

Situated on a cliff high above Wādī Ibn Ḥammād and ca. 300 m. west of site No. 78 are the remains of a tower (8.50 x 8.50 m.) built of well dressed stones standing two to three courses high. There are no interior wall lines. From this tower-like building one has a commanding view to the west where the Wādī Ibn Ḥammād flows into the Dead Sea. It may well be

that this tower was built to guard the approach from the Ghor to the plateau. Pottery: Ir II, ER/LR, Byz, Mam.

#### Site No. 79

*Pal. Grid: 95835 Elev.: 560 m. Name: Ḥafāyir*

There is a small towerlike structure (7.50 x 7.50 m.) at the south slopes of Wādī el-Ḥafāyir ca. 150 m. downstream from Ḥauḍ el-Ḥafāyir (No. 64). The north face of the structure is preserved up to 4-5 courses (1.50 m. high). There are no interior wall lines. No pottery.



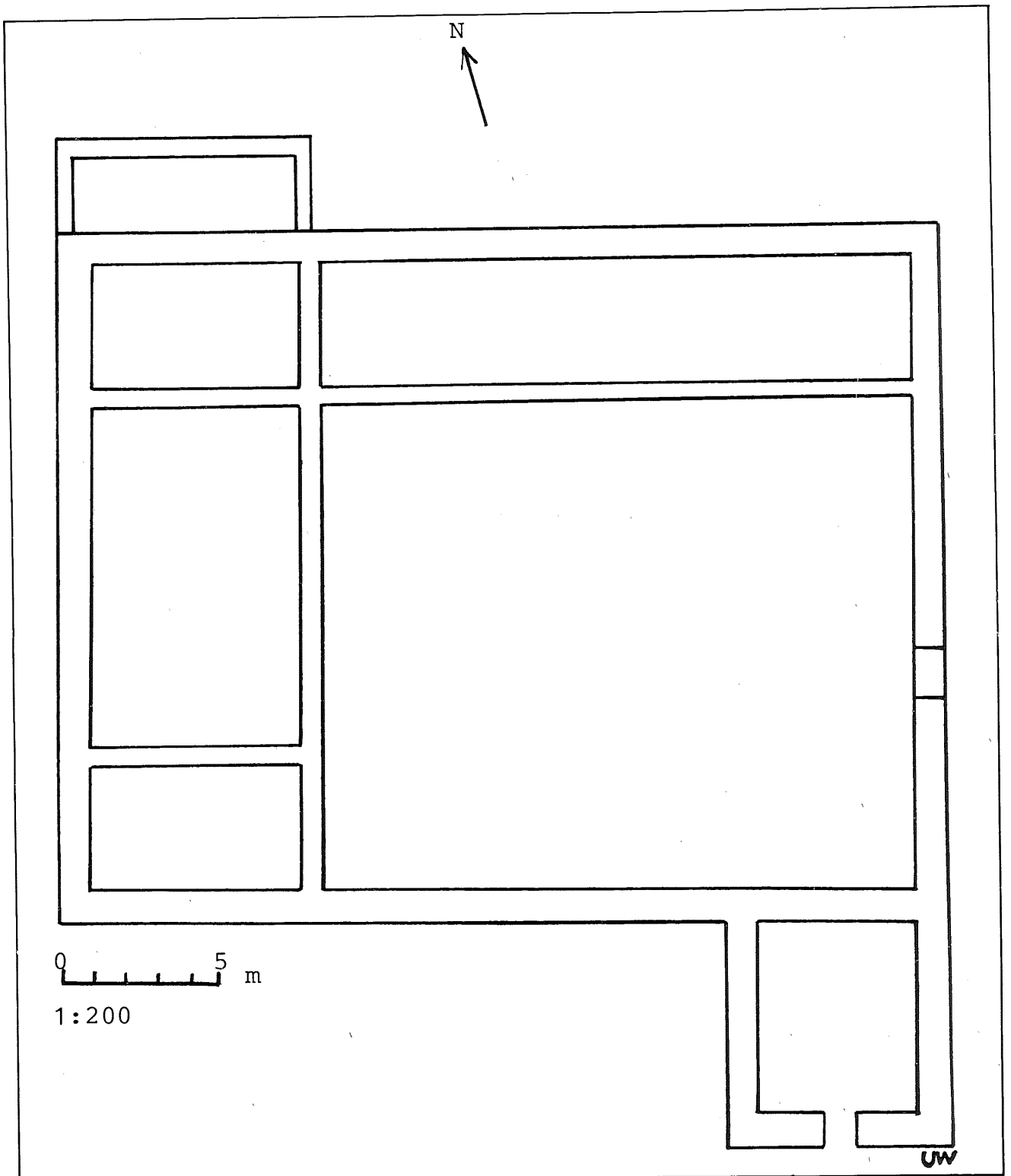


Fig. 6: Plan of Umm Qal'ā.

**Site No. 80**

*Pal. Grid: 94835 Elev.: 570 m. Name: Ḥafāyir*

This site is located ca. 250 m. southwest from 'Ain el-Ḥafāyir. The site is surrounded by fields. Also ancient terracing can be seen at the slight slopes of the hills to the south of the site. There are three buildings to this site. The largest (21

x 12 m.) consists of three rectangular parallel running rooms. Their sizes vary in width (5 m, 3.50 m., 3.50 m.), however, they are of equal length (10 m.). There is an open walled courtyard at their southside measuring 12 x 11 m. Its walls are 0.60 m. thick. About 17 m. to the north is another building (12 x 10 m.) with no interior walls. It is likely that this may have been a cellar-like installation since the foundation

POTTERY SEQUENCE AT SITES IN THE NORTH WEST ARD EL-KERAK (WORSCHER-SURVEY), 1985

Nr.	Name Pal. grid.	PL Ach Epi	NL PP PN	CL	FB I II III	MB I II	LB I II	Ir I II IIC	H	Nab	R E L	Byz	Um	Ayy/Mam
72	Umm Şidreh 2168.0786			+						+	+	+		
73	Sweimeh 2168.0790													
74	eş-Zağiba .1 tomb .2 tomb 2186.0793										+			+
75	Kh. Qabū, Deir el-Mahrūq 2163.0740							+		+	+		+	+
76	eş-Zahriye 2162.0732									+	+			+
77	Butayyir 2183.0735									+	+	+		
78	Umm Qal'a 2115.0787							+		+	+			+
.1	Umm Qal'a 2114.0787							+		+	+			+
79	Wadi el- Hafayir 2100.0834													
80	Hafayir 2098.0835													
81	Shihān 2201.0877							+		+	+		+	+
82	Şahrīj 2154.0868									+	+			+
83	Freiwān 2211.0899									+	+		+	+

stones inside the building are exposed up to five courses while outside the top of the foundation wall is at level with the ground. An entrance is leading into the compound (1.50 m. wide); there are three steps leading down. Between the two installations is another smaller building measuring 6 x 4 m. Only the foundation stones can be seen. The walls of the two main buildings are 1-1.10 m. thick and are built of undressed and fairly dressed stones. They are standing 1-2 courses high. Despite of intensive search only 6 pieces of pottery were picked up. It is likely that due to the slightly sloping area most of the pottery has been washed down into the Wādī Ḥafāyir. Pottery: ER.

#### Site No. 81

*Pal. Grid: 201877 Elev.: 1064 m. Name: Shiḥān*

The recent use of Jebel Shiḥān has been given up. Therefore a detailed examination of the ancient remains on top of the mountain was possible (Fig. 7).<sup>6</sup> There was no serious destruction of the ancient remains when modern equipment was installed here (we appreciate the watchful eye of the Department of Antiquities during that operation).

The perimeter wall (1.30 m. thick) can be followed around the entire (at places irregularly built) ancient citadel (51 x 40 m.) standing 2-3 courses high. However, stone fall, rubble, and debris have accumulated so heavily that only a few interior wall lines can be made out clearly. Several towers are flanking the complex, others can be seen inside the citadel. There are a cistern and an oval shaped (ca. 5 m. in diameter) pool as well as two columns (0.50 m. in diameter) *in situ*.

Pottery: (Ir I?), Ir II, Nab, Nab-R, ER, LR, Byz, Um, Ayy/Mam, Tessarae.

#### Site No. 82

*Pal. Grid: 154868 Elev.: 900 m. Name: Ṣahrīj*

This "site's" name refers to a flat region north of Imra' between Wādī el-Faqū' and Wādī Abū 'Ujeil. Rectangular enclosures built of undressed basalt blocks form a large compound (ca. 80 x 50 m.) in a fertile area where recent agricultural activities can be observed. There are also many cisterns and caves still in use. Inside and around the camplike enclosures no pottery was found, however, a large amount of possible epipalaeolithic flints strewn over the area were picked up (these will be published elsewhere). A rocky and difficult roadway runs over a mountain ridge to a narrow plateau from where one has a magnificent view along the Wādī esh-Shuqeiq towards the Dead Sea. Ca. 1 km west of the enclosures the remains of a possible tower (Pal. grid: 145869) have been destroyed and pushed aside when the roadway was prepared with bulldozers. However, the large amount of pottery and the many scattered undressed boulders allow to pinpoint this site. But no measurements could be taken. Pottery: ER/LR.

#### Site No. 83

*Pal. Grid: 211898 Elev.: 875 Name: Freiwān<sup>7</sup>*

Located at the southwestern side of Wādī el-Freiwān - almost opposite Kh. el-Miṣ'ar - is a large area (ca. 200 m. in length) of once agriculturally used ancient remains. Many cisterns and caves - most of them still in use today - as well as foundation walls of farmhouses (altogether four measuring between 4 x 4 and 7 x 7 suggest an open agricultural settlement. The four building remains are lined up at the slopes of a ridge running N-S above a dried up

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>7</sup> N. Glueck, 'Explorations in Eastern Palestine' I, *AASOR* 14 (1934), p. 58.

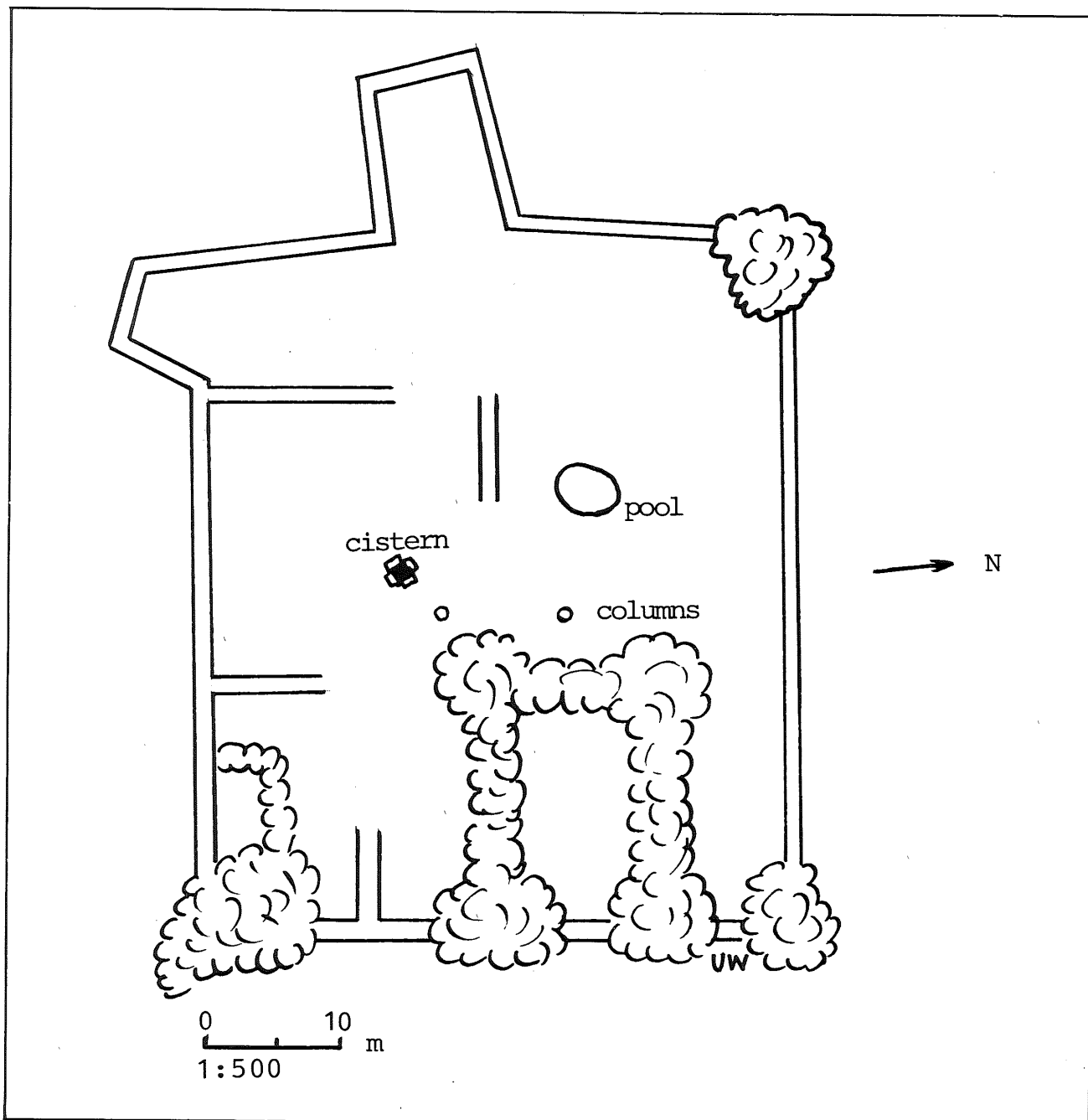


Fig. 7: Sketch of remains on Jebel Shiḥan.

wadi. The only impressive ancient remain in this line of small houses is a building complex of ca. 30 x 26 m. Due to the heavy destruction and stone and rubble accumulation it was not possible to draw an exact sketch of this building which may belong to the Nabatean-Roman epochs. The destruction of this complex by fire must have been very intense since by approaching the site from the east the soil immediately around and below the building is of dark grey colour and ashy consistence. Only the Western wall is 2 courses

high and built of roughly dressed basalt blocks. Pottery: Nab, Nab-R, ER, LR, Byz, Ayy/Mam.

#### Ancient roads in the Northwest Ard el-Kerak

In 1984 an entirely new ancient road-system of secondary roads was discovered connecting the western hinterland of the Ard el-Kerak with the Via Traiana. A detailed description of these roadways has already been published.<sup>8</sup> All roads - also

<sup>8</sup> U. Worschech, E.A. Knauf, 'Alte Straßen in der nordwestlichen Ard el-Kerak', Ein Vorbericht, ZDPV 101 (1985).

those described below - are ca. 4 m. wide and have either subsurfaces or curbstones or both as identifiable sections. In the following, brief descriptions of these new roadsections are given (see also Fig. 1).

#### *Section A*

A stretch of ca. 220 m. close to the north bank of Wādī el-Kerak. Subsurfaces and supporting walls can be seen at the point where the road is coming around a sharp corner at the foot of a high mountain. From there it continues towards Buleida but disappears among fields.

#### *Section B*

Close by Site Nos. 72 and 73 the curbstones of a road can be followed going from Dimnah northward and then turning to Yarūt in the east (Pl. XXVI, 1). The road can be traced for ca. 300 m. It disappears on the rocky surface near site No. 73; however, it can be seen approaching Yarūt.

#### *Section C*

This is another section of the roadway from Şirfa to Haditha through the Wādī Jarra. The road remains are just opposite site No. 79. It has a stone embankment (Pl. XXVI, 2; curbstones can be seen only at certain intervals since erosion has taken away much of the ancient roadway. A stretch of ca. 250 m. can be made out clearly.

#### *Section D*

North of Imra' a rather long section of a newly discovered ancient roadway can be followed ca. 2000 m. (Pl. XXVII, 1). Close to site No. 82 - the ER and LR watchtower - the road descends into the deep canyon of Wādī esh-Shuqeiq. The roadway was not followed any further at this time.

#### *Section E*

There is a stretch (ca. 150 m.) of an ancient roadway passing the citadel of Shihān ca. 100 m. to the west. This road may have left the via Traiana south of Shihān and then continued over it in

northwesterly direction crossing or joining a roadway from Faqū' into Wādī el-Mūjib. Due to agricultural activities north of Shihān, this, however, is difficult to verify.

#### **Summary**

The reconnaissance-survey of 1985 in the northwest Arđ el-Kerak has discovered 17 formerly unknown ancient sites, one new roadway to the Dead Sea through the Wādī esh-Shuqeiq, and new sections of roads already examined in 1984.

Again isolated farmhouses, church remains, open settlements, tombs, and probable prehistoric remains indicate the rich and manifold culture in the ancient Arđ el-Kerak. However, there are no tell-like settlements comparable to those discovered during previous campaigns.

The periods dated range again from the Chalco/EB to the Ayy/Mam and late Islamic times with no clear indications of MB-settlements, and only some evidence of the LB-periods.

It is hoped that this survey can be continued in the near future to explore the slopes and valleys close to the Wādī el-Mūjib.

#### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Dr. A. Hadidi, Director-General of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, Amman, for his most considerate assistance in supporting this project, and for providing the survey license for us, as well as for his un-bureaucratic help when special requests were made. I also would like to thank Dr. E. A. Knauf, Director of the Deutsches Evangelisches Institut für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes, for his scholarly assistance and for accomodations in the Institute during the final days of the survey.

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