

## ISLAMIC SETTLEMENT IN UMM QAYS (GADARA)

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All the major cities of the Roman period in Jordan continued to flourish during the Byzantine period, and the major Byzantine sites such as 'Ammān (عمّان), Jarash (جرش), Umm al-Jimāl (أمّ الجمال), Umm Qays (أمّ قيس), Ṭabaqat Faḥl (طبقة فحل), and Umm ar-Raṣāṣ (أمّ الرصاص) continued to be occupied into and through the Umayyad period (Sauer 1982).

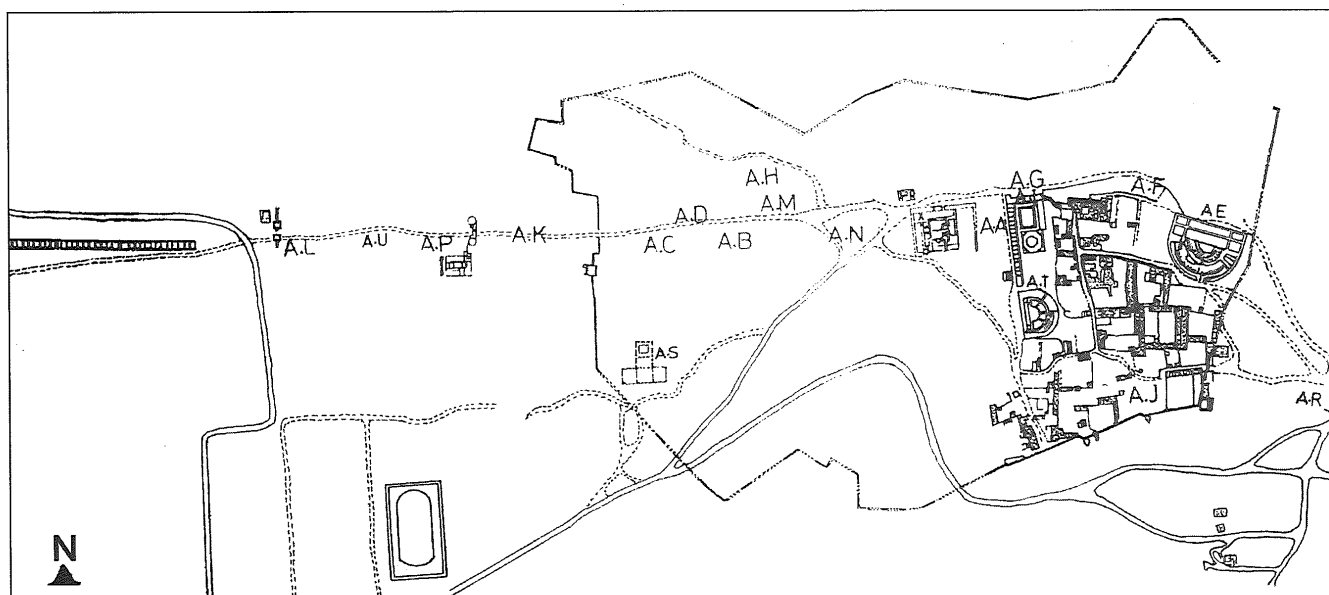
Elsewhere in the north of Jordan, four towns were mentioned by the Arab geographers as existing during the Islamic period: Umm Qays (Jadar جدر), Quwaylibah (أبيل، قويلبه), Bayt Rās (بيت راس) and Jarash. Each of these towns is better known as a Classical site with continuation into the Byzantine and Umayyad periods (Whitcomb 1992: 387).

Classical Muslim historians refer to Jordan in the seventh century as "*Jund al-Urdun*" (جند الاردن). By order of Prophet Muḥammad, two campaigns were waged against this *Jund* which was mostly inhabited by Arab tribes. Although these two campaigns failed to conquer any part of the land, they paved the way for the coming expedition at the time of the first caliph Abū Bakr, who sent an army under the leadership of Shuraḥbīl b. Ḥasna and achieved complete success (Al-Bakhit 1982: 361).

The Muslim conquests of Jordan and Palestine

lasted from AD 630 to 640, while Jordan was completely annexed in AD 636, after the Byzantine armies were defeated at the Battle of Yarmūk (معركة اليرموك). This was followed by a brief period of Arab rule prior to the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty in Damascus in AD 661. During the Umayyad period (AD 661-750), Jordan was close to the center of power, and was also positioned on the pilgrimage route to Arabia, so Jordan continued to prosper. Judging from the archaeological evidence, the Umayyad period was one of widespread activity in Jordan. Many Byzantine sites seem to have continued to be occupied or have been reoccupied during the Umayyad period, and a number of new sites were founded (Sauer 1986: 304).

At the end of the Umayyad period, Jordan was rocked by a strong earthquake in AD 749. Archaeological field surveys of different regions of Jordan show similar variations in settlement numbers throughout the Islamic centuries. The number of sites peaked in Byzantine times, and declined by more than 50% under the Umayyads. Abbasid sites are completely absent from some survey areas, and in others declined by more than 50%. In all regions, the number of Ayyubid/Mamluk sites increased. For the Ottoman period, there was considerable variation from region to region (Johns 1992: 363).



1. Umm Qays city plan.



2. A small Umayyad mosque in area (B).



3. Sun clock (*mazwala*) in the middle of the sanctuary.

### The Umayyad Period (AD 661-750)

The recent excavations conducted by the Department of Antiquities at Umm Qays (on-going since 1999; Fig. 1) indicate that the site continued to be occupied into the Umayyad, Abbasid, Ayyub-

id/Mamluk and Ottoman periods.<sup>1</sup>

The excavations uncovered a number of domestic structures of the Umayyad period. Several isolated structures were situated just above the *Decumanus Maximus*, most of which rested on a layer of compact soil (ca. 20-60cm thick) that separated them from the pavement. This indicates the cancellation of the street function in the Umayyad period.

The structures were made primarily of stones taken from the colonnaded street. They extended from the western area to the Tiberias Gate. The plans and the building techniques are very simple, indicating it was most probably a popular area.

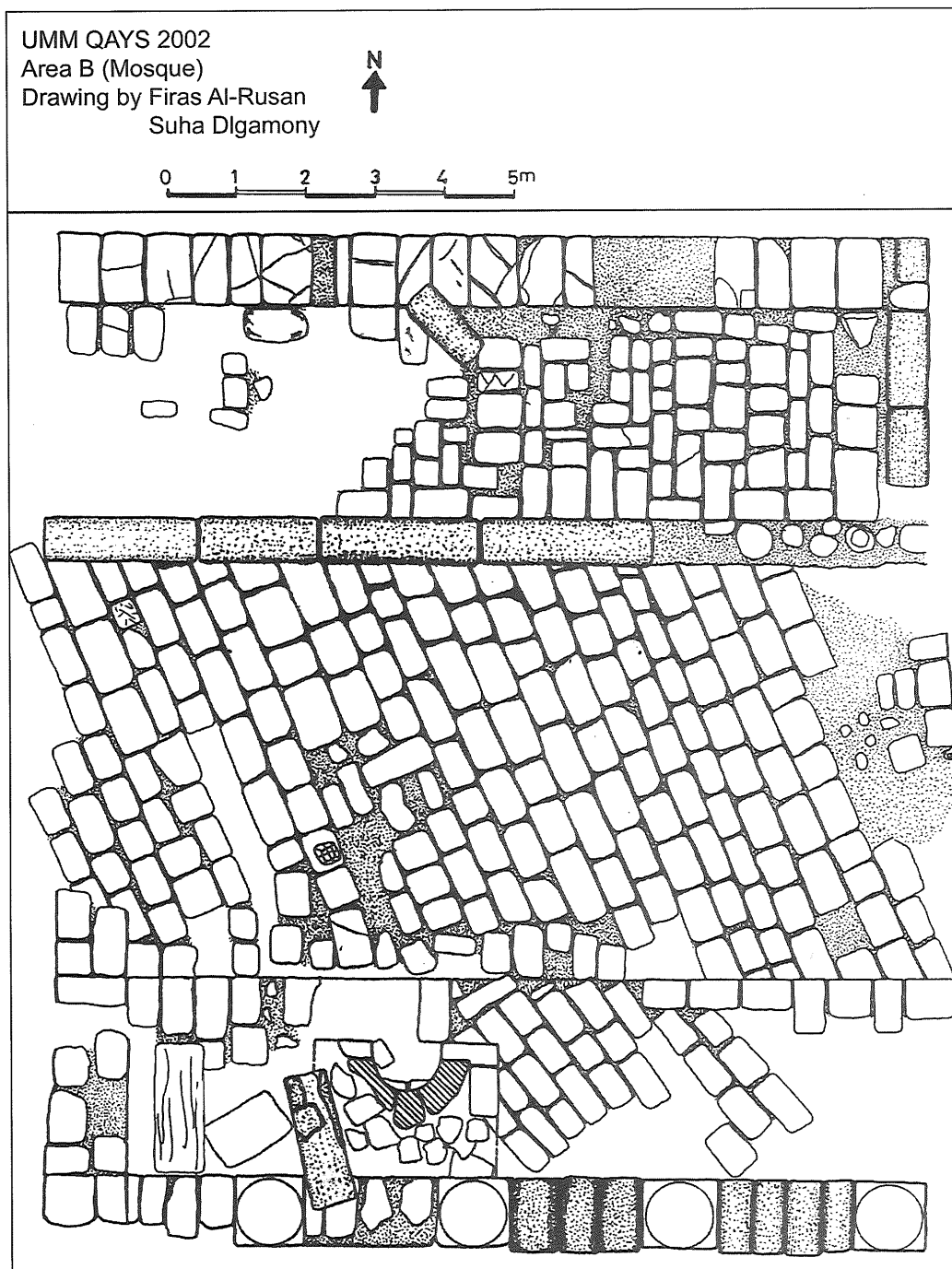
A mosque was part of the Umayyad complex in area (B), near the temple. The plan of this mosque is rectangular, measuring approximately 10x15m. It consists of a sanctuary with a semi-circular *mihrāb* in the middle of the *qibla* wall. It is possible that the *mihrāb* was taken from the Nymphaeum and reused in this mosque (Fig. 2).

In the middle of the sanctuary, a sun clock (*mazwala*) that was used to show prayer times was found carved on the pavement (Fig. 3). The mosque was built with reused stones from the colonnaded street. It is possible that the mosque was without a roof, built in an open area (Fig. 4). Most of the collected pottery sherds are Umayyad in date.

On the opposite side, there is a semi-circular church that dates back to the sixth century AD. There is evidence for the continuation of use of the church during the Umayyad period, as Umayyad pottery was found on top of the mosaic floors.

1. See unpublished report in Arabic (the work of excavations and restorations in Umm Qays 2000-2001) by Obydat, Taw

albeh, Malkawi, Fayad and Owysi. On file at the Department of Antiquities/ Ammān and Umm Qays Antiquities Office.



4. Top plan, area (B).

The Byzantine baths were also reused as dwellings during the Umayyad period. An inscription from one of the Roman baths of Hammat Jadar (الحمّة السورية) in the Yarmūk Valley gives details of the refurbishment of these facilities under the Caliph Mu'āwiyah in 42 AH/AD 662 (Green and Tsafir 1982: 77; Johns 1992: 368).

During the excavations at Umm Qays, a large collection of Umayyad pottery sherds was found together with coins in the domestic complex structures located on the colonnaded street (area K), the semi-circular church (area M), and the large bath

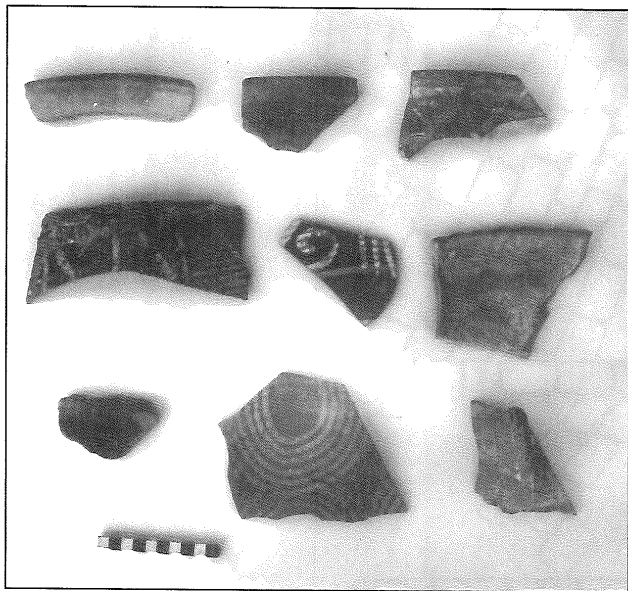
building (area S) (Fig. 5). Umayyad pottery from various areas at Umm Qays was attested in large quantities, thus indicating the widespread activity at this site. The pottery from the lowest levels consisted of a mixture of Roman, Byzantine and Umayyad sherds.

During excavation at the large bath building in area (S), a fine collection of complete Umayyad pottery vessels was found together with Umayyad coins in sq. (15) loc. (004) (Fig. 6). As Umayyad pottery was found beneath Roman and Byzantine remains, it is possible that the loci and walls date to

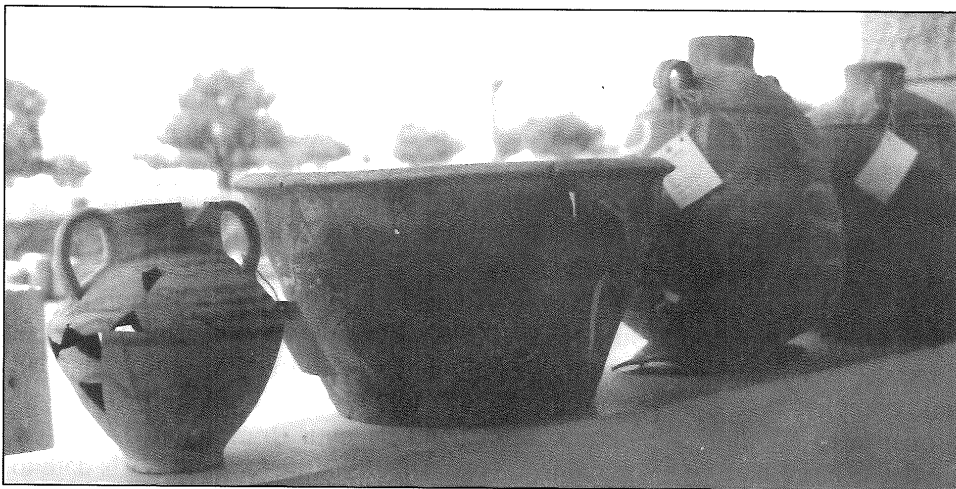
the Byzantine period and were resettled through Umayyad period.

Umayyad pottery from Umm Qays is very distinctive: ribbing is found on cooking pots, jars, and jugs; the exteriors of jars and jugs are often decorated with red painted loops, spirals, and wavy and crossed lines. White paint is also found on black ribbed large jars. Incising and wavy line combing are common on basins and large jars, and zigzag incising on black basins.

As for the Umayyad coinage (Fig. 7), the early Caliphs contented themselves with the foreign coinage already in circulation in the empires seized by them. Shortly after the Muslims conquered Bilād ash-Shām, a group of anonymous copper coins were struck bearing varied inscriptions, some in Greek, others in Arabic, and some bilingual (Goussous 1996: 43). Numerous Umayyad coins were found at Umm Qays in different areas (B, K, M), dating from the early as well as the late Umayyad period.



5. Umayyad pottery sherds.



6. A collection of restored Umayyad pottery, from area (S).

### The Abbasid Period (AD 750-969)

Several scholars who wrote about the Abbasid period did not give a clear idea about it, and postulated a sharp decline following the Umayyad period (see for example Sauer 1986: 304; Johns 1992: 363 and re-evaluation by Whitcomb 1992).

These hypotheses changed in the recent decades, due to excavations at various sites in Jordan. The Islam cultural heritage of north Jordan has received belated recognition in the last two decades. Excavations at Ṭabaqat Faḥl, Bayt Rās, Jarash and Umm Qays have identified a continuous urban tradition into the second and third centuries AH (eighth and ninth AD) (Walmsley 1982: 379), while the evidence from written archaeological sources attests to the continued settlement of Faḥl, Jarash, Bayt Rās, Abīl and Jadar through the Abbasid and Fatimid periods (Walmsley 1982: 382).

The recent excavations at Umm Qays, areas (B, C, K and S), revealed a few Abbasid pottery sherds mixed with Byzantine and Umayyad (Fig. 8), thus giving evidence of continued settlement during the Abbasid period, and negating abandonment at the end of the Umayyad period (after the earthquake of AD 749). However, the Abbasid settlement was limited in extent.

The Abbasid pottery sherds include distinctive forms in a white ware. Among the decorative types are elaborate cut-wares, and raised rouletted or molded geometric patterns. The Abbasid pottery is thinner and smoother than the Umayyad pottery in its surface incised band combing.

### The Ayyubid/Mamluk Period (AD 1174-1516)

In 1187, the Ayyubid leader Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn defeated the Crusaders at the Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn, and from that time Jordan was again in Arab hands.

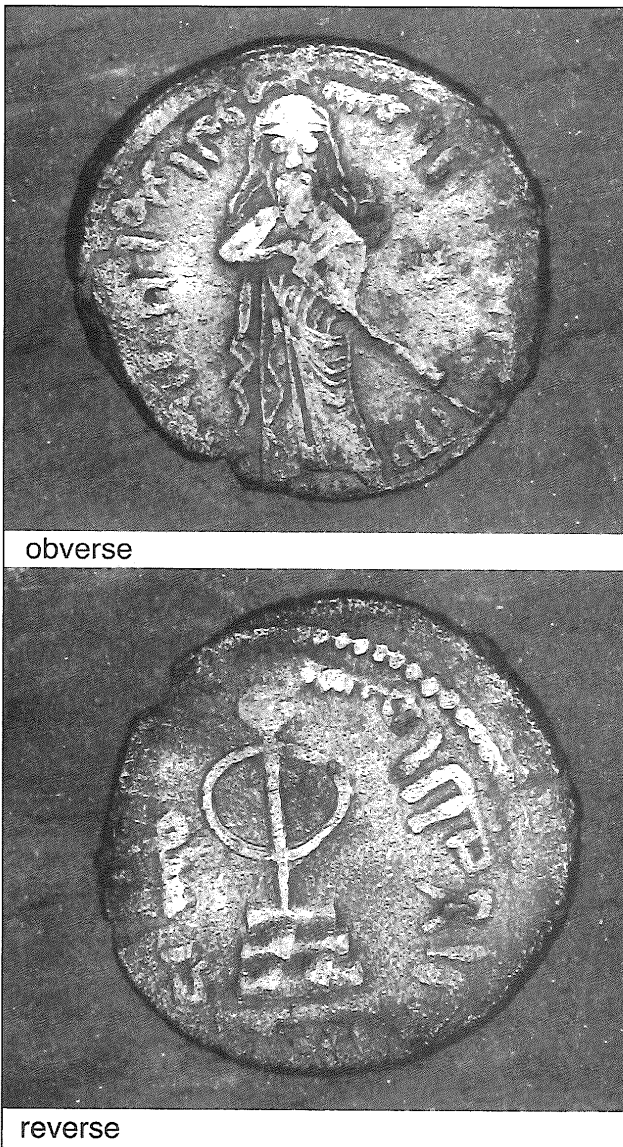
Although several old classical sites remained uninhabited, a large number of Ayyubid/Mamluk sites



testify to the high level of activity throughout Jordan during this period (Sauer 1982: 334).

The fall of the Crusader states led to a renewed link between Syria and Egypt and a new era of prosperity under the Ayyubids and Mamluks, so that from ca. 1200 there was a great increase in population and density of settlement (Whitcomb 1992: 385).

Ayyubid/Mamluk remains have been found at Umm Qays at areas (P, U, and L), in the western sector between the Tiberias Gate and the Monumental Gate (Fig. 9). Both the Ayyubid and the Mamluk periods are represented, and continuity of development characterizes the two periods. Numerous Ayyubid-Mamluk coins are attested from the various excavations, but more important is what



7. Arab-Byzantine copper coin from area (P), sq. 2 loc. 00. Obverse: standing caliph bearing the name of 'Abd al-Malik; reverse: shaft with globe on top, Kufic script "bis-millah lā ilāha illā Allah waḥdahū".

was found in area (P) sq. (11) loc. (002): a small jar that contained 533 coins, 528 of them are silver and the five others are gold Crusader coins (Fig. 10).

Stratigraphically, the Ayyubid/Mamluk remains were found above the Roman street, set above the pavement. The excavations provided stratified evidence of Ayyubid/Mamluk occupation in areas (P) and (U) in the form of *tawābīn* pits and ash, thus providing evidence for domestic occupation in the Ayyubid/Mamluk period.

In area (P), there is evidence for the reuse of the church above the underground mausoleum during the Ayyubid Mamluk period, which was converted to a mosque.

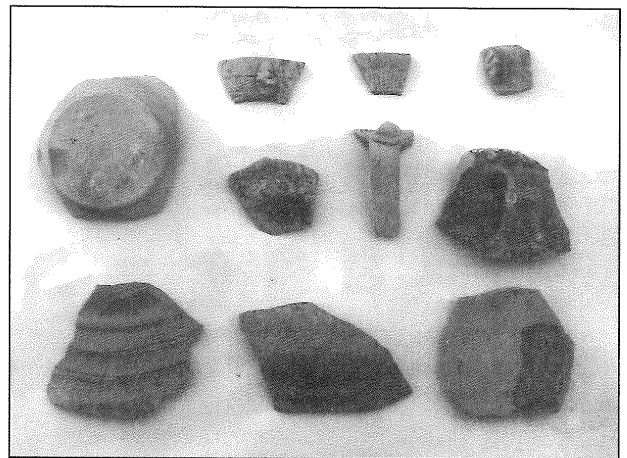
Ayyubid/Mamluk pottery is very different in character from the Umayyad and Abbasid. A large percentage of Ayyubid/Mamluk pottery is hand-made, sometimes using pieces of cloth in the production process. Some of the vessels are wheel-made, and the glazed wares are made of well-prepared clays (Fig. 11). Much of the handmade pottery is decorated with dark brown or black painted geometric designs covering large areas of the vessels. Sugar pots are often widely ribbed (Fig. 12).

The glazed wares are often monochrome glazed in green, yellow or brown, and moulded designs are often present under the glaze.

#### The Late Ottoman Period

In AD 1516, the Mamluks were defeated by the Ottoman Turks and Jordan become part of the Ottoman Empire (Mousa 1982: 385; Yassine 1988: 272). The decisive battle took place on August 24, 1516, when the whole of Syria fell into Ottoman hands (Al-Bakhit 1982: 362).

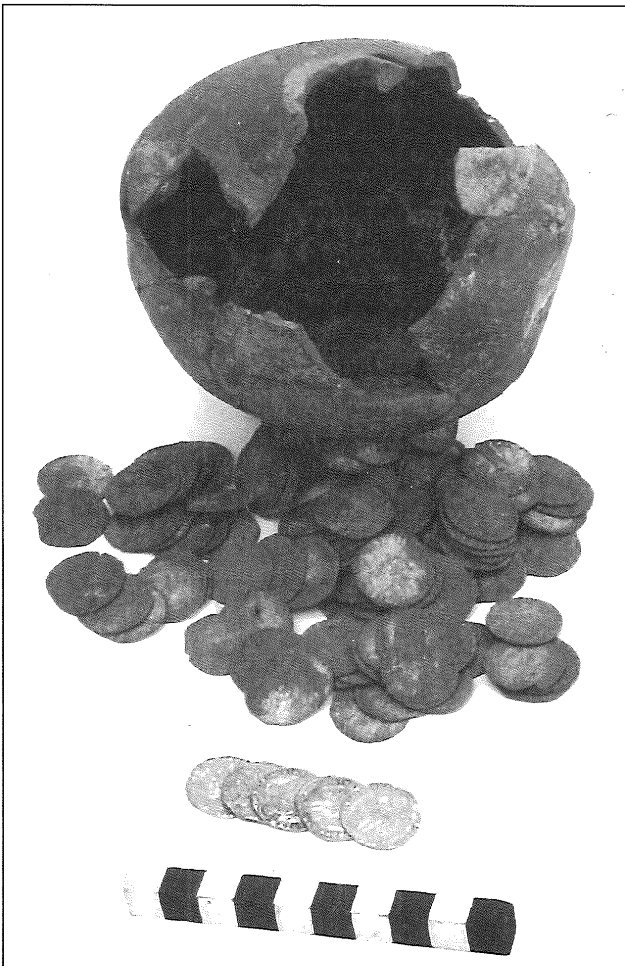
The Umm Qays acropolis hill is covered by the most complete Ottoman village in Jordan (Fig. 13).



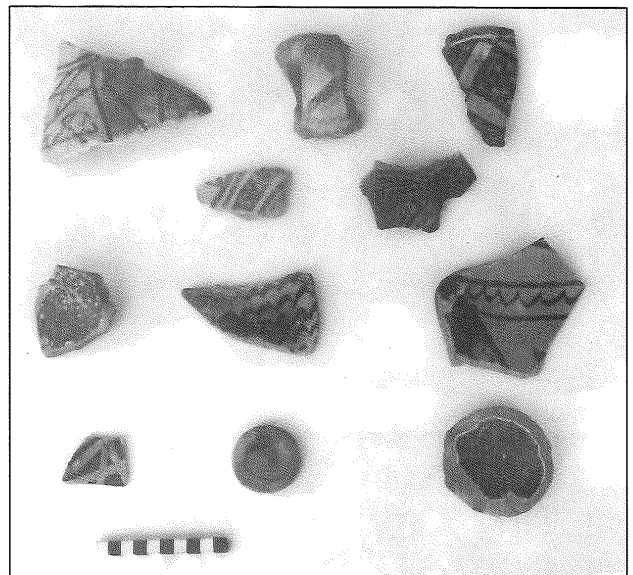
8. Abbasid pottery sherds.



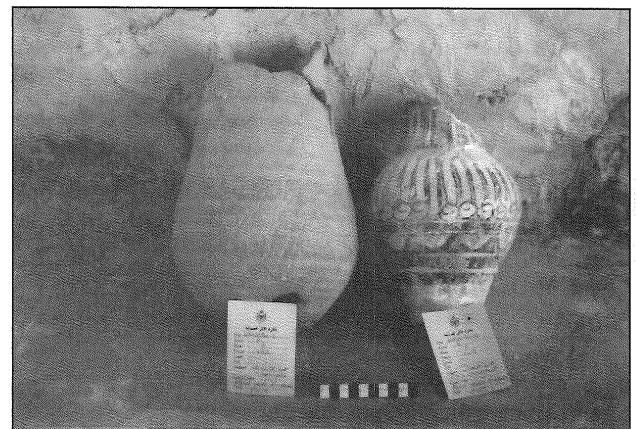
9. Domestic structure of the Ayyubid/Mamluk period in area (L), above the Decumanus Maximus.



10. Small jar that contained Ayyubid-Mamluk coins, from area (P) sq. (11) loc. (002).



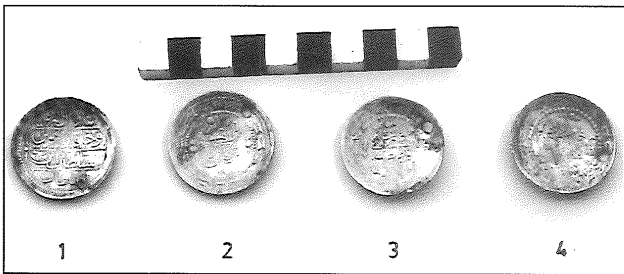
11. Ayyubid/Mamluk pottery sherds.



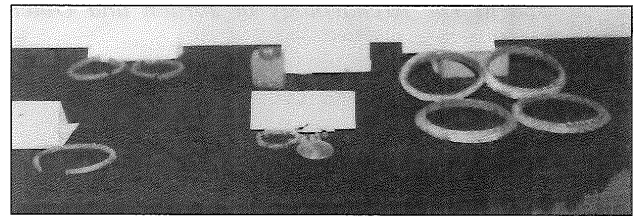
12. Ayyubid/Mamluk jars (sugar pot and glazed jar), area (S).



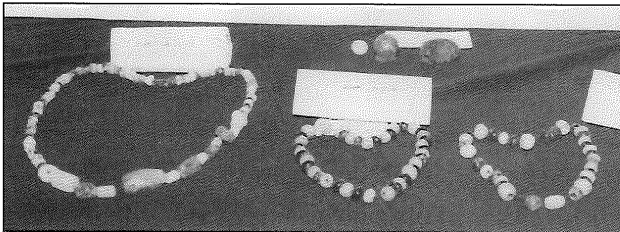
13. The village on the Umm Qays acropolis. Late Ottoman period.



14. Ottoman coins, areas (K, P).



16. Four glass bracelets, and metal bracelets, areas (K, P).



15. Bead necklaces, areas (K, P).

The prospects for analyzing the ancient city nucleus are rather limited, since the builders of the Ottoman village flattened large parts of the acropolis (Kerner 1994: 54).

The layout of the Ottoman village seems to follow the original urban plan. The Ottoman houses incorporate many re-used decorative stones from the Graeco-Roman cemetery, such as inscriptions, architectural ornaments and tomb lintels, and many house courtyards still preserve their *īwān* or reception room (Weber 1990: 16).

Trading activities are also evident in the late 19th century architecture of Bayt ar-Rūsān (بيت الروسان), particularly in the use of the crossvault

rather than the more typical north Jordanian system of transversal arches carrying a roof of wood beams. The second storey was added to the house when it served as official residence of Ottoman government's district magistrate (the *Kaimakam*). It has recently been restored and now serves as the site's archaeological museum (Weber 1990: 16).

During the excavation at the Decumanus Maximus in areas (K, P), numerous Ottoman coins dating to 1223 AH were found (Fig. 14). Additionally bead necklaces, bracelets and rings (Figs. 15, 16) that were found in tombs at area (K) sq. 32, tomb (1); sq. 38, tombs (1, 2); sq. 39, tomb (1) and area (P) sq. 5, tomb (1), suggest that it was a common traditions to bury the deceased with their jewelry in the late Ottoman period.

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