

Baq'ah Valley Project 1981*

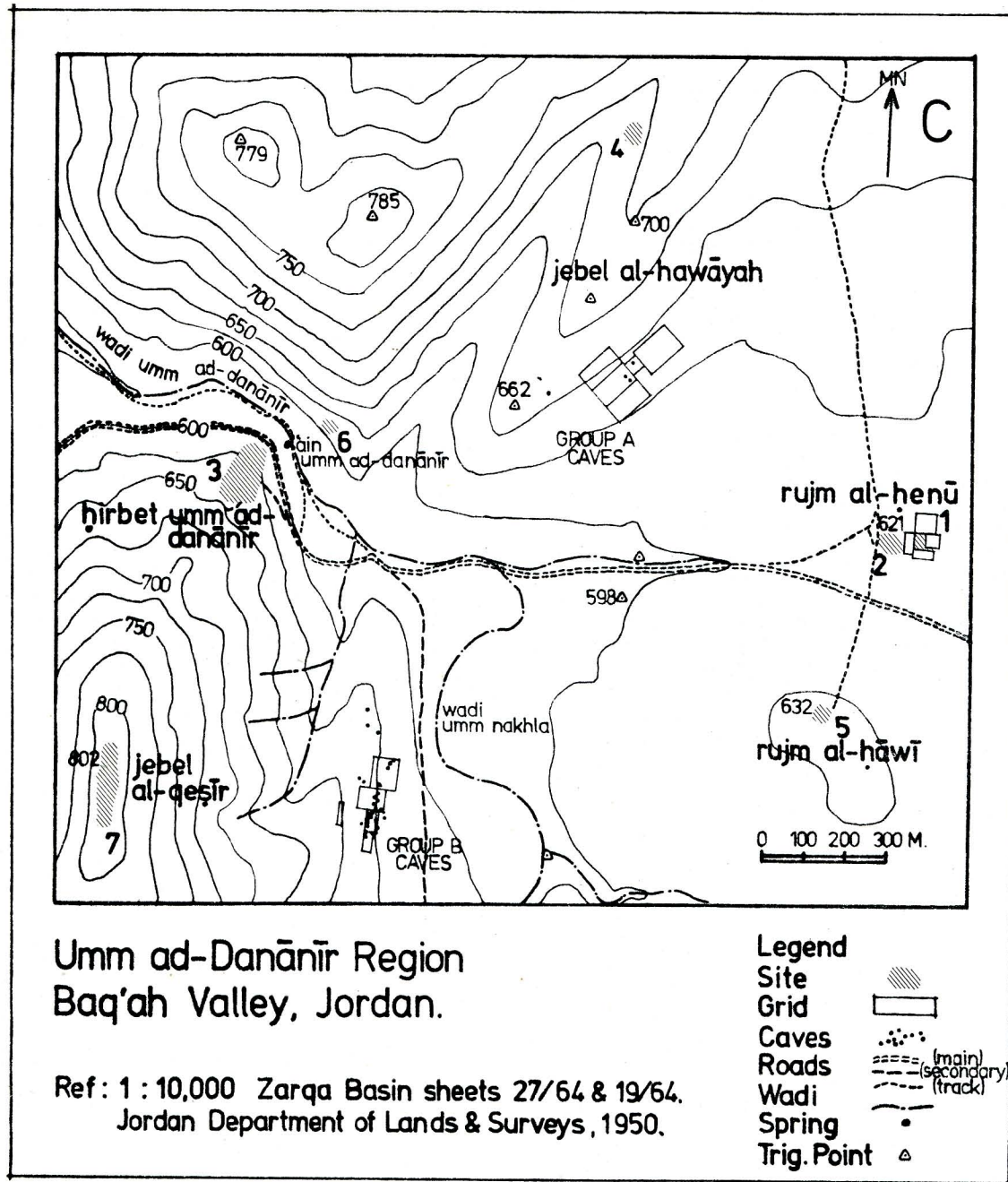


Fig. 28. Umm ad-Danānīr Region

*) This contribution, here with different illustrations, has appeared in LA 31 (1981) 329–332 (Resumé); cf. also A. Hadidi, ADAJ 25 (1981) 18–19; P. McGovern, *The Baq'ah Valley Project*:

ADAJ 25 (1981) 356–357; *Baq'ah Valley Project* 1981: BiAr 45 (1982) 122–4; *Exploring the Burial Caves of the Baq'ah Valley in Jordan: Archaeology* 35/5 (Sept./Oct. 1982) 46–53.

The fourth season of the Baq'a Valley Project under the direction of Dr. Patrick E. McGovern of the Museum Applied Science Center for Archaeology (MASCA) of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, was carried out between May 25 and June 30, 1981. The project was again jointly sponsored by the National Geographic Society, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, and the University Museum/MASCA, and was affiliated with the American Schools of Oriental Research and its center in Amman. An eight-member team with various areas of expertise comprised the core staff (physical anthropology and osteology — Scott Rolston and Lydia Hume; surveying — Dr. Robert Gordon, Jr.; field supervision — Dr. Vincent Clark, William Glanzman, Sabah Mahmoud, Cherie Lenzen, and Zbigniew Fiema), in addition to the Departmental representative (Sa'ad Hadidi) and a crew of twenty workmen.

Because of the immediate threat of bulldozing and house construction on Ġabal al-Ġuwayya, which was accompanied by renewed robbing, it was imperative that another season be conducted only ten months after the completion of the 1980 campaign. Using a cesium magnetometer, significant magnetic highs had been localized which led in 1980 to the excavation of a completely silted-up, undisturbed Iron IA (ca. 1200–1050 B. C.) burial cave (A4). The 1981 season concentrated on another high, which excavation revealed had been caused by a large accumulation of stones and soil washing in through the back hole of the largest known burial cave (B3) on Ġabal al-Quṣēr (ca. 6 m. in diameter) and the only cave dating solely to the Late Bronze (LB) II period, ca. 1400–1200 B. C. This compacted mass of fill covered two undisturbed burial layers.

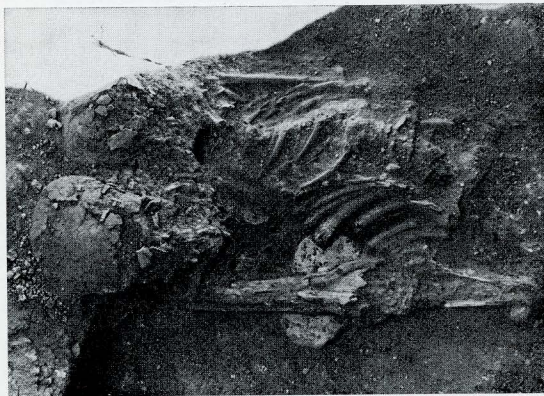


Fig. 29. Preadolescent female skeleton, lacking legs and with spinal curvature, from Late Bronze II (ca. 1400–1200 B. C.) burial cave (B3) in the Baq'a Valley, Jordan

In the topmost layer, three skeletons were clustered around an inverted bichrome bowl. The upper parts of these bodies were reasonably intact, but each individual, as well as another three nearby, lacked legs. Articulated legs and piles of long bones laid out in the same direction were found near the front of the cave. Intermingled with the burials were pieces of charcoal and completely charred long bones, possibly cremation remains (cf. the Amman Airport Building) although a blackened cooking pot from the same context suggests a more mundane explanation.

Below a 10 cm. sterile layer, a second level of six individuals, again without legs, was recovered, including a pre-adolescent female with a rare condition of spinal curvature. The girl, the most elaborately adorned of any in the tomb, wore five earrings from her right ear and a double-stringed necklace of more than a hundred beads — one string comprised solely of short bronze cylindrical beads and the other of glass beads in various colors and shapes — with a large, roughly-cut carnelian barrel bead, flanked by pairs of small spherical carnelian beads, at the back of her neck.

Many whole pots, primarily bowls and lamps, a partially decomposed calcite vessel and fragments of a bronze bowl, an excellent collection of jewelry (glass, faience, Egyptian Blue, worked shell and bone, copper/bronze, and semi-precious stone beads; copper/bronze rings, earrings, bracelets, and toggle-pins), a faience cylinder seal, and copper/bronze javelin and arrow heads were found with the burials. Of special importance was a fragment of an iron anklet/bracelet, comparable to Iron IA mild steel types from Cave A4, which may support a pre-1200 B. C. development of the iron/mild steel industry on the Transjordanian plateau.

Cave B3 bridges the technological gap between the LB I and Iron IA remains of Caves A2 and A4. For example, pending a full petrographic study, the firing and tempering of the LB II wares appears to be closer to the coarse, badly fired fabrics of Iron IA than the fine wares of LB I. On the other hand, the LB II pottery types, which are often slipped and have painted bichrome decorations, show greater affinity to LB I types. As another example of cultural change over six centuries, glass, which appears to be preferred over faience in LB I, loses its preeminence in LB II, and finally disappears altogether in Iron IA.

Directly related to the burial cave sequence was our continued investigation of the proposed LB-Early Iron settlement site at Ĥ. Umm ad-Danānir. Four 4 × 4 m. squares were opened on an upper terrace of the site in 1981. Just below the surface, a large structure immediately emerged, which extended out beyond the area of excavation. A central room was characterized by a northern wall with seven orthostats, placed ca.

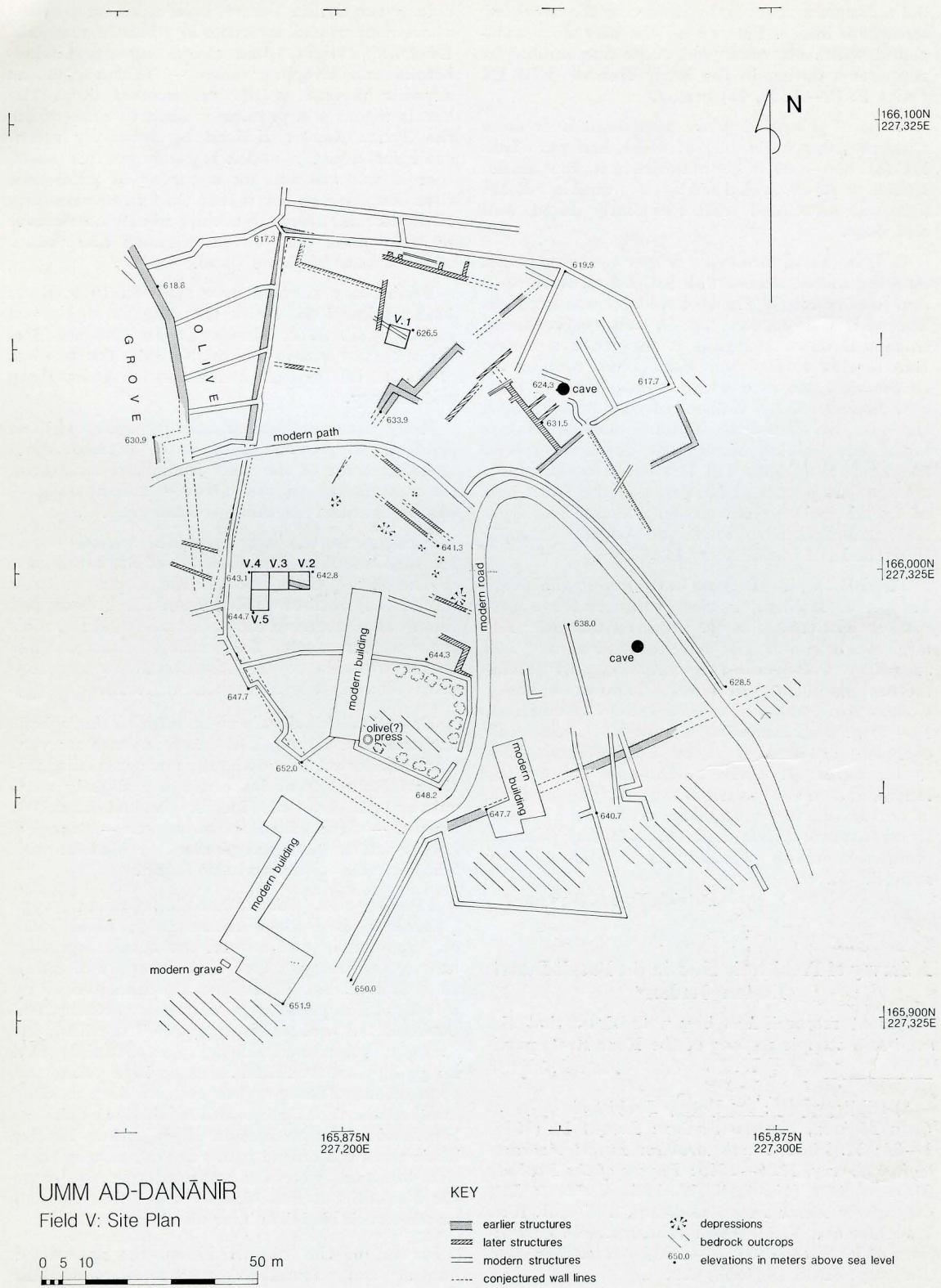


Fig. 30. Plan of settlement site at Ḥ. Umm ad-Danānīr

0.5 m. apart and several still having the overlying stretchers intact. Pottery on the clay floor associated with this room and those surrounding it supports a dating in the Early Roman (ER) III (ca. 4 B. C.—A. D. 73) period.

Some of the upper walls were built over more massive lower walls, one of which had pure Iron IIC (ca. 650—500 B. C.) material in its foundation trench. A *tābūn*, sealed off by a probable ER III floor was associated with a similarly dated wall and floor.

Only in one square was a deeper sounding made. An even more massive wall (ca. 1.5 m. thick with two lines of roughly hewn boulders) was exposed. The wall was covered by an ashy layer which continued down alongside it for about a meter. Here a clay surface was discovered, running up to the wall and into which a deep pit had been cut. Beneath large timbers of carbonized wood, the pit was found to contain charred animal bones (cow, donkey, sheep/goat, and a carnivore), fragments from large LB II vessels (cooking pot, storage jar, jugs, and lamps), and the front half of a crude bull rhyton, virtually identical in style and manufacturing technique to an example from the LB I burial cave (A2).

The LB II pit (cf. those surrounding the Fosse Temple at Lachish) is clear evidence for a permanent settlement at Ḥ. Umm ad-Danānir. The large vessels and the associated massive wall suggest a well-established community. An architectural plan of the site disclosed additional heavy walls, again composed of double lines of boulders, 1.5—2 m. thick, which appear to be the city wall enclosing an area of about 2½ hectares. This would make Ḥ. Umm ad-Danānir one of the largest known sites in the Amman region, and one of several having a stratified sequence of architectural remains. Iron I sherds definitely point to occupation in this period somewhere on the site, as well.

Patrick E. McGovern.

A Survey of Prehistoric Sites in the Basalt Desert, Eastern Jordan*

Recent research has begun to show that the semi-arid steppe regions of the Near East, parti-

*) Bibliography: A. Betts, *Prehistoric Sites at Qa'a Mejalla, Eastern Jordan: Levant* 14 (1982) 1—34; H. Field, *North Arabian Desert Archaeological Survey, 1925—1950: Papers of the Peabody Museum* 45/2 (1960); S. W. Helms, *Jawa: Lost City of the Black Desert* (London, 1981); J. d'A. Waechter and V. M. Seton-Williams, *The Excavations at Wadi Dhobai 1937—1938 and the Dhobaian Industry: JPOS* 18 (1938) 172.

cularly the Syrian Desert, hold much information about man and his activities in prehistoric periods. Evidence is slight, traces of hunting camps, wind-breaks and knapping sites — thin occupation deposits perhaps a few centimetres deep. The basalt region is a physically discrete area within the Syrian Desert, defined by relatively recent geological activity, and it is partly for this reason that it was selected for a survey of prehistoric sites. A second reason is that the extreme hostility of the terrain, although not apparently a deterrent to early man, has prevented much disturbance of the sites to be found there.

Preliminary surveys were made in 1979 (Betts 1982; Helms 1981) in the Qā' Meḡalla region and along the T. A. P. Line track. In 1981 the first major survey season took place under the auspices of the British Institute at Amman for Archaeology and History.

Many sites are marked only by walls, with no artefacts to provide clues as to possible date, although some of the more formalised structures, for example the «desert kites» — animal traps — can be classified according to their plan.

Evidence for the early Paleolithic periods has so far only been found on the edge of the basalt east of the Azraq basin around the slopes of table mountains, outliers eroded from the lava-capped limestone plateaux of the interior. Several Levallois cores were recovered from isolated findspots but so far no evidence has been found for any concentration of early occupation material.

Epi-paleolithic sites have been found throughout the areas so far examined. Most of these are very small scatters of flint with only one or two diagnostic artefacts but at least two are slightly more substantial. Artefacts include backed bladelets, lunates — some with Helwan retouch — triangles, borers and denticulated pieces. One bladelet with traces of silica sheen was also found.

PPNB sites of Dhobaian/Wualian type (Waechter & Seton-Williams 1938; Field 1960) are common in and around the basalt especially near to the fringes where a good supply of coarse chert is available. These sites are characterised by a very high percentage of concave truncation burins in the tool assemblage, together with a few scrapers, borers and bifacial pieces. Multi-period knapping sites are found on many high points and promontories. These appear to have been used by hunters as lookout points and much of the debitage is related to the production of projectiles. Bipolar blade cores and tanged points are common on these sites but some were also apparently in use before the Neolithic as fine bladelet cores, lunates and punch-struck bladelets have also been found.

Several of the «desert kites», the specialised hunting traps found in great numbers in this