

THE 1992 SEASON OF EXCAVATION AT ABILA OF THE DECAPOLIS

by
W. Harold Mare

Introduction

The seventh season of excavation at Qweilbeh/Abila of the Decapolis, northern Jordan, was conducted from June 14 to August 1, 1992, with Dr. W. Harold Mare, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, as principal investigator. The excavation was under the gracious supervision of Dr. Safwan Tell, Director-General of the Department of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and assisted by Mr. Sultan Shureidah, the Irbid District Inspector of the Department of Antiquities and Department Representative for the 1992 Abila excavation season. This ancient site, with an archaeological history extending from about 3500 B.C. to A.D. 1500, is

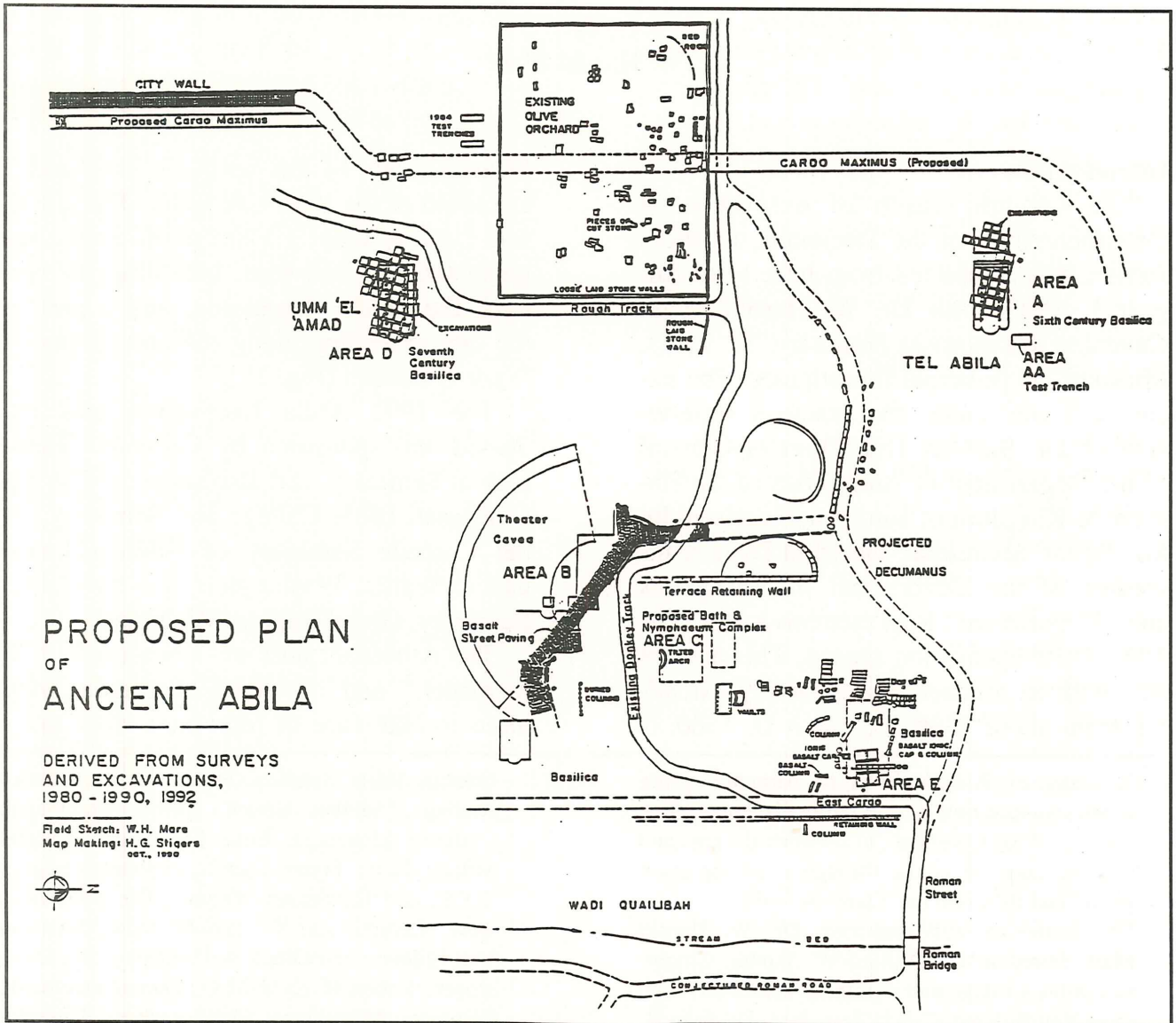
located about 14 km north of Irbid and 4 km south of the Yarmouk River. The site itself extends about 1.5 km north-south, and about 0.6 km east-west, including the two tells, the saddle depression, and a part of the city extending along the east slopes of Wadi Qweilbeh (Fig. 1).¹

The 1992 Abila Excavation was endorsed and sponsored by Covenant Theological Seminary, and also sponsored by the Cincinnati Bible College and Seminary, by the Cascade Seminary of Biblical Languages, Seattle, Washington, and by Calvin Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The American staff was composed of 30 members,² and 45 local workmen were hired to take care of important labor tasks

1. The waters of 'Ain Qweilbeh, the perennial spring at the southern foot of Tell Umm el-'Amad, flow north in Wadi Qweilbeh, in between the east and west sections of Abila, through a pomegranate grove, and then into the Yarmouk Valley.
2. The American staff included: Dr. W. Harold Mare, Director, Dr. Willard W. Winter, Cincinnati Bible College and Seminary, Ohio, Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen, Calvin Seminary, Dr. John R. Lee, St. John Fisher College, Rochester, NY, Dr. Robert H. Kyle, Covenant Seminary, Dr. Glenn A. Carnagey, Sr., Cascade Seminary of Biblical Languages, Seattle, Washington, Mr. Robert W. Smith, Miami University, Ohio, Mr. John D. Wineland, Miami University, Ohio, and Mr. Timothy Snow, Cincinnati Bible Seminary, as senior staff members. Staff members and their positions were as follows: Director, W. Harold Mare; Area Supervisors, John D. Wineland, Area A; Glenn A. Carnagey, Sr., Area AA; Bastiaan Van Elderen, Area B; John R. Lee, Area C; Willard W. Winter, Area D; Robert H. Kyle, Area E; Robert W. Smith, Area H-Tomb Excavation. Also Harold G. Stigers, Chief Architect and Surveyor, worked on the architectural materials that were brought back to the United States. Square Supervisors included: James Baltus, Robert Berry, Adam Chambers, Debborrah Benham, Daniel Dyke, Mark Evenhouse, Karen Gronauer, Ian

Guertin, Paula Harrison, Judith Herzog, Charles Kading, Shannon Knock, Steven McDougal, Clarence Menninga, Irene Menninga, Douglas Milam, Heidi Pryor, Patricia Seward, Gregory Smith, and Harrietann Weller. The Specialists were: Ceramicists, W. Harold Mare, Bastiaan Van Elderen, and Glenn A. Carnagey, Sr.; Osteologist, Robert H. Kyle, M.D.; Geoarchaeologist, Clarence Menninga; Photographer, Timothy Snow; Registrar, Adelaide Allenbaugh; Computer Imaging Expert, Daniel Dyke; Director of Computer Processing, Glenn Carnagey; Solar Panel Lighting Expert, Charles Kading; Draftsmen-Artists, several members of the staff; Educational Director, Willard W. Winter and Assistant, Gregory Smith. The Support Staff consisted of: Sultan Shureidah, Department of Antiquities Representative; Charles Kading, Camp Manager and assistants; and Robert H. Kyle, M.D., Medical Director; and the cook and his assistant. The Abila Excavation sincerely thanks all of the Abila staff, Dr. Safwan Tell, Sultan Shureidah, and all the Department of Antiquities staff for their dedicated efforts that made the Abila 1992 season an outstanding success. We also thank Dr. Wesley Ulrich, M.D. and Aileen Coleman, R.N. for all of their kindnesses to the excavation, including the storage of the Abila archaeological equipment at the Annoor Hospital in Mafraq.



1. Proposed plan of ancient Abila.

in the field. The Ministry of Education and the Department of Antiquities kindly arranged again for the staff to use the Khureibah Boys School, Mr. Ibrahim Mustafa Ibrahim, Principal, a school of Abila/Qweilbeh about 1.5 km to the south and well adapted to the research and housing needs of the excavation.

The objectives set forth in the Research Design for the 1992 season of excavation at Abila of the Decapolis as submitted to Dr. Safwan Tell, Director-General of the Department of Antiquities consisted of three main points: 1) research into the physical materials available at the site (i.e., ceramic

evidence, stratigraphic profile, architectural remains, human skeletal remains, geological, faunal and floral evidence, numismatic specimens, inscriptional evidence, soil analysis, etc.), which will help to understand the cultural history of the site); 2) cultural resource management involved in salvage archaeology, through retrieving and preserving as much as possible of the physical remains exposed or disturbed by unlawful digging and looting both on the site and in the necropolis; and 3) a well-planned and intensive educational program consisting of instructional sessions on the theory and techniques of excavating, bi-weekly

lectures in camp and a wide-ranging touring program on week-ends to the important archaeological sites in Jordan. The educational program also included provision for regular college or graduate school archaeological courses including a practicum in the field for which three to five hours of credit could be earned.

The 1992 Excavation at Abila of the Decapolis concentrated on the following areas of the site:

Area A:

The Excavation at the Tell Abila Basilica (John D. Wineland, Area Supervisor)

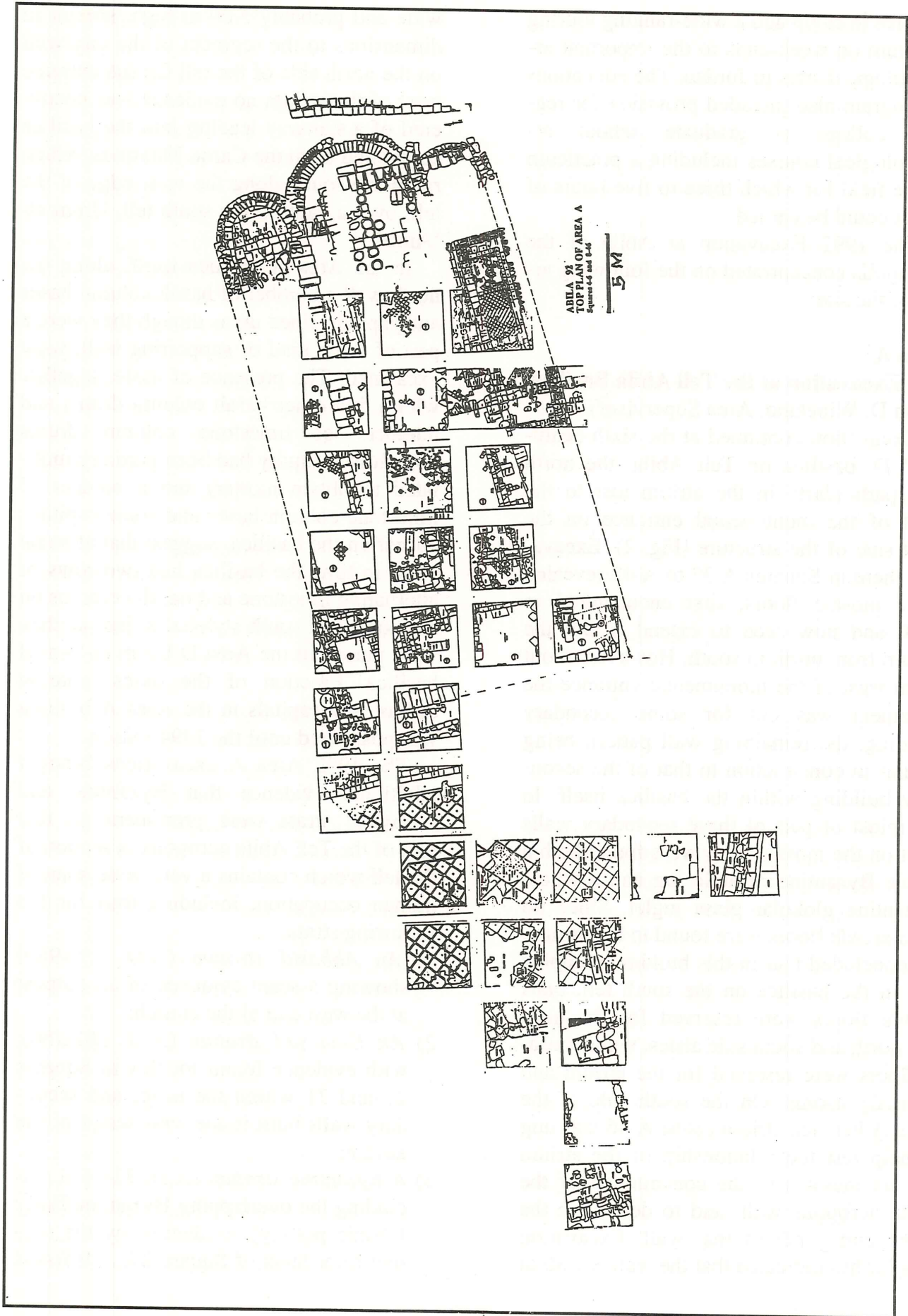
Excavation continued at the sixth century A.D. basilica on Tell Abila, the north tell, particularly in the atrium just to the west of the monumental entrance on the west side of the structure (Fig. 2). Excavation there in Squares A 37 to A 45 revealed more mosaic floors, first encountered in 1990 and now seen to extend across the atrium from north to south. However, about 15 m west of the monumental entrance the pavement was cut for some secondary building, the remaining wall pattern being similar in construction to that of the secondary building within the basilica itself. In the midst of part of these secondary walls built on the mosaic floor were found both a whole Byzantine ceramic jug and a whole Byzantine globular glass juglet. Since no *opus sectile* floors were found in the atrium, we concluded that in this building complex and in the basilica on the south tell, *opus sectile* floors were reserved for the nave and north and south side aisles, while mosaic floors were reserved for the atrium and auxiliary rooms. On the south side of the Area A basilica atrium probe A 46 was dug to help test the relationship of the atrium and its mosaics to the construction of the south acropolis wall, and to determine the width and depth of that wall. Excavation thus far has indicated that the wall is 1.80 m

wide and probably 5.00 m high, similar in dimensions to the segment of the city wall on the north side of the tell. On the extreme west of the atrium no evidence was uncovered of a stairway leading into the basilica compound from the *Cardo Maximus*, which ran north-south along the west edge of the tell, over a vault to the south tell, Umm el-'Amad.

In the Area A basilica itself, along the north wall a number of basalt column bases and capitals, lined up as though they were a part of some kind of supporting wall, were excavated. The presence of these, together with a few other basalt column drums and numbers of limestone column drums (which in antiquity had been partially mutilated to obtain mortar) and a number of limestone column bases and some capitals, all within the basilica, suggest that at some point in time the basilica had two rows of alternating limestone and basalt columns on the north and south stylobates, just as they were placed in the Area D Umm el-'Amad basilica. Erection of the bases, column drums, and capitals in the Area A basilica was postponed until the 1994 season.

The 1992 Area A excavations brought additional evidence that Byzantine and Umayyad strata were prominent on this part of the Tell Abila acropolis, a section of the tell which contains a very wide span of human occupation, including thus far the following strata:

- 1) *An Abbasid stratum* (A.D. 750-969) showing a scant evidence of an outpost at the west end of the church;
- 2) *An Umayyad stratum* (A.D. 661-750), with evidence found for this in Squares 27 and 31 within the nave, and secondary walls built in the west sector of the atrium;
- 3) *A Byzantine stratum* (A.D. 324-661, including the overlapping Byzantine/Early Islamic pottery), evidenced by the second floor level of Square 27, a different



ABILA 1992
TOP PLAN OF AREA A
Squares 4-4 and 4-4

5 M

2. Abila 1992: Area A, sixth century A.D. basilica. Top plan.

wall line in square 19, the Byzantine layers and courses of wall in Square 10, and the Byzantine jar and glass juglet found on the mosaic floor in A 39;

- 4) *A Roman/Hellenistic stratum* (250 B.C.-A.D. 324), evidenced by a large amount of pottery of these periods, especially in Square 19, and in capitals that showed a Roman construction;
- 5) *An Iron Age stratum* (1200-500 B.C.), with a good quantity of Iron Age pottery found in Square 10 (although not stratified);
- 6) *A Bronze Age stratum* (3100-1200 B.C.), with Early Bronze Age evidence in Square 10.

Area AA:

Tell Abila Probe, Northeast of the Area A Basilica (Glenn A. Carnagey, Sr., Area Supervisor)

Excavation in Area AA 1, in a 12 m deep trench, produced increasing evidence of Early and Middle Bronze loci, together with domestic structures. At the deepest levels Early Bronze (EB I) loci were uncovered, and about 7 m below ground surface a domestic living area; this evidence completes the sequence here of Early Bronze I, II, III, and IV, with EB I and EB IV now supported by domestic architecture. Also in AA 1, just to the north of the deepest trench and the Early Bronze wall there, excavation in a shallow probe down into this stratum produced a Middle Bronze I/IIA domestic floor surface and a mudbrick layer constituting a second phase of occupation, with a third phase of occupation found in a white limestone cement-like surface at the bottom of the mudbrick floor, a surface which was associated with a large quantity of EB IV pottery.

Additional AA squares opened just to the east of the deep trench, revealed in the

northwest corner of AA 8 that the Byzantine water channel, first uncovered in previous seasons in AA 7, was abruptly interrupted by other Byzantine installations that included evidence of at least four phases of Byzantine occupation, a part of which were a massive wall and a mortar platform. To the east of AA 1, in the more recent loci of AA 5, a Late Roman infant burial was excavated, and numerous tabuns or cooking areas were found in an east-west line in the south balk. In AA 4 (east of AA 2) parts of an Iron Age/Hellenistic wall³ were further probed. A new AA square was opened (east of AA3) to probe further into a large Umayyad building just east of the Area A basilica, but initial loci consisted of a jumble of building stone and rubble.

The Saddle Depression: Area B, The Theater Cavea (Bastiaan Van Elderen, Area Supervisor)

The 1992 excavation in Area B, the Theater cavea, located on the northeast slope of the south tell, Umm el-'Amad, at the south side of the saddle depression, reinforced the conclusion that materials thus far excavated have represented the following periods: 1) the Roman period evidenced by the reuse of classical architectural pieces in the later building built within the cavea and the Roman limestone street/plaza and threshold; 2) the Byzantine street, and possible basilica (reused in the later building), and an ecclesiastical complex; and 3) a later Umayyad structure built within the cavea (with later Abbasid and Mamluk reuse). Excavation of some of the massive overlay at the west end of the Umayyad building revealed a finely cut corner stairway (Square B 20), leading presumably into some room and/or building, but its exact context at present remains a mystery. The Department of Antiquities crane helped in this area of the exca-

3. Similar to the zigzag Iron Age/Persian wall found in Area C 2, 3, and 7 in the Hesban excavation,

Andrews University Seminary Studies 16 (1978), pp. 67, 68.

vation by removing a number of the large ashlar limestone blocks (in the area of Squares B 21 and 22, etc.). Excavation and clearing of the Byzantine basalt street that ran northwest-southeast in front of the fore-mentioned Umayyad building continued. Thus far 49 metres of this street have been exposed, 32.0 m in the 1990 season, and 10 m more on the north end and 7 m more on the southeast end in 1992 (Fig. 3). The clearance brought evidence modifying the earlier hypothesis regarding the direction the street took. At the northwest section of the street, excavation on both the south and north sides of the modern dirt path revealed that the street proceeded directly north (rather than west toward the western gate) across the saddle depression, probably to connect with the east-west Decumanus that ran just at the foot of Tell Abila. Extended sections of the street's curb stones were found on either side of the street in its very northern end and also some cross walks on

the west side of the street, leading to the suggestion that a series of shops lined the street on the west side. To the southeast, the basalt street ran along the north edge of the Umayyad building (obviously built after the street since it cut through a small section of the street on the south side), and extended over an earlier Roman limestone street/plaza, after which it made an abrupt 50 degree turn to the east to run just to the south of a corner column and wall and at the north foot of a small hill on which a single apse structure had been built. No doubt the basalt street continued east and then turned north again to run just to the east of the Area E basilica built at the bottom of the slope of the saddle depression.

Further exposure of the Roman limestone street/plaza which was equipped with finely cut stones and with door sockets further showed that the plaza was bounded on the west and on the east with walls. The wall on the west forms an acute angle with



3. Abila 1992: Central Civic Center, panorama. Foreground, Basalt Street; middle-ground, ruins of bath/Nymphaeum; background, Area E basilica.

a northwest-southeast wall that aligns with the semicircular hillside, suggesting that here was a doorway opening into a structure on the south, presumably the theater. The enclosing wall on the east of the limestone street/plaza extends south 5.0 m until it terminates at a corner column. On the north, the limestone street extends into the balk running under the modern dirt path, presumably toward the bath/nymphaeum complex. It may be that this street/plaza broadened out in the Roman period to cover a more extended area in front of the bath/nymphaeum complex. Initial probing to the south toward the cavea, beyond the limestone street/plaza's east enclosing wall, back toward the eastern corner of the theater cavea exposed a chamber or channel, but as yet no theater seats (such as those seen by G. Schumacher in 1888)⁴ were found.

The Saddle Depression: Area C, The Bath/Nymphaeum Complex (John R. Lee, Area Supervisor)

At the massive ruins of the bath/nymphaeum complex, located just to the north of the theater cavea, excavation was aided by the removal of jumbled ashlar blocks by the Department of Antiquities crane, so that the basic plan of the structure could be better analyzed. The removal of blocks in Square C2 helped to expose more of a well-preserved upright column that presumably stood on a floor below. This column may have been part of a room just inside the Area C 1 arch (excavated in 1990) located on its south. Further excavation in Square C 6 on the west edge of the structure revealed more of the small covered water channel running north-south which may have extended to the southwest edge of the bath/nymphaeum and turned

east along the south wall of the complex to empty its water through a sluice into the vault reservoirs there. In one of these vaults on the east edge of the complex two sluices are to be seen opening into the south wall of the vault/reservoir, adding support to the proposal that the sluices emptied large amounts of water coming from the two large underground Umm el-'Amad aqueducts that brought the water from the 'Ain Qweilbeh spring at the south foot of Umm el-'Amad and from the water resources within the hill and from farther south of Umm el-'Amad. Parts of two reused basalt sarcophagi were found in the western sector of this vault/reservoir complex which were possibly used to repair this part of the vault.

Also on the east wall toward the northeast corner of the bath/nymphaeum excavation in Square C 7 uncovered a complex of walls in the midst of which a large intact Umayyad storage jar was recovered. Approximately in the center of this east wall of the complex, under considerable rock debris, another arch and part of a domed vault were found, and initial excavation of this structure was undertaken. It is projected that the floor of this domed arch may be on the same level as the floor on which the upright column rested in nearby Square C2 just to the southwest, suggesting that all of this was a large domed room in this part of the complex.

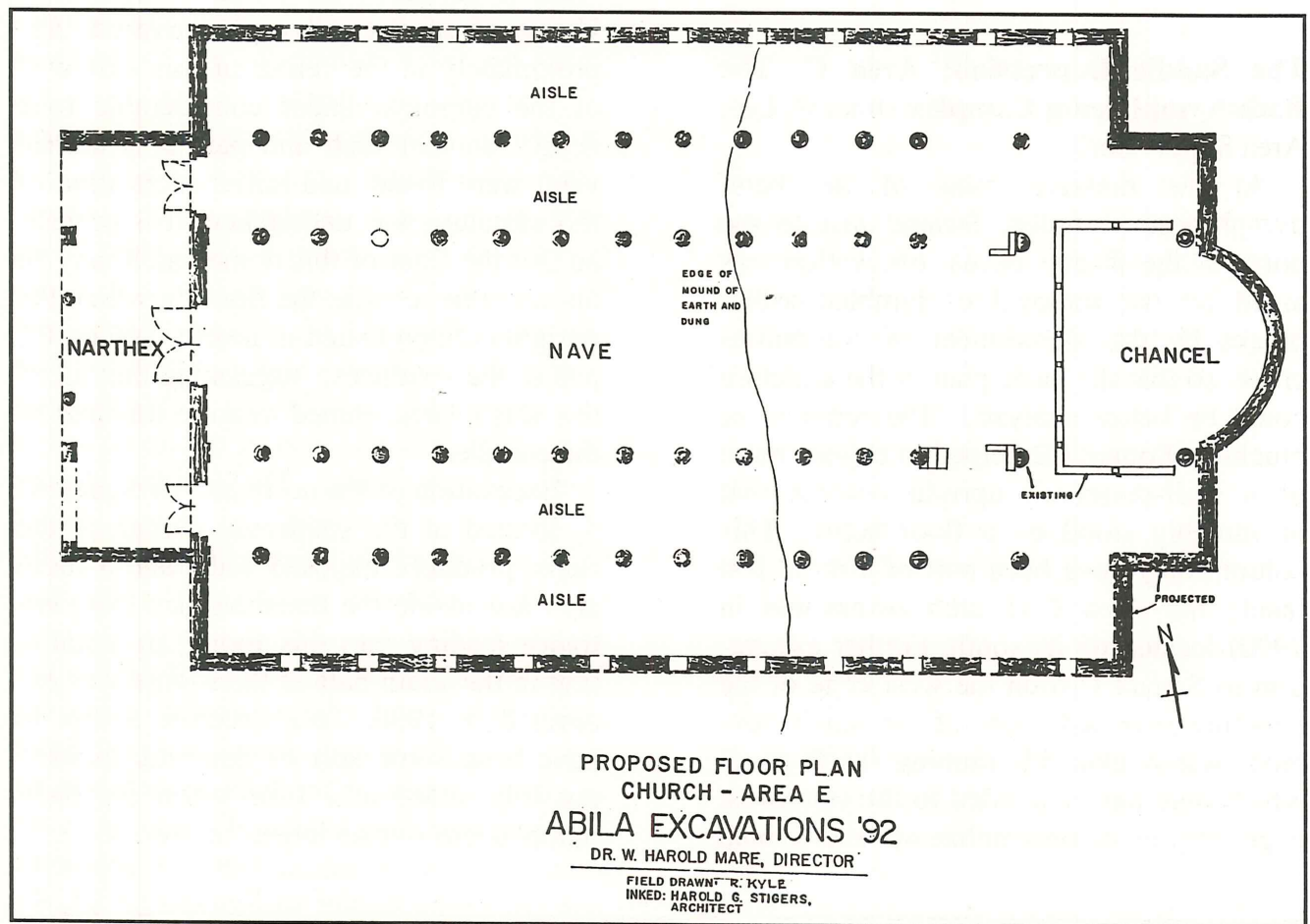
Excavation of the north half of Square C 5, located at the southwest corner of the ruins, produced exposed walls and a room area just inside the threshold and door entrance leading into this room; an installation in the south half of the square was excavated in 1990. This structure seems to have been some sort of domestic quarter, possibly added at a time when the bath/nymphaeum was no longer in use.

4. G. Schumacher, *Abila of the Decapolis* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1889), p. 30.

The Saddle Depression: The Area E Basilica (Robert H. Kyle, Area Supervisor)

Excavation begun in 1990 continued in the Area E basilica (pottery evidence indicates it was in use in the Late Roman, Early and Late Byzantine, and on into the Umayyad periods), a structure built on the lowest terrace of the saddle depression, located about 50 m just to the northwest of the Area C bath/nymphaeum ruins and about 75 m west of the Roman bridge in Wadi Qweilbeh (Fig. 4). Additional basalt column drums and capitals were excavated in the eastern half of the basilica after massive amounts of overburden debris (coming from the slopes and tells above it) had been removed. The south half of the eastern central apse (Square E 9; the northern half in Square E 1 had been excavated in 1990) was excavated revealing further basalt column drums and an Ionic capital that were

part of a column that stood on the southwestern corner of the apse. In Square E 8, just to the west of the south half of the central apse, the southern sector of the full three-sided iconostasis foundation was uncovered, in a central section of which on the west side the stone was cut to receive altar posts inscribing a central entrance way into the altar area. Working in the nave just to the west of the extended areas of the apse, along the line of the north and south stylobates, we uncovered some of the north and south stylobate plinth blocks, some with their column bases *in situ* and spaced at regular intervals. The first two columns, one each on the north and south stylobates, at the western extension of the apse were column piers with Ionic capitals (engaged columns). In addition, we excavated to the north and the south of the central nave and uncovered additional basalt column drums



4. Abila 1992: Area E basilica. proposed floor plan.

and capitals belonging to two additional rows of columns, one on the north and the other on the south of those bounding the central nave. The bases for these rows of columns were *in situ* and parallel to the extant inner rows of bases and columns, indicating that the basilica had five aisles; a central nave, and two side aisles on either side. In addition, we found two marble capitals, Corinthian in style, in the debris: these architectural pieces may have been part of an earlier Christian basilica or temple that were then reused in the later structure. Further excavation will be needed for additional clarification.

Near the end of the excavation season, with the help of the Department of Antiquities crane, we erected all the columns and capitals of the basilica thus far excavated that were found in the eastern half of the structure.

Surface evidence of a semicircle of cut stones just outside the south wall of the basilica, in a position parallel to the iconostasis foundation, suggests the possibility that the basilica was cruciform in design.

Initial surface investigation of the road running west from the Roman bridge along the north side of the Area E basilica revealed evidence of the tops of column drums projecting from the road surface at intervals along this road, a fact suggesting that this Decumanus in ancient times was lined with columns. There is evidence of an extension of this Decumanus running south just to the east of the apse of the Area E basilica, and pottery evidence coming from an area just outside this apse indicates that the street was maintained through the Abbasid period.

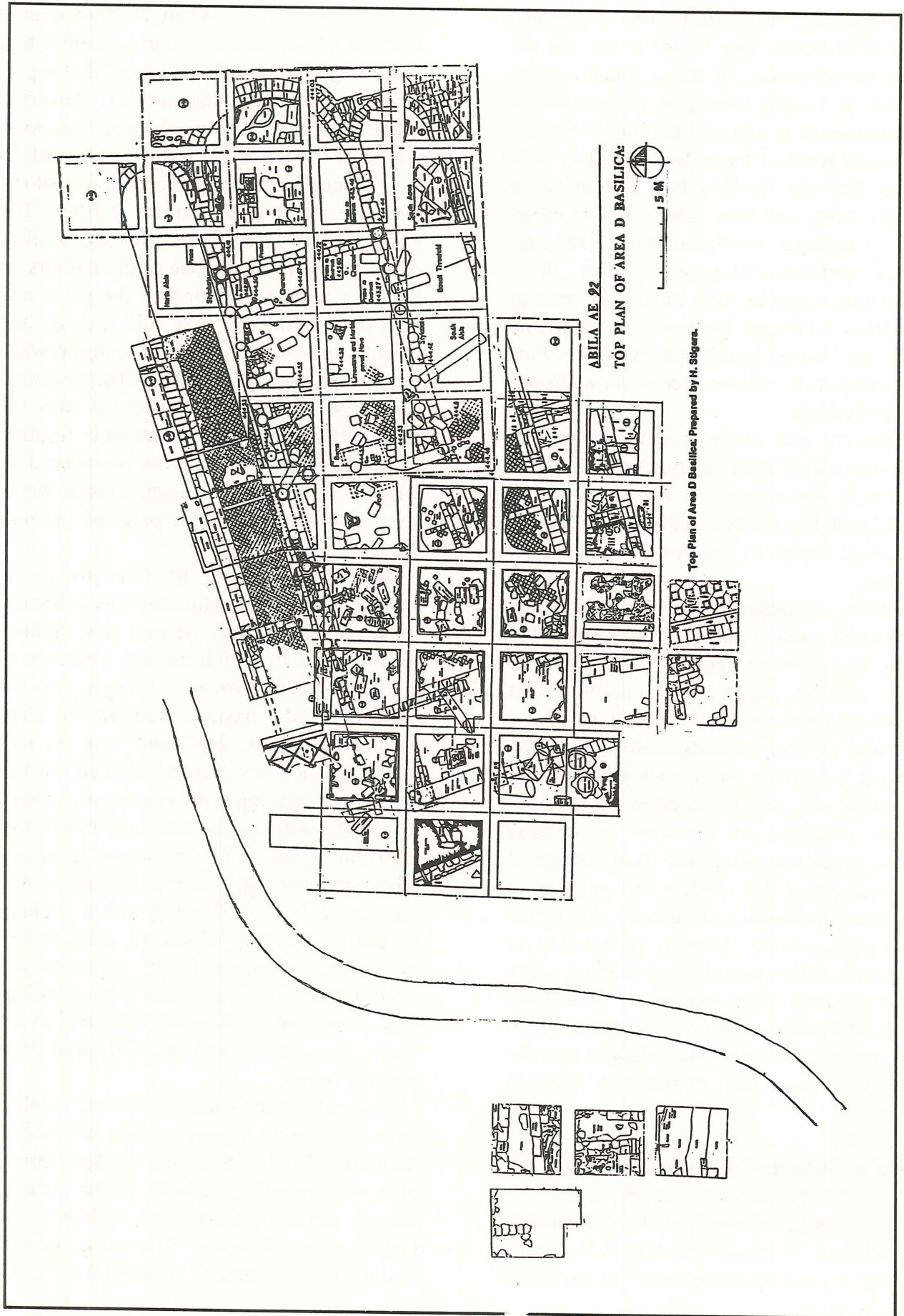
Umm el-'Amad: The Area D Basilica (Willard W. Winter, Area Supervisor)

In the 1992 excavations at the Umm el-'Amad Area D seventh century A.D. basilica (Fig. 5), we continued work in the north

aisle of the structure, where additional large sections of *opus sectile* flooring were found extending west as far as the wall that separated the aisle from the narthex. An additional threshold, leading through the north wall into the north aisle was uncovered, as well as another threshold for a door that entered the north aisle from the narthex. The evidence thus far indicates that the basilica could be entered from one of three doors on the west (a central door into the nave, and side doors into the two side aisles), and through one of two doors through the walls on the north and the south of the structure. Just west of the west threshold into the north aisle a section of mosaic flooring with geometric design was uncovered in Area D 54. In earlier seasons mosaic floors were also found in other parts of the narthex.

Across the modern dirt road just to the west of the monumental columns at the entrance of the basilica, several new squares were opened to search for any evidence of a monumental stairway leading up to the entrance of the basilica through the large entrance columns, but there was no evidence of such a structure. Instead, secondary walls running north-south were found just to the west of the basilica, and in this sector in Square D 77, on a lower level, another apse with an eastern orientation was uncovered. Mosaic flooring with a geometric design was laid within the apse, and to the south, in Square D 78, more mosaic floor with a diamond and flower design was uncovered. In Square D 75, still to the south, an extended section of Roman drain tile was found.

Just outside the south wall of the basilica there was found a large section of mosaic, including floral and animal designs. Some of it was found in the balk, which was removed, adjoining Square 49, adding to the large section of mosaic floor of geometric design found earlier in Squares D 27, 43,



ABILA AE 92
TOP PLAN OF AREA D BASILICA

Top Plan of Area D Basilica. Prepared by H. Stigera.

5. Abila 1992: Area D, seventh century A.D. basilica. Top plan.

44, 45 and 48, and other mosaic flooring with a heart, basket, and flower design found in a part of D 44 and 48. This auxiliary area adjoining the south wall of the church may have been living quarters for the religious officiants, or functional rooms for storage of religious vestments, etc. Nearby in Square D 51 large quantities of ceramic roof tile were found, indicating that the basilica, which was probably two-tiered, was covered by a roof of ceramic tiles, supported by wooden rafters. Recesses cut into one or two of the column drums are evidence of this.

No further sections of column drums or capitals were found in the porch area of the basilica beyond those segments found in earlier seasons that belonged to the four monumental columns/capitals. Near the end of the season with the help of the Department crane we erected the remaining column drums and capitals that belonged to the four columns at the entrance of the porch (Fig. 6), and we also placed an assorted number of scattered smaller column drums on the wall separating the porch from the nave and side aisles to preserve them from vandalism. Those column drums may originally have adorned a pediment on the facade of the basilica.

In the central and north apses of the Area D basilica, in Squares D 40 and D 21, the small platform composed of small columns and other stones build within the apse was



6. Abila 1992: Area D basilica, restoration, looking east.

partly dismantled to see if there was a martyrrium beneath it, but no evidence of this was found.

Tomb Excavations, Area H (Robert W, Smith, Area Supervisor)

Tomb excavations in 1992 concentrated on the Area H cemetery, located on the east slope of Wadi Qweilbeh just to the northeast of Tell Abila. A total of 74 tomb complexes and graves have been excavated since the beginning of the excavation. The 1992 excavation included ten Roman and Byzantine tomb complexes (some with central chamber and radiating loculi) and graves (shaft graves). Of the six shaft graves, some had ledges and sealing stones (H 30, 34, 35), some were shallow (H 29, 33, 37), while others were deep (H 30, 34, 35). The workmanship varied, in one case shoddy (H 33), in another superior (H 30). Overall, these graves, with their sparse and less elegant grave goods, in a context of surrounding Late Roman tombs, give evidence that they were used by less affluent citizens of Abila.

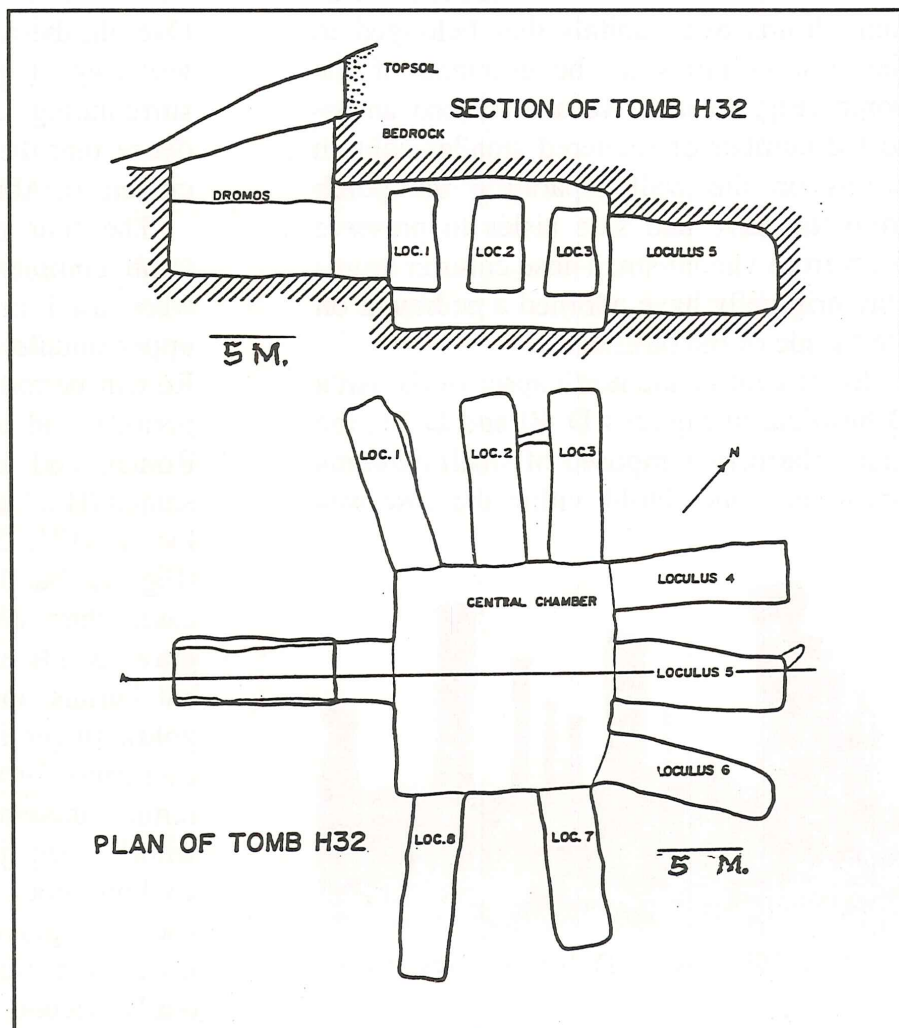
The four central-chamber, multi-burial tomb complexes (H 28, 31, 32 and 38), were used primarily by the middle and upper middle class citizens of Abila in the Roman period (including the Early Roman period), and in secondary use in the Late Roman and Byzantine periods. Two had sumps (H 31 and 38), all four had radiating loculi: H31, 32, and 38 had eight loculi (Fig. 7), but H 28 had only two. In most cases they contained the usual array of grave goods expected in moderately affluent burials, including earrings (sometimes gold), finger rings, metal rings; and other fragments for wooden coffins, glass and ceramic unguentaria, glass beads, spindle whorls, bag jars, lamps, bronze hairpin, cooking pots, bracelets, etc. The pottery and other grave goods in H 31 indicate that it was first used in the Early Roman period (early second century A.D.); it also evi-

denced typical Roman burial practices in the use of bag jars (more than 12 such jars were found in H31, two of which contained inscribed names on the side) and unguentaria, personal jewelry, and representative items such as spindle whorls and surgical instruments belonging to a medical practitioner. The Dionysos/Bacchic motif in the engraved *intaglio* finger ring gemstone (cf. the Dionysos figurine found in the Early Roman Tomb H2 in 1982) and the egg shell, which may be symbolic, point to belief in rebirth. Skeletal remains of over 200 individuals, males and females, ranging in age from fetuses to elderly were identified, but in many cases the remains were poorly preserved. One tomb, H 32, was first used in the first century B.C. and continued in use into the Byzantine period.

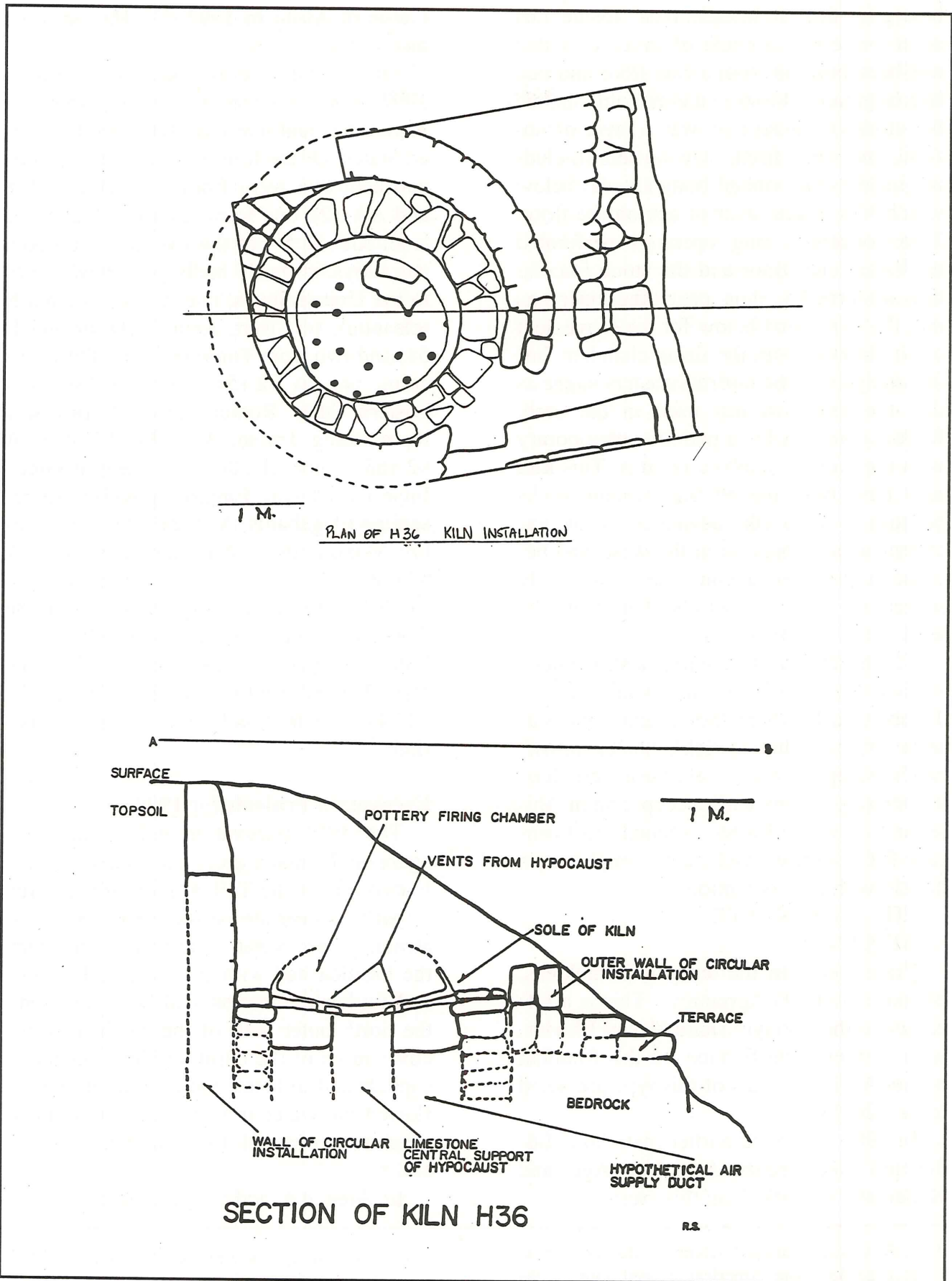
Three special installations in the Area H

cemetery were investigated. Two were terrace installations connected with tombs: H 39 consisted of temenos walls for a private tomb precinct in the Byzantine period (a Byzantine cooking pot was found here); and H 40 consisted of terrace walls 10 meters apart making an access to a temenos walled burial site.

The third installation (H 36) was a pottery kiln, the first of its kind to be found at Abila (Fig. 8). It, too, was located on the east slope of Wadi Qweilbeh in Area H, positioned near the crest of the slope among large elaborate tombs. Although part of the kiln structure had collapsed down the steep wadi slope, enough remained to identify the following features. First was an outer circular stone walled structure with mortared joints on the interior where the flat stones had turned to a



7. Abila 1992: Tomb H 32, section and top plan.



8. Abila 1992. Kiln installation H 36. Top plan and section drawing.

blue-gray due to intense heat. Inside this outer circle was a circle of baked clay that had been built up from a clay floor and that had originally closed in a clay dome. Inside the circle of baked clay was a layer of unfired, and some fired, clay wasters (including handles and ribbed body sherds) below which was a thin layer of ash on the floor. Two concentric ring openings perforated the baked clay floor and the stone foundation underneath, thus providing openings into the hypocaust below for the movement of air flowing from the firing chamber. Initial analysis of the unfired wasters suggests that the kiln was last used in the early fourth century A.D., a period contemporary with the Area H tombs around it. This kiln may have been placed here among tombs because it could take advantage of the excellent wind supply from the west, and because it provided a convenient and ready source of ceramic vessels that could be used in the nearby tombs.

The tomb team's activities also included surface survey of the east wadi crest of Tomb Area H where they found numerous stone lithics including sickle blades, arrowheads, scrapers, cores, and basalt grinders, all pointing to very early occupation in Abila, and they also found a second-third century B.C. stamped Hellenistic amphora jar handle with the inscription:

ΕΠΙ ΔΑΜΟΚΛΕΥΣ
ΑΓΡΙΑΝΙΟΥ

Translated, "In the term of Demokleus, of (the month of) Agrianios". This is a reference to the Eponym Damokles of Rhodes, with further identification of the Rhodian month Agrianios. Jars of this type are dated to ca. 220-180.⁵

In 1988 we found earlier material (Middle and Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Hellenistic period) along this crest.

Coins of Abila in 1992 (W. Harold Mare and Michael Pfefferkorn)

Of the nine coins found at Abila in 1992; four were kept by the Department of Antiquities and five were taken to the United States. Of the four coins kept by the Department two were from Area AA (AA 8 and AA 12), one from Area A 39, and one from Area D 57; of the five coins (all copper alloys, all fairly badly preserved) taken to the United States, one was from Area B (cleanup), two from Area D (D 49 and D 51) and two from Tomb H 38. Of these five coins, one (A 92.151; Tomb H 38006) is Eastern Early Roman Imperial, probably representing Trajan, A.D. 98-117; one (A 92.168; Tomb H 38011) is Eastern Greek Imperial Roman Empire, possibly representing Elagabalus, A.D. 218-222, or possibly Maximinus I, A.D. 235-238; one (A 92.066; Area B cleanup) is Late Roman (probably fourth century A.D.) from the Greek East; one (A 92.103; D 49002), is Late Byzantine, representing Justin II (A.D. 565-578) and Sophia; and the fifth one (A 92.141; D 51002) is from the Umayyad period.

Excavation Projects for 1994

The 1994 excavation will concentrate again on the major areas excavated in 1992. Excavation at the Tell Abila basilica (Area A) will concentrate on the west side of the atrium to see what structural connections the basilica had with the *Cardo Maximus*, and further excavation will be made along the north outer wall of the basilica to uncover more of the basalt column bases and capitals and to locate the cistern into which flowed the water from the Byzantine plastered water channel, found in Area AA 6, 7 and 8.

In Area AA additional squares will be

5. V. R. Grace, 'Stamped Amphora Handles Found in 1923-33'. The American Expeditions in the Athenian Agora, 4th Report, American School of

Classical Studies at Athens, *Hesperia* 3 (1934), pp. 197, 219, 307.

opened to the east of AA 1, 2, and 3 to see how extensive the Iron and Bronze Age settlement there was; also squares will be opened farther south and east to uncover additional remains of the large Umayyad building there.

In the saddle depression between the two tells, excavation at the theater cavea will include major probes back into the cavea, including a probe at the crest of the cavea, to try to find remains of the theater seats and their foundation structures. Excavation at both the north and the southeast sections of the Byzantine basalt street will be made as well as a further probe at the earlier Roman plaza and threshold, both south back toward the cavea, and north toward the bath/nymphaeum.

In Area C, the bath/nymphaeum complex, excavation will be made in square C2 where the single column stands *in situ*, and elsewhere along the east and north edges of the complex including the domed vault on the east wall, to reach the floor and installation levels, which will help us to determine the full nature and function of the building.

In the Area E Byzantine basilica, work will concentrate particularly on the west section of the structure and to the north and south of the basilica to uncover any additional column and wall segments, to determine the length of the basilica, and to see if the structure is truly cruciform in design. Also further excavation within the basilica will be done to recover further architectural components, floor segments, and any additional religious equipment or instruments.

On the south tell, Umm el-'Amad, the excavation in Area D will be divided into two sectors; the one, Area D itself, will continue to probe in the seventh century A.D. basilica and its auxiliary rooms; and the other, Area DD to the west, will continue to excavate in the area where the apse on the lower level was found in the 1992 excavation.

Tombs along the ledges of Wadi Qweil-

beh will continue to be searched for and excavated, and again we will be looking for Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine tombs, as well as those of the earlier Iron and Bronze Ages.

Time permitting, we will also again investigate the Umm el-'Amad and Khureibah underground aqueduct system, concentrating on that segment near 'Ain Qweilbeh that connects the Khureibah Aqueduct to the Umm el-'Amad aqueducts.

Selected Finds From the 1992 Excavation at Abila of the Decapolis

(Listed by object number and area identification number).

Figs. 9 and 10 (Ceramics)

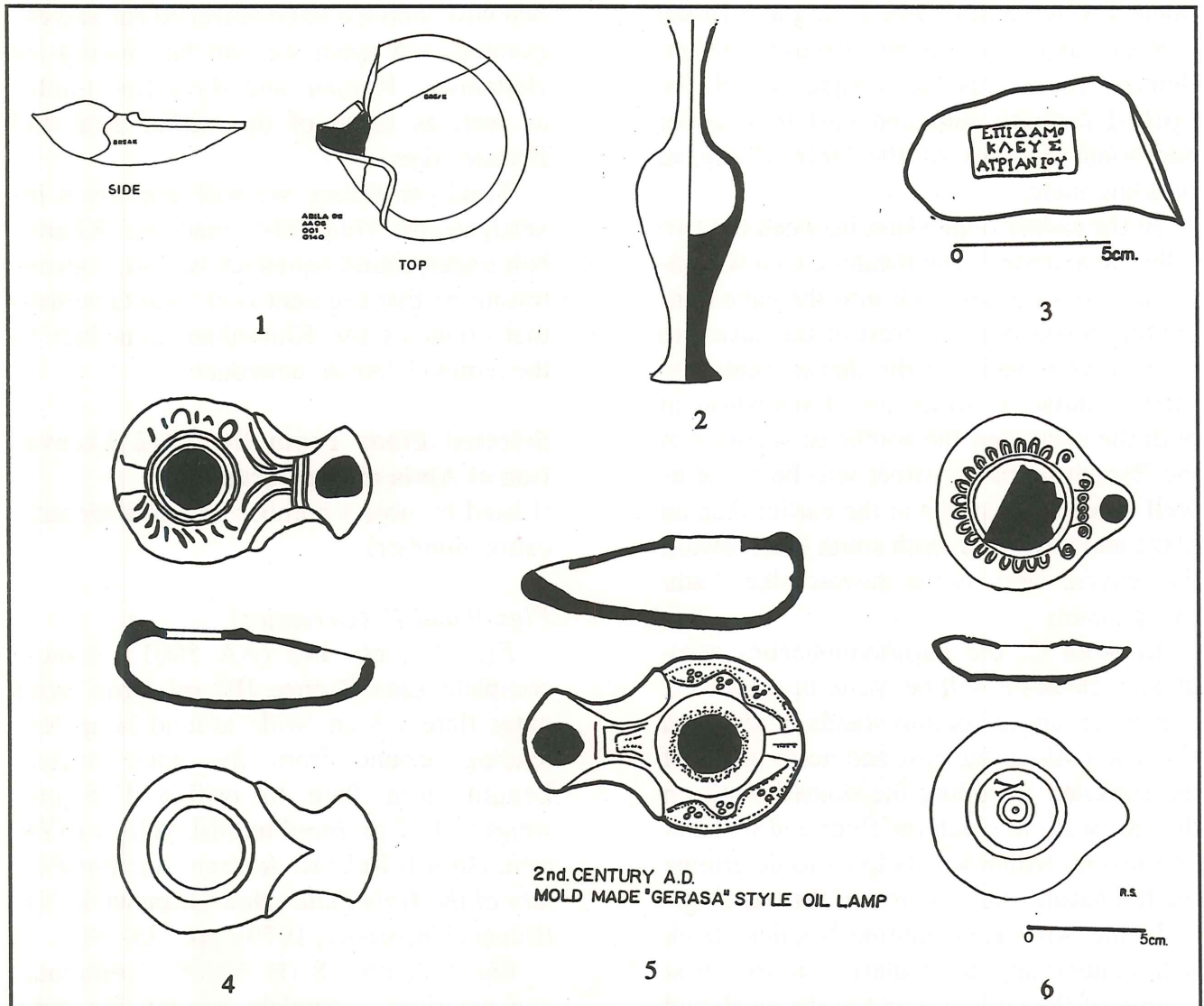
Fig. 9:1, no. 140 (AA 5001). Almost complete Late Bronze IIB oil lamp, with outer flare 1.3 cm wide around lamp, extending around from the wick orifice. Length from flare to orifice 13.8 cm, weight 243.7 gr. Fired reddish yellow (5YR 6/6). (Iron I) Ref.: R. Amiran, *Ancient Pottery of the Holy Land* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1970), pp. 188-190.

Fig. 9:2, no. 78 (H 32008). Terracotta unguentarium, complete except for rim; flared base. Height 19.5 cm; maximum width 5.5 cm; weight 282.1 gr. Fired pinkish white (7.5YR 8/2). Hellenistic. Ref.: G. A. Reisner, C. S. Fisher, and D.G. Lyon, *Harvard Excavations at Samaria. 1908-1910. Vol. II. Plans and Plates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), p. 67, no. g.

Fig. 9:3, no. 129 (Area H Cleanup). Rhodian jar handle with stamp:

ΕΠΙ ΔΑΜΟ
ΚΛΕΥΣ
ΑΓΡΙΑΝΙΟΥ

Length 8.0 cm; width 4.0 cm; weight 138.9 gr. Fired exterior surface very pale brown (10YR 8/3); interior, light reddish brown (2.5YR 6/4). Hellenistic. Ref.: V. R. Grace, *Stamped Amphora Handles Found in 1932-*



9. Abila 1992. Ceramics.

33, *Hesperia* 3 (1934), pp. 197, 219, 307.

Fig. 9:4, no. 47 (H 31007). Mold-made oil lamp, complete; with design around central orifice; carbon on wick orifice (flared spout). Length 9.0 cm; maximum width 6.0 cm; thickness 2.5 cm; weight 49.5 gr. Fired pink (5YR 7/3). Late Roman, second-third centuries. Ref.: J. W. Crowfoot *et al.*, *Churches at Bostra and Samaria Sebaste* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1937), fig. 88, no. 4.

Fig. 9:5, no. 11 (H 28004). Mold-made oil lamp, complete; with raised ring and design around central orifice (flared spout). Length 9.0 cm; maximum width 6.0 cm; thickness 2.5 cm; weight 47.6 gr. Fired light reddish brown (2.5YR 6/4). Early Ro-

man. Ref: J. W. Crowfoot *et al.*, *Churches at Bostra and Samaria Sebaste* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1937), fig. 88 no. 3; I. Kehrberg, Report on Moulded Lamps, in W. Ball *et al.* *The North Decumanus and North Tetradyon at Jerash*. In F. Zayadine, ed., *Jerash Archaeological Project I, 1981-1983* (Amman: Department of Antiquities, 1986), pp. 369, 371.

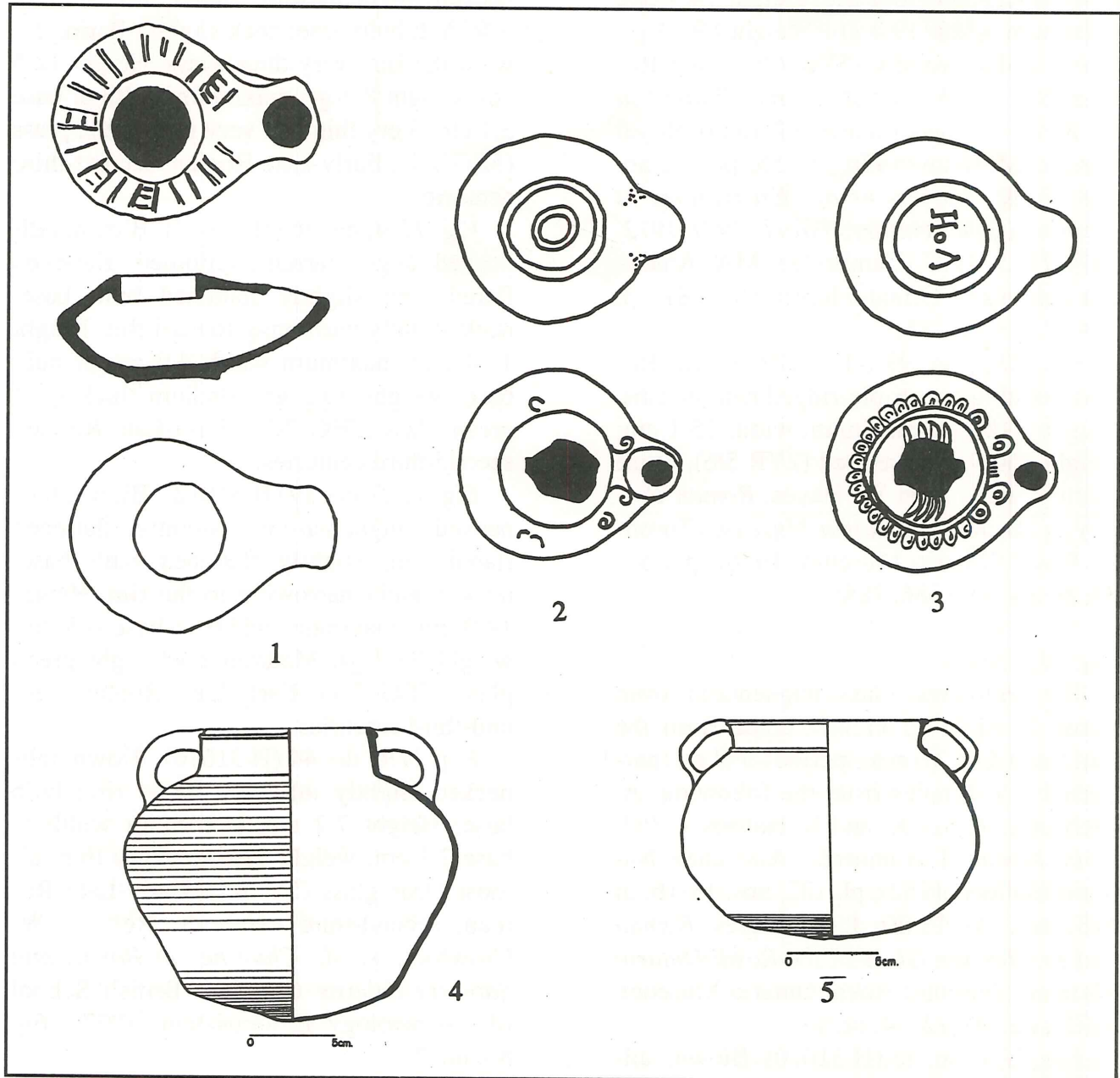
Fig. 9:6, no. 83 (H 31006). Mold-made oil lamp, complete; with design around central orifice; carbon on wick orifice; circle designs on bottom. Length 8.5 cm, maximum width 7.3 cm; thickness 1.6 cm; weight 47.5 gr. Fired white/yellow (2.5Y 8/2). Roman. Ref.: E. M. Meyers, J. F.

Strange and C. L. Meyers, *Excavations at Ancient Meiron. Upper Galilee. Israel, 1971-1972, 1974-1975, 1977* (Cambridge, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1981), p. 151, pl. 9.16, no. 2.

Fig. 10:1, no. 46 (H 31013). Mold-made oil lamp, complete; design around raised central orifice; flared spout; raised circular bottom. Length 8.7 cm; weight 60.9 gr. Fired, upper side light reddish brown (2.5YR 6/4); under side pink (7.5YR 7/3). Early Roman. Ref.: cf. the Greek example from Athens in *Lamps from the Athenian*

Agora. Picture Book no. 9 (Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1963), no. 20.

Fig. 10:2, no. 171 (H38004). Mold-made oil lamp, complete; design around central orifice; carbon on wick orifice; circle designs on bottom. Length 8.2 cm; maximum width 7.0 cm; thickness 1.8 cm; weight 33.5 gr. Fired very pale brown (10YR 8/3). Roman. Ref.: J. W. Crowfoot *et al.*, *Churches at Bostra and Samaria Sebaste* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1937), fig. 88, no. 8.



10. Abila 1992. Ceramics.

Fig. 10:3, no. 174 (H 38002). Mold-made oil lamp, almost complete; design around central orifice; carbon on wick orifice; circle designs on bottom with Greek letters HOA in center. Length 8.5 cm; weight 56.2 gr. Fired pink (5YR 7/3). Roman. Ref.: J. W. Crowfoot, *et al.*, *Churches at Bostra and Samaria Sebaste* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1973), fig. 88, no. 8.

Fig. 10:4, no. 146 (H 39001). Early Byzantine cooking pot; double ridged rim; fine ribs from shoulder to base; slightly rounded base, blackened from use. Height 14.5 cm; maximum width 19.4 cm; weight 894.4 gr. Fired reddish yellow (5YR 6/6). Late Roman. Ref.: J. W. Hayes, *Roman Pottery in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1976), p. 56, pl. 34, no. 288; E. M. Meyers *et al.*, *Excavations at Meiron. Upper Galilee, Israel, 1971-1972, 1974-1975, 1977* (Cambridge, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1981), p. 124, pl. 8.6, no. 25.

Fig. 10:5, no. 98 (H 31010). Small Roman cooking pot; triple-ridged rim; no ribs. Height 10.9 cm; maximum width 15.1 cm; weight 450.9 gr. Fired red (2YR 5/6). Third century. Ref.: John W. Hayes, *Roman Pottery in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1976), pp. 55-56, pl. 34, nos. 286, 288.

Fig. 11 (Glass)

The following glass unguentaria from Tomb H 31 (*Fig. 11:1-7*) come from the Early and Late Roman periods and are paralleled in examples from the following: A. McNicoll, R. Smith and B. Hennessy, *Pel-la in Jordan I* (Canberra: Australian National Gallery, 1982), pl. 132, nos. 11-16; pl. 133, nos. 10, 18-20; J. W. Hayes, *Roman and Pre-Roman Glass in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1975), pp. 70, 72, 74, pl. 17.

Fig. 11:1, no. 43 (H 31010). Blown, tall-necked unguentarium; with infolded and

flattened flared rim; flattened bulb base; neck slightly narrowing to the rim. Height 14.2 cm; maximum width at base 5.2 cm; weight 37.0 gr. Very thick light green glass (SG 6/2). Early-Late Roman, second-third centuries.

Fig. 11:2, no. 45 (H 31010). Blown, tall-necked unguentarium; infolded and flattened flared rim. Height 16.2 cm; maximum width at base 4.7 cm; weight 46.5 gr. Moderately thick light green glass (5B 6/1). Early-Late Roman, second-third centuries.

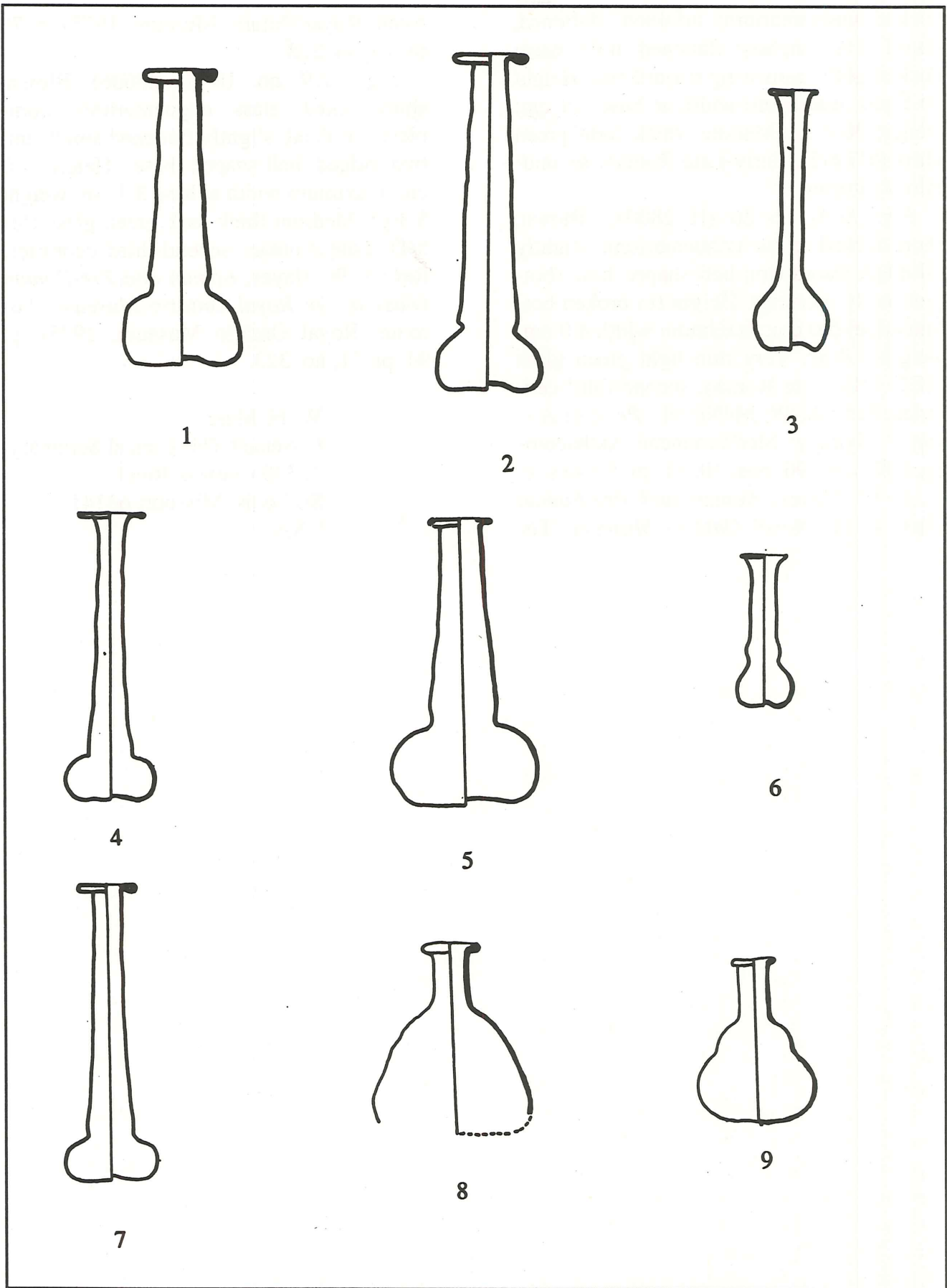
Fig. 11:3, no. 38 (H 31004). Blown, tall-necked unguentarium; flared rim, slightly infolded; bulb base; neck slightly flaring toward the rim; very thick glass. Height 12.5 cm; weight 8.2 gr; maximum width at base 3.1 cm. Very thin and very pale green glass (5BG 7/1). Early-Late Roman, second-third centuries.

Fig. 11:4, no. 36 (H 31011). Blown, tall-necked unguentarium; unfolded, flattened flared rim; slightly flattened bulb base; neck slightly narrowing toward rim. Height 13.4 cm; maximum width 4.0 cm at bulb base; weight 30.2 gr. Medium thick light green glass (5BG 7/1). Early-Late Roman, second-third centuries.

Fig. 11:5, no. 39 (H 31012). Blown, tall-necked unguentarium; slightly flattened flared rim; slightly flattened bulb base; neck slightly narrowing to the rim. Height 14.0 cm; maximum width at base 6.5 cm, weight 88.7 gr. Medium thick light green glass (5BG 7/1). Early-Late Roman, second-third centuries.

Fig. 11:6, no. 44 (H 31010). Blown, tall-necked slightly infolded, flared rim; bulb base. Height 7.2 cm; maximum width at base 2.1 cm; weight 11.6 gr. Very thin, almost clear glass (5Y 7/1). Early-Late Roman, second-third centuries. Ref.: J. W. Crowfoot *et al.*, *Churches at Bostra and Samaria Sebaste* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1937), fig. 88, no. 7.

Fig. 11:7, no. 37 (H 31011). Blown, tall-



11. Abila 1992. Glass.

necked unguentarium; infolded, flattened, flared rim; slightly flattened bulb base; neck slightly narrowing toward rim. Height 14.5 cm; maximum width at base 3.9 cm; weight 36.1 gr. Medium thick light green glass (5G 6/2). Early-Late Roman, second-third centuries.

Fig. 11:8, no 26 (H 28004). Blown, short-necked glass unguentarium; slightly infolded, flared rim; bell-shaped base (bottom partly missing). Height (to broken bottom edge) 5.0 cm; maximum width 4.0 cm; weight 7.8 gr. Very thin light green glass (5GY 7/1). Late Roman, second-third centuries. Ref.: A. W. McNicoll, *Pella in Jordan 2* (Sydney: Mediterranean Archaeology, 1992), pl. 96, nos. 10, 11; pl. 97, nos. c. d.; J. W. Hayes, *Roman and Pre-Roman Glass in the Royal Ontario Museum* (To-

ronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1975), p. 70 pl. 16, no. 228.

Fig. 11:9, no. 18 (H 28006). Blown, short-necked glass unguentarium, complete; infolded, slightly flattened small rim; two ridged bell-shaped base. Height 4.0 cm; maximum width at base 3.1 cm; weight 5.3 gr. Medium thick dark green glass (5B 5/1). Late Roman, second-third centuries, Ref.: J. W. Hayes, *Roman and Pre-Roman Glass in the Royal Ontario Museum* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 1975), p. 94, pl. 21, no. 323.

W. H. Mare
Covenant Theological Seminary
12330 Conway Road
St. Louis, Missouri 63141
USA