

**PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE SWISS-LIECHTENSTEIN
EXCAVATIONS AT EZ-ZANTUR IN PETRA 1992*
THE FOURTH CAMPAIGN**

by
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The fourth season of operations by the Archaeological Institute of the University of Basel and the Swiss-Liechtenstein Foundation of Archaeological Research Abroad (SLFA) on the terrace beneath ez-Zantur ran under the direction of Prof. Dr. R. A. Stucky from August 21 to October 4, 1992.

Participants in the fourth campaign were the archaeologists, Bernhard Kolb (field assistant), Daniel Keller, Christoph Schneider and Ivo Zaroni; the archaeo-osteologist Dr. Jacqueline Studer and the preparator of animal skeletons Jean-Marie Zumstein.

Having received the official excavation permit from Prof. Dr. Safwan Tell, Director General of the Department of Antiquities, we arrived in Petra on August 24. Thanks to the hospitality of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, we could stay in the caves near the Museum and work in the lobby of Nazzal's Camp. We are very grateful for the logistic support given to us by Mr. S. Farajat, Head of the Service of Antiquities in Petra. Our project benefited once again from the customary assistance and courtesy extended to us by the Jordanian Embassy in Berne and the Swiss Embassy in Amman. The expedition would like to particularly thank H. E. the Ambassador A. Barakat in Berne and H. E. the Ambassador Dr. D. Sciolli in Amman.

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Fonds für Lehre und Forschung, Basel; Freiwillige-Akademische Gesellschaft, Basel; Ciba-Geigy, Basel; Jubiläumsstiftung der Schweizerischen Bankgesellschaft, Zürich; Landis & Gyr, Zug and Royal Jordanian Airlines, Amman. The fourth campaign would not have been possible without the generous help of our private sponsors. We are particularly grateful to Dr. H.-H. Coninx, Zürich and to Drs. O. and E. Coninx, Zürich.

The main objective of the 1992 season was to prepare the first volume of the final publication. For this reason we put the emphasis on the analysis of the Nabataean and the Late Roman architecture on ez-Zantur. Specific soundings and surface cleaning produced evidence of the hitherto unknown outline of the Nabataean house in the southern and eastern parts of the site and gave us the opportunity to reconsider and verify preliminary results concerning the Late Roman architecture. Another aim was to re-examine and photograph important small finds and pottery. Nine local workmen were hired for the various tasks in the field.

The Nabataean House¹ (Figs. 1-4; Pl. I: 1-2)

A detailed analysis of the Nabataean house that was destroyed in the early second century A.D. and then built over almost completely in the early fourth century revealed that it contained three functionally

* The following abbreviations will be used:

Campaign 1988: R.A. Stucky, 'Schweizer Ausgrabungen in ez-Zantur, Petra. Vorbericht der Kampagne 1988,' *ADAJ* 34 (1990), pp. 249ff.

Campaign 1989: R.A. Stucky *et al.*, 'Swiss-Liechtenstein Excavations at ez-Zantur in Petra 1989 — The Second Campaign,' *ADAJ* 35 (1991), pp. 251ff.

Campaign 1991: R.A. Stucky *et al.*, 'Swiss-Liechtenstein Excavations at ez-Zantur in Petra 1991 — The Third Campaign,' *ADAJ* 36 (1992), pp. 175ff.

1. This text is a very short summary of the forthcoming first volume of final publication on our project at ez-Zantur.

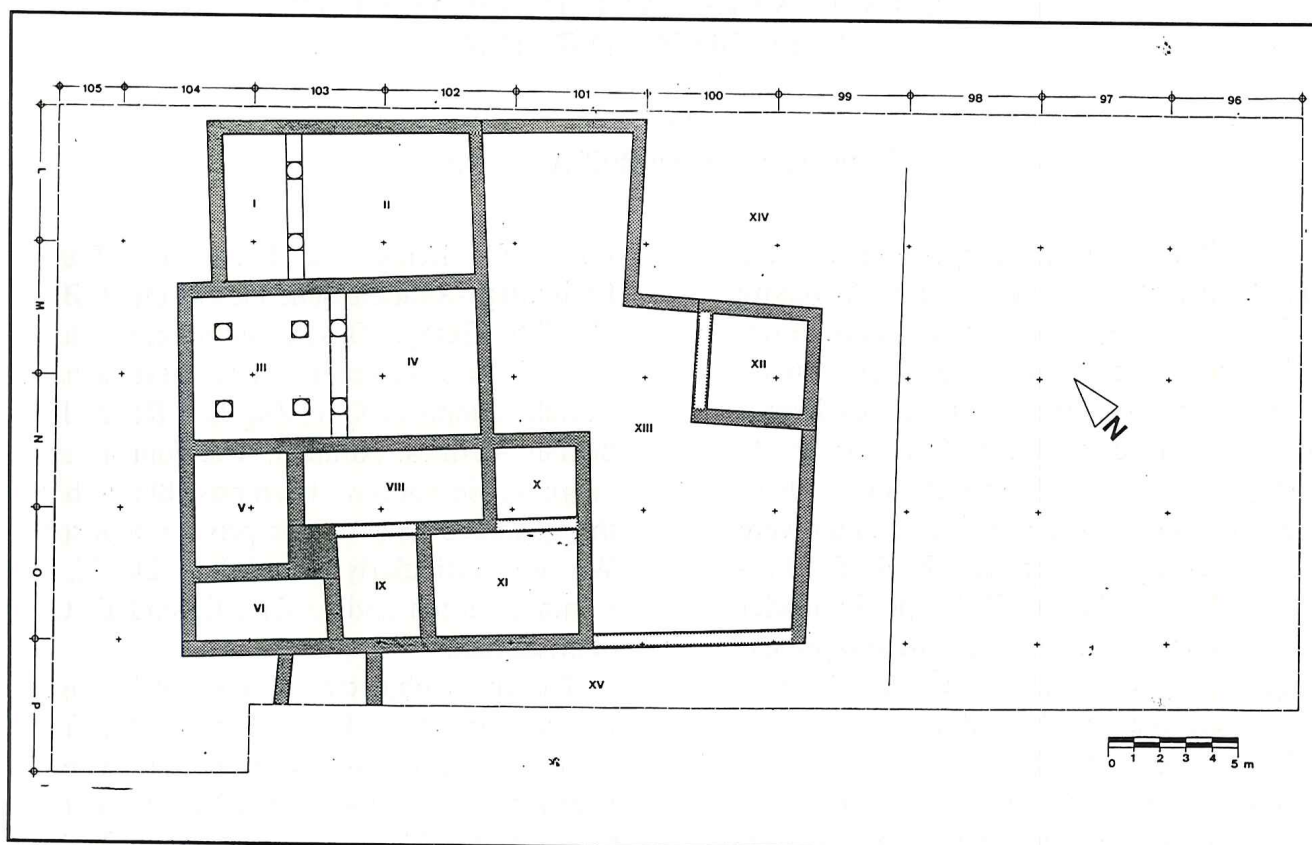


Fig. 1. Ez-Zanṭur. Ground plan of the Nabataean house, Phase 1.

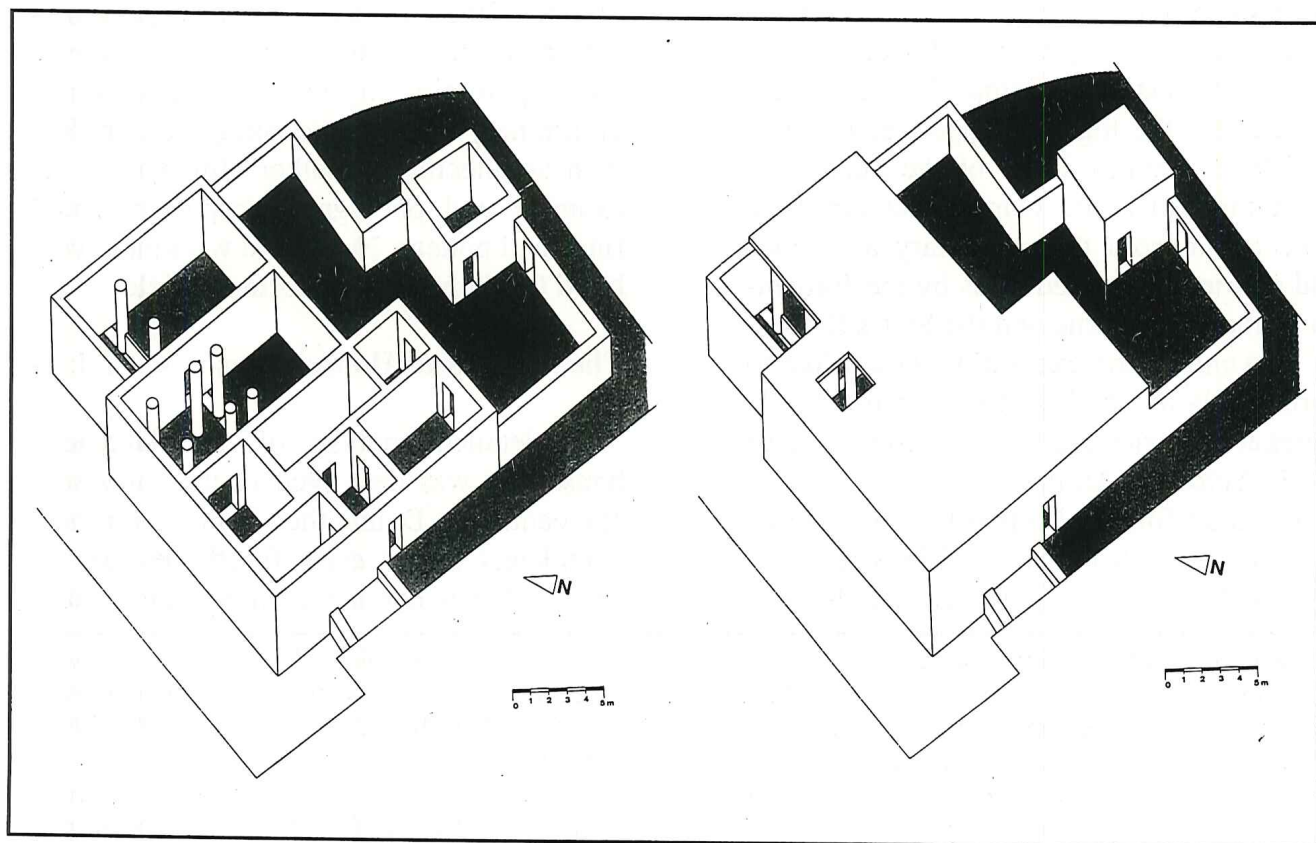


Fig. 2. Ez-Zanṭur. Reconstruction of the Nabataean house, Phase 1.

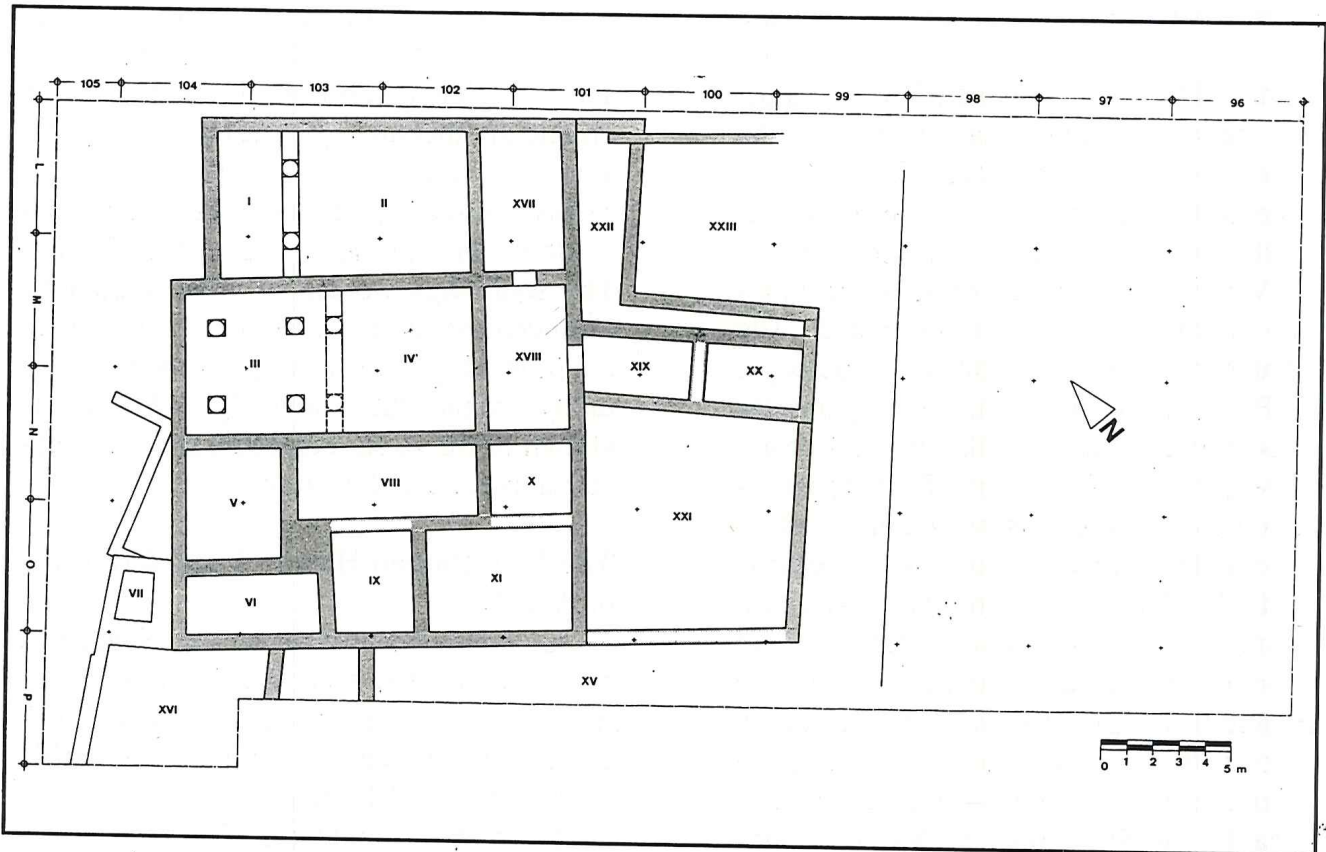


Fig. 3. Ez-Zantur, Ground plan of the Nabataean house, Phase 2.

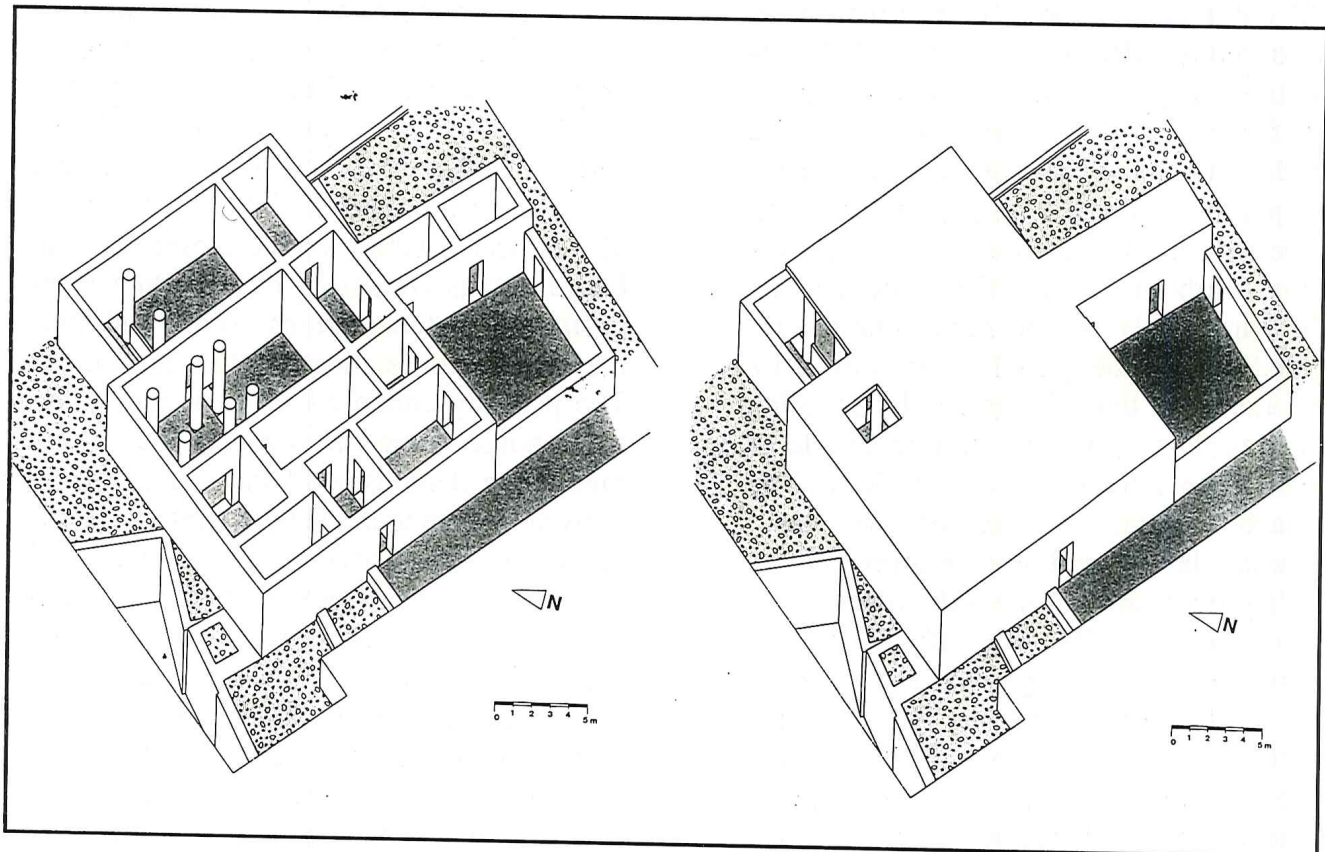


Fig. 4. Ez-Zantur. Reconstruction of the Nabataean house, Phase 2.

separate parts (Figs. 1, 2). Rooms I-V were built and decorated in a Greek-Hellenistic manner. These interconnected rooms must have been the representative core of the house. Room I and peristyle III were built to the north and were not normal rooms but had the function of furnishing rooms II, IV and V with light and air through their partially or completely open roofs (Fig. 2). The Nabataean-corinthian capitals of peristyle III (Pl. I, 2) and the former wall paintings of room II give proof of the owner's desire to present the official part of the house — the rooms where guests were welcomed — in the highest contemporary, i.e. Hellenistic standards. The smaller rooms VI-XI had flagstone pavements as well, but were not decorated in the same luxurious way. The alterations in Late Roman times make it difficult to say much about the original function of these rooms — but we can most probably identify rooms VI-XI as the private section of the Nabataean house. The outer walls of the adjacent paved courtyard XIII define the southern limit of the house. In courtyard XIII and in room XII the inhabitants may have stored goods and utensils for everyday use. In this part of the building we have fairly good evidence for two phases. In phase I the rooms opened on to the paved, spacious courtyard, which was partly overbuilt in phase II by rooms XVII-XX (Figs. 3, 4). At the same time the intended use of the paved outer court XIV was altered to that of a garden by covering this area along the north-eastern facade of the Nabataean house with soil (XXIII). The archaeobotanical analyses of the corresponding layers will give information on the "garden plants" of the Nabataeans.

In contrast with the official-function rooms, there are no signs of western influence in the private section. Thus we may conclude that the Nabataean house on ez-Zanţur represents both tendencies: Greek influence and local tradition — a fact that is typical of the Nabataean culture in general.

We hope that we can intensify our work on the coexistence of Hellenistic influences and the oriental substrate in the Nabataean private architecture by continuing the excavation of the better preserved houses on the second terrace, which lies some metres lower down the northern slope of ez-Zanţur. The soundings we did in 1991 should be extended because the structures laid bare are promising in every respect and will certainly extend the knowledge of what is known of the so far neglected field of Nabataean private architecture.

The Late Roman Houses 1 and 2 (Figs. 5, 6; Pl. I: 1)

After the destruction of the Nabataean house in the early second century A.D., the terrace was left unused till the early fourth century, when settlers removed the rubble of the destroyed Nabataean house in order to construct new buildings. Wherever possible the existing Nabataean walls and pavements were integrated in the planning and the construction of the Late Roman houses. Rooms I-III of the earlier house were not to be part of the new buildings and so the still standing walls were pulled down and the ashlar, pavement slabs, column drums and capitals were reused as building material. The typical structure of the preserved Late Roman walls consisting of a *mixtum compositum* of column drums, ashlar and simple quarry stones illustrate this procedure. The partially collapsed walls of the Nabataean house along the edges of the terrace must have demonstrated the static problems of the site to the new settlers; as a consequence they moved the outer walls of their houses away from the precarious area to the centre of the terrace (Fig. 5). The close relation between the small Late Roman houses and the earlier building had an immediate effect on their layout, which may be seen as a successful compromise between given structures and newly defined conditions.

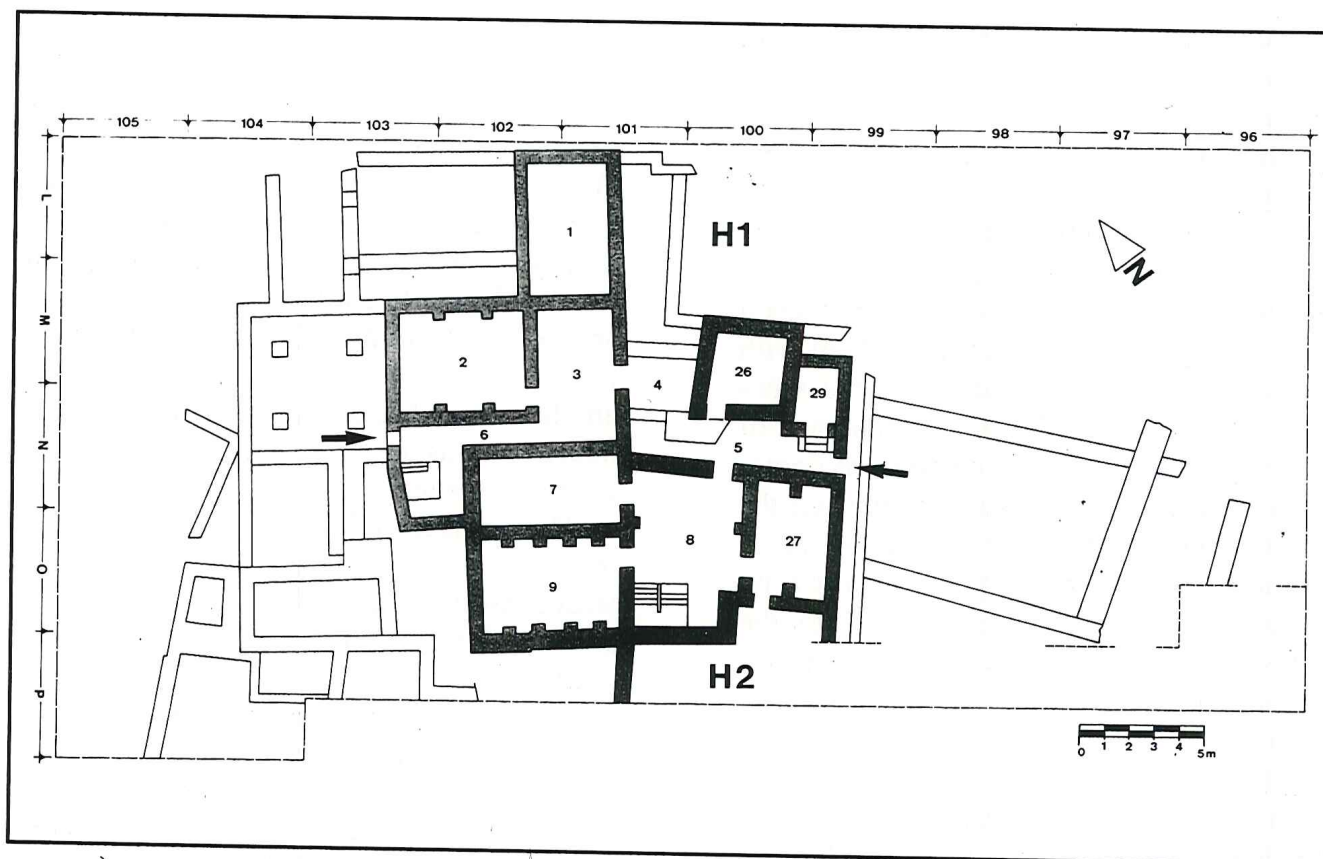


Fig. 5. Ez-Zanțur. Ground plan of the Late Roman houses 1 and 2.

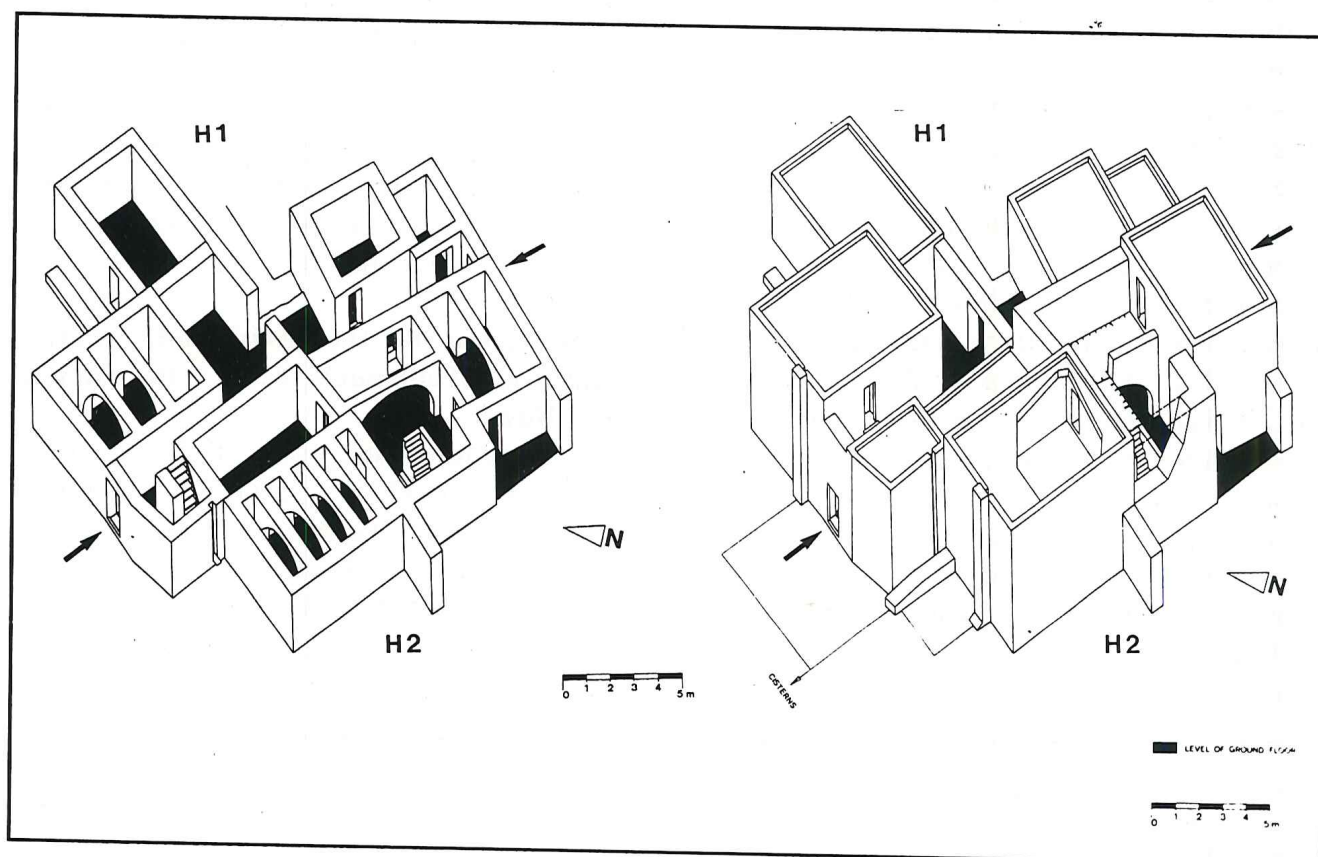


Fig. 6. Ez-Zanțur. Reconstruction of the Late Roman houses 1 and 2.

House 1 includes the rooms 2, 3 and 6; house 2 the rooms 5, 7, 8, 9 and 27. The rooms 26 and 29 were shared. On the strength of the finds and the collected data it is possible to state that both houses were used as noncommercial dwellings. The most probably windowless living- and workrooms on the ground floor opened onto courtyards which provided them with air and light and facilitated the access between the rooms² (Fig. 6). A staircase of two flights was built in the western corner of courtyard 8. It originally connected the ground floor with the first floor, where an L-shaped wooden balcony — supported by a transverse arch — gave access to the upper storey of rooms 9 and 27 (Fig. 6). The southern part of the courtyard was left open.

The staircase of house 1 lies on the right of the front door, in an annexe of corridor 6 and led to the first floor of room 2 (Fig. 6). The position of the staircases within the houses together with the fact that certain rooms were originally bridged with transverse arches, shows that all rooms with transverse arches must have had an upper storey (Fig. 6). Although the two houses were built together, they form two separate units; the main entrance to house 1 is located on the north-western side, whereas the front door of house 2 lies on the south-eastern side of the terrace. Detached from the actual residential area are the rooms 26 and 29. The two baking ovens in room 26 give evidence of the original use as a bake-house. The isolated position of these rooms can be explained by the high risk of fire. Even in some modern rural Jordanian settlements bakehouses stand apart from the dwellings and are used jointly by several families.

Analyses of the coin hoards found in rooms 1 and 29 gives convincing evidence for a first destruction of the Late Roman houses by the earthquake of A.D. 363³. With the exception of the said rooms, the houses were subsequently rebuilt. In the process of the reconstruction, minor alterations and modification of the ground plans and of the functions of some rooms were made. The stratigraphy in room 26 for example shows that it was no longer a bake-house but was used in a different — but unknown — context.

The evidence of the finds indicates that the settlement on the terrace was finally destroyed during the earthquake of A.D. 419 and was left unaltered until we started the excavations.

The water supply of the Late Roman houses in Petra was not managed by the community. The channel system on the western side of houses 1 and 2 indicates that the settlers collected rainwater on the flat roofs and led it through a system of drains and channels to a nearby cistern (see Fig. 6). There were no cisterns to be found inside the houses. This was probably because the houses were not constructed on bedrock but on sandy ground, so that the cisterns would have had to be built with quarried stones and not hewn out of the bedrock as was usual in Petra.

Preparation of the Exhibition "Petra und die Weihrauchstrasse" in Zürich and Basel

Thanks to the suggestion of the direction of Swiss Credit in Zürich, we had the chance to show the results of our excavations enriched with a selection of other finds from Jordan within the framework of an exhibition at the head office of Swiss Credit in Zürich in spring 1993, and later

2. House 1, room 3; house 2, room 8.

3. See *Campaign 1988*, pp. 249ff.; *Campaign 1989*, pp. 258f; *Campaign 1991*, pp. 179f. Compare K.W. Russell, 'The Earthquake Chronology of

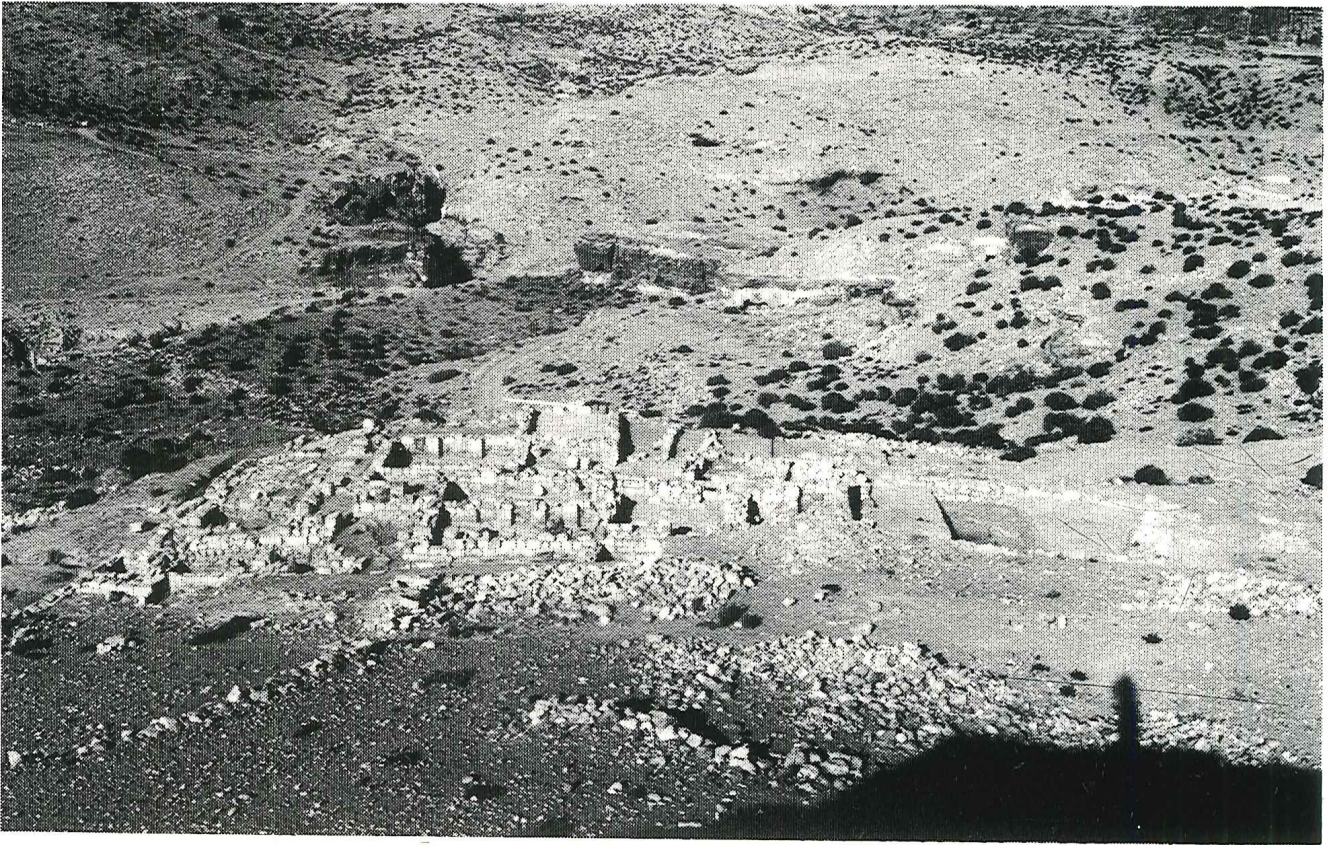
Palestine and Northwest Arabia from the 2nd through the Mid-8th Century,' *BASOR* 260 (1985), pp. 39ff.

on in the Antikenmuseum of Basel. During our stay in Jordan, the selection and transportation of the finds and the artifacts on loan had to be organised. A brochure containing about one hundred figures and plans should introduce the visitors of the exhibition to the history of the Nabataeans and to the results of our excavations.⁴ The making of the brochure is the result of a collaboration between the excavation staff and other

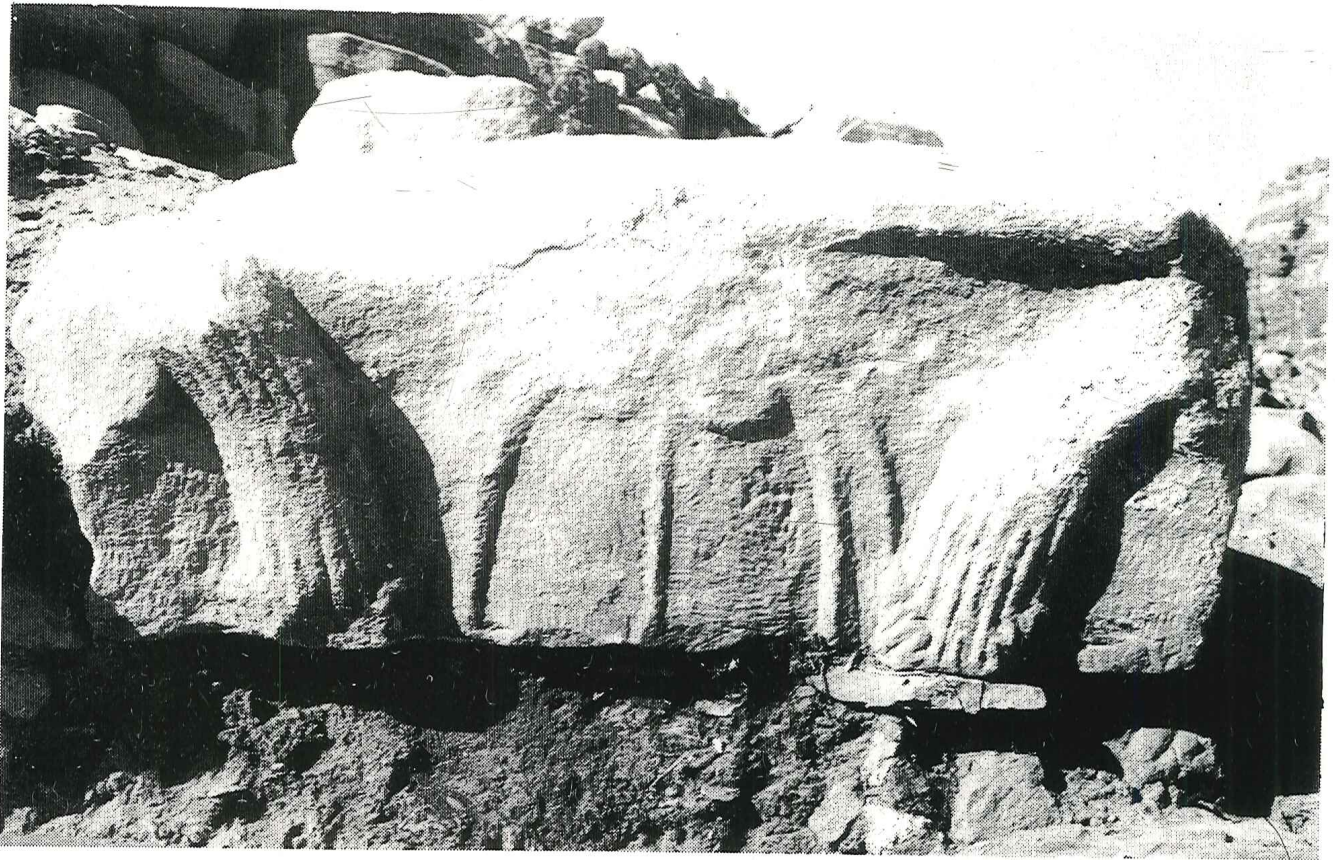
experts on Nabataean culture, religion and history.

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4. See catalogue of the exhibition in Zürich and Basel.



1. Petra ez-Zanțur 1992. General view.



2. Petra ez-Zanțur 1992. Corinthian capital.