

**PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE
EXCAVATIONS IN GADARA
(UMM QES) IN JORDAN, 1980**

by
Ute Wagner-Lux and Karel J.H. Vriezen

Introduction

From October 3rd till November 12th, 1980, the German Evangelical Institute for Archaeology of the Holy Land carried out the fifth excavation campaign in the ancient town of Gadara, today Umm Qēs, in Jordan.¹ During this campaign, work was carried out in four areas - III, IV, V and VI - (Fig. 1).

Area III

Area III (Fig. 2, Pls. XIII: 1, 2; XIV: 1) is situated in the northern part of the street branching to the south from the main street and below the large terrace, where a Byzantine church had been excavated in 1976-1979 (Area 1), along a row of rooms with vaulted ceilings.² In this area, the excavations, begun in 1977 and 1979 in the most northern field (field 1), were completed and work was extended to three further fields (fields 2-4). During this work, the western boundary of the ascent, which comes from the north to the terrace and which was only visible a few centimetres over the surface and the blocked entrance to the vaulted room, adjoining immediately to the south, was exposed. In the southern part of the excavation area (fields 2 and 4) many worked stones, either directly on the pavement of the street or a few centimetres above, were found under different kinds of layers of earth. They are

mainly building blocks of basalt from the facades of the vaulted rooms, which were collapsed westwards to the street. Even if not all the stones of the facades could be found, the material present is sufficient for a preliminary reconstruction of these parts of the buildings. According to this, each facade was constructed of eight basalt-stone layers in the runner-binder-technique, which reached a height of approximately 4.00 m. Profiled door-fittings with a doorstep of 0.10 m. reached the height of the four lower layers and the lintels, consisting of one stone each, are to be counted to the fifth layer of stones. Each door had a height of approximately 2.10 m. and a width of approximately 1.48 m. The seventh layer consisted of horizontally profiled stones, which apparently formed a ledge on the facade. The eighth layer of stones, which began approximately 3.60 m. over the doorstep, had a smooth surface. Apparently this formed the top of the terrace, which covered the ceilings of the vaulted rooms. In the northern part of the area (field 1) the pavement of the street could only partially be found, along the western boundary of the ascent to the terrace, in the northern end of this field and at the border to a smaller western field (field 3, compare Fig. 2). In those parts of field 1, where the basalt pavement was destroyed, a canal hewn out of the rock (0.44 m. wide and 0.62 m. deep; see Fig. 2, A) leading to a cistern (Fig. 2, M) was

¹ Compare U. Wagner-Lux and K. J. H. Vriezen, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 98 (1982) pages 153-162. The excavation campaign was directed by Ute Wagner-Lux. Working with her were: Karel J. H. Vriezen of Vleuten/Holland, Ernst W. Krueger of Jerusalem, Dr. Karl Jaroš of Linz/Austria, Markus Sieber and Lea Apolloni of Basel/Switzerland. The Department of Antiquities of Jordan was represented by "Omar Rshedat and Sultan Shraideh of Irbid. Many thanks to all

fellow-labourers for their tireless cooperation. Our special thanks go to the Director of the Jordan Department of Antiquities in Amman, Prof. Dr. Adnan Hadidi, as well as to the "Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft" in Bonn-Bad Godesberg/Federal Republic of Germany, with whose support the work could be done.

² Compare U. Wagner-Lux, E. W. Krueger, K. J. H. Vriezen and T. Vriezen-Van der Flier, *ZDPV* 94 (1978) p. 138.

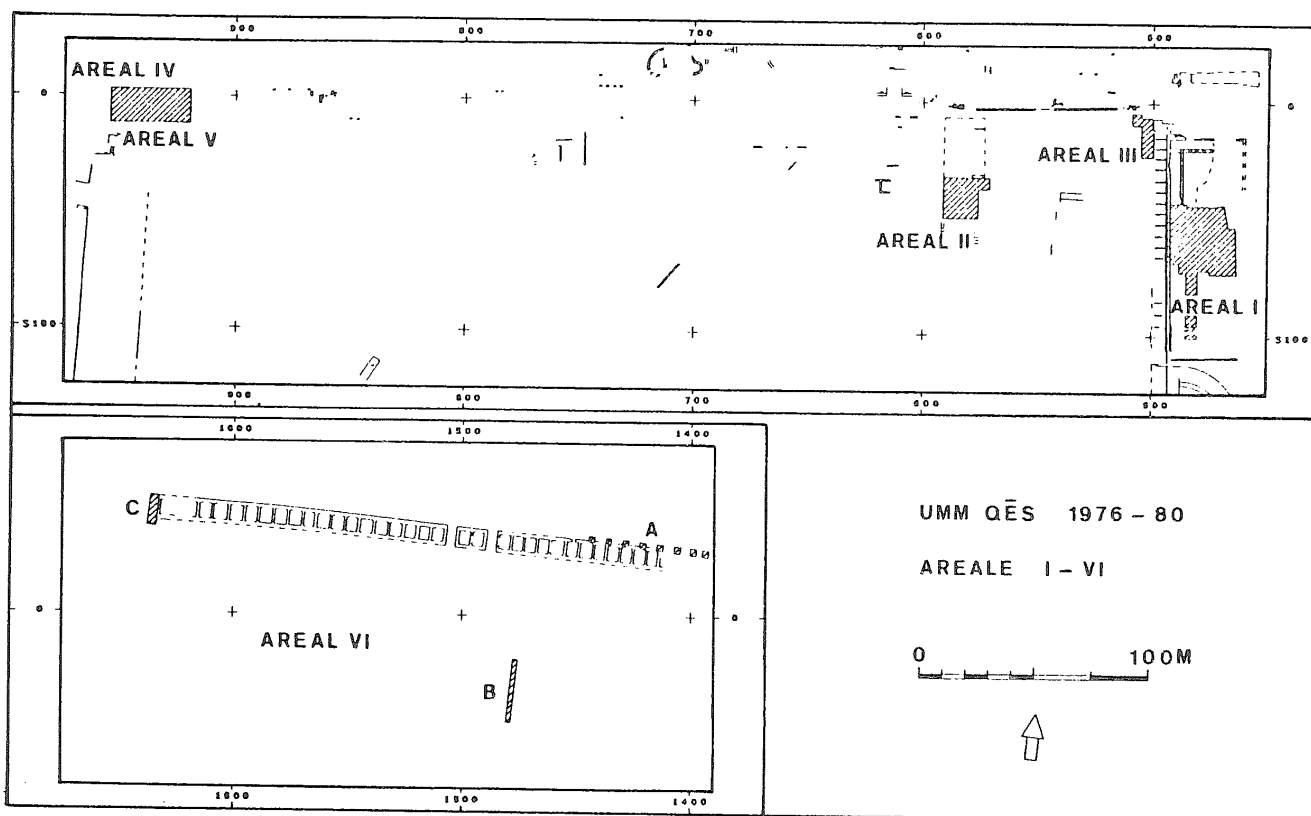


Fig. 1: Umm Qes, complete plan of the areas I-VI.

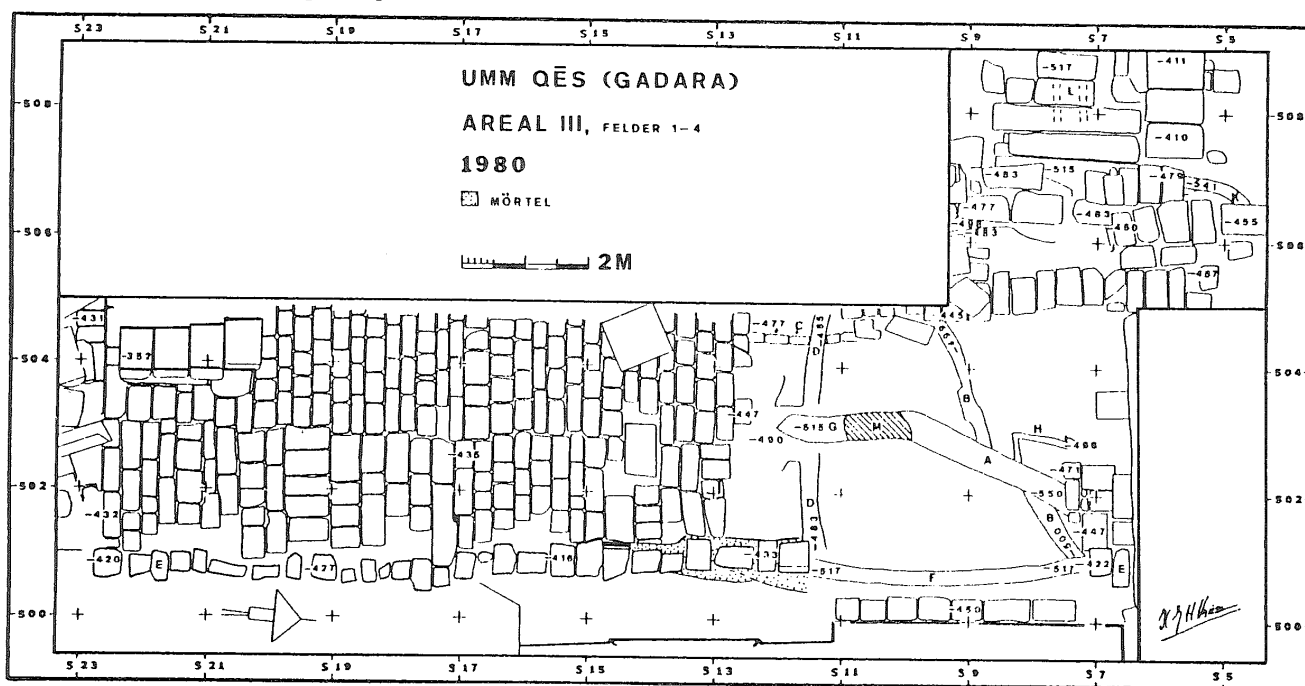


Fig. 2: Umm Qes, plan of area III.

found under the above mentioned strata and a white mortar layer. Since the cistern is mainly filled with earth, the measurements can only be estimated at 15.00 m. length in the north-south direction and 7.00 m. width in the east-west direction. Apparently the cistern was used for a long time and quite clearly the pavement was damaged when the cistern came to be used again at a later date. It seems that canal A lead the water of the main street of the

town (east-west direction) to the cistern M. In this area, several other waterpipes, constructed one over the other, were found (Fig. 2, B-H), which were also hewn out of the rock or otherwise consisted of ceramic tubes. While the canals A-D and F-H were all situated under the pavement, canal E (north-south direction) is secondary and was built into the street above canal F (compare Pl. XIV: 1 left). - The above described fields of area III (fields 1, 2 and

4) were opened by us to a breadth of 5.00m. (east-west direction). Aiming to find the western side of the so-called side-street and its boundary, the northern section of this area was extended to the west by a 4.00 m. wide field (field 3). However, only three further canals (Fig. 2, J, K and L) could be found; the western boundary of the street could not be determined.

Areas IV and V

Areas IV and V (Fig. 1 and 3, Pls. XIV: 2; XV) are situated between 420 and 454 m. west of area III. Here were visible the upper parts of column-shafts on both sides of the road³ being used today, which almost runs in the same direction as the ancient main road. On the north side of this street there were eight shafts of limestone columns in a row, on the southern side only two and it was supposed that they belonged to the colonnades of the old main street. The excavation site had a length of 34,00 m.; it was 15.00 m. wide. The northern boundary of area IV was drawn just north of the northern columns, the southern boundary 6.00-7.10 m. to the south. The southern boundary of area V was drawn behind the southern row of columns, whereby the excavation spread 3.50-4.50 m. to the north. Between the two areas there was a strip of approximately 4.50 m. wide, which is today being used as the road 0.10-0.15 m. above the ancient street. On both sides of the presently used road - on the north side of area IV and the south side of area V - walls were constructed in modern times in order to support the terrain, which is situated approximately 1.00-2.00 m. above street level. Material of ancient buildings, e.g., bricks, column-shafts, bases, capitals and architrave-parts, were used. During the excavation it turned out that the two column-shafts on the south side of the street in area V (which were drawn into the map of the surface survey of 1974) did not stand *in situ*, but most likely they belonged to the above mentioned modern walls. The

breadth of the street between the northern and southern stylobate of the colonnades is 12.55 m. in average. The breadth of the northern side-walk is 2.90-3.00 m.; the breadth of the southern side-walk 3.00-3.09 m. The northern stylobate is not rectilinear, but juts out between column S 6 and pedestal P 9 by 0.21-0.23 m. Seven column-shafts (diameter 0.70 m.) were found *in situ*, S 1 - S 6 and S 8, all standing on a round base with a square plinth (diameter 0.94-1.02 m.) The distance between the columns S 1 - S 6 (measured centre to centre) varies between 2.78-2.84 m. It is very doubtful if the pedestals of this row, P 7 and P 9, originally belonged to the northern colonnade, since on the one hand there are only bases with column-shafts on this side (S1-S6 and S8, and on the other hand their measurements (P7: 1.08 x 1.14 m.; P9: 0.66 x 0.71 m.) vary greatly. It is surprising that all the columns of the southern colonnade stood on pedestals. There are nine pedestals from pedestal P 11 to base B 19 on the stylobate (height 0.56-0.63 m.; length 0.81-0.92 m. breadth 0.75-0.88 m.), whereas in three cases (B 13, B 14 and B 19) round bases with square plinths rest on these pedestals (diameter 0.80; 0.87 and 0.81 m.). The distance between P12-B13, B13-B14 and B14-P15 is always 3.02 m. (from centre to centre). On the northern side-walk, Area IV, south of S 1, there was found a secondary construction (approximately 0.30 m. high and mainly only one layer of stones) with the southern side missing. Excavation tests down to the rocky soil were conducted in the same area in the parts A and B (compare Fig. 3). In the excavation test A (in the north-western corner of the excavation site) mainly three conduits made of ceramic pipes bedded in mortar were found, under which an opening in the rock lead to a room — most likely to a cistern. The filling material was mixed with numerous fragments of early Roman pottery. In the excavation test B (in the north-eastern part of the area) several (up to 1.50 m. high, partly based on the rock) remains of walls were found as well as a part of a

³ Compare ZDPV 94 (1978) p. 137.

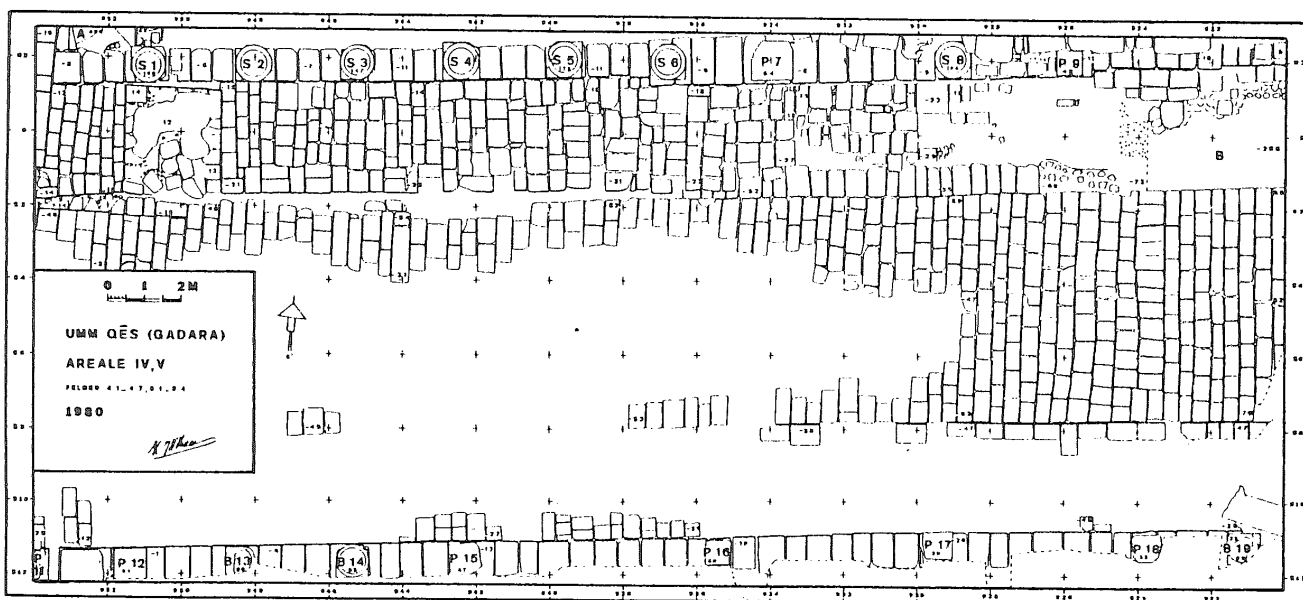


Fig. 3: Umm Qēs, plan of areas IV and V.

plastered basin. As seen clearly in the plan of the Areas IV and V, only a little has been left of the pavement of the southern side-walk of the street. On its western end (north of pedestal P 11) most likely a secondary wall was added in the north-south direction. Both side-walks dip a little to the street. The street itself, which was paved in a regular pattern, was higher in the middle than on the sides and turns eastwards in this area (compare Fig. 3).

Suggestions of dates will not be made until all the material of this excavation campaign, which, apart from Area VI, deals with the main and the so-called side-street of Gadara, has been studied completely.

Area VI

In the western part of the ancient town three soundings were made (A, B and C, compare Fig. 1) at the remains of a building, which, during the surface survey of 1974, was thought to have belonged to a hippodrome.⁴ Various small excavations on the east side (A) showed that the

building could be prolonged at least 15.00 m. further to the east than first judged in 1974. Diggings at the west end of the remains (C) showed that at a right angle to the ruins of the building there is a wall running in a southern direction. However, without further excavations, nothing more can be noted about this. In the excavation test B (compared Fig. 1), which was carried out at a length of 27.00 m., a breadth of 1.50 m. and a depth of 1.20 m., south of the southern wall of the long-stretched building, many squared building stones and quarry-stones of basalt and limestone, mixed with fragments of pottery, were found. Only the excavation of the whole area can show if and in how far this accumulation of stones has any connection with the ruins situated to the north.

Ute Wagner-Lux
Karel J.H. Vriezen
German Evangelical Institute
for Archaeology
Amman - Jordan