

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE EXCAVATIONS AT JABAL AL-QAL'A (LOWER TERRACE): THE IRON AGE WALLS

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Introduction

The "Development of Amman Citadel Project", carried out by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities with technical cooperation from the Department of Antiquities, includes a restoration component at the southern fortification wall of Jabal al-Qal'a ('Ammān Citadel قلعة عمان).

In preparation for the project, excavations were conducted from 16 April to the end of October 2000 at the southeastern sector of the Lower Terrace. Work started by a survey of the walls, and cleaning the modern debris.

The Study Area

The work area is located at the southeast corner of the Lower Terrace, overlooking the modern region of Jabal al-Qal'a from the east, and downtown 'Ammān and the theater from the south. The site chosen for this season was divided into three areas: **Area SEa**, located inside the southern fortification wall, which in turn was divided into five squares. **Area SA4** and **Area SA3** were located outside the wall.

The trench supervisors were graduate students in archaeology: Merna Hussen, Najd Mazahrah, Firas Bqain and Jihad Abu-Ali. Draftspersons from the Department of Antiquities were: Ahmed al-Horani, Jamal Safi, Yusef Mherat and Qutiba Dasuqi. Photographers: Osama Jaber and the late Mohammad Fayez.

This report presents the main results of six months of excavation, which revealed part of the defense system of the Iron Age II period.

At the outer façade of the southern fortification wall, in an area near the southeastern corner, the earliest remains found dated to the Iron Age II, although below them a few scattered pottery sherds that may date to the Middle Bronze Age were found in cavities in the bed rock, with no associated architectural remains. The Middle Bronze Age fortifications identified by previous excavators are located to the west of our excavation area (Zayadine *et al.* 1989: 359).

Area SA4

In this area, the Iron Age remains consist of re-

mains of badly damaged walls due to modern constructions. These walls were built on the natural bedrock. Their function cannot be identified because of the disturbance. The collected sherds date mainly from the Iron Age period. The few recovered Middle Bronze Age sherds are probably remainders of Bronze Age structures that were originally erected in this areas.

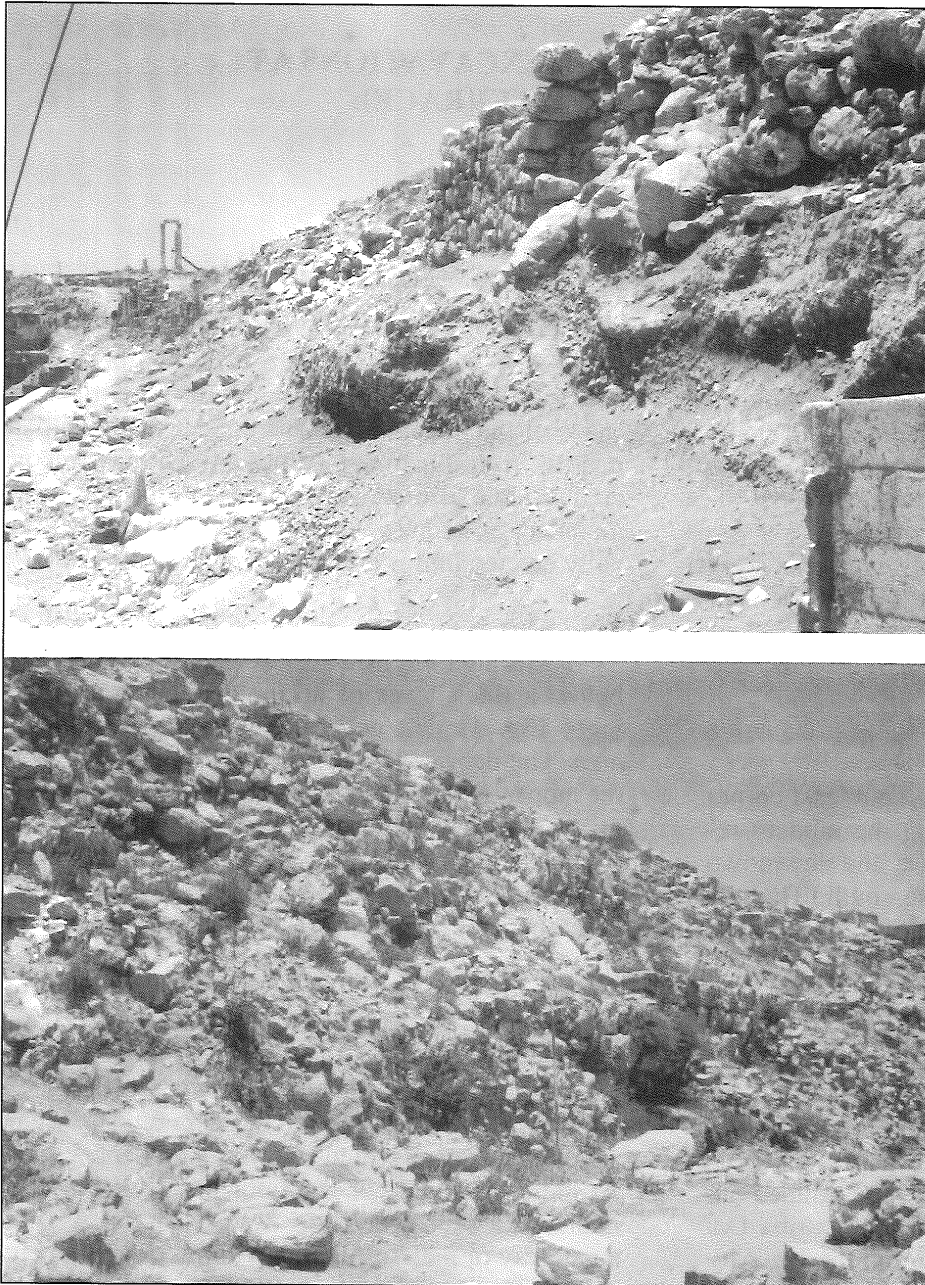
Area SA3

In this area the Iron Age II remains were found below a thick layer of accumulated debris (3-7m high, **Fig. 1**) that covered the whole excavation area. The debris were probably washed down from the upper areas. They contain large quantities of mixed pottery sherds dating from the Iron Age to the Byzantine period.

In squares 8e and 9e, two parallel walls built of medium and small-sized rough lime and flint stones were revealed (**Figs. 2, 3**). The northern wall (B) extends for 10m in length, is 0.65-0.75m thick and has preserved height of 1-5m. The southern wall (A), also running east-west, has the same length and preserved heights. Between these parallel walls a floor was formed of a smooth surface of small stones over which the Iron Age deposits lay. At the eastern side of the floor there were the remains of a staircase. The whole structure suggests a gateway or path in relation with the Iron Age city wall. It should be noted that Dornemann identified two Iron Age walls in the northwest corner of the Upper Terrace outside the fortification wall, in 1969, and suggested a structure with a defensive function (Dornemann 1983: 19, 91-93). Ateyat also exposed what he calls an "Ammonite settlement" at the outside of the Upper Citadel's northeast area (personal communication, unpublished).

In the Lower Terrace, at the outside of the southeast corner, Zayadine (1973; 1977-8) exposed Iron Age walls that may be related with the parallel walls A and B.

The Iron Age deposit between the two parallel walls produced fragments of clay figurines retrieved in an ashy soft soil layer (**Figs. 4, 5, 6**), and sherds of cooking pots, lamps and jars, while the upper layer of the deposit contained a large amount



1. Area SA3 before excavation.

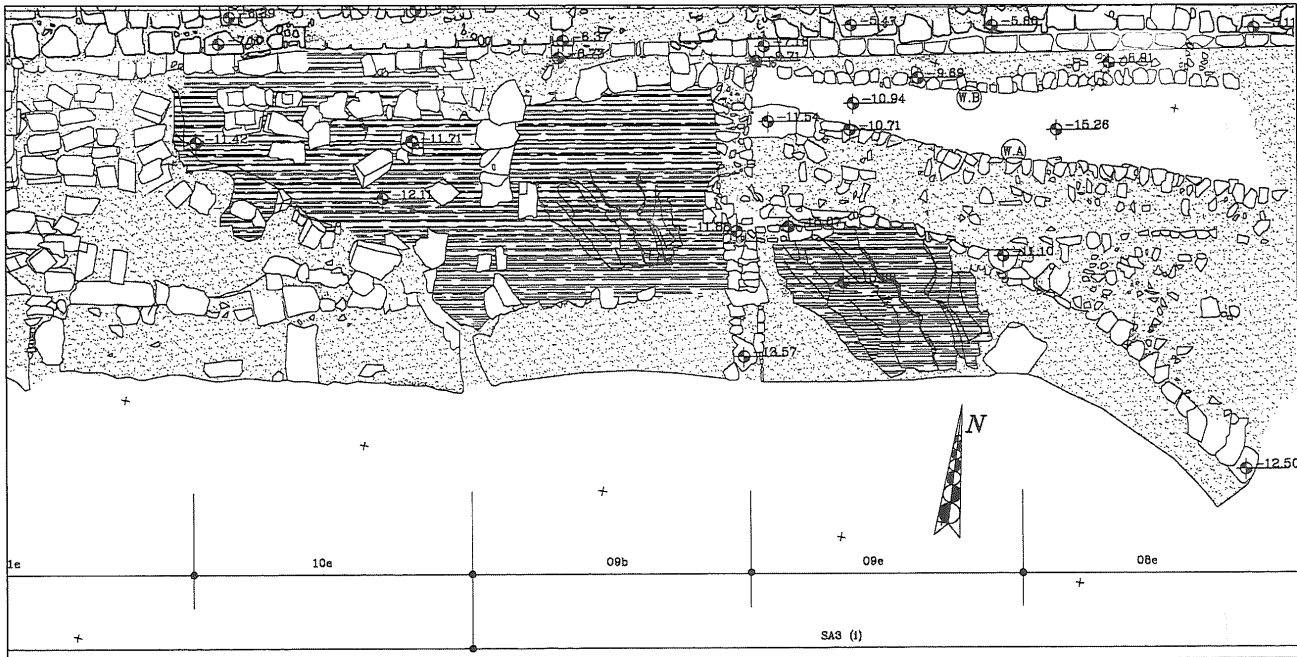
of mixed pottery shreds (Roman and Byzantine) with large quantity of whitish wall plaster. Parts of the plaster are still *in situ*, adhering at many places to the southern fortification wall. It should be noted here that the southern fortification wall is superimposed on part of the northern parallel wall (B) (Fig. 2). At the present I cannot give a definite date to this part of the southern fortification wall. One difficulty, as pointed out by Dornemann when he reported on fortifications in Jordan in the Iron Age, is that it is not possible to distinguish between Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman or Byzantine megalithic structures.

In this area another structure was found, located directly at the border to the west of Squares 8e and

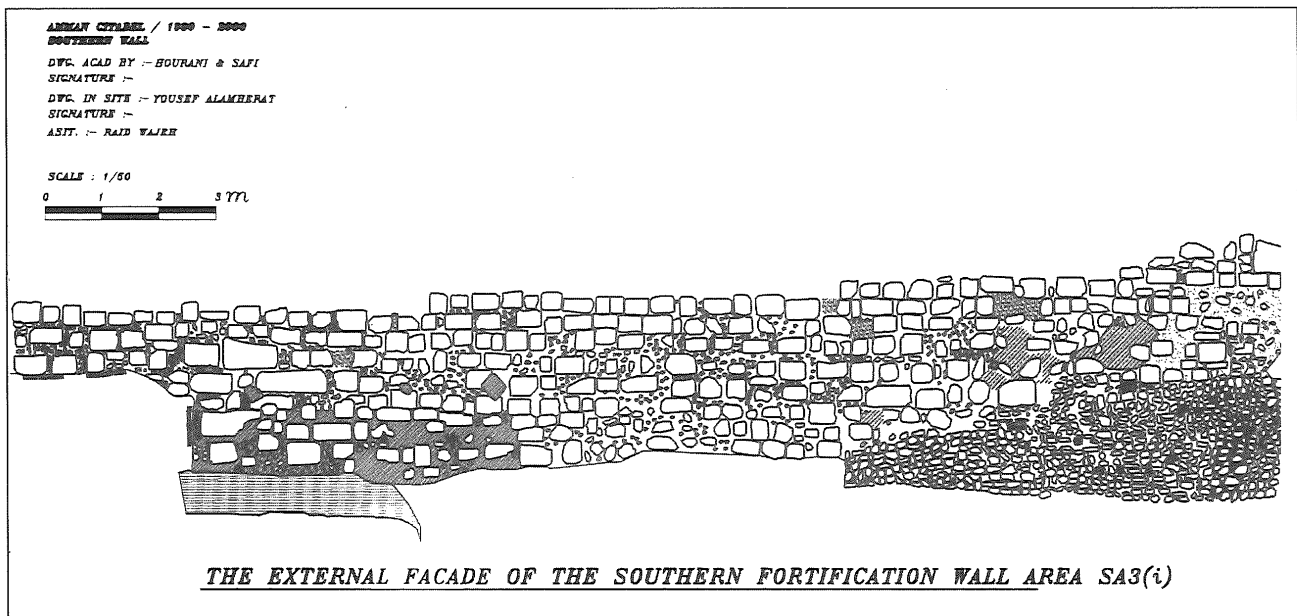
9e (Fig. 2). Its level suggests difference in time. There are traces of the foundations of walls in Squares 9b, 10e, 11e, and 12e, but the plan is not clear. Five cooking pots dated to the Byzantine period were found on the bedrock. These remains, which seem to be domestic, are outside the southern fortification wall. They are probably linked with a newly-discovered Byzantine buildings inside the southern fortification wall. A report on this excavation will be published separately.

Area SEa

The most unexpected discovery at the interior line of the southern fortification wall was a unique construction at Area SEa, Squares 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8,



2. Top plan of the Area SA3, showing the two Iron Age II parallel walls, and the southern fortification wall which is superimposed on part of the northern parallel wall (B).

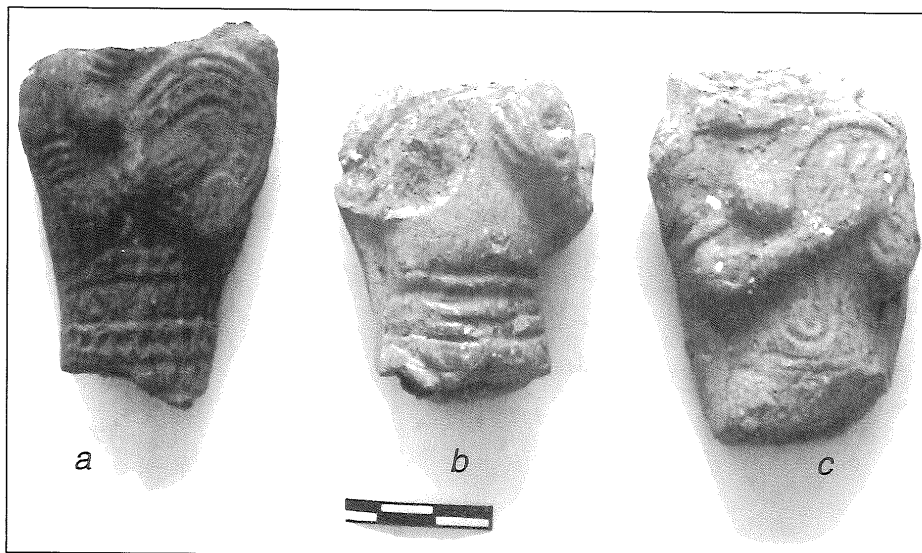


3. Elevation of Area SA3.

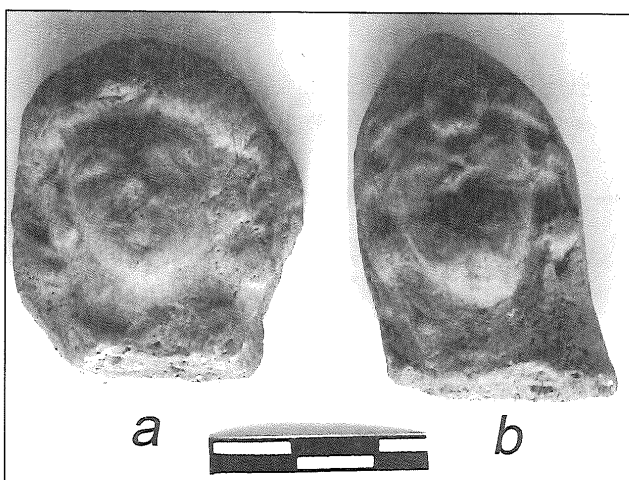
which proved that the Ammonite City was fortified by a casemate wall. This type of defense is common in the Iron Age II in Palestine and Jordan. Examples in Palestine are Bīr as-Sab' (Aharoni 1973), Tall Bayt Mīrsīm (Herzog 1992b), Hazor (Yadin *et al.* 1956), Samaria (Herzog 1992) and Megiddo (Yadin 1970). In Jordan there are the examples at Tall al-Khulayfī (Glueck 1977), Khirbat al-Mudayna (Chadwick *et al.* 2000), al-Judayda (Hendawi 1999) and al-'Umayrī (Geraty *et al.* 1987).

The casemate fortification system extends in a

straight line (Fig. 7). The outer wall is constructed of two rows of limestone boulders. This wall is 2-2.50m thick, being the heaviest wall in the fortification system. The internal façade is of good quality courses standing up to 7m high, and exposed length is 30m, with a thick layer of plaster still intact in some places on the outer side of western part of the casemate wall, which is constructed of big rough hard limestone blocks in a header-stretcher manner, with some flint, chinked with many pebbles and small cobble stones to give bet-



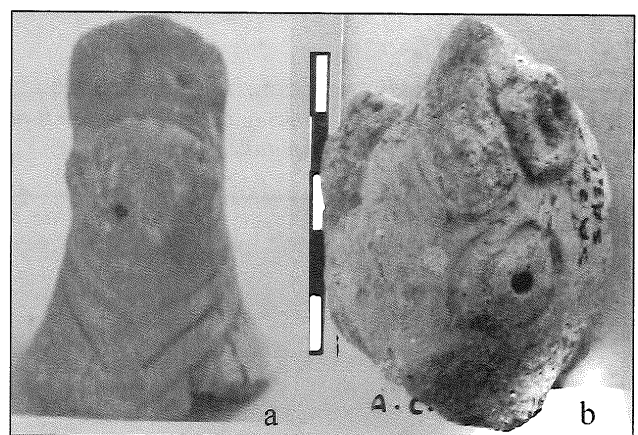
4. Human figurines from Area SA3: a. torso of a woman holding a circular object in her left hand, well preserved, height 6.8cm, length 3.3-4.6cm, width 2.4-2.8cm, ware 2.5YR 7/6 light red, slip 5YR 7/4 pink; bad firing, molded, many grog and lime grits of various size, incised lines on body, bracelets and armlets; b. pregnant woman holding her breast in her left hand, the other arm and breast are missing, ware 7.5YR 8/4 pink, slip 2.5YR 6/6 light red; bad firing, molded, lime grits, blues ochre, incised lines on belly; c. torso of a woman holding a circular object (loaf or musical instrument), ware 10YR 5/2 grayish brown, slip 7.5YR 6/4 light brown; good firing, lime, grog and flint grits.



5. Human figurines from Area SA3: a. probably a female head, unclear features, wearing a head cover, slip 2.5YR 7/6 light red; bad firing, molded, many flint and lime grits of various sizes; b. female head, oval shape with pointed top, some parts are applied as ear ornament and diadem, ears and eyes are clear while nose is scratched, ware 2.5YR 6/6 light red, slip 7.5YR 7/4 pink; medium to good firing.

ter solidity. The two parallel walls run east-west and the space between them is about 4.35m, divided by five casemate rooms (Fig. 8), also built of big blocks of hard limestone filled up with rubble and earth. All the partition walls are without doors. We do not yet have an answer as to why there are no doors except for the one in Square 4 (Fig. 9).

The southern parallel casemate wall (the outer one) has a gate in its upper part at the eastern side (Fig. 10). This gate is located about 6.5m higher than the casemate floor level (Fig. 7), with no staircase connecting the gate with the floor of the casemate rooms. Maybe wooden stairs or ropes were used to connect the levels. This situation is unusual with no obvious parallels at other sites. The main



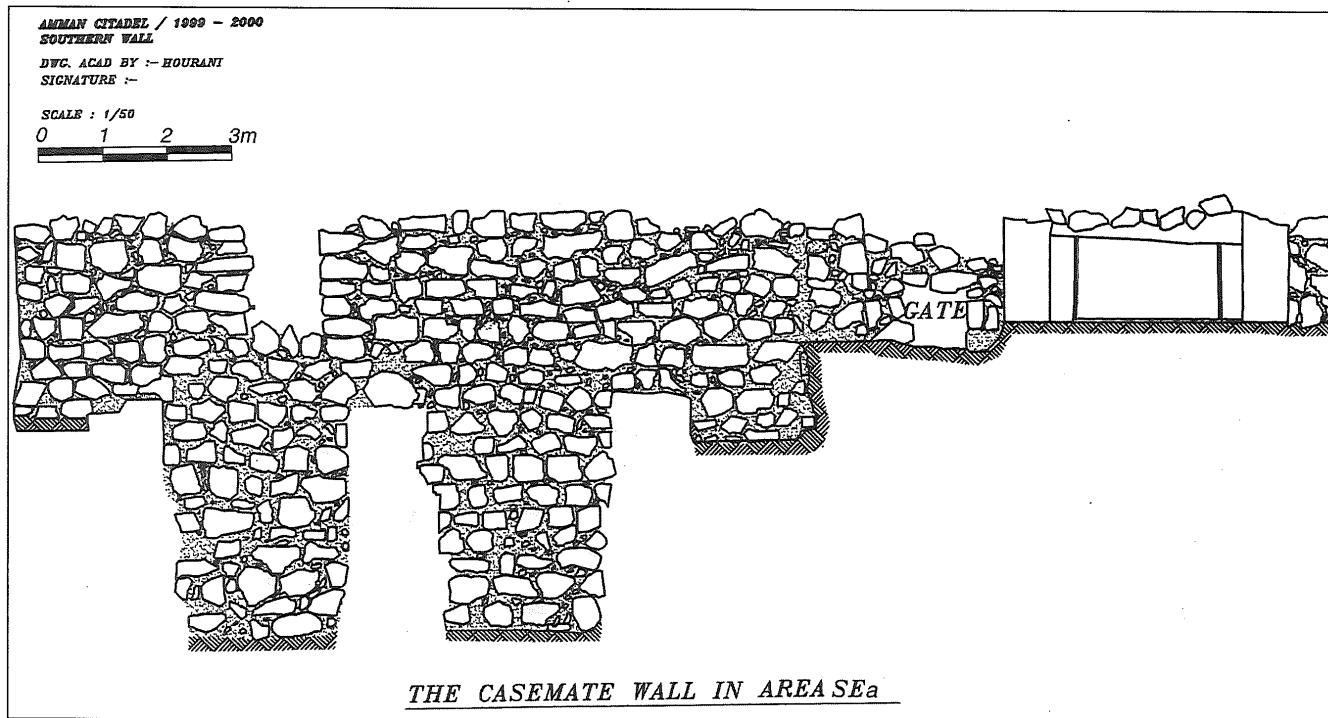
6. Animal figurines from Area SA3: a. probably a camel, molded, deep pierced holes for nose and eyes, ware 2.5YR 7/6 light red, slip 10YR 7/2 light gray; bad firing, many ochre, flint and lime grits of various sized; b. horse, molded with pierced ears, mouth and eyes, and grooved lines, ware 7.5YR 7/4 pink, slip 2.5YR 7/6 light red; probably used for liquids; good firing, lime grits of small and medium size.

entrance to the casemate must therefore be sought elsewhere.

At the west part of the outer casemate wall, there is a small room measuring 2.50 x 2.50m (Fig. 11). Its small entrance is 1m wide and 1.40m high, both the entrance and the room are coated with a thick layer of white plaster (Fig. 12). The deposit inside this room dates to the Hellenistic period, with a large amount of stamped Rhodain jar sherds that were found over the plastered floor were found (Fig. 13). One jar was restorable (Fig. 14). These remains indicate that the room was used for storage in the Hellenistic period, and the stratified evidence inside the casemate indicates that this structure continued in use during the Hellenistic period.

The Hellenistic modifications are also obvious by the addition of a wall in Square 4, running





8. Elevation of the casemate wall.



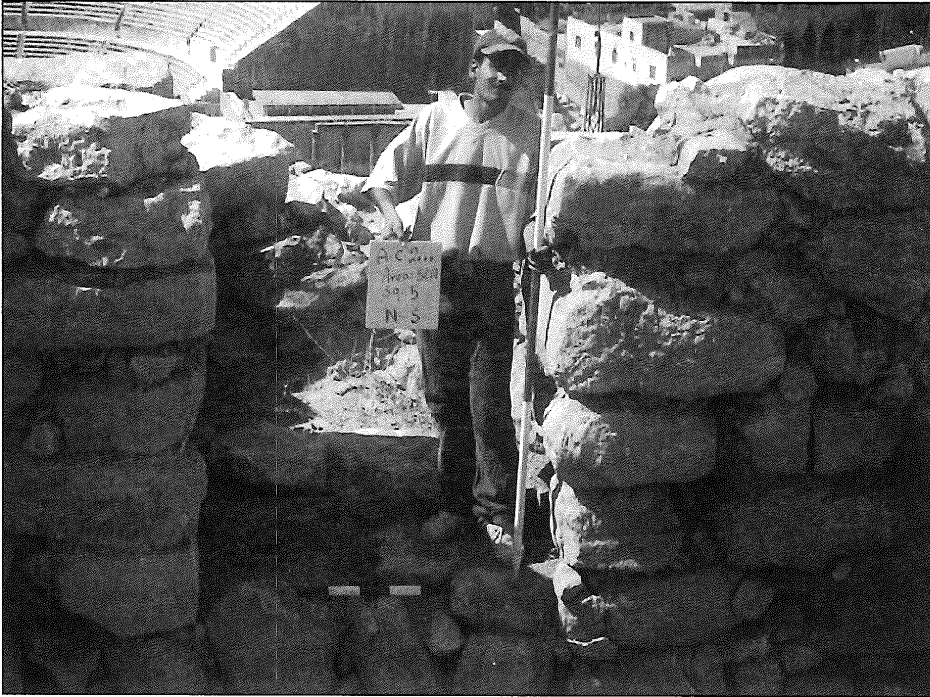
9. Gate for a casemate room, Area SEa, Sq. 4.

north-south over the Iron Age wall (Fig. 15). This wall is probably connected to the Hellenistic wall located in the southeast corner of the Lower Terraces (Area B), which was excavated by Zayadine in 1973 (unpublished report).

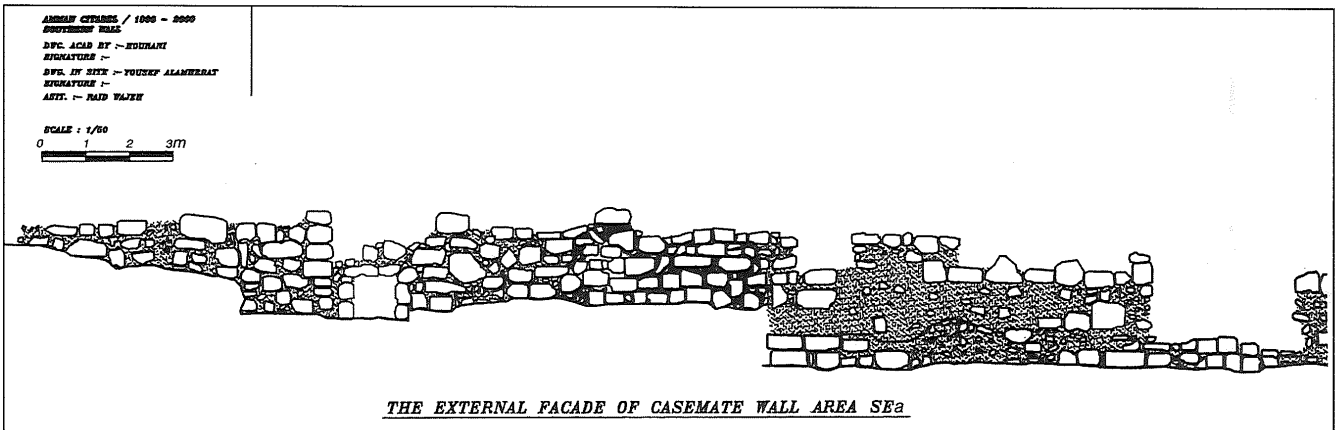
These walls were standing during the "Third Syrian War" (221-217 BC). Polybius (*Hist.* V,71,9) relates that Antiochus III the Great launched his troops on the conquest of Coele-Syria, learning that his enemies were concentrated Philadelphia. He besieged the city and installed his siege machines at two sections, maybe to the north and south. The de-

fenders surrendered when a captured prisoner revealed to the besiegers the location of an underground passageway leading to the hidden water supply. They blocked the tunnel with "wood, stones and all such kind of things".

The deposits above a Hellenistic floor inside the parallel walls were formed of hard mud with spots of plaster covering it in some parts. It contains a large quantity of body sherds and inscribed Rhodian jar handles dating to the third-second centuries BC. A black decorated lamp (Fig. 16), is similar to one dated by Lapp to 200 BC (Lapp 1961),



10. The upper gate of the casemate.



11. Elevation of the outer façade of the casemate wall.

was found along with other lamp fragments, as well as sherds from plates and bowls of black and red colors (Fig. 17). Two bronze coin fragments were retrieved in a dark soil in a bad state of preservation, but we are able to identify the Ptolemaic eagle on the reverse (Fig. 18).

Under the previously mentioned floor, the Iron Age deposit is almost devoid of artifacts. This supports the interpretation of these layers as deliberate fill, which when removed uncovered the Iron Age floor of the casemate rooms, consisting of mud with pebbles. This deposit contained a few fragments of clay figurines, pointed marked jar handle, and a few plain and painted sherds belonging to the Iron II (Fig. 19).

The excellent state of these walls — and in the absence of any evidence for fire, military damage or repairs — negates the biblical story (*IISam.*

8.27.17) that King David destroyed the city walls during the siege of Rabbath Ammon.

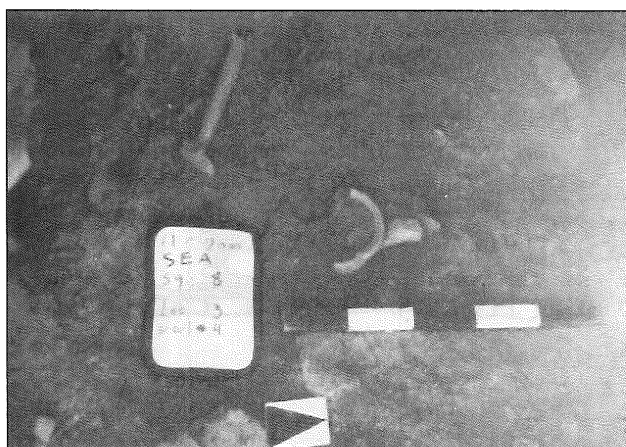
Mention should be made of another important structure that may be related to the casemate wall and refers to the Iron II period: an Ammonite palace or administrative building located about 30m from the casemate (Zayadine 1992). In 1968 and 1972/3, Zayadine also excavated parts of another Iron Age and a Hellenistic city wall at the south-eastern corner of the Lower Terrace (Zayadine 1973; 1977-8).

In 1969, Dornemann identified in Area III at the outer side of the northern temple platform two Iron Age walls (E and F), set against the Middle Bronze Age glais and intersecting at an angle that indicates a gateway or casemate fort, or the junction of the city wall (Dornemann 1983).

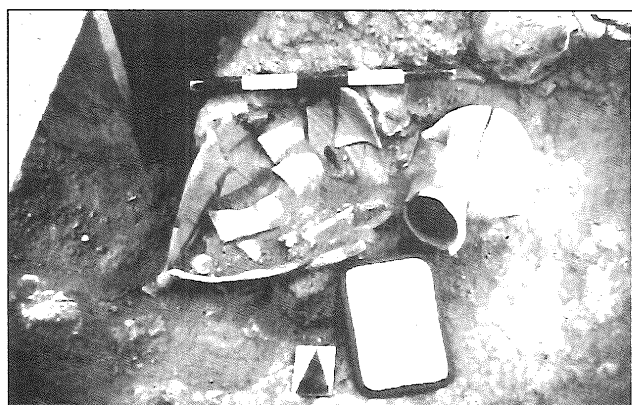
If these previously excavated walls were linked



12. The small plastered entrance in Sq. 8.



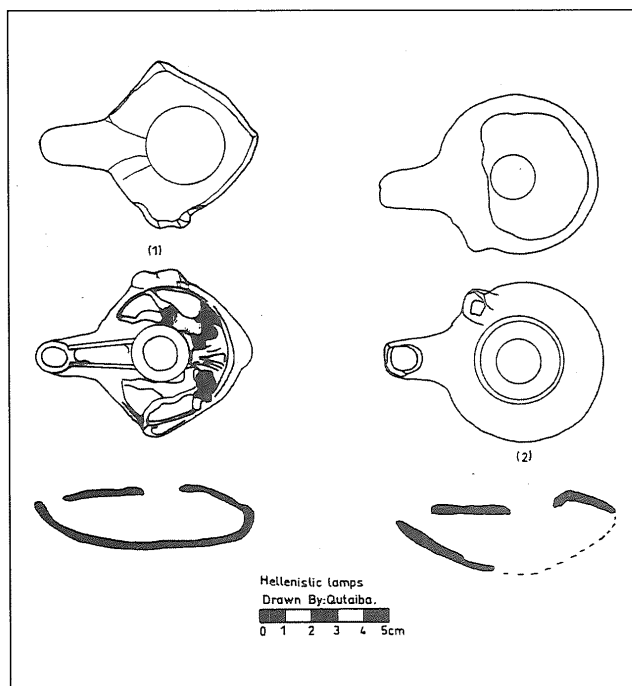
13. Hellenistic pottery sherds.



14. A broken Hellenistic Rhodain stamped jar in the small storeroom, Sq. 8.



15. Hellenistic wall based over an Iron Age II wall (Area SEa, Sq. 4).



16. Hellenistic period lamps. The one to the left is black ware decorated on two side with what could be a winged Eros.



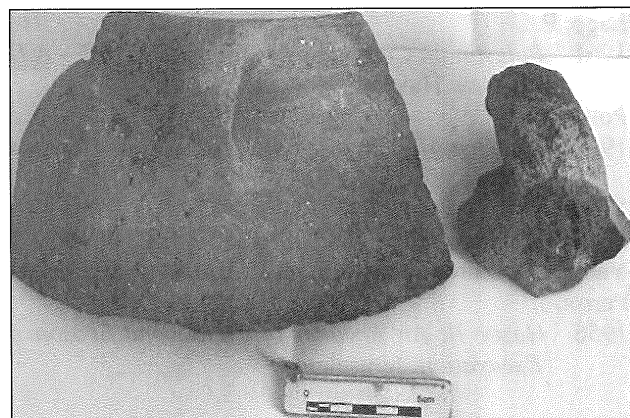
17. Fragments of plates and lamps from the Hellenistic period.



18. Hellenistic coin found over the floor.

to the casemate discovered in our excavations, then this proves that the Ammonite city was well fortified and surrounded by walls.

The existence of the Ammonite palace or administration building inside the casemate enables us to suggest that the Lower Terrace was a residen-



19. Fragment of a cooking pot dated to the Iron Age II, and marked jar handle.

tial and administrative area in the Ammonite period. This discovery is very important for the history of this period, giving additional information about the Ammonite culture. It would be rewarding to continue the work in order to identify the other parts of the casemate wall and the city gate, in order to have a better understanding of the Ammonite city plan.

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