

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES AND NEWS

TUWANEH AND THE VIA NOVA TRAIANA IN SOUTHERN JORDAN A SHORT NOTE ON THE 1992 SEASON

Between January and June 1992, the author assessed the spatial and temporal occupation at Tuwaneh, a Nabataean through Byzantine period site in southern Jordan; surveyed the local road network; and interpreted the finds within the framework of the culture history of southern Jordan during the classical period. The project was made possible through the grant from the United States Information Agency, and thanks to the assistance of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the American Center of Oriental Research. Following is a short note on the activities, which will be superseded by a detailed report to be published in *ADAJ* at a later date.

The settlement at Tuwaneh is generally identified with *Thana/Thoana* of Ptolemy, and with *Thornia* of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. The major Roman highway in Jordan, the *Via Nova Traiana*, passes through the site. Despite its impressive appearance, Tuwaneh has received only few scholarly visits and brief descriptions, namely by Brunnow and Domaszewski, A. Musil, N. Glueck, and S. Hart.

The site, ca 800 m (E-W) by 450 m (N-S), is located about 5 km south of the road between Tafila and Jurf ed-Darawish, on the slopes of two hills separated by Wadi et-Tuwaneh. No modern housing exists on the site, yet a great damage was done by the construction of a new road leading south, toward Gharandal, with a total disregard for archaeological remains. The architecture of the site is almost entirely stone-made; from irregular basalt boulders through roughly hewn stones and well-made ashlar lime- and sandstone blocks. The whole area has been divided into "complexes", i.e. distinguishable intra-site units or isolated structures; 46 in total. Each complex has been described, photographed, and the surface ceramics collected (1238 sherds in total). The most important complexes include C 14/15, probably a large caravanserai, previ-

ously identified as a "temple", C16, a Roman bathhouse, and C36, a city quarter occupied by several monumental structures. C2 contains a superbly preserved subterranean multi-chambered tomb.

Tuwaneh and its environs must have already been frequented or inhabited during the prehistoric times. Several samples of Middle Palaeolithic (ca 40,000 B.P.) through Neolithic periods stone implements have been collected from the surface. The site shows little of the possible pre-classical (=pre-Hellenistic) urbanistic evidence, and Iron Age pottery collected is much less than 1% of the total sample. Fine examples of the first through fourth century A.D. Nabataean Painted and Plain Ware are abundant. Imported wares include Eastern *Terra Sigillata* A and B, Western *Terra Sigillata* (Arezzo Ware), and Late Roman Red Ware. Late Byzantine wares are very few, and the transitional types into the Umayyad period, practically non-existent. Although the final demise of the Classical period town cannot be fully understood without the excavations, it is highly probable that the settlement considerably declined or ceased to exist toward the end of the Late Byzantine period. The evidence of the Ayyubid-Mamluk pottery on the site indicates that some parts of the Classical period town had been reinhabited, and some ruins consolidated.

The surveyed section of the Trajan's Road is one of the best preserved in Jordan. Yet, the road and archaeological remains along it face almost certain extinction through modern human activities. Through bulldozing, many road sections were exposed, milestones displaced, overturned or, unexpectedly, re-surfaced. To ensure a full junction with the area surveyed by the Wadi el-Ḥasa Project, which had tracked the Trajan's Road down to ca 10th kilometer south of Wadi el-Ḥasa, several sites already visited by B. MacDonald were re-

surveyed. The survey was completed at the point ca 5 km south of Tuwaneh, in the area of Jabal Daba; i.e. ca 21 km south from the starting point. All sites located in the distance of ca 100 meters on both sides of the road were described, photographed and surface material (including lithics) collected. In many places the width of the road is clearly marked by its curbstones, being ca 5.90-6.20 m wide in total. The central ridge line and/or the original pavement, consisting of flat basalt or limestone boulders, is often well-preserved too. In total, 42 sites have been recorded. Besides Tuwaneh and three larger forts, the majority (14) were small structures (watchtowers). Also, 49 milestones were recorded, in association with 21 shaft fragments. Most of the inscriptions were badly weathered so as to be illegible. An interesting find was a painted milestone, dated to Constantine, thus probably the latest in the whole area. The pottery collected is predominantly Nabataean through Late Byzantine. Numerous sherds date to the first century A.D., indicating that this route was already used prior to the construction of the *Via Nova* (i.e. well before A.D.106-114). The Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods are the best represented. Although Late Byzantine sherds were also found, their frequency seems to decrease with the increasing distance away from the main settlement of the entire area (Tuwaneh).

The results of the survey of Tuwaneh and the *Via Nova Traiana* in the area gener-

ally support the author's prior theoretical assumptions. The area had experienced a relative prosperity during the Nabataean-Late Roman periods (First century B.C.-late third century A.D.), associated with an intensive long-distance commercial traffic, and reflected in the urbanistic growth of Tuwaneh, evidence of imports, and the well-maintained and guarded road system. The Early Byzantine period (fourth-fifth century) was also marked by well-developed settlement patterns, reflecting the unparalleled expansion into marginal lands and intensive agricultural production as well as the continuity of the interregional trade. However, during the later Byzantine period (fifth-early seventh century A.D.), southern Jordan experienced economic decline marked by a gradual decline in urbanism, growing isolation of settlement clusters, the abandonment of military infrastructure, and a gradual disappearance of interregional means of communication. Probably, some sections of Trajan's Road had become defunct, while the others (closer to the still existing larger settlements, like Tuwaneh) were still used in traffic, maintained, and guarded by attendant military structures. Future studies to be conducted by the author on the site and in the environs of Tuwaneh should further strengthen these conclusions.

Zbigniew T. Fiema
ACOR
Amman - Jordan

EDH-DHRA' SURVEY 1992

An archaeological survey in Ghor edh-Dhrâ' (Fig. 1) took place from the 29th of February until the 10th of March 1992.¹ The survey covered the area along Wâdî edh-Dhrâ' as far north as the mouth of Wâdî el-Karak into the plain. Within this

survey the main objective was the investigation of the Monolithic Pillar Site at edh-Dhrâ'.²

The Monolithic Pillar Site (Fig. 2)

The Monolithic Pillar Site (PG

1. The survey was conducted in cooperation with Mr. Uwe Engler, Archaeologist, Heidelberg, Germany.

2. Archaeological work in edh-Dhrâ' has earlier taken place at the remains from the Pottery Neolithic A period. This was conducted by C.-M. Bennett.

See C.-M. Bennett, 'Soundings at Dhra', Jordan', *Levant* 12 (1980), p. 30-39; and T. D. Raikes, 'Notes on some Neolithic and later Sites in Wadi Araba and the Dead Sea Valley', *Levant* 12 (1980), p. 56-60.