AMMAN RING ROAD ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT PHASE I (SURVEY)

by

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Introduction

The archaeological heritage constitutes the basic record of past human activities. Its protection and proper management is therefore essential to enable archaeologists and other scholars to study and interpret it for the benefit of present and future generations.

The protection of archaeological heritage must be based upon effective collaboration between professionals from many disciplines. It also requires the cooperation of government authorities, academic researchers, private or public enterprise and the general public.

The Department of Antiquities of Jordan has been promoting a Cultural Resource Management (CRM) program in its own organization in order to develop such a technique in Jordan. The program has been active in finding ways of cooperation between governmental development departments and the Department of Antiquities. Governmental agencies are now aware of the importance of preserving our national heritage, and of the need for coordination at the earliest stage of a construction project. We are in the process of having Cultural Resources Impact Assessment (CRIA) included in the Environmental Impact Reports of major public construction projects, and these assessments are now routinely prepared by the CRM Office each time a new construction project enters the design and feasibility phases.

General Assessment

Here it suffices to say that each time we are informed of a public project being in the design or prefeasibility study phase, we conduct a preliminary inspection of the project area, after having completed library research on the presence of archaeological sites (being much facilitated by JADIS, a computerized database of sites within the limits of given coordinates). After a visit to the proposed "Amman Ring Road", a preliminary Cultural Resources Impact Assessment was issued, which informed the development agency, Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MPWH) and the consultant about the presence of archaeological sites within or in the vicinity of the area to be developed.

The assessment also includes an evaluation of impact on sites and suggestions for their protection (such as possible road realignments) or for their rescue excavation before construction begins at the site.

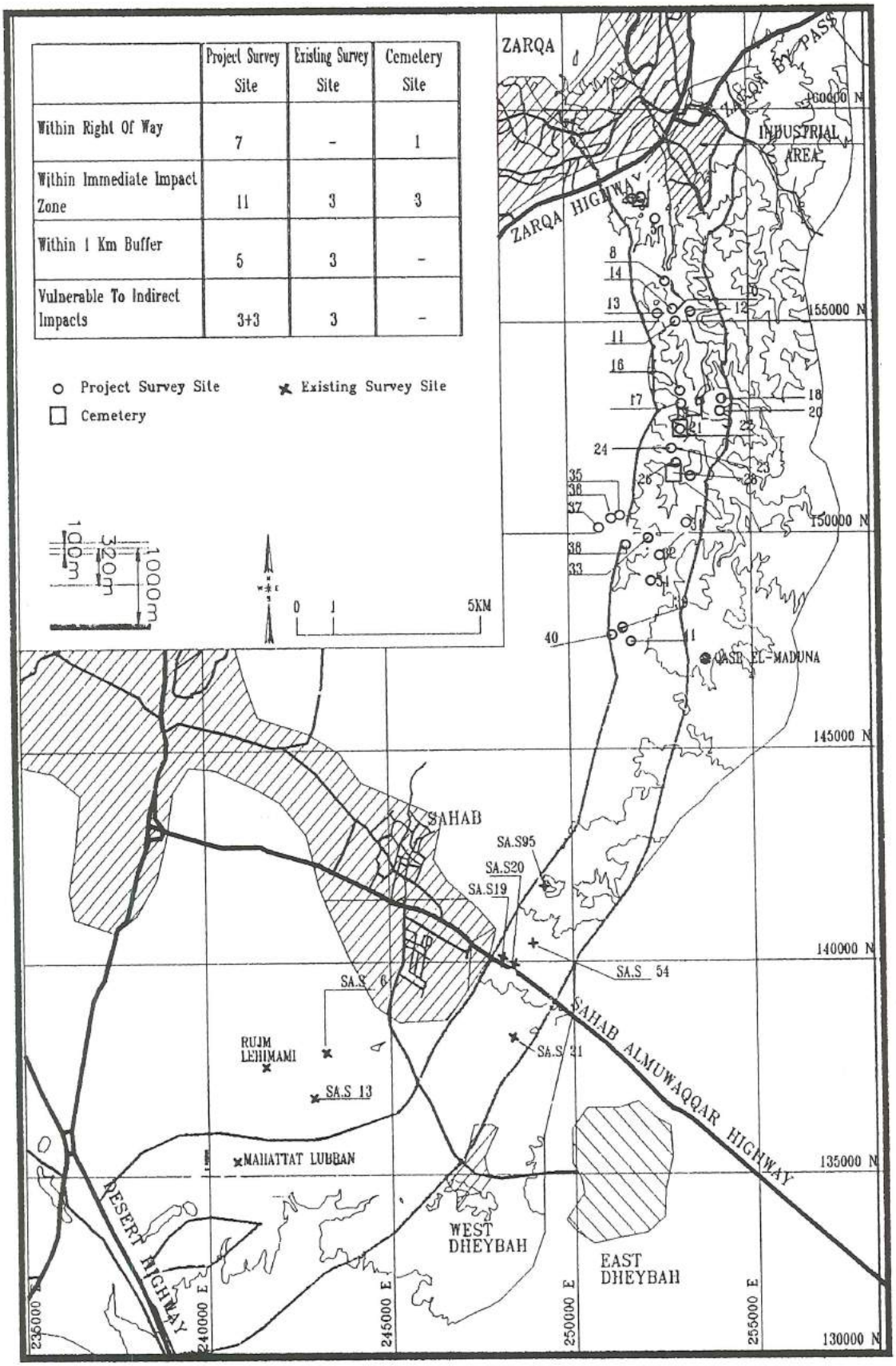
Definition and Scope of Work

Our approach to the study of the region consists of 5 steps:

1. Analysis of the aerial photographs and identification of visible sites.
2. Intensive archaeological survey and identification of periods of occupation (sherd, flint scatter, burial sites, etc).
3. Soundings at selected sites for the establishment of a stratigraphic record.
4. Limited excavations in different areas (selected sites) followed by comprehensive excavatians to salvage all threatened sites.
5. Processing the data for publication.

Methodology

A team composed of eight Department of Antiquities staff members surveyed the road alignment from November 1997 to January 15,1998.



	Project Survey Site	Existing Survey Site	Cemetery Site
Within Right Of Way	7	-	1
Within Immediate Impact Zone	11	3	3
Within 1 Km Buffer	5	3	-
Vulnerable To Indirect Impacts	3+3	3	-

1. Map showing the discovered sites during the survey.

The team surveyed, registered and mapped all the sites located within a radius of 250m to the right and left of the road alignment. Available maps were of the scale 1:25,000.

The survey was conducted on foot, with survey members walking at distances between 15-40m from each other. Sample collections were taken at all sites, and the features were recorded.

The principal aims of the survey were to locate archaeological sites along the road alignment, so as to enable the Department of Antiquities to propose diffenent solutions for their protection in cooperation with MPWH and the consultant.

There have been many changes in eastern Amman in the twentieth century. The biggest initial change was the building of the al-Ḥijāz rail road, but in the last 30 years the pace of modern development has accelerated at an alarming pace.

Now the region is crossed by networks of paved roads, towns and workshops have been put up everywhere; local people have started removing ancient monuments to construct new buildings. Quarries are still destroying the mountainous terrain and the modern garbage dumps spoil once scenic views.

The purpose of the survey was not only to find sites, but to gain knowledge of land use resources, travel routes and general aspects of the frontier region.

A complete listing of all sites found by the survey follows, with the identification of the main period for each site. The sites are located by the number assigned to them in the field. The reference given following the site number is the Jordan 1: 50,000 series map sheets, by sheet number and grid coordinate, together with height asl in metres.

If known, the modern Arabic site name is also given. Appended to each description is a summary of the number and period of the artifacts recovered from the site. Both lithics and sherds are presented in chronological order, from earliest to latest.

The dating of artifacts from a site to a specific period does not necessarily imply that architectural or other features of a site are to be so dated.

Paleolithic and Neolithic occupation is well attested in the area, Roman Byzantine and Islamic sites are known to have existed. Finally, the discovered sites included sherds and lithic scatters, structures, watch- towers, enclosures, camps, water installations, and so on (Fig.1).

Damage to the discovered sites had already occurred and has continued over the last years at the same rate:

- Alluvial debris resulted from running water through the area partly covering and cutting through cultural layers. The extent of the disturbed cultural layers cut by the water is difficult to determine.
- A bulldozer cut resulted in separating the archaeological deposits into two part and exposing cultural layers in section up to 1 m high.
- Modern agricultural activities revealed well-cut stones.
- Pits dug by robbers all over the sites: these pits were dug by local people disturbing several walls and deposits.

Sites Assessment

The archaeological surveys made in the area of the road (Road Alignment) and its vicinity revealed several types of archaeological sites: Paleolithic (Middle-Lower) 500, 000-200,000 BC (site No. 1)

- Pre-Pottery Neolithic Age (PPNA) 9000-5500 BC (site No. 6)
- Chalcolithic 4500-3000 BC (site No. 4)
- Iron Age I 1200-900 BC (site No. 15)
- Iron Age II 900-322 BC (site No. 7)
- Roman/Byzantine 1-600 AD (site No. 27)
- Islamic (Ṭumayyad) 650-750 AD (site No. 42) Khirbat al-Manakher.

Endangered Sites

The survey has shown that there are 23

sites directly threatened by the project. These are :
Site Nos. (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (15) (16) (17) (19) (23) (25) (26) (27) (28) (29) (32) (34) (42) (43)

Sites not in Immediate Danger of Destruction

The survey has shown that there are 20 sites not directly threatened by the project . These are:
Site Nos. 10/11/12/13/14/18/20/21/22/24/30/31/33/35/36/37/38/39/40/41.

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Appendix: Survey List

Site No.	Site Name	P.G.E	P.G.N	Periods of Occupation and Type of Site
1	W.Ush 1	252.1	158.1	Paleolithic plus u.d flints (scatter)
2	W.Ush 2	252.1	157.9	Modern (cemetery)
3	W.Ush 3	252.4	157.7	UD (small structure)
4	W.Ush 4	252.6	157.6	Chalcolithic (small structure)
5	W.Ush 5	252.7	157.3	Chalcolithic ? (wall foundation)
6	W.Ush 6	252.6	156.3	Pre-Pottery Neolithic (scatter)
7	W.Ush 7	252.6	156.2	Pre-Pottery Neolithic plus u.d (structure)
8	W.Ush 8	252.7	156.0	Pre-Pottery Neolithic? (wall foundation)
9	W.Ush 9	252.7	155.9	Byzantine (building plus enclousers)
10	W.Ush 10	253.1	155.3	u.d. (structure)
11	W.Ush 11	253.0	155.0	Roman? Byzantine (settlememt)
12	W.Ush 12	252.9	155.1	Byzantine(small structure)
13	W.Ush 13	252.8	155.2	Byzantine(wall foundation)
14	W.Ush 14	252.9	155.3	u.d. (cairn)
15	W.Ush 15	253.2	153.5	Iron II+u.d (enclosure)
16	W.Ush 16	253.3	153.3	u.d. (structure)
17	W.Ush 17	253.4	153.2	Byzantine (watch-tower?)
18	W.Ush 18	254.1	153.2	u.d. watch-tower
19	W.Ush 19	253.5	153.0	Modern (cemetery)
20	W.Ush 20	254.1	152.9	u.d. (small structure)
21	W.Ush 21	253.1	152.4	Modern (cemetery)
22	W.Ush 22	252.9	152.3	Roman? Byzantine (watch-tower)
23	W.Ush 23	253.0	152.0	u.d. (small structure)
24	W.Ush 24	252.8	152.0	Byzantine?(enclosure)
25	W.Ush 25	252.9	151.9	Roman? Byzantine-u.d (settlement)
26	W.Ush 26	252.9	151.7	Roman Byzantine (small structure)
27	W.Ush.27	252.9	151.6	Roman Byzantine u.d (settlement)
28	W.Ush.28	252.9	151.4	Modern (cemetery)
29	W.Ush.29	252.7	151.1	Byzantine (wall foundations)
30	W.Ush 30	253.1	150.2	Roman ? Byzantine (watch-tower)
31	W.Ush.31	253.1	150.2	Byzantine (enclosures)
32	W.Ush.32	252.4	149.6	u.d. (small structure)
33	W.Ush.33	252.2	14.9	Byzantine ? (small structure)
34	W.Ush.34	252.2	148.9	Roman ? Byzantine ? (watch-tower)

Site No.	Site Name	P.G.E	P.G.N	Periods of Occupation and Type of Site
35	Rujum al-Abyad	251.4	150.1	Roman Byzantine (watch-tower)
36	Rujum al-Abyad	251.2	150.3	u.d. (watch - tower)
37	Rujum al-Abyad	251.0	150.0	Iron II+u.d. sherds (cairn)
38	Rujum al-Abyad	251.6	149.9	Byzantine ? u.d. (small structure)
39	Rujum al-Abyad	251.4	147.8	Iron II. Byzantine ? (building)
40	Rujum al-Abyad	251.4	147.7	Iron II ?(settlement)
41	Rujum al-Abyad	251.5	147.5	Iron II. Byzantine (small structure)
42	Kh.al-Manakhir	251.8	144.8	Iron? Byzantine, Islamic. u.d. (settlement)
43	Kh. al-Manakhir			Byzantine -Umayyad (wall foundations)