

SOUTHERN HAURAN SURVEY, 1985

by

David Kennedy

Henry Innes MacAdam

A preliminary survey season of some two weeks was undertaken in Spring 1985 by a joint team from the American University of Beirut and the University of Sheffield, under the aegis of the British Institute at Amman for Archaeology and History.¹

The survey area (Fig. 1) extends over some 45 km west to east and 10-15 north to south, from Şabḥa to Deir el-Qinn and the Tapline road to the international frontier with Syria. The focal point of this initial work was the large modern village of Umm el-Qutṭein.

The objectives of the survey were: to record the visible remains in the villages of the region; to investigate the communications systems; to map remains in the countryside; and to investigate the ancient agricultural system, traces of which, still visible on the ground, could be plotted from old aerial photographs.

In the villages, the time is ripe in several cases for re-examining remains reported to some extent by the Princeton Expedition at the turn of the century² and in some cases by subsequent visitors.³ Growing population and prosperity has led many of the beduin inhabiting the ancient remains to move out into new concrete block houses beyond the periphery of the ancient remains; this is certainly the case at Şabḥa, Qutṭein and Deir el-Kahf.

In Umm el-Qutṭein itself, the remains

of what was once clearly a considerable settlement of the Roman-early Islamic period, were examined and a start was made in preparing an overall site plan as well as plans of individual structures/complexes. The most easily intelligible remains were largely those already observed by the Princeton Expedition though now much mutilated and often scarcely recognisable. A new discovery, noted from old aerial photographs, was that the northern part of the settlement was once walled. Indeed, the clearly rectangular circuit may well have had its origin in an auxiliary fort: the size (4.5 acres/1.87 ha) would have been suitable for the *cohors equitata* named on a dedication re-used in a building in the north-eastern corner of this circuit.

The routes to the south-east and north-east were investigated. No trace could be found of the latter beyond tracks, in use now, and of any age. For the former, the known Roman road to the Azraq Oasis was probably no more than a cleared track through the boulder-strewn surface or over the flint/chert desert.⁴ To the north-west we had our most tangible results.

Just beyond the perimeter of the village, the made boulder foundation of a Roman road was discovered and traced well up towards the border and heading for Bosra. It was exactly like the remains of the much better known *Via Nova Traiana* to the west: side curbs and central rib bounding a closely packed area of boulders which

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The team consisted of ourselves, Mr. P.W.M. Freeman, Dr. D.N. Riley, Mr. I. Robinson and Mr. J. Wilson. As always we are grateful to Dr. Adnan Hadidi for kindly granting permission for the survey and to Dr.

Andrew Garrard for easing the work and making our stay in Amman so agreeable.

2. H.C. Butler, *Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1904/05 and 1909*, Leyden, 1919, Division II Section A 137-142.

3. S. Gregory and D.L. Kennedy, *Sir Aurel Stein's Limes Report* (BAR, S272) Oxford, 1985, and D.L. Kennedy, *Archaeological Explorations on the Roman Frontier in North East Jordan*, (BAR, S134), Oxford, 1982, 240ff.

4. Kennedy, *op. cit.*, 169 *et seq.*

would have been overlain by beaten soil and gravel. To clinch the identification, we discovered the inscribed fragment of a milestone of the Tetrarchy beside the road 2.5 km beyond Umm el-Quttein.

Within the survey area 14 other sites were located and/or visited all of which will require further investigation. One of our team, Derrick Riley made a detailed study of selected areas of apparently ancient field systems identified on aerial photographs. He was able to formulate some criteria for differentiating the ancient, and in places very similar modern practices of land clearance. With the availability of wider aerial coverage it is hoped to be able to develop a useful study of one or more settlement sites within their agricultural setting.⁵

Many inscriptions were seen by the survey. Within Umm el-Quttein itself, 14 previously unpublished texts (nine Greek, four Nabataean, and one bilingual Greek-Nabataean) were recorded, all but one - a dated building inscription of AD 265 - being funerary. Outside Umm el-Quttein, apart from the milestone mentioned above

and another tombstone seen in ed-Dafyana, our most exciting discovery was made quite fortuitously on the first day when new team members were taken to the summit of the volcanic peak of the Jebel Qu'eis to view the region. Lying amidst the ruins on the highest point of the rim where a more recent Arab grave overlies a ruin, perhaps a small shrine, was found a Latin military building inscription in the name of *legio III Cyrenaica*. This last, together with two other fragments recorded at Azraq Oasis and the re-reading of a previously published Latin dedication from Umm el-Quttein are to be published separately.⁶

David Kennedy
Department of Ancient History
and Classical Archaeology
University of Sheffield
Sheffield
United Kingdom

Henry Innes MacAdam
Department of History and Archaeology
American University of Beirut
Beirut, Lebanon

5. D.L. Kennedy, H.I. MacAdam and D.N. Riley, "Preliminary Report on the Southern Hauran Survey, 1985", *ADAJ* (1986) forthcoming.

6. D.L. Kennedy, H.I. MacAdam, "Latin Inscriptions from Jordan, 1985", *ZPE* (1986), forthcoming.

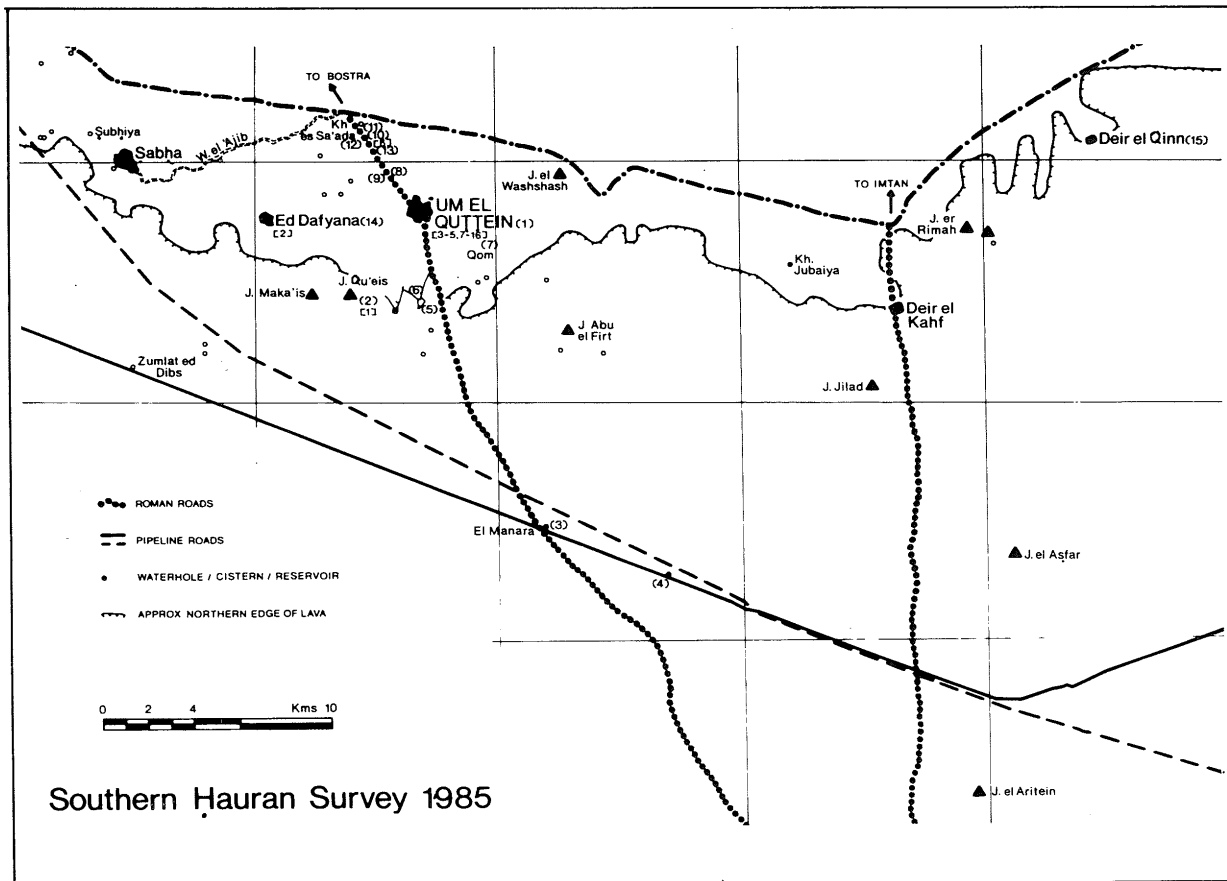


Fig. 1.

