

THE 1962 EXCAVATION AT 'ARAQ EL-EMIR

The third campaign at 'Araq el-Emir took place between September 10 and October 12, 1962. Except for a minor operation outside one of the caves, work was concentrated exclusively at the Qasr and in the northwest quarter of the village where the work of the earlier campaigns was continued. The campaign was supported by the regular archaeological budget of the Jerusalem School with a substantial grant from Princeton University through the courtesy of Professor R. B. Y. Scott.

The staff was composed of Paul W. Lapp, Director and Photographer; Professor R. B. Y. Scott, Associate Director and Recorder; Fr. Alexander Di Lella, Dr. Dorothy K. Hill, Professor George M. Landes, Dr. John Zimmerman, Fr. Wm. Casey, Mr. Sten Lundgren, and Mr. Carney Gavin, Field Supervisors; Mr. Ahmed Hassan, Jordan Department of Antiquities Representative; Mr. Michael Brett, Architect; Mrs. Paul Lapp, Business Manager; Mr. Mustafa Tawfiq, Foreman; Mr. Muhammed Adawi, Cook. The excavation profited from the usual cordiality of the Department of Antiquities through its director, Dr. Awni Dajani, who has also continued to permit us to use a Decauville railway.

The most striking find of the campaign was a feline sculptured in high relief on a block of mottled red and white dolomite (Pl. XVI). It came to light as debris was being cleared from the face of the Qasr east wall near its north end. According to its Hellenistic plan, the Qasr was to be surrounded by a large lake, the extent of which can be appreciated by observing the depressed area which still surrounds the Qasr. A road skirted the south embankment of the lake and passed northward through Gate II and Gate I (Pl. XVII). From Gate I the main path continued north to the village and caves, but just inside the gate a path led westward across the only spur of land through the lake to the Qasr. The feline sculpture was on a line with this path, greeting all visitors as they approached.

The feline functioned as a fountain. Inside the Qasr were traces of a plastered basin with a channel leading to the animal's mouth. In the sculptured megalith the conduit consisted of a narrow circular hole which widened to a 5 by 7 cm. rectangular opening in the feline's mouth. Without teeth or tongue, the beast looks like he is swallowing a box, as Miss Hill notes. That a pool to receive the water stream from the mouth must have been planned is indicated by a channel just in front of the animal's right forepaw (Pl. XVI). Whether such a pool had ever been completed could not be determined, for Byzantine occupation layers occur to a considerable depth below the fountain megalith, which rests on the upper surface of the Hellenistic Qasr foundations. A Byzantine wall, set against the outer face of the Qasr east wall and carefully built around the sculptured block, has certainly contributed to its fine state of preservation and its concealment before our excavations.

The maximum dimensions of the sculptured block are 2.05 by 1.50 meters. It is 35 cm. thick and in addition the relief projects as much as 45 cm. A stone cut around the animal's head caps the sculptured stone and levels with the 1.75 m. height of the lowest course into which the block is set. Smaller undressed stones were used to fill out the 90 cm.

width of the megalithic course inside (Pl. XVIII). The 2.05 m. length is unique for megaliths of the lowest course of the east wall so that the placement of the fountain seems to have been part of the original building plan. Its crude insertion suggests that it was probably placed after the wall had been erected.

The possibility that the relief had been used in another setting or was available when the Qasr architects made their plans cannot be excluded. It will be noted below that the carving of the animal frieze was completed *in situ*. It could be argued that the same procedure would be expected with the fountain relief had it not been already prepared. The writer would prefer the view that the relief was commissioned in connection with the building of the Qasr and inserted after the hazards from erecting megalithic walls had passed. The relief block was of mottled red and white dolomite breccia, which is locally available. From the view point of the history of art there is nothing against its execution in the early second century B.C., when the Qasr was built (see below). Excavation so far has not brought to light any evidence of monumental buildings in the area of the third century B.C., and the large-scale building operations of Hyrcanus display enough evidence of planning to make it difficult to consider the animal fountain as originally planned for any other place than where it was found.

It seems doubtful that the sculptor had a specific beast in mind for the relief. The male body seems too sleek for a lion, not sleek enough for a leopard or panther. The head, too, seems small for a lion, large for a leopard. The tail tuft belongs to a lion, but the curling of the tail around one leg is a more common treatment for leopards. The griffin-like claws occur on Greek monumental lions, but the mane, which is a characteristic feature of the male lion, is missing. The mottled stone gives the beast a spotted appearance, which is the monument's most striking feature. Miss Hill suggests that the feline is a result of the combination of the sculptor's (distant ?) knowledge of sculptured lions, sphinxes, and griffins, and his acquaintance with live Transjordanian leopards.

In attempting to assess the artistic tradition which produced this work of art, Miss Hill points out "that there is no other known monument like the animal fountain of 'Araq el-Emir.'" Indeed, we have very little evidence at all of the effective influences upon works of art in Syria-Palestine and of the entire Near East in the second century B.C. Whole lions or leopards as fountains were rare in the Greek world though the heads of lions were commonly used as spouts. Lion spouts seem to be unknown outside the Greek world. The unequal lengths of the legs is a Greek means of portraying action. The animal with extended paw is a common Greek stance of the Hellenistic period, though only one of the expected antithetical pair appears here. These and other observations have led Miss Hill to define the fountain as "a provincial Greek work of the period 182-175 B.C." This brief discussion is based largely on her detailed discussion of the fountain in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 171 (Oct., 1963), pp. 44-55.

A second major discovery of the third campaign was conclusive evidence that the Qasr was never completed. Evidence that the Qasr was unfinished has been available to Butler when he published his detailed study of the Qasr early in this century, but he did not find it convincing. In connection with getting evidence for Mr. Brett's restored plan of the Qasr, an attempt

was made to jack up all megaliths of the frieze course ; they could easily be picked out by their dimensions. In raising one of them near the southwest corner of the building, it was surprising to find that the lion had only been roughed out for carving (Pl. XIX). Since the block had obviously fallen from the building, it was to have been finished **in situ**.

Shortly after this discovery several other unfinished elements were noted. The dentils of the string course of the north porch had not been cut in a fragment from the east corner, whereas they had been cut in the adjacent fragment of this course. The carefully dressed west semicolumn of the north porch was set against a megalith only roughly finished on the inside. A quite unexpected discovery came to light as the lowest dressed course of the east Qasr wall was being uncovered. One of the megaliths had a smooth surface, its boss having been completely removed. The boss of an adjacent megalith was obviously in the process of being removed when work on the building ceased. The observation that the margins and bosses throughout the Qasr are quite irregular suggests that the completed building would have had a smooth face.

To these discoveries should be added some of the evidence previously cited for the unfinished state of the building. A base for one of the north porch free-standing columns had a projecting ring, which had presumably been used in transport of the block but was not subsequently removed. Some of the Corinthian style capitals show remarkably detailed finish, but in others the details have only been roughed out. Other non-Hellenistic capitals have been only roughly blocked out. Together this evidence points to the fact that the outer shell of the Qasr had been erected, but much detailed finishing was left undone. The problem of the extent to which the inside of the building was completed is more difficult. It is connected with the problem of the function of the building, to which we now turn.

After the 1961 campaigns an attempt was made in **Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan**, Vols. VI-VII (1962), p. 83, to develop the hypothesis that the Qasr was a mausoleum, the view of Albright. Mr. Brett's architectural study of the Qasr (**Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research**, 171 (Oct., 1963), pp. 39-45) has drawn attention to the stairwell east of the north porch (Pl. XVIII). The flights of wide, low steps gave access to a gallery and led to a tower above the frieze course. Presumably they were also to have given access to a terrace roof. Although there is no evidence that the roof had been completed, the megalithic foundation lines (Pl. XVIII) are best interpreted as lines of support for a roof. Among the Byzantine walls and occupation debris (which lay well below the level of the Hellenistic floor) there was no clear evidence of a terrace roof, and certainly if it had been completed, some vestiges would have survived. Just what had been completed inside at the time of Hyrcanus and what might have been reused by the Byzantine occupants is impossible to decide.

In any case, Robert Amy in **Syria**, Vol. 27 (1950), pp. 82-136, has convincingly shown that these elements — stairway, tower, and terrace roof — are present in some 39 temples and are to be associated with a cult function. Other features of the Qasr find their best parallels in temples. The bifaciality of the Qasr (which leaves a nonfunctional south porch) has parallels in temples from Syria to Sicily. Megalithic voussoir blocks have been found at the Qasr only in the vicinity of the adytum of the temple. Other temples are associated with bodies of water. Perhaps the chief reason for hesitating to call the building a temple has been the view that such a rival to the Jerusalem temple was impossible. Such a view ignores Josephus'

reference to the nearly contemporary temple at Leontopolis in Egypt. Certainly, the religious significance of the Qasr will be an important subject of study for years to come.

In the first two campaigns evidence for dating the Qasr was extremely elusive. Byzantine occupation had cut down to the Early Bronze layers upon which the Qasr was built. Despite the lack of stratigraphic evidence, there was no hesitation about considering the building, as described by Josephus, Hellenistic. Yet, some scholars preferred a date a century earlier than that indicated in Josephus' account. This matter has been settled by the discovery in the 1962 campaign of a satisfactory group of Hellenistic potsherds clearly belonging to the first half of the second century B.C. The complete lack of anything from the third century B.C. at the Qasr or the Square Building (for location see Fig. 2; cf. *Annual*, VI-VII, pp. 85-87) makes any attempt to raise the date of the building unjustified. The evidence that the Qasr was unfinished makes the seven-year period (ca. 182-175 B.C.) in which Josephus has Hyrcanus at 'Araq el-Emir less difficult for the major operations accomplished, but it is not impossible that Hyrcanus began his operations as early as 210 B.C., and his death could have occurred a few years after 175 B.C.

Of the Byzantine occupation of the Qasr little new was learned in the third campaign. The general chronological framework proposed after the first campaign has received additional support, but no artifacts of sufficient importance to merit treatment in this report have been recovered.

The highlight of the 1962 excavation in the village was the discovery of the Plaster Building. Excavation was extended west from the west wall of the Late Hellenistic town with the aim of learning more about the heavy Iron I walls previously excavated. This purpose was completely frustrated by Hellenistic builders, who had cleared away Iron age remains for their construction. As so far excavated (Pl. XX), the building consists of an area of over 18 by 21 m. surrounded by a wall of medium and small stones some 90 cm. thick, with two thin coats of white plaster on its inner face. A second wall, placed concentrically inside this area, contains an area of some 10.5 by 15 m. This wall is 1.15 m. thick and is plastered on its outer face like the outside wall, but on its inner face with a much thicker beautiful dark red plaster with bevelled edges and white borders. The base of this wall at the doorways is composed of finely dressed rectangular blocks, but the rest of the wall consists of plaster against dirt and rubble. There was a single entrance to the inner court in the middle of the east wall, two symmetrically placed doorways in the inner south wall, one at the west end of the inner north wall, and presumably others still unexcavated. All these were about 1.10 m. wide. Between the two walls was a corridor 2.70 m. wide with an extremely hard-packed floor, and the inner court had a similar, but less well-made floor. Except for a drain at the outer wall near the northwest corner and some mysterious paving blocks interrupting the northwest entryway, there was no evidence of any kind unearthed to shed light on the function of the building.

The ashy layer which covered the floor of the corridor and part of the inner court contained a pottery group which belongs about 175 B.C. A very small sounding below the floor yielded sherds which are probably to be assigned to the early second century B.C. To the west, where the walls of the building were only preserved as foundations, we obtained our first good group of Hellenistic sherds which can be assigned with confidence to the very beginning of the second century B.C. This evidence points strongly to the construction of the

Plaster Building at the time of Hyrcanus who "built enclosures [aulai] remarkable for their size, and adorned them with vast parks." *Antiq.* XII, 233. It is difficult to dissociate the Plaster Building from the aulai, for by one definition an aule is a court or quadrangle "round which the house itself was built, having a corridor all around."

The basic stratigraphy in the village, described in earlier reports, has proved essentially correct, but some refinements should be noted. Strata I (ca. A.D. 200) and II (ca. A.D. 100) remain the same. Strata III a (ca. A.D. 50) and III b (ca. 100 B.C.) are unchanged. but Stratum IV becomes an earlier Hellenistic phase (ca. 175 B.C.). Stratum IV of the first campaign becomes the Iron I Stratum V (ca. 1050 B.C.) Early Bronze surfaces appearing in a limited area are designated as Stratum VI.

The change in strata designation became necessary when detailed study after the third campaign made it clear that the original Stratum III b consisted of two elements. Stratum III b consisted of the northern and western town walls with inner walls [parallel to these joined by crosswalls forming a casemate-type construction. A wall at the southern end of the excavated area bounded a large courtyard inside the casemates. Most of the Stratum III b walls were laid on a plaster floor of high quality some 5 cm. thick, while the plaster floor of the court was of poorer quality. Elsewhere foundations for Stratum III b walls cut through the thick plaster floor, and the trench was covered by plaster of poorer quality so that the line of the joining of the two qualities of plaster could be noted. The evidence led to a careful rechecking of material below the better and poorer quality plaster in the casemates, and it became clear that the few pockets of Early Hellenistic pottery recovered in the excavation were sealed under the thicker plaster floor.

This evidence forced the conclusion that the plaster floor unearthed over so much of the excavated area had been used during two phases of occupation. The thicker plaster floor was assigned to Stratum IV, for it became clear that it had extended beyond the III b north and west village walls and must have been part of a large building of which only a few vestiges remains. These included drainage channels cut into bedrock, two curious stone pavings several protrusions of bedrock unintelligible in their III b setting, and a column base plastered into the thick plaster floor. In only one of the casemate rooms were discovered separate III b and IV floors, and here the remnant of Stratum IV walls were covered with beautiful painted plaster, similar to that of the Plaster Building. This combined with other evidence suggests that the large plaster-floor structure of Stratum IV and the Plaster Building are contemporary, both the work of Hyrcanus.

This isolation of Hellenistic Stratum IV provides an explanation for the lack so far of Persian and Early Hellenistic remains in the excavations though we have been shown artifacts of this time which certainly come from the village. The laying of the Stratum IV floor involved cutting down several bedrock outcroppings and the scraping away of all earlier occupation debris to below the level of the Stratum V floors. The few pockets of Early Hellenistic sherds below the Stratum IV floors may be considered the bottoms of Hellenistic pits which had been cut into the Iron age layers.

The Strata III a, II, and I occupations continued to have the same character as in previous campaigns, and their dates remain the same. The progressive additions of crosswalls in the casemates and large court in Strata II and I was studied in detail, and their progressively poorer quality was noted. This reflects the change of the area from a public function

to domestic dwellings, which tended to become more crowded, presumably as the population of the town increased. We were fortunate enough to recover quite a number of new forms for the ceramic groups of Strata II and I, including quite a number of whole or reconstructed pieces. These and other ceramic groups from 'Araq are now in process of being prepared for publication.

There is still much to attract the excavator to 'Araq El-Emir, and it is hoped that a fourth campaign might be conducted there in 1964 or 1965, concentrating on a new part of the village in hope of finding especially Early Hellenistic material and on the debris piles in front of the caves.

April 10, 1964
Jerusalem, Jordan

PAUL W. LAPP
American School of Oriental Research