

EXCAVATIONS ON THE CITADEL, AMMAN

THIS work was carried out to clear an area for the building of the Jordan Archaeological Museum during the months of October and November 1949. The area cleared was merely that on which the building was to be erected, and was roughly cruciform in shape, the greatest lengths being 26 m. A courtyard and several rooms of a large house, and beginnings of other houses, all of the Early Umayyad period, were revealed, the walls of the main building still standing to a height of $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. in the highest part. The houses were cleared to floor level, and pits sunk down to bedrock, the depth of which varies tremendously, revealed only a jumbled, comparatively sterile layer.

The area is situated on the south side of the western, highest part of the citadel, and it appears that during the Roman (or less probably the Hellenistic) period all early remains were swept away to make room for a new town planning scheme. This is confirmed by deep excavations by builders on the slopes of the citadel which reveal jumbled but inverted stratification. It is only on the lower, eastern section that there are any early remains, and these appear to be mostly of the Iron Age. It is certain, however, from a tomb group in the vicinity, that it was also occupied during the Hyksos period, and one would expect so strongly defended a position, with such a fine water supply close by, to have been occupied during all the historic periods.

The material is important inasmuch as it is one of the rare occasions when we have Umayyad buildings and objects of the ordinary man. Most work in the period has been done on palaces, and indeed there are not many sites where it is possible to find the common houses, most of them having been long since built over.¹ It would appear that Amman was quite a flourishing Umayyad village, if not town, for the style of house and the quality of objects found in it are not the style and quality associated with squatters.

The Buildings (see plan, Fig. 1). The main house consisted of a courtyard, the entrance to which must be outside the area of excavation to the west, with rooms opening off it on the west, north and east sides. One room on the north side had a door considerably wider than any of the others: it was probably the open liwan or guest-room. Walls are fairly thick and built of reused Roman blocks and rough flint rubble held together by mud plaster. Only rooms C, D and F had traces of lime plaster on the walls. Floors were of beaten earth, and door sills, except for the stone sill to room F (Pl. I, 6), were flush with the floors. In the courtyard was a kind of raised platform of very rough construction, and from the north-east and north-west corners channels conducted water from the roof to the cistern in room J. This cistern is cut in the rock (see section) and is probably earlier than the building in which it was incorporated. There was an entrance to another cistern against the north wall of F, but it had collapsed, and it was not possible to clear it. The door between rooms D and E had been blocked up and used as a

¹ In Syria, XX, 1939, pp. 239 ff., Sauvaget describes the Umayyad remains at Jebel Seis, but there was no excavation, and only plans and photos of buildings are given: they are remarkably well squared up for Umayyad buildings.

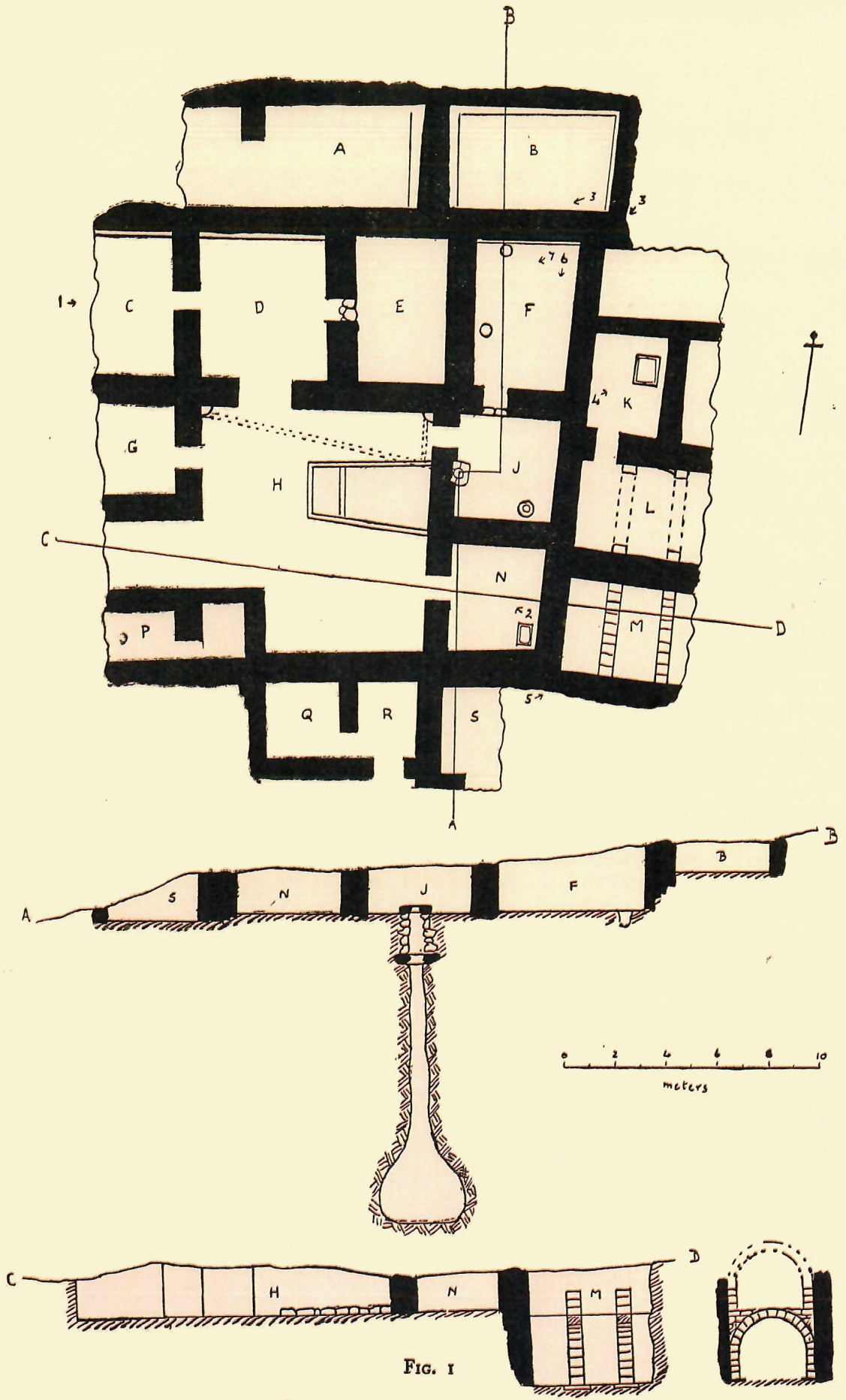


FIG. I

cupboard (Pl. I, 1), in which was found a selection of glass, pottery and lamps. A rectangular limestone trough was in the south-east corner of room N, and a circular one in the same corner of J. A clay oven stood against the west wall of F, close by which were a number of soapstone cooking pots (Pl. I, 7), and a water jar, No. 48.

The house on the east, of which only one complete room and parts of three others were seen, was more ambitious architecturally. A great quantity of plain large white tesserae in room K suggested that the upper storey at that point had a mosaic floor: in this room was another large rectangular limestone trough (Pl. I, 4). Rooms L and M had what was probably a basement and a ground floor level both supported on arches (see section, Fig. 1 and Pl. I, 5). The arches of the basement were intact, but those of the ground floor had collapsed and fallen through into the basement. These rooms were only cleared up to the limit required by the building.

There is little to say about the houses on the north and south, except that that on the north was at a much higher level, and they were both of inferior workmanship to the main house. The walls of rooms A and D are built on the remains of earlier walls.

The Objects. The only objects other than sherds from the houses on the north, west and south were the bone inlay from rooms A and B (Pl. II), the glass and glass mosaics from room M (Pl. V, 24) and a few amorphous pieces of iron and iron nails from various rooms.

From the main house, however, we recovered a good selection of objects of all kinds, including a few coins. Only one of the latter, definitely Umayyad, was found in the floor of room J: the rest were in the filling, and consist of two more early Umayyad, one Byzantine-Arab transition and one of Claudius Gothicus. They have been identified by Sir Alec Kirkbride, K.C.M.G.

INVENTORY OF OBJECTS

Room C

1. Crushed bronze bowl, just above floor level (not illustrated).
2. Spoon-like object, iron, leaning against north wall, on floor (Pl. II). J1683.
3. Silver earring (?), high in filling (Pl. II). J1691.

Room D

4. Bronze censer, found about 25 cm. above floor level against the north wall. This unusual piece is apparently of cast bronze, body, lid and handle being made separately. The body is cylindrical with a disc base projecting beyond the cylinder and making a flange, to which three legs are attached. There is another flange at the top with three ornamented projections pierced with a small hole. The place of the fourth projection is taken by the hinge which holds the lid on. The lid is in the form of a dome with a series of arched openings in the drum. Three rectangular holes have been cut in the dome, which is surmounted by a knob. The handle is a tube of bronze ending in a crude lion's head, and is attached to the body by three rivets. It is placed between two legs, which makes the whole piece unbalanced and prevents it from standing flat. The body and

dome are delicately engraved with a formal floral design on a background of fine dots. There are remains of a white substance in the body. The only parallels I have been able to find are illustrated in the catalogue of the Cairo Coptic Museum.¹ The object when found was completely encrusted in green, and no trace of the engraving could be seen (Pl. II). J1660.

5. Bronze seal, on floor near door. The design on the bezel faintly resembles a spider, but it is very corroded (Pl. II). J1700.

6. Small silver ring with traces of glass bezel: high in filling (Pl. II). J1692.

7. Silver nail with large head engraved concentric circles: floor level (Pl. II). J1693.

8. Squat glass vase with thick bottle neck: from cupboard, with fragments of a second. Similar glass vases have been found at Kh. el Mefjer, unpublished (Pl. II). J1669.

9. Small glass bowl: from cupboard (Pl. II). J1670.

Room E

10. Pottery censer (?), on floor in south-east corner. This unique piece is very crudely made of fine red pottery with a buff surface, well fired. The decoration is of applied motifs and lines of incised dots. The square handle is inserted separately; the interior is well blackened by fire. Apart from the handle, this resembles nothing so much as the limestone censers of the Late Iron Age, but I know of no contemporary parallel (Pl. III). J1661.

11. Grey soapstone censer (?), circular body, three legs, decoration of incised lines and concentric circles. There are no signs of burning in the interior (Pl. III). J1662.

Room F

12-15. Group of iron implements, all lying together on the floor near the door in the south-east corner. The implements are a hoe, a pick, a stone hammer and an axe, and are practically identical with modern forms. But for the fact that they were actually on the floor one might have doubted their antiquity (Pl. II). J1666-1667.

16. Iron nails, plain and ornamental, found near Nos. 11-14; probably from door of the room. No iron hinges were found, so presumably the door revolved in wooden sockets. Fragments of iron chain from Room J (Pl. IV). J1814.

17-19. Grey soapstone cooking pots; it is surprising to find that this is the function of these vessels, but it is quite clear from the fact that (a) they were found on the floor near the oven and (b) they are heavily blackened by smoke on the base and outside. They each have two ledge handles, and are rather crudely hand-made; the material is, of course, very soft. No. 19 had a hole knocked in its bottom at some time, which was repaired by trimming the edges and inserting a new piece, which was riveted in place by iron rivets. No. 18 had been cracked and repaired with iron rivets and the crack smeared with some white substance (Pl. II). J1695-J1697.

Room H

20. Sandstone fire altar: the fragments of this curious object were found mixed in the filling from floor level to about 40 cm. above, against the north wall. Presumably it was standing

¹ *Catalogue General, Koptische Kunst*, J. Stryzowski, 1904, Pl. XXXII, No. 9118. See also *L'Art Copte*, Al. Gayet, 1902, pp. 292, 297.

on some kind of shelf when the wall collapsed. The object is in the form of an arched tetrapylon, with engaged columns at the corners. The columns rest on simply moulded bases and carry capitals of a highly conventionalised floral design, perhaps intended to represent some form of Corinthian capital. The arches have a simple moulding, and between the capitals and the moulding is a circular projection. The corners are surmounted by a crowstep design, and the whole is surmounted by a dome on pendentives. The dome is pierced by four arched openings, is carved on the outside and finished off in the centre with a conventionalised six-petalled flower. Although the term 'fire' altar is suggested, there is no trace of burning in the floor of the object (Pl. II). J1663.

i

Room J

21. Small glass bowl, with applied wavy decoration on the body: in filling (Pl. II). J1690.
22. Part of a soapstone pot with incised decoration: it has no trace of smoke, and does not seem to have been used as a cooking pot. About 10 cm. from the floor. Similar vessels imitated in pottery are found at Kh. el Mefjer¹ (Pl. III). J1701.
23. Fragments of an iron chain: found near the mouth of the cistern (Pl. IV).

Room M

24. Fragments of flat glass slabs, with gold leaf interleaved: for cutting up into gold mosaic tesserae. A quantity of these, and green, blue and yellow glass tesserae, were found nearby (Pl. V).

Room N

25. Soapstone dish, shaped like a flat iron; incised decoration: on floor in south-east corner (Pl. III). J1668.
26. Fragments of a soapstone pot with incised decoration on raised bands: on floor near door (Pl. III). J1702.

Quantities of iron nails, as 16, were found in other rooms, but could not be assigned to any particular purpose.

THE POTTERY (PLS. III-V ; FIGS. 2-5)

Some of the forms and ware can be paralleled at Kh. el Mefjer (*Q.D.A.P.*, X, pp. 65 ff.), but there are many wares found there which we do not have, and we have some forms not found at Mefjer. Some of the lamps, Nos. 34, 55 and 56, are entirely Byzantine in type: No. 55 has crosses and a debased Greek inscription on it. Others are of the type usually called Arab. No late glaze or other material was found, and in general the pottery relates much more closely to Byzantine times than does the Mefjer material.

¹ *Quarterly of the Dept. of Antiquities in Palestine*, Vol. X, Pl. 6; pp. 82-3, No. 24.

Room	No.	Description	Body	Fire	Surface	Jordan Reg. No.
C	27	Small two-handled jar, slightly ribbed. Fig. 3	Red	Medium	Brown	1684
	28	Small jug, ribbed neck. Fig. 2	Red	Hard	Red	1685
D (cupboard)	29	Thick, bottle-necked flask: two examples. Fig. 2	Buff	Medium	Cream	1671
	30	Same as 27	Buff	Medium	Buff	1672
	31	Same as 27, slightly larger. Fig. 3	Buff	Medium	Buff	1673
	32	Small bowl. Fig. 2	Buff	Medium	Buff	1674
	33	Small bowl. " "	Black	Hard	Red	—
	34	Lamp. Fig. 2	Brown	Hard	Brown	1675
	35	Lamp. " "	Pink	Medium	Buff	1676
	36	Lamp. Pl. III	Red	Hard	Brown	1677
D	37	Jar cover: two examples. Fig. 2	Buff	Medium	Buff	1686
	38	Water jar, ribbed, combed decoration (cf. <i>Q.D.A.P.</i> , X, p. 77, No. 4). Fig. 4	Yellow	Soft	Yellow	1719
	39	Crater, two handles, red decoration. Fig. 3	Pink	Medium	Cream	1725
E	40	Large two-handled bowl, combed decoration. Fig. 2	Buff	Medium	Buff	1712
	41	Water jar, ribbed, white decoration (cf. <i>Q.D.A.P.</i> , X, p. 77, No. 2). Fig. 4	Red	Hard	Brown	1716
F	42	Pot cover (cf. <i>Q.D.A.P.</i> , X, p. 95, No. 27). Fig. 2	Buff	Medium	Buff	1678
	43	Pot cover, same as 37	Pink	Medium	Cream	—
	44	Small bowl. Fig. 2	Red	Medium	Red	1679
	45	Jug, ribbed on shoulder. Fig. 2	Red	Medium	Pink	1717
	46	Cooking pot, slightly ribbed. Fig. 3	Brown	Hard	Brown	—
	47	Water jar, red decoration. Fig. 3	Pink	Hard	Buff	1724
	48	Water jar, ribbed. Fig. 3	Black	Hard	Red	1698
	49	Bottle-necked flask, as 29	Buff	Medium	Cream	—
	50	Large bowl, combed decoration. Fig. 3	Black	Soft	Black	1713
G	51	Pot cover, red decoration. Pl. III	Red	Hard	Cream	1687
H	52	Lamp, unusual form. Fig. 2	Buff	Soft	Buff	1682
	53	Large bowl, incised wavy line. Fig. 2	Pink	Medium	Pink	1710
	54	Large bowl, incised wavy line, as 40: two examples	Yellow	Soft	Cream	1711
	55	Lamp. Pl. III	Pink	Hard	Buff	1680
J	56	Lamp. " "	Red	Medium	Red	1681
	57	Large bowl, combed decoration. Fig. 2	Pink	Hard	Cream	1714
	58	Pot cover, same as 37. Pl. III	Red	Medium	Pink	—
L	59	Small bowl. Fig. 2	Pink	Medium	Buff	—
	60	Small jug. " "	Buff	Soft	Buff	—
M	61	Jar, two handles, red decoration. Fig. 3	Red	Medium	Cream	1723
	62	Jar, two handles, red decoration. " "	Pink	Medium	Cream	1722
	63	Drainpipe (?). Fig. 2	Pink	Hard	Cream	—
	64	Spouted water decanter, red decoration. Fig. 2	Buff	Hard	Buff	—
	65	Water jar, red decoration. Fig. 3	Pink	Hard	Cream	—
N	66	Storage jar (?) ribbed, white decoration, much blown and warped. Fig. 4	Black	Hard	Black	1715
	67	Flask, two handles. Fig. 2	Red	Medium	Cream	1720
	68	Spouted water decanter, incomplete. Fig. 2	Red	Hard	Cream	1709
	69	Cooking pot, lug handles. Fig. 3	Brown	Hard	Brown	1718

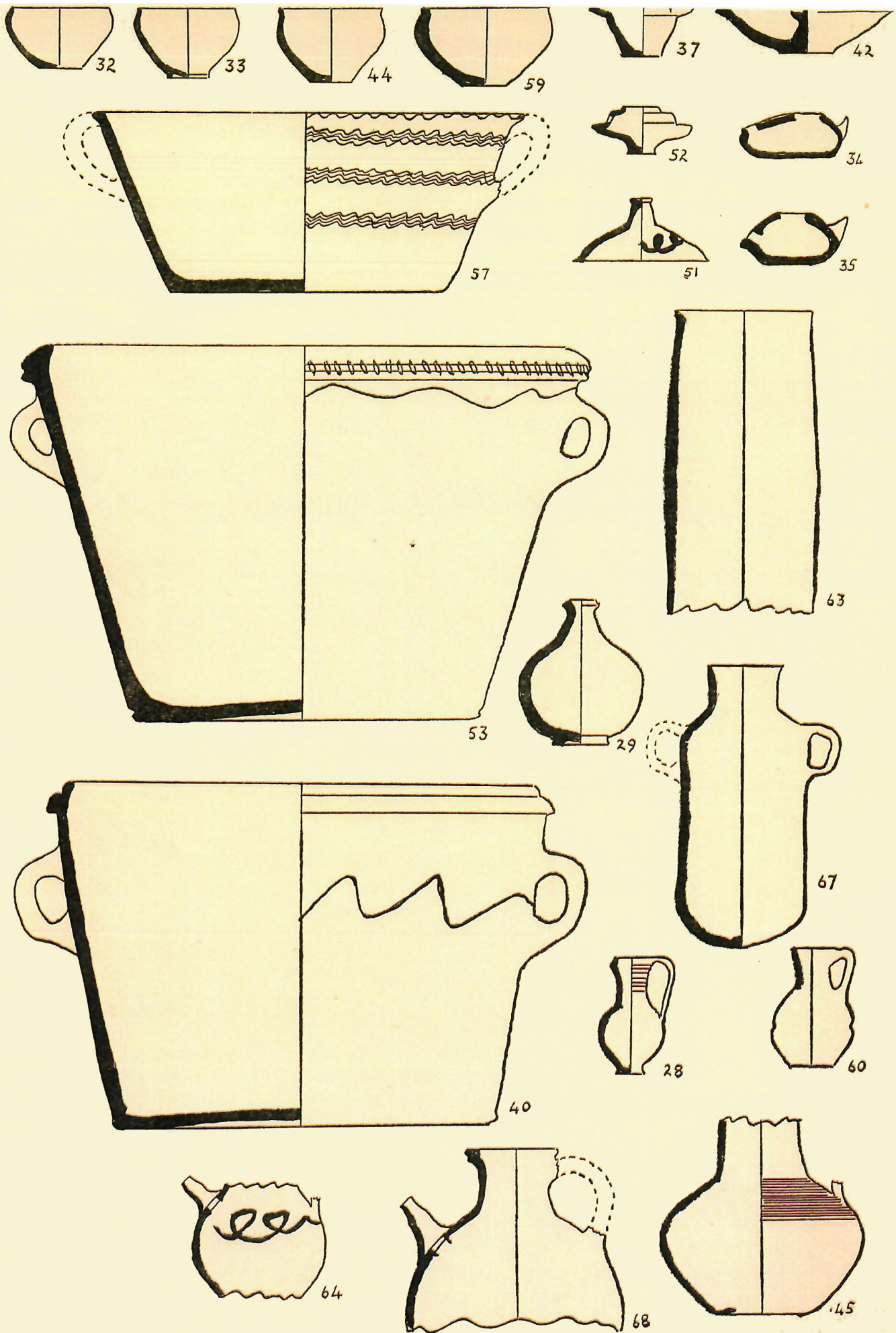


FIG. 2. Amman Citadel Excavations: Pottery (1 : 5)

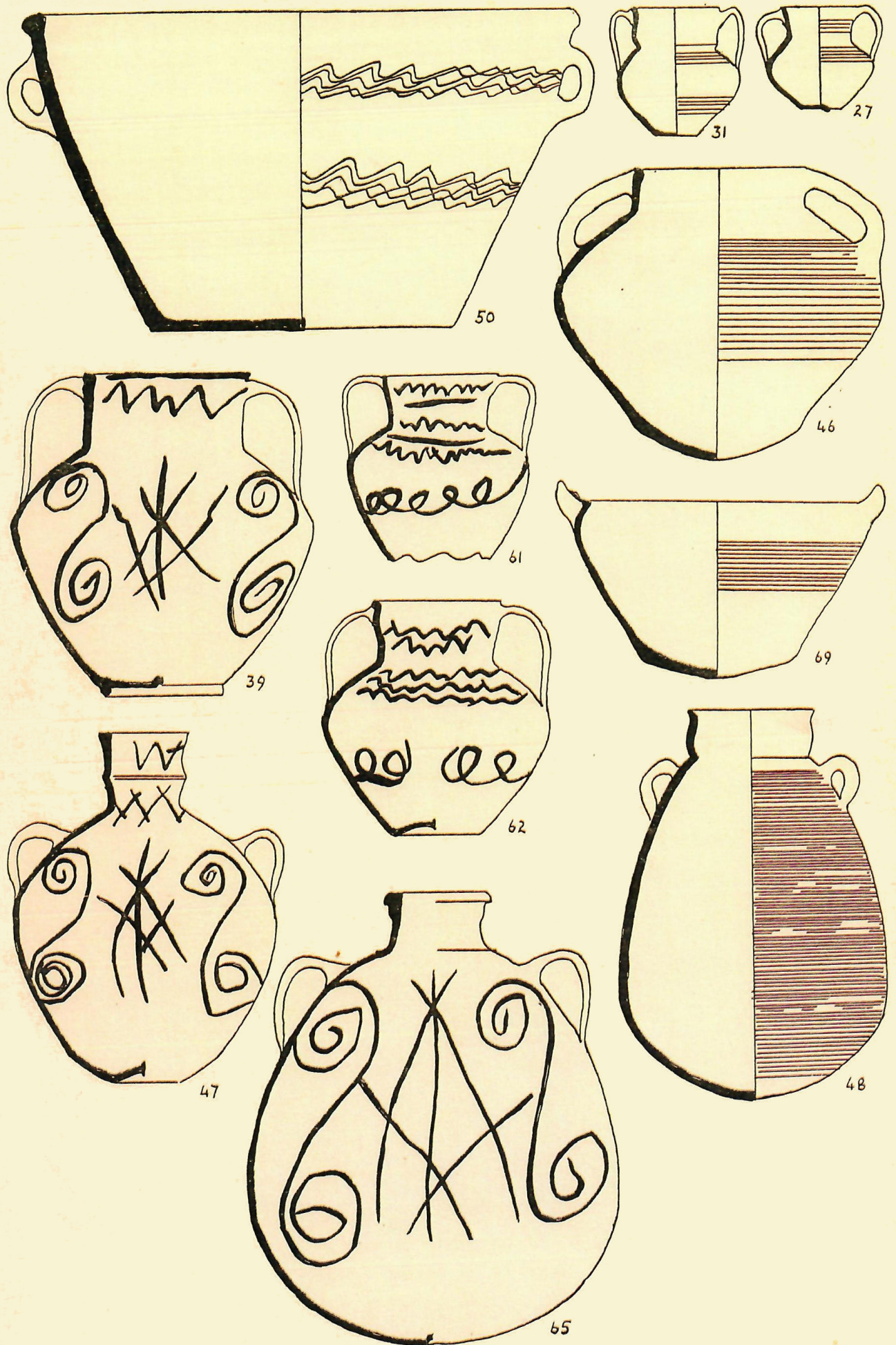
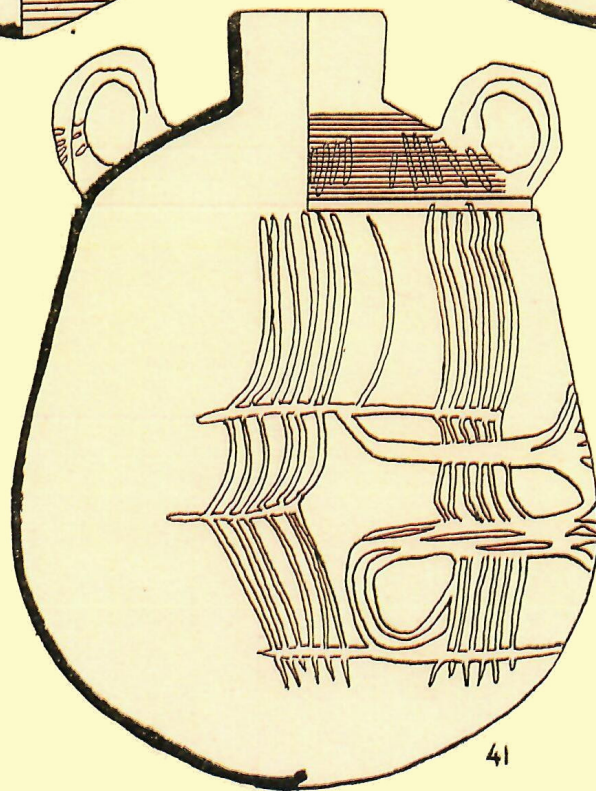
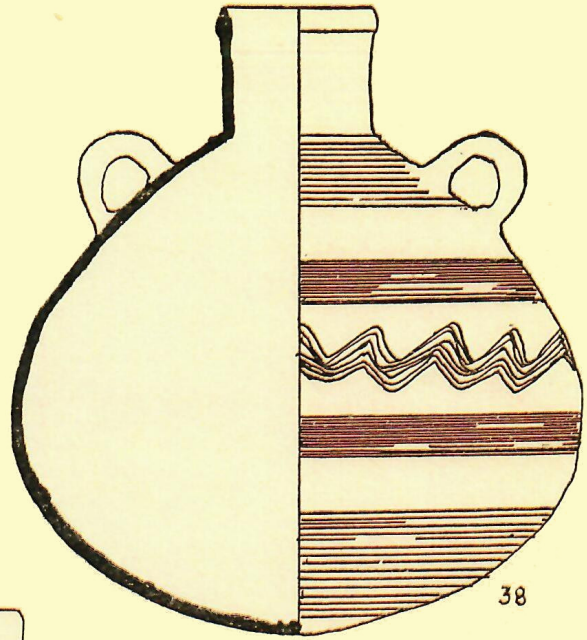
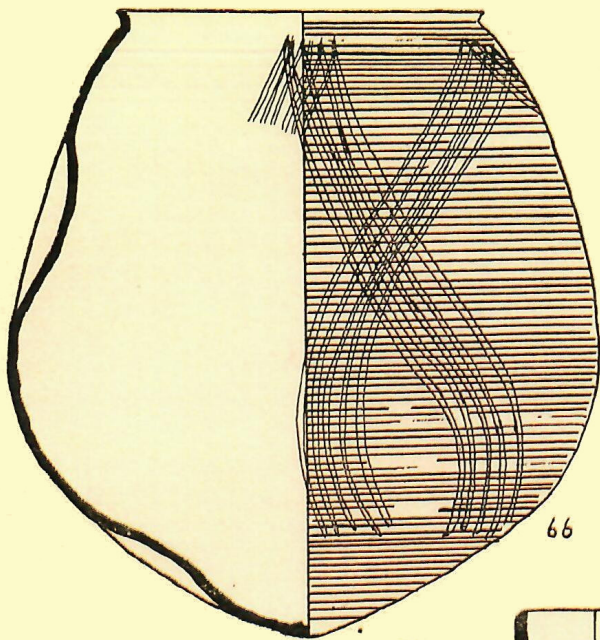


FIG. 3. Amman Citadel Excavations: Pottery (1:5)



الملك الأردنية
مكتبة راقية الأثار
رقم التسجيل ٤٤٦
رقم العنبر
التاريخ

FIG. 4. Amman Citadel Excavation: Pottery (1:5)

DECORATED SHERDS

No.	Description
70, 71	Hard pink ware, buff core, red paint on buff slip (cf. <i>Q.D.A.P.</i> , X, Fig. 9; 11 and 39). Pl. V.
72	Hard red ware, pink core, red paint on pink slip; inside of flat bowl (cf. <i>ibid.</i> , No. 29).
73, 74	Hard pink ware, buff core, red paint on cream slip: inside of bowl (cf. <i>ibid.</i> , No. 6).
75	Hard red ware, grey core, red paint on white slip: inside of bowl (cf. as 72).

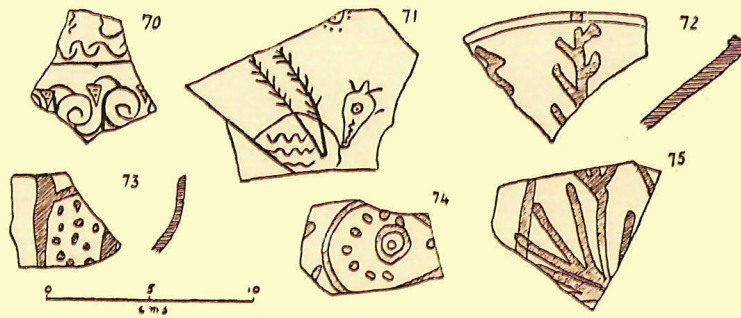


FIG. 5. Decorated Sherds.

The above is no more than a selection of the materials: it has not yet been possible to work over all the sherds for reconstruction purposes, but it does not appear that there are any new forms or ware among them.

G. LANKESTER HARDING