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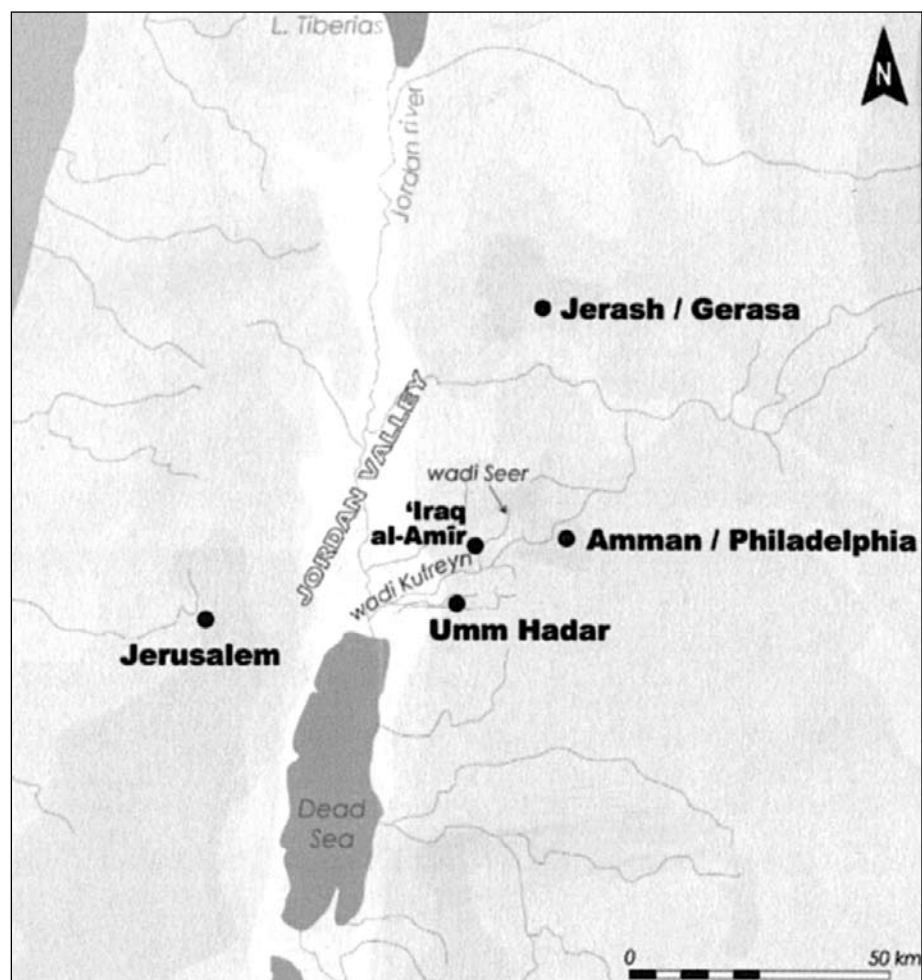
Dina Frangié and Jean-François Salles

Hasmoneans, Herodians and Arabs in the Jordan Valley: Disputes Over a Border?

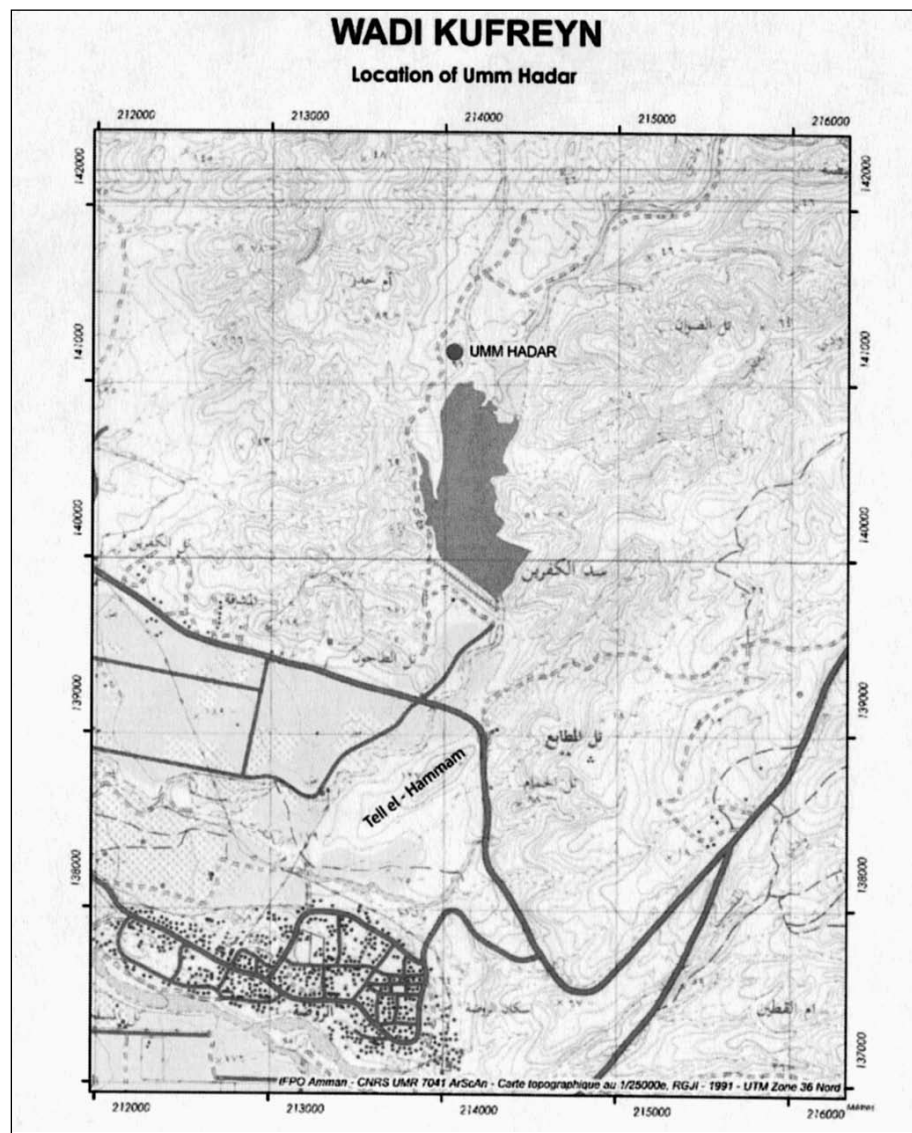
The French project at Umm Ḥadhar in the lower Wādī al-Kafrayn, in the area known as the Ḥadhar plains just upstream from the al-Kafrayn dam (FIGS. 1, 2), resulted from a couple of unresolved questions about the history and archaeology of the Wādī as-Sir - Wādī al-Kafrayn - Jordan Valley region, and also from the positive obstinacy of our friend Dr Fawzi Zayadine to see this site fully excavated and protected, the latter being achieved

recently by the donation of a fence by the Jordan Valley Authority.

One of the first questions was: is there any chronological and historical relationship between 'Irāq al-Amīr and the site of Umm Ḥadhar (see description below)? It is generally assumed that Wādī as-Sir and Wādī al-Kafrayn were the main routes from the city of Birta in Ammanitis mentioned by Zeno (*P. Cairo Zen.* 1, 59003, see Durand 1997) —



1. Sketch plan of Central Jordan (Caroline Kohlmayer).



2. Topographical environment of Umm Hadhar (Laurent Costa, CNRS).

that is Philadelphia / Amman — to Jerusalem, via Abella / Abila (*P. Cairo Zen.* 1, 59004, *P. Lond.* VII, 1930) — usually identified with Tall al-Kafrayn,¹ located *ca.* 1km north of the al-Kafrayn dam.

On this hilly track, the fortress of Sūr was established on the eastern ridge of the al-Kafrayn range of hills during the Hellenistic period, according to its pottery (Villeneuve 1988: 280-281; Ji and Lee

1998: 597-598, 2004), seemingly in order intended to protect Wādī as-Sūr and its settlements. However, was it really the western «border» of the Tobiad estate? Zayadine (2004: 270) mentions the site of Khirbat al-Farāwīt, also referred to by Ji and Lee (1998: 596), as another possible defensive position of the Tobiad estate. Thus, the exact extension of the Tobiad domain remains to be ascertained.²

¹ Although no archaeological remains of the Hellenistic period were found on this huge site. Papadopoulos (2007: 189) mentions some finds from the fifth century BC: «the alabaster cosmetic palette; the gaming-board stone with rows of circular impressions and the decorated sherd of a fifth century BC Attic red-figured vase, all of which suggest links with Egypt, Palestine, Cyprus and Classical Greece». At the same time, contemporary artefacts were found in the village of 'Irāq al-Amir (American excavations) and in the excavation of the door of the village (F. Villeneuve excavations). The identification of Abella/ Abila with Tall al-Kafrayn is not ac-

cepted by Fawzi Zayadine, who suggests that it should be the site of Tall al-Hammām, about 1,5km South of Tall al-Kafrayn (Gatier 2004: note *8 = Zayadine, 2004: 269-270): Abila would have been included in the gift of Livias (nearby Tall ar-Rameh) by Nero to Agrippa, son of Herod.

² Ji and Lee (2004) argue that the southern «border» of the estate included al-Maḥaṭṭa and some other small sites in the region of Wādī Hisbān. To the North, F. Zayadine claims that Birta-Amman was part of the estate. The eastern and western limits remain unclear.

On the other hand, Umm Ḥadhar stands out as a small outpost among a number of larger fortresses in the south-eastern region of the Jordan Valley. Numerous fortified sites cluster in the rather narrow area of the valley itself and the lower slopes of the hills³ to its east, some dating back to the Early Bronze Age. The function of Umm Ḥadhar seems to have been to control traffic along Wādī al-Kafrayn, preventing access up from the Jordan Valley to Wādī as-Sir, or *vice versa*, or possibly both.

Such questionings guided our exploration of the site, comprising a topographical survey in June 2006, a one-month season of excavation in January 2007 and another in January 2008.⁴ We are much indebted to Dr Mohammed Waheeb, who kindly offered to collaborate in the study of data from his 1996 season. This paper will present the main results of the 2007 season and presents a few questions which we hope to address during the continuation of the project, planned for 2008-2010.

Introduction to the Site

The site was previously surveyed by Mohammed Waheeb of the Department of Antiquities in 1996; two main architectural features, still visible on the ground, were described by the author (Waheeb 1997) as follows:

Umm Ḥadhar 2

«Remains of a building belonging to a small Hellenistic structure. It is a rectangular structure (16.50 x 13m). No post holes were found — they would have been unnecessary considering the pillars attached to the compact soil. The site should be related to the nearby main site to the south and possibly functioned for some secondary reasons. Few pottery sherds and no other material culture were

recovered during excavation» (Waheeb 1997). The site is labelled 119 in Ji and Lee's survey (1999: 533), with the authors adding that «the pottery is Late Hellenistic-Early Roman». The site is partly bulldozed and its southern part has been completely destroyed.

Umm Ḥadhar 1

This is the main site «located on top of a hill north-west of the dam-lake, at approximately 100m bsl. It covers an area of about 200m. The north-east and west slopes are relatively steep. To the south is a shallow saddle. The entire area is entirely terraced⁵ and not cultivated. [...] The excavations conducted in the northern and southern parts of the site revealed the remains of a structure approximately 40.7 x 30.8m built of not well-dressed limestone blocks with squared-shaped buttresses located at the four corners of the structure, each measuring between 6-6.9 x to 6-7m. The limited excavation in the structure revealed foundation walls built of small and medium stones, a large cistern located in the centre of the site possibly to collect the run-off water from the roof during winter season. Judging from the discovered architectural remains it is difficult (at this moment) to determine the nature and extent of the internal division of the structure. What distinguishes the site is the layer of destruction which was noticed everywhere in the excavated squares. It is not clear whether the site was destroyed by an earthquake or other events. Excavation trenches have produced an enormous amount of pottery sherds and some intact vessels especially lamps, jugs, juglets, etc. In addition to that a large quantities of charcoal-mudbrick fragments, grinding stones and iron fragments were discovered on the site. It is evident that the architect used stones for

³ «The entire valley of Jericho was protected by a chain of fortresses built by the Hasmonians on the hills around the valley. Herod continued this practice», quoted by Prag and Barnes 1996: 59.

⁴ 2006 Jean-François Salles, DoA Inspector Mr. Abdelrahim Abu Hazim, ingeneer-topographer Laurent Costa (Maison de l'Archéologie et de l'Ethnologie, Nanterre, Univ. Paris1 and CNRS), and Massud Karim as assistant.

2007 Jean-François Salles, DoA Inspector Yazid Alian, Dina Frangié as field-director, archaeologist Olivier Callot (CNRS-Lyon), Rizaine Touili assistant-archaeologist (University Lumière Lyon2), ingeneer-topographer Laurent Costa and Massud Karim as assistant. Nesrine Frangié was the draghtswoman. The team gratefully welcomed Prof. Roland Étienne, Chair of Greek Archaeology, University Paris1-Sorbonne, for two weeks; Dr. (Mrs.) Claire Hasenohr, professor at University Bordeaux-3, joined the team on a few occasions.

2008 Jean-François Salles, DoA Inspector Rami Freihath, Dina Frangié as field-director, archaeologist Olivier Callot (CNRS-Lyon), Caroline Coudre assistant-archaeologist (University Lumière Lyon2), Rizaine Touili assistant-archaeologist, ingeneer-topographer Laurent Costa and Massud Karim as assistant. Nesrine Frangié was the draghtswoman.

The programme was sponsored by the French National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS : Jordan-CNRS programmes), the French Institute for the Near East (IFPO), and the University Paris1-Sorbonne. It benefited from a strong and friendly support by the French Company Dégremont in 2007.

⁵ The word is partly inadequate, as it may suggest that the slopes were intentionally terraced (*e.g.*, in ancient time for cultivation). Actually, the many «steps» running along the slopes seem to result from the endless movements of the flocks of goats rambling in the lower plains of Wādī al-Kafrayn.

the lower courses of the structures then mudbrick was added for the upper courses. The structure was roofed by wood and other organic material. It is not clear whether the whole structure was roofed or some parts only. Traces of post holes were noticed in the hard compact floor of the structure. Barley, wheat, plain seeds, olive, etc. were among the discoveries, this reflecting the strong reliance on plant resources» (Waheeb 1997: 466-467).

The site is labelled 118 in Ji and Lee's survey (1999: 533). The authors emphasize the «excellent visibility in all directions» and state that «the pottery is Late Hellenistic-Early Roman».

Umm Ḥadhar 10

This is another site surveyed by M. Waheeb (1997: 466), located «to the west of the Hellenistic site (1) approximately 100m distant in the plateau area, and several stone traces and pottery scatters were noticed. One test trench was put down which indicated a possible reservoir built beside the run-off water drainage. The pottery indicates a Hellenistic and Byzantine date». Ji and Lee's description is slightly different: «Approximately 200m east [c.f. west for Waheeb] of the late Hellenistic buildings. [...] The pottery collected by the survey team at this site and its vicinity indicates the early Hellenistic and Byzantine periods. Hence, the Hellenistic building at this site seems to have been slightly earlier than the counterparts at Rujum Umm Ḥadhar and Site 119» (1999: 533). The site was not spotted during our research in the area.

Without considering other chronological data from the region, e.g. Papadopoulos (2007) or Prag (1996), the information on this very limited area of the Wādī al-Kafrayn plains indicates discontinuous occupation from the Early Hellenistic to the Byzantine periods. The area would not have been used for agriculture on account of its aridity and, probably, the recent evolution of the river course. It may well have been used for grazing, as it is today, but that would have not required the construction of a small fort at Umm Ḥadhar.

The 2007 Season

Three areas were cleared during the four-week excavation season (FIG. 3): the north-western tower, the north-eastern tower (these two areas were linked

up at the end of the season) and the open space west of the cistern (FIG. 4). At the same time, a team of workers was emptying the 4.30m wide cistern. By the end of the season, it had been excavated to a depth of 5m without reaching the base.

Northern Area

The northern part of the fort had been partially exposed by Mohammed Waheeb in 1996, and remained so up to the 2007 season. The area was disturbed in places, but excavation could take place. In the north-western tower (Loc. A), the remains of an earthen floor without archaeological material were removed, with a sounding in the south-eastern corner of the locus exposing the foundations (or at least their inner face) of the walls. These consisted of four courses of large, undressed blocks, nicely fitted together with smaller stones (FIG. 5). Inside the fort, the foundations rest on what appears to be a natural accumulation of eroded material, compacted in a sort of compact gravel.⁶ However, we know from the north-eastern tower (Loc. G) that the outer face is more deeply founded, about 2m in the case of the eastern wall (M14), both for strengthening and because of the slope. Strangely enough, no trace of a door was found in either tower, which might mean that there were filled up to the top, what seems unlikely, or that their top — a simple platform — was reached by ladders.

Several rooms, Loc. B to F (FIG. 6), were found between these two towers. The largest, at 5.5m long and 2.5m wide, are Loc. E and F. These have entrances on the same axis, with the door of Loc. F opening on to a central courtyard. Numerous traces of destruction were found in Loc. E (FIG. 6), including charcoal, burned wood, fragments of *pisé* roofs with imprints of reed ceilings. Elsewhere in the locus (as well as in the cistern, where it was more frequent), a whitish, very fine powder may be indicative of the burning of palm leaves, often used in traditional architecture in the Jordan Valley. Pottery was abundant in Loc. E, including fragments of jars and other vessels, lamps (one complete), plus a spindle-whorl, bronze pendant, three coins, date stones, a carbonised bee cell and a probable oyster shell. Loc. F was not fully excavated.

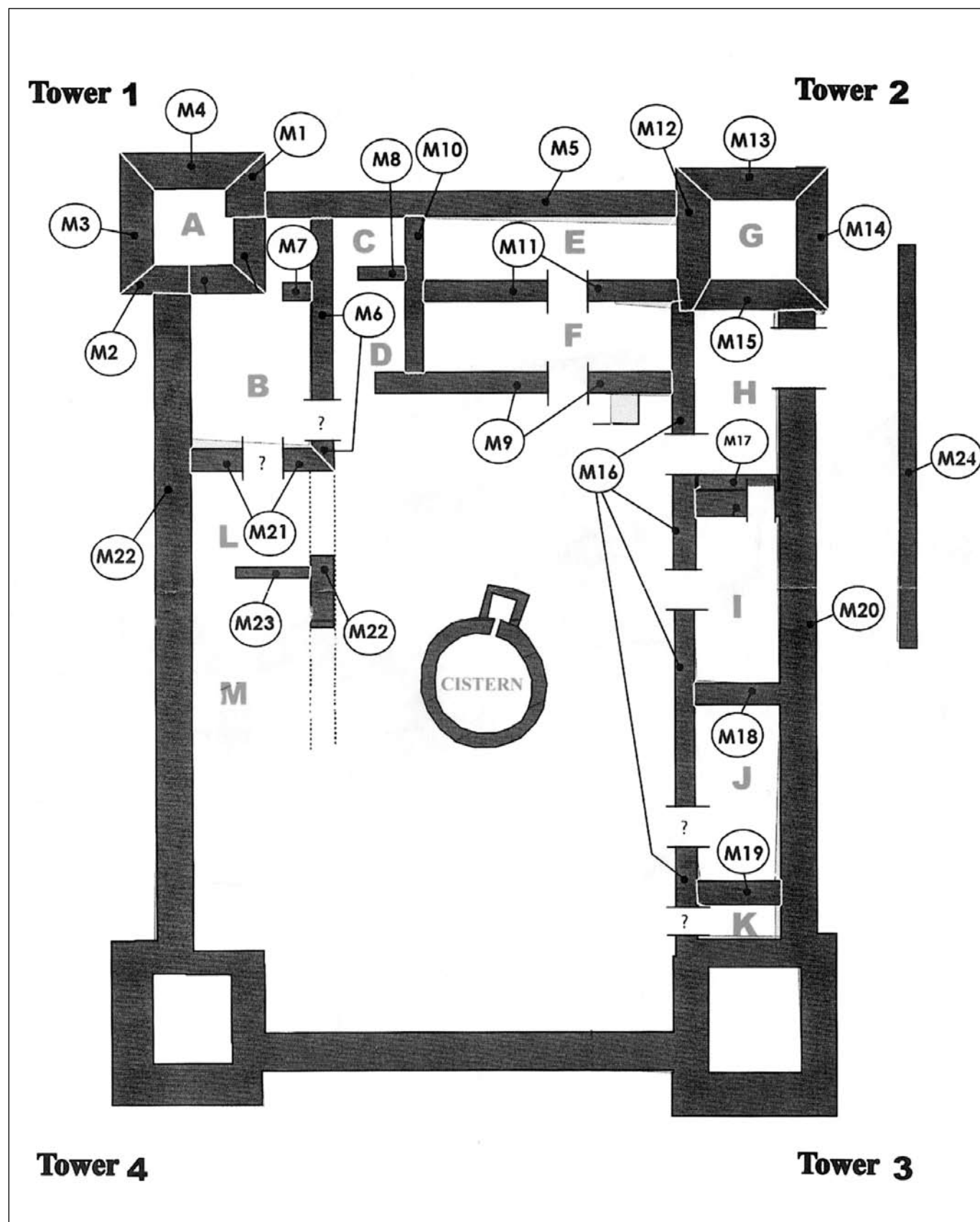
The smaller Loc. C and D may have been used for domestic purposes. In Loc. D, a fragment of

⁶ A few trenches were dug out on the slopes of the hill by treasure-hunters: all of them were empty of any archaeological trace, but

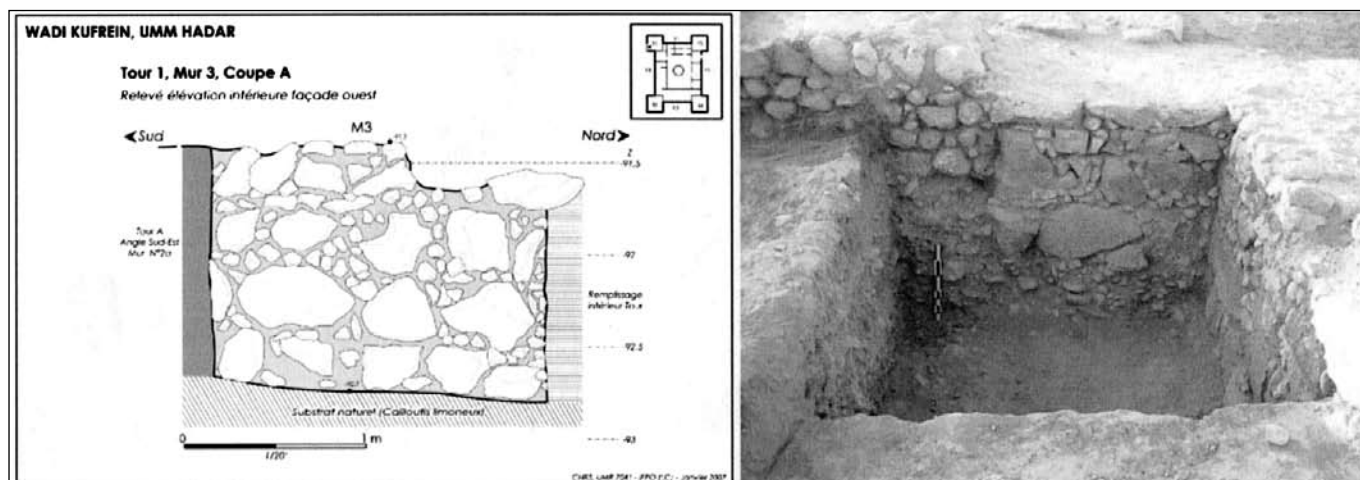
they all show the same geological composition of the hill.



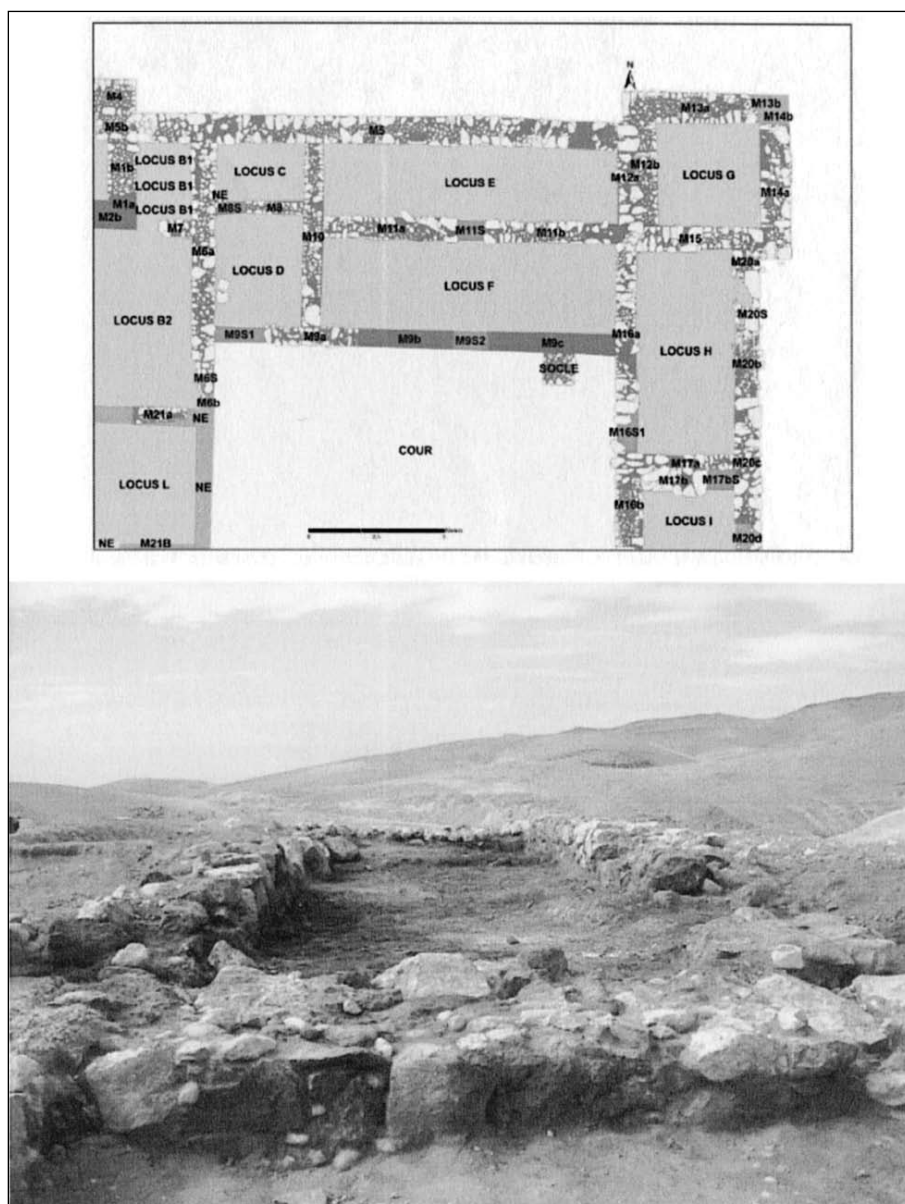
3. The site of Umm Ḥadhar at the end of the 2007 season, kite photograph (Yves Guichard, CNRS).



4. Plan of the site at the end of the 2007 season (L. Costa).



5. Tower 1, Locus A: the inner foundations of the enclosing wall and a view of sounding insinge the locus.



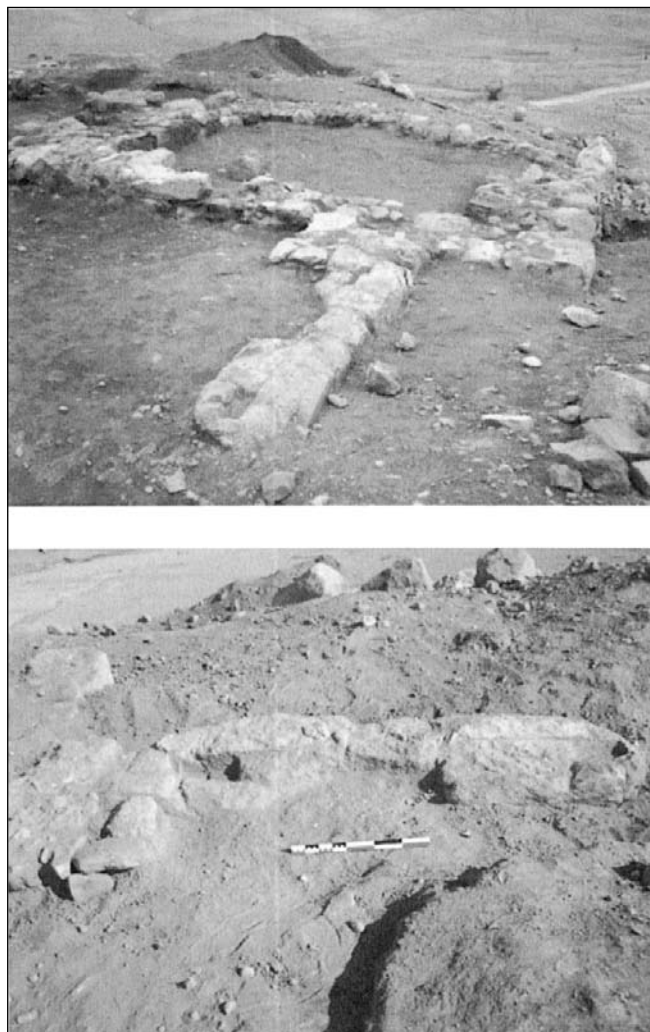
solid, cemented floor was uncovered, which may have been related to the presence of a large grinding stone nearby. Nothing special was found in Loc.B, where a northern recess has yet to be interpreted; four courses of brickwork were preserved in a small section of wall M6 (see *infra*).

In Loc. E especially, but also in Loc. D, a succession of two floors was clearly identified. The upper one is made of beaten earth mixed with pebbles (found also in Loc. H and I) and is rather well-preserved. In Loc. E it was found just under the destruction layer. Another floor was exposed in a test trench, about 10cm lower down; its texture is different, being just an earthen floor without pebbles. These indicate two phases of occupation, rather close in time, but definitely different. This phasing also appears in some of the architectural details in Loc. D and B.

Close to the north-western tower, i.e. Loc. G, the main entrance pierced the eastern curtain wall, M20. The external walls of the tower are 1.10-1.20m wide and built of irregular blocks with a filling of small stones. The inner walls are slightly narrower, 0.90m but of the same construction. No floor and no trace of a door was uncovered (see *supra*). The main entrance to the fort is located in Loc. H (FIG. 7); it is 2m wide, with three threshold blocks with a longitudinal groove and two door-sockets preserved *in situ*. Made of a different type of limestone, the blocks of the threshold are badly damaged. Only the northern base of the door jamb remains, the southern one having been destroyed by looters after the 2006 season. The passage between Loc. H and the central courtyard does not show any trace of a door and might be associated with a second phase of the main entrance. Nevertheless, the E-W partition wall (M17) between Loc. H and Loc. I is a later reconstruction, suggesting that Loc. H and I may originally have been a single space, though which the original entrance passed.

Outside the fort, on its eastern slope, we found remains of a very badly-preserved wall (M24), running parallel to the curtain-wall (M20). It was about 2.50m away from the fort and followed the slope. It may have been a small retaining wall for a ramp leading to the main entrance. This wall has now disappeared.

A few soundings made at the end of the season provided clear evidence for similar rooms along the entire inner perimeter of the structure. The construction techniques are suggestive of rather crude



7. Tower 2, Locus G, from the S.E in the foreground, the entrance of the fort. Details of the threshold.

buildings, with foundations typically consisting of just one or two courses of rubble and rough stones, although wall M6 is more deeply founded (*ca.* 0.60m), at least on its western, excavated face. The walls are based on two or three courses of undressed stone, with the remainder being constructed of mudbricks — still visible on wall M6 (FIG. 8). Numerous mudbrick fragments were also found in the cistern. The roofs were made of earth laid over a reed framework, or more simply of palm leaves.

The Central Courtyard and Cistern

The plan of the fort, as it now appears, has a large central courtyard with a well in the middle. Its dimensions will be known only after the complete excavation of the surrounding rooms, but is somewhere in the region of 14m W-E. The western part of this «square» was excavated; the original floor

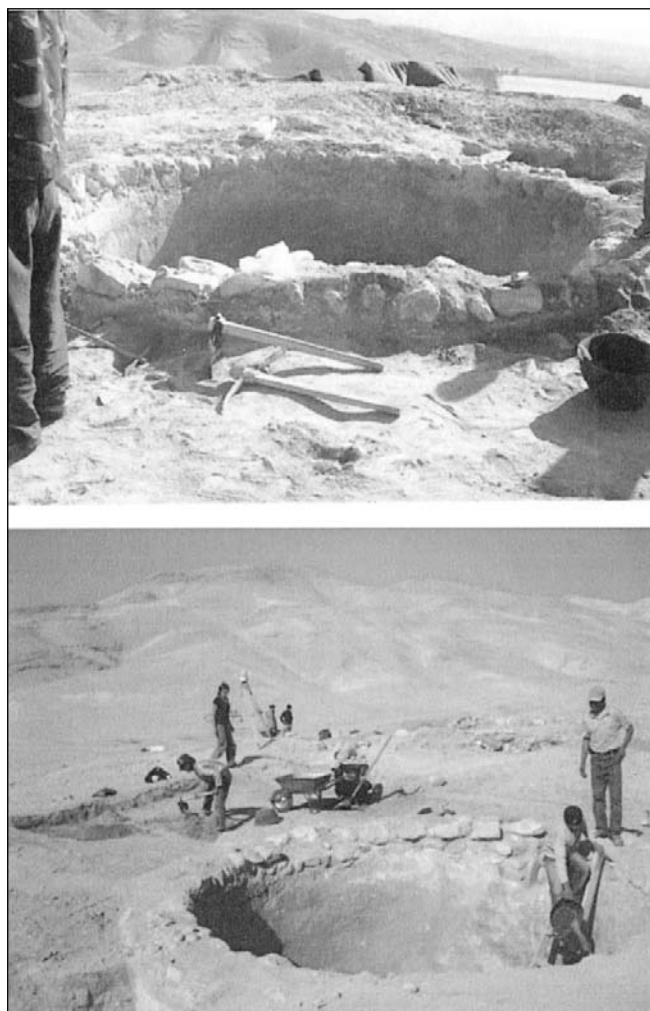


8. Fragments of mudbricks *in situ* on the walls.

was discovered 0.80m below the rim of the cistern, which suggests that the cistern wall stood at least 1m above the floor, which was in turn laid over the substratum of the hill. The floor appears to have been re-laid at least once, but we have to excavate the whole courtyard to be more precise. The function of the courtyard is however not in doubt: it is the place where all day-to-day activities took place, especially when one considers the narrowness of the surrounding rooms — most probably living and domestic quarters.

The well is the most massive construction of the site: its internal diameter is 4.20m, or 5m with its wall (FIG. 9). From what can be seen of the exposed part of the wall, it was carefully built with irregular blocks and small stones, probably with some kind of earth or clay binding which is still visible in places. The mortar is very well preserved for the full height excavated so far, and there is indisputable evidence of two successive coatings and probably some repairs. Clearly, this well was carefully maintained for a long period. To the north, there is a nicely-built basin about 1 x 1m across and 0.6m deep, with a well-built channel leading to the well. Can it be interpreted as a basin for the well water? A sounding south of the well showed, without any doubt, the large cut which had been excavated during the construction of the well. It is 1m larger than the well itself and the gap between the substratum and the wall was filled with rubble.

It seems most unlikely that this well was intended to reach the underground water-table (probably situated at a depth of 30m or more). It is more likely that the water came from the run-off of win-



9. The upper part of the cistern, standing over the courtyard.

ter rains — perhaps through a light roofing, which might justify the decanting basin? It is also possible that the well was filled by hand, bringing up the

water in goatskins from Wādī al-Kafrayn or from another perennial wadi on the western side of the valley, close to the site («*corvée d'eau*»). It was impossible to follow any stratigraphy inside the well, although it was carefully excavated one half at a time. The upper 2 to 2.50m consists of undatable, non-archaeological fill. The archaeological fill below cannot be divided into successive layers; the well was clearly filled in a single episode with all the debris of the fort (pottery, bricks, beams, vegetal roofing material etc.). The pottery recovered during the excavation of the cistern is quite homogeneous all way down (although this will have to be confirmed when the base is reached).

Architectural Comments

The setting, size and plan of the small fort at Umm Ḥadhar raises a few questions, as this type of construction is unknown — to the best of our knowledge — in Jordan and Palestine during the period in question: the mid-second to late (?) first centuries BC (see below). There are a large number of Roman fortresses in the region from the second century AD onwards, with a rectangular plan, square towers at the corners, rooms along the internal face of the curtain walls, and a well or cistern in the centre. All have a genuine defensive and military capability, as demonstrated by their massive construction. At Umm Ḥadhar, such a function is less evident, as the «garrison» — if any — would have consisted of just a handful of soldiers in view of the size of the living quarters. There is also a gap of four centuries between these two types of structure.

One would be tempted to look for an «ancestor» of such a construction in the shape of the small fortress at Horvat Radum, situated in the Negev, close to the city of Arad (EAHL: 1254-1255): «[...] toward the end of the Iron Age this was the site of a small Judahite fort [...]. The almost square fort (21 x 25m) is enclosed by a 2-m thick wall, preserved to a height of 2m [...]. The gateway was in the eastern side; it included an opening in the fortress's wall protected by a rectangular structure outside [...].» Apparently, the cisterns were located outside the fort. Although we might hazard a guess at a Judaeen tradition still present at Umm Ḥadhar four centuries later, there are several differences which need to clarification.

Despite the chronological gap (second century

AD), a comparison could also be made with the Roman *praesidia* established on the caravan routes from Myos Hormos to Coptos in Egypt (Brun 1996). These forts are rather small in size (50 to 60m square), with rooms along the curtain walls and a well or cistern in the centre (which has not been demonstrated at Horvat Radum). The main function of these *praesidia* was to control the caravans, perhaps supplying them with food and water, and to protect them in case of attack. The Horvat Radum fort was interpreted as an outpost for the fortress at 'Uza, controlling the road along the course of the river. Would it help us to understand the function of the fort at Umm Ḥadhar (see concluding remarks)?

The Archaeological Material

The study of the excavated material is in its early stages; a detailed study of the pottery is being prepared by Dina Frangié after a very preliminary examination of the corpus, which has yielded some basic information. Of the two coins discovered in Loc. E, one was an illegible small copper coin of the Roman period (date uncertain) and the other a coin of Demetrios II, dated to *ca.* 140BC.⁷

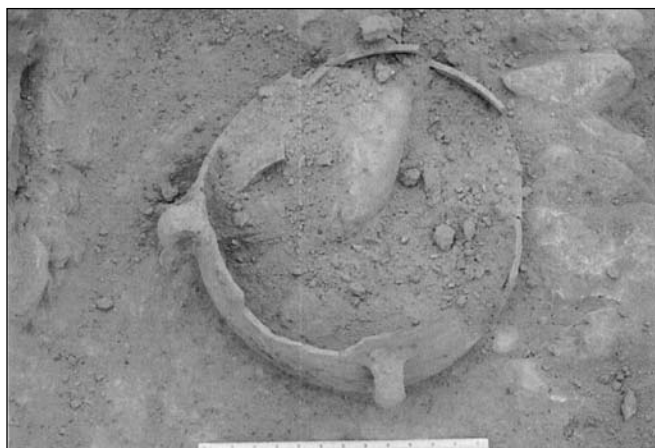
The pottery found during the 2007 season has many shapes, including jars, cooking-pots, flasks, jugs and juglets, table *amphorae*, lamps, bowls, *unguentaria* etc.. Table-wares, such as plates, small bowls, goblets, etc. are present but in small quantities, mostly showing the traditional incurving bowl of the Hellenistic *koinè*, in plain ware. The study of the pottery is still in progress; for the moment, we can only offer a very preliminary description of some of the shapes found in the Umm Ḥadhar excavations.

Amongst the jar types found at Umm Ḥadhar, we identified jars with four handles (FIG. 10), which are very common at Jericho (Type J-SJ1 (Bar Nathan 2002: 22-23)), Jerusalem, Beth-Zur, Tell el-Ful etc.. The date of these jars spans the second and first centuries BC. They are principally characteristic of the Hasmonean period and Judaeen tradition but, at Masada, it appears that some were also found in a warehouse dated to the Herodian period.

Flasks and juglets are one of the most common shapes at Umm Ḥadhar. The pilgrim flasks are distinguished by an asymmetrical body, sometimes decorated with concentric circles (FIG. 11b and d),

⁷ Information kindly provided by Dr. Christian Augé (IFPO-Am-

man), after cleaning.



10. Four-handled jar *in situ*.

and two vertical handles. This is Jericho type J-FL1 (Bar Nathan 2002: 65-67), dated from the end of the second to the first centuries BC. They are much more widespread in the later period. We know of their presence at Ashdod, Jericho, Qumran, Masada, Cypros, Jerusalem and Herodium, where they seem to continue until the end of the first century AD.

A large number of juglets was also found, similar in all aspects to Jericho type J-JT1A1, itself a variant of type J-JT1 (Bar Nathan 2002: 52-55). They are characterized by a globular body, rounded base and vertical handle (FIG. 11a and c); the neck is usually very narrow. The rim, as described at Jericho, is «cup-mouthed». This type is very common in Hasmonean and Herodian contexts at Jericho, i.e. from the first century BC to the second century AD, but starts to appear elsewhere at the end of the third century BC as, for example, at Tirat Yehuda and Samaria. At Tell el-Ful and Beth-Zur, this type appears from the 2nd century BC onwards (Bar Nathan 2002: 52-55). Such juglets are also common at Macheronte ('*gruppo 26*' belonging to '*strato 2*'). They are apparently most common in the first century BC, but are still found during the late first century AD (Loffreda 1996: 60-62; Photos 22-23, Fig. 22).

Fusiform *unguentaria* are rather numerous in the Umm Ḥadhar pottery corpus. A large number of fragments were recovered during the 2007 excavations, and F. Zayadine has published some complete ones from Mohammed Waheeb's excavations (Zayadine, in press), concluding that «the five examples presented in this contribution are probably of the early second century BC and are supposed to be contemporary of the establishment of the Tobi-

ads at 'Irāq al-Amīr and environs» (FIG. 12b and c). Fusiform *unguentaria* were widespread in the Near East during the Hellenistic period, especially in the second century BC. They appear at Jericho during the first century BC and are replaced by piri-form *unguentaria* during the first century AD (Bar Nathan 2002: 57-58).

We also found a few unslipped bowls that are distinguished by a string cut base. These bowls have also been found at Dor (Guz-Zilberstein 1995: 289-290, Fig. 6.1: 34-38), where they seem to have been used as jar lids rather than bowls. At Dor, they are common in contexts dating to the beginning of the Hellenistic period. Guz-Zilberstein states that, in Judea, they are most common at the end of the Hellenistic and beginning of the Roman periods.

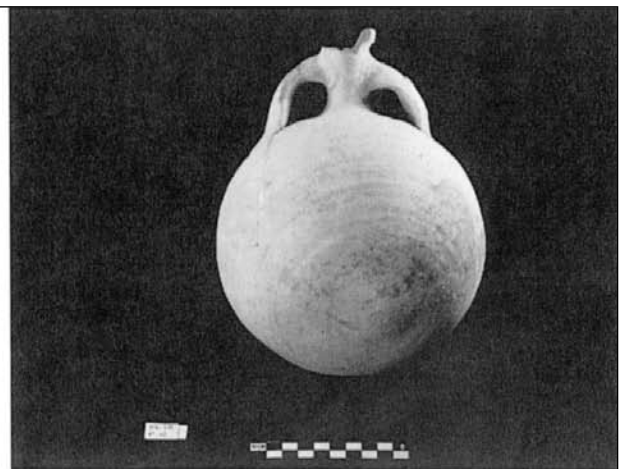
Few lamps were recovered during the 2007 excavation. Of those that were found, the dominant type was a type of folded lamp already published from the site by F. Zayadine (Zayadine, in press), who dated them to the transitional Persian – Hellenistic period, i.e. Early Hellenistic or *ca.* 250BC (FIG. 12d and e). At Jericho, this type is known as J-PL1A, which was associated with Hasmonean contexts. These folded lamps were very common in the first century BC at Jericho and have also been found at many other sites, such as Jerusalem, Bethany, Ramat Rahel, Tell el-Ful, Tell en-Nasbeh, Nahal David, Beth Shemesh, Ashdod and Samaria (Bar Nathan 2002: 102-104). It seems that these lamps do not occur in Herodian contexts at Jericho, suggesting — according to the author — that their production stopped at around 31BC. They also appear to have had a limited distribution in the Judean area. Lapp dates these lamps to the second century BC, on the basis of parallels at Beth-Zur (Lapp 1961: 162).

Another type of lamp from the 2007 Umm Ḥadhar excavations, known as «s-shaped lugs» (*lampe à poucier en 's'*), was also uncovered, albeit only in fragments. It has a grey colour, is moulded and is distinguished by a side lug in the shape of an 's'. This type of lamp was very common on Phoenician and Israelian coastal sites, especially in the second century BC (Frangié 2005, in press).

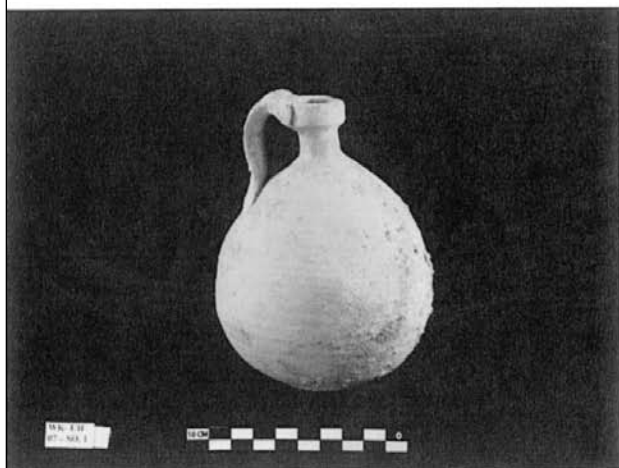
The pottery is thus basically common ware, with no imported / decorated material (e.g. washed Hellenistic pottery) on initial inspection. The fabric of the majority of the pottery is «regional», as it was not produced at the site itself. Clearly, at one time in its existence the site of Umm Ḥadhar was fully



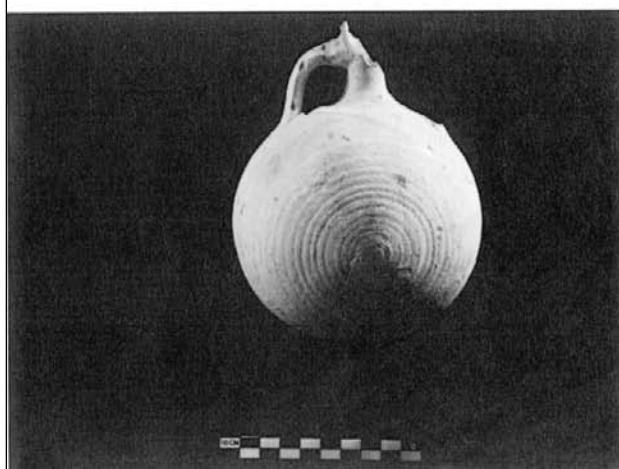
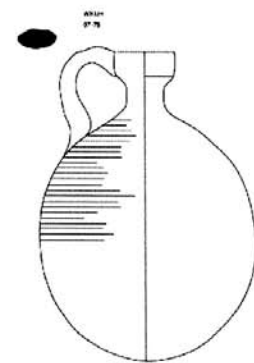
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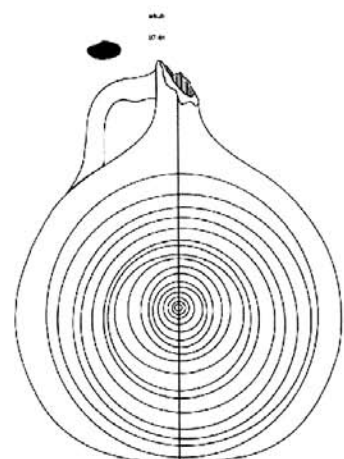
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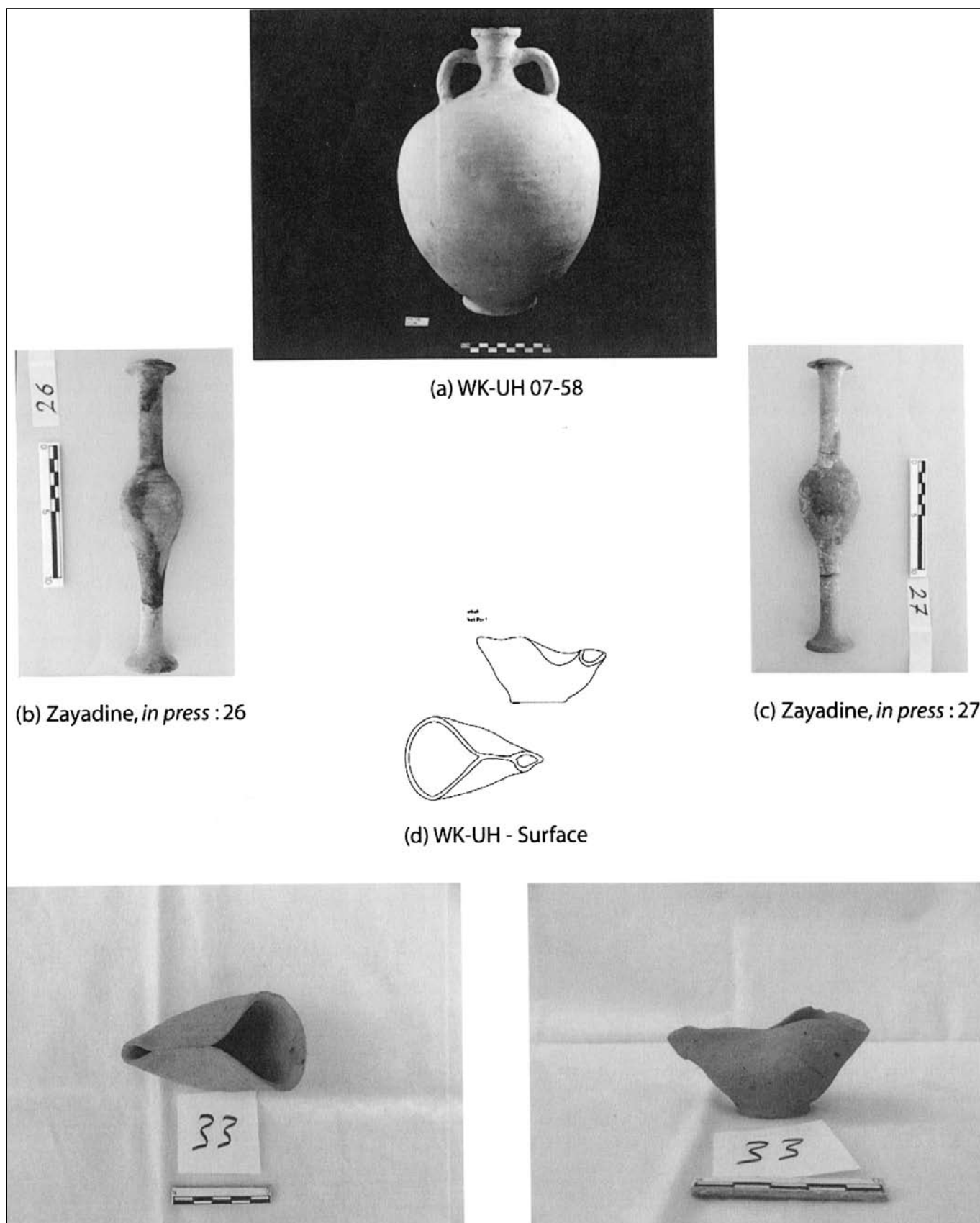


(c) WK-UH 07- 76



(d) WK-UH 07-61





12. Pottery from Umm Ḥadhar: unguentaria and lamps.

integrated within the Jericho - Hasmonean sphere of influence, probably during the second half of the second and the first centuries BC. Only a few traces of typical Hellenistic Near Eastern culture were found, such as the incurving bowls (in plain ware) and the «s-shaped lug» lamp. A simple reading of the archaeological evidence therefore tends to confirm the «non-Hellenistic» character of the Hasmonean monarchy (Schwentzel 2007: 135-137).

Concluding Remarks

The chronology and function of the fort at Umm Ḥadhar should be viewed in the wider context of regional evolution, in terms of politics as well as settlement patterns — including the Jordan Valley and the slopes leading up to the Jordanian plateau. For the latter, it is worth quoting the results of the three year survey by La Sierra University: «The Iron II-Hellenistic and early Roman periods are also well represented in the survey. It seems apparent that the number of occupied sites in the regions of ‘Irāq al-Amīr and Wādī al-Kafrayn rose dramatically during the Iron II period after long occupational abatement, and this settlement intensification continued into the Hellenistic period. In particular, the early Hellenistic period was one of the best represented period of all historical periods in the region» (Ji 2007: 139). Ji rightly asks: why such an intensification of occupation during the Hellenistic period, and for what reasons? The answers, when they come, will help us towards a better understanding of the fort at Umm Ḥadhar.

The second half of the second century BC, insofar as it is represented in the archaeological finds from Umm Ḥadhar, is consistent with the historical background. After the Maccabean wars, Jonathan the Hasmonean (152-142BC) — actually the heir of the Maccabees — initiated a policy of expansion towards the Palestinian coast as well as towards Ammanitis and Moab in the east, a policy followed by his brother Simon after Jonathan’s assassination by Tryphon in 143 / 142BC. Although the sources are mute on this point, it seems reasonable to assume that the Jordan Valley was the first step in the Hasmonean expansion. Simon was assassinated at Jericho in 135BC, and the first palace at Jericho was probably built during the reign of John Hyrcan (134 - 104BC) (Netzer 2001). Thus, a Hasmonean presence at Umm Ḥadhar should not come as a surprise. Without taking into account the preceding centuries referred to by Ji (*supra*), is it possible that

the alliance between the Hasmoneans and Romans (I *Macc.*, 8 = ca. 160BC; I *Macc.*, 12 = 140BC) gave new impetus to the human occupation of this region? There is however no obvious reason for that. The Hasmoneans were looking for a new partnership in order to escape Seleucid hegemony and, beyond their competition with the Seleucids, the Romans may held some attraction for an already wealthy region, as we see later in the time of Anthony and Cleopatra. However, the source of this increasing wealth had nothing to do with politics (see below).

Before the Maccabean wars, the situation is less clear. Very little archaeological data dating to the third and first half of the second centuries BC have been found in the Jordan Valley. Furthermore, the classical literary sources referring to this the region cannot be dated with precision until the time of Herod (e.g. what were Strabo’s sources?). Even Josephus is rather silent about this area. What is noticeable is that the association between Jerusalem and the Tobiad estate in Wādī as-Sir appears to have been a long-term one. Jason the high priest escaped to the Tobiads in Ammanitis in 170BC and we may assume that there was a kind of «connection» between these two regions, without presuming that the entire southern Jordan Valley was part of the Tobiad estate! What is clear is that the Jordan Valley, a very fertile area close to Jerusalem, was in the hands of the great families of the city, as attested by the Hasmoneans in Jericho. Indeed, the initial conjecture of the Wādī al-Kafrayn project was that Umm Ḥadhar might have been a «border» post of the Tobiad estate. This has yet to be demonstrated. At the time evidenced by the archaeological finds — which cannot predate the second half of the second century BC, or possibly very slightly earlier — nothing is known about the former Tobiad estate, which was mentioned for a last time in 2 *Macc.* 12, 35 and that in connection with events that occurred in 163BC. We know that the village of ‘Irāq al-Amīr was re-built at ca. 100BC, but it is not clear who its inhabitants were (see Zimmerman, this volume). It might even have been that the fort at Umm Ḥadhar was not at associated with Wādī as-Sir at all.

What happened after the Hasmonean period remains to be cleared up as well. Hasmonean pottery was found in large quantities on the site itself (e.g. the *in situ* jar in Loc. L), even more so within the cistern. Thus, the final destruction of the site should

post-date to the Hasmonean period. As there were no major changes in local pottery production before the time of Herod, it would be hazardous to date the end of the fortress to the period of his reign — although there is an evolution in Herodian pottery (Bar Nathan 2002) which does not appear clearly at Umm Ḥadhar. Although the exact meaning of «Late Hellenistic - Early Roman» in ceramic terms remains debatable, the absence (up to now) of *sigillata* at Umm Ḥadhar might suggest that the site was destroyed some time between the middle and end of the first century BC, although the questions of by whom, when exactly and in which regional context remain to be answered.

We have already discussed the probable function of several fortresses in the Near East in terms of providing logistical support (water, food, accommodation etc.) and military security for caravans marching along the barren and insecure routes of the region. This is especially apparent in the case of the Roman *praesidia* in Egypt, e.g. *az-Zarqā'* (Brun 1996). Might this concept be applicable to central Jordan and the Jordan Valley, in much the same way as it was applied to the Iron Age fortresses of the Negev by Israeli archaeologists? At this point, a key issue is our knowledge of the long-distance trade routes relating to central Jordan and the Jordan Valley.

«Philadelphia stood at the crossroads of the lucrative trade with inner Arabia, some of which may have come from westward through the Wādī as-Sirḥān and the al-Azraq oasis. The bulk of it came northward through Petra from the Ḥijaz and the Ḥismā. Philadelphian merchants transshipped these goods northwest through Gerasa to Pella and Scythopolis, and then on to the Palestinian coast» (MacAdam 1992: 31), to which should be added transshipment to the west via the Jordan Valley and Jerusalem, a route frequently mentioned in the classical sources.

On the other hand, it is well known — from both written sources and archaeological discoveries — that the trade in luxurious products from the East (India and, in the case of cinnamon for example, further to the east) or from South Arabia, increased in the Iron Age and flourished from the Achaemenid period onwards. It was based on caravan traffic from the Persian Gulf to the Levantine coast (see,

for example, the economic interpretation of the conquest of Tayma by Nabonidus in the 6th century BC, or the role of Gerrha in eastern Arabia) and from South Arabia to southern Jordan / Palestine. Such a multi-faceted enterprise, which involved many more people than the caravaneers themselves and led to a new prosperity that surpassed that of the preceding agricultural tradition, might provide a clue with which interpret the significant growth in population and settlement density between the Iron Age and Hellenistic period (see above for the region under consideration here). Indeed, these caravans were the most important of all, as they carried the most luxurious and expensive items of the «Indian» (i.e. from the East and South) trade to the Mediterranean. Might Umm Ḥadhar have been a Hellenistic precursor of the Roman *praesidia*, one located along the route taken by the priceless caravan traffic to Jerusalem?

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⁸ There is an enormous literature on this problem, which will not be referred to here. For the role of the Red Sea and its connection with

southern Jordan and Palestine, see, for example, Salles 1998.

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