

It is of interest to note that the Byzantine period is not yet clearly represented in Area C except by some pottery and coins in the wash layers.

AREA A

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Area A is located inside the highest architectural perimeter of the mound. The level at the top of the perimeter is mapped at 895.00 m. above sea level. Exposed architectural features on this part of the mound indicated the presence of some major structure—temple, church, palace? Three column bases plus the foundation stone of a fourth base provided some orientation and an east-west line was drawn in alignment with them. This east-west axis was fixed to pass through a depression (a possible gateway or entrance) on the east side. It continues to the western side of the mound and forms the south balks of all four Squares in Area C. The north-south axis was fixed to pass through a depression on the south edge of the elevation and thus integrates with Area D constituting the west balks of all three Squares there (Fig. 1).

Four Squares, measuring six by eight meters (with a one-meter balk between them), were excavated in Area A. Squares 1 and 2, their north balks being the east-west axis, and the west balk of Square 2 being the north-south axis of the *tell*, were opened at the beginning of the excavation. Squares 3 and 4, lying south of Squares 1 and 2, respectively, were opened at the end of the first week of digging. All four Squares were excavated at different times during the succeeding weeks with work in only two Squares going on simultaneously.

Description of the Excavation

Square 1: Prior to the excavation there were scattered stones on the surface (some partially exposed), but they were

not in any discernible alignment. Some stones in the southwest corner formed a serpentine "wall" with surface stones and column fragments in Squares 3 and 4. This does not appear to have been part of any structure.

The surface and plow soil was designated as Locus A. 1:1. The bulk of the sherds were modern, painted and glazed Arabic with a few Byzantine, Roman, Hellenistic and UD's found in almost every pail throughout the season (this is to be understood even where the UD's are not specifically mentioned). The removal of Locus A. 1:1 exposed some portions of walls and fallen stones. An accumulation of fallen stones along the north balk was designated A. 1:2. The removal of the soil between and around the stones revealed that they were in no alignment and appeared to be fallen stones from some demolished building or wall. The range of identified sherds is modern, painted and glazed Arabic, possibly Byzantine, and a few Roman. Wall A. 1:3 ran east to west. Its east end at the north balk was poorly preserved. The wall, 3.35 m. long and 1.00 m. wide, consisted of field stones and a few dressed stones in two rows without a foundation trench. Only one course of the wall was preserved. The pottery consisted of painted and glazed Arabic wares, and a complete Arabic lamp. The west end of the wall formed a corner with Wall A. 1:4 which ran to the south, with its south end petering out at the south balk. It is 7.05 m. long and .80-1.00 m. wide. Painted and glazed Arabic wares with some possible Roman sherds came from this wall. A reddish-brown soil layer (A. 1:5), .35-.50 m. deep, was bounded in the southwest corner of the Square by Walls A. 1:3 and 4. Many tesserae of two different sizes were found in it. The pottery was modern, painted and glazed Arabic, and some Byzantine. Wall A. 1:6 of dressed stones ran east to west, butted into Wall A. 1:13 and ended about .20 m. from the west balk. Only one course of this wall was preserved, which lies on top of Wall A. 1:12 and is correlated with Wall A. 2:7. No Arabic sherds were identified; some were possibly Byzantine or Roman.

Wall A. 1:7 ran east to west with four flat pavement stones level with the top surface of the wall located in the southwest corner of the Square. Only one course is preserved and it rests on dirt. No Arabic sherds were identified; only Roman wares could positively be recognized. Two large field stones in the southwest corner, labeled Locus A. 1:8, were visible on the surface and were part of the serpentine wall (already mentioned) which continued in the northwest corner of Square 3 (A. 3:2) and the northeast corner of Square 4 (A. 4:3). Wall A. 1:9 runs east to west along the south balk out of the east balk for a length of 3.80 m. It is butted against the north side of the semi-circular Wall A. 3:5. The stone on the west end of the wall has a Corinthian capital leaf pattern carved on it. Two courses are preserved. One pail of sherds was derived from this locus and contained Byzantine wares and UD's. In the center of the Square was Locus A. 1:10, two large storage jars, each originally *ca.* one meter high, east of Wall A. 1:4. They appeared to be part of an Arabic storage complex (Plate XV: B). The western jar was placed upside down on Floor A. 1:11, with a separate stopper placed inside the mouth of the jar. This arrangement was not leak-proof and shows that the jars may have been used for dry goods. The level of the center of the western jar was 891.38 m. A floor of hard-packed yellow earth associated with Walls A. 1:3, 4 and 9 was designated Locus 11. Locus 10 rested on this floor. The pottery of A. 1:11 was Arabic.

Wall A. 1:12, 1.05 m. wide, 2.10 m. long, running east-west, was built in header-stretcher fashion. Two courses of dressed stones, .70 m. high, were preserved. Wall A. 1:6 was built on top of this wall. A. 1:12 continues into Square 2 as Wall A. 2:8. Sherds range from painted and glazed Arabic to Byzantine and Roman. Another wall, A. 1:13, runs south to north from Wall A. 1:9 to *ca.* 1.10 m. south of the north balk. It is of cut stones of varying size with mortar on the top surface. The pottery consists of painted and glazed Arabic sherds with some possibly Byzantine and Roman wares.

Underneath Floor A. 1:11 was a .10-.20 m. thick layer of *huwwar* (Locus A. 1:14) mixed with red soil. It produced some painted Arabic sherds, and some possibly Byzantine and Roman pottery with the inevitable UD's that appeared in almost every pail. Under Locus A. 1:14 and above Locus A. 1:25 was a layer of very loose, crumbly, gray-black soil (Locus A. 1:15) with Byzantine, Roman, and possibly Hellenistic and Iron I pottery, also the head of a ram figurine. North of Wall A. 1:9 was a group of level pavement-like stones (Locus A. 1:16), 2.10 m. long and 1.45 m. wide. Under Wall A. 1:13 was a wall running north to south with one course of roughly dressed stones preserved (Wall A. 1:17). Only Roman pottery was registered from it. The foundation trench, .40-.50 m. wide, of loose red-brown soil along the east face of Wall A. 1:17 was designated A. 1:18. The pottery was mainly Roman. Locus A. 1:19 consisted of a double row of field stones (two courses high), which possibly underlay Wall A. 1:3. It may have been an east-west wall. Some painted Arabic sherds, together with Byzantine and Roman wares came from it. A poorly preserved plaster floor (A. 1:20) associated with Wall A. 1:12 ran under the pavement-type stones of Wall A. 1:7. Under this plaster floor (A. 1:20) was a layer of *huwwar* mixed with red soil (Locus A. 1:21) .05-.10 m. thick. From it came Byzantine and Roman sherds. Underneath Locus A. 1:21 was a layer of red soil (Locus A. 1:22) containing many fallen stones. Locus A. 1:23 was the designation of the foundation trench along the north face of Wall A. 1:12. A. 1:24 was a crudely constructed wall running along the west balk beginning at the north balk. Although excavation of this wall was not completed, Byzantine and Hellenistic sherds have been identified from within it. Underneath Loci A. 1:15 and A. 1:26 was a hard gray layer (A. 1:25), .15-.25 m. thick, containing Roman, possibly Hellenistic and Iron III sherds. The level at the center was 890.79 m. Wall A. 1:26 ran east to west under Locus A. 1:16 north of and parallel to Wall A. 1:9. The wall, 1.40 m. wide and 4.00 m. long,

consisting of two rows of rough field stones, was not completely excavated. North of Wall A. 1:26 lay Locus A. 1:27, a layer of gray-black soil. It was not completely excavated. The range of available sherds was Roman, Hellenistic, and Iron III.

Square 2: The exposed column bases which served as an orientation line before excavations started were located in the south balk of this Square. Prior to the excavations there were scattered stones on the surface (some partially exposed), but they were not in any discernible alignment.

The surface soil with an average depth of *ca.* .15 m. was designated as Locus A. 2:1. It produced painted and glazed Arabic, Byzantine, Roman, Hellenistic and UD sherds. The three column bases in the south balk were labeled Locus A. 2:2. The level on the top is 891.80 m. Wall A. 2:3, .40 m. wide, ran for a length of 2.25 m. from the north balk to the south. Its associated pottery was Arabic. Loci A. 2:4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 were various sections of a water channel system uncovered in this Square (Plate XV:A). The channels were made of irregularly shaped stones. They were *ca.* .30 m. wide and *ca.* .20 m. deep, and plastered inside. Only a few cover stones were preserved. The pottery date for the latest fill was Arabic.

Fragmentary remains of a wall (A. 2:7) were found on top of Locus A. 2:8; apparently it is to be correlated with Wall A. 1:6. Its associated pottery was painted Arabic and Byzantine. Wall A. 2:8 ran east-west across the entire Square, its north face 4.10 m. south of the north balk. It is 1.10 m. wide. The level on the top is 891.22 m. It is of excellent construction and consists of three courses of well dressed blocks of stones laid in header-stretcher fashion, being the continuation of A. 1:12 (Plate XIX:B). Sherds associated with the wall range from some painted and glazed Arabic, to Byzantine and Roman. A. 2:11 is a bell-shaped cistern, *ca.* 2.00 m. wide and deep, with a settling basin, .40 m. deep, at the bottom (Figure 6). It is located between two of the column bases (A. 2:2). The fill produced Arabic pottery and UD's.

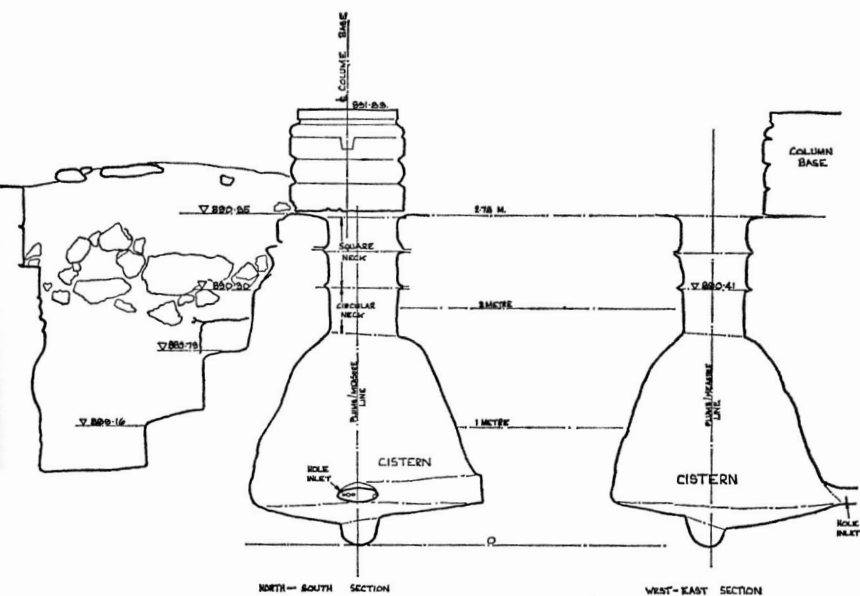


Figure 6. Plan and sections of Cistern 11 in Area A, Square 2, also showing the trench dug north of the cistern with the several ledges of bedrock

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Locus A. 1:12 is the designation for a fragmented plaster surface in the southeast corner of the Square which possibly joined one pillar base (Locus A. 2:2) with Wall A. 2:8. The sherds are possibly Byzantine and Roman. A *huwwar* surface 11.-.25 m. thick, below Locus A. 2:12, was labeled A. 2:13 and had the same pottery as the overlying surface. Underneath Locus A. 2:13 was a red-brown soil layer, A. 2:14, .33-.42 m. thick, containing medium-sized rocks, and the same kind of pottery as A. 2:12 and 13. The foundation trench, .70 m. wide and 52. m. deep, on the north side of Wall A. 2:8, containing Byzantine/Roman wares, was designated Locus A. 2:15, and that on the south side of the same wall, .55 m. wide and .55 m. deep, with the same pottery received the Locus designation A. 2:16.

A probe trench was dug between Cistern A. 2:11 and Wall A. 2:8 to determine the extent, contour and character of the bedrock into which the cistern had been dug. This trench was 1.10 m. wide, 2.00 m. long, and reached a depth of 2.50 m. from the top of Wall A. 2:8 when bedrock was reached. Several soil layers were distinguished. The first rock protrusion into the trench was found at the level of the collar of the cistern. A second protrusion, .22-.30 m. wide, was .45 m. below the first one. A third protrusion, .55 m. wide, lay .50 m. below the second one; .40 m. below this was bedrock across the entire trench.

Square 3: Prior to the excavation there were scattered stones on the surface and a few column fragments in the north-west corner.

The surface and plow soil (Locus A. 3:1) had an average depth of .15 m. It contained sherds that ranged from painted and glazed Arabic to Byzantine and Roman. Locus A. 3:2 was part of the serpentine rock line in the northwest corner, found also in the southwest corner of Square 1 (A. 1:8) and the north-east corner of Square 4 (A. 4:3). A multicolored mosaic floor fragment with an arc-shaped border and adjacent face stones in the northeast corner with a UD pottery con-

text was designated as A. 3:3 (Plate XVI: A; XVIII: A). The mosaic was lifted from its underlying bed of cement (Plate XVI: B), restored on a new bed of cement and transferred to the regional museum of Madeba. The level of the mosaic's surface ranged from 891.92-891.94 m. Wall A. 3:4 was the connector between the mosaic floor with the face stones and the outer Wall A. 3:5. It was a crude filler wall following the inside arc of Wall A. 3:5 (Plate XVI: A and B). Byzantine and Roman sherds came from it. Wall A. 3:5 was an arc-shaped wall of hard, finely-dressed blocks of stone preserved only two courses high (Plate XIX: A). The level at the north end on the top of the upper course is 891.59 m. The wall was disrupted by the intrusion of a cistern (A. 3:8) (Plate XVII: A). Wall A. 3:6 of irregular stones, *ca.* .40 m. wide, ran east-west in the northwest corner under Wall A. 3:2 and lay on Surfaces A. 3:11 and 14. The wall began at the west balk and ended 2.70 m. east of the west balk where it made an angular turn to north-northeast, running thus only about .70 m. The stones along the south side and around the corner were plastered.

Locus A. 3:7 was a surface of cement/plaster covered with small pebbles corresponding to the area described by Locus A. 3:3. It extended to its presumed original dimensions on the north, south and east and to the balk on the west. A vaulted Cistern A. 3:8 was cut into the arc-shaped Wall A. 3:5 along the east balk (Plate XVII: A). The preserved part had a depth of 2.00 m. It was plastered on the three exposed sides and the bottom. Pottery date of the latest fill was painted and glazed Arabic wares. Wall A. 3:9 was a single-course line of stones running east-west near the south balk abutting the outside edge of Wall A. 3:5. Locus A. 3:10 was the underlayment, about .25 m. thick, for Floor A. 3:3, between the last mentioned floor and Surface A. 3:7. Its small amount of pottery was predominantly Byzantine and Roman. Surface A. 3:11 of cement/plaster covered most of the area surrounded by Wall A. 3:5 and reached as far as part of the west balk. It

is hard and relatively smooth, also well preserved. Levels averaged 891.35 m. On it were found large quantities of painted plaster, among which one contains a crude human face (Plate XXIII: E) and another one the Greek name [Δ]ΑΝΙΗ[Α] (Plate XXIV: A). The pottery was mainly Byzantine and Roman. A bag-shaped pit, A. 3:12, was dug into Surfaces A. 3:11 about .42 m. deep. The pottery date of the latest fill was possibly Byzantine and Roman. A diamond-patterned mosaic Floor A. 3:13 lying between Wall A. 3:9 and the south balk had a predominantly Byzantine pottery context. (Since the floor continues into the south balk, it was not removed.) Surface A. 3:14 of cement/plaster in the northwest corner was bounded by Wall A. 3:6, the north balk, and the west balk, and corresponds to the Surface A. 3:11 on the other side of Wall A. 3:6. The pottery is mainly Byzantine and Roman. A relatively poor plaster/cement Surface A. 3:15 was encountered in the same area as Surfaces A. 3:11 and 14, but underneath them, associated with predominantly Byzantine and Roman pottery. Underneath Surface A. 3:15 was the hard-packed Surface A. 3:16 of light-brown dirt, with an average top level of 891.05 m. The pottery date is Byzantine, Roman and possibly Iron Age. Wall A. 3:17 consists of a one-course line of partially dressed stones running east-west aligned to a line drawn from the inside edge of the west end of Wall A. 3:5 to the west balk in the southwest part of the Square. The level at the top was 891.43 m. Wall A. 3:18 was at least four courses high and ran between Wall A. 3:5 and the south balk, forming a passageway along the south edge of Wall A. 3:5. Top course level was 893.69 m. A wall at least three courses high and one course wide protruding from the west balk was designated Wall A.3:19. Its top level was 892.31 m. Two small mosaic fragments (A. 3:20) in the southwest corner of the Square were left *in situ* since they seem to continue into the south balk. Loci A. 3:21, 22 and 23 are crude walls uncovered underneath Surface A. 3:16. They have been exposed but not yet excavated. The available pottery is

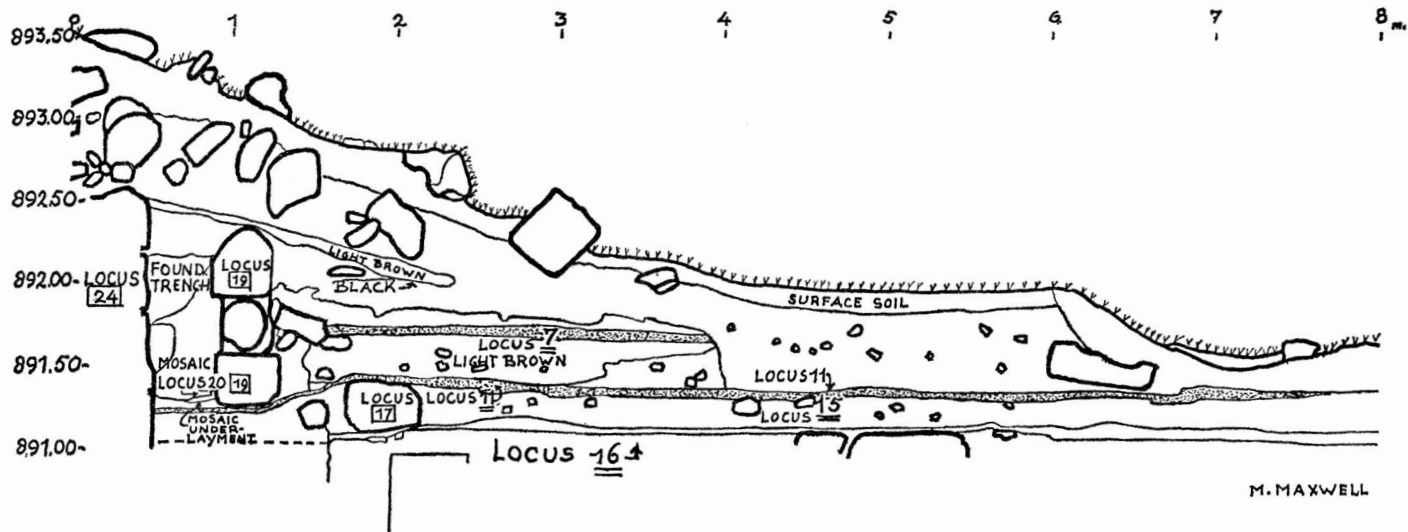


Figure 7. Section of west balk of Area A, Square 3. Speckled layers indicate *huwwar*, double-underlined locus numbers indicate floors, and boxed numerals are walls

Roman and Iron III. A five-course wall just visible in the south balk is designated A. 3:24. Wall A. 3:25 protrudes from the north balk and runs from the west end of the north leg of the arc-shaped Wall A. 3:5 to the west balk. It lies above Surface A. 3:15 but underneath Surface A. 3:14.

Square 4: Prior to excavation there were scattered stones on the surface and a few column sections in the northeast corner. The Square was considerably higher in the southeast corner (cf. Figure 7). This feature made excavation by layers complicated at first, but the heavy concentration of fallen stone in the southeast area of the Square indicated that a major structure originally stood south of the Square and its debris constituted this higher portion.

The surface and plow soil was designated as Locus A. 4:1. It had an average depth of .50 m. and contained painted and glazed Arabic, Byzantine and Roman sherds. A two-course wall, A. 4:2, was found in the southeast corner of the Square, partly in the south balk and running west from the east balk for about 2.00 m. A column fragment, A. 4:3, lying along the east balk on the surface formed part of the serpentine Wall A. 3:2 in the northwest corner of Square 3 and the southwest corner of Square 1 (A. 1:8). The water Channel A. 4:4 (being the continuation of A. 2:4, 5, 6, 9 and 10), lying right underneath the topsoil ran from the north balk to the south balk parallel to and 1.50 m. east of the west balk. The pottery obtained consisted of painted and glazed Arabic, Byzantine, and Roman wares. In the northeast corner of the Square, also right under the topsoil, there was stone Surface A. 4:5, 1.80 × 2.75 m., consisting of three rows of flat, irregular stones with an uneven surface. The top level was 891.35 m. Pottery associated with it was Byzantine and Roman. In the southeast corner of the Square, Wall A. 4:6 lay north of Wall A. 4:2 having a small column base (plastered to the mosaic Floor A. 4:8) in its lowest course. Above it stood a larger column base, while another large column base (A. 4:7) was standing west of it. The pottery was painted and glazed

Arabic ware. The mosaic Floor A. 4:8 with a geometric multi-colored pattern was bordered by Walls A. 4:6 and 9 (Plate XVII:B) and measured .81 × .66 m. with an extension of .30 × .13 m. (Plate XVIII :B). It was removed, restored and transported to the Madaba museum. The pottery was painted and glazed Arabic, Byzantine, Roman wares and one sherd each of the Hellenistic and Iron II periods. Wall A. 4:9 ran along the east balk and was plastered to the east edge of Floor A. 4:8. It consisted of one course of well cut stones. The one-course Wall A. 4:10 ran along the south balk lying directly below Wall A. 4:2.

Along the north balks and near the Cistern A. 2:11 in Square 2 was Pit A. 4:11 which produced Arabic pottery from its fill. Wall A. 4:12 ran from the east balk to the west balk, .50 m. north of the south balk, lying below the foundation stones of Column Base A. 4:7. It consisted of dressed rectangular blocks and was *ca.* 1.00 m. wide. The average top level was 891.04 m. Possibly Byzantine and Roman pottery was associated with it. In the southeast corner of the Square was *hwwar* Layer A. 4:13. It terminated about halfway between the north and south balks with disturbed fill of dirt and debris north of it. Its pottery was predominantly Byzantine and Roman. A small portion of *hwwar* Surface A. 4:14 lay along the east side of the Square below Floor A. 4:8 and Layer A. 4:13. Underneath this *hwwar* Surface A. 4:14 was a Surface A. 4:15, .20-.25 m. thick, of plaster and dirt mixed with limestone along the east side of the Square. The pottery dates from Byzantine, Roman and Hellenistic times. Surface A. 4:16 of packed earth was traceable over the entire Square from east to west along Wall A. 4:12. It had possibly Byzantine, Roman and Iron Age pottery. The hard-packed earth Surface A. 4:17, *ca.* .06 m. in depth, of ruddy brown color, ran along the east balk and over the eastern half of the Square. Its sherds were of the Roman and Iron Ages. Another hard-packed earth Surface, A. 4:18, .10-.19 m. in depth, ran along the east balk over the eastern half of the Square and underneath Surface A. 4:17. Its pottery date is Roman, Hellenistic

and Iron III. It produced a well preserved coin of Tyre of the 1st century B.C. Underneath Surface A. 4:18 was a third hard-packed dirt surface, A. 4:19, containing chunks of plaster, in the eastern half of the Square. It had the same pottery range as the surface above it. Bedrock with an undulating surface (level average: 890.28 m.) over the entire Square was designated A. 4:20. A circular, cone-shaped pit in the bedrock north of Wall A. 4:12 became Locus A. 4:21. Its diameter at the top is .73 m., its depth .75 m. The pottery date of the latest fill was Iron III. A thin, gray ash layer, A. 4:22, was located north from the south balk, reaching to Wall A. 4:12 by which wall it was cut. A neat cobblestone Pavement A. 4:23 was found below Layer A. 4:22. Only a small section of each was exposed along the south balk.

Removal of Balk Between Squares 1 and 3. Upon the completion of the drawing of the south, east and west balk sections of Square 1 and the north, east and west balk sections of Square 3, the balk between Squares 1 and 3 was partially removed near the end of the excavation. The purpose of this operation was to ascertain the integration of walls in Squares 1 and 3. Of special concern was the relation of the arc-shaped Wall A. 3:5 and Walls A. 1:9 and 17 (possibly also Wall A. 1:13). It was found that Wall A. 3:5 ends in the balk at a point even with its southern counterpart on the southern side of Square 3. Wall A. 1:9 was found as being built against the north side of Wall A. 3:5 with a fill of small stones between the two walls. One large block (a reused decorated stone) forms a corner with the western end of the north leg of Wall A. 3:5 (Plate XIX:A). Between this block and the north-south balk separating Squares 1 and 3 from Squares 2 and 4 (to the column base at the juncture of the balks) more of Wall A. 1:7 was exposed. A one-course wall made up of stones protruding into Square 3, their top surface being a few cms. below the surface of Wall A. 1:7, was exposed and designated A. 3:25. No direct alignment of Wall A. 3:5 with a wall running north-south in Square 1 could be ascertained.

Interpretation of the Architectural Remains Uncovered in Area A

The excavation of the four Squares described above rather clearly exposed three strata, and the following discussion will seek to describe and delineate phases of occupation within these strata. The standard designations of these strata are:

- Stratum I = Arabic
- Stratum II = Byzantine
- Stratum III = Roman ¹²

Stratum I, Phase A: Very Late Arabic. Possibly the very latest occupation phase in Area A is the serpentine wall (A. 1:8, A. 3:2 and A. 4:3) made up of some cut stone blocks and column fragments lying on the surface largely exposed. Exact dating is not possible, but it appears to be very late Arabic. Likewise, no conclusions are possible as to its purpose or functions. It may have served as a kind of temporary boundary and enclosure. The column fragments are obviously from an earlier structure.

Stratum I, Phase B: Late Arabic: The general outline of the ruins of the acropolis suggests that at one time there were major structures on the north, south and west side. These buildings surrounded an open court, which was exposed on the east side (or possibly with relatively low buildings on the east side). Not only the ruins but also the climatic features and location of the acropolis suggest this. This layout would give the courtyard exposure to the morning sun from the east and protection from the afternoon sun and prevailing winds from the west in the afternoon. The existence of the large courtyard with pavement stones (according to local legend and possibly partly preserved in some loci [A. 1:7 and A. 4:5])

¹² It is becoming more and more evident that the terms Byzantine and Roman for the early centuries of our era are too indefinite. To make the dividing point *ca.* A.D. 300 ignores that which might properly be designated Early Christian prior to that time. Similarly, a distinction between Byzantine and Early Christian is proving very helpful in archaeological work in Turkey. Perhaps with greater refinement of the pottery chronology (possibly at Heshbon) of these early Christian centuries, a more definitive terminology can be structured.

provided a good flat surface for the collection of water by means of the water channel system in Squares 2 and 4 (Loci A. 2:4, 5, 6, 9, 10 and A. 4:4; Plate XV:A). Included in this system would be the cistern between the column bases in the balk between Squares 2 and 4 (A. 2:11) (Figure 6).

A possible dating for abandonment of this water channel complex is Late Arabic. Admittedly this is very indefinite and the sherds included painted and glazed ware. Furthermore, the complex was directly below the surface. Also, exact chronological delineation of Arabic pottery has not been fully developed. On the other hand, the existence of this water channel complex in the presumed courtyard of Arabic public structures of a character still unknown suggests a date after those structures. Hence this dating must remain tentative until further excavations delineate the structures on the acropolis perimeter.

Stratum I, Phase C: Early Arabic. In the eastern half of Square 1 the remains of a storage complex were identified. These included sizable remains of large jars (A. 1:10), walls (A. 1:3 and 4) and surfaces (A. 1:5 and 11). It is possible that this complex was contemporaneous with the water-channel system described above. However, the Arabic Cistern A. 3:8, dug from a higher level than that of the water system described above, suggests that it was filled by run-off water from buildings. Since the water channels cutting through a courtyard could hardly be contemporaneous with the use of the courtyard and surrounding buildings, it seems plausible to suggest that the Arabic building remains antedate the water system. Walls A. 3:9 and A. 4:2 may belong to these Arabic buildings; future excavations must ascertain that definitely.

Stratum II: Byzantine. A discussion of the Byzantine stratum immediately raises the question regarding the identification of the ruins. The interpretation of this entire stratum will be dependent upon this identification. Hence this basic question will be discussed first, although it necessarily will involve some evaluation of the ruins.

It is the judgment of this investigator that the total impact of the evidence points to the identification of these ruins as those of a church. Admittedly, the case cannot be absolutely or firmly established, but the cumulative effect of a number of items points in this direction. These items will be discussed first, and consideration will be given later to certain problems involved in this identification.

1. The shape and position of Wall A. 3:5. This is a semi-circular wall oriented to the east. The shape of this wall and its extent are typical for an apse of a Byzantine church. This is so patent that further documentation is not necessary. Furthermore, the orientation to the east also is a typical characteristic of early churches.¹³ Hence Wall A. 3:5 certainly qualifies in these respects as the apse of a church.

2. The shape, construction and date of the mosaic floor in the apse (A. 3:3). The preserved east edge of this mosaic floor is semicircular, suggesting that it is prescribed by the arc of an apse. Some of the stones of an (inner) apse have been uncovered east of the mosaic (Plates XVI:A, B; XVIII:A). This apse was smaller than that described by Wall A. 3:5. Although the design of the mosaic is not distinctly Christian, it is not without parallel in Christian churches, and its tentatively ascertained date in the latter part of the 6th century A.D.¹⁴ puts it in the pre-Arabic period.

3. The position of the row of column bases (A. 2:2) and parallel wall (A. 1:12 and A. 2:8) (Plate XVII:A). A frequent

¹³ "Let the building be long, with its head to the east" (*Apostolic Constitutions*, II.57).

¹⁴ Ute Lux of the Deutsches Evangelisches Institut für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes, a recognized expert in mosaics, after seeing a photograph of the apse mosaic wrote to Horn by letter of November 29, 1968: "Ich würde das Apsis-Mosaik in die 2. Hälfte, bezw. in das letzte Viertel des 6. Jahrhunderts datieren." However, of the geometrically-patterned mosaic from the main aisle she says: "Es handelt sich um jene neutralen geometrischen Muster — sie scheinen mit grösseren Steinen eingelegt worden zu sein —, die keinen Anhaltspunkt einer Datierung bieten, vielmehr schon lange vor dem 6. Jh. anzutreffen sind und bis ins 8. Jh. hineinreichen."

style of early Christian churches is the basilica. A feature of the basilica-type church is a double row of pillars supporting the roof and separating the main aisle from the side aisles.¹⁵ The position of the column bases (three in the balk between Squares 2 and 4 and the foundation stone of a fourth one west of the Area) in relation to the apse described above fits into this scheme.

4. The evidence of the inscription on plaster fragments found in Square 3. On August 2, 1968, two pieces of painted plaster were found with Greek letters on them (Plate XXIV:A). These were found in the removal of Surface A. 3:7 and the exposure of Floor A. 3:II, just east of Wall A. 3:6. The letters, arranged as a partial semi-circle, were]ANIH[. These have been identified as the medial letters of the Greek name Δανιηλ.¹⁶ The semi-circle suggests they were placed over a painting of Daniel. This likewise points to a building in which Daniel would be revered—a synagogue or a church. The use of Greek and frequent use of the Daniel motif in Christian art favors identifying the building as a church.

5. The existence of a church at Heshbon on the basis of literary sources. Heshbon was the seat of a bishopric in the early Christian centuries—Bishop Gennadius was present at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 and Bishop Zosus at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) and that of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). In 650 there was a Bishop Theodore at Heshbon.¹⁷ This evidence of Christian occupation is also indicated by a stone capital discovered on Mt. Nebo which is decorated with crosses and contains the letters Εσβους. S. J. Saller suggests that the people of Esbous (Heshbon) presented this capital to the church of Moses on Mt. Nebo.¹⁸

¹⁵ Michael Gough, *The Early Christians* (London, 1961), pp. 125-144.

¹⁶ This identification was made by Volker Langholf of the Universität Hamburg by letter of October 16, 1968, addressed to Horn.

¹⁷ See *supra* p. 101 and Vyhmeister, *AUSS*, VI (1968), 168-171.

¹⁸ S. J. Saller, *The Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo*, I (Jerusalem, 1941), 265, 266.

6. The dating of the ruins. The sherds found in context with the various structures and the mosaic in the apse apparently date the buildings in the Byzantine period. This proves nothing as to the existence of a church, but it does indicate a chronological setting appropriate for a church.

7. The location of the ruins. The literary evidence suggests a major Christian settlement at Heshbon. A prominent place for the location of the church would be on the acropolis, where the ruins under discussion are located. (Fig. 7a depicts an architect's sketches of a tentative reconstruction of the church at Heshbon.)

The following interpretation of the archaeological data therefore assumes that a major structure in Byzantine times was a church located on the acropolis of Heshbon. The validity of this assumption will be discussed later. This procedure is followed for the sake of clarity, not to prejudice the reader unfairly. The following phases of building and use of the church are suggested:

- Phase A α and A β = Late Byzantine
- Phase B = Intermediate Byzantine
- Phase C α and C β = Early Byzantine ¹⁹

1. *Stratum II, Phase A α = Late Byzantine.* The major evidence for this phase is the mosaic Floor A. 3:3 (Plate XVIII:A). As suggested above, the border of the floor was semicircular and thus was described by the arc of an "apse." One stone immediately along the outer edge of the mosaic was preserved—possibly a part of the elders' bench inside the apse. It appears that with this phase of construction, the church (at least the apse) was reduced in size. Wall A. 3:4 appears to be a filler wall between the larger apse of the

¹⁹ Perhaps this should be designated Early Christian since this period may overlap with Late Roman. Presently, the delineation of pottery typology in the 2d, 3d, 4th and 5th centuries has not been sufficiently refined. Further analysis of Heshbon materials is required before more can be affirmed. It is possible that this phase begins in the 2d or 3d century.

earlier church and the small one of the smaller and later church. The mosaic was discovered about .25 m. below the ground surface. Most of the wall constructions seem to have been destroyed or robbed. The floor level cannot be identified in Square 2 or 4—possibly being disrupted along with associated walls in the formation of the courtyard and subsequent water drainage system.

It is possible that the fragmentary Walls A. 1:6 and A. 2:7 are to be associated with this period. However, the evidence is scanty and connection by soil layers non-existent (due to closeness to the ground surface) and thus this can only be a suggestion. These walls could also be related to Phase A β described below.

2. *Stratum II, Phase A β = Late Byzantine.* This is an earlier phase of the smaller church described above. It is to be identified in the cement/plaster Surface A. 3:7 and the *huwwar* Layer A. 4:13. The extent of the Surface A. 3:7 eastward was the same arc described by the outer edge of the mosaic Floor A. 3:3. Possibly in the digging of the Cistern A. 3:8 along the east balk this area east of the Floor A. 3:3 and Surface A. 3:7 was completely disrupted. In Square 4 the west edge of Layer A. 4:13 is butted by Wall A. 4:9 as a kind of retaining wall providing a "step-down" from the apse to the main aisle of about .22 m. The lower level or floor of the main aisle may be partly preserved in the mosaic Floor A. 4:8. To the south of this mosaic floor was Wall A. 4:9, forming a room of which the other walls have been disrupted, unless the excavation to the south in a future season will provide more data.

3. *Stratum II, Phase B = Intermediate Byzantine.* This is to be identified with the cement Surface A. 3:11 and Surface A. 3:14 as well as the *huwwar* Surface A. 4:14. Both are at the same level and apparently there was no "step-down" from the apse to the nave or main aisle in this period. The apse is to be identified with the surrounding Wall A. 3:5. The Surface A. 3:11 covered the area inclosed by Wall A. 3:5. The

many fragments of painted plaster found above surface A. 3:11 presumably came from the walls and possibly from the dome of the apse. This would indicate that the apse (of this phase) was rather extensively decorated with biblical scenes.

Walls A. 1:9 and A. 3:9 are abutting the outer edge of Wall A. 3:5. Since the outside face of Wall A. 3:5 is not finished, it would seem that these outer walls were contemporaneous with Wall A. 3:5. An Arabic storage complex had been built north of Wall A. 1:9 (see *supra*, p. 144) and this may have removed any trace of rooms or structures from Byzantine times in this area. In Square 3 south of Wall A. 3:9 a portion of a mosaic floor has been uncovered which appears to be contemporaneous with Wall A. 3:9. However, the determination of what type of structure or room was formed by this floor or by Wall A. 3:9 must await further excavation south of Square 3.

Wall A. 3:6 also belongs to this building phase (it was set upon Surfaces A. 3:11 and 16). However, its function in this location is a conundrum.

Wall A. 1:7 belongs to this phase of building since it lies above the plaster Floor A. 1:20 which is associated with an earlier phase. It appears to be some kind of subsidiary wall joining the end of Wall A. 3:5 with the easternmost column base. The column bases may have been used in this phase of building, but a portion of their bases must have been covered.

No definite relationship of this phase with the main east-west Wall A. 1:12 and A. 2:8 is evident. However, since there is a relationship of the apse with this main east-west wall in the immediately preceding phase (phase C α) and the remains are higher than the level of Phase B, it seems that they were present in Phase B and perhaps were part of the structure.

A north-south wall connecting the end of the apse with the east-west Wall A. 1:12 cannot be identified. Wall A. 1:13 is a possibility. However, there is a jog in the wall and its connection with Wall A. 3:5 is not direct. It is possible that originally there was a doorway here, which later on was rather crudely filled in.

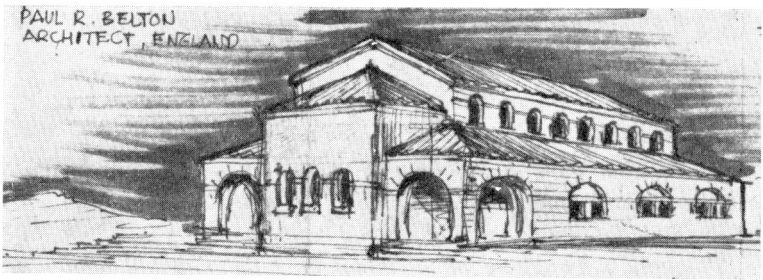
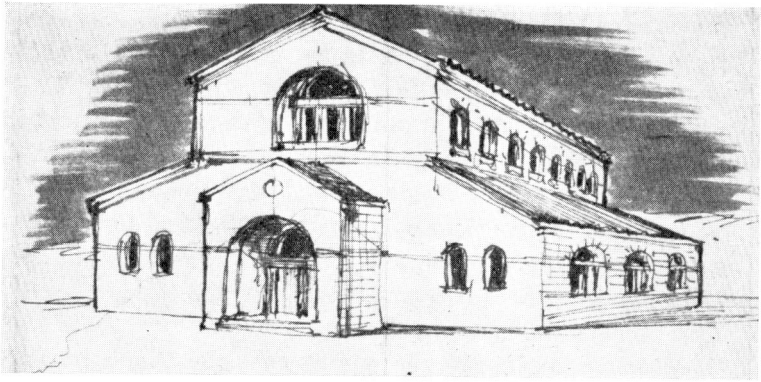


Figure 7a. Architect's sketches of a tentative reconstruction of the
Early Christian Church at Heshbon

Top: View from the southwest — Entrance
Bottom: View from the northeast — Apsidal end

4. *Stratum II, Phase C α = Early Byzantine.* This phase is perhaps the most extensively identified in the ruins. The surface or floor of this phase of building and use is identified by the plaster Floor A. 3:15, plaster Surface A. 4:15, plaster Floor A. 1:20 and plaster Surface A. 2:12. Floor A. 1:20 and Surface A. 2:12 may associate the column bases with the main east-west Wall A. 2:8. Floor A. 3:15 is bounded by the apse Wall A. 3:5.

Again the identification of a north-south wall connecting the end of the apse with the main east-west wall is difficult. Wall A. 3:17 is a possibility. Two troublesome factors are the date of its foundation trench—Roman—and its termination before reaching the end of the apse. The former factor may be explained by its being a Roman wall reused in Byzantine times or that the designation Byzantine is too general and there is a measure of overlapping here. The latter factor may have been occasioned by the presence of a doorway (such a doorway appears on the south side of the apse in Square 3).

5. *Stratum II, Phase C β = Early Byzantine.* This phase is identified by Surface A. 3:16 which is the original floor level with Wall A. 3:5. The continuation of this surface into Square 4 is indefinite. Below Surface A. 4:15 there are a number of surfaces very close together. These may be associated with this phase. If so, it may indicate that there was a "step-down" in floor levels in the apse and main aisle in this phase. Whether this phase made use of the column bases in their present location is doubtful. There is no clear soil connection and their present level would be too high. It seems that the column bases were brought in connection with the construction of Phase C α . It is possible that the walls serving as foundations for the column bases in Phase C α were originally the walls or segments of the walls of the church in Phase C β , which apparently did not have the full basilica type of construction.

The foregoing analysis and interpretation assumes the identification of the structures as phases of the building of a

church. The arguments for this have been set forth above. Objections to this identification will be considered next.

1. One objection is the absence of a distinctively Christian motif in the Mosaic A. 3:3. However, mosaics found in Byzantine churches in Madeba and on Mt. Nebo²⁰ show features similar to the mosaic under discussion. Ute Lux, an expert in mosaics, in examining the photograph of the mosaic wrote: "Der Meister des Mosaiks der Apsis gehört zweifelsohne der 'Madebaschule' an. Offensichtlich handelt es sich hier um ein sehr beliebtes Thema: symmetrisch zu Seiten eines Obstbaumes angeordnete Tiere, in diesem Falle wohl Rinder (vgl. das Apsis-Mosaik der Kirche des Lot und Procopius in el-Muhayyet)." ²¹ A similar design with animal shapes similar to the animal in the mosaic under discussion can be seen in the details of a floor mosaic from the great church at Mopsuestia in the plain of Eastern Cilicia which is dated in the 5th century.²²

2. Another objection stresses the lack of clear connection of building remains in one Square with those in another Square. This primarily concerns the integration of the main east-west wall (A. 1:12-A. 2:8) with the so-called apse (A. 3:5). The above discussion has recognized the complexity of this problem. However, the integration suggested in Phase C α above, whereby the apse, the column bases, and the wall are correlated by the Surfaces A. 3:15, A. 4:15, A. 1:20 and A. 2:12 answers this objection to a large extent for the earliest Phases. The presence of doorways, reconstructions within a phase, removal through later occupation and similar phenomena could account for the break in continuity of integration of later Phases asserted in this objection.

3. Another objection cites the presence of Arabic pottery in some contexts, especially in the northern half of Square 1.

²⁰ Saller, *op. cit.*, II (Jerusalem, 1941), Plates 81-113.

²¹ For reference to this letter see Note 14. In her letter she refers to Saller and B. Bagatti, *The Town of Nebo* (Jerusalem, 1949), Plate 14, 1.

²² Gough, *op. cit.*, Plates 70, 71.

What type of structures lies to the north of Squares 1 and 2 (or the main east-west wall) is not presently known. If the east-west wall (A. 1:12-A. 2:8) is the north wall of the church and if the whole area was occupied in Arabic times (by a citadel-like complex and courtyard and later by a water channel system), disruption and contamination of earlier layers becomes a real possibility. In addition, as suggested above, Early Christian materials can overlap with Roman materials, so that identification of items as Roman could still be part of a Christian complex.

It must be remembered that only a portion of the structure to be identified has been uncovered. The entire south side and western end have not been exposed. Hence all identifications and descriptions must be tentative to that extent. The total impact of the evidence points to a Christian church. This investigator does not want to be dogmatic about this. He does consider the above judgment a strong possibility and presently feels fairly confident that this was a Christian church at Heshbon. Hopefully, future excavations will settle the issue with more compelling evidence.

Otto Meinardus, in a report on the excavations of a church near Jericho,²³ describes ruins very similar to those at Heshbon, including mosaics with purely geometrical designs. Of interest regarding the question of dating, Meinardus mentions that the Persians destroyed all Christian churches in the *Wadi Qelt* and the Jericho area in A.D. 614. How this relates to churches in Transjordan needs further investigation.

Stratum III: Roman. There is evidence for a Roman occupation in the layers just above bedrock in Square 4. These are not very extensive and further excavation is necessary to relate them to Wall A. 4:12.

Below Surface A. 3:16 a number of crude walls with stone fill between were uncovered. The fill appears to have been put

²³ Otto Meinardus, "The Byzantine Church of St. Andrew in Jericho," *Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie Copte*, XVIII (1965-1966), 181-195 and plates.

in to level the area for Surface A. 3:16. The sherds found in context with these walls were Roman and some Iron III. Of interest is the fact that these walls go below the level of bedrock found in Square 4. Apparently the bedrock in this area is very undulating and the highest point of bedrock seems to be the cistern between the pillar bases, from where it gradually slopes off to the southwest in Square 4. The probe trench in Square 2 seems to indicate that the bedrock was deliberately quarried or faced on that side.

Roman sherds have been identified in every Square, usually at the levels where work terminated this season. However, the line of demarcation between Byzantine and Roman is rather dubious. At present, it appears that the Roman Walls A. 1:12 and A. 2:8 were reused in Byzantine times.

Further excavation will be necessary to delineate clearly the Roman levels on the acropolis at Heshbon.

AREA D

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Area D was laid out with the primary aim of exposing the main entrance to the acropolis area from the lower city to the south. To this end three 6×6 m. "Squares" were plotted to the east of the north-south axis across the eastern half of the south slope of the acropolis of the mound. Their common west balk bisected a gateway that was visible at the summit somewhat east of the center of the south ridge. It then slanted along a presumed path of access on the slope below framed by a pair of standing columns (outside the Area) on the west end. Square 1 straddled the summit where the line of an enclosure wall was just visible through the mass of rockfall that camouflaged the upper slope. Square 2 stretched across the slope below, incorporating on the west the aforementioned wall line that appeared to climb the slope toward the gateway in the summit wall. Square 3 was staked out on a small fairly level shelf.