

THREE TOMBS NEAR THE HIPPODROME AT JARASH A PRELIMINARY REPORT

by
Ruba Abu-Dalu

Background

The area of the Hadrianic Arch and the Hippodrome at Jarash has long been known to scholars as a cemetery site which had come into disuse by the time when the Roman monuments were built there. In the past decades a number of rock-cut tombs were revealed during road construction in the vicinity and excavations by the Department of Antiquities. In 1993 surface clearing of the area east of the hippodrome was undertaken as part of the excavation and restoration work still going on at the hippodrome. In the course of this final clearing there were discovered three tombs hitherto unknown.

Fear of looting made the excavations of these tombs an urgent necessity and in 1993, shortly after the discovery work began.¹

The Excavation

As all other tombs in this part of the south cemetery of Gerasa, the recently excavated tombs (see J. Seigne and T. Morin, Fig. 1: tombs 6, 7, (8), in this issue) are of the hypogean type (hewn in the rock). They consist of a burial chamber and a *dromos* leading down to the chamber from the surface of the rock.

Upon the completion of excavation it appeared that the construction of only tombs 6 and 7 was achieved and that these tombs were used for burials. The construction of tomb (8) was begun but it was not completed; the *dromos* was cut in the rock but the burial chamber was never hewn. Tombs

6 and 7 are shown in Figs. 1-4 which present all relevant features of their architecture.

The entrances to the burial chambers from the *dromoi* of tombs 6 and 7 were found to be partly closed with large and roughly cut stones and a few smaller stones set on top of them.

They blocked the entrances to a height of 4m, the total height of the entrances being 0.80m and 1.10m, respectively.² The *dromoi* were filled with dirt and rubble. The fill also contained stones of a structure (Fig.5) which appeared to have been a mausoleum, once situated in the area of the south cemetery (see J. Seigne and T. Morin in this issue). In the lowest layer of the fill of the *dromoi*, close to the entrances into burial chambers, were found some pieces of pottery and glass, and coins.

The burial chambers were found to be filled with a thin layer of soil, from 0.10m - 1.30m above the flooring of the chambers. The skeletal remains of the buried individuals were found in this layer as well as in the graves in the burial chambers.³ The bones were all broken and many were crushed into small pieces.

The condition in which the skeletal remains were found and incomplete blocking of the entrances into the chambers show that the tombs were opened and robbed in antiquity.

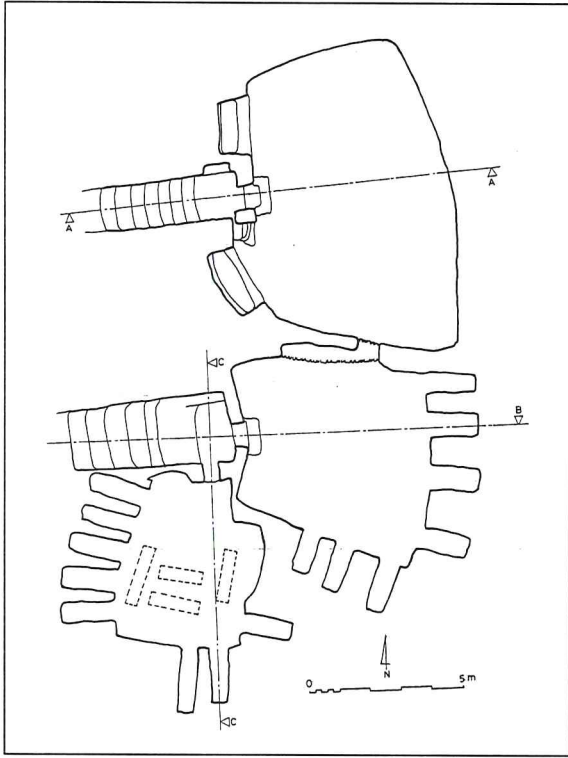
The Finds

The deposits found in tombs 6 and 7 consist of ceramics, glass, coins and gold ob-

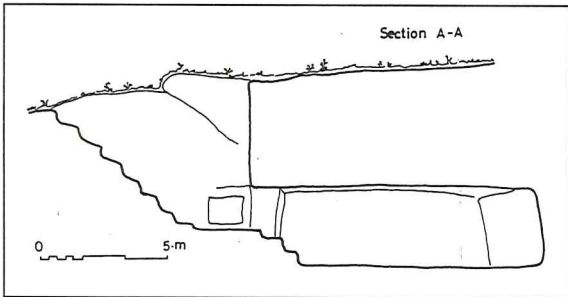
1. The excavation was directed by Ruba Abu-Dalu and generally supervised by Ibrahim al-Zubi, then chief Inspector of Antiquities at Jarash.
2. Tomb 7 includes two burial chambers of which each is accessible from a separate entrance from

the *dromos*. There were, then, three entrances into the two tombs.

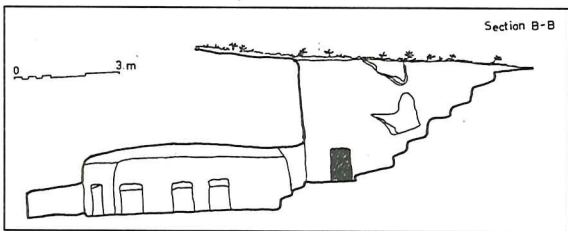
3. The study of the skeletal remains is planned to be published in the final report of the excavation.



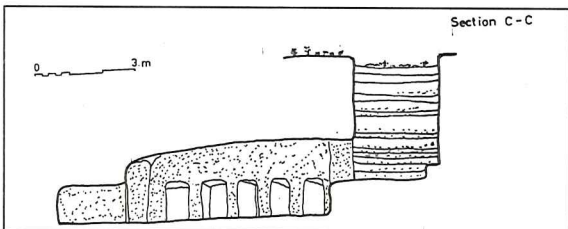
1. Plan of tombs 6 and 7.



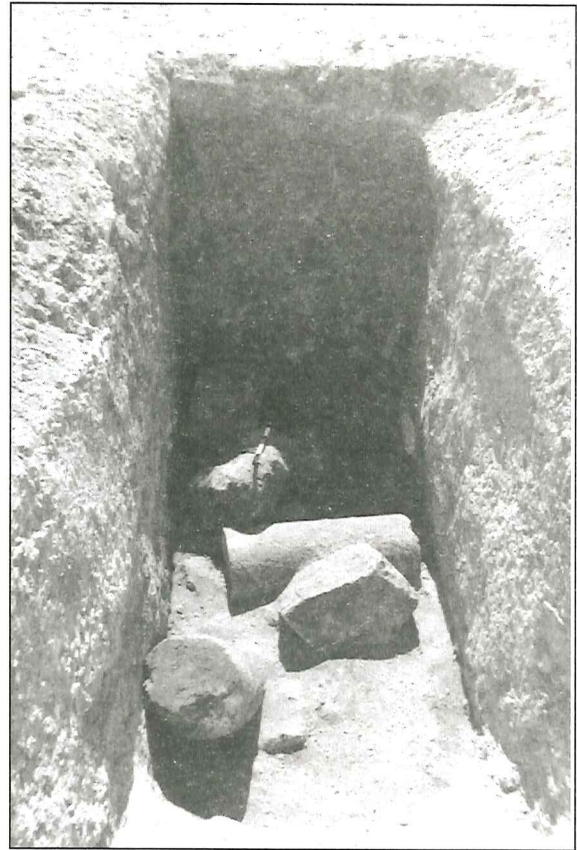
2. Section of tomb 7.



3. Section of tomb 6.



4. Section of tomb 6, side-chamber.

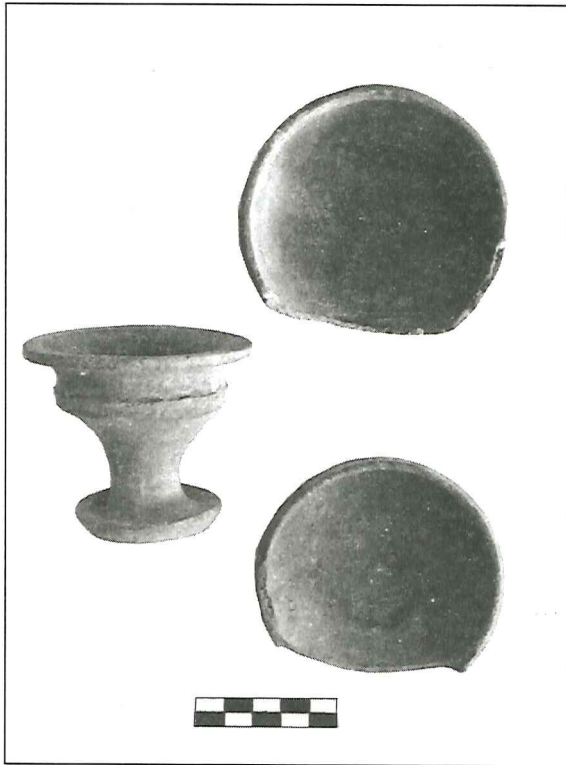


5. Fill of dromos, tomb 6.

jects, bronze and iron jewelry and seals.

The ceramic material includes a large number of ribbed jars and table ware (cooking pots, craters, jugs, dishes) and some unguentaria. It represents a large variety of shapes well attested in Jordan and dating to the first through the early second centuries AD. In addition to this type of local ceramics there is also a large number of carinated cups with a stemmed foot, found in practically all tombs of that period excavated at Jarash (Fig.6). In tomb 7 was found an eastern sigillata A cup (Hayes form 46) dating to the beginning of the first century AD.

Ten almost complete lamps were recovered from both tombs (Fig.7): three rounded lamps of Hellenistic origin, decorated with radial lines and having a long nozzle; six late Herodian rounded lamps with decorated discuss, lug handle on the discuss and triangular nozzle flanked by vo-



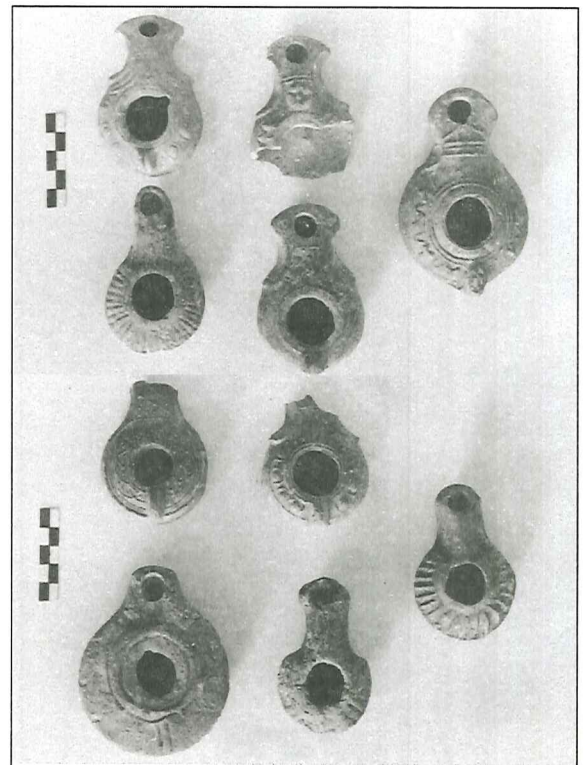
6. Stemmed cup and bowls, tombs 6 and 7.

lutes; a lamp with a large round body, and small nozzle approximately round; the decoration was almost erased.

The whole ceramic material resembles the ceramic deposit recovered from a tomb in the north-west cemetery at Jarash.⁴

A variety of glass vessels was found in tomb 6. These types of vessels are commonly found in burials of the first and second centuries AD. They are: six unguentaria, four intact and two almost complete (Fig. 8); two banded beakers, one almost complete and the other incomplete; numerous fragments of bottles, their types represented by the necks; one lower part of a larger bottle or a jar decorated with a radiated pattern in relief (moulded).

The prize of the collection goes to an al-



7. First and second century lamps, tombs 6 and 7.

most complete ornate beaker (Fig. 9), a rare find in Jordan, datable to the first century AD.⁵ There are numerous other body fragments most of which belong probably to bottles and other types mentioned above.

The assemblage of glass can be dated to the first two centuries AD and has parallels at other Roman sites in Jordan and Syria.⁶

The finds in tomb 6 are especially important for the glass as there are few examples where the period of use of a tomb is a short one and the date of the burials is so clearly defined (see above: the pottery; also J. Seigne and T. Morin, in this issue).

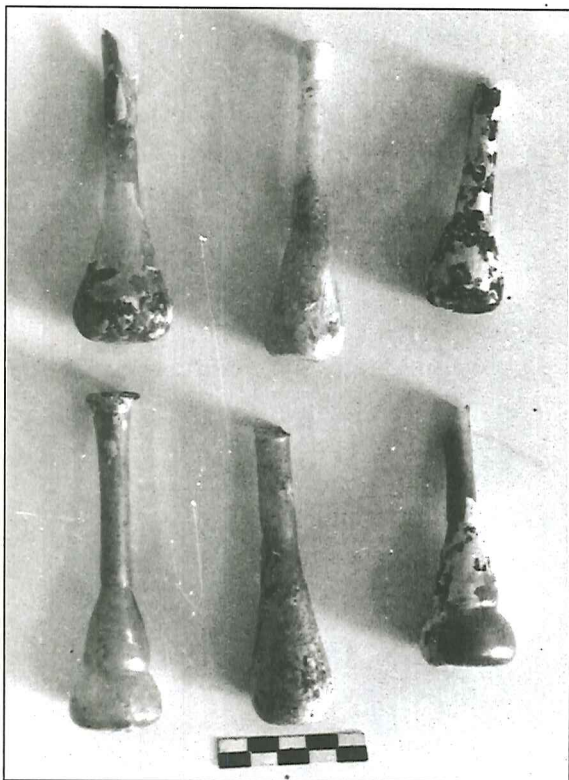
In tomb 6 were found three seals made of soft black stone set in iron rings. The seals are oval in shape and all three bear engraved images of human figures. The image

4. Moussa Smadeh, Anne-Michèle Rasyon and Jacques Seigne, "Fouille de sauvetage dans la necropole nord-ouest de Jérash". *ADAJ* 36, 267-271.

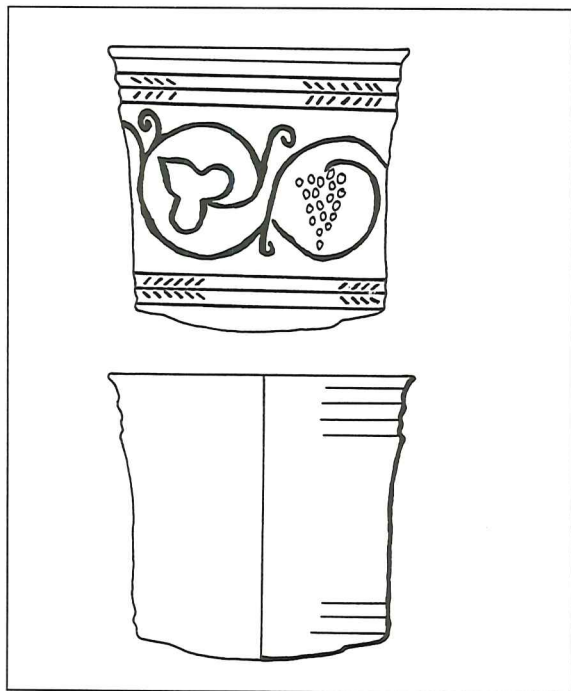
5. Parallel to ornate beaker in Susan B. Matheson 1986, *Ancient Glass in the Yale University Art*

Gallery. No 135, (Moore collection 1955, 6.67): 54.

6. E.g. Abila, cf. H. Mare, *ADAJ* 38: 377, Fig. 11; Palmyra, cf. K. Gawlikowska and K. As'ad, *Studia Palmyrenskie* IX, 1994: 8-13.



8. First-second century glass, tomb 6.

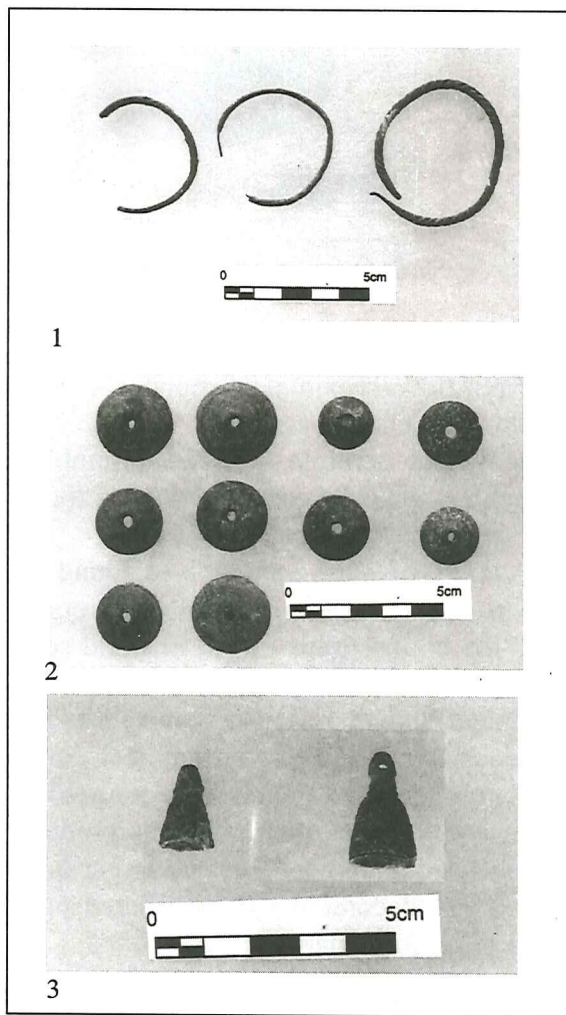


9. Ornate glass beaker, tomb 6.

of one seal is entirely clear, showing distinctly the head, body, arms and legs.

In the same tomb was also found a scarab seal of white stone, which apparently was used as a pendant. The decoration of this seal includes hieroglyphic signs and its style points to the Hyksos period.⁷

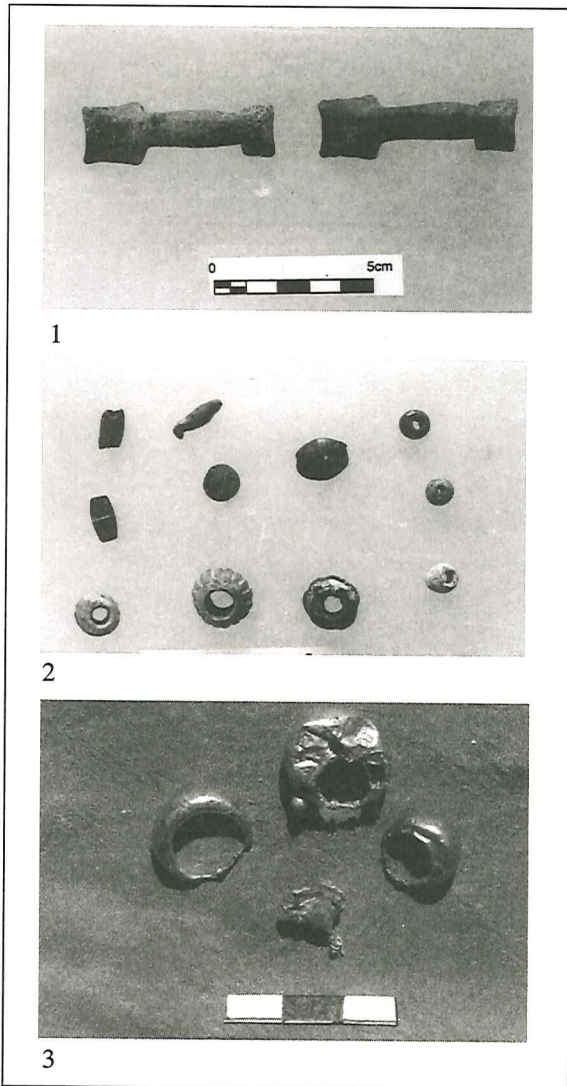
Other finds are represented by three complete and numerous fragments of bronze bracelets. Some are made of thin coiled wires and others of solid round bars, 3-4mm in diameter. Their closing ends are in form of the heads of snakes (Fig 10:1).



10. Small Finds, tombs 6 and 7.

7. The author is indebted to Omar al-Khoul, Institute of Archaeology, Anthropology and Epigraphy, Yarmouk University, for his opinion on the scar-

ab seal. Cf. also R. Giveon, "The Scarab from Ginnosar", *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 20: 85-87, Figs. 42-43.



10. Small Finds, tombs 6 and 7.

Apart from the finds listed above, there are spindle whorls, two bronze bells (Fig. 10: 2, 3) and two bronze handles (Fig. 11:1), earrings and beads of necklaces. The beads are made of various materials (Fig. 11:2). In tomb 6 were also found gold earrings (Fig. 11:3) of which one was found damaged.

Five coins found in the dromoi of tombs 6 and 7 appear, on preliminary examination, to have been minted in the first and second centuries AD.⁸

Concluding Notes

The whole assemblage of the finds in tombs 6 and 7 can be dated to the first century AD and the earlier part of the second century. The ceramic material provides the most explicit evidence for this dating. The bulk of the vessels and lamps date to the first century AD and the remaining ones to the first decades of the second century. No object datable to a later period was identified.

The stone pieces of an architectural monument found dumped in the dromoi of tombs 6 and 7 firmly confirm the evidence of the ceramics. They were dumped there in the course of construction of the Hadrianic Arch (see J. Seigne and T. Morin, in this issue), therefore the tombs must have ceased to be used for burials at about AD 130 when the arch was built.

The earliest artefacts found date to the beginning of the first century AD. The tombs were thus in use at that time but a somewhat earlier date of their construction cannot be excluded.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express her gratitude to Dr. Safwan Tell, then Director-General of the Department of Antiquities for his support, to Ina Kehrberg and Anne-Michèle Rasson-Seigne for the examination and dating of the glass and ceramic deposits found in the tombs. Also, many thanks go to Jacques Seigne and Thierry Morin for recording the architecture of the tombs and to Antoni Ostrasz for reading and correcting the manuscript.

Ruba Abu Dalu
Department of Antiquities
Irbid, Jordan

8. I owe my thanks to Christian Augé, CRNS, for the examination and dating of the coins.