

Archaeological Excavations in Jordan 1972

By

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YAJUZ

Two years ago, the inhabitants of Khirbet Yajuz, north of Amman, cleared a tomb on the southern slope of the site. The tomb contains ten loculi in the southern and western sides and an olive press.

Excavations were carried out inside the tomb under the supervision of Dr. Henry O. Thompson assisted by Ibrahim Haj Hassan of the Department of Antiquities. The results, as reported by Dr. Thompson (see P.37), show that the cave was used as a tomb in the Roman period, and re-used by the Byzantines who built the olive press inside.

SAHAB (see P.23)

The Department of Antiquities undertook excavations led by Dr. Moawiyah M. Ibrahim at Sahab, 12 kms. south-east of Amman.

The topography of the site and its architectural remains show that it was a walled city with a fortified acropolis. Five main periods — have been recognized. The earliest evidence came from tombs of which three have already been excavated. These caves were inhabited in the Chalcolithic Age, about 4000 B.C. Most of them were re-used in later periods :-

The Middle Bronze Age (1800-1700 B.C.), probably Late Bronze Age (1400 B.C.) and Early Iron Age (1200 B.C.). Four Chalcolithic occupation layers have been identified in a cave in the eastern slope,

the largest and richest cave yet excavated. This cave was re-used again after a gap of 3000 years when the people of the Early Iron Age (1200 B.C.) used it as a tomb. A large number of skeletons and a wide variety of objects were found in association with the skeletons, including pots and oil lamps, decorated Egyptian alabaster vases and a scarab, wooden pieces, weapons and jewelry made of Iron and bronze, beads, and the head of an Egyptian figurine. Notable things discovered inside the cave were eight burial jars representing the last stage of the occupation of the cave. The mouths of the jars had been cut in such a way so that two jars could face each other to form an M shape.

The excavators also uncovered part of an Early Iron Age settlement, in two areas (A, B). About 20 well-made storage jars were found on a paved floor in Area A. Some of these jars were stamped on the rim and handle. Two things must be noted about this pottery deposit. First the frequency of this distinct type of jar and the seal impressions show that they were made locally. Secondly, the jars were broken as

a result of destruction. Thick layers of ash also suggest another major destruction in the first half of the first millennium B.C.

The Department of Antiquities is planning to continue investigation and digging of the site to throw more light on the history and foreign relations of the area.

SIRAN

As part of a training program of arch-

aeology students, the University of Jordan conducted excavations under the supervision of Henry O. Thompson at Tell Siran in the vicinity of the University. A report on the excavations will appear in ADAJ of 1973. Pottery sherds from the four squares indicate occupation in the Ayyubid / Mamluk, Byzantine and Iron Age periods. No significant architectural remains have been found since the excavators reached bedrock after removal of about one meter of soil. A few cisterns and caves cut into the bedrock have been cleared. The most important discovery from Siran was a bronze bottle which showed after cleaning eight lines of an Ammonite inscription referring to the achievements of Aminadab, an Ammonite king in the mid of the seventh century B.C. The inscription will be published by Dr. Fawzi Zayadin in the near future

RUJM EL-MALFUF SOUTH

Dr. Henry Thompson and the Friends of Archaeology undertook limited sounding in Rujm el-Malfuf South Jabal Amman. The Rujm is a well-built rounded stone tower similar to the series of Ammonite towers around Amman. On the basis of these investigations, it was determined that the tower was built in Iron Age II (Seventh Century B.C.). It is not sure whether it was founded in Iron Age I, as possibly suggested by a few sherds from this period. The tower was slightly rebuilt in the Byzantine period.

BUSEIRAH

The Buseirah expedition completed a second season under the direction of Mrs. Crystal Bennett of the British School of Archaeology. More work was done on the acropolis and new squares were opened around the city wall and in northern slope. Concerning a definite date for the city or the nature of the main buildings of the acropolis, little evidence has been provided. The extension of the dig, especially

on the northern side, may give better results. New and important information about the life of the Edomites and their art and architecture should result from further excavation of the buildings of the city.

AMMAN CITADEL

In 1968 excavations were conducted on the interior side of the south-west of the Amman Citadel. Islamic, Byzantine, Roman, Hellenistic and Iron Age II periods have been recognized. The 1972 excavations led by Dr. Fawzi Zayadin of the Department of Antiquities uncovered more evidence of the Hellenistic period and also evidence from Iron Age II and I. Further investigation will add more information about these phases and their extent.

SPORT CITY AREA

A : While the main road between Amman and Suweileh was being widened, a tomb was discovered and reported to the Department of Antiquities. It was excavated by Dr. Fawzi Zayadin of the Department.

This is the second tomb from the Intermediate Bronze Age which was found in the Amman Area. The first one was discovered in 1968 at Jabal ~~et-Taj~~

B : Next to Intermediate Bronze Age tomb, on the slope to the north from the main road, a Roman tomb has been cleared by Suleiman Da'ana of the Department. It seems the tomb had been robbed in earlier days.

KHIRBET EL-HAJJAR (see P.47)

The discovery of two Ammonite statuettes in late 1971 encouraged Dr. Henry O. Thompson of the American Center of Oriental Research to undertake more investigations at Khirbet el-Hajjar, south-west of Amman. A rounded plastered stone tower and defensive walls from Iron Age II were uncovered, while underneath an Iron Age I level without architectural remains

was identified. The Department of Antiquities is interested in further excavation of the site.

MADABA (see P. 77)

During September and October 1972 the Department of Antiquities excavated a Byzantine church in Madaba. This excavation, under the direction of Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen, director of the American Center of Oriental Research, assisted by Inspector of Antiquities Mahmud Rusan uncovered the basic plan of the building — a basilica approximately 17 1/2 meters by 30 meters. The outside walls of the church were excellently constructed of well-dressed bossed stone blocks closely fitted together. Two doorways were uncovered — one in the south wall and the other in the west wall. Sizeable portions of the mosaic pavement which covered the entire floor area of the building were uncovered. This colorful floor contained intricate geometric designs. This church is being dated in the late fifth century. A limited Arabic occupation was found above

the church, but the bulk of the debris was modern fill over the area.

KFEIR ABU SARBUT

During November and December 1972 the Department of Antiquities excavated a Byzantine church at Kfeir Abu Sarbut, about 3 kms. north of Madaba. This excavation was under the direction of Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen, director of the American Center of Oriental Research, assisted by Inspector of Antiquities Mahmud Rusan. A basilica has been uncovered with many of its architectural features *in situ*. Sizeable portions of the mosaic floor have been preserved, as well as evidence of an earlier mosaic floor directly below. The two floors represent two phases of the church, possibly fifth century and sixth century. Two Greek inscriptions were found in the upper floor. Extensive Arabic occupation was indicated by a living complex consisting of large walls, in which architectural members of the church were re-used, and a large cistern cut into the bedrock.

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