

A Byzantine Tomb from Na'ur

by
Sabri 'Abadi

The discovery of a tomb at Na'ur¹ was reported to the Department of Antiquities on March 25th, 1973. Na'ur is a flourishing village situated about 15 Km. west of Amman, on the main road to Jerusalem. Sherds of the Arab, Byzantine, Roman and Iron I and II periods have been collected from the area. A square tower, built of megalithic stones and similar to many Ammonite towers, lies about 2 Km. to the south-east of the village.

The tomb was located on the eastern slopes of the Wadi, in an area which has many shafts and caves. A cemetery is certainly to be placed in the area, and some of the caves could date back to the Iron Age, since many sherds of that period are scattered around.

The newly discovered burial was a shaft-tomb, whose entrance was blocked by a large cover-stone which fitted into the opening. The cover-stone which measures 1.88 m. by 1.00 m. and 0.50 m. on thickness, had, two rectangular notches at the bottom to help in lifting it with an iron bar. It seems that the cover-stone was quarried out from the near-by rock, for a trough, corresponding to the dimensions of the cover-stone is to be seen in the vicinity.

Unfortunately, when the Department's officials reached the spot the cover-stone had been lifted and the burial searched by tomb robbers. Nevertheless, it was decided to dig; the operation was entrusted to the writer.

Description of the burial:

Roughly rectangular in shape, the chamber measured 5.25 m. by 4.75 m. and it contained 5 graves (plan Figs. 1-2, and Pl. XLI, 1). The largest grave measured, 2.20 m. by 1.15 m. (No. 1). An atrium corresponding to the opening of the tomb but of larger size, separated grave No. 1 from Nos. 3 and 4. Two graves were situated on the western side of the chamber (Nos. 5 and 6), and they were separated from the rest of the grave by a bench, 0.75 m. high.

Probably the entire tomb had been Plastered at one time, for traces of Plaster were noticed on small section of the ceiling at the western end.

The Finds:

Although the tomb was plundered by modern robbers, some objects were discovered during the excavations. In addition to the fragmentary skeletal remains, there were pottery lamps, beads, bronze bracelets and rings, a bronze nose ring, a bronze cross, a bone spindle whorl, and some illegible bronze coins

Dating:

Since the coins were badly corroded, they are of no help in dating the tomb. The only possible evidence would be the two lamps. Lamp No. 1 could be dated to the 3rd century A.D.,² while No. 2 is typical the Byzantine Period (6-7th century A.D.).³ The bronze cross⁴ is also common in Byzantine tombs especially from Pella. In this case, it is probable that the tomb was first occupied in the Later Roman Period and again later in the Byzantine Period.

(1) About Na'ur see: **AASOR**, XXV-XXVIII (1951), p. 221; **ZDPV**, 77 (1961) p.46; 77 (1961) p.56 ff; 76 (1960) p.113-114.

(2) **QDAP**, (1950), Pl. XXV.

(3) **Pella**, pl. 84, No. 368, and p. 219.

(4) **Pella**, pl. 68 and p. 228.

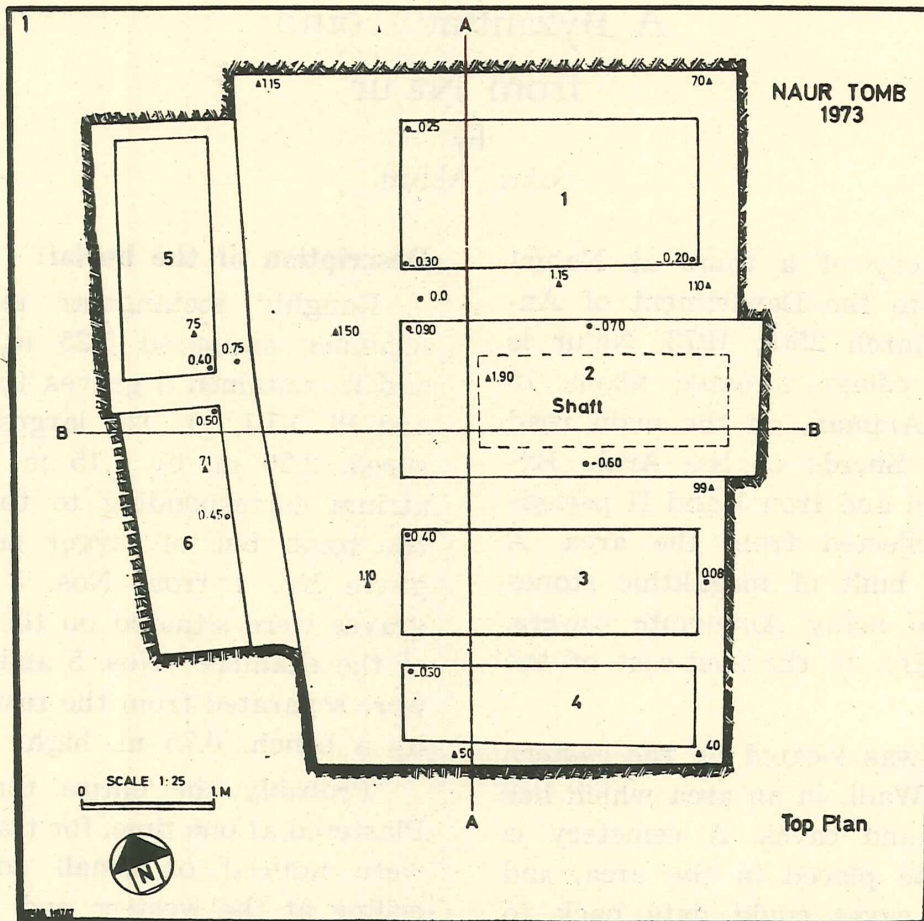


Fig. 1

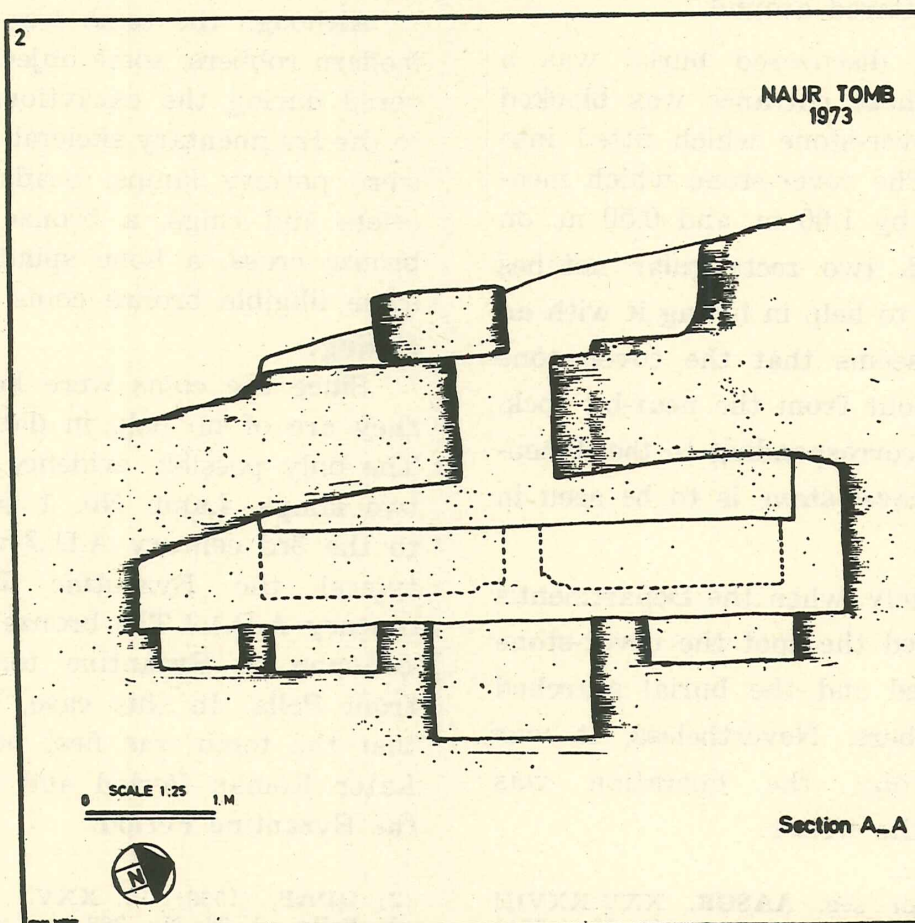


Fig. 2

Description of finds

| No. | Provenance | Description | Plates |
|-----|------------|---|---------|
| 1 | Loc. 2 | Intact pottery lamp, red ware, round shape with semi-circular nozzle and vertical handle, decorated with two bands. It contained arrow head elements. Surface decorated with dents. | XLII, 1 |
| 2 | Loc. 3 | Intact pottery lamp, creamy ware almond shape, ring around the main hole, decorated with relief bands. | XLII, 1 |
| 3 | Loc. 1 | Group of beads of different sizes, shapes and colour. | XLII, 2 |
| 4 | Loc. 3 | Bone spindle whorl, circular shape, with a hole in the centre, decorated with groups of small circles. Two incised circles around the central hole. No decoration on the other side. Dia. 4 cm. | XLII, 2 |
| 5 | Loc. 1 | Bronze Cross, small, broken from the hanging ring. length 2,2. cm. | XLII, 2 |
| 6 | Loc. 4 | Group of beads of different size, shapes and colours. | XLII, 2 |
| 7 | Loc. 5 | Three bronze nose rings. | XLII, 2 |
| 8 | Loc. 3 | Bronze spatula, broken on one end. Length 10. cm. | XLII, 2 |
| 9 | Loc. 1 | Bronze bracelet. | XLI, 2 |

S. 'Abbadī
The Department of Antiquities