

# The Excavation of the Roman Forum at Amman (Philadelphia), 1964 - 1967

by

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## Introduction

Little excavation has been carried out at Amman and that was confined to some soundings and removal of debris in and around the acropolis hill, the Qal'a (Fig. 1), and to the clearance of a few tombs of the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Byzantine periods which have been discovered in the course of building operations.<sup>1</sup> At intervals between 1929 and 1938, an Italian archaeological expedition under the direction of Renato Bartoccini conducted limited excavations on the acropolis. The results of these excavations are unfortunately as yet not fully published.<sup>2</sup> The Roman temple has been partly cleared, and many important architectural features brought to light. Among them was a frieze with the name of Marcus Aurelius on it.<sup>3</sup> Much evidence of the pre-Roman occupation of the acropolis hill was uncovered. The impressive Byzantino-Islamic building north of the temple was also cleared.

(1) *QDAP*, XI (1944) p. 67-74; XIII (1946) p. 58-62; XIV (1950) p. 81-94; *ADAJ*, I (1951) p. 30-33; IV-V (1960) p. 114; XV (1970) p. 37-38; XVII (1972) p. 81-83; *APEF*, VI (1953) p. 48-65.

(2) The following preliminary reports have been published by the excavator, R. Bartoccini, "Ricerche e scoperte della missione italiana in Amman", *Bollettino dell'Associazione Internazionale degli Studi Mediterranei*, also under the title, *International Mediterranean Research Association*, 3 (1930) p. 15-17; "Scavi ad Amman della Missione Archeologica Italiana", *ibid.*, 2 (1932), p. 16-23; 4-5 (1933-34) p. 10-15; "La Rocca Sacra degli Ammoniti", *Atti del IV Congresso Nazionale di Studi Romani*, (1938) p. 3-8.

(3) Cf. C. R. Conder, *Survey of Eastern Pales-*

tin, (1889) p. 33; H. C. Butler, *Syria, Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904-5 and 1909*, Div. III, inscr. 4.

(4) *Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordanländer, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten (1806)* ed F. Kruse et al., Vol. I (1854) p. 396f.

(5) *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land (1812)* (1822) p. 357-360.

(6) *Travels in Palestine through the Countries of Bashan and Gilead, East of the River Jordan (1816)* (1821) p. 67-79.

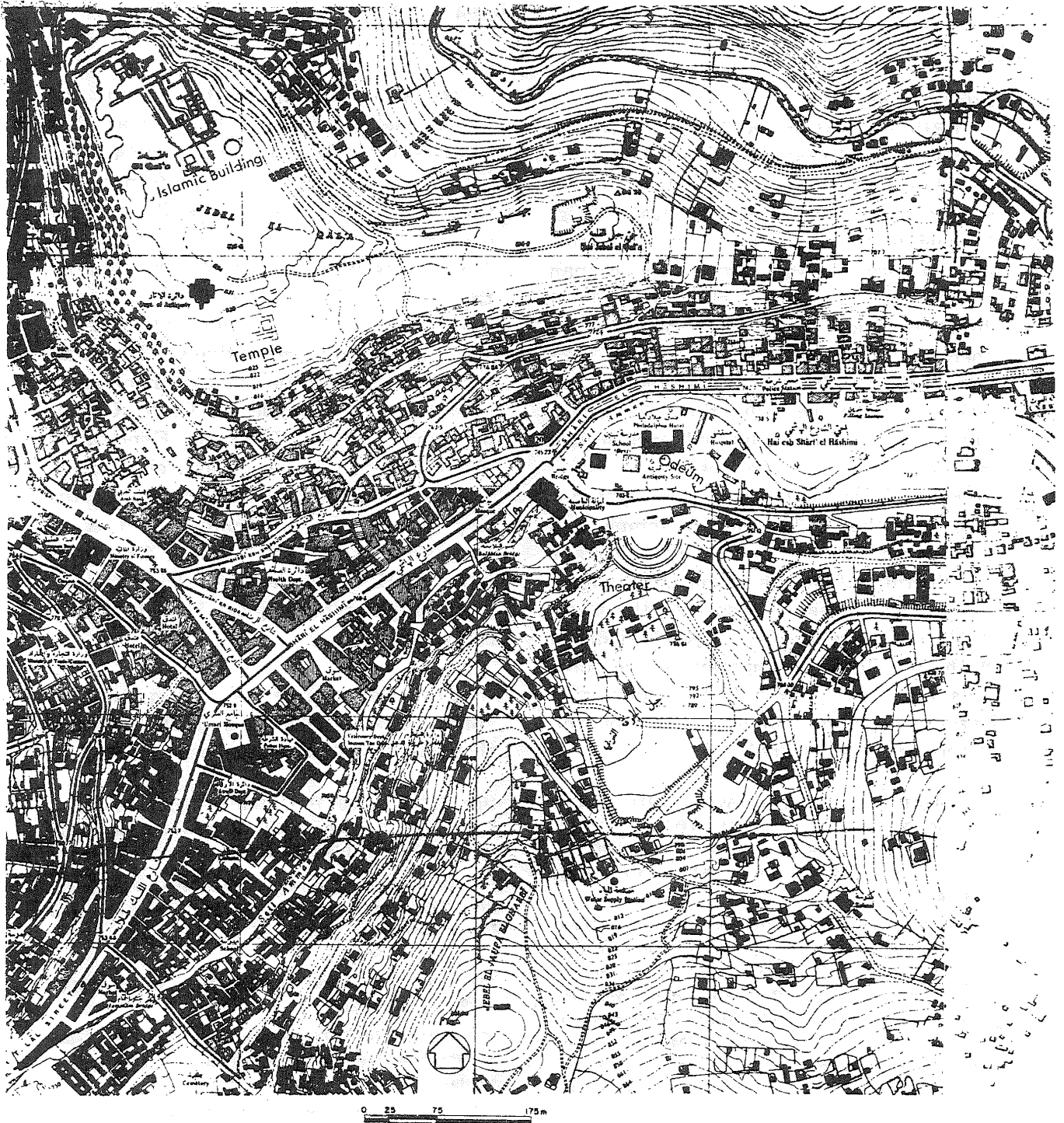
(7) C. R. Conder, *op. cit.*, p. 19-64.

(8) *Die Provincia Arabia*, Vol. II (1905) p. 216-221.

(9) *Op. cit.*, Div. II, Section A, Southern Syria, (1919) p. 34ff.

The Department of Antiquities of Jordan was established in 1928 and since then its activities have been devoted to

Fig. 1



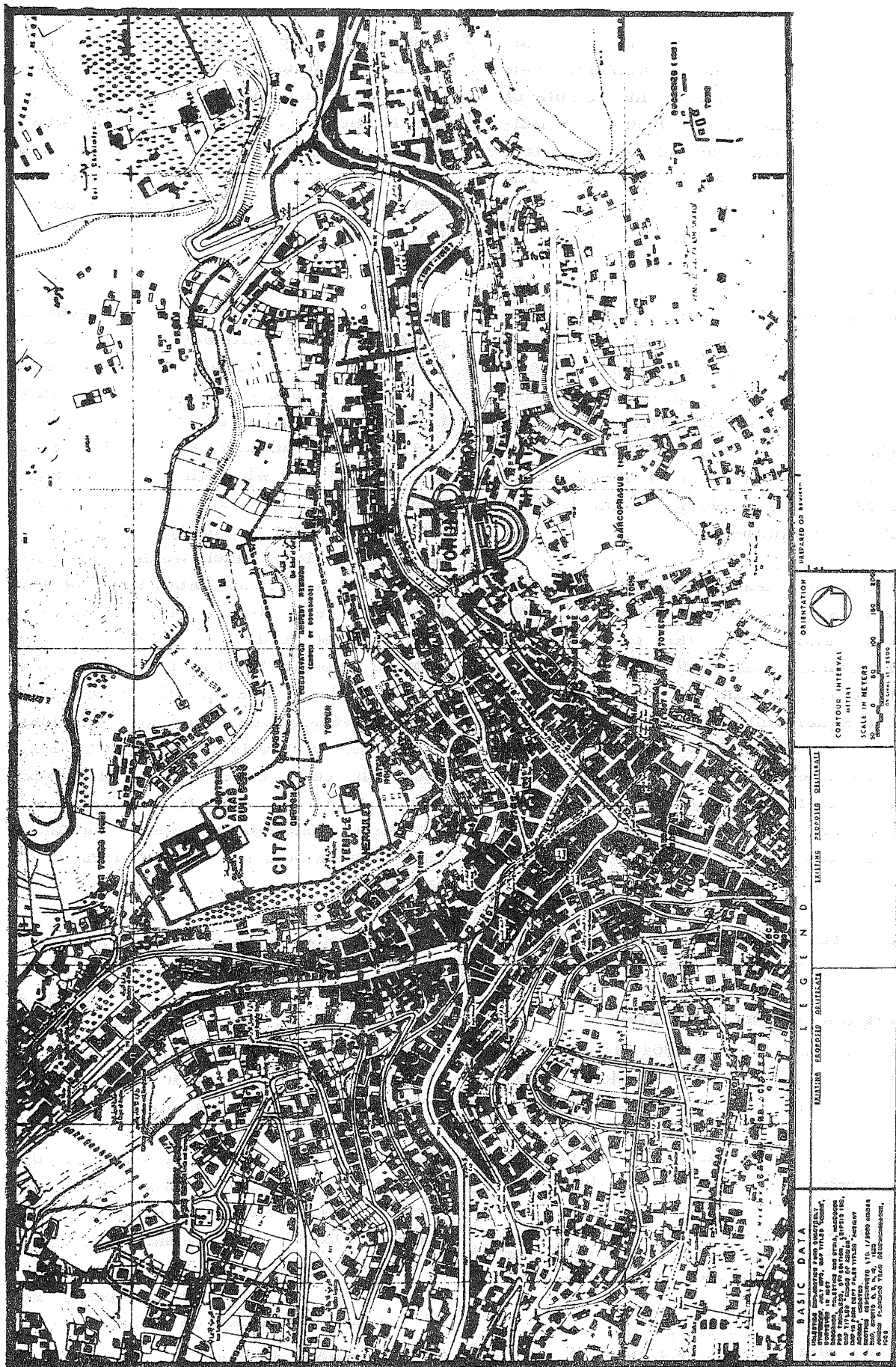


Fig. 2

the protection and conservation of archaeological sites and monuments. One of the most remarkable achievements of this Department in the field of conservation is the clearance and reconstruction of the Roman theater at Amman.<sup>10</sup> The first three systematic excavations which were undertaken by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan in Amman are the excavation of the Roman forum in the lower section of the ancient city under the direction of the writer, the excavation of the Roman temple area on the acropolis under the direction of R. H. Dornemann<sup>11</sup> and recently the excavation on the eastern rectangle of the acropolis hill under the direction of Fawzi Zayadine, Senior Archaeologist of the Department of Antiquities.<sup>12</sup>

During the last few decades, the city of Amman has grown out of all proportions, and an important part of downtown Amman was built on the major ruins of the Roman city in an area less than a square mile. The crucial area lies at the lowest point in the city, where the Philadelphians built their great forum, beside the *wadi*, or stream that drains the surrounding hills (Fig. 1). On the south side of the forum rises the great Roman theater, Amman's best landmark, and on the east side is the odeum. The forum area had long been overlaid by a modern street.

#### Description of the Excavation

In the summer of 1964, the Municipality of Amman finally decided to convert the area in downtown Amman

bounded by the Roman theater on the south, the Roman odeum on the east, the Philadelphia Hotel on the north and the Municipality building on the west, into a city park (Figs. 1, 2, 3). It was agreed, however, that first the Department of Antiquities of Jordan should be given the opportunity to excavate the site and record the results.<sup>13</sup>

The excavation had four general goals: First, to contribute to our understanding of the history of Amman and its times; secondly, to discover evidence that would help in dating more closely the Roman buildings around the area and to find out when the city had been taken over by the larger Roman architectural scheme; thirdly, to recover stratified pottery which would contribute to our yet insufficient knowledge of the Hellenistic and Roman ceramic chronology in East Jordan;<sup>14</sup> and fourthly, to provide opportunity for field experience in archaeology. The specific objective of this excavation was to uncover the plan and extent of the forum which has long been believed to have occupied this area, and to probe the area for domestic and industrial installations, public buildings and religious structures of the Hellenistic and Roman times.

Excavation commenced on November 14, 1964 and ended on January 1st, 1967. There were several intervals extending sometimes for a few months due either to delays in obtaining official permissions to shut off vehicular traffic which passed through the busy street that ran across

(10) The late Mr. Hassan Awwad, then technical assistant is credited with the supervision of the project.

(11) **The Cultural and Archaeological History of the Transjordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages**, Vol. I (Unpublished Dissertation), Chicago, 1970.

(12) "Recent Excavations on the Citadel of Amman", *ADAJ*, XVIII (1973) p. 17-35.

(13) Thanks are due to those who made the excavation at the Roman forum of Amman possible, the Lord Mayor and the Municipality engineers, Director of the Traffic Department, Director of the Department of Antiquities, and above all to the United States Agency for International Development to Jordan.

(14) See *ADAJ*, XV (1970) p. 11-15.

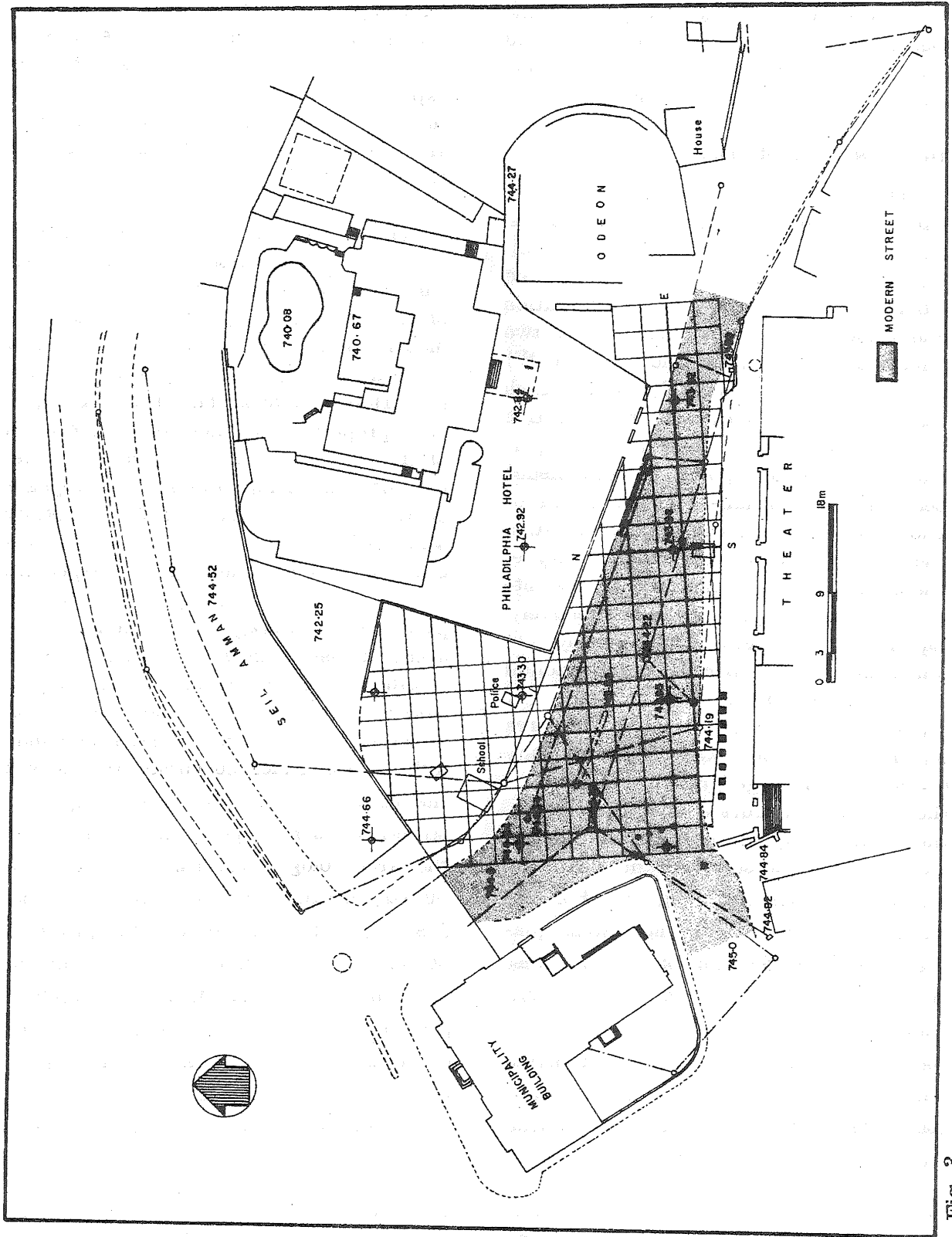


Fig. 3



the area, to alter water mains, telephone and electricity lines, sewers and etc., to rainy weather or to lack of fund. The excavation was a joint project of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the United States Agency for International Development in Jordan.<sup>15</sup>

### Description of Method

The method adopted for this excavation consisted of the following steps. First, the establishment of a three dimensional system for accurately and efficiently locating and relating excavation and conservation work. Secondly, a two dimensional horizontal grid of 5 (E-W) by 5 (N-S) meter was plotted for each assigned quarter of the site; the elevation of each major grid point above a permanent reference point or established bench mark. Permanent bench marks of known horizontal location and elevation were established in sufficient quantity to enable any area or find within the site to be located quickly and effectively. Squares on the grid are cited by (1) quadrant, (2) number on the horizontal axis, followed by a hyphen, and (3) number on the vertical axis. The area under excavation was conventionally divided into three geographical quadrants: the southwest quadrant near the theater, the northeast quadrant near the odeum, and the northwest quadrant near the Municipality building (Fig. 3). For example NW 11-6 is in the northwest quadrant between 50 and 55 meters west of the vertical axis and 25 to 30 meters north of the horizontal axis. Within the above grid system, one, meter wide balks centered on the grid lines were established. The 5 by 5 grid was chosen over the larger 6 by 6 or 6 by 8 grid to

provide a more scrutable working condition. This grid seems to have some disadvantage chiefly in that it does not allow space for more than a very few people to work in the square. A detailed evaluation, however, should await more experience in using it. It should be noted that the elevations in all plans and sections are in meters above Mediterranean Datum.

The excavation of the Roman forum at Amman was beset with difficulties. Difficulty arose out of the fact that most of the area had long been overlaid by a modern street (Pl. XXIV:A) and a few modern buildings, notably the Philadelphia Hotel complex. This Hotel is a private property and therefore exploration of the area is out of the question at least for the time being. Further, each phase of the salvage excavation was carefully scheduled, and any disruption of this schedule had far-reaching and expensive effects on the total program of the city park and sewerage construction. The archaeologist in such a program has to coordinate his efforts as closely as possible with the demolition and construction activities including the diversion of public utilities, for under no circumstances was the excavation allowed to hold up construction. Such cooperation requires that the archaeologist carefully evaluate his efforts, because in many instances, as past experience has shown, the progress of construction will not permit complete and thorough excavation by standard procedures. It was decided, therefore, to concentrate systematic excavation in three main areas (Fig. 3): the northeast quadrant between the back wall of the *scaenae frons* of the odeum and the

(15) Grateful acknowledgment is due Prof. Prescott H. Williams and the late Prof. Paul W. Lapp, Masters of archaeological methods, who during their assignment as archaeological ad-

visors with the U.S.-Jordan National Parks Planning Team (1964-1967) gave much of their knowledge and technical advice that helped bring the project to a successful end.

garden-wall of the Philadelphia Hotel, the southwest quadrant between the colonnade north of the back wall of the theater's stage building and the modern street that ran across the forum area, and finally the northwest quadrant adjacent to the side-walk of the Municipality Building.

The significance of the northeast quadrant is two-fold. First, to the west, Squares NE 8-1 and NE 8-2 cross the extension of the eastern colonnade of the forum and therefore would show whether the line of columns on this side of the forum continued northward in front of the odeum. Secondly, to the east, Squares NE 9-1 and NE 9-2 run to the line of the surviving portion of the back wall of the *scaenae frons* of the odeum and therefore would clarify the date as well as the relationship this building to the forum.

Roman and Hellenistic levels were reached in all squares that were opened in the forum area. In Squares NE 8-2, SW 5-1 and NW 11-6, excavation was carried further down to virgin soil. The objective of reaching virgin soil in these significantly located squares was to establish the sequence of occupation in the forum area from the earliest times.

#### Description of Loci 16

In the northeast quadrant, the lower part of the back wall of the *scaenae frons* of the odeum was uncovered to its foundation (Fig. 4; Pl. XXIV:F). A one by one meter trench was opened at right angle against this foundation wall to establish its date and composition (Pl. XXIV:D). It was found that this foundation wall was built of irregular blocks and chips of limestone of various sizes

with mortar to a height of about 1.60 m. and its bottom reached close to bedrock (Fig. 4). Locus 19 to which this wall belongs yielded Early Roman sherds which can be dated to the period between 50 B.C. and 70 A.D.<sup>17</sup> Thus, these sherds provide a date for the construction of the wall. At about two meters to the west and parallel to this wall, another wall was built on similar foundations (Fig. 4). This second wall provides a foundation for the stylobate of the eastern colonnade of the forum which ran in front of the odeum.

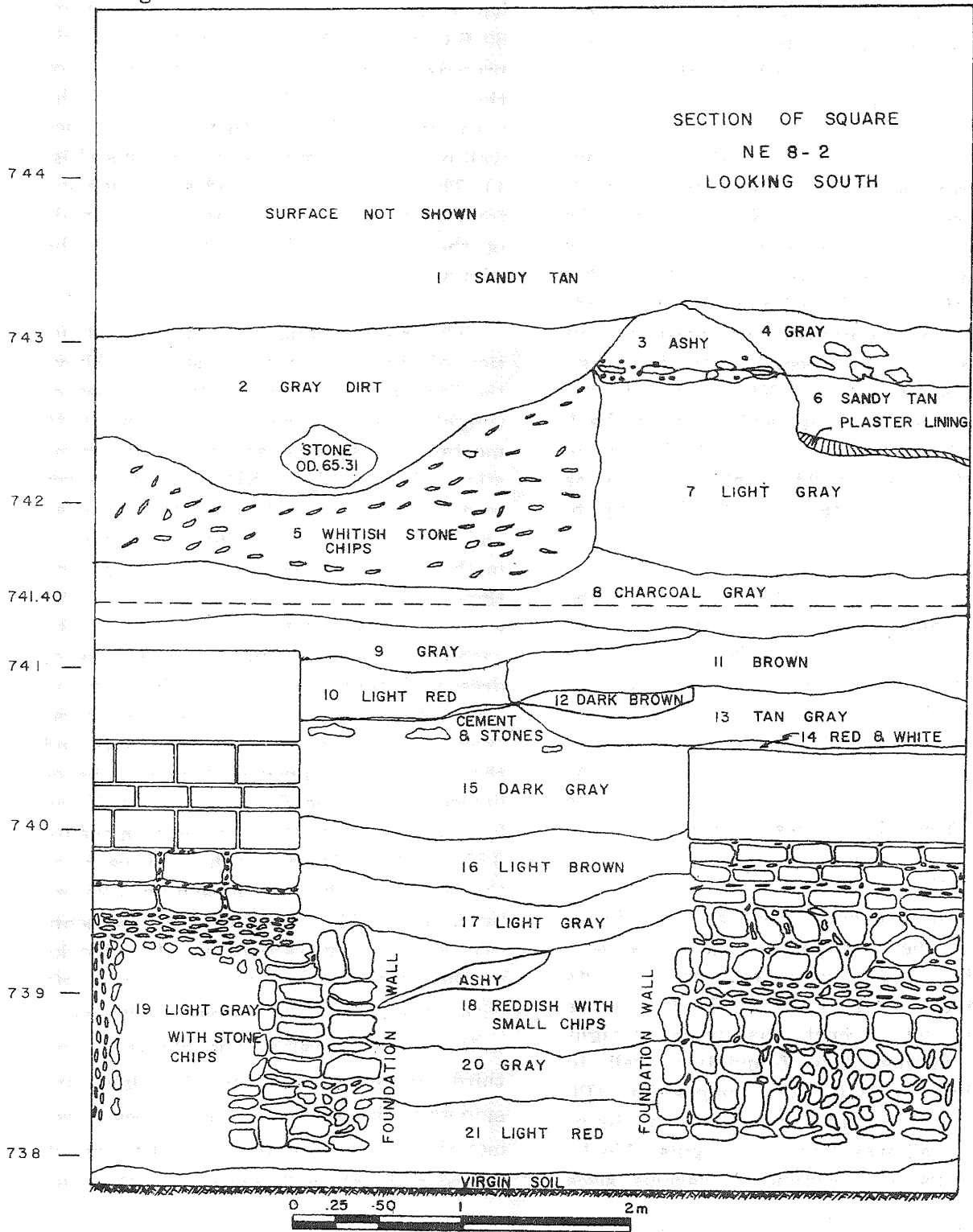
The material and method of construction of the two walls are similar. Above the foundations were laid two courses of roughly shaped blocks of limestone with mortar and smaller stones in the interstices (Fig. 4; Pl. XXIV:D). The lower course is laid on a thick layer of mortar and small chips of limestone. The stones in these two courses are well bonded and their sizes average about 0.40 m. by 0.15 m. Above these two courses in the eastern wall, were built three courses of dressed blocks of limestone laid out in alternating lines of headers and stretchers with mortar between the joints and the whole was topped with long slabs of limestone. The headers measure 0.40 m. by 0.25 m. each, the stretchers measure 0.35 m. by 0.18 m. each, and each of the slabs on the top measures 1.25 m. by 0.57 m. The masonry here presents two kinds of workmanship. The blocks in the first two lower courses are left with rough and heavy bosses with very wide marginal drafts. The blocks in the third course as well as the slabs are smoothly dressed and their bosses removed. One explanation for the use of bossed and unbossed masonry is that the

(16) The term "locus" is used in this report for expressing any coherent layer of earth or discernible architectural feature which can be meaningfully distinguished from features

around it; cf. H. D. Lance, *Excavation Manual for Area Supervisors*, (1967) p. 12, 32.

(17) ADAJ, XV (1970) p. 13.

Fig. 4





lower courses were not to be seen and thus the stones were left with their heavy unbossed faces. A closer examination, however, shows that the Roman builders intended to remove the bosses from all the stones as witnessed by the unfinished condition of a few blocks where the chisel marks are clearly seen. Moreover, the same process is obvious in the upper courses of the *scaenae frons* and in the superstructure of the odeum (Pls. XXIV: E; XXVIII: B, C, F). It is very likely, therefore, that the builders of the odeum were forced to leave the masonry of the building in this unfinished condition, perhaps either for lack of finances or in order to save time.<sup>18</sup> It should be noted in this connection that, although generally speaking the retention of smoothed bosses is characteristic of large Herodian masonry, exceptions do occur from time to time, as in the round tower at Herodium where the bosses of the smaller stones have all been removed.<sup>19</sup>

In the western wall, which runs parallel to the eastern wall, three courses of roughly shaped stones are directly topped with long slabs similar to those in the eastern wall both in size and appearance (Fig. 4). It is, however, lower than the eastern wall by about 0.30 m. The area between the two walls is covered with a layer of mortar and small irregular stones. The whole complex indicates that the odeum may have been originally approached by a wide entrance consisting of two or more wide steps.<sup>20</sup>

(18) A similar example is to be found in the building of Qasr at Araq el-Emir, about 17 km. west of Amman. Although this building is generally attributed to John Hyrcanus (187-175 B.C.) on the basis of literary evidence, its date is still disputed and by no means certain; cf. H. C. Butler, *op. cit.*, Div II, Section A, p. 9, Ill. 5:1 & p. 12, Ill. 6:1; V. Tcherikower, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, (1961) p. 458-459; Paul W. Lapp, "The Second and Third Campaigns at Araq el-Emir", *BASOR*, No. 171 (1963) p. 22, 24-25.

The fill above the two walls consists of wash and dump that had accumulated in a series of layers varying in color, thickness, texture and contents (Fig. 4). Loci 1 through 11 yielded mixed Roman, Byzantine and Islamic sherds and coins. Locus 5 is a large pit that contained debris of whitish stone chips and Umayyad sherds. Locus 6 had a Plaster lining which may have belonged to some sort of an Umayyad structure of a poor quality, although no other architectural elements were found associated with it. The stratigraphy of this fill indicate that the western wall and presumably the eastern wall and the odeum were still in use during at least part of the fourth century A.D. as shown by the ceramic and coin finds. The loci between 741.00 and 743.00 m. indicate that the area went out of use thereafter. A major earthquake in East Jordan is known to have knocked down walls and buildings in several sites in 365 A.D.<sup>21</sup> The same quake could have toppled the superstructure of the odeum, several columns in the forum and part of the theater. If this is so, the debris above the walls must be attributed to the period following 365 A.D.

The fill between the two walls i.e., between 740.75m. and 738.00m., consists of several layers varying in color, thickness, texture and contents. Locus 15 is made up of hard-packed dark gray earth ranging in thickness from 0.65 m. to 0.85 m. Its top was sealed with a layer of mortar

(19) Cf. V. Corbo in, *RB*, No. 2 (1964) p. 258-263, Pl. XIII.

(20) Most of the area where excavation may throw more light on this question lies within the private property of the Philadelphia Hotel. It is hoped that when the Municipality has acquired ownership of this area, further investigation would be undertaken in this section.

(21) D. H. Kallner-Amiran, "A Revised Earthquake-Catalogue of Palestine", *IEJ* I (1950-51) p. 225.

and small to medium size rough blocks of limestone. This indicates that the area between the two walls was paved and that this layer provided the subpavement. The sherds recovered in this locus were mixed Early Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age. Locus 16 is about 0.40 m. thick in the middle and consists of loose light brown earth and mixed Early Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age sherds. Locus 17 is about 0.30 m. thick and consists of loose light gray earth and the same mixture of sherds as in locus 16. Underneath, is a very thick layer, locus 18, which is about 0.80 m. deep and consists of loose reddish debris with small chips of limestone and mixed Early Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age sherds. A narrow ash-pit was found dug in this locus but no sherds were found in it. Locus 20 is about 0.35 m. thick and consists of compact gray earth and mixed Early Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age sherds. Locus 21 is about 0.40 m. thick and consists of hard-packed light red earth and mixed Early Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age sherds. Thus, the stratigraphy of this fill show that the area was dug out in the course of building the walls and then thrown back in. The Early Roman sherds which can be dated to between 50 B.C. and 70 A.D., provide a date for this operation.

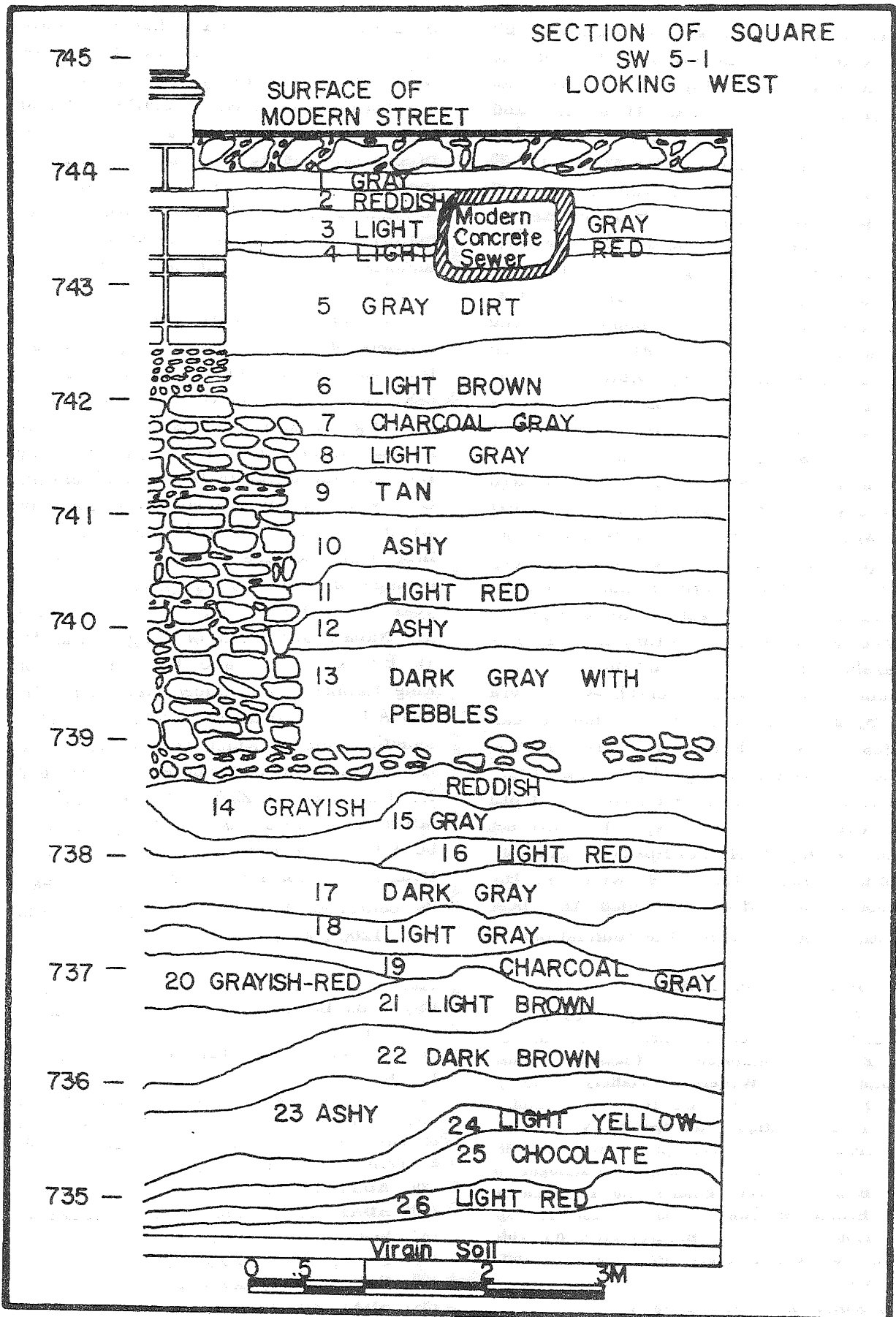
In the southwest quadrant which abuts the line of the columns north of the theater (Fig. 3), excavation began in Square SW 5-1, where virgin soil was reached (Fig. 5). This square was used as a control trench for the excavation of the other squares flanking it in this area to the east and west in order to allow speed with accuracy down through Roman and Hellenistic levels. It was found that the plinths of the columns are placed on a stylobate which consists of two parallel courses of smoothly dressed

quadrated blocks of limestone with perfect joints without mortar (Pl. XXV:A). Underneath the stylobate is laid the *euthynteria* or leveling course which consists of smoothly dressed flattish blocks of limestone well jointed and without mortar. The foundation wall underneath this course consists of two parts. The first immediately under the *euthynteria*, is made up of finely dressed blocks of limestone laid out in four alternating courses of headers and stretchers. Each of the headers measures 0.80 m. by 0.80 m. and each stretcher is 0.80 m. by 0.40 m. The second part of this foundation wall below, consists of a massive platform of roughly shaped limestone blocks averaging in size 0.40 m. by 0.25 m. and reinforced with smaller stones and mortar (Fig. 5; Pl. XXVI:E). The height of this platform is nearly 3.75 m.

Except for a disturbance caused by a modern sewer that ran across this pool in Square SW 3-1 (Fig. 5; Pl. XXV: pool in Square SW 3-1 (Fig. 5; Pl. XXV: C), a very similar stratigraphic picture is found in all squares of this quadrant. Loci 1-4 (Fig. 5) are disturbed layers which consist of debris differing in color and texture and contained mixed Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, Abbasid, Mamluk, Ottoman and modern brick tiles. The latest coins recovered in these loci are of Constans II (641-668 A.D.) and an Umayyad coin of Damascus mint which can be dated to ca. 650 A.D.<sup>22</sup> Locus 5 is about 0.80 m. thick and consists of loose light brown earth associated with fallen columns, capitales and stones as well as second century A.D. Roman sherds. A coin dated in the fourth century A.D. provides a *terminus post quem* for the formation of this locus. The *terminus ante quem* for the collapse of the columns, capitals and stones is in all probability the earthquake of 365 A.D. (see above).

(22) ADAJ, XVIII (1973) p. 53, Pl. XXXIII, 3, 7.

Fig. 5



Loci 6 to 13 inclusive, constitute a fill associated with the lower section of the foundation wall (Fig. 5). These loci contained mixed Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age I-II sherds. Locus 7 yielded a coin of Elagabalus (218-222 A.D.)<sup>23</sup> A bronze statuette of the infant god Harpocrates (Egyptian Haru-Pa-Khert) was recovered in Locus 13 (Pl. XXVII). This statuette belongs to the Egypto-Roman type of bronze figures of Harpocrates which became popular in the Hellenistic period and more so in Roman times especially among soldiers. Unfortunately, it is not possible to give a precise date to this statuette, as the type was in use for a long period of time from the third century B.C. to the fourth century A.D.<sup>24</sup> Judging from the context in which the statuette was found, it can be probably dated to the second century A.D. All Roman sherds found in this fill including a few Eastern terra sigillata pieces are of second century A.D. date.<sup>25</sup> Parallels for the foundation walls are found at neighboring Jerash,<sup>26</sup> Palmyra in Syria,<sup>27</sup> and a score of other Roman sites in Near East and North Africa. The remarkable thing about these foundations is that they extended to a depth of nearly 5 m. At this depth they are set upon a layer of hard-packed grayish-reddish gravel, Locus 14, which in the absence of bedrock, provided the best footing obtainable for the foundations.<sup>28</sup>

(23) *Ibid.*, p. 52, Pl. XXXII, 3.

(24) Bronze statuettes of Harpocrates are generally dated either Hellenistic or Roman: cf. D. K. Hill, *Catalogue of Classical Bronze Sculpture in the Walters Art Gallery*, (1949) p. XXIX, n. 89, & p. 36-39, pls. 16-19; A. de Ridder, *Les Bronze Antiques du Louvre*, Vol. I. *Les Figurines*. (1913) p. 53ff., pl. 29, Nos. 330-338, & pl. 44, No. 629; H. B. Walters, *Catalogue of the Bronzes, Greek, Roman and Etruscan in the British Museum*, (1899) p. 238-244 esp. No. 1496; P. Perdrizet, *Bronzes grecs d'Egypte de la Collection Fouquet* (Paris 1911) p. 46ff., Pl. XX.

(25) *ADAJ*, XV (1970) p. 13-14.

It is then obvious that what lay above this layer was a secondary deposit of earth. It is very likely that the site of the forum was filled in artificially and that an area of such size as this required preparation before it could be transformed into a plaza. The mixture of pre-Roman sherds and coins with Roman material in these loci become clearly understood in the light of this fact.

The fill underneath the foundations consists of several loci varying in color, thickness, texture and contents (Fig. 5). Loci 15 to 22 inclusive, contained mixed Iron Age II and Hellenistic sherds. The former can be dated to the eighth century B.C. and the latter to the second century B.C.<sup>29</sup> Locus 15 yielded seven coins of which only three could be identified. The first coin belongs to the autonomous coinage of Sidon dating probably to the year 60/59 B.C.<sup>30</sup> The other two coins are Nabataean, one is of King Aretas IV (9 B.C.-40 A.D.), and the other is of king Rabbel II and queen Gamelath (71-106 A.D.).<sup>31</sup> Locus 22 yielded three Hellenistic coins of which the earliest is of the type generally attributed to Antiochus III the Great (223-187 B.C.), and the latest is of Antiochus VIII Gryphus (125-96 B.C.).<sup>32</sup> The third coin is of Demetrius I (154/153 B.C.).<sup>33</sup> Loci 23 through 26 contained purely Iron Age I sherds (ca. 1200-900 B.C.).<sup>34</sup>

(26) C. S. Fisher, "The Forum" in, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*, edited by C. H. Kraeling, (1938) p. 154.

(27) K. Michalowski, *Palmyra*, (1962) p. 41, fig. 46.

(28) It is interesting to note that the whole process of building these foundations conforms to Vitruvius' description, cf. Book III, Ch. IV, 2 (Translated by F. Granger), 1931.

(29) *ADAJ*, XV (1970) p. 12, Pl. I-III.

(30) *ADAJ*, XVIII (1973) p. 51, Pl. XXXI, 6.

(31) *Ibid.*, p. 52, Pl. XXXI, 8, 9.

(32) *Ibid.*, p. 51, Pl. XXXI, 1, 3.

(33) *Ibid.*, p. 51, Pl. XXX, 2.

(34) *ADAJ*, XV (1970) p. 12, Pl. I-II.

On the basis of the archaeological evidence, there appears to have been at least three periods of occupation before the construction of the forum. The first period is in the Iron Age I, the second period is in the Iron Age II and the third period is during the Hellenistic and Nabataean times covering the last two centuries B.C. and at least the first three quarters of the first century A.D. There is no archaeological evidence to indicate that the site was occupied during the Persian period (550-331 B.C.). This may be explained by the fact that in 582 B.C., Nebuchadrezzar captured Amman and sent its population off into exile in Babylonia.<sup>35</sup>

In the northwest quadrant which abuts the western line of the colonnade of the forum next to the side-walk of the Municipality building, a very similar stratigraphic picture is found (Fig. 6). The first five loci consist of disturbed layers that contain mixed Roman, Byzantine, Islamic and modern sherds. Locus 6, in addition, yielded a Byzantine coin of Constans II (641-668 A.D.) and five Umayyad coins of mid-seventh century A.D. date.<sup>36</sup> Locus 8 is about 1.20 m. thick and consists of loose gray earth, pebbles and several fallen columns and other architectural members. To this locus also belongs a stairway which leads down to the central area of the forum (Pl. XXVI:A). The steps are built on sterile artificial fill of small irregular blocks of limestone and mortar. A terracotta pipe drain was laid alongside and slightly lower than the lowest step (Pl.

(35) Josephus, *Antiq.* X. 9, 7; Jeremiah 48, 76. It is significant to note that the excavations at Araq el-Emir (see fn. 18 above), show that there is a gap in occupation during this period on this site; cf. Paul W. Lapp, *op. cit.*, p. 20. According to Herodotus (III. 89.), Darius I (522-485 B. C.) reorganized the administration

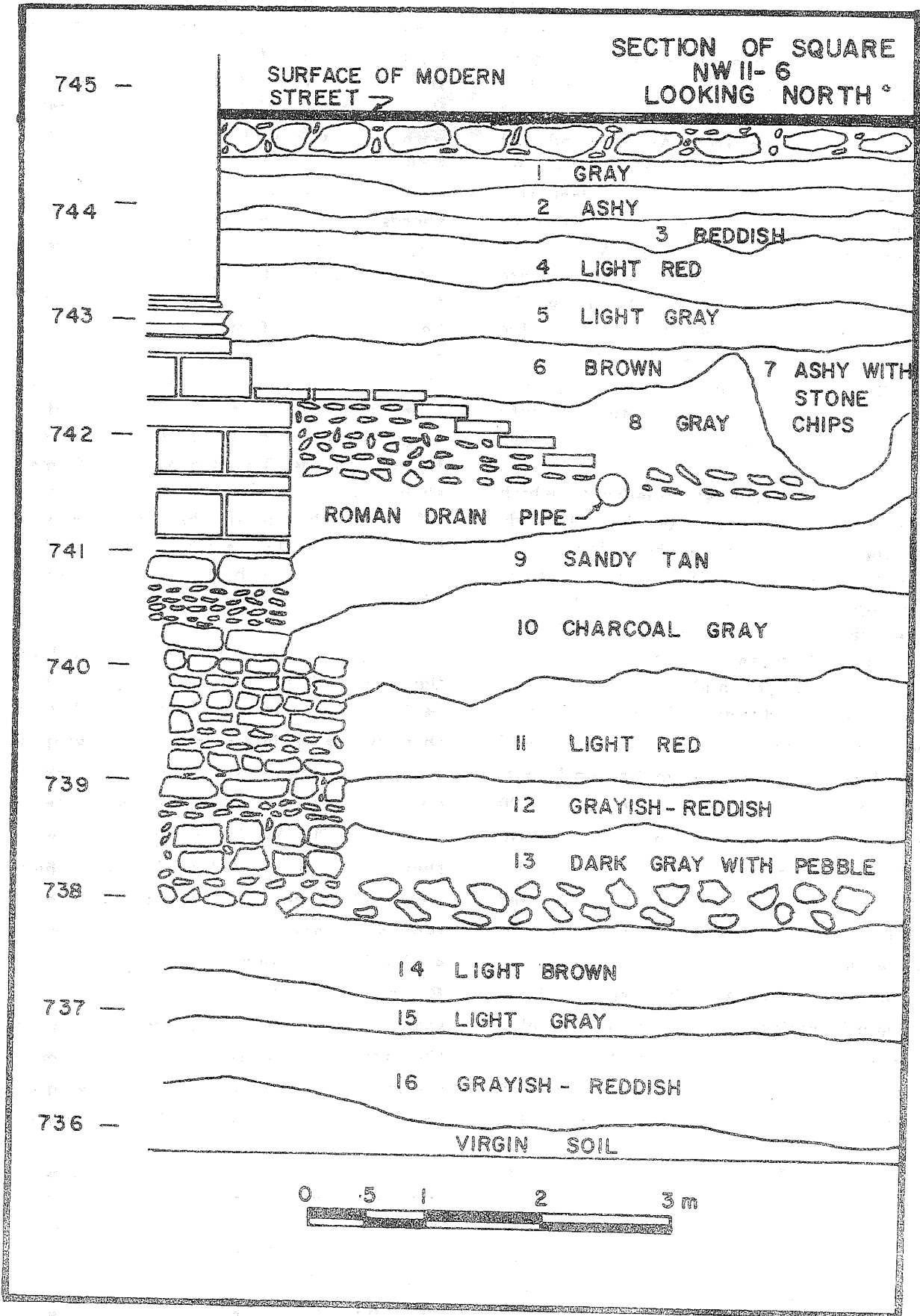
XXVI:B). Second century A.D. sherds associated with this drain make it contemporary with the Roman scheme for the construction of the forum. Loci 9 through 13, constitute a fill associated with the lower section of the foundation wall (Fig. 6). These loci contain mixed Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age I-II sherds. No coins were recovered. The foundation wall itself is built of the same material and in the same way as in the southwest quadrant. The only difference here is that the footing was provided by a stratum made up of irregular blocks of limestone and mortar. Underneath the foundations, Loci 14 through 16 contain mixed Iron Age I-II, Hellenistic and Roman, sherds. The discovery of Roman sherds in these lower loci may be considered further proof that the area was filled and leveled artificially and thus explains the disturbance in the majority of the loci in the forum.

Several test trenches were opened on the north side of the street in the central part of the forum to find out whether there was a variation in the stratigraphy from that observed in the other areas, and to probe this part for architectural remains (Pl. XXIV:C). It was found that this section contained a fill which consisted mainly of disturbed and contaminated layers of wash and dump to a depth of about 2.25 m. above the Roman level. Further, there was no evidence of any architectural activity in the area. The sherds and coins recovered are predominantly late Roman, Byzantine and Islamic. It was decided, therefore,

of the Persian empire into twenty *satrapies* or provinces. Amman was placed under the fifth *satrapy* of Palestine. However, nothing is known of events here until the time of the conquests of Alexander in 331 B.C.

(36) *ADAJ*, XVIII (1973) p. 53, Pl. XXXIII.

Fig. 6





to employ a bulldozer for the removal of the street, the sub-pavement and the debris underneath. The fill, however, was carefully searched for coins and other significant material.

### Occupational History

The occupational history of the forum area as far as it has emerged from the excavation may be outlined as follows. The earliest occupation of the forum area was in the Iron Age I-II (Iron I: ca. 1200-900; Iron II: 900-600 B.C.).<sup>37</sup> to this period belong loci in the lowest levels which all but in the southwest quadrant were disturbed by the subsequent Roman building activity. In the areas where these loci were disturbed, it is not possible to differentiate Iron I levels from those of Iron II. The complete absence of archaeological material that can be attributed to the Persian period, make it almost certain that the site was not occupied during this time.<sup>38</sup> The area seems to have been reoccupied probably about the beginning of the third century B.C. after the division of Antigonos' kingdom between Ptolemy and Seleucus in 301 B.C.<sup>39</sup> This is indicated by the discovery of Hellenistic sherds and coins mixed with Iron Age sherds in the loci below the Roman foundations as well as in the fill associated with these founda-

tions. The Hellenistic coins recovered in the forum are all of the Seleucid mint. The absence of Ptolemaic coins is rather striking since we know that the city was founded by this dynasty and renamed Philadelphia after Ptolemy II Philadelphos. Coins of this monarch were, however., discovered at nearby Araq el-Emir and Jerash. The discovery of Nabataean sherds and coins of the first century A.D. may indicate that the city had come into closer ties with, if not under the direct control of the Nabataeans. During the second century A.D., the forum must have reached its highest development and prominence. The architectural elements were laid out and constructed in typical Roman style of the Antonine period, with at least two phases evident. The first style is manifestly dependent upon the "grand style" of the second century A.D. which we find especially represented in Jerash, Palmyra and Baalbek. Here, the east and south colonnades are built in this style. The capitals with their rich modelling are definitely in the Antonine tradition, but the treatment of the foliage is already somewhat dry, the spirals are quite plain and the *cauliculus* has almost disappeared (Fig. 7:A-B; Pl. XXIX).<sup>40</sup> Similar capitals, columns and bases in Jerash, Palmyra, Baalbek, Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Miletus, are dated to the middle of the

(37) Cf. W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, (1961) p. 112.

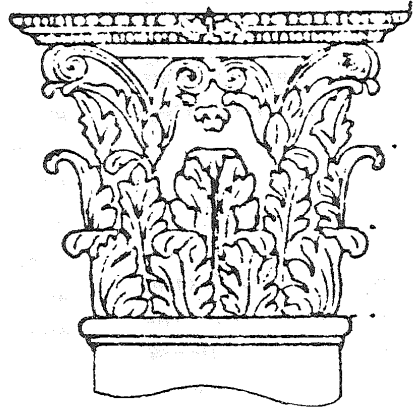
(38) See fn. 35.

(39) By right of possession Ptolemy obtained Palestine and southern Syria in the partition of Antigonos' kingdom after the battle of Ipsus in 301 B.C. He and his successors held these districts virtually intact up to 218 B.C., in spite of repeated Seleucid attempts to make good their rival claims. As a city of the administrative district of Ammanitis under Ptolemaic control, Amman was undoubtedly

exposed to Greek influence since early in the third century B.C.

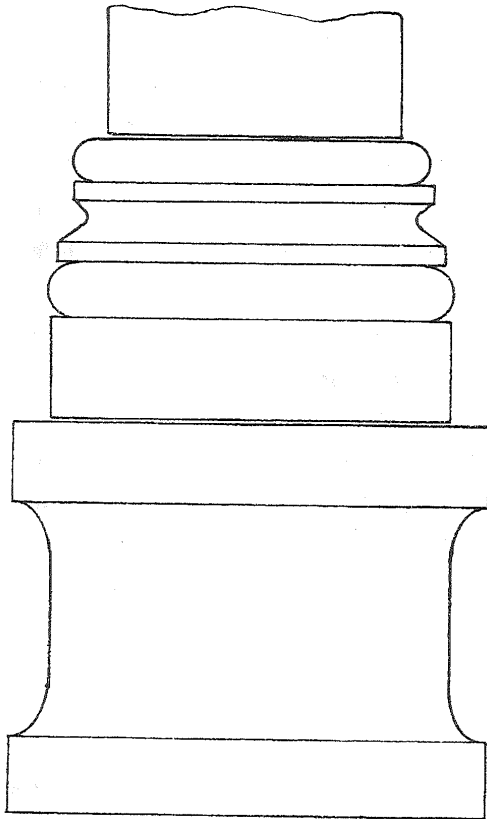
(40) For the development of the type, cf. Daniel Schlumberger, "Les formes anciennes du chapiteau corinthien en Syrie, en Palestine et en Arabie", *Syria*, 14 (1933) p. 283-317, especially p. 286, 306-308; E. Weigand, "Baalbek und Rom, die römische Reichskunst in ihrer Entwicklung und Differenzierung", *JdI*, 29 (1914) p. 37-91, especially p. 61-63, figs. 15, 25, 27, 30-31, & pls. 1: 2, 3: 2; K. Ronczewski, "Kapitelle des el Hasne in Petra", *JdI*, 47 (1932) p. 38-90, figs. 9, 10, 16.

Fig. 7

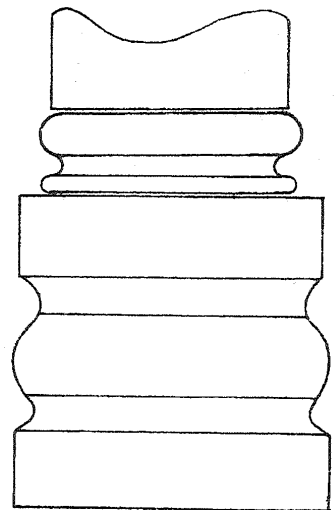


A

0 .25 .75 1.50 m



B



C

0 .20 .60 1.20 m

second century A.D.<sup>41</sup> Further, the decoration of the architrave finds parallels on friezes and cornices of gates and temples throughout Syria during the first and second centuries A.D. (Pl. XXIX).<sup>42</sup>

The west colonnade seems to be the product of a later period. This is attested by the use of a debased type of Corinthian column. The column-base and the plinth on this side find similar examples in those used in the Camp of Diocletian at Palmyra dated to the last quarter of the third century A.D. (Pl. XXX:D; Fig. 7:C).<sup>43</sup> Although no capitals were found in this side of the forum, one may assume that they were of the late squat Corinthian type used in Palmyra and elsewhere in the third and fourth centuries A.D.

#### The theater (Fig. 8; Pl. XXVIII:A)

This celebrated monument was noted and illustrated by many an archaeological visitor during the last century, and was first fully described by H. C. Butler in 1905.<sup>44</sup> The dates which have been given to this theater range from the beginning to the end of the second century A.D.

(41) Cf. C. H. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, pls. I: b, VI: a, VII, XVIII: b, & XXVII; Th. Wiegand, *Palmyra*, *Ergebnisse der Expeditionen von 1902, 1917, 1932*, p. 85-107, figs. 96, 176-182, Pl. 38; K. Michalowski, *op. cit.*, (1961) p. 19, fig. 16; A. Champdor, *Les ruines de Palmyre*, (1953) p. 81ff.; Th. Wiegand, *Baalbek*, *Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen u. Untersuchungen, 1898-1905*, Vol. 2, (1923) p. 6-7, figs. 9-14; R. Stillwell, *Antioch on the Orontes*, Vol. III (1937-1939) p. 150ff, pls. 3-31; A von Gerkan, *Milet, Das Stadion*, (1921) p. 36ff., fig. 46.

(42) Cf. D. Krencker & W. Zschietzschmann, *Römische Tempel in Syria*, 1938, especially the frieze of the temple at Bziza, pl. 4 dated to the early first century A.D., and the cornice of the basilika at Burkush, pl. 104, dated to the middle of the second century A.D.; also the pediment of the temple of Bacchus in Baalbek dated somewhere in the second century A. D., cf. Th. Wiegand, *op. cit.*, figs. 12-14, pls.

D. S. Robertson dates it to 150 A.D. with a question mark.<sup>45</sup> The recent clearance of the stage-building and the excavation of the forum calls for a re-examination of the problem of its date and its relation to the forum.

The fill underneath the *pulpitum* (Pl. XXX:A) in front of the *scaenae frons* yielded sherds of the second century A.D. and a coin of Marcus Aurelius (169-177 A.D.) issued at the mint of Philadelphia or Amman.<sup>46</sup> A coin of Commodus (180-182 A.D.) was discovered in the upper passage on the west side of the auditorium.<sup>47</sup> These two coins are the earliest Roman coins discovered in the theater up to this date. The first coin was discovered at the bottom of the *scaenae frons* almost on bedrock. Since the stage-building must have been built after the *cavea* of the theater was excavated and built up, we are in a position to conclude that the theater was finished sometime between 169 and 177 A.D. This date is supported by the very close similarity between this theater and the North Theater at Jerash which is securely dated by inscriptions to ca. 162-166 A.D.<sup>48</sup> Thus the theater is anterior

7, 8, 9 etc., especially on the south cella wall, pl. 56; the cornice of the monumental gate of the Camp of Diocletian dated to the late third century A.D., cf. K. Michalowski, *op. cit.*, p. 76, figs. 93-94; an architrave in Jerash which carries a similar motif is dated to the fifth or sixth century A.D., cf. C. H. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, pl. CXXI: c.

(43) Cf. K. Michalowski, *op. cit.*, (1959) p. 57, fig. 59.

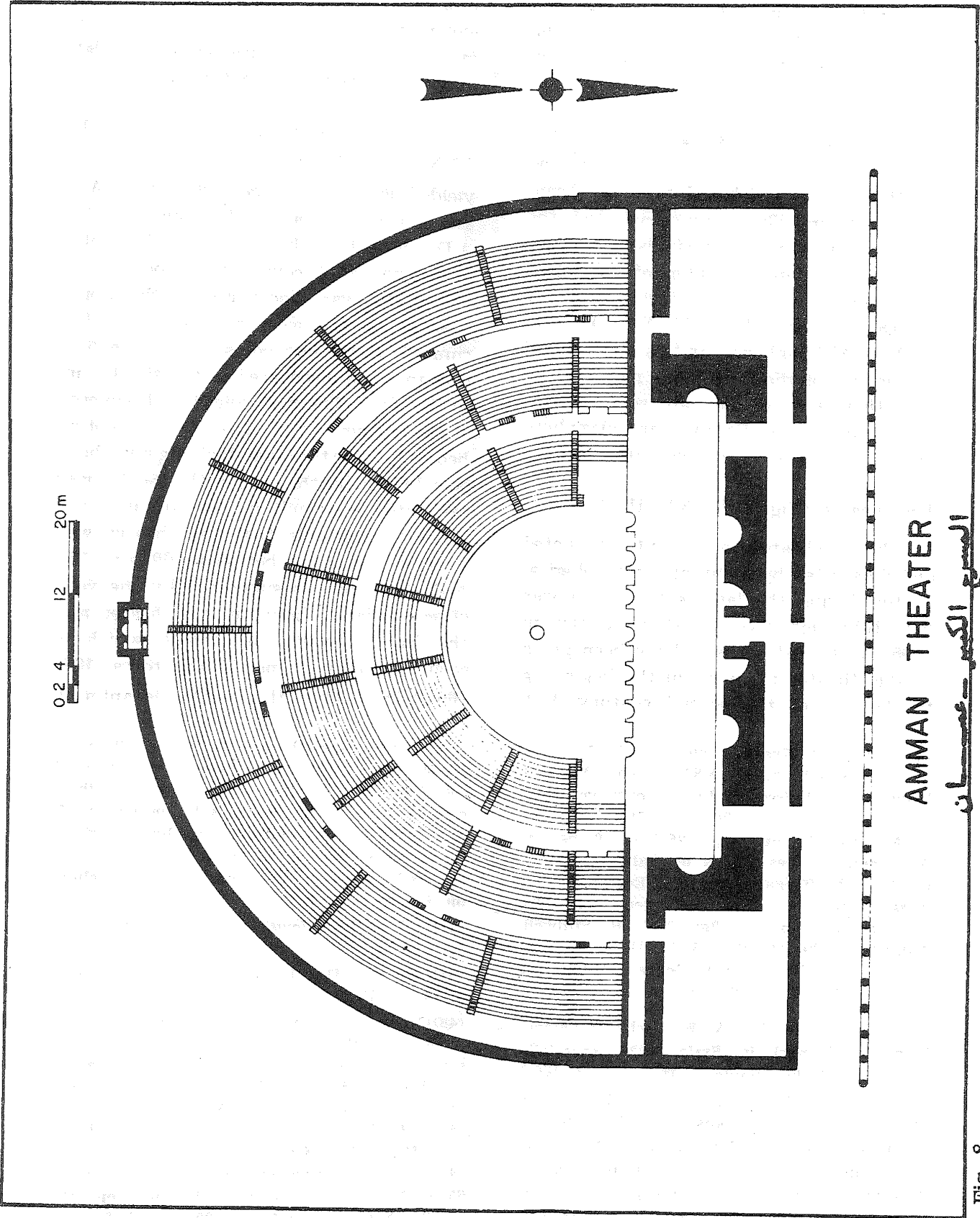
(44) *Op. cit.*, Div. II, Section A, p. 47-50, Ills. 31-33, pl. IV.

(45) Greek and Roman Architecture, 2nd ed., (1969) p. 343; Edmond Frézouls, "Recherches sur les théâtres de l'Orient Syrien", *Syria*, 36 (1959) p. 225, pl. XVII, dates it to the last part of the second century A.D.

(46) *ADAJ*, XVIII (1973) p. 52, Pl. XXXII, 2.

(47) *Ibid.*, Pl. XXXII, 1.

(48) Cf. C. H. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 54, inscr. 65, p. 405, Pl. II: c; Edmond Frézouls, *op. cit.*, p. 223; *Syria*, 38 (1961) p. 80, Pl. VII:2.



AMMAN THEATER  
المسرح الكبير - عمان

Fig. 8

to the forum as shown by inscriptional evidence. 49

### The odeum

Though there is scarcely a monument in ancient Amman which does not present some problem to the excavator, few indeed raise more problems than the small theater, commonly known the odeum on the east side of the forum (Figs. 2, 9; Pl. XXVIII:B). The first of these questions is whether it was originally roofed, and if it was, what was the shape of this roof? How was it approached from the forum? When was it constructed? More with the intention of discovering the date of its construction than of trying to answer the other questions, excavation was centered in front of the building (see above). The results were gratifying in themselves, but many questions will have to wait unanswered until the clearance of the site is completed. The first to describe the odeum, though inaccurately, was C. R. Conder.<sup>50</sup> A more accurate description than Conder's was published by H. C. Butler.<sup>51</sup> Extremely valuable in these publications are the illustrations showing the *scaenae frons* which is now almost completely robbed of its stones (Pl. XXIV: E).

Much of the plan of the odeum is restored (Fig. 9). It is semicircular with a stage-building that is connected with an outer wall by a barrel-vaulted passage with a corner tower at each end (Pls. XXVI:F; XXVIII:C, F). The *cavea* is oriented to the west and is built up entirely from ground level of well-dressed blocks of limestone sometimes bossed and drafted especially in the interior sections.<sup>52</sup> The external diameter of the *cavea* is 38 m. and its internal diameter is 22m. It consists of two divisions of seats separated by a *praecinctio*, 1.20 m. wide. The upper division has seven tiers of seats divided by five *scalaria* into five *cunei* and a balcony at the north end. The lower division has eleven tiers of seats divided by three *scalaria* into four *cunei*. There were additional *scalaria* at each end of the two divisions. There is a barrel-vaulted *parodos* at the south end of the *cavea*. The *scaenae frons* extends the whole width of the *cavea* and has five doorways with molded jambs and lintels and relieving arches over them. Only vestiges of these exist today (Pl. XXIV: F).<sup>53</sup> Decorative and functional portals of this shape and style were employed throughout Syria from the first to the sixth centuries A.D. and even later.<sup>54</sup> The base moldings of the *proscenium*

(49) Cf. F. Zayadine, "A Greek Inscription from the Forum of Amman — Philadelphia, A.D. 189" *ADAJ*, 14 (1969), pp. 34ff. Pls. XXI-XXIII.

(50) *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

(51) *Op. cit.*, Div II, Section A, p. 50-54, Ills 34-35.

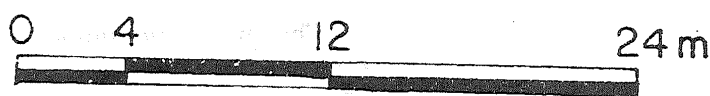
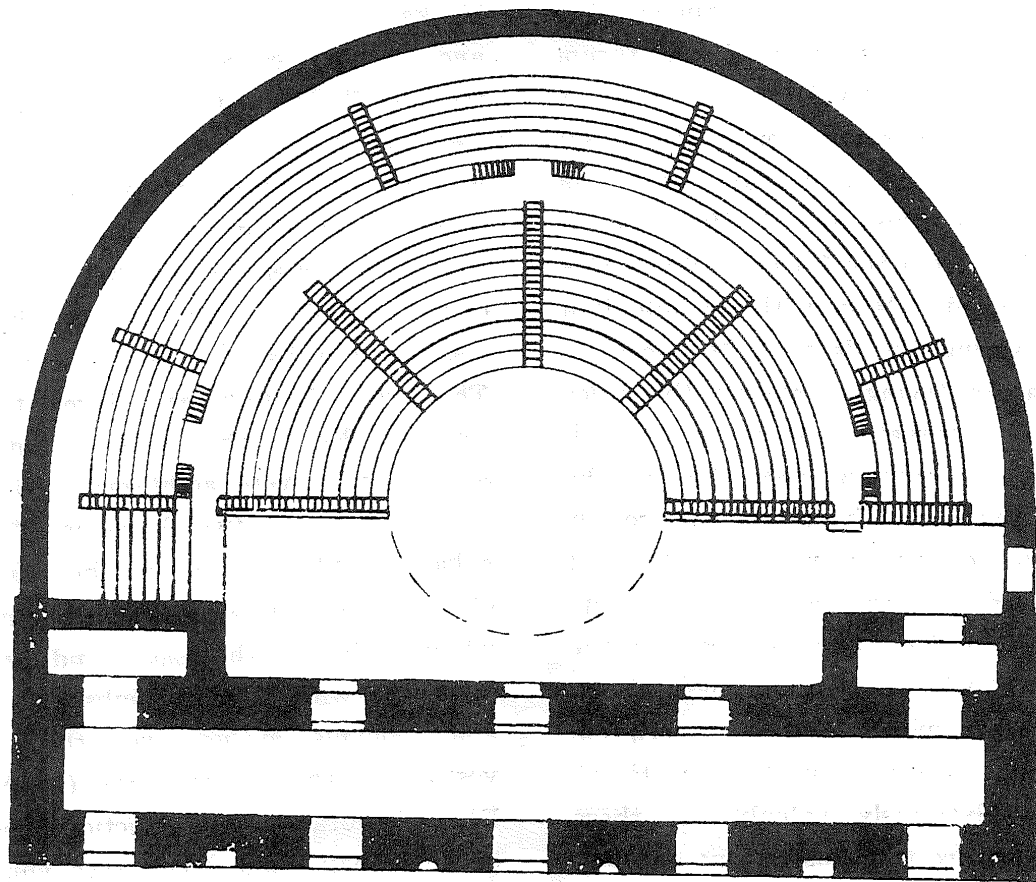
(52) Usually Roman theaters are oriented to the north but exceptions do occur from time to time as can be seen at Umm Qeis (Gadara) where the theater is oriented to the west, and

at Petra where the theater is oriented to the east.

(53) Cf. C. Butler, *op. cit.*, Div. II, Section A, Ill. 35, where three of these doorways were still preserved up to the first decade of this century.

(54) Cf. R. E. Brünnow and A.v. Domaszewski, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, 1909, p. 47, figs. 928, 932, 945, 946, 948, Pl. L (the theater at Bosra); H. C. Butler, *op. cit.*, Div. II, Section B (Northern Syria), Ill. 287-290 (Der Sima'an), Ill. 309 (the chapel at Kafr Lab); Div III, Section B, p. 208 (Doorway of a church).

Fig. 9



AMMAN ODEON  
الصحن الصغير أو قاعة الموسيقى  
عمان



are simple but very elegant (Pl. XXVIII: E). The back wall of the *scaenae frons* has corresponding portals and in addition two round and two square niches in the outer face of the wall. Architectural fragments discovered in the debris inside the stage-building indicate that it was originally decorated with friezes, cornices and niches.

In dating the odeum, we have two important considerations to guide us. First, the stratigraphic evidence from the foundation walls of the *scaenae frons* indicates a date in the early second century A.D. for the construction of these walls (see above). Secondly, the base moldings of the *scaenae frons* find parallels in those of the temple of Bacchus at Baalbek dated somewhere in the second century A.D.,<sup>55</sup> and at Jerash in the south theater dated by inscriptions

to the year 90-91 A.D.,<sup>56</sup> the south *tetrapylon* in its four *tetrakionia* dated to the middle of the second century A.D. and in the temple of Artemis dated by inscription to 150 A.D.<sup>57</sup> The moldings and shape of the portals in the back wall of the *scaenae frons* seem to be characteristic of Syrian architecture of this period. Parallels are found at Jerash in the temple of Zeus dated by inscription to 163 A.D., the *propylaea* of the temple of Artemis dated by inscription to between 161-169 A.D.,<sup>58</sup> at Palmyra, and on a stage-model in the *Terme Museum* at Rome dated to 150 A.D.<sup>59</sup> From these considerations, it is only reasonable to conclude that the foundation walls of the odeum were built early in the second century A.D. and its superstructure and the stage-building were finished some time close to the middle of the century.<sup>60</sup>

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(55) Th. Wiegand, *op. cit.*, pls. 7ff; D. S. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 432 dates this temple 120-200 A.D. with a question mark.

(56) C. H. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 43, 134, 145, fig. 1, pls. V: b, XVIII, XIX, & plan XIV; Bastiaan Van Elderen, "New Tablets Unearthed at Jerash", *JORDAN*, A Quarterly Magazine of Tourism And Cultural Interest, Vol. V, No. 2, (1974) p. 14-15.

(57) C. H. Kraeling, *op. cit.*, p. 43, 134, 145.

(58) *Ibid.*, p. 52, 54, pls. IV: b, XXV: a.

(59) B. Schulz, "Bogenfries und Giebelreihe in der römischen Baukunst", *JdI*, XXI (1906) p. 224-225, fig. 3; M. Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*, 1961, p. 182, fig. 634.

(60) The general plan of the building is very similar to the plan of the odeum at Corinth dated to the late first century A.D., cf. Oscar Broneer, *Corinth*, the Odeum, Results of Excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Vol. X, p. 144, Pl. I; the theater at Bosra built shortly after 106 A. D., and the theater at Shuhba dated early second century A.D., furnish the closest parallels in Syria, cf. R. E. Brünnow & A. v. Domaszewski, *op. cit.*, Vol. III (1909) p. 47f., Figs. 928, 930, 932, 945, 948, Pls. L & LII; Edmond Frézouls, *op. cit.*, p. 225, 228, dates the odeum of Amman to the last decade of the second century A. D. which in the opinion of the writer is far too late and cannot be accepted in the light of the evidence at hand.