

# Archaeological Excavations in Jordan, 1971

prepared by  
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## Hesban<sup>1</sup>

A second season of excavation was carried out by Andrews University Expedition under the direction of Dr. Siegfried Horn at Tell Hesban. The work continued in the center of the mound (acropolis) and on the southern and western slopes. A number of Roman and Byzantine tombs, which are located west and south-west of the tell were also excavated.

The Mamluk period is represented in the upper most levels on the summit of the mound (Area A) by a paved courtyard surrounded with buildings containing vaulted rooms. In Area D south of Area A, some cisterns and a staircase leading to the central building on the edge of the acropolis have been found. Complete pots and thousands of painted and glazed sherds and a broken lamp containing 66 silver Mamluk and Ayyubid coins were discovered in Area C on the western slope.

A Byzantine church and other remains preceded the Arabic occupation. This church was probably built on the foundations of a Roman temple, perhaps represented by the large cave cut by the Romans discovered below the Byzantine level. Various points of the tell are roughly covered with Roman remains, such

as stone structures, water channel and walls probably for defensive purposes. A notable oval-shaped installation in Area B must have served as a lime kiln<sup>2</sup> during the Byzantine occupation.

The earliest evidence discovered in the two seasons of work on Tell Hesban dates from the 7th to 6th centuries B. C. In Area B a wall, two pits, and an Aramaic ostrakon with four or five Aramaic, Egyptian and Babylonian names were found. In the Old Testament Heshbon is mentioned rather frequently as a prominent city in the second and first millennia B. C. Present archaeological evidence hardly confirms the identification of Tell Hesban with ancient Heshbon. It is hoped that the 1973 season will clarify this issue of identification, ascertain the full range of archaeological periods represented and complete the excavation of the Byzantine church on the acropolis.

## Buseirah

In 1971 the British School of Archaeology under the direction of Mrs. C. Bennett began its excavations at Buseirah, 20 kms. to the south of Tafleh. The site looks over Wadi Finan, from which copper materials were obtained as early as the fourth millennium B. C.

(1) Preliminary report of 1968 season published by S. Horn in *ADAJ* XII-XIII (1967-68), p. 51ff.

(2) See the article on lime-kilns by M. M. Khadijah, p. 107 above.

The site is about 15 acres (60 dunums) in size and is surrounded by a series of walls dating the Iron Age to the Roman period.

Excavations were mainly undertaken in the center of the site, massive buildings of an acropolis were uncovered. There occupation phases were identified. These phases provided little stratified evidence, because contemporary material had been eroded away.

Soundings against the southern terrace wall provided the most beautiful Iron Age pottery ever found. This painted pottery can be compared with the Nabataean pottery, and it is possible that the latter has been derived from this Edomite pottery which is very fine painted ware of high quality. The architecture and certain pottery types suggest that possible there was a temple or a place on the acropolis. However the nature and definite date of these buildings could not be determined in 1971.

It is probable that Buseirah was the capital of the Edomites and is the Bosrah mentioned in the Bible.

Mrs. Bennett will be continuing the excavation in 1972.

### Accidental Digs

Staff members of the Department of Antiquities conducted a number of small digs as sites accidentally discovered by local residents.

#### *Jabal el-Hussein Tomb / Amman:*

Inspector of Antiquities Hussein Qandil cleared a tomb on Jabal el-Hussein in Amman in the spring of 1971.<sup>3</sup>

The tomb was cut into bedrock and contained two sarcophagi with human skeletons and a number of pots in addition to few copper objects, beads and a single glass bottle.

It dates from the Late Roman/Early Byzantine period.

#### *Salt Tomb :*

During the construction of a new road in the south-west of Salt, a tomb was found. Hussein Qandil, who cleared the tomb, reported the following note:

The entrance of the tomb is a rectangular opening measuring 2.50×0.75 m. with a stone cuphagus with a decorated stone cover was cut in the rock in square shape (16 sq. m.) and contains four loculi one in each side. A sarcophagus with a decorated stone cover was cut inside each loculus. In three of these, pottery and glass objects, copper pieces and beads were found. These artifacts date from the late Roman/Byzantine period.

#### *As - Sadaqa :*

24 kms. South-east of Wadi Musa, a number of Nabataean tombs were excavated by Inspector of Antiquities Mahmoud Rousan. The discoveries await further study, but the following note has been reported. The cemetery is square in shape (25 sq. m.) containing 48 tombs in the two sides in a depth of about 2.5 m. The two sides are facing each other and covered by stone slabs. The finds consisted of skeletons, a number of pots and oil lamps, some of which bear Nabataean letters on the base.

#### *Mheiy :*

Mheiy, about 35 kms. South-east of Kerak, appears to have been important in the Roman,

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(3) A report is on file in the Department of Antiquities.



Byzantine and Mamluk periods. There is a large building in the center of the old town which seems to have been rebuilt several times. A Byzantine church surrounded with a number of buildings and cisterns was built on the western slope. Decorated and inscribed stones from the Byzantine period were found in some houses of the village.

Many tombs were found by the inhabitants in the northern and western benches. Some of the discoveries from the tombs reached the hands of antiquities dealers. The Department of Antiquities had to dig some of these tombs. This was carried out under the supervision of Inspector of Antiquities Mohammad N. Abu-Ubaid who has not yet provided the Department with a report. But the following note

might be helpful:

The tombs were found in large groups and were cut in the soft soil to a depth of 0.50 to 1.50 m. from top surface. The skeletons were usually surrounded by small stone slabs arranged in a rectangular shape. Decorated or inscribed stones were common in the tombs. The inscriptions indicate the name of the deceased, his age and the year of the death. The tombs were usually covered by crossing slabs and then buried with earth. Numerous beautiful glass objects, copper bracelets and other tomb furnishings have been found. Nabataean sherds were also registered.

### **Khirbet el-Hajjar**

See Two Ammonite Statuettes from Khirbet el-Hajjar p. 91 of this *Annual*.

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