

AREA A

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In 1968 four Squares were opened in Area A in the acropolis of *Heshbân*. These Squares, each 6.00 x 8.00 m., were laid out in reference to architectural features visible on the surface, including four column bases in line in an east-west direction. A major building was indicated, and the 1968 excavations were intended to investigate this building. The remains of the structure itself, together with literary evidence of a Christian community at *Heshbân* in the 4th to 7th cent. A.D., suggested a Byzantine Christian church.¹ This identification was supported by a semi-circular, apse-like feature at the east end of the building, mosaic floor fragments in the apse and nave sectors, plaster fragments on which part of the name Daniel was painted, a well-built wall 2.50 m. north of an extant row of column bases forming a north aisle, and a parallel wall to the south in the right position to support another row of columns.² Dating the remains of the building suggested two late Byzantine phases, contemporary with mosaic floors in the apse and nave sectors; one intermediate Byzantine phase, contemporary with a cement floor in the apse and the painted plaster mentioned above; and two early Byzantine phases, contemporary with a plaster floor in the apse and a plaster floor probably connecting the column bases with the north wall.

Two main problems remained at the end of the 1968 excavations. The excavated portion did not extend far enough to the south or west to include all the floor plan of the Byzantine building, and the excavation in the four Squares was not completed through the underlying layers to bedrock. This meant that the dimensions of the building were still undetermined, no south exterior wall had been found, and the relation between

¹ See B. Van Elderen, "Heshbon 1968: Area A," *AUSS*, 7 (1969), 157-159.

² See "Heshbon 1968," *ibid.*, Pls. XV-XIX, XXIII:E, XXIV:A.

the church and pre-church phases of building had not been worked out. Some discrepancies in the relation between walls (as, for instance, an uneven or absent connection between the north wall and the apse, and a slight shift in the angle of the north wall in relation to the apse) could be caused by adjustment to, or reuse of, earlier buildings in the Area. Roman sherds were found in all four Squares, but the Roman loci and structures, and their possible reuse in the Byzantine church required further investigation.

The 1971 excavations in Area A were intended to provide more evidence on these problems. The four Squares already opened were cleared of debris accumulated in the intervening years and were excavated further. Square A.2 was excavated completely to bedrock on both sides of the north exterior wall. Squares A.1, A.3, and A.4 were excavated to bedrock with some small exceptions. In A.3 and A.4 the south edges were not completely cleared. The removal of balks between Areas A and D was in process at the end of the season, and further excavation south of the south column-support wall will be easier once this has been accomplished. In A.1 the south cave, found during the season, and the southwest corner of the Square were not completely excavated. In these Squares the main findings in 1971 were in Roman loci or in Byzantine reuse of Roman structures.

The other main problem, that of the western and southern parts of the Byzantine church, was attacked in Area A by opening two new Squares immediately west of the original four, and in Area D by opening new Squares extending excavation to the south edge of Area A. Square A.5 was laid out and opened immediately west of A.2 (leaving only the standard 1.00 m. balk between the Squares) at the end of the first week, and Square A.6, west of A.4, was opened at the end of the third week. Neither Square was completely excavated by the end of the seven weeks. Bedrock was reached in one sector of A.5, and Roman loci were dug, but more work is still to be done in both Roman and Byzantine loci. In A.6 an Early Byzantine surface was reached in the southwest corner, but nothing below this was dug. No conclusions could be reached at the end of the 1971 season as to the floor plan of the western end of the Byzantine

church. Work was not completed on the western half of either A.5 or A.6, but the position of the Byzantine mosaic and paving stones along the western balks of A.5 and A.6 indicate that the west wall and probable entrance of the church lay either in the west balks of these Squares, or still further to the west. In A.6 the mosaic and the paving stones (which bordered the mosaic on the north) were both covered by the west balk, so that their extent is unknown. In A.5 the face of a north-south wall west of the paving stones appeared in the west balk, but its connection with the surface containing the mosaic has not yet been determined.

The 1971 excavations in Area A did provide further evidence in regard to the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk reuse of the Byzantine church, details of the plan of this church, its extent to both the south and the west, and the pre-church occupation and structures and their relation to the later structure. Pottery was found in the Area from the following ancient occupation periods: Ayyūbid/Mamlūk, Umayyad, Byzantine, Late Roman, Early Roman, Late Hellenistic, and Late Iron II.

Ayyūbid/Mamlūk

The most recent structure found in A.6 was a room consisting of a north-south wall of roughly faced stones (Wall A.6:6), forming a corner with an east-west wall of similar roughly faced stones (Wall A.6:5) and floor surfaces indicating two stages of use, a hard dirt floor (A.6:8) over a layer of about .12 m. of fill, laid over an earlier hard-packed floor surface (A.6:15) immediately over an original plaster floor (A.6:16). Walls A.6:5 and 6 seem to have been the heavy outer walls of this Ayyūbid/Mamlūk house. Wall A.6:6 had a width of 1.00 m., and Wall A.6:5 was built against an earlier heavy wall on the north (A.6:2) for a combined width of 1.50 m. Both Floors A.6:8 and 16 ran up to these walls and did not extend beyond them.

An earlier occupation of this house again seemed to show two stages of use with a hard-packed earth floor (A.6:17) over a layer of rubble and occupation debris (A.6:18) containing tesserae, plaster and *ṭabun* fragments, roof tiles, iron and glass fragments, a button, and many sherds. Below this lay a hard white

floor surface (A.6:20). Floor A.6:20 ran up to Walls A.6:6 and 2. It was not cut by the foundation trenches for them, and seems to have been contemporary with these walls. Wall A.6:6 was set on the floor surface containing the Byzantine mosaic (A.6:37), and was built over and around the column base attached to this mosaic (A.6:38), so as to incorporate the column base as part of the wall. Wall A.6:6 seems, therefore, to have been part of the first structure built in the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period which used the Byzantine church as its foundation.

In A.5 an apparent entrance-way consisting of two side posts built of roughly faced stones, .95 m. apart and standing to a surviving height of 1.00 m. (A.5:5 and 15), appeared in the west balk in association with stone Threshold A.5:60 (see Pl. II:B). If this partially excavated entrance represents part of the first building phase on the surface of the Byzantine mosaic in A.5, it also probably belonged to the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period.

An earlier Ayyūbid/Mamlūk phase of occupation seemed to be represented in a layer of occupation debris (A.6:23 and 30) about .13 m. deep and resting directly on the Byzantine floor (A.6:37). This debris contained tesserae, lamp fragments, charcoal, a weight, and many sherds. It was cut by the foundation trenches for Walls A.6:6 and 2, and seemed to be part of an occupation which simply reused the Byzantine floor. The evidence in all of the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk levels in A.6 indicated domestic reuse of the Byzantine church features as living space.

Umayyad

A few Umayyad sherds were found in A.5 and A.6, always in mixed association with Ayyūbid/Mamlūk pottery. No Umayyad structures were identified.

Byzantine

Church. In the new Square A.6, nothing lying below the Early Byzantine floor with its paving stones and mosaics has yet been dug. This means that no evidence for more than one phase of church construction has been found there to date. In A.5 both Late and Early Roman loci have been reached in much of the Square, but again, in the sectors dug there is not evidence for more than one Byzantine church floor surface. In the eastern half

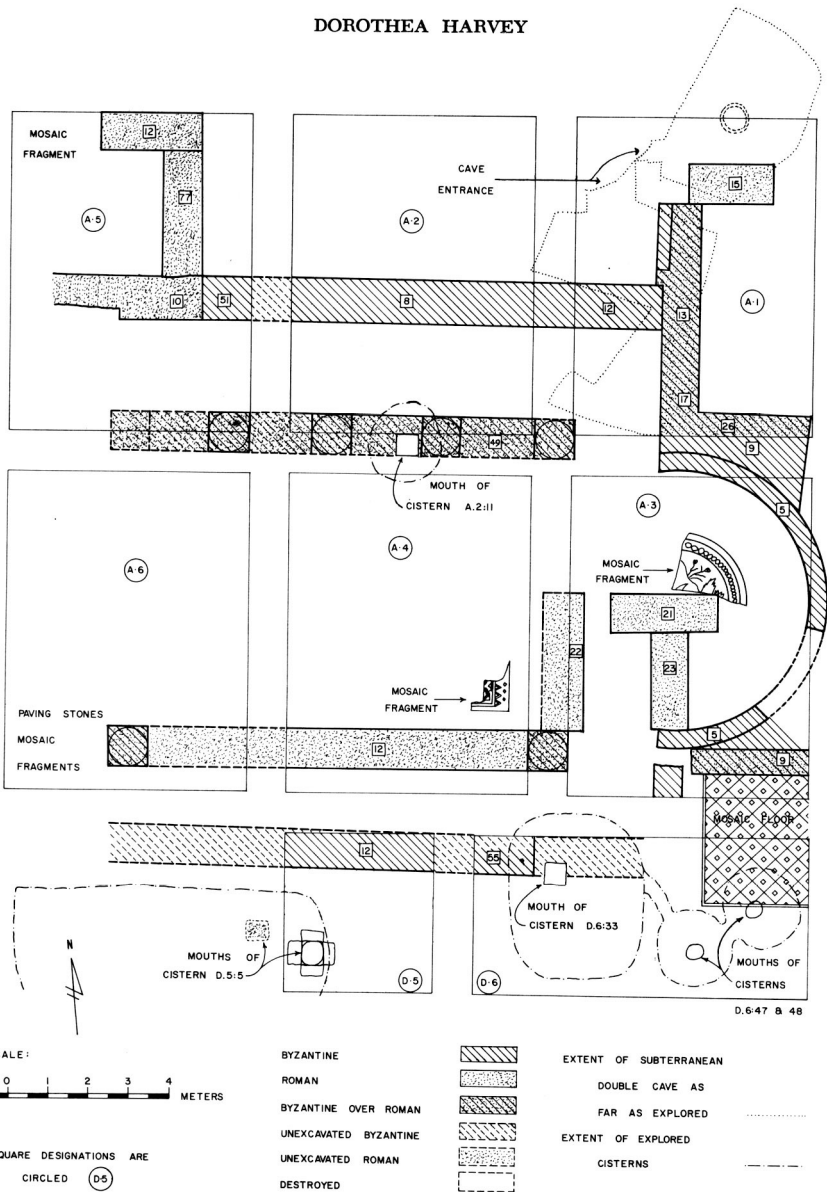
of both Squares the present ground surface and accompanying disturbed topsoil is lower than in the western half. This may be one reason why no trace of a floor from an earlier phase of the Byzantine church was found in the southeast corner of A.5. It is difficult, without this evidence, to relate the mosaics found in A.5 and A.6 with any one phase of the 1968 analysis of the Byzantine church.

It seems clear, however, that these mosaics did belong to the Byzantine church. The A.6 fragment of mosaic (A.6:37) was found cemented to a column base (A.6:38) which is in line with the column base found in position on the column-support wall in A.4 (A.4:12). Both of these bases were apparently *in situ* for their reused phase. The other mosaic fragment in A.6 (A.6:35) was at exactly the same level (891.52 m. above sea level), set in the same hard sub-floor surface, and laid up to the edge of one of two paving stones (A.6:36) in the west balk. The mosaic fragment in A.5 (A.5:28) is less well preserved. It occurred a few centimeters from a similar row of paving stones (A.5:6) along the west balk, but when exposed it did not touch these stones. It was set in a similar hard white sub-floor surface (A.5:17). The level was 891.33 m., as compared with 891.52 m. for the mosaic in A.6, and 891.48 m. for the mosaic floor south of the apse in A.3 (A.3:13). The mosaic Fragment A.4:8 in the southeast corner of the nave floor, found at Level 891.48 m., was identified as "Stratum II, Phase A β = Late Byzantine" in the 1968 report. It would seem possible that the mosaics in A.5 and A.6 belong to this phase of the 1968 analysis (but with revised dating).

An Early Byzantine plaster floor (A.5:21) ran south of the line of the north wall of the Byzantine church at approximately the same level (891.28 m.) as Floor A.5:17. Both Floors A.5:17 and 21 extend over the top of Wall A.5:10 (A.5:17 to the north and A.5:21 to the south of the wall), and they may be part of the same floor. If this is true, then Floor A.5:21 may also belong to this phase. A fragment of cobbling (A.5:14) appeared just to the east of the A.5 mosaic and probably belonged to this same floor.

It would seem probable that the top course of Wall A.5:11

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D.6:47 & 48

Fig. 2. Schematic plan of the excavated part of the Byzantine church in Areas A and D with Roman architectural remains relating to the church building. No distinction is made between early and late phases

belonged to the same period as the A.5:28 mosaic. The top of Wall A.5:11 was flat, level with Wall A.5:10 with which it formed a corner, and it provided an eastern boundary for Floor A.5:17 in which the mosaic was set. Foundation Trenches A.5:53 and 55 for the lower courses of the wall along the east side yielded Late Roman and earlier pottery. A foundation trench (A.5:25) along the west side of the wall contained Early Byzantine sherds. These foundation trenches would seem to indicate an Early Byzantine reuse of an original Roman wall.

A number of sectors excavated in 1971 seem to relate to this church phase. Three additional column bases were found in reuse *in situ*. One was found in the east balk at the southeast corner of A.4 (A.4:45), another was found in the south central sector of A.6 (A.6:38), and the third in the southeast corner of A.5 (A.5:68). The three column bases previously excavated are in an east-west line, north of the central portion of the church, dividing a north aisle from the nave proper. The column base found in A.4 is directly west of the apse and matched the first column base in the north row. The base in A.6 was in the position of the fifth from the apse in the south row. The base in A.5 was the fourth from the apse in the north row. Because of these column bases found *in situ*, it would seem evident that the church had a north and a south aisle set off from the nave by ten columns in two rows of five each. The number of columns, however, can be expanded to a minimum of 12 in two rows of six each, as an additional five column bases have been discovered scattered throughout the building.

The main east-west wall on the north (Wall A.1:12 and A.2:8) was found to continue an additional 2.25 m. to the west into A.5, where it (as Wall A.5:51) met the corner of the Late Roman Wall A.5:10. In 1968 a plaster floor fragment and surface in A.1 and A.2 (A.1:20 and A.2:12) were found possibly associating this main east-west wall with the column bases as the north exterior wall of the church. This association seems highly probable in the light of a connection found in 1971 between the south row of column bases and a major east-west wall on the south. Column Base A.4:45 was found in the southeast corner of A.4, resting on an east-west column-support wall (A.4:12).

As this corner of A.4 was cleared, the cobblestone Surface A.4:23, identified in 1968, was traced eastward to the balk and was found to be laid up against the lower part of the column Base A.4:45 (Pl. IV:A). As the balk between A.4 and D.5 was partially removed, this same cobblestone surface was traced westward and southward and was found to connect with Wall D.5:12 in the south balk of A.4. With this clear stratigraphic connection, the plan of the central part of the Byzantine church is fairly certain: as exterior walls on the north and on the south there were well-built major walls, slightly more than 1.00 m. wide, of header-stretcher construction; also there was a north and a south aisle, each set off from the main part of the nave by a row of columns each row having a minimum of six.

Excavations of the north exterior wall of the church indicated that that wall was built in the Early Byzantine period. A probe trench in 1968 in A.2 had cleared a 1.00 m. wide strip to the lowest layer of *huwwar* over bedrock in the center of the south edge of the Square, between the north Wall A.2:8 and the line of column bases, and had uncovered quarried stepped edges of bedrock. The rest of the southwest corner of A.2 and the entire north half of the Square, north of the north Wall A.2:8, was found to have been a quarry, cut to a depth of 2.50 m. into a relatively soft white limestone bedrock. Above some Roman layers of *huwwar* and soil at the bottom and a rockfall of approximately .50 m. above these, a massive Early Byzantine fill of up to 1.50 m. deep was found. An Early Byzantine foundation trench cut through this fill and rockfall beside a heavy foundation wall ca. 1.80 m. wide and built of field stones. One course, ca. 1.50 m. wide, of well-cut stones, was laid on this foundation, and above it were the two still standing exposed courses of the north Wall A.2:8, with a width of 1.10 m. The whole structure, including the foundation, seems to have been Early Byzantine.

The quarry was not found to continue into A.5. Here, then, there was no massive fill or foundation wall. A wide, triangular foundation trench (A.5:50), along the north side of this main east-west wall, did not contain any Byzantine sherds, but the corresponding wide foundation trench against the same wall in A.1

and A.2 did yield Early Byzantine sherds. Two layers of fill (A.5:3 and 9) laid against the south side of the wall in A.5, with no apparent foundation trench, also contained Early Byzantine sherds, confirming an Early Byzantine date for the wall.

A lower course of cut stones, at the level of the 1.30 m. wide course in A.2, was found in an Early Roman association in A.1 (A.1:63). This lower course is at a different angle from the orientation of the main east-west wall and rests on higher, unquarried bedrock where there was an earlier Roman occupation. Here, as well as at its extreme east and west ends, the Early Byzantine east-west wall seems to have been built over, or up to, earlier Roman structures (Walls A.1:17, A.1:39, A.5:10). In the A.2 quarry also, the east-west wall rests on the Roman quarry floor.

The discrepancies in size and in angle of orientation which appear in the plan of the Byzantine church seem to be at least partly the result of the reuse of Roman structures. The south exterior wall runs at a slight angle off the line of the south row of columns and was ca. 1.50-1.60 m. south of the line of columns, while the north exterior wall, again on a slightly different orientation from the north row of columns, is ca. 2.00-2.20 m. north of the line of columns. One base exposed in the south row of column bases rests on one course of cut stones which form a flat surface at the top of a rough wall of small field stones 1.00 m. wide and presently ca. .50 m. high. The 1968 excavations north of this column-support Wall A.4:12 identified a foundation trench of .05-.08 m. deep along the upper course which contained possible Byzantine as well as Roman sherds. In Layers A.4:18 and 19 below this were found only Roman and earlier pottery.

The 1971 excavations confirmed this finding. Three layers of occupational debris and fill (A.4:27, 28, 30) along the north face of the rough field stone wall under Wall A.4:12 yielded Early Roman and Late Iron II pottery. A foundation trench (A.4:29) cutting into these layers also yielded Early Roman and Late Iron II pottery. Findings south of the wall were similar. A layer of soil at the level of the top of the wall (A.4:35) and

a foundation trench (A.4:36), which cut through this layer along the upper course of the wall, both yielded possible Early Byzantine sherds. Layers under this (A.4:38, 39, 40) and a foundation trench (A.4:37) cutting through these layers along the south face of the wall yielded Early Roman sherds dominantly, with a few possible Late Roman sherds, and some Late Iron II sherds. It seems reasonably certain that the field stone wall was built in the Roman Period (probably Early, but possibly Late Roman) and that the Early Byzantine builders leveled its top with a course of flat cut stones so that it could be used as foundation for their column bases. This is a clearer case here, with evidence of double foundation trenches on both sides of the wall, of the same kind of Early Byzantine reuse of Early Roman construction as was suggested above regarding Wall A.5:11.

The north column-support wall consisted of one course of well-cut, squared-off slabs of stone set in dirt, except for one segment about 2.00 m. long in the southeast corner of A.2 where there are two such courses. A foundation trench (A.2:47) was evident, and there was probably one in A.5 (A.5:18). In the quarried sector of A.2, the column-support wall followed the south edge of the quarry, including the mouth of the Cistern A.2:11 which was cut into the same bedrock at that point. Early Byzantine fill seemed to lie against the wall with no foundation trench in this southwest corner of A.2 as it did in the southeast corner of A.5. Both foundation trenches along the wall contain possible Early Byzantine sherds, and both were cut into layers (A.2:14 and A.5:19) which also contained possible Early Byzantine sherds. The construction was not identical to that of the south column-support wall since there is no underlying Roman wall in the north. The construction, using flat leveling stones, was similar, however, and the pottery readings suggest that this north column-support wall may also have been Early Byzantine in origin.

Late Roman

Late Roman structures above bedrock in A.1 included two walls reused by the Early Byzantine builders, Wall A.1:17, a

north-south wall at the east end of the north wall of the church, and Wall A.1:26, an east-west wall north of the outer wall of the apse (Wall A.1:9). Wall A.1:17 was represented by an upper course over a previous wall (A.1:39, probably Early Roman). When Wall A.1:17 was removed, it was seen that the Early Byzantine north exterior wall was not finished neatly at the east end. The ends of the two stones in the upper course jutted out at irregular angles and the central portion between them was filled in against the west face of Wall A.1:17. The east end of the lower stone on the north face was not squared off either, but was set at an angle fitting over a field stone of Wall A.1:39. This evidence tends to confirm the suggestion made in 1968 that the structural connection between Wall A.1:12 and the outer wall of the apse was the Early Byzantine course above these two Roman courses of the north-south wall, or A.1:13. The Early Byzantine north exterior wall is built up to a Late Roman wall on its west end also, where it meets Wall A.5:10, with its north face lining up with the north face of that wall. The Early Byzantine apse wall (A.1:9) also seems to have been built against a Late Roman wall (A.1:26).

Late Roman structures in A.5 included the heavy east-west Wall A.5:10 mentioned above, probably also a parallel wall (A.5:12) set 3.00 m. to the north, and the lower courses of the north-south Wall A.5:11 which formed a corner with Wall A.5:10 and seemed to connect it with Wall A.5:12. The width of these walls suggests that they were the outer walls of a house, and two Late Roman/Early Byzantine occupation layers (A.5:24 and 26) were found in the space enclosed by them. A fireplace (A.5:23) was found in association with Floor A.5:24 with ash, charcoal, bones, and one coin of Constans I (343-350).³ Floor A.5:26 was a harder, more solid floor with sherds, charcoal, and ash on its upper face.

It is possible that Wall A.5:22 should be included among the Late Roman structures in A.5. It was a wall of dressed stones in the south end of the west balk, resting on the cobblestone Surface A.5:38, with the plaster Floor A.5:30 (above A.5:38) running up to it. Cobblestoned Surface A.5:38 was above a thick

³ A. Terian, No. 60, in his forthcoming article on the Heshbon 1971 coins.

layer of loose soil and rock tumble (A.5:19), apparently destruction debris. With the exception of one call of some possible Early Byzantine sherds in one pail from Locus A.5:19, the pottery evidence for these structures suggested a Late Roman date. Wall A.5:22 was in line with Wall A.5:7 in the northern half of the Square, where excavation is not yet complete. It is possible that these walls will be found to relate to the Early Byzantine period, and that they mark the western limit of the church. Further excavations of both A.5 and A.6 should provide relevant evidence on this.

The distinction between Early Byzantine and Late Roman is important for an interpretation of the mosaic Floor A.3:13 south of the apse. The outer support wall (A.3:9) of the apse rested on this mosaic, so that use of the room which had the mosaic as its floor was connected stratigraphically with the Byzantine church. This room was excavated in A.3 and D.6, and in the portion of the balk between the two Squares. It was found to extend from 4.50 to 4.42 m. south of Wall A.3:9 and to have been 3.20 m. across (east-west). Byzantine sherds as well as other structures were found above the mosaic.

When Wall A.3:9 was removed, a foundation layer of small stones (A.3:42) was found, creating a level surface with a number of larger field stones (Wall A.3:49). In places where the mosaic was still intact at the edge of Wall A.3:9, one, two, or at the most five rows of mosaic tiles and a certain amount of cement setting for mosaic (A.3:43) were found continuing under Wall A.3:9 and over this foundation layer (see Pl. IV:B). Elsewhere in the room the mosaic floor was laid up to the walls, with a border pattern running around the geometric pattern which covered the central part of the floor. Plain white tesserae were set between the border pattern and the walls. Where Wall A.3:9 covered the edge of the mosaic there was no border pattern and one of the geometric pattern elements was cut off. The completion of the design and the addition of a border with the plain white tesserae beyond it would have brought the north edge of the mosaic at least 1.75 m. farther north in A.3, where the apse wall now stands. The foundation wall (A.3:42 and 49) had pottery readings of a few possible Early Byzantine, some

Early Byzantine/Late Roman, and the rest Late and Early Roman. It was above a hard *huwwar* surface (A.3:50) with consistent Early Roman pottery. An Early Roman field stone wall following the same orientation as Wall A.3:42 and 49 was set on bedrock below this surface. It would seem possible that the Early Byzantine church builders, here working again with a Late Roman (or pre-church Byzantine?) structure, laid their Wall A.3:9 on top of the structures and mosaic, breaking up the surface of the mosaic in the process of laying the heavy stones of Wall A.3:9. Red and black, as well as white, tesserae were found in the excavation of Wall A.3:42, and no *certainly* Early Byzantine pottery was found below the mosaic. A close study of the "possible" Early Byzantine pottery recorded from this sector may provide more conclusive evidence in this case.

Other, more easily identified Late Roman structures in A.3 were: the cobbled surface (A.3:34) in the west center of the Square (between Walls A.3:21, 22, 23); the lower course of Wall A.3:21 (Surface A.3:34 seemed to run over the upper edge of this lower course); and probably the lower courses of Walls A.3:22 and 23. The Roman dating of Wall A.4:12 has already been mentioned above. A blocking wall (A.2:45), closing the east entrance to the Roman quarry, can also be dated as Late Roman, and it would indicate that the quarry was in existence and open during that period.

Excavations in the northwest corner of A.1 uncovered the entrances to two caves below the upper surface of bedrock, both used in the Late Roman period. The east cave, located under the northeast corner of the Square, was evidently a natural cave, about 1.75 m. high and roughly 5.00 m. in diameter. It had been worked to the extent of a carefully constructed doorway which included a threshold, sill, and a bolt hole in one doorjamb; blocking walls built inside on the west, east, and south, and lamp niches cut into the walls. This cave seems to have been used for industrial work, in addition to possibly domestic occupation. A heavy, anvil-like stone (A.1:64) with a cone-shaped top and a cylindrically-shaped bottom, .50 m. high and .55 m. in diameter at the top, was located almost directly behind the doorway, 2.00 m. east from the entrance, in the

center of the cave. It was set in a ring of heavy stones with its top surface exposed (see Pl. III:B). A firepit was located 2.00 m. north of the "anvil" in the northwest corner of the cave. One occupation layer (A.1:66), immediately over bedrock and under a layer of Byzantine fill and wash (A.1:58), contained *huwwar* flecks, burned olive pits, bones, a few tesserae, and a small amount of mainly Late Roman and some possible Early Roman pottery. The firepit contained no apparent evidence of specific industrial use but included burned rock and dark brown soil, a long bone, some pottery, and some silt washed in from later outside seepage. It seems possible that the firepit and "anvil" stone were used for the sharpening or working of tools needed for stonecutting in the adjoining quarry, for the cutting of tesserae, or for related building projects.

The south cave, located under the south half of the Square and ca. 2.00-2.25 m. in height, was entered from another worked doorway almost adjoining but slightly to the south and west of the doorway into the east cave. This cave was not completely excavated, but, at the end of the 1971 season it seemed to be roughly Z-shaped with an entrance area extending about 2.00 m. south from the doorway to a blocking Wall A.1:70, an east-west strip extending approximately 4.00 m. to the east from a blocking wall (A.1:69) on the northwest, and a third strip extending south at least 3.50 m. from a blocking wall on the northeast. Two main occupation layers in this cave indicated domestic occupation as charcoal, *huwwar* lumps, tesserae, roof tile and *tabun* fragments were found along with mainly Late and Early Roman pottery as well as some Late Iron II sherds. The upper layer (Surface A.1:71) contained more Late than Early Roman pottery while in the lower layer (Surface A.1:73), directly on bedrock, Early Roman was dominant. Fill containing Early Byzantine pottery was found in this cave also. The cave was evidently in use in the Late Roman period and was left open at the end of that use. There was no sign of occupation in the Byzantine Period and Byzantine fill blocked both cave entrances completely, sealing the earlier occupation evidence.

Early Roman

The dominance of Early Roman pottery in the lower Surface

A.1:73 indicates that the south cave was used during the Early as well as the Late Roman periods. It seems probable that the Roman quarry was worked in the Early Roman period and remained open into the Late Roman, when the blocking wall was built. The quarry was cut into the bedrock of A.2 immediately to the west of A.1. A well-built doorway (A.1:52) in a wall of faced field stones was directly in front of the entrance into the east cave, and it opened into the quarry. The doorway on its east face consisted of an inverted V-shaped lintel set on side posts of heavy blocks of cut stone (Pl. III:A). On the west face a heavy horizontal stone lintel was set across these side posts. The height of the gate from the peak of the inverted V to the threshold was 1.52 m. The balk between A.1 and A.2 was removed, and the upper courses of Wall A.1:24 were taken out, together with a portion of the blocking wall of large boulders (A.2:45) which had been built against the west side of both Wall A.1:24 and its doorway.

The top of Wall A.1:24 was only slightly below ground surface and contamination by later sherds seems likely. A few possible Late Roman sherds were found in the first pail of pottery from the wall, and lower courses consistently contained Early Roman sherds as dominant with a few Late Iron II items. Tesserae and Nabataean fragments were also found. The wall was built on bedrock with the west threshold of the doorway cut from bedrock. The south gatepost was set in line with a quarried edge of bedrock in the quarry proper.

The date of the quarry seems, then, to be closely related to the date of the doorway and Wall A.1:24. In the first place, there seems to be no doubt that this area was a quarry. Smooth cut faces of bedrock at right angles, cuts made between blocks such that a rectangular building block could be removed, and quarry marks in the surfaces of the bedrock exposed do not leave doubt about this (Pl. II:A). There was no evidence for any one consistent occupation layer in the quarry. The uneven levels in the rock remaining after the quarrying were in themselves convincing evidence against this. The west balk of A.2, where the depth of the quarry appeared in section, showed evidence of natural and human deposits of *huwwar*, *huwwar* and

soil, rubble, soft brown soil with many stones, and a rockfall sloping toward the south. Various portions of the bedrock were covered by hard *huuwar* layers (A.2:22, 43, 46) with consistent Early Roman and earlier pottery, but in other sectors Late Roman sherds were found in the lowest *huuwar* level (Locs A.2:30 and 34). The quarry seems, then, to have been open and exposed to accidental and natural accumulations through the Late Roman period. A rockfall later covered these layers, and then a massive Early Byzantine fill was laid in. It was through this fill that the north exterior wall (A.2:12) of the church was cut.

The Late Roman wall blocking the gate clearly was built while the quarry was still open and after the building of Wall A.1:24 and its doorway. A subsidiary section was cut to bedrock into the blocking wall and its chink dirt (A.2:45 and 44) at the point where it blocked the doorway. A *huuwar* layer (A.2:46) on bedrock under A.2:44 contained only Early Roman and Late Iron II pottery. This suggests use of the doorway in the Early Roman period, as is consistent with the predominantly Early Roman dating of the excavated courses of Wall A.1:24. A tentative dating of events might include: (a) an Early Roman phase of domestic occupation in the south cave, quarrying operations in the adjoining limestone, and cutting and building of the doorway and Wall A.1:24 between the quarry and the caves; (b) one Late Roman phase of industrial use of the quarry, the doorway, the "anvil," and firepit in the east cave, and continued domestic use of the south cave; and (c) a second Late Roman phase when the quarry was still open, but incorporating the building of a wall blocking access to the caves. If this is true, it would seem to represent the only evidence thus far in Area A for two phases (or at least one phase long enough to show a change of function) within the Late Roman period.

Other portions where Early Roman levels were reached in Area A all gave evidence of at least two phases of Early Roman occupation. In A.1 an occupation layer (A.1:35) on bedrock in the center of the Square, a cobbled surface (A.1:38 and 46) built on leveling fill laid on bedrock just to the north and west of this, and an oval rock bin construction (A.1:68) set on bed-

rock slightly to the southwest with no sign of a foundation trench represented the earlier phase. The north-south Wall A.1:39, west of Surface A.1:38, and a pit above Surface A.1:35 with at least four distinguishable layers of Early Roman occupational debris (A.1:31, 32, 34) represented the later phase.

In A.3, directly south of A.1, three walls of field stones built on bedrock (A.3:54, 57, 62) and the occupation layer (A.3:55) associated with and east of Wall A.3:54 represented the earlier phase. Surface A.3:55 seemed to continue under Early Byzantine Walls A.3:5 and 9 and Late Roman Wall A.3:26 into A.1 at the same level, connecting the stratigraphy of the two Squares in this period. Occupation Layers A.3:26 (above Surface A.3:55) and A.3:50 (above Wall A.3:57), with their associated fill layers (A.3:27, 28, 51, 58, 59), represented the later phase.

In A.4, the north-south Wall A.4:34, built on bedrock, and probably also the occupational layers (A.4:31, 32, 33) on bedrock represented the earlier phase, and Early Roman fill Layers A.4:27, 28, and 30, running over Wall A.4:34, belonged to the later phase. Fill Layers A.4:38, 39, and 40, south of Wall A.4:12, were probably equivalent to A.4:27, 28, and 30 to the north, and belonged to this later phase.

One complex which may have belonged to the early phase of the Early Roman period was the pair of cisterns uncovered in A.5. Only one of the cisterns was excavated by the end of this season, and that partially. Two layers of fill were distinguished in Cistern A.5:62, which was round, pear-shaped, and had a flat bottom and a cylindrical neck. Its depth was about 1.60 m., and it connected about half-way down with a second cistern (A.5:61) to the east. The upper layer of Cistern A.5:62 contained one Late Roman sherd, probably contamination from the Late Roman foundation trench for Wall A.5:10. This trench cut through the Early Roman Layer A.5:34 which sealed the mouths of the cisterns. Other pottery in this upper layer (A.5:63) was Early Roman and Late Iron II, and it would seem to reflect the use of the cistern in the early phase of Early Roman, before the accumulation of the destruction Layers A.5:35 and 36. The lower layer contained Early Roman and at least one, and probably other, Late Hellenistic sherds. Further

excavations may suggest that these cisterns were cut in the Late Hellenistic period, or even in Late Iron II, and were simply reused in Early Roman occupation. In any case, no use after the Early Roman period seemed to be indicated.

Late Hellenistic

Some pottery identified as Late Hellenistic was found in various loci of A.1, A.2, A.4, and A.5. This was rare, however, compared to all other ceramic horizons. A positive identification of Late Hellenistic pottery was made in only eight groups of mixed sherds. No structures from this period were identified.

Iron II

Late Iron II sherds were found frequently in large numbers, and almost always in groups of mixed pottery in all Squares of Area A. The one locus containing only Late Iron II sherds was a very small fill locus on bedrock under the Early Roman occupation Layer A.3:55, and this locus contained a total of only three sherds. No structures could be diagnosed from this period.

Conclusion

The 1971 excavations in Area A tended, then, to confirm the plan of the Byzantine church as suggested in 1968. No evidence was found to challenge the identification of the building as a church, and this identification seems highly probable. The underlying pre-church levels were investigated more fully, and this investigation is illustrated by the accompanying Plan of Byzantine and Roman structures (Fig. 2). A Roman quarry was positively identified and further evidence of a monumental Roman building may well be found on the site, as the Corinthian capital reused as a building block in the Early Byzantine apse suggests. Completion of work in A.5 and A.6, together with further excavation to the west and south of the present Area A should provide more evidence for the extent of the Byzantine church and its relation to earlier Roman structures.