

GADARA 1998 THE EXCAVATION OF THE FIVE-AISLED BASILICA AT UMM QAYS: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

by

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with a contribution by Ulrich Hübner

Resuming the archaeological activities undertaken by the German Protestant Institute at Amman between 1986 and 1990, the excavation was reopened at Umm Qays in 1998 under the directorship of the author.¹

The excavation in April and May at Decapollitanean Gadara (modern Umm Qays) revealed an Early Christian basilica with five aisles. This type of Late Antiquity sacred architecture, attested by the Gadarene example, is the first example east of the Jordan.

In addition, two sites outside the city wall, within the lands (chora) of the Gadarenes, were investigated as part of this campaign: Ibrahim Zu'bi of the Department of Antiquities uncovered a fine building at the eastern Gadarene border point of al-Manāra. Ulrich Hübner reports on a recently discovered Late Hellenistic fortress at the site of Lahluh.

In close cooperation with the Amman branch of the Institute, this campaign was put within a wider research programme (Sonderforschungsbereich 295 "Kulturelle und Sprachliche Kontakte") of the Johannes Gutenberg-University at Mayence, Ger-

many.

Topography of the Site

The excavation area of the 1998 season was located in the lower city of Gadara west of the Acropolis hill. Work focused on the Byzantine Basilica, first excavated in various squarès in 1989.² This ecclesiastical structure covers the area on top of a Roman hypogeum and a Christian crypt extending towards west. The whole complex of these three buildings lies close to the decumanus maximus to the south-west of the southern circular tower of the Tiberian gate (Fig. 1). The gate was an important urban monument, a free-standing archway with a single barrel-vaulted passage and cylindrical flanking towers. It was erected in the first century AD and probably served as a customs toll station from the Early Imperial period to Late Antiquity.³ During the late second or early third century AD the Tiberian gate was replaced by a more 'sumptuous' arch⁴ located in the western outskirts of the enlarged city area. Having been abandoned, possibly also due to damages caused by an earthquake, the Gadarenes decided to quarry

1. The 1998 season at Umm Qays was supervised and assisted by Ibrahim Zu'bi, Inspector of the Department of Antiquities. Nawzat Abida, Director of the Department of Touristic Development, participated on behalf of the Ministry of Tourism. Wajeeh Karasneh, of the Department of Antiquities at Irbid kindly provided help in the restoration of the mosaic.

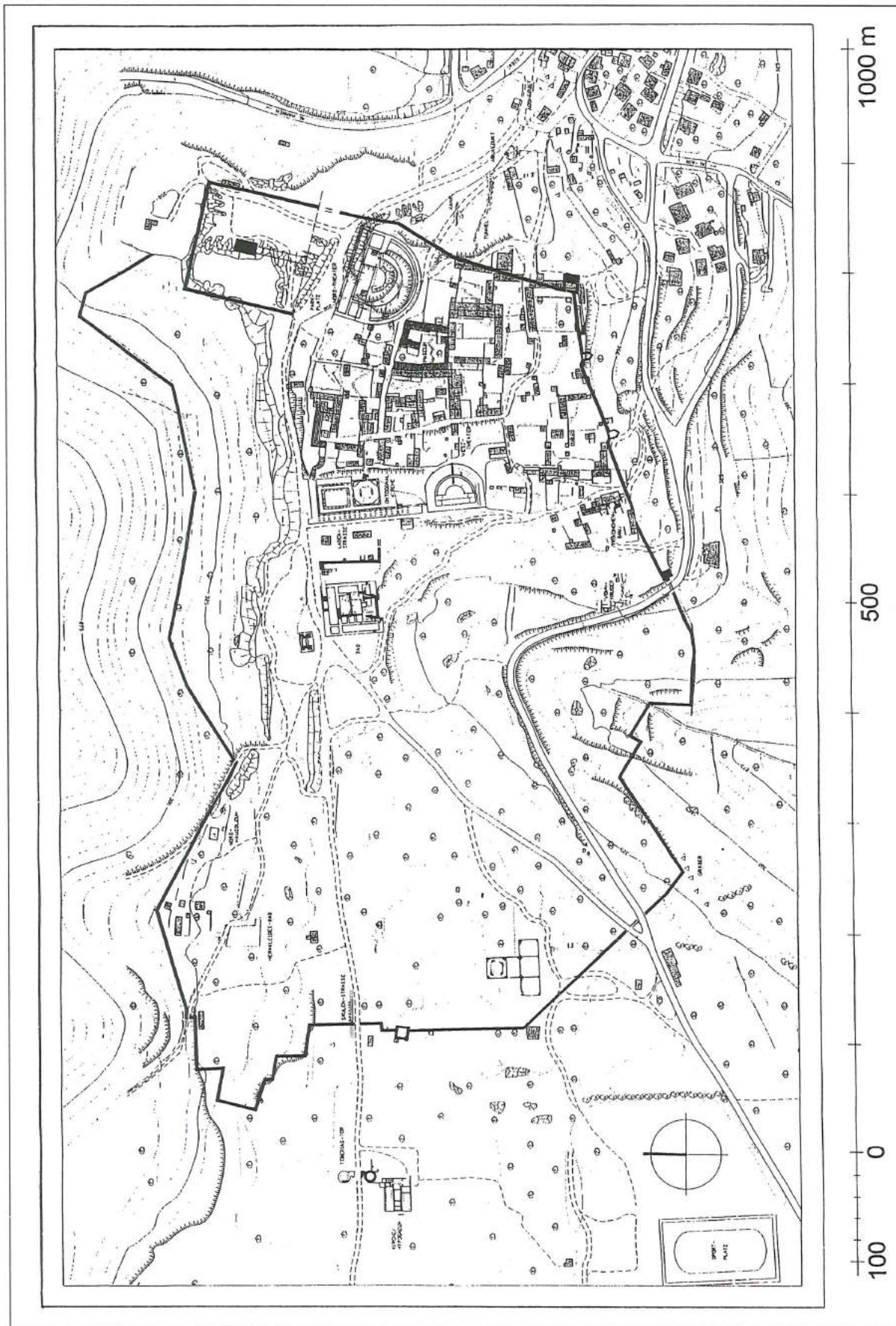
The team of the German mission consisted of: Muhammad al-Daire, (archaeologist, Mainz University), Ulrike Denis (draftswoman, Trier University), Arn Gyldenholm (biologist and Photographer, Aarhus University, Denmark), Ulrike Hess (architect, Technische Hochschule Munich), Ul-

rich Hübner (Biblical Archaeologist, Kiel University), Muhammad al-Husban (student of archaeology, Università degli Studi - La Sapienza, Rome), Birgit Mershen (ethno-archaeologist, Sultan Qaboos-University, al-Khod, Oman), S. Felicia Meynersen, (archaeologist, Mainz University), Wolfgang Selesnow (archaeologist, Bochum University) and Helle Strehle (restorator, Forhistorisk Museum, Moesgard, Denmark).

2. cf. Weber, Hoffmann *et al.* 1990: 324f. and 327f., Fig. 3.

3. Weber 1998.

4. Weber, Hoffmann *et al.* 1990: 328ff., Fig. 4-5.



1. Topographical map of Gadara of the Decapolis. The Tiberian gate, the Roman mausoleum, the Byzantine crypt, and the five-aisled basilica form an architectural unit located west of the Early Roman city wall (map by W. Boeser).

this monumental arch for blocks to build an Early Christian underground crypt adjacent to the east of the front of the Roman mausoleum. This burial place was dedicated to a prominent local saint, probably the Gadarene Diacon Zachaios who suffered martyrdom in the years of the Diocletian persecutions.⁵ His apse-framed tomb was considered as being a holy place, and became a place of Early Christian pilgrimage. For this reason one would assume that the whole complex, including the Roman Mausoleum and the superstructures of the underground sepulchral buildings, had a memorial character. As already shown in the 1988 campaign, the rest of the crypt was used for burials of other notables of the Early Christian Gadarene society to be close to the venerated corpse (*ad sanctum*).⁶

This topographical and architectural setting is essential for the understanding of the basilical building located above the Roman hypogeum and the Early Byzantine coemiterium.

The 1989 Campaign

21 square trenches opened in 1989 separated by 1 m profile balks uncovered the entire area of the altar zone with the bases of marble screens and poles, as well as parts of the central and lateral naves of the church with outer walls along the northern, western and southern side of the structure. All walls and the mosaic floors were found in poor condition; serious damage of the mosaic floors was caused by an earthquake. Burned mosaic tesserae indicate local fires at various points. The outer walls preserved only two layers of basalt masonry of older origin, raised on a foundation layer of limestone slabs resting on a slightly protruding, thick bancett made out of greyish mortar mixed with stone chips. Much of the building material was quarried and reused for later con-

structions: No fallen material could be observed in the trenches apart from several column drums, capitals and a long basalt lintel with the frontal relief of an eagle framed by two rosettes.⁷ The western wall showed three entrances corresponding axially with the central and the adjacent lateral aisles. To the west of these, a paved floor consisting of smooth rectangular marble slabs and smaller oblique tiles extended westwards. The intercolumniation of the central nave consisted of marble and basalt bases of Attic-Ionic type. They could not be studied because most of them remained covered by the profile balks or by the spolia walls of a later building which has been preliminarily interpreted as an open-air mosque (*musalla*) at that time.

Former Proposals on Type and Date of the Basilica

Relying on the square plans drawn already in the 1989 campaign and on the style of the polychrome mosaics, the author regarded the structure as a basilica of the common three-aisled type, and proposed the first half of the sixth century AD as the period of construction (1990). The intercolumniation remained still hidden under the 1 m profile balks. Clearance was planned for a final season in 1990 which was postponed due to the Gulf war.

Chronology of the Crypt

Further study of the documents from the 1989 season led to the conclusion, that the underlying crypt was constructed in the first half of the fourth century AD : According to archaeological and numismatic evidence the neighbouring towers of the Tiberian gate were destroyed for the reason mentioned above during the first half of the fourth century AD. A Byzantine storage building erected on the limestone founda-

5. Eusebius, *acta Mart. Palaest.* (ed. Cureton, *History of Martyrs in Palestine* [1961]).

6. Duval 1988. E. Rebillard, *MEFRA* 105 (1993):

975ff.

7. cf. Weber (1995, in press): pl. 91, 3.

tions was abandoned in the fifth century, possibly due to damage caused by the severe earthquake of AD 479. Coins found in the joints between the cover slabs of a tomb within the coemeterium indicated that the last burials in this privileged area were put there in the late fourth or in the first half of the fifth century AD. Further, the polychrome floor mosaic on top of tomb 6, which was lifted in 1987 by P. Michele Piccirillo and conserved for display in the Umm Qays Museum,⁸ can be dated prior to the edict of Emperor Theodosios II issued in AD 427.⁹

The 1998 Season

The campaign started on April 18th and ended on May 24th, 1998. In this period excavation work was carried out with an average number of 22 local workmen, occasionally supported by labourers employed by the Department of Antiquities.

Systematic Excavation in the Grid

It was the aim of the 1998 campaign to uncover the complete basilica area including the westwards adjacent narthex and atrium in order to confirm the type and the date of this important church. During the first two weeks the squares already excavated in 1989 were cleared of recent refill. After this, the profile balks were removed in order to get a clear picture on the position of the columniation of the central and the lateral naves. In the progress of work, the excavation area was gradually extended according to the grid-system in order to uncover the outer walls of the church at its northern, western and southern flank.

Soundings

Eight trial trenches (I-VIII/98) in the southern, northern, western and in the central parts were dug in order to get in-

formation on the construction of the foundation (Sondage I/98), the dimensions of the atrium (Sondage III/98) and the eastern limits of the complex (Sondage VI/98). The stratigraphy of older floor levels underneath the sixth century AD mosaics was studied in Sondage VII/98. A dump area close to the southern wall of the basilica produced a number of fragments of a coloured wall mosaic with a Greek inscription (Sondage IV/98). In order to prove the link between the basilica complex at its western end with the *decumanus maximus*, another trench was opened at a corresponding stretch of the 'darb al-rasefiye' (Sondage V/98). Finally, a small artificial cistern in the crypt was emptied in the hope of obtaining more dated strata for the chronology of the structure.

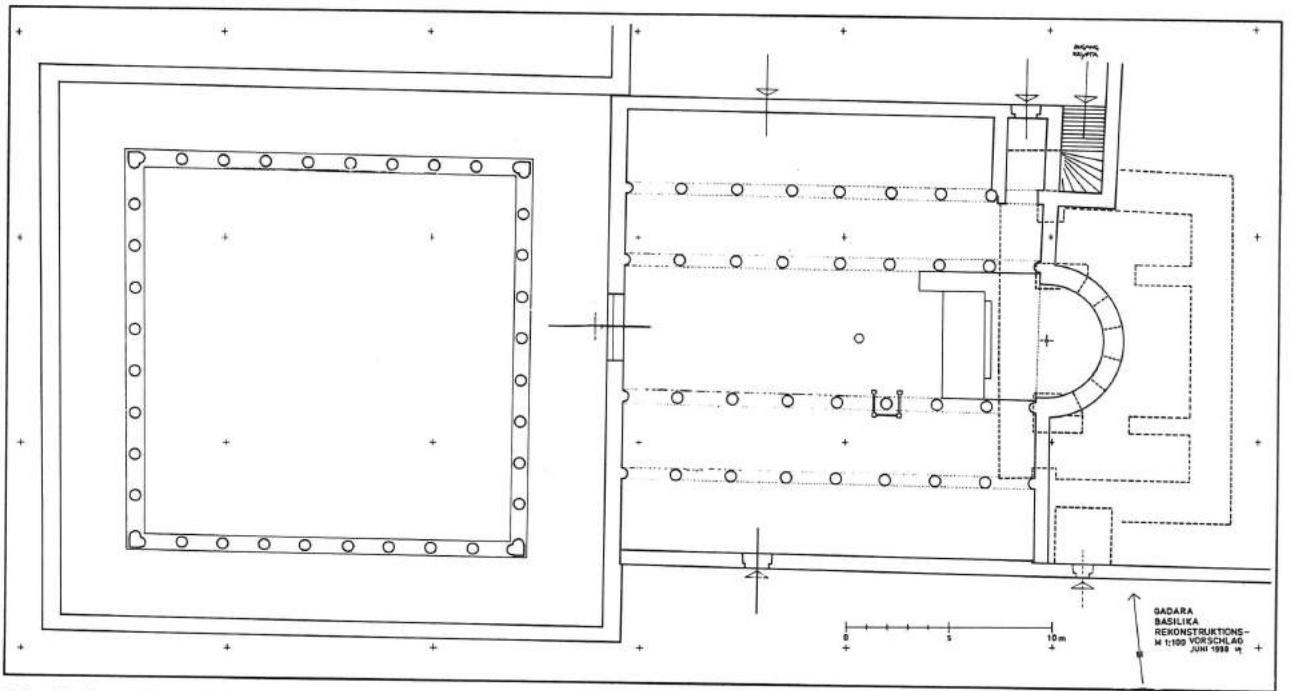
The Plan of the Church

The church has a ground plan (Fig. 2) of nearly square shape measuring 21.50 m in the east-west and 20.10 m in the north-south direction. Well fitting into the urban *cataster-system*, this huge ecclesiastical complex is oriented from east towards west with an entrance hall and a large open air colonnaded courtyard (atrium, 26.47x 26.00m) in the west. The complex was framed by paved passageways along its southern and western façade. The western street was most probably interconnected perpendicularly as a *cardo* of minor rank to the main traffic axis of the city (*decumanus maximus*) running at a distance of about 30 m from the northern wall of the basilical complex in an east-westerly direction. The building material of the whole complex consists of older (i.e. Roman) basalt and limestone materials from buildings in the immediate environs. The foundations of the outer walls consist of a thick layer of *opus caementicium* and a row of well-cut limestone ashlar.

As a common feature in Christian archi-

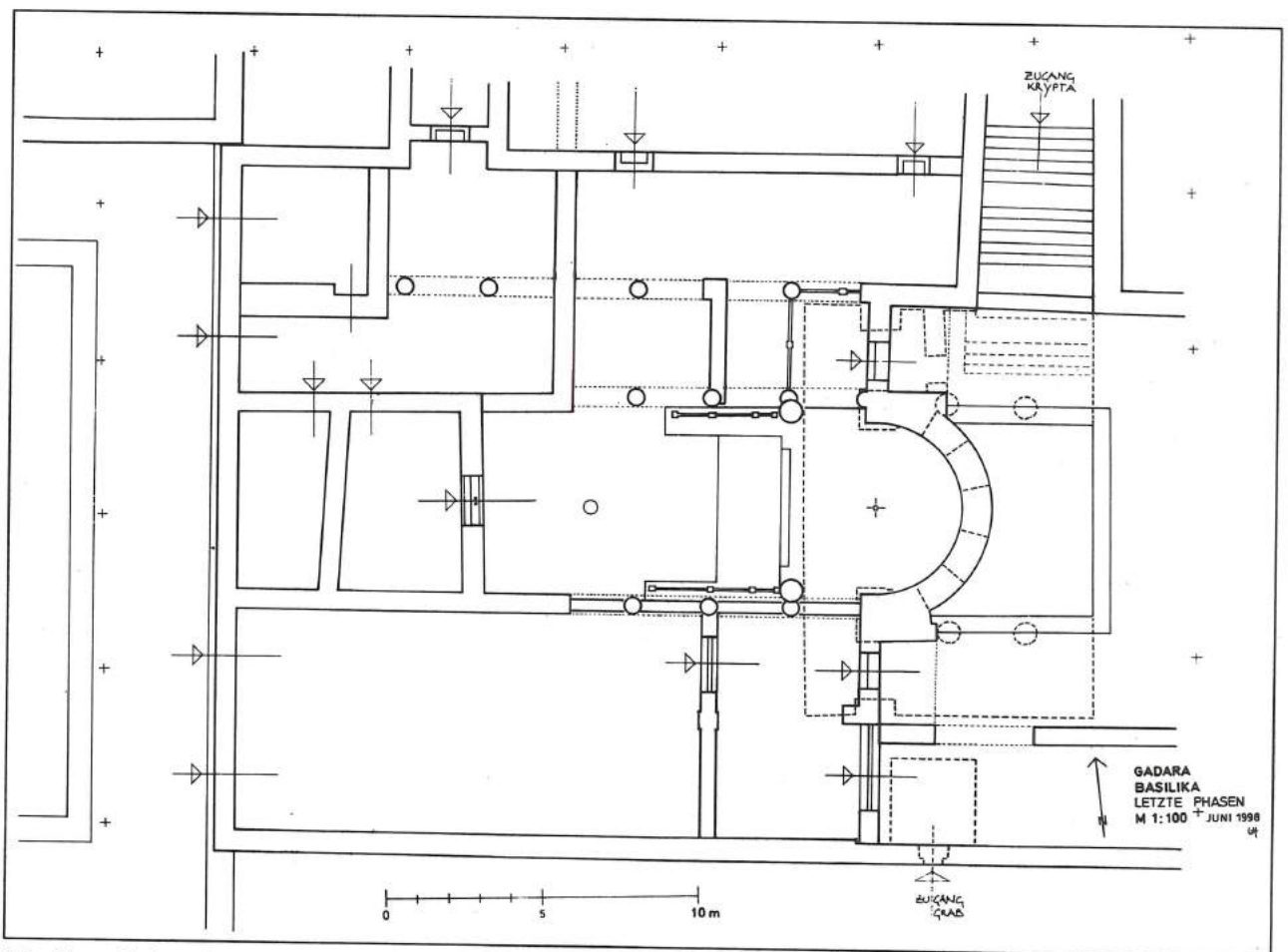
8. cf. ADAJ 31 (1987): 640 Pl. XCV. For the inscriptions cf. Weber (1995, in press): 267f. No. IS 41.

9. *Corpus Iuris Civilis* II: *Cod. Just.* I, VIII 2 (P. Krueger (ed.) [1914]); cf. J. Green, Y. Tsafirir, *IsrexplJ* 32 (1982): 82 n. 13.



2A. Gadara, five-aisled basilica, ground plan:

A reconstruction on paper of the original phase (fourth century AD). Plan with later occupations, (Drawings: U. Hess, Technische Hochschule München).



2B. Ground plan of the basilica with later occupations. (Drawings: U. Hess).

ecture, the orientation of the church was given by its apse which was entirely quarried for stone after the final destruction. It was constructed on top of the semicircular base of the crypt. The purpose of this structure was to frame the central tomb of the Early Christian cemetery. The apse of the church provided the eastern border of the slightly raised altar zone (sanctuarium). From the sanctuarium (Fig. 2: A) the central nave (aisle I) extends axially towards the west and the light-window of the domed burial chamber of the pagan Roman mausoleum marks precisely its half length (Fig. 3). The central nave of the church was separated from the lateral aisles on both long sides by an arcade consisting each of seven columns. The adjacent areas south and north of it were subdivided by one row of pilasters corresponding to the colonnades of the central nave. Thus, the northern and the southern sections of the church hall were divided on both sides into two lateral aisles (north: aisle II-III; south: aisle IV-V, Fig. 4).

On both sides of the apse, two doors gave access from the aisles III and IV on to a balustrade (Fig. 2: B), probably made out of wooden beams, leading around the sacred



3. The five-aisled basilica of Gadara, detail of the central nave: light-hole (oculum) of the Roman Mausoleum (Photo: A. Gyldenholm).



4. The five-aisled basilica of Gadara, overview from south-east (Photo: Arn Gyldenholm).

space of the crypt on an elevated level. This construction allowed processions of pilgrims from inside the church around the venerated tomb which could be seen within the rectangular frame of the apse through the large rectangular openings. The southern and eastern limits of this processional walkway were marked by walls. They separated procession area from an outer passageway, which gave access to a baptisterium in the south-eastern corner of the complex. At the southern side, the floor of this passageway is partly supported by the ceiling of a barrel-vaulted chamber which could be entered from the southern façade of the church by a small door with a lockable monolithic basalt wing still *in situ*.

The interior of the basilica was originally made accessible through various entrances, the main one opening axially to the central nave. Additional doors, probably dating to a later use of the basilica, were found in the northern and in the southern walls.

The relatively narrow entrance was in front of the western façade of the building, that is the eastern colonnade of the atrium which extends over an overall length of 26.00 m immediately west of it. Its assumed width is estimated at ca. 26.50 m, so an approximately square courtyard may be reconstructed. The interior space in the courtyard was framed on all sides by a colonnaded hall, the stylobate of which came to light in the section of the long

probe, Sondage III/98: The cross-section of these halls measured 3.80 m. While the floor of the atrium was entirely destroyed by recent army bulldozing, the floor level of the narthex (and probably of the colonnades of the atrium) was once covered by a fine pavement made of smooth rectangular basalt slabs.

Date of Construction, Phases of Use and Abandonment of the Five-aisled Basilica

Even though stratigraphy was disturbed by war actions of 1967 and bulldozing by the Royal Jordanian Army in the following years, there is no contradicting archaeological evidence against the assumption that the church has been erected during the fourth century AD, together with the crypt. Apart from that, one has to take into consideration that, according to the structural layout of the plan, the Roman Hypogeum and the Crypt had been deliberately adopted by the Early Christian community of Gadara in the worship.

A date of construction within the first half of the fourth century AD would typologically fit well other building activities of the Constantine era in neighbouring Palestine. Due to the lack of epigraphical information or other archaeological evidence, neither the Saint nor the commemorated holy event venerated in the Gadarene five-aisled basilica can be identified with certainty.

As it had already been stated in the previous excavation report (season of 1989), the existing mosaic floor dates to the sixth century AD. This floor shows later repairs in many spots, most probably due to damages caused by earthquakes or iconoclasm. An older plain plaster floor level, dated by the pottery to the phase of construction (fourth century AD), was uncovered ca. 30 cm under it.

The original fourth century AD church

was converted into smaller chapel after its sixth century renovation. This sacred building was used over a long period for the Christian liturgy. The first substantial alteration of the architecture was most likely executed when the basilica was partially destroyed by one of the earthquakes in the Late Byzantine or Early Islamic periods, probably the fatal catastrophe of AD 749 by which most of the buildings were laid into ruin. Despite its reduced size, practice of Christian liturgy continued inside the building during Early Islamic rule.

The relatively large amount of Ayyubid-Mamluk pottery, suggests that the central nave was transformed into a mosque during or shortly after the time of the Crusades. The main entrance, divided by a column of the southern arcade of the central nave in the former basilica, has been located in that phase to the north in order to form an axial layout oriented towards the prayer niche (*mihrab*). In the new entrance area the sixth century mosaic was still relatively well-preserved. Two smaller rooms were attached to the prayer hall towards the west. A storage vessel lowered into the floor at the corner of the extreme western hall may indicate, that this part of the building had been used for dwelling. In the south-eastern corner of the former church a kiln was built in order to burn the marble fittings to lime.

When and why this complex was entirely abandoned remains unknown. It may be explained with the establishment of a new sepulchral shrine for the local saint Mohammad Abū an-Naml. This structure and the adjacent burial ground may be attributed to a village still visited by travellers of the early 19th century.¹⁰ G. Schumacher¹¹, on his topographical map published in 1890 refers to "ruins of villas and villes" in this part of the former city area, which is still known to the local population of Umm Qays under the name "al-knas ("churches").

10. B. Merschen, in Kerner (ed.) 1991: 135ff.

11. Schumacher 1890: map on p. 46.

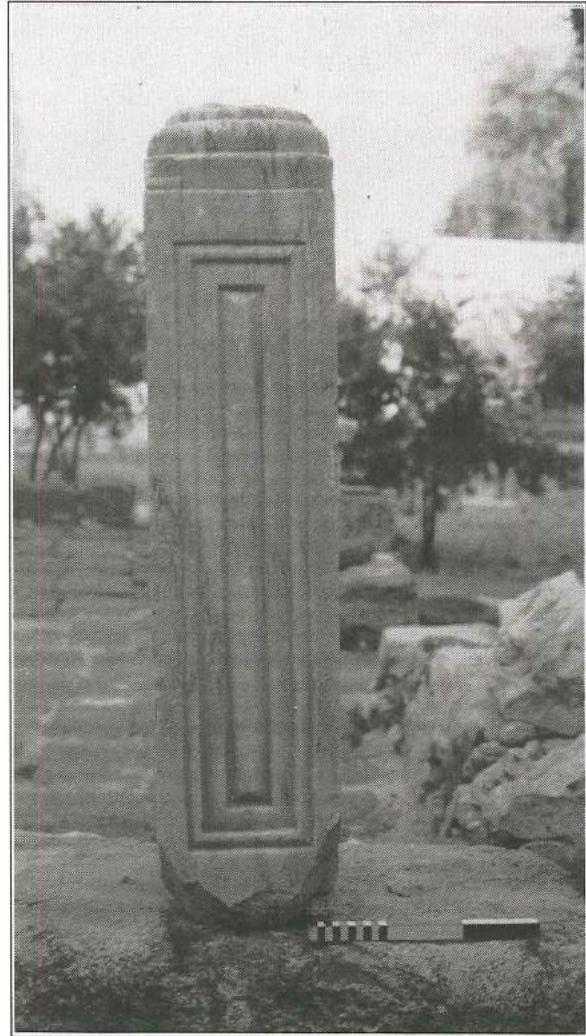
Finally, the site was occupied by the Royal Jordanian Army during the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Architectural Features in the Interior of the Basilica

During the 1998 campaign four marble column bases of Attic-Ionic type were uncovered in the central aisle, flanking the western end of the altar zone. These marble bases supported column drums of Troas granite with Corinthian capitals made out of marble from Proconnessesus.¹² The same arrangement of imported column drums, bases and capitals of western Asia Minor origin is preserved in the caldarium of the fourth century AD baths close to the city centre.¹³ Grooves chiselled into the upper surfaces of limestone blocks testify marble chancel screens, three poles of which (Fig. 5) have been found reused in masonry put in the western part of the central nave. Fine marble slabs originally screened not only the altar but were extended on both sides to the west towards the central nave. The third column base (counted from the east) of the southern arcade was surrounded by marble slabs as well. One could assume that this has been done in order to support a reliquary or tabernaculum fitted to the column at this emphasized spot of the church. Some of the marble slab fragments, found in the mosaic floor close to the main entrance, could be identified as part of a mensa (Fig. 6) placed on top of the altar.

Mosaics

The interior of the basilica was embellished with a large mosaic pavement. The style of its geometric ornamentation and the few figural motives suggests a date in the sixth century AD: The Gadarene mosaics are closely related, for instance, to those in the church of Gergesa-Kursi on the



5. Marble pole from the chancel screen found in the five-aisled basilica (Photo: A. Gyldenholm).

eastern shore of Lake Tiberias.¹⁴

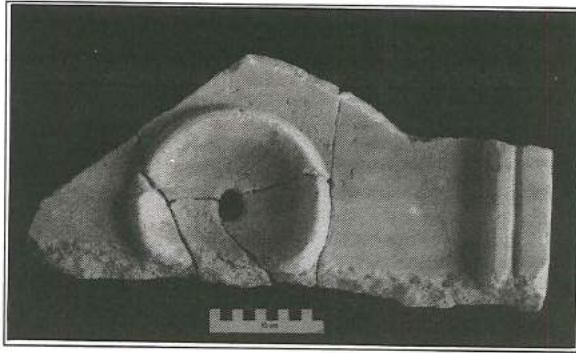
The central and the two adjacent lateral naves (III and IV) were covered by a floor showing a simple feather ornament of white tesserae framed by a frieze of alternating lotus buds. In the western half a line of octagonal fields was partly destroyed by the stylobate of a later alteration of the church interior. In one of the fields one reads in Greek characters the word (ΠΡΟΣΦΟ Πρεσφο[εά] dedication of ...”), indicating personal involvement of a cleric or a pilgrim in financing the mosaic floor. The two outer aisles (II and V) are covered by el-

12. For the combination of Troade granite with Proconnesian marble capitals and bases, cf. H. Dodge, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 7 (1988):

76, Fig. 7.

13. Nielsen, Andersen, and Nielsen 1993: 234, Fig. C.

14. Tsaferis 1983: 23ff.



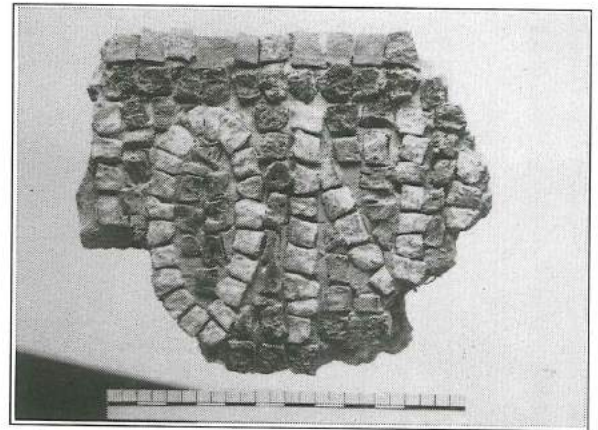
6. Marble fragments of the altar plate (mensa) from the five-aisled basilica (Photo: A. Gyldenholm).

ongated fields filled with stylized geometric scrolls, in the vignettes of which small figural motives such as an empty bird cage¹⁵ or ivy leaves are displayed. In the intercolumniation between aisles II-III and IV-V single birds¹⁶ or trees are represented.

Apart from the floor pavement a lot of fragments of a coloured wall mosaic framed by a narrow band in fresco technique was found in a dump pit beyond the southern wall of the basilica. They could be restored as a coloured panel with at least two lines of a Greek inscription (Fig. 7) executed in white tesserae on a light blue background. Small portions of the letters could be conjectured, but the full reading of the epigram remains obscure due to the fragmentary state of preservation.

Small Finds

A relatively large number of coins has been found together with pottery sherds, glass and minor objects made of bone or metal. Especially Sondage IV produced an amount of more than 100 bronze coins found underneath coloured mosaic fragments, tesserae or pieces of *opus sectile*. The evidence of pottery for the chronology has to be considered as rather scarce since a major portion of it comes from recent refills of the square trenches or from disturbed



7. Fragment from a coloured wall mosaic with Greek inscription, from a dump pit south of the southern wall of the five-aisled basilica (Photo: A. Gyldenholm).

stratigraphical contexts.

The interior of the basilica produced a considerable number of glass lamp fragments (polycandela). Amongst the metal finds a clay core of a bell with horizontally ribbed body should be noted. One of the burials in the crypt (Tomb 12) already excavated in 1988¹⁷ contained two bronze chains with bells fixed to them by wire. One of these chains¹⁸ preserves bells of the type represented by the core. This find indicates that bronze objects of this sort are of local origin, manufactured in the immediate environs of the church complex. One building of this type, a simple storage room with *dolia*, was examined north of the *decumanus maximus* in the 1989 campaign at the foundations of the Tiberian gate. A fragment of an incense-burner (Fig. 8) was found in the area of the main street within unstratified debris and may be classified as one of the few pre-Hellenistic items from Gadara.

After the division all small finds were handed over to the Department of Antiquities. After anthropological examination all human bones were reburied in one of the stone-lined shaft tombs of the crypt.

15. Piccirillo 1993: 248, Fig. 422; 280, Fig. 514. Cg. Asemakopoulou-Atzaka, *Archaiologiko ergo Makedonias kai Thrakes* 3 (1989): 625ff.

16. Piccirillo 1993: 329, Fig. 690.

17. Th. Weber, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 42 (1992).

18. Weber (1999, in press).



8. Fragment of a stone incense-burner, found in the debris upon the pavement of the decumanus maximus, pre-Hellenistic, mid 6th century BC, local origin? (Photo: A. Gyldenholm).

The Five-aisled Basilica and the Miracle of the Gadarene Swine

The topographical setting of the basilica in the immediate vicinity of the Early Imperial city gate and the integration of a pagan Roman mausoleum in the early Christian cult may perhaps be connected with details in the New Testament about the miracle of Gadara (Matthew 8, 28). Both Roman monuments were visible during the life-time of Jesus. In respect of other basilicas of the five-aisled type it is evident, that the Gadarene structure must have been dedicated for a outstanding event or person of the Bible or early church history. Despite the lack of inscriptions or other striking evidence, it should not be excluded, that a pilgrim church of this size was built on the spot, where Byzantine tradition recalled that Jesus had performed the miracle of the Gadarene swine.

Consolidation and Future Presentation of the Ruin to the Public

Urgent measures had to be undertaken in

order to guarantee security for excavators and visitors. Cracks in the basalt slabs of the ceiling of the crypt were temporarily supported by a scaffold and are going to be restored by the Department of Antiquities.

In the course of the current fieldwork, the author together with Nawzat Abida, Director of the Department of Touristic Development in the Ministry of Tourism, worked on a proposal for the consolidation and preservation of the five-aisled basilica complex at Umm Qays. First steps for the consolidation were undertaken immediately at the onset of the excavation. To the east of the retaining walls of the underground complex a soil package of a thickness up to 80 cm contains materials deposited after 1967, when the area of the Tiberian Gate, the underground burial places and the five-aisled basilica was occupied by a military unit. Since only the upper stratum of this thick earth layer could be removed during the 1998 campaign, further bulldozing is recommended in order to facilitate access for the visitor. By the end of the fieldwork all deep soundings, which may cause danger to men and cattle as well, were refilled. It has been agreed with the Department of Antiquities to raise the outer walls of the basilica by two layers of masonry. For these works ancient ashlar which are available in the area, should be used, held in place with a mixture of sand-lime mortar. For the consolidation of the fragmented mosaics, the Irbid branch of Department of Antiquities provided rescue help. Only small portions such as those with the inscription fragment or with vignettes of birds were lifted for presentation in the Museum. After the end of the excavation, the remaining basilica's mosaic floor was covered by a 20 cm layer of rubble sand and debris for protection.

The Excavation of Rujum al-Manāra

During the excavation season the site of al-Manāra, located 12 km east from Umm Qays, was visited by members of the Ger-

man archaeological mission. Inhabitants of the village helped to identify the small ruin of the Rujum al-Manāra already reported by G. Schumacher in 1890.¹⁹ He described it as “a small square ruined tower on the Roman high road from Umm Keis to the Hauran, situated near Ibdar. Its elevated position, its extraordinary large and well-hewn building stones, with the columns and capitals, above which run a cornice and an architrave, would render it probable that we have here either the remains of a small temple or else a watch-tower at the frontier for the collection of toll”.

The Rujum al-Manāra presently lies some 30 m south of the asphalt road between Umm Qays and Irbid, and 50 east of a towered station of the military security police. The land is now privately owned by a local family. The Department of Antiquities at Umm Qays under the inspector Ibrahim Zu‘bi undertook clearance and a small-scale excavation with the endorsement of the owners. This fieldwork produced a small square building with east-west orientation (Fig. 9: a-b), the foundations of which consists of well-levelled bedrock. The structure is raised on a three-stepped podium and preserved a profiled base. In the interior a shaft tomb was found chiselled into the soft rock (Fig. 9: c), accessible by a short tunnel from the north. The pottery and reused limestone ashlar point to a use of this well-designed building as a tomb during the Byzantine period. In the environs various rounded blocks ornamented with palmette leaves and rosettes indicate the presence of an older building in the shape of a cylindrical tower. Due to the limited excavation area it was impossible to locate its foundations. The figural style of this frieze leads to the assumption that close to the uncovered building a tower-shaped monument marked the eastern border of the Gadarene chora in the Roman Imperial period.

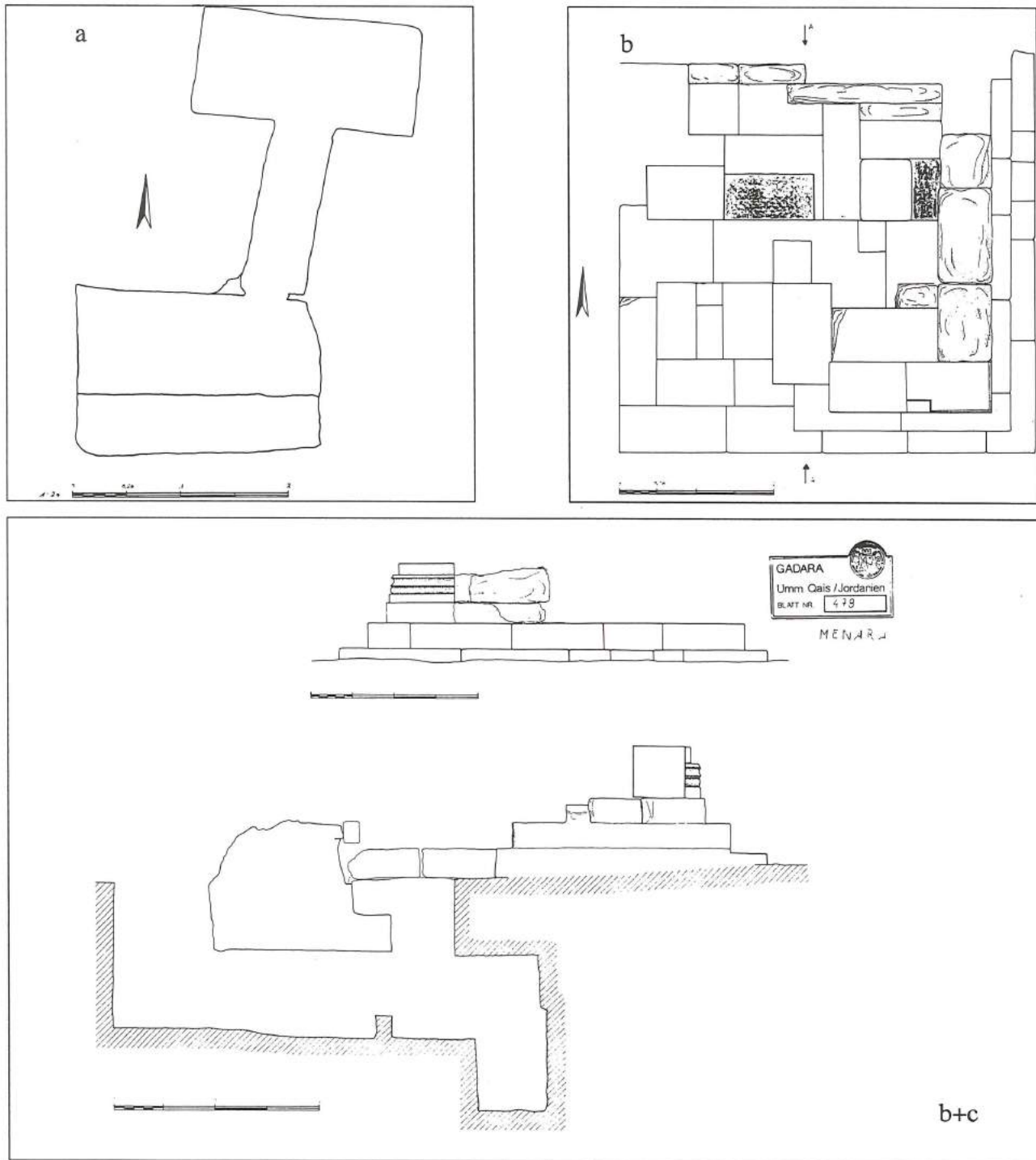
A Late-Hellenistic Fortress at Lahlūh (Ulrich Hübner)

Lahlūh is the Arabic name of a small promontory situated at a distance of about 400 m south-south-west of the fortified acropolis hill of Gadara. It is accessible south of the asphalted road winding through the Wādī ‘Ayn Umm Qays which connects the modern village to the perennial spring. The site is today planted with an olive grove and it is used for agriculture by its private owners.

At a first visit during the 1998 campaign traces of ancient quarrying on the protruding rocky outcrops at the site on the eastern top of the slope were noted together with visible remains of a fortress in its western parts. Close to the road a rock-cut Roman tomb was altered into a columbarium. These antiquities were reported to the responsible authorities at Umm Qays and briefly surveyed with the assistance of Thomas Weber and Sufyan al-Karaimah, the son of the owner of the land. The result of this visit is a sketchy ground map showing the layout of the fortress, which has not been previously reported by G. Schumacher or other visitors of the ancient territory of Gadara.

The fortress has an approximately square plan (Fig. 10) and was built on the highest elevation point of the slope and was founded solidly on the extant bedrock. It occupied an area of ca. 40 x 45 m. The interior consisted originally of two separate rectangular courtyards arranged adjacently to each other from east to west and connected to each other by a small rock-cut gate (Fig. 11 a). The fortified area was surrounded by walls and protected the eastern, southern and north-western part of the slope where the terrain is relatively steep. A main entrance should be searched at the eastern side because of the relatively flat elevation on this side of the hill. The south-western

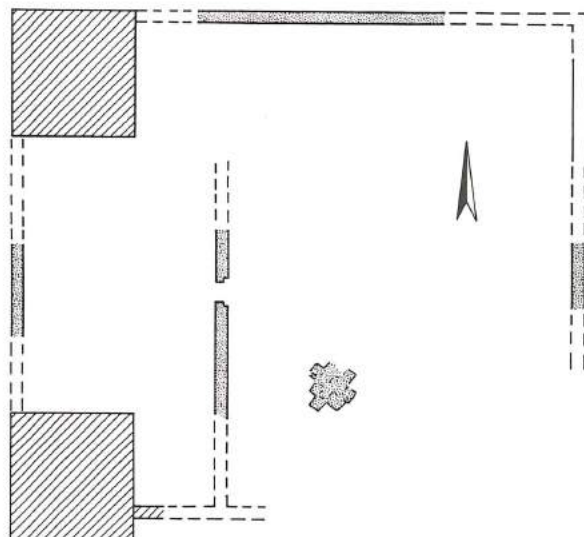
19. Schumacher 1890: 103f.



9a-c. Rujum al-Manāra, ground plan (a), elevation and section (b+c), plan of the rock-cut tomb (surveyed by Osama Hammouri, drawn by U. Denis).

and north-western corners of the fortification are flanked by a massive 10 x 10 m tower of square plan (Fig. 11 b). Their masonry consists of large (1.80 x 0.65 m) and carefully chiselled limestone ashlar laid in header-and-stretcher technique with precise horizontally and perpendicularly running

joints. The fortification wall connecting these two towers is only little preserved. It is obvious that the blocks for the construction of the fortress were produced in the quarries in the eastern part of the hill. Rough field walls have been built in recent times over both towers and other con-



10. Lahlüh, late-Hellenistic or Early Roman fortress. Sketch ground plan (surveyed by U. Hübner, and Th. Weber, drawn by U. Denis).

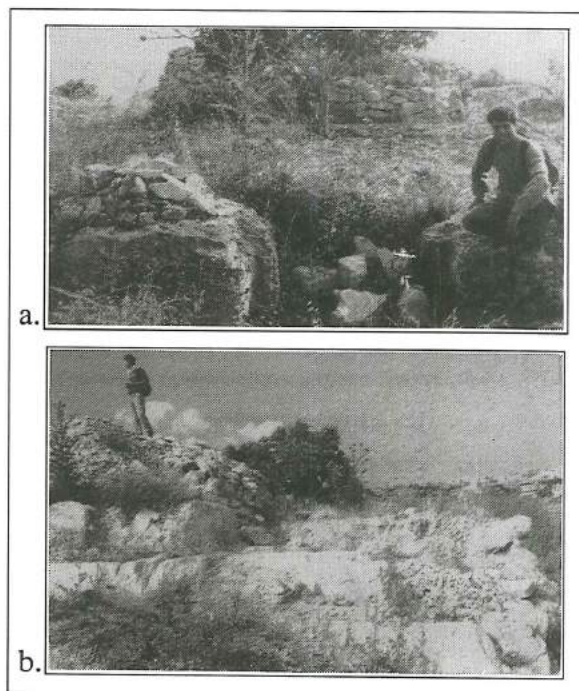
necting masonry, in order to make use of the enclosed area for the sake of agriculture. At the south-western tower remains of military shelters are preserved dating to the Arab-Israeli wars of the present century.

The ancient complex of Lahlüh was situated in a strategically well-chosen position. From here guarding military units had an excellent overview on the southern flank of the Gadarene city wall as well as on neighbouring sites such as into the Wādī al-‘Arab (close to Tall Zer‘a), on the promontory Angora, on the skyline of the ‘Ajlūn-massive until the plain of Baysān/Scythopolis. From Lahlüh, all natural southern entrances to the city and to its immediate vicinities could easily be controlled and the water supply from the spring ‘Ayn Umm Qays be guaranteed.

Due to the coherence of the building technique of the recently found fortress with the masonry of the city wall of Gadara, a preliminary date within the Late Hellenistic or Early Roman period seems appropriate. Pottery sherds scattered at the side, however, make it evident, that the side was still occupied in Byzantine times.

Acknowledgements

Funding was provided by the German



11. Lahlüh, late-Hellenistic or Early Roman fortress, a: Rock-cut gate of the interior, b: Remains of the south-western tower with masonry in solid header-and-stretcher-technique (Photo by Th. Weber).

Research Committee (DFG), generously supported by the Foreign Department of the German Protestant Church, Hannover, and the Franz und Eva Rutzen-Stiftung, Bonn.

This year's fieldwork was granted the Director-General of the Department of Antiquities, Dr Ghazi Bisheh. Organization was facilitated on all levels due to the tireless efforts and generosity of Dr Hans-Dieter Bienert, Acting Director of the German Protestant Institute, Amman. To all above persons and Institutions, and to the people of Umm Qays, I owe thanks for their cooperation, hospitality, and friendship.

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