

AREAS E, F, and G.10

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In 1974, exploration of tombs that had been begun in 1971, was continued. In Area F, on the southwest slope of Tell Ḥesbân, five possible tomb sites were located, taking the presence of marks in the rock face or the existence of caves under overhanging ledges as cues. These were designated Squares 19 to 23. In the course of clearing these caves some evidence of human or animal occupation was noted, but no trace of human burial was found. Ceramic evidence suggested that primary utilization of the caves surrounding the *tell* were by Byzantine and Ayyūbid/Mamlūk occupants, probably as occasional shelters or animal pens.

In Area E, on the east flanks of the hills immediately to the west-southwest of the *tell*, four caves and tombs were excavated and explored in anticipation of finding evidence of burial use.

Tomb E.2

The first of these, a chamber off Tomb E.2, which had been investigated in the 1971 season and had been thought worthy of further study, was entered and partly cleared. A horizontal shaft was dug westward to ascertain whether there might have been a larger cave in the vicinity of this "side chamber." No evidence of occupation was found beyond a few Roman and Byzantine sherds which were thought to have been washed in by water erosion.

Tomb E.4

Tomb E.4 had an entrance that had been cut northward into the rock face. Investigators found it to be a natural cave that had been filled with debris from hillside water runoff.

Tomb E.5

In anticipation of a tomb here a number was cut for identification into the rock face at the beginning of excavation, but it turned out not to have any underground cavity and digging was soon terminated.

Tomb E.6

Tomb E.6 had not been disturbed by tomb robbers, at least in recent times. Its presence was detected through a cave-in of the roof during the previous winter's rains. A probe on the hillside came upon an entrance that had been carved westward into the rocky substratum. A rectangular stone slab had been placed in the entryway to block it shut. Sitting to the left of the doorway was a Herodian-type Early Roman lamp with two nozzles and a high central column (Pl. XVI:E). Past the entryway the excavators found a single-locus "Type 2" tomb.¹ No human bones were found in this tomb, nor any grave goods except for a few Byzantine sherds and two Early Roman pots. The pots contained soil like that of the rest of the tomb.

The association of these three slightly broken Roman ceramic objects—the double-nozzled lamp and the two cooking pots—posed some interesting problems. According to John Reeves, who was one of the excavators, and who searched the literature for references to other double-nozzled lamps, no other lamp of this type with a secure provenance has been reported. Though there are some uncertainties as to the place of its manufacture, its date seemed quite certainly to be Early Roman. The style and manufacture of the two pots also seemed to place them in the Early Roman period. That they should be resting on a surface dated by some Byzantine sherds seemed to indicate either that the tomb was disturbed in Byzantine times or that this was an instance of archaism, in which Byzantine-age people held these specimens of old pottery in special regard when they put them in the tomb.

¹ S. Douglas Waterhouse, "Heshbon 1971: Areas E and F," *AUSS* 11 (1973): 120.

Another interesting aspect of the tomb and its contents was the question of their function. Why would a tomb have these three objects and yet no skeletal remains? Possibly the pots held ashes when they were put into the chamber, but were filled with dirt later from water seepage which had resulted in the filling in of the entire tomb. If so, the presence of the ashes with the dirt went unnoticed when the pots were emptied. If the pots held ashes from the cremation of a human being there is abundant precedent for the practice in Early Roman culture. In Roman times cremation was almost universally practiced in the Empire; but around the turn of the era a change of attitude favoring burial came about. Nock examined a number of possible explanations for the change, and finally concluded:

It was a change of fashion. . . . We mean the habits of the rich, which gradually permeated the classes below them. Burial seems to have made its appeal to them because of itself in the form of the use of the sarcophagus. This was expensive and gratified the instinct for ostentation. The richest could build mausolea. Many whose resources would not suffice for that could afford sarcophagi, which might well appear a more solid and adequate way of paying the last honors to the dead. . . . The sarcophagus reestablished the popularity of burial, and burial then came into its own right to be the dominant custom of the poor.²

Nock also noted an instance in which a cinerary urn had been found with a lamp and without ashes in it, at a cemetery in Harit, or Theadelphia.³

Tomb G.10

About two kilometers northwest of Tell Heshbân is a limestone outcropping which was recommended to us as a possible tomb site by Helmi Musa, a villager working with the expedition. He pointed out a half-exposed disk of stone which closely resembled the slab that closed the opening to "Rolling Stone Tomb" F.1, which had been excavated in 1971. G.10 turned out to be another of this type, and only the second example to be found in Jordan.

² Arthur Darby Nock, "Cremation and Burial in the Roman Empire," *HTR* 25 (1932): 321-359.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

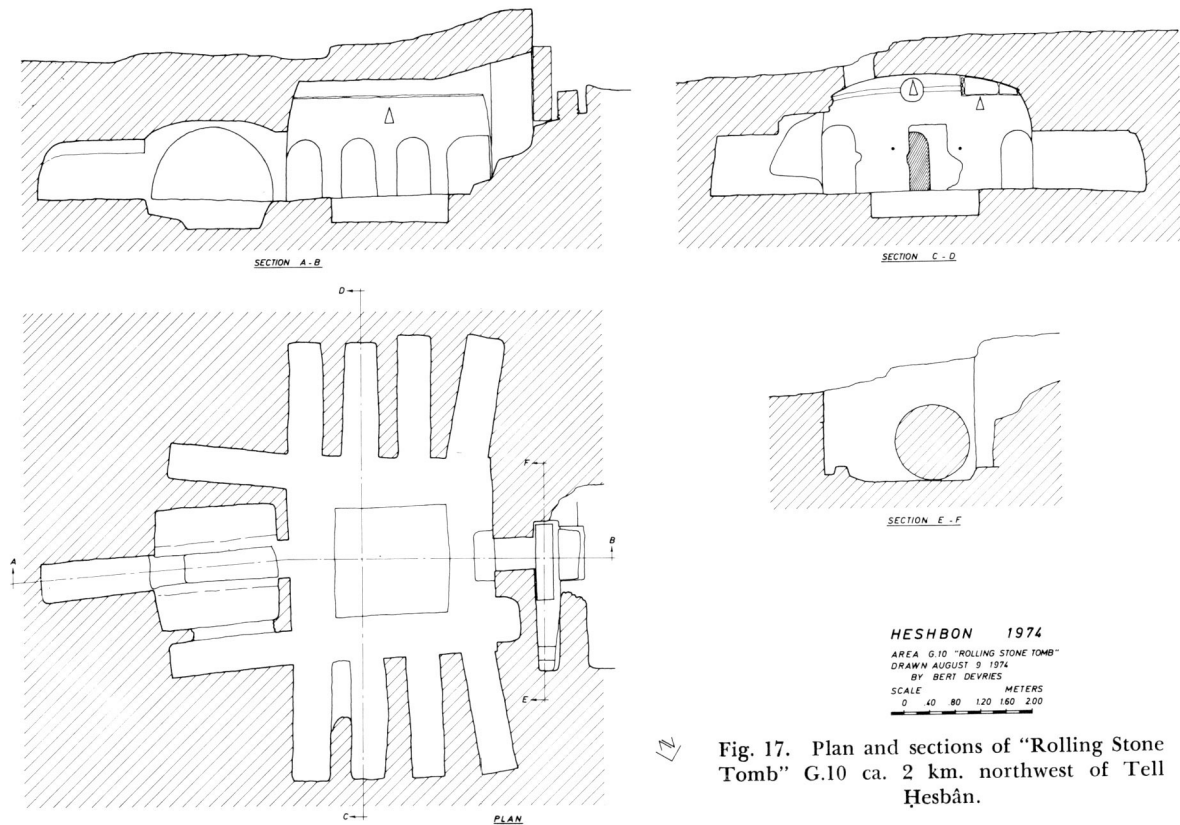


Fig. 17. Plan and sections of "Rolling Stone Tomb" G.10 ca. 2 km. northwest of Tell Heshbân.

Tomb G.10 had an access hole in the roof about 1 m. wide by 3.5 m. long, apparently produced by recent tomb robbers. It was used as access for our excavation work, leaving the door *in situ* for its value as an exhibit of tomb door construction and placement. This tomb corresponded to Waterhouse's Types 1 and 3, for it had a central chamber and four loculi radiating out from the north and south walls, and three more from the east wall. One of those in the east wall had two arcosolia flanking it and an additional loculus attached to its east end (see Fig. 17). A square pit, serving apparently as a sump, occupied the center of the chamber floor as in Tomb F.1.⁴

It was unfortunate that the tomb had been visited by grave robbers. Bodies and grave goods had originally been placed in all the loculi in Early Roman times, and dirt had apparently been brought in from the surrounding land to cover the bodies. While robbers had not entered through the rolling stone doorway—for the sherds in its track were all from Roman times—they had taken advantage of the break in the roof to rifle the contents and rake the soil from the end of each loculus to the central chamber. Thus no bones were articulated and no grave goods were found associated *in situ* with them. In the process of excavating the mound of soil in the central chamber, however, a fragment of a Herodian lamp, a faience bead, and bones from several persons (including 9 left radii) were recovered. These individuals had ranged from infants to arthritic aged persons and included both males and females.

As the loculi were excavated, additional scattered grave goods came to light: a gold earring, a bronze fibula, a Nabataean (Rabbel II, A.D. 71-106) coin, a fragment of a pin, an iron nail, and many fragments of glass (Pl. IX:B). An unexploded hand grenade was possible evidence for the way in which modern tomb robbers do their work. Scattered bones from more individuals were found.

⁴ Waterhouse, "Areas E and F," p. 115.

As the tomb was cleared of its contents the architectural style of the interior became more visible, and evidence of considerable care in its workmanship was indicated by the presence of three wall niches for lamps and a decorative band of carving on the walls near the ceiling.

In the process of excavating outside in front of the tomb and the doorway, more objects were found, including three Herodian lamps and a spindle whorl. The door was provided with a rock base slot in which to roll, and a slot had been cut into the rock left of the doorway to accommodate the stone when it was rolled away from the opening (Pl. IX:A).