

Rock - Cut Tombs at Rajib

by
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Three rock-cut tombs, situated at Rajib (ca. two kilometers east of "the Cave of the Seven Sleepers"), were brought to light at the end of May, 1973. The discovery was made during work on the "green belt highway", which runs south of the villages of Abu Alanda and Rajib to Marka, when a bulldozer accidentally cut into the rear wall of a loculus on the south side of a tomb (tomb 1, cf. fig. 1). The discovery was reported to the Department of Antiquities and Mr. Ali Sa'idi, the inspector of Antiquities of the Amman region, immediately went to the site and supervised the initial clearing operations; From Tomb 1 he was able to recover three pottery lamps (Pl. XXXVI, 1) from the sockets in the chamber walls, two broken candlesticks, a small pottery vessel, and a few bronze objects.

In Loculus 4 of Tomb 1 there was a small opening (ca. 0,15 m. in diameter), which looked into an adjacent tomb (tomb 2). Mr. Sa'idi however, was not able to continue his work because of another urgent assignment, so the writer replaced him as the supervisor of the excavations. When work continued, it was found that the small opening had been enlarged to permit one to crawl into Tomb 2. It was soon evident that Tomb 2 had been robbed recently, since the lid of the sarcophagus which it contained, had been partially removed, and since traces of footprints were visible in the central chamber and loculi.

In Tomb 2 also, a small opening, enlarged later, led into the loculus of yet another tomb, 3 (cf. Fig. 1).

The three tombs were situated on the slope of a hill, and their entrances faced south. When the entrances had been opened by trenches from the outside, the excavation of the tombs was carried out through the entrances. The contents of the tombs were sifted, and in Tomb 2, two soil layers were revealed by a stratigraphic section through the central chamber (cf. below).

Tomb 1

The entrance to Tomb 1 was rather low (ca. 0,70 x 0,65 m.), so that one has to stoop down when entering it. Behind the entrance, which was blocked by a large slab strengthened by smaller stones, was a chamber reached by one rock-hewn step. The chamber was filled with loose brown soil which had silted into the tomb through the entrance, and with limestone blocks which had fallen down from the roof. The chamber, roughly cut into the soft limestone, measured 7,80. from north to south, and 8,00m. from east to west, with a maximum height of 2,50m. There were thirteen loculi cut into the side walls of the chamber, ca. 0,30m. above the floor level. The average measurements of the loculi were: 1,70m. depth; 0,70m. width; 0,95m. height. Loculi 1 and 2; however, measured 1,90 x 1,60 x 1,50 m. and they contained more than one burial. In the southwestern corner of the central chamber was a rock-cut pit (ca. 1,55m. dep) which was covered with a rectangular slab. It contained neither bones nor pottery, but it may have been intended for additional burials, or for collecting of bones of decomposed burials (to allow for prolonged use of the tomb).

In addition to the objects recovered

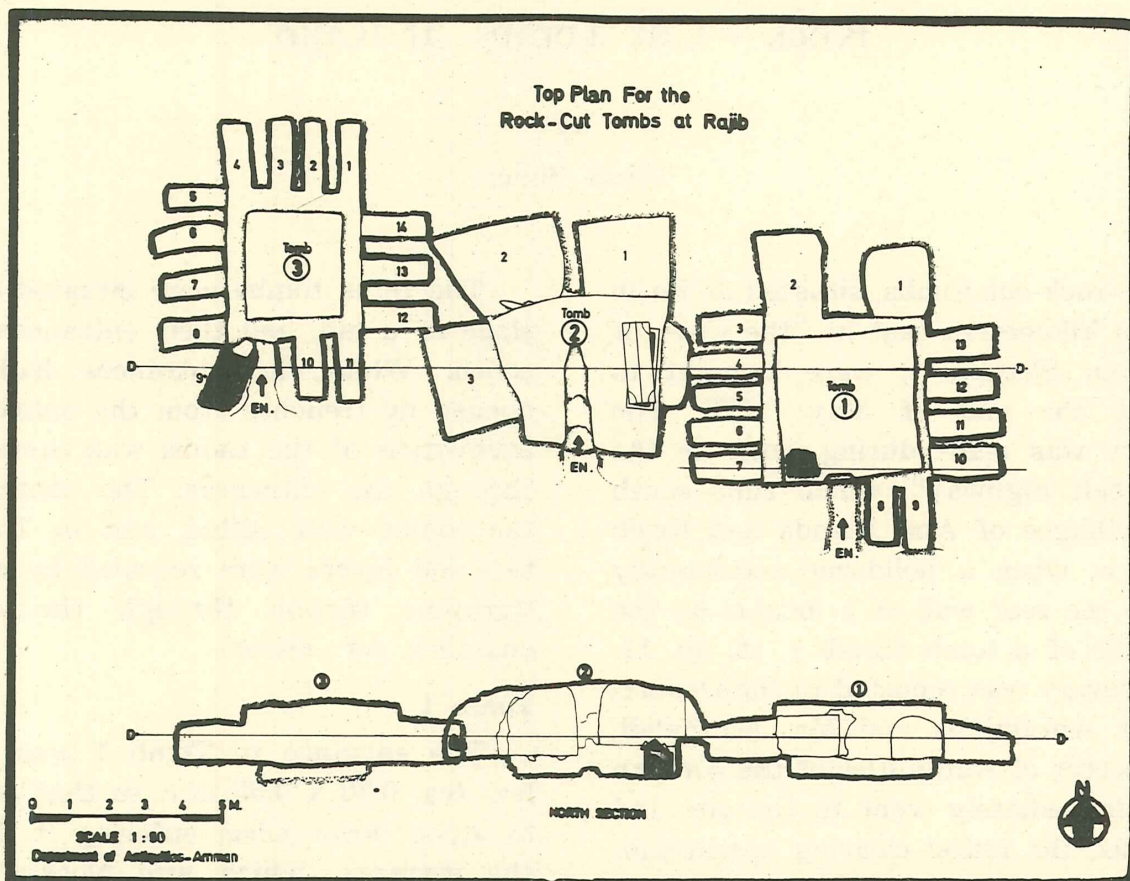


Fig. 1

by Mr. Sa'idi (cf. above), a cooking pot¹ and a small ribbed vessel came from Tomb 1. (Pl. XXXVI, 2) the most diagnostic objects for dating the tomb would be the lamps² (Pl. XXXVI, 1) which would indicate that the tomb was probably in use during the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D.).

Tomb 2

The entrance to Tomb 2 was blocked on the outside by a stone slab. Since the slab was not properly adjusted, loose soil had worked its way into the tomb, and this soil sloped down into the chamber from near the top of the entrance. Four roughly cut steps led down from the entrance to the floor of the chamber. The

chamber was cut irregularly into the soft limestone, and it contained two layers of stratification:

- A. Huwwar layer, ca. 0,35 m. thick.
- B. Hard brown soil layer, under the huwwar layer.

Opening off from the chamber were three alcoves (or bays) two on the north and one on the west (cf. Fig. 1) Each of the alcoves contained more than three burials, but no complete skeleton were recovered. Along the east (unfinished ?) wall of the chamber was a heavy limestone stercophagus, which had the following dimensions: 2.10 m. length; 0,72 m. width; 0,62 m. height. The lid of the sarcophagus had a pitched roof

(1) The cooking pot with round body, sharp shoulder, and low, vertical neck, might be dated to the first century A.D. (cf. **QDAP** X, (1940) p. 32, Fig. 16 No. 7).

(2) Several examples of Herodian lamps occurred in the burial cave of Silet edh-Dhahr (for references and dating discussion, cf. **BASOR Supplementary Studies** 15-16 (1953), p. 31; cf. also **Atiqot**, III (1961), p. 136-138.

and acroteria at the corners. It would seem that the sarcophagus had been brought into the tomb after it had been constructed elsewhere.

From the huwwar layer in the chamber came a pottery lamp (Pl. XXXVII,1,No.2) and two bronze coins of Philip the Arab (A.D. 244-249; Pl. XXXVII, 2; Nos. 1, 2). The sarcophagus produced a gold earring (Pl. XXXVIII, 1; 7), a moulded lamp (Pl. XXXVI,1No. 1) two badly corroded bronze coins, (Pl. XXXVII, 2; No. 3, 4), fragments of green glass, small iron nail heads, and fragments of decayed wood. Since the objects from the huwwar layer would seem to be later in date than those from the sarcophagus, two distinct burial periods could be reconstructed for Tomb 2. The first, during which time the sarcophagus would have been placed in the tomb, would be dated by the moulded lamp to the first third of the 2nd century A.D.³ The second would be dated by the two bronze coins and the pottery lamp to the middle of the third-century A.D.

Tomb 3

The entrance to Tomb 3 was blocked by a stone slab, but the chamber was filled near the entrance with crumbled rock and silt. The chamber was 7,15 m. square, with a maximum height of 2,90 m., and it had the characteristic sunken floor surrounded by benches. Fourteen loculi radiated from the side walls (cf. Fig. 1), and they all contained disintegrated human bones. The loculi usually measured ca. 1,70 x 0,95 m., and some of them were blocked partially by stone slabs. Loculus 9 located immediately to the west of the entrance, was sunken into the floor of the chamber, and it measured ca. 1,55 x 0,80 x 1,65 m. Lamp sockets were carved into the walls of the chamber between the loculi.

Objects from the tomb included glass, bronze, iron, and pottery fragments, a bronze buckle, a gold earring with pendant and a few beads (Pl. XXXVIII Nos. 5 and 8). The pottery lamp fragments (Plate XXXVIII, 2) would point to a late 3rd century A.D. date for the tomb.⁴

Rock-Cut Tombs

At Rajib (1973)

The contents of the tombs and their positions as follow;

No.	Tomb	Position	Contents
1	I	Socket	Lamp: Herodian; Spatulate nozzle; round flattened body with central filling-hole. Both nozzle sides and ends seem to have been trimmed with a knife. Pl. XXXVI, 1.
2	I	Socket	Herodian lamp: as No. 1. Pl. XXXVI, 2.
3	I	Central floor	Piriform bottle: Neck is tall and slightly bulging; rounded base; flaring rim. Pl. XXXVI, 1.
4	I	Socket	Lamp: Bowed nozzle; knob handle; ridge around filling-hole is pinched. Pl. XXXVI, 1.
5	I	Central floor	Lamp: Broken.
6	I	Central floor	Lamp: nozzle.

(3) IEJ, XII (1962), p. 194, Fig. 4.

(4) ADAJ. XVII (1972), p. 82, No. 1, Pl. III, fig. 2.

No.	Tomb	Position	Contents
7	I	Central floor	Lamp: Broken
8	I	Central floor	Candlestick: broken.
9	I	Central floor	Cooking pot: Rounded body; slightly protruding belly; low, vertical neck; two handles. Pl. XXXVI, 2.
10	I	Central floor	Vessel: Ribbed body; flat base; vertical neck. Pl. XXXVI, 2.
11	II	Locus I	Iron fragment and iron nail heads; Bronze ring; Interlooped bronze circles badly oxidized; Tiny cylindrical dark green bead. Plate XXXIX, 1.
12	II	Locus III	White-Creamy glass fragment, Iron flat object with two knobs; fragments of iron and twisted bronze bracelet; Beads: Plate XXXIX, 2.
13	II	Central floor	Candlestick: Broken, very low firing temperature.
14	II	Central floor	Two bronze coins of Philip the Arab: obv; head of emperor, Rev; Tyche. Pl. XXXVII, 2, Nos. 1, 2.
15	II	Central floor	Lamp: Nozzle smoke blackened; Handle slightly, bent up; filling hole encircled by two ridges, chevron pattern and parallel strokes on shoulder Plate: XXXVIII; 1, No. 2.
16	II	Sarcophagus	Moulded Lamp: Orange buff ware with red slip; bowed nozzle; flat base; knob handle; pomegranate and pine cone decoration around filling-hole, which is encircled by a ridge. Plate XXXVIII, 2, No. 1. Gold earring: Plate XXXVIII, 1, No. 7.
17	II	Sarcophagus	
18	II	Central floor	Cooking pot, Red ware; ribbed body and ring base; broken.
19	III	Locus I	Iron fragments: Heavy headed iron nails with traces of decayed wood attached to them; Iron ring. Two Beads: One is tiny cylindrical green bead; the other is dark green.
20	III	Locus II	Iron fragments; two iron nails; Interlooped iron circles: Small bronze bracelet with two rings attached to it. Pl. XXXVIII, 1, No. 2.
21	III	Locus III	Iron rod ends in wooden attachment round which bronze Sheet is wrapped; use unknown (Pl. XL, 1).

22	III	Locus III	Bronze buckle (Pl. XXXVIII, 1, No. 5).
23	III	Locus III	Gold ear-ring with pendant (Pl. XXXV III, No. 8).
24	III	Locus VI	Glass bracelet (Pl. XXXVIII, 1, No. 1) and two Iron fragments.
25	III	Locus VII	Iron nail heads; Glass fragments of green-bluish colour; Widely ribbed Sherds and bronze breast pin.
26	III	Locus VIII	Bronze ring; Glass fragments; Widely ribbed sherds.
27	III	Locus IX	Ribbed Sherds and glass fragments.
28	III	Locus X	Iron fragments; Thin circular bronze sheet pierced in the center.
29	III	Locus XI	Few Sherds and glass fragments.
30	III	Locus XII	Iron fragments.
31	III	Locus XIII	Glass fragments of pale-green and green-bluish colour.
32	III	Locus XIV	Lamp Broken; Nozzle smoke-blackened (Pl. XXXVIII, 2, No. 1); Iron and glass fregments.
33	III	Central floor	Lamps nozzle: A band of Chevron patterh between filling-hole and spout; Dot-in-circle decoration on both sides of nozzle (Pl. XXXVIII, 2, No. 2).
34	III	Central floor	Lamp fragments; Buff ware; Knobs around Shoulder (Pl. XXXVIII, 2, No. 3).

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