AREA G.11, 16, 17, 18

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AREA G.11

Area G.11 was opened as a 3.00 m. x 3.00 m. Square on the north slope of Tell Ḥesbân, northeast of Area C and overlooking the Wadi el-Majarr. The sounding was intended to investigate the stratigraphic sequence on this slope. Visible over much of the ground surface of the north slope was a complex network of architectural features. These features included several circular depressions, which were surrounded by walls, and also other architectural or terrace walls. The walls were poorly preserved throughout, but their remains did indicate that their original construction had been chiefly of uncut or only roughly cut boulders. One of the objectives governing the specific orientation of the Square was the investigation and dating of such collapsed walls, some of which appeared to be at right angles to one another. Thus the south balk of G.11 was set to bisect an east-west wall and the west balk was set to bisect an adjoining north-south wall. Another factor involved in choosing the location was that the ground surface was not sunken, which was interpreted as indicating a lessened probability of intersecting a cistern.

The stratigraphy associated wtih Wall G.11:9 necessitated the subsequent expansion of the Square northward by 1.00 m. thus increasing the overall dimensions to 3.00 m. east to west and 4.00 m. north to south. This Square was excavated from 21 June to 19 July.

Strata II-III: Mamlūk (ca. A.D. 1260-1456)

Description: Soil Layer G.11:1, 2, and 16 extended across the entire Square and lay over a *terra rossa* soil layer (G.11:3, 4, and 17). The earth matrix consisted of top soil and dry, crumbly gray earth mixed with pebbles of *huwwar* and limestone, and with cobbles and boulders of limestone as well. This rock

rubble constituted approximately 50 percent of the matrix. The top levels ranged from 886.48 m. to 885.66 m. and the bottom levels ranged from 885.61 m. to 885.65 m. The average depth was 0.30 m.

Terra rossa soil Layer G.11:3, 4, and 17 extended across the entire Square and lay over soil Layer G.11:5 and foundation Trench G.11:20. The earth matrix consisted of *terra rossa* soil of varying degrees of compaction mixed with localized patches of loose brown soil (except in the central and eastern portions) and rock rubble. The latter included pebbles, cobbles, and boulders of limestone as well as *huwwar* chips and totaled approximately 50 percent of the entire matrix. The average depth was 0.30 m.

Foundation Trench G.11:20 and 25a was located in the northeast corner of the Square. It measured at maximum 1.30 m. east to west x 1.40 m. north to south. To the south it met the north face of Wall G.11:9 and sediment Layer G.11:18 and 19a. The earth matrix of the upper portion consisted of loose, granular gray soil mixed with flecks of charcoal and a few small patches of compacted *terra rossa* soil. The lower portion of the trench was characterized by a loose fill of dark gray granular soil mixed with small and medium sized cobbles of limestone and numerous air pockets where the soft soil had subsided. The rock rubble constituted approximately 50 percent of the total matrix. Clustered in the corner where the north and east balks met were several cut blocks of stone tightly wedged together. These stones were part of the upper portion of a cistern structure. The top level was 885.16 m. and the bottom levels ranged from 884.20 m. to 883.51 m. The average depth was 0.90 m.

Cistern G.11:26, located in the extreme northeast corner of the Square, lay beyond the foundation Trench G.11:20 and 25a. Only a few centimeters of this structure were actually within the Square and therefore it remained unexcavated. Its structure included a vertical corridor which had been cut into limestone bedrock. The top of the bedrock scarp had been built up with stone walls and a roof. Plaster had been applied over the interior face of the shaft.

A soil layer (G.11:58, 11, 13, 18, and 19a) was located across the entire Square except in the northeast corner. It lay over soil layers (G.11:12, 14, and 19b) and Wall G.11:9. In the northeast corner it was cut by foundation Trench G.11:20. The earth matrix consisted of lightly compacted granular brown soil mixed with rock rubble which constituted approximately 65 percent of the total matrix and included pebbles of limestone and *huwwar,* and cobbles and uncut chunks of limestone. The average depth was 0.75 m.

Soil Layer G.11:19b lay in the northwest corner of the Square over *terra rossa* soil Layer G.11:21a. It measured 2.10 m. east to west x 1.50 m. north to south and touched the north and west balks. To the south it met the north face of Wall G.11:9 and on the east it was cut by foundation Trench G.11:20. The earth matrix consisted of light brown granular soil mixed with patches of dark brown granular soil and compacted *huwwar.* A few small pebbles of limestone were also present.

Terra rossa soil Layer G.11:21a was located in the northwest corner of the Square and lay over *terra rossa* soil Layer G.11:21b. To the south it met the north face of Wall G.11:9 and on the east it was cut by foundation Trench G.11:20. The earth matrix consisted of firmly compacted *terra rossa* soil mixed with *huwwar* chips and small to medium-sized limestone cobbles. The latter

were clustered along the north face of Wall G.11:9 where the *terra rossa* soil was less compacted. The average depth was 0.10 m.

The dating of these loci to the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk Strata II-III was based upon the latest sherds in the ceramic assemblages.

Interpretation: Soil Layer G.11: 1, 2, and 16 contained a few scraps of metal but no post-Ayyūbid/Mamlūk pottery. As described above, the remains of a network of walls were intercepted in order to date and identify associated foundation trenches and surfaces. No such features were identified as associated with the "walls," one of which (extending parallel and adjacent to the west balk) did not appear to have been a wall but a cluster of stones. The other (extending parallel and adjacent to the south balk) was superficially constructed. These late walls seemed to represent a subphase of Ayyūbid/Mamlūk occupation, and on the north side of the *tell* this was clearly the last phase of building to have been initiated. The lack of domestic artifacts and features indicated that these late walls may have been terrace walls for soil retention or boundary walls marking property division.

Terra rossa soil Layer G.11: 3, 4, and 17 and soil Layer G.11: 1, 2, and 16 represented accumulation without occupation or internal cultural stratigraphy. Since many boulders were embedded in both these layers simultaneously it appears that the process of collapse and sloping downward of destruction debris had been a natural process responsible for a large amount of deposition prior to the construction of the late walls.

Foundation Trench G.11:20, 25a had been cut from the top level of soil Layer G.11:5-8, 11, 13, 18, and 19a for the construction of Cistern G.11:26. Earth had been hollowed out in order to build the cistern's upper walls and roof, and after that had been completed the remaining space was backfilled with rock rubble and soil. It seemed that after the cistern was completed, *terra rossa* soil Layer G.11: 3, 4, and 17 formed over it. However, the limited exposure of Cistern G.11:26 does not lend itself to conclusive evidence, and it remains possible that in the process of the construction of the cistern the trench was cut out from under

soil Layer G.11:3, 4, and 17. Pottery from both within the trench and the top of the soil pile in the cistern was dated Ayyūbid/Mamlūk indicating that both the construction of the cistern and its latest phase of abandonment were in that period. Although even on the basis of stratigraphy alone Cistern G.11:26 seems to have been a subphase of the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period, no more precise dating could be given for it.

Soil Layer G.11:5-8, 11, 13, 18, and 19a represented natural accumulation during the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period. This massive deposition of rock rubble and sediment fill must have resulted from the erosion downward of large amounts of destruction debris from abandoned structures and/or terrace walls farther up the slope. This debris accumulated against the south face of the bedrock scarp (G.11:10) and spilled over it and Wall G.11:9 as it sloped down the *tell* northward. It appears that some sorting took place, for though there were a few boulders scattered over Wall G.11:9 there were none north of it. Both *terra rossa* soil Layer G.11:21a and soil Layer G.11:19b represented soil accumulated during the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period, but they were the result of natural erosion processes.

Stratum VI: Umayyad (ca. A.D. 661-750)

Description: Terra rossa soil Layer G.11:21b and 22 was located in the northwest portion of the Square and lay over soil Layer 23a. It measured 2.10 m. east to west x 1.10 m. north to south and touched the north and west balks. On the south it met the north face of Wall G.11:9 and on the east it was cut by foundation Trench G.11:20. The earth matrix was characterized by compacted *terra rossa* soil mixed with a few small cobbles and pebbles of limestone, flecks of charcoal, and chips of *huwwar*. Localized along a short portion of the north face of Wall G.11:9 was a patch of lightly compacted *terra rossa* soil mixed with numerous limestone cobbles. Towards the northwest corner of the Square the *terra rossa* soil became increasingly compacted. The top level was 884.62 m. and the average depth was 0.30 m.

Soil Layer G.11:23a was located in the northwest portion of the Square and lay over *terra rossa* soil Layer G.11:23b. It measured 2.40 m. east to west x 1.40 m. north to south and touched the north and west balks. On the south it met the north face of Wall G.11:9 and on the east it was cut by foundation Trench G.11:25a. The earth matrix consisted of uncompacted granular gray soil mixed with pebbles and small cobbles of *huwwar* and limestone. The top

levels ranged from 884.44 m. to 884.23 m. The depth ranged from 0.05 m. to 0.25 m.

The dating of these layers to Umayyad Stratum VI was based upon the latest sherds in the ceramic assemblage.

Interpretation: Though the soil layers which were deposited in this stratum had no direct cultural significance but were rather natural accumulations of sediment and debris, they do attest Umayyad occupation elsewhere on the *tell* by the pottery which was incorporated into these layers during deposition. This Umayyad pottery is present only north of Wall G.11:9. The wall probably continued to function as a retaining wall in this period.

Stratum VII: Late Byzantine (ca. A.D. 614-661)

Description: A *terra rossa* soil Layer (Locus G.11:23b) lay in the northwest portion of the Square over *terra rossa* soil Layer G.11:23c. It measured 2.40 m. east to west x 1.40 m. north to south and touched both the north and west balks. On the south it met the north face of Wall G.11:9 and on the east it had been cut by foundation Trench G.11:25a. The earth matrix consisted of compacted *terra rossa* soil interspersed with patches of crumbly brown soil and pebbles of limestone and *huwwar*.

This layer was dated to the Late Byzantine Stratum VII on the basis of the latest sherds in the ceramic assemblage.

Interpretation: No associated architectural or occupational features existed in relationship to this layer except for Wall G.11:9 against which this soil accumulated. Thus it appeared that this deposition was without cultural stratigraphic significance, although Wall G.11:9 may have continued in use in this stratum. There was no specifically Late Byzantine material south of bedrock Scarp G.11:10.

Stratum VIII: Byzantine (ca. A.D. 450-614)

Description: Soil Layer G.11:27 was a thin fill of earth which lay between the stones of Wall G.11:9. The matrix consisted of granular brown soil mixed with numerous limestone cobbles which were particularly frequent as fill between the south face of Wall G.11:9 and bedrock Scarp G.11:10.

Wall G.11:9 extended from the east to the west balk and ran parallel to the north balk at a distance of 1.40 m. from it. It continued into both those balks and ranged from 0.85 m. to 0.43 m. wide. Along its north face several layers had accumulated and along its south face it ran parallel and adjacent to bedrock Scarp G.11:10, a vertical bank of limestone. At maximum preservation at the east balk, five courses of stones were extant. Due to variation in

the size of the stones the number of courses was not consistent but at no point was the wall more than one row wide. Towards the central portion of the wall the average number of surviving courses was three. The stones were of limestone and varied in shape from cut blocks whose average measurement was 0.50 m. x 0.40 m. to an uncut cyclopean boulder which was considerably larger and spanned the same vertical extent as four or five courses of stones elsewhere along the wall. The stones of the founding course had been set unevenly at different levels. The eastern portion had been founded upon soil Layer G.11:25b and the central and western portions had been set upon *terra rossa* soil Layer G.11:23c. The top levels ranged from 885.49 m. to 885.12 m. and the average bottom level was 884.30 m.

Soil Layer G.11:25b was a localized patch of loose granular brown soil upon which the eastern portion of Wall G.11:9 had been set. Since it was only partially excavated, precise measurements are not available. This layer met foundation Trench G.11:23c and lay upon bedrock Scarp G.11:10 between Wall G.11:9 and the north balk. To the south it extended beneath Wall G.11:9 and to the east it was cut by foundation Trench G.11:25a. The earth matrix consisted of compacted *terra rossa* soil mixed with pebbles of limestone and *huwwar*. The bottom level was 883.59 m. The average depth was 0.50 m.

A soil layer (G.11:12, 14, and 15) extended across the southern half of the Square between the south balk and bedrock Scarp G.11:10. The earth matrix consisted of very loose granular brown soil mixed with rock rubble. The top level was 884.70 m. and the average depth was 0.75 m.

The dating of loci within this stratum was based upon the latest sherds in the ceramic assemblage which in Loci G.11:15 and 25b were possibly Late Byzantine I.

Interpretation: Wall G.11:9 was founded upon two distinct types of soil deposit, had no foundation trench and no associated surface to promote the conclusion that this was part of a domestic unit. Its irregular construction, including uneven founding levels, its position against bedrock Scarp G.11:10 and its orientation east-west which follows the contours of the *tell* all suggested that it may have been a terrace wall of some sort. The deposition south of the bedrock scarp implied, however, that the bulk of the debris filled up against the scarp during Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period. However, this may have been an extensive retainer wall in which case it may have served its purpose more directly elsewhere.

Soil Layer G.11:25b may have been a localized accumulation of destruction debris before it was incorporated into the foundation of Wall G.11:9.

Terra rossa soil Layer G.11:23c accumulated upon bedrock

and though not devoid of cultural remains it did not appear to have any cultural function until Wall G.11:9 was founded upon it.

The soil layer (Loci G.11:12, 14, and 15) south of the plunging bedrock Scarp G.11:10 was in all physical respects identical to the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk soil layers which lay over it, but in it a shaft from Ayyūbid/Mamlūk to Byzantine and Iron Age pottery occurred. This unstratified destruction debris appears to have accumulated through the erosion downhill of collapsed architectural features. Although this may have been a steady process, the pottery reflects principally two periods: Ayyūbid/Mamlūk and Byzantine, which in turn reflect the dominant occupation periods on this part of the *tell.*

AREA G.16

Area G.16, a sounding, was located on a steep slope near the base of the east side of Tell Ḥesbân overlooking the Madaba Road. The Square measured 4.00 m. east to west x 2.00 m. north to south and was opened for the purpose of investigating the sequence of occupation evidence on this slope. In previous seasons it had not been excavated because of problems of land ownership. Excavation was carried out from 14 July to 6 August.

Strata II-III: Mamlūk (ca. A.D. 1260-1456)

Description: Soil Layer G.16:1 lay above soil Layer G.16:7b, 8, 9, and 11 and *terra rossa* soil Layer G.16:7a and extended throughout the Square. The earth matrix consisted of compacted gray-brown granular soil mixed with pebbles and cobbles of limestone and flint. A few localized patches of *terra rossa* soil were present. Very little occupational debris was included in the earth matrix. The average depth was 0.75 m.

This layer was dated to the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period on the basis of the latest sherds in the ceramic assemblage.

Interpretation: This massive but homogeneous layer was the accumulation of soil which had eroded down the *tell* during the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period. This deposit was free of architectural or destruction debris, indicating that the upper slope of the east side of the *tell* may not have been occupied in the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period.

Stratum VII: Late Byzantine (ca. A.D. 614-661)

Description: The Late Byzantine Stratum VII in Area G.16 comprised several soil layers and two walls between which a deep probe was excavated.

Terra rossa soil Layer G.16:7a lay over Locus G.16:7b throughout the Square except to the east, where it met soil Layer G.16:6. The earth matrix consisted of compacted *terra rossa* soil mixed with pebbles of limestone and flint. The average depth of excavation was 0.10 m.

A soil layer (G.16:7b, 8, 9, and 11) lay over soil Layers G.16:12 and 17 as well as Walls G.16:10 and 13 and covered the entire Square. This consisted of yellowish brown granular soil. It was lightly compacted and mixed with pebbles and cobbles of flint and limestone toward the top but was well compacted in the bottom portion where it was mixed with rock rubble, including limestone boulders. Depth ranged from 0.64-0.70 m.

Terra rossa soil Layer G.16:12 lay over soil Layer G.16:14 and the east portion of the top of Wall G.16:13. The earth matrix consisted of tightly compacted *terra rossa* soil free of inclusions. The top level was 864.40 m. and the bottom level was 864.15 m. The average depth was 0.25 m.

Soil Layer G.16:14 covered the Square from the east face of Wall G.16:13 to the east balk. The earth matrix consisted of lightly compacted brown soil mixed with rock rubble, including pebbles and cobbles of limestone and small patches of *terra rossa* soil. The lower portion of the layer contained a greater percentage of *terra rossa* soil. The average depth was 0.20 m.

Wall G.16:13, parallel to Wall G.16:10, extended from the north to the south balks and lay parallel to the east balk 1.40 m. from it. Its width ranged from 0.50 to 1.00 m. Though of rubble construction, the wall was two courses high and two rows wide. It consisted of large boulders and cobbles of both limestone and flint which were founded upon *terra rossa* soil Layer G.16:15, 17, and 18. The top level was 864.46 m. and the bottom level was 863.98 m.

Wall G.16:10 extended from the north to the south balk and lay parallel to the west balk 0.30 m. from it. The wall, one course high and one row (0.50 m.) wide, consisted of five uncut limestone boulders which had been laid side by side upon the *terra rossa* soil layer G.16:15, 17, and 18. The top level was 864.46 m. and the bottom level was 863.98 m.

Terra rossa soil Layer G.16:15, 17, and 18 extended both east of Wall G.16:13 the the east balk and between and beneath Walls G.16:10 and 13 where it lay over cobble Layer G.16:19 and 20. The earth matrix consisted of tightly compacted *terra rossa* soil mixed with pebbles and a few small cobbles of limestone and *huwwar*. The average depth of this layer was 0.45 m.

The earth matrix of cobble Layer G.16:19 and 20 consisted of approximately 70 percent small to medium-sized limestone cobbles mixed with decomposed limestone and loose granular yellowish brown soil. Numerous air pockets where the soft soil had subsided were scattered throughout.

The loci discussed above were dated to the Late Byzantine Stratum VII on the basis of the latest sherds in their ceramic assemblages.

Interpretation: Cobble Layer G.16:19 and 20 was a deep fill of destruction debris for which the process of accumulation was accomplished without the formation of any internal stratigraphy.

No integral relationships between this debris and any other features were exhibited from its limited exposure within the Area. The nature of this destruction debris does indicate however that a subphase of occupation within this stratum may be identified if pursued further. The *terra rossa* soil layer G.16:15, 17 and 18) which had formed over this fill also indicated that no direct occupation existed here at the time that it was formed. Walls G.16:10 and 13 were constructed on the *terra rossa* soil superficially, without foundation trenches. No associated floors or surfaces were identified. The relationship of these walls to one another was vague. They were found at the same level, in a similar manner, and upon the same soil horizon, all of which leaves open the possibility that they were used either as terrace walls (possibly to retain eroding soil) or property markers, but conclusive evidence is lacking. The thick layer which was deposited over the walls appears to have accumulated as the result of soil eroding down the *tell.* Also subsequent to the use of the walls and the abandonment of this part of the *tell,* was the formation of *terra rossa* soil Layers G.16:12 and 7A over Wall G.16:13 and throughout the Square. In summary, the evidence suggested accumulations by natural processes of erosion with some possible efforts toward erosion control.

AREA G.17

Area G.17 was located on nearly level ground at the base of Tell Ḥesbân below its eastern slope. This Square was a small 2.00 m. square probe opened in order to detect a reported mosaic floor which had been discovered by a villager who then refilled the post hole which he had been digging. The second objective was to investigate this reported mosaic's relationship to any datable architectural feature and determine what type of structure had been involved. This Square was excavated from 21 July to 28 July.

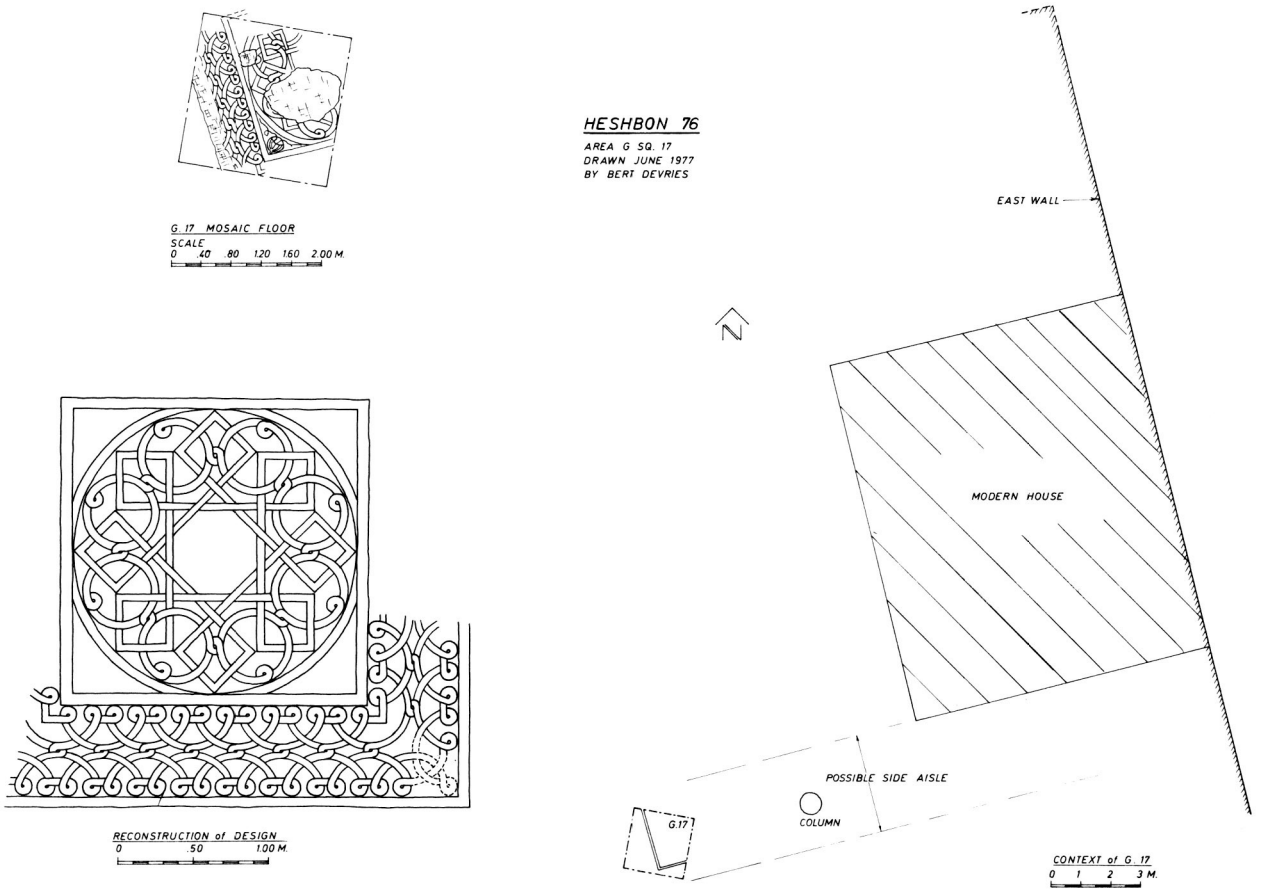

Fig. 16. Plan of G.17 mosaic floor, including its context and reconstruction.

Stratum I: Modern (1870-)

Description: This period was represented by one pit (G.17:1), which was located in the southeast corner of the Square where it touched both the east and south balks and lay over mosaic Floor G.17:2. It measured 0.50 m. east to west and 0.95 m. north to south and was 0.75 m. deep. The earth matrix consisted of granular brown soil mixed with plaster, pebbles of limestone, tesserae and modern trash including a shoe and several metal cans. The top level was 800.15 m. and the bottom level was 799.39 m.

Interpretation: Pit G.17:1 appears to have been a post hole dug within the last decade and back-filled with modern trash.

Stratum II: Late Mamlūk (ca. A.D. 1400-1456)

This period was represented by topsoil and a layer of soil directly beneath it.

Description: Soil Layer G.17:3 was located across the entire Square except in the southeast corner where it was cut by Pit G.17:1. It measured an average of 0.20 m. deep. The matrix consisted of dry gray top soil in the upper portion and *terra rossa* soil mixed with patches of compacted brown soil, patches of loose brown soil, and small cobbles of limestone. The top levels ranged from 800.41 m. to 800.19 m. and the bottom levels ranged from 800.07 m. to 799.92 m. The dating of this locus to Stratum II was based upon the latest sherds in the ceramic assemblage.

Interpretation: This layer represented postoccupational deposition of soil, possibly from the erosion of sediment down the east slope of the *tell*. There was no direct Late Mamlūk occupation at this location, but Ayyūbid/Mamlūk pottery attested that the soil accumulation did occur during this period or later.

Stratum VII: Late Byzantine (A.D. 614-661) or Stratum VIII: Byzantine (ca. A.D. 450-614)

This stratum consisted of a Byzantine accumulation including different soil layers deposited over a mosaic which was located but not lifted.

Description: A soil layer (G.17:4, 5, 6, and 9) was located over the entire Square except in the southeast corner. It lay over mosaic Floor G.17:2 and soil Layers G.17:7 and 8. It was 0.60 m. deep. In the southeast corner of the Square it was cut by Pit G.17:1. The earth matrix consisted of compacted brown soil mixed with cobbles, pebbles and limestone. The top level was 800.00 m. and the bottom level was 799.39 m.

Soil Layer G.17:8 was located in the northwest corner of the Square and lay over mosaic Floor G.17:2. It measured 0.95 m. east to west x 0.80 m. north to south and was 0.27 m. deep. To the south it met soil Layer G.17:9 and 6, and to the east it met soil Layer G.17:7. The earth matrix consisted of moderately compacted reddish-brown soil mixed with cobbles and pebbles of limestone. The top level was 799.61 m. and the bottom level was 799.34 m.

Soil Layer G.17:7 was located in the northeast corner of the Square and lay over mosaic Floor G.17:2. It measured 0.89 m. east to west x 0.75 m. north to south and was 0.30 m. deep. To the west it met soil Loci G.17:6, 9, and 8. On the south it was cut by Pit G.17:1. The earth matrix consisted of rock rubble including small limestone cobbles and boulders mixed with loose brown soil. Of the boulders four or five had been cut to square shapes measuring on the average 0.40 m. x 0.35 m., and one face of one of these cut blocks had plaster adhering to it. Large pebble-sized fragments of plaster were mixed with the soil. The top level was 799.69 m. and the bottom level was 799.39 m.

Mosaic G.17:2 extended into all four balks. The original floor had been laid with small multicolored tesserae set in a geometric pattern. Several patches of repair were set with larger, plain white tesserae. In a few places the mosaic had broken away altogether. The top level was 799.39 m.

These loci were dated to within the scope of Stratum VII and Stratum VIII on the basis of the latest sherds in the ceramic repertoire.

Interpretation: Soil Layer G.17:7 appeared to have been the result of architectural collapse, possibly from the ruin of a structure associated with the mosaic floor. The other sediment and debris layers seemed to be naturally accumulated subsequent to the abandonment of the building.

Mosaic Floor G.17:2 clearly extended into all of the balks of the Area and probably functioned as the floor of a church or some other structure. No architectural features associated with the mosaic were intercepted within the Area. The date of the mosaic remained tentative as it was not lifted and pottery from the layer above indicated that either a Stratum VII or Stratum VIII date for the material was possible. Therefore mosaic Floor G.17:2 could be dated to either of these Strata or even earlier.

AREA G.18

Area G.18 was located next to a building known to the villagers as the "Qasr," a turn-of-the-century structure which stands in a central position in the modern village of Ḥesbân. The objective was to investigate and date a wall upon which the northwestern corner of the Qasr had been built. An L-shaped trench was

oriented so as to intercept on its short axis the foundation trench of the earlier wall (G.18:1) and on its long axis another wall (G.18:2) perpendicular to the first wall. The trench measured 6.00 m. north to south x 1.00 m. east to west on its long axis and 2.25 m. east to west x 1.00 m. north to south on its short axis. Modern drainage pipes extending through the northern portion of the trench halted plans for excavation north of Wall G.18:2. Excavation south of Wall G.18:2 was terminated prematurely when modern burials were discovered. Consequently the investigation of Wall G.18:2 was suspended.

Because of the descriptive problems created by an L-shaped trench, three sectors were identified to facilitate clarity in recording. Sector I included the short axis from Wall G.18:1 to the junction with the long axis and measured 1.25 m. long x 1.00 m. wide. Sector II included the southern portion of the long axis adjacent to sector I and measured 1.00 m. square. Sector III included the portion of the long axis which lay between Wall G.18:2 and sector II, and measured 1.00 m. wide x 1.65 m. long.

At the time that excavation was initiated this trench spanned a path, used by pedestrians and shepherds, which passed between the Qasr and the village mosque. Excavation was carried out from 30 July to 6 August.

Strata II-III: Mamlūk (ca. A.D. 1260-1456)

Description: Soil Layer G.18:3 extended across all of sectors I, II, and III and lay over soil Layer G.18:4, foundation Trench G.18:7, soil Layer G.18:6, foundation Trench G.18:15, and cist Burial G.18:5. The earth matrix included top soil mixed with cobbles and pebbles of limestone, tesserae, and vegetation. In the lower portion of the locus in sectors II and III the matrix consisted of compacted gray soil and in sector I a patch of compacted *terra rossa* soil embedded in gray soil, localized patches of red-brown clay, *huwwar*, and charcoal. This compacted matrix was mixed with chips and pebbles of limestone, tesserae, and one human bone. The top level was 873.39 m. and the bottom levels ranged from 873.14 m. to 872.95 m.

Soil Layer G.18:4 extended across sector III and into the northern portion of sector II. It lay over cist Burials G.18:5 and 9. The earth matrix consisted of loose, light brown soil mixed with pebbles, cobbles and boulders of limestone, and air pockets where the soft soil had subsided. The average depth was 0.14 m.

Cist Burial G.18:9 (partially excavated) lay in sector III adjacent to cist Burial G.18:5. The exterior measured 1.00 m. east to west x 0.40 m. north to south and it extended into the east and west balks. Limestone cobbles, one course high and one row wide, formed the parallel north and south walls of the cist. The matrix consisted of loose, pale brown soil mixed with chips, pebbles, and cobbles of limestone. The top level was 872.87 m.

Foundation Trench G.18:7 was located between the row of cobbles forming the south wall of cist Burial G.18:5 and the west balk. It measured 1.00 m. east to west x 0.45 m. south to north and touched the west and south balks. On the north it met cist Burial G.18:5 and soil Layer G.18:4. It lay over soil Layer G.18:6. The matrix consisted of a pale brown soil mixed with pebbles and cobbles of limestone and with charcoal. From this trench came an ostracon (object no. 2951) which joined to the one from the Late Byzantine Layer G.18:6 below. The top level was 872.96 m. and the bottom level ranged from 872.96 m. to 872.60 m. The average depth where it met the south balk was 0.10 m. The average depth where it dipped downward to meet the burial was 0.30 m.

Cist Burial G.18:5, an oval pit ringed with stone, was located in sectors II and III. The exterior of the structure measured 1.00 m. east to west x 0.85 m. north to south. The interior measured 1.00 m. east to west x 0.52 m. north to south and it extended into both the east and west balks of sectors II and III. On the south it met foundation Trench G.18:13, soil Layer G.18:12, Surface G.18:8, and soil Layer G.18:6. The limestone cobbles which formed the cist averaged 0.25 m. x 0.15 m. x 0.20 m. and were set vertically side by side (one course high, one row wide) in two parallel lines extending east to west. The sediment and debris within the cist consisted of loose, pale brown soil mixed with chips, pebbles, and cobbles of limestone, and fragments of human and other bone. The latter were analyzed in the field by Robert Little as follows. The bones articulated within the cist burial comprised left femur, left fibula, left foot bones, left ulna, and left tibia, all probably of an adult female. Pelvic bones protruding from the west balk suggested that a complete articulated skeleton lay there. The bones were aligned from east to west with the head towards the west. A skull fragment and ulna of a child less than 10 years old indicated that this was a multiple burial. The top level was 873.00 m. and the bottom level (arbitrary) was 872.56 m.

Interpretation: The Ayyūbid/Mamlūk strata were represented primarily by two cist burials. It appears that an Arab cemetery had been intercepted, for the pottery belonged to the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk period. These burials were without elaborate tomb structures or grave goods and seemed therefore to have been burials of average citizens. The presence of what appeared to be clusters of capping stones extending from area G.18 southwest for about 20.00 m. until meeting the modern cemetery indicated the scope of the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk cemetery.

The ostracon found in foundation Trench G.18:7 appeared to

have originally come from the same deposit as the ostracon from Layer G.18:6, for that layer had been cut into when cist Burial G.18:5 was constructed. This mixed the Late Byzantinė wares with the Ayyūbid/Mamlūk wares.

Soil Layers G.18:3 and 4 accumulated after the burials, and deposition continued to the present.

Stratum VII: Late Byzantine (ca. A.D. 614-661)

Description: Soil Layer G.18.6 was located throughout sector I and between foundation Trench G.18:7 and the south balk. It lay over both soil Layer G.18:11 and Surface G.18:8. On the east it was cut by foundation Trench G.18:15; on the northwest it was cut by cist Burial G.18:5; and to the southwest it was cut by foundation Trench G.18:7 and reached the west balk. The matrix consisted of compacted granular brown soil and clay mixed with chips, pebbles, and cobbles of limestone. This locus also contained an ostracon (object no. 2952). The top levels ranged from 872.85 m. to 872.77 m. The depth varied as this layer sloped downward and lensed thinly towards the west. The average depth was from 0.35 m. to 0.10 m. towards the west.

Soil Layer G.18:11 was located in sector II where it extended from foundation Trench G.18:7 to the south balk. To the east it lensed into Layer G.18:6 and to the north it was cut by foundation Trench G.18:7. The matrix consisted of lightly compacted pale brown soil mixed with limestone pebbles and charcoal flecks. The average depth was 0.05 m.

Surface G.18:8 was located in sector I where it lay over soil Layer G.18:12. It measured 1.25 m. east to west x 1.00 m. north to south and touched both the north and west balks. To the northeast it was cut by foundation Trench G.18:15 and to the southeast it lensed out and was met by soil Layer G.18:6, to the northwest it was cut by cist Burial G.18:5 and to the southwest it lensed out and was met by soil Layer G.18:6. The matrix consisted of compacted light gray soil mixed with pebbles of limestone and fragments of charcoal. The average depth was 0.50 m.

Soil Layer G.18:12 was located in sector I where it lay over Surface G.18:13. To the east it was cut by foundation Trench G.18:15 and to the west it was cut by cist Burial G.18:5. The matrix consisted of compacted brown soil mixed with pebbles of limestone. The average depth was 0.15 m.

Surface G.18:13 lay over soil Layer G.18:14. To the east it was cut by foundation Trench G.18:15, to the southwest it lensed out and met soil Layer G.18:12, and to the northwest it was cut by cist Burial G.18:5. The matrix consisted of compacted white plaster mixed with minor inclusions of crushed pottery, sand, and dung. The average depth was 0.10 m.

Foundation Trench G.18:15 lay over soil Layer G.18:14. On the east it was adjacent to Wall G.18:1 and on the west it cut Surface G.18:13, soil Layer G.18:12, Surface G.18:8, and soil Layer G.18:6. The earth matrix consisted of lightly compacted red-brown soil mixed with patches of *terra rossa* soil, patches of gray clay and rock rubble, including pebbles and cobbles of flint

and limestone. The top level was 873.03 m. and the bottom level was 872.66 m. The average depth was 0.35 m.

Wall G.18:1, which had been built on a north-south axis, extended perpendicular to sector I and formed the east balk of that sector. It was adjacent to foundation Trench G.18:15 to the west. Where it appeared in the east balk it consisted of four limestone blocks cut roughly to square shapes and vertically dressed. The spaces between them were filled with earth and cobbles. Two surviving courses appeared in the east balk but elsewhere along the wall it was evident that the maximum preservation above ground surface was four courses high, one row wide. The top level was 873.40 m. and the bottom level was 872.66 m. The depth was 0.75 m.

Soil Layer G.18:14 was located in sector I where it extended 1.25 m. east from Wall G.18:1 and touched the north, south, and east balks. The earth matrix consisted of lightly compacted pale brown soil mixed with limestone chips, pebbles, and a few cobbles. The top level was 872.66 m. and the bottom levels (arbitrary) ranged from 872.61 m. to 872.56 m.

These loci were dated to the Late Byzantine stratum on the basis of the latest sherds in the ceramic assemblage.

Interpretation: The Late Byzantine stratum was largely represented by a series of alternating surfaces and soil deposits. Plaster and soil Surfaces G.18:13 and 8 may have been reflorings within the same architectural unit. The layers G.18:14, 12, and 6 represented debris which could have accumulated in periods of nonoccupation. Though some occupational debris was mixed with the earth it did not constitute a large percentage. Therefore it seemed unlikely that intensive domestic activities were carried out here. There was no architectural context within which to interpret these surfaces. Although two subphases may have been represented here there was no clear evidence either way.

The construction of Wall G.18:1 does appear to represent a subphase, for this was the latest feature of the phase, and it was clear that with its construction the surfaces adjacent on the west had ceased to function, and layer G.18:6 had accumulated later. There was no floor with which Wall G.18:1 could be associated, which indicated that if the wall was part of a structure the interior of that structure lay east of the wall.