

THE SITE OF KHIRBET SALAMEH

by

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Introduction

In 1984, a site was chosen for the new ACOR (the American Center of Oriental Research) building on the north/north-west side of the expanding city of Amman. The land for the building was partially an antiquities site, Khirbet Salameh. This section of Amman is being developed extensively. As this development occurs, antiquity sites are consistently in danger of removal. Because of the foresight of Dr. Adnan Hadidi, Director-General of the Department of Antiquities, and Dr. David McCreery, director of ACOR, survey and salvage/rescue excavations were carried out at the site. The major portion of these excavations was directed by the authors with the assistance of Ms. Hanan Kurdi of the Department of Antiquities and by members of the "Friends of Archaeology".¹ During the construction of the building, a tomb was found and excavated by Mr. Stephen Hart, then librarian at BIAAH (the British Institute at Amman of Archaeology and History); Drs. David McCreery and Donald Whitcomb excavated a Byzantine section of the *khirbeh*; and, Dr. Robert Miller has studied the flints from the site.²

The Site

Khirbet Salameh is located opposite the University of Jordan on the north/north-west side of Amman (Grid Reference: YA710-454, 1:50,000 map of Jordan, Sheet 3154 II). The *khirbeh* measures ca. 27 m. north-south by ca. 23 m. east-west and lies 1050 metres above sea level on a terraced east-facing slope. The

area is in the Mediterranean climatic and vegetational zone, with an annual rainfall of 500-600 mm. The area supported grain agriculture, i.e., wheat, and sheep/goat grazing, still minimally present, until the recent development of the area. In the immediate vicinity, there are no springs. Adjacent to the *khirbeh* there is a cistern indicating that water storage was necessary in antiquity as well as in the recent past.

The site may be *Qutnah el-Janubiyah* identified by Nelson Glueck³ during his survey of the east bank of the Jordan River. In 1976, the *khirbeh* was re-surveyed as part of Mujahid Muheisin's survey of the Amman area.⁴ During 1983 and 1984, the site was surveyed and excavated by the authors. Two areas were excavated: Area I and Area II (Fig. 1).

Methodology

As the initial purpose of the survey and excavation of the area was to determine the presence of antiquities on the actual building site, of which the *khirbeh* was not a part, concentration was placed on the east slope or face, where the present building stands. A planned access road was to have taken part of the *khirbeh*; and, therefore, this section, Area II, was also a concern. The survey method employed was determined by the terrace walls which originally descended from the east wall of the *khirbeh*; each wall was numbered and surface sherds were collected in relationship to the terrace walls, three in total. The *khirbeh* was surveyed separately in 1984 by the use of quadrants. The amount of time spent on each terrace and within each quadrant totalled two (2) hours.

1. C.J. Lenzen and Alison McQuitty, 'Khirbet Salameh,' *ADAJ* XXVIII, (1984) p. 295.
2. There is a forthcoming monograph by the same authors.
3. Nelson Glueck, *Explorations in Eastern Pales-*

tine, III.AASOR, Vols. XVIII-XIX, 1937-1939, p. 173.

4. Mujahid Muheisin's report is on file with the Department of Antiquities.

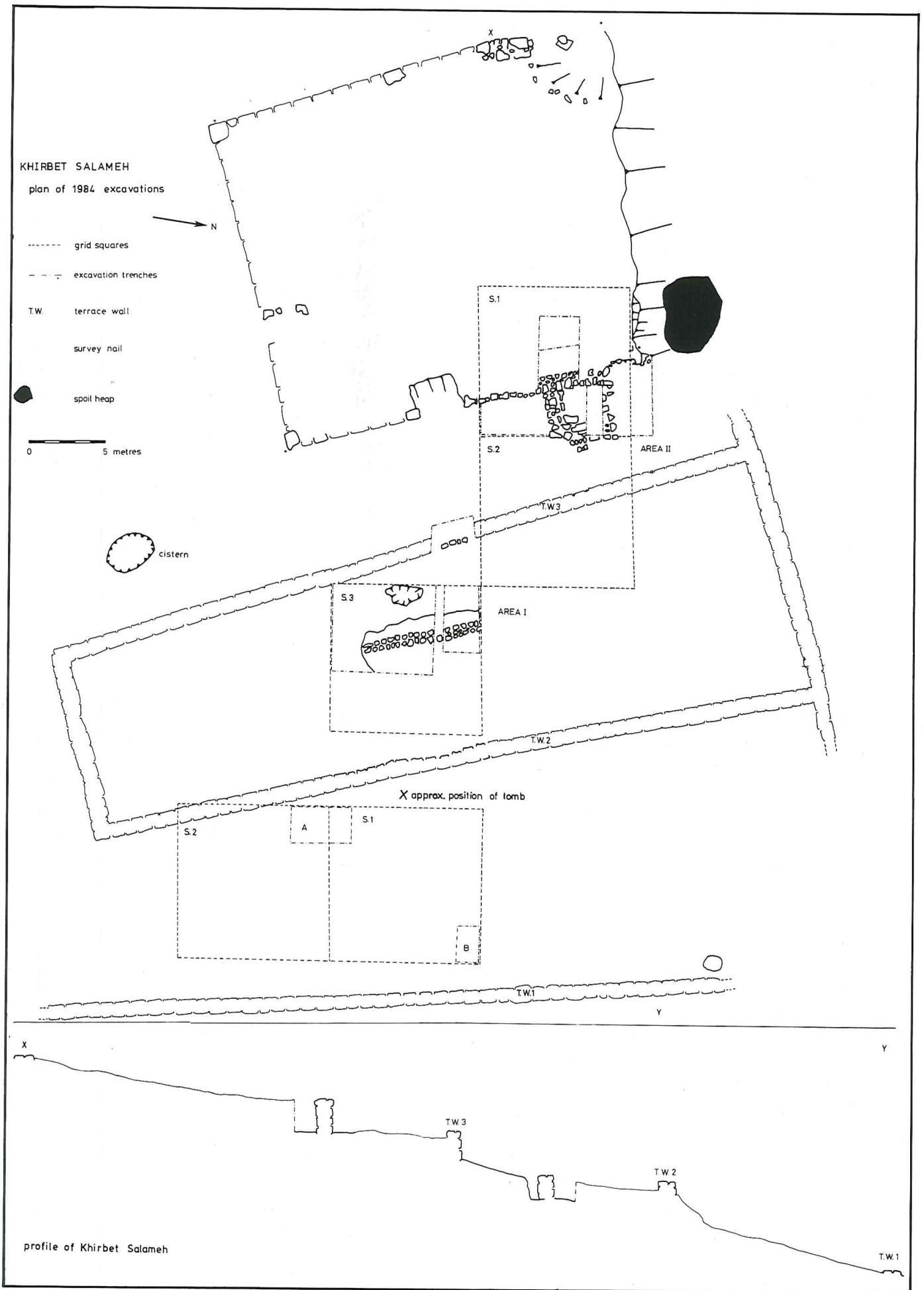


Fig. 1: Plan of Khirbet Salameh.

Although the method was essentially random in nature, there was an almost total pick-up of surface material culture remains within the *khirbeh* and along the terraces.

Excavation consisted of two areas: Area I on the slope and Area II adjacent to the *khirbeh* wall. This was followed in 1985/1986 by the excavation of the tomb and Byzantine installation already mentioned. The purpose of the excavations was two fold: 1. to determine the presence of antiquities on the slope prior to the construction of the modern building; and, 2. to substantiate the significance of the *khirbeh* through stratigraphic excavations in order to preserve the site. The following report is preliminary in nature and is concerned with the excavations of Area I and Area II only.

Area I

Two probe trenches were excavated in Area I: one on the lower slope of the eastern face and one adjacent to terrace wall 1. The first probe, although containing pottery from ca. 400 B.C. through ca. the seventh century A.D., consisted only of agricultural wash. The second probe rapidly revealed a seven course, well-constructed wall. This wall was founded on a layer of what can only be identified as debris, "garbage", containing large quantities of animal bone⁵ and potsherds dating to the sixth/fifth centuries B.C. Both the pottery and the animal bones showed evidence of burning, as if the area had been used for dumping and then periodically been burned. The exact purpose of the wall (Pl. XXXII, 1) is unclear. It is likely that it acted as a tomb curtain wall; however, the massive construction would belie this assumption. However, with the evidence of the tomb excavated by Hart, it is possible that this did form part of the architectural remains of a necropolis area.

Area II

The north-east corner of the *khirbeh*, both the inside and the outside probe

trenches, comprised Area II (Pl. XXXII,2). The pre-construction use of the *khirbeh* is not possible to date, except for saying that it pre-dates A.D. 150. This phase is represented by a zone of flattened bedrock, an associated storage pit cut into the bedrock and holes within the bedrock, which in all likelihood were used for grinding. The implication is that the area was used for agricultural purposes, but as there were no material culture remains in association with this, it is not possible to be more precise in the date.

The *khirbeh* was built directly on the bedrock. Although no evidence was found, it is likely that the bedrock was levelled for the construction of the walls. No foundation trenches were present in the probe trenches. The interior probe, along with the exterior probe, point to a construction date of ca. A.D. 150, dated by the presence of a late, spatulate-spouted Roman lamp. A storage jar, dating to the same period, was found crushed *in situ* in the interior probe. A tower was added to the north-east corner of the *khirbeh* between A.D. 150 and A.D. 300. The tower measures 4.50 m. north-south and 4.50 m. east-west. Both the tower and the *khirbeh* were filled with debris dating to the period between A.D. 150 to A.D. 300. The debris consisted of burnt mud-brick, limestone rubble and pottery. It is likely that the *khirbeh* was destroyed. No occupational layers following this date were found, although the survey of the *khirbeh* indicates continued use of the installation.

Conclusions

It is the generally held opinion that all of the *khirab* and *rujum* surrounding Amman relate to the Iron Age city of Rabboth-Ammon and were, essentially, a series of watch towers surrounding the ancient city. This, however, does not seem to be the case with three of the six excavated and reported sites. First, although the area of Khirbet Salameh does have a pre-Roman use, the actual *khirbeh* was not built until the Roman period; and,

5. Mary Metzger of the University of Arizona has completed the faunal analysis for the monograph.

it functioned as a farmstead as opposed to a paramilitary installation. The site of Rujm el-Malfuf (north), excavated by Roger Boraas, has both an Hellenistic and Roman use. Boraas does not really state when he thinks the *rujm* was built. Henry O. Thompson's excavations of Rujm el Malfuf (south) and Rujm el-Mekheizin both show foundations in early periods with continuity of use in the Roman and Byzantine periods. In both cases, the *rujm* seem to be founded in the seventh/sixth centuries B.C. Thompson's excavation of Khirbet el-Hajjar indicates a foundation in the twelfth/eleventh centuries B.C. with use in the seventh/sixth centuries B.C.⁶ What is becoming clear is that not all of the installations were built at the same time nor were they used during the same periods of time. It would appear that the history of the *rujum/khirab*, like the history

of Amman and Jordan in general, is far more multifarious than originally assumed.

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6. Roger Boraas, 'A Preliminary Sounding at Rujm el-Malfuf, 1969,' *ADAJ* XVI, (1971) p. 31-45.
Henry O. Thompson, 'The 1972 Excavation of Khirbet al Hajjar,' *ADAJ* XVII (1972), p. 47-72.

The reports on Rujm el-Malfuf (south) and Rujm el-Mekheizin by Thompson are both on file with the Department of Antiquities.