

The Department of Antiquities : Achievements in 1969-1970

by
Mr. Yousef Alami

I. Archaeological Excavations.

A. Foreign Archaeological Excavations

Mrs. Crystal M. Bennett, Professor of Archaeology in London University, has concluded her excavation at Twailan near Petra. She has also excavated two other trenches located northeast of the previous site. Many skeletons were found and the cross walls opening was discovered.

Mrs. Bennett also visited Busira, in Tafileh area, to study the site in preparation for another excavation in the coming year.

B. Archaeological Excavations of the Department of Antiquities

Most of the Department's archaeological excavations were conducted upon the reports of citizens finding antiquities by chance in different parts of the country.

Some of these excavations are:

1- Swafieh Excavation (Amman Area)

The Department of Antiquities in cooperation with Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen, Director of the ASOR in Amman, conducted the excavation at Swafieh. (Refer to Dr. Van Elderen's article in this issue). A roof was built to preserve the mosaic floor found in that area. (Plate I).

2- Masouh Excavation

Under the direction of Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen, the Department of Antiquities concluded the excavation at Masouh, 10 km. from Madaba. A beautiful mosaic floor of a Byzantine church was discovered. (Plate II and III) The Byzantine church, dating from the fifth century A.D., was the traditional basilica

type of the Byzantine period. It is composed of a central nave and side aisles. The size of a piece of the mosaic floor is 9 meters by 14 meters. In this piece of the floor there are intricate geometric designs and floral patterns. Unfortunately, due to reparations in a later period some of the designs were damaged. In the center of the nave, some Greek inscriptions were found. One inscription which is complete reads:

"O Christ, our God help thy servant Sabbatios, the archpresbyteros, Amen." (Plate II).

Another piece of the floor was discovered; its size is about 7 meters by 2 meters. It contains some figures, animals and birds, similar to those found in Swafiyeh and Madaba. The floor reveals excellent craftsmanship in its beautiful designs and figures. This magnificent church was remodeled in the sixth century.

II- Maintenance and Consolidations.

A. Amman Area

1- The Forum

Three years ago, the Department started with this project. Meanwhile, the work has stopped awaiting the removal of the Department's offices which will be in the year 1971.

2- The Citadel

Work has been going on to build the retaining wall to the eastern side of the original wall of the Citadel. The purpose of such a project is to preserve the Citadel and to establish fixed boundaries. The project should take about five years according to the sum of money allocated yearly.

(*) See plates pp. 65-68.

B. Jerash

Amman Gateway (Triumphal Arch)

The Triumphal Arch is composed of three gateways. Wooden pillars were used as a means of supporting the two side gateways. The western arch, the columns and their bases underwent a measure of consolidation. The same old stones were restored in their places, while the lost stones were replaced by new ones. In the meantime the eastern gateway is under restoration, and the work should terminate in 1971. (Plate IV)

C. Ajlun

A retaining wall was built facing the entrance of the Citadel to enlarge the parking area. Some of the fallen roofs were restored. A long term plan of five years duration is arranged with the British Technical Aid to provide technical equipments and professional advice, while the Department will finance and carry out the work starting in 1971.

D. Madaba

In the Prophets Church, a roof was built to preserve the mosaic floor. Some of the mosaics found near Madaba were removed and exhibited in the museum. (Plate V).

E. Karak

The vault entrance has been repaired and cleared in preparation for using it as a popular

museum. Other vaults to the west of the Citadel were consolidated and organized. Restorations are continued in that area. Initial excavations were conducted at Mihai village due to evidence from tombs and inscriptions showing that it belongs to the Byzantine period. The Department of Antiquities is planning to conduct other excavations in that area during the year 1971.

F. Petra

1- Al-Hammam. (Bath)

During the Al - Hammam Excavation, two rooms were cleared, and the walls and dome were restored. Due to the importance of this excavation, work should be continued to uncover the entrances to all the rooms. This name, Al - Hammam, (Bath) was attributed to this place by Brunnow.

2- The Monumental Gateway

The side pillars of the gateway were consolidated by replacing the lost stones with new ones. (Plate VI & VII).

3- By the side of the wadi, a retaining wall, extending from the Monumental Gateway to Qasr al-Bint, was built to prevent the main street from decaying. In the process of constructing the wall, the original foundation and the same kind of stones were used and in the same method.

Yousef Alami
Department of Antiquities

(1) Refer to Vol. XIV of the Annual of the Department of Antiquities.