

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN JORDAN.

The building operations and road works that have been going on all over the country during the past few years have brought to light some very interesting archaeological discoveries, which have not only increased our knowledge of Jordan's history, but have also greatly enriched the national collections. These discoveries cover all periods from the Early Bronze Age to the Islamic period. The following is a brief summary of the most important of them.

Amman. At a distance of about 13m. east of Jordan Archaeological Museum on Jebel el-Qala'ah (Biblical Rabbath Ammon), a labourer, in the course of digging a drain to the museum, found a very fine marble head of Tyche, the Roman City Goddess (plate III, 1). Excavations designed to find the rest of this statue produced some very interesting results. A private house of the Ommayad period was uncovered, and many sherds, ranging in date from the Iron Age to the Early Islamic period, were retrieved; but the most remarkable discovery was that of a Middle Bronze Age tomb, below one of the rooms of the house and at a depth of about 2m. from the surface. This was the first M. B. tomb to be found on Jebel el-Qala'ah itself, and only the second to be found near Amman, another being known on Jebel el-Jofeh el-Gharbi (published by G. L. Harding, *P. E. F. A.* VI, 1953, pp. 14ff.)

A second M. B. tomb was later found on Jebel el-Qala'ah, below the south eastern room of the Ommayad Palace; while in a second season of work in the area east of the museum still more tombs of the same period have been discovered. The numerous objects from these tombs include painted and plain pottery (goblets, jugs, juglets, bowls, craters, lamps), scarabs (some mounted with gold), bone inlay, and toggle pins.

More than one hundred and fifty pottery objects of Iron Age II, dating from c. 800 B.C., were recovered from a rock-cut tomb found by stone workers at the house of Said el-Qaruty, in the foothills of Jebel el-Jofeh esh-Sharqi (Amman), about 300m. east of the present Department of Antiquities building. The finds include pinched-mouth jugs, bowls, tripod cups, chalices, mugs, cooking pots, dippers, pointed bottles, miniature cooking pots, a miniature two-handled flask, lamps, iron anklets, a bronze mirror, and a pottery cult object. In addition, a very interesting pottery head of Astarte, the goddess of fertility, was discovered, the goddess wearing a veil (plate III, 2). The finds are closely paralleled by those from Amman and Sahab published by G. L. Harding (*Q. D. A. P.* XI (1944) pp. 67 ff. and XIII (1948), pp. 92 ff.; *A. D. A. J.* I (1951), pp. 37 ff.)

At the north end of the citadel (Jebel el-Qala'ah), about 300m. east of the north corner of the Roman city wall, and in the same general area where were found, in 1950, four pieces of sculpture (cf. R. D. Barnett, *A. D. A. J.* I, (1951), pp. 34ff.), labourers converting a cave into a Civil Defence shelter discovered another statue, of a hard grey stone (plate IV, 1). The head and legs were missing, but in both the quality of the stone and in the mode of dress this statue is identical with one of the earlier group (*A. D. A. J.* I (1951), plate X). This find strongly supports the view that the statues discovered in 1950 represent a cache having some connection with a shrine, the newly discovered statue being a part of the same cache. Mr. G. L. Harding, describing the original find of four statues in the *Illustrated London News* (Feb. 2nd, 1950), stressed their importance, saying that they were, with the exception

of two detached heads, the first examples of native sculpture in the round of early date to be found on either side of the Jordan.

Sweileh. A Circassian inhabitant of Sweileh, about 13 km. north-west of Amman, reported to the Department the discovery of a burial cave on his land, situated about 50m. to the east of milestone 14 on the Amman-Jerash road, just opposite Tell Safut. The cave proved to be a chamber tomb of the 1st/2nd. century A. D., built up of dressed white limestone and of good workmanship. It contained twenty-six loculi, distributed in two storeys, as follows: six loculi in the north side of the cave, with six others above them; five in the southern side, with five others above them; and four in the western side. Over these four a platform, surmounted by two arches, had been cut back into the wall of the cave, and on this platform three large sarcophagi with their covers had been placed. Each loculus had originally been closed with a dressed slab of limestone, similar to those of which the interior walls of the chamber were constructed. The high standard of the workmanship of the tomb indicates clearly that it was originally of great richness, but unfortunately it had been repeatedly reused in later times, and its contents robbed, as was shown by the fact that all the burials were thoroughly disturbed, and the original stone door was found buried beneath the earth in the centre of the tomb. The tomb was rather disappointing, therefore, so far as grave goods were concerned.

Tell Safut (Sweileh). During the construction, near Sweileh, of the new Point 4 road from Jerash to Na'ur, part of the northern end of Tell Safut was destroyed. In the section that was left standing by the side of the road there was revealed a sloping plastered 'glacis' revetment, resting on natural rock, and crowned by a wall. The glacis was constructed of different layers of sand, *huwar*, and earth, beaten into a kind of *terre pisée*. The discovery of this type of M. B. fortification, well known in West Jordan and throughout the Near East, here also on the East Bank, proves that East Jordan was occupied during this period, a fact which has previously been denied by some scholars.

Umm el-Hanafieh. At this village, situated south-west of Amman, and described by Conder (*Survey of Eastern Palestine* I (1889) pp. 246 ff.) as a small Byzantine site, five shaft graves of the Roman period and a family chamber tomb of the Byzantine period were found by labourers of the P.W.D. in the course of cutting a road through the north-eastern side of the village. The Antiquities Department cleared the tombs. In one of the shaft graves there was found a small lead coffin in which was a medium sized lead pot full of burnt human bones.

Jerash. In the course of cutting the new road from Ramtha to Na'ur a chamber tomb of the 2nd. century A.D. was discovered by the P.W.D. near the Triumphal Arch at Jerash. The tomb was carved from the natural rock, and oriented east-west. The entrance was through a narrow doorway approached from outside by a descending flight of six steps. Within the tomb a further flight of fourteen steps built against the north wall of the chamber led down to the floor in the north-west corner. The tomb contained seventeen loculi, all of which had been robbed anciently, as was shown by the thoroughly disturbed nature of the burials and the absence of the original stone door. The loculi were all built of dressed limestone and were originally closed by small slabs of limestone set in mud, with the exception of that loculus on the east side of the chamber, which was carved out of the solid rock and had been closed by a slab of marble set in with other smaller slabs of limestone. There was a Latin inscription on the marble slab. Around the opening of this loculus an area of the chamber wall had been covered with a coating of plaster, about 3mm. thick. The sides and top of the opening were

enclosed with a decoration consisting of a gable resting on Doric columns; on one side of the opening there was drawn the portrait of a young girl, and on the other side that of a boy. Unfortunately, the painting had been very badly affected by the dampness and by the seepage of water through cracks in the roof of the tomb, so that little of it remained *in situ* on the wall. Some lamps and coins were the only objects recovered from this tomb.

This painted tomb at Jerash is of great importance archaeologically, since it is only the third such tomb to have been discovered in East Jordan, the first being that at Maru (or Marwa), published by McCown (*Q. D. A. P.* IX (1942), pp. 1 ff.), and the second being that cleared by the Department of Antiquities in 1959 at Quailba (see below).

Two more chamber tombs, poorer and of less importance, were discovered at Jerash in the vicinity of the painted tomb described above. They produced pottery lamps and figurines (plate IV, 2), and some copper masks.

Quailba (Irbid District). A very large and important painted chamber tomb of the 2nd century A.D. was recently found at Quailba, the site of ancient Abila, and was excavated by the Department of Antiquities under the direction of Hassan Awad Qutshan (plate VI, 1). Three decorated sarcophagi were found in one of the vaults of the chamber, one of which has been removed to Amman for exhibition in the Jordan Archaeological Museum. The Department also excavated a further twenty chamber tombs, twelve shaft graves, and one rock-cut tomb in the same area, which lies about 500m. N. E. of the ancient ruins and on the opposite side of the wadi from them. These tombs produced in all more than nine hundred intact objects, from the Early Bronze, Late Bronze, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods. The most interesting finds were that of an inkwell and a cylindrical jar which are closely paralleled by similar objects discovered at Qumran (plate V, 1).

Umm Qeis. A fine early Byzantine inscribed coloured mosaic floor, with geometric decoration, was uncovered in the house of Hussein el-Faraj, in the north western part of the village of Umm Qeis (ancient Gadara), among olive groves by the side of the road to Hemma (plate V, 2). The floor is part of that of a large hall 20m.x. 6m. in size, on the east of which two other rooms were found, 5m. x 5m. and 5m. x 3m. respectively.

Madaba. In the course of cutting a new street in the south-western quarter of Madaba municipal labourers discovered a small piece of coloured mosaic. The Department of Antiquities excavated the area, and uncovered two rooms paved in mosaic. The western pavement had human portraits, a tree, and figures of Eros and Satyrs (plate VI, 2); the eastern pavement had only geometrical designs. The mosaic in the first room is probably of the late Roman period, and that in the second room of the 6th. or 7th. centuries A.D. All the pottery found was of the late Byzantine period.

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