

TALL JUḤFIYYA: AN IRON AGE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS IN NORTH JORDAN PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2002 AND 2003 SEASONS

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Introduction

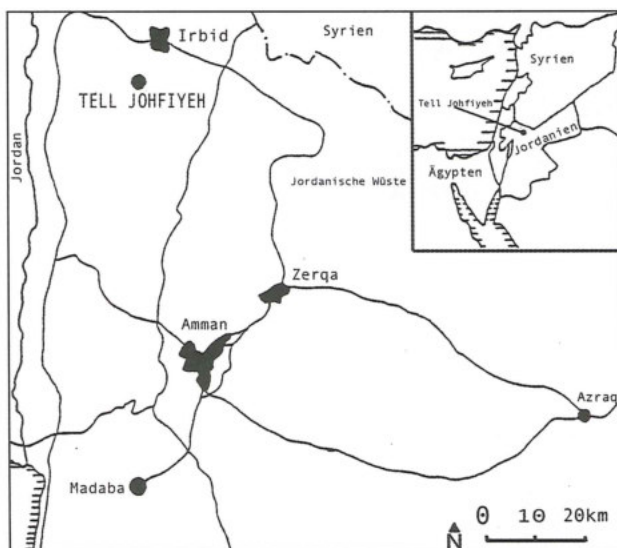
Tall Juḥfiyya تل جحفية (Fig. 1) is situated in an intensively used agricultural area about 7.5km southwest of Irbid (UTM-Zone 36, UTME 7653, UTMN 35986) on the northern fringe of the modern village of Juḥfiyya. Its topographical location on a high mound, about 793m above sea level, is exposed but offers an excellent view in all directions. Nowadays the inhabitants of the modern village of Juḥfiyya grow mostly grain and different kinds of fruit trees.

A few weekend trips in the area surrounding Irbid back in 1995 during my time as an Alexander von Humboldt fellow at the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, Yarmouk University, were in some ways the starting point of the Tall Juḥfiyya archaeological project. During these trips, my attention was drawn to some small, archaeologically unnoticed sites to the west and southwest of Irbid. An initial analysis of surface pottery carried out on the spot, suggested that most of these sites were founded and occupied mainly during the Iron Age, while late Byzantine and early Islamic pottery further hinted to a later re-

settlement of the sites.

Published material on the sites mainly comprises early travel reports (Schumacher 1893: 82-83, 153-154; Steuernagel 1926: 46=A.430; Abel 1967: 35-36), the reports of Nelson Glueck (1951: 170-172, 175, 186-187), who visited the region within his extended "Explorations in Eastern Palestine", different scientific compilations (Zwickel 1990: 309; Palumbo 1994: 2221.007) and maps (e.g. TAVO B IV: 6). These reports are restricted to very short descriptions with a rough dating of the sites, and with no further archaeological investigation. Information about the structure and function as well as the regional, historical and political settings of the sites is still missing. Although several hundred Iron Age sites have been identified on the plateau and its catchment area during the last decades (e.g. Glueck 1951; Mittmann 1970; Banning and Fawcett 1983; Lenzen and McQuitty 1988; al-Ma'ani 1992 or Kamlah 2000) there is, even now, almost no information available about the Iron Age on the northern Jordanian plateau in general (Bartl *et al.* 2001: 128-132; 2002: 95-96). The archaeological and historical knowledge about the era under discussion is still very poor. Almost no written sources that might help in clarifying the role and function of the Iron Age sites mentioned above are available. Furthermore the interpretation of the available data is very difficult due to the facts that Iron Age layers are often disturbed by a later resettlement of the site and that a regional system for the exact chronological classification of Iron Age pottery and finds is still missing for the area. New studies and in particular new excavations are badly needed.

It was only in 1995 that the published information on the sites was completed by new research. Visits to the region in 1995, 1996, 1998 and 2000 produced very promising results (Lamprichs 1996; 1997a,b,c; 1998a,b,c; Lamprichs and Kafafi 2000) and led to a joint archaeological project at Tall Juḥfiyya. Under the joint directorship of Dr. Ziad al-Sa'ad (IAA-Irbid) and Dr. Roland



1. Map showing Tall Juḥfiyya.

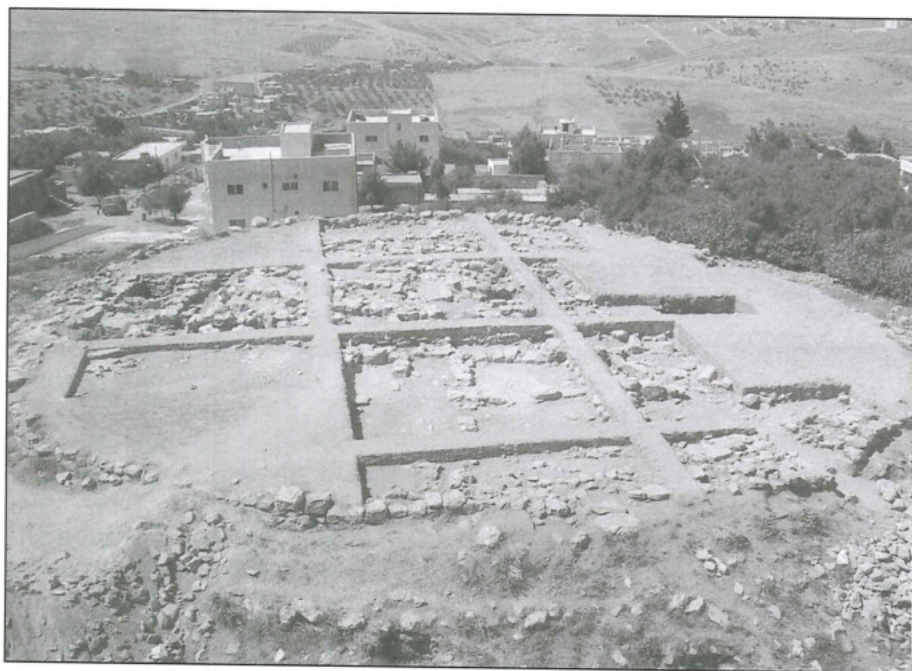
Lamprichs (DEI-Amman), the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology in Irbid (IAA) and the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in Amman (DEI) conducted two seasons of archaeological excavations at Tall Juhfiyya. The first one lasted from May 5th to May 26th 2002 (Lamprichs 2002; 2003a,b,c,d; Lamprichs and Sa'ad 2002; 2003) and the second from May 24th to June 14th 2003 (Lamprichs 2004). The excavations were carried out with the constant support of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DoA) and we would like to express our gratitude to its Director General, Dr. Fawwaz Khraysheh. We are also thankful for the help of Mr. Nasser Khassawneh and Mr. Ibrahim Zoubi, Inspector of Umm Qays, and our representative Dia' Tawalbeh who did an excellent job in the field. Important logistic support was given to us by Dr. Ziad Talafeha (Juhfiyya), the inhabitants of the village of Juhfiyya and our excellent team members (K. Bastert, M. Batainah, E. Khreis, U. Koprivc, A. Kulla, Dr. A. Kunz, Dr. L. Martin, H. Nawafleh, K. Poenitz, E. Posselt, N. Qadi, G. Reimann, I. Schmalfluss, E. Schmidt-Kulla) and local workmen. Thanks are due to all of them.

Tall Juhfiyya: Field Seasons 2002 and 2003

The archaeological site of Tall Juhfiyya which is roughly aligned east-west at its base, covers a total area of only approximately 4,000m², and rises above the surrounding fields by about 7m. The main surface structure is an almost circular wall (up to 1m high and 0.8m wide) surrounding the pla-

teau of the site, which measures approximately 950m² (Fig. 2). Traces of ploughing found on top indicated a recent agricultural use of the plateau. The slopes of the mound and its immediate surroundings were covered with many large and medium sized stones of flint and limestone. Another wall at the foot of the mound, roughly outlining the limits of the tall, reaches up to 2.5m in height and is more than 1m wide. We learned that the residents of modern Juhfiyya rebuilt the wall recently for farming purposes. Unlike similar sites in the neighbourhood the general preservation of Tall Juhfiyya was very good. Relatively little destruction and a few traces of illicit digging were found on the slopes and the levelled surface, while natural erosion was only of minor importance and barely affected the site.

In addition to Tall Juhfiyya the following sites have been looked into briefly in the frame of the project: Tall Bayt Yāfā (تل بيت يافا), Tall ash-Shiqāq (تل الشقاق), Dhahrat as-Sūq (ظهرة السوق) and Tall Kufr Yūbā (تل كفر يوبا). They are all situated near to each other to the west and southwest of Irbid, in an area that was characterized by hundreds of dolmen until the late 1950s. The sites mentioned are characterized by common features such as the round to oval form of their bases, an exposed location (600m or more above sea level) within a very fertile region, a large cover of stones on the surface and remains of a perimeter wall. Some of the sites mentioned are located in view of each other. Most of them were founded during the Iron Age and were resettled during the Byzantine and early Islamic eras.



2. Tall Juhfiyya: Situation 2003 (post excavation).

The only exception is represented by Tall Kufr Yuba which was occupied since the Bronze Age. The distribution of the sites is almost semicircular. Tall al-Ḥuṣn (تل الحصن) and Tall Irbid (تل اربيد) most probably functioned as "central sites".

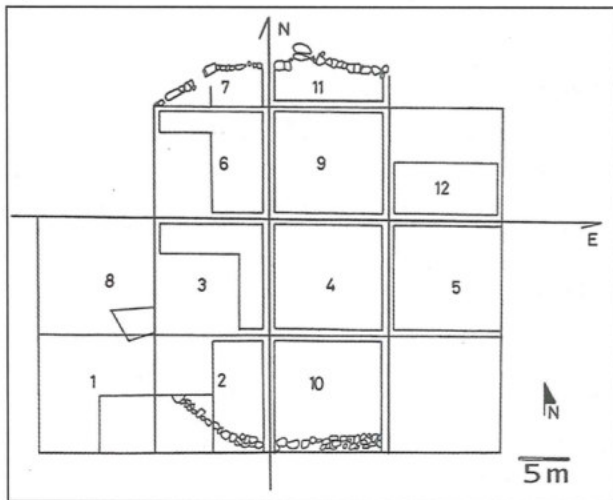
The Campaign of 2002

In the frame of our first three-week excavation campaign, a topographical map of the site was drawn up and an artificial grid (10mx10m) orientated to the north was laid over the tall (Fig. 3). Within this grid, eight squares (1-8) were selected and partially excavated. The results can be summarized as follows:

Two phases of settlement could be separated belonging to the Iron Age II and Byzantine-Umayyad era. Remains of the latter were found exclusively on the southwestern fringe of the tall and on the eastern slope. Remains of the Iron Age, however, were found all over the site and dominate the finds made so far.

The Byzantine-Umayyad era is represented by remains of a small room/house (on the southwestern slope), a cistern, two almost complete clay vessels (from the cistern area) and numerous clay sherds, glass and metal remains (mainly from the southwestern slope).

The architectural remains from the Iron Age excavated during our first campaign were heterogeneous. They were characterized by huge walls and simple settings but due to the limited area opened in 2002, no definite structures could be



3. Area of excavation.

identified at that stage. The material remains found, however, belong to domestic activities within an agricultural world: numerous fire places and cooking spots, grinding stones, mortars, basalt pestles and scrapers, weaving weights, spindle whorls, a three footed basalt bowl with tools, "buttons", numerous stone vessels, several arrow-heads made of iron and needles as well as a few beads made of carnelian were found.¹

In addition more than 16,000 pottery sherds were registered during our first three weeks campaign in Tall Juhfiyya. More than 1,400 pieces were classified as diagnostics (bases, rims, handles, decorated body sherds). Altogether 20 wares were separated and classified into two main groups.

Group 1 consists of wares 1-5 and includes roughly 82% of the pottery assemblage. They are all dated to the Iron Age. All pieces are wheel-made. Their texture extends from fine to coarse. The temper usually consists of small white, grey and brown mineral grits. The colour varies from light beige up to reddish brown. Larger (storage) jars are often characterized by a greyish core. Group 2 consists of wares 6-20 and includes only 18% of the entire assemblage. They are most probably not of Iron Age date and two thirds of them seem to belong to the Byzantine/early Islamic era. The remaining third is a mixture of different wares, thought to represent different periods. The Iron Age pottery assemblage registered during the first campaign mainly consists of cooking pots, storage jars and jugs/juglets. In addition bowls, bases, handles, lids, spouts, decorated body sherds and lamps were registered. An initial analysis of the remains mentioned (architecture, small finds, pottery) excavated in 2002 indicates that Tall Juhfiyya and the small archaeological sites in its vicinity were used most probably as farmsteads, dating back to the late Iron Age II.²

The campaign of 2003

Within the second three-week campaign in 2003, we continued the "plateau-excavation", that is the area within the perimeter wall, laid out a deep sounding in the western part of the plateau area (square 3), cleared part of the stratigraphy, recorded the architectural remains and tried to give a first interpretation of the excavated structures. By the end of the season more than 600m² had been

1. For detailed information and a first analysis of the small finds and pottery found during the 2002 season see Lamprichs 2003d.
2. As already mentioned, a regional system for the chronological classification of Iron Age pottery is still missing for the area under discussion. Due to this, no exact date of the

pottery excavated so far can be given. Comparisons, however, with material found in Palestine and central Jordan points to a late Iron Age II date for most of the pottery found at Tall Juhfiyya in 2002. See also Lamprichs 1997a: 329-337.

opened and investigated within 12 squares; 200m² in 2002 and more than 400m² in 2003 (Fig. 3).

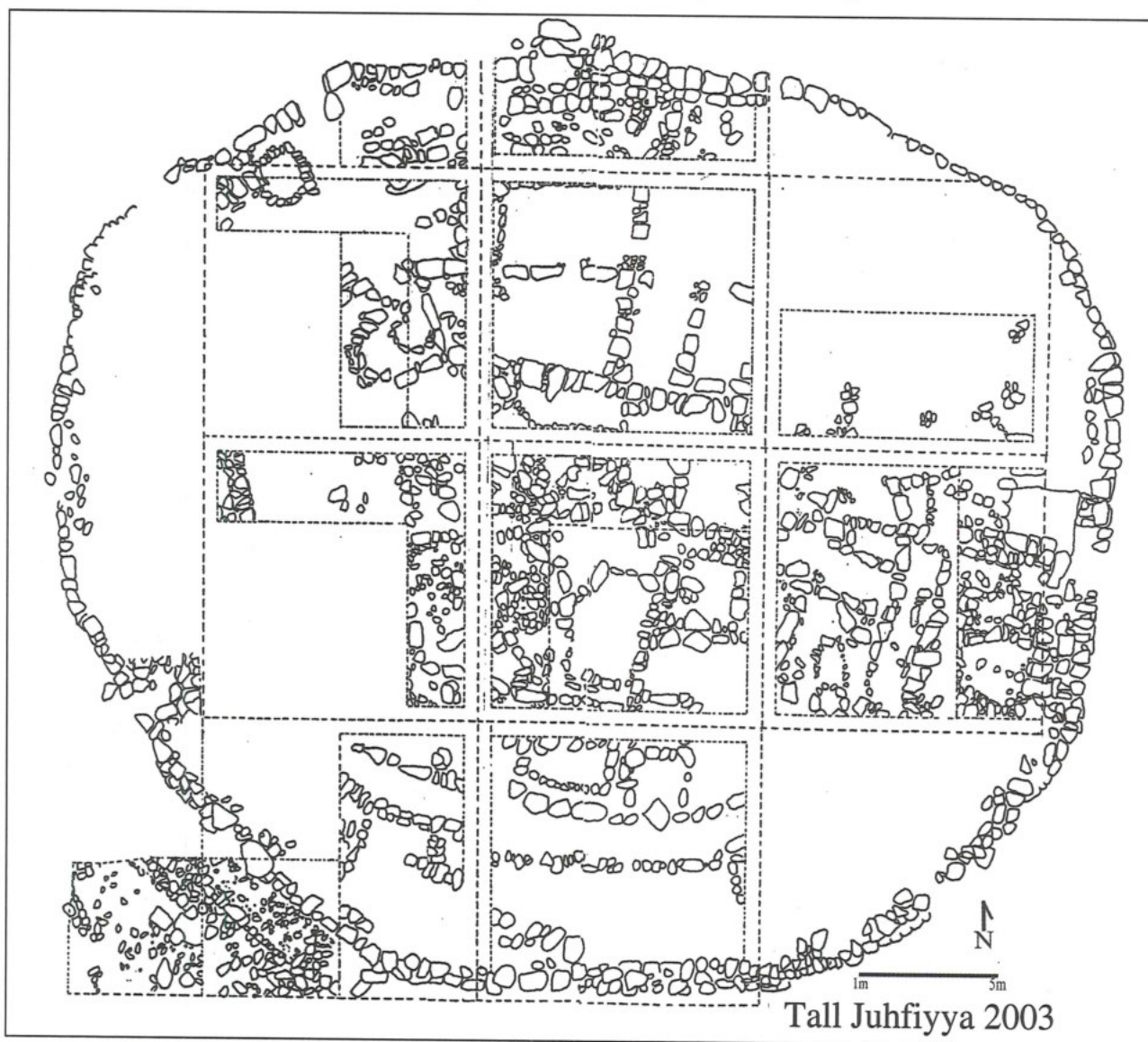
The stratigraphy worked out in 2002 was confirmed by the results of 2003. Besides some poor remains of the Umayyad era the material dates back exclusively to the late Iron Age II. A few pieces belonging to the early Iron Age II were found, mainly within the deep sounding.

The architectural remains uncovered in 2003 gave us a first clue concerning the structure of an Iron Age farmstead in the north of Jordan (Fig. 4). Based on our information at least two main units can be distinguished within the surrounding perimeter wall:

1. A storage and processing unit for agricultural goods situated in the southern and eastern parts of the tall (Fig. 5). It is characterized by small



5. "Storage and Processing units".

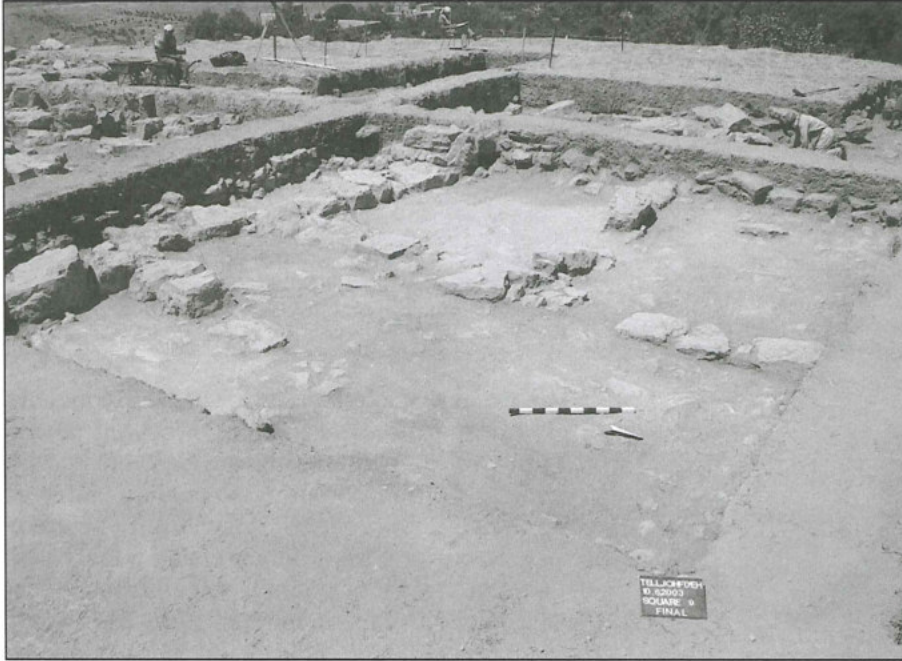


4. Architectural remains - a general view of excavated areas.

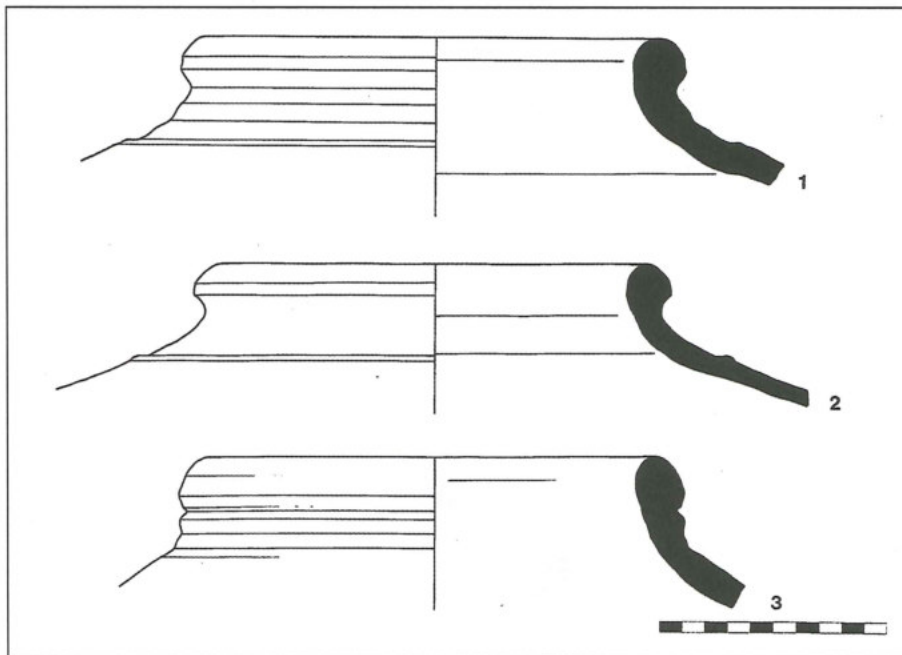
rooms which are connected to each other by a semicircular passageway, silos, *ṭābūn*(s) and storage jars (some placed upside down).

2. A main or farmstead building situated in the northern part of the tall consisting most probably of a courtyard house which is characterized by large rooms, domestic installations and "luxury goods" found *in situ* (Fig. 6).

Almost 80% of the more than 23,000 sherds registered during this season (in 2002 there were 16,802 pieces) date back to the late Iron Age II. The remaining pieces date to the beginning of the Iron Age II and the Umayyad period. Besides a huge amount of storage jars and (cooking) pots, many jars, jugs, bowls, pot stands, oil lamps and spouts were found in 2003 (Figs. 7-12).³



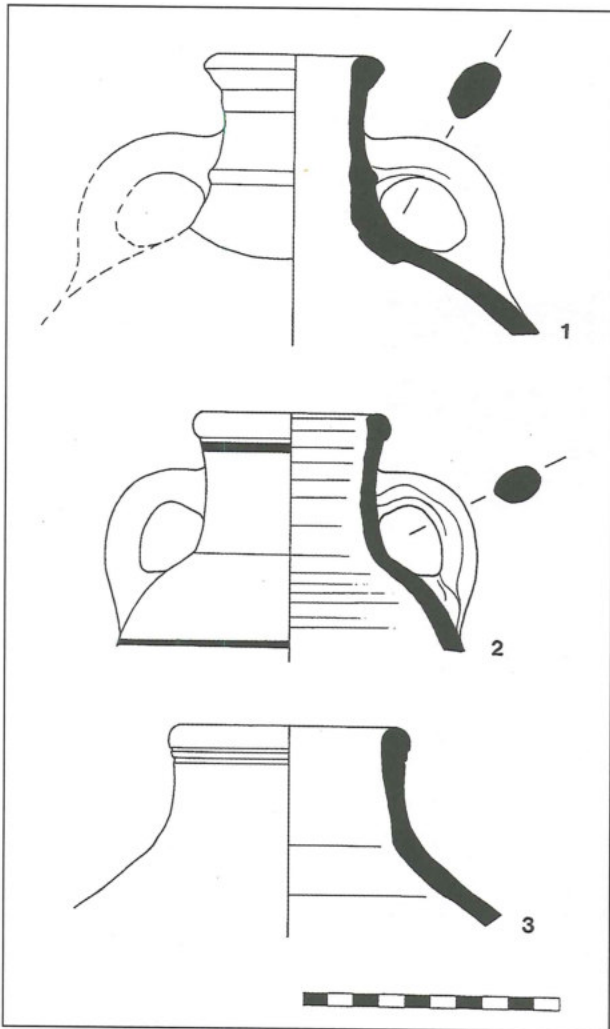
6. "Main building".



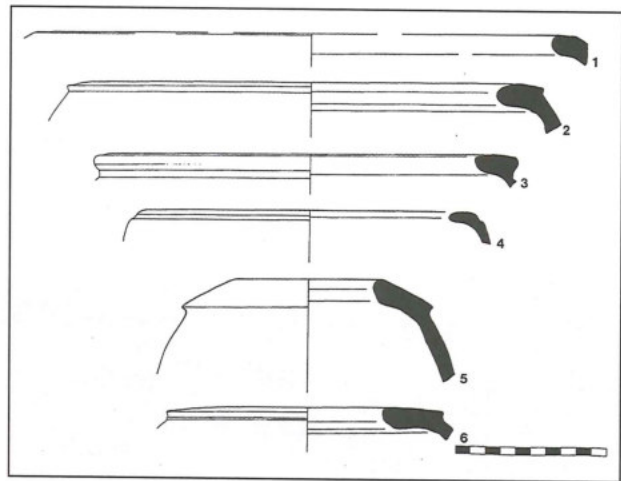
7. Storage jars (Iron Age): 1. square 11, ware 2, locus 11002, no. 1100421; 2. square 2, ware 2, locus 2013, no. 206002; 3. square 10, ware 2, locus 10002, no. 1008804.

3. (Figs. 7-12 and 14-16) drawn by Ahmad al-Momani, Amman. For a detailed description of pottery wares and abbrevia-

tions used in the captions of Figs. 7-12 and 14-16 see Lamprichs 2003d: 369-374, Taf. 1-43.

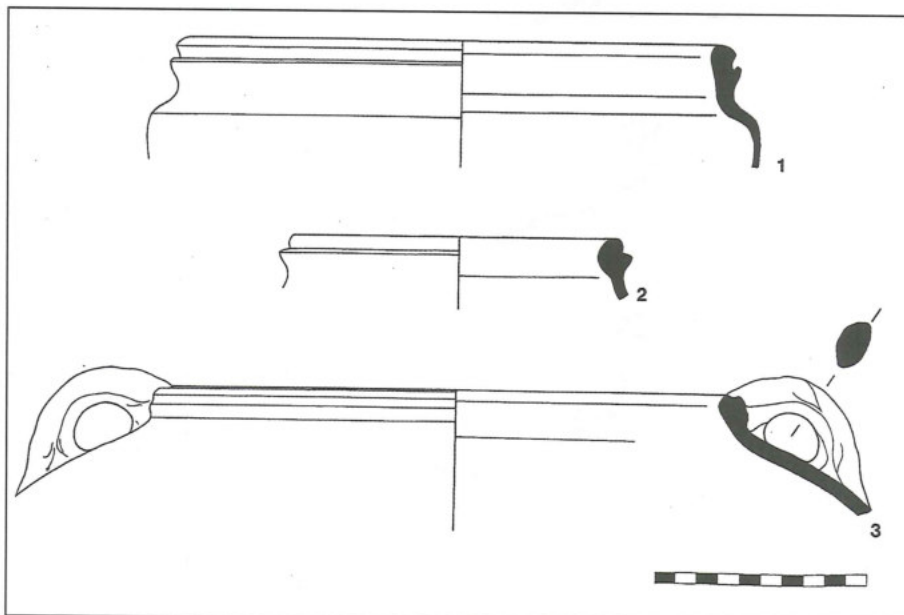


8. Jugs (Iron Age): 1. square 9, ware 4, locus 9018, no. 913101/2; 2. square 9; ware 4, locus 9018, no. 913201; 3. square 9, ware 3, locus 9018, 911107/8/9.

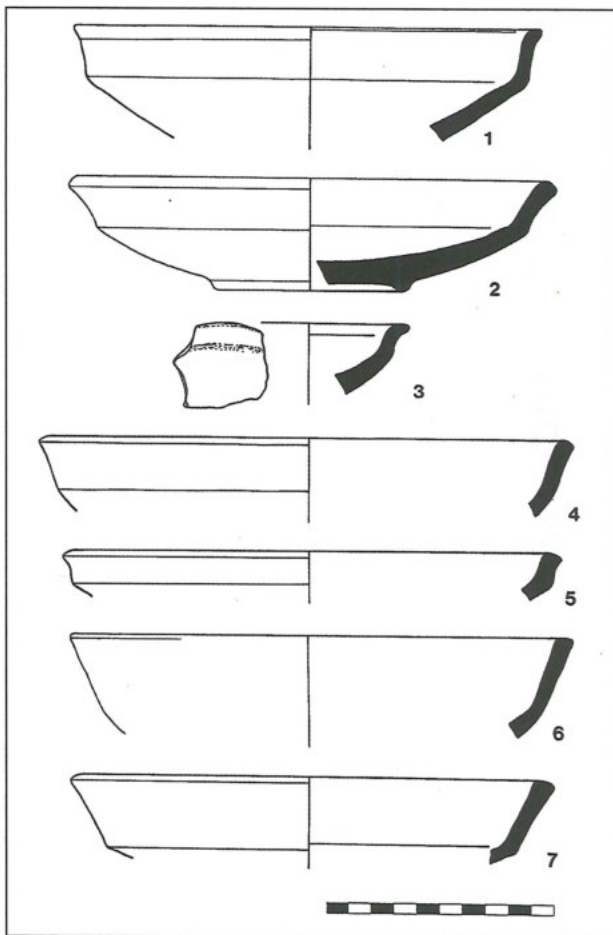


10. Pots and jars (Iron Age): 1. square 3, ware 1, locus 3023, no. 310401; 2. square 9, ware 3, locus 9004, no. 902803; 3. square 4, ware 2, locus 4035, no. 415207; 4. square 6, ware 5, locus 6036, no. 614003; 5. square 10, ware 3, locus 10002, no. 1007901/2/3; 6. square 10, ware 5, locus 10006, no. 1002527.

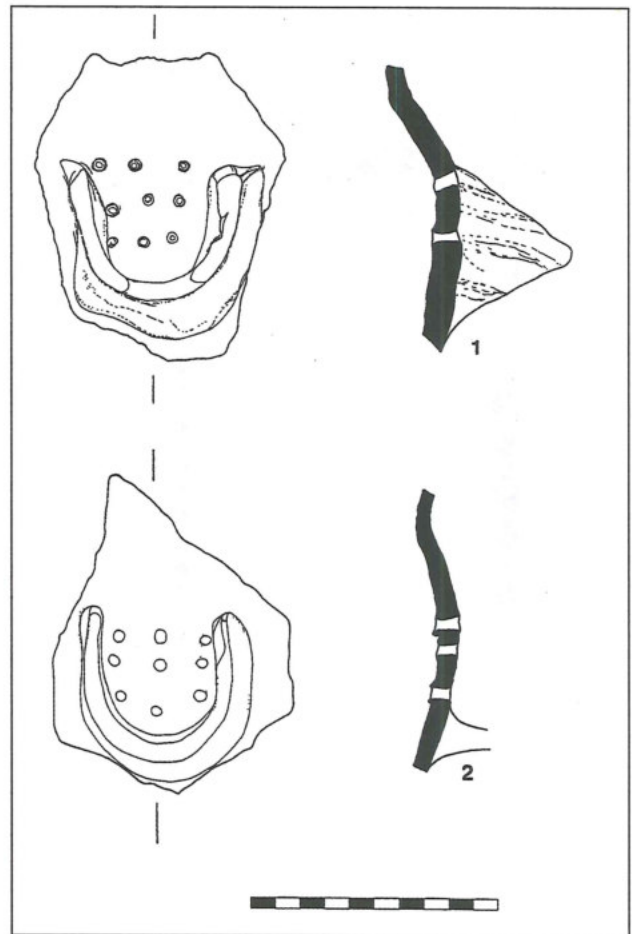
The excavated remains of the Iron Age belong again mainly to domestic activities within an agricultural world. The assemblage is dominated by pieces used for transportation, processing and storage of agricultural products. Apart from numerous fire places, cooking spots, *ṭābūn*(s) and pottery vessels, a great variety of querns, pestles (round, cornered, conical), scrapers, mortars (Fig. 13), bowls (round, cornered) and rubbers made of basalt as well as many weaving-weights, spindle-whorls, "buttons", stone "lids" and stone vessels were found. Additionally the excavations of 2003 at Tall Juḥfiyya produced, for the first time, some objects which are not exclusively used for farming activ-



9. Cooking pots (Iron Age): 1. square 10, ware 1, locus 10006, no. 1002526; 2. square 10, ware 1, locus 10006, no. 1002523; 3. square 11, ware 1, locus 11003, no. 1102403.



11. Bowls (Iron Age): 1. square 10, ware 4 (slip), locus 10002, no. 1008802; 2. square 9, ware 4 (slip), locus 9018, no. 912304/12; 3. square 5, ware 4, locus 5039, no. 516706; 4. square 6, ware 4 (slip), locus 6032, no. 611312; 5. square 5, ware 4 (slip), locus 5037, no. 514410; 6. square 9, ware 4 (slip), locus 9010, no. 902813; 7. square 9, ware 4, locus 9004, no. 902813.



12. Spouts (Iron Age): 1. square 9, ware 4, locus 9011, no. 906401; 2. square 9, ware 2, locus 9013, no. 908101.

ities. These are remains of jewelry made of carnelian and lapis beads, pierced stone discs and shells as well as a tooth of a comb, a fibula made of bronze (Fig. 14:4), two decorated cosmetic palettes made of polished limestone (Fig. 15:1-2), a small complete (tripod) basalt bowl (Fig. 16) for the preparation of cosmetics or spices (Fig. 17), some arrowheads and a chisel made of iron. The manufacture of basalt mortars or bowls on three legs has a long history in the Levant. They were used, as already said, for grinding spices and coloring matters. Examples such as this one, on high legs connected to each other with a central column, are rare. A similar, but broken piece, was found for example in Tall Dayr 'Allā (Ibrahim and van der Kooij 1986: Pl. XIX).

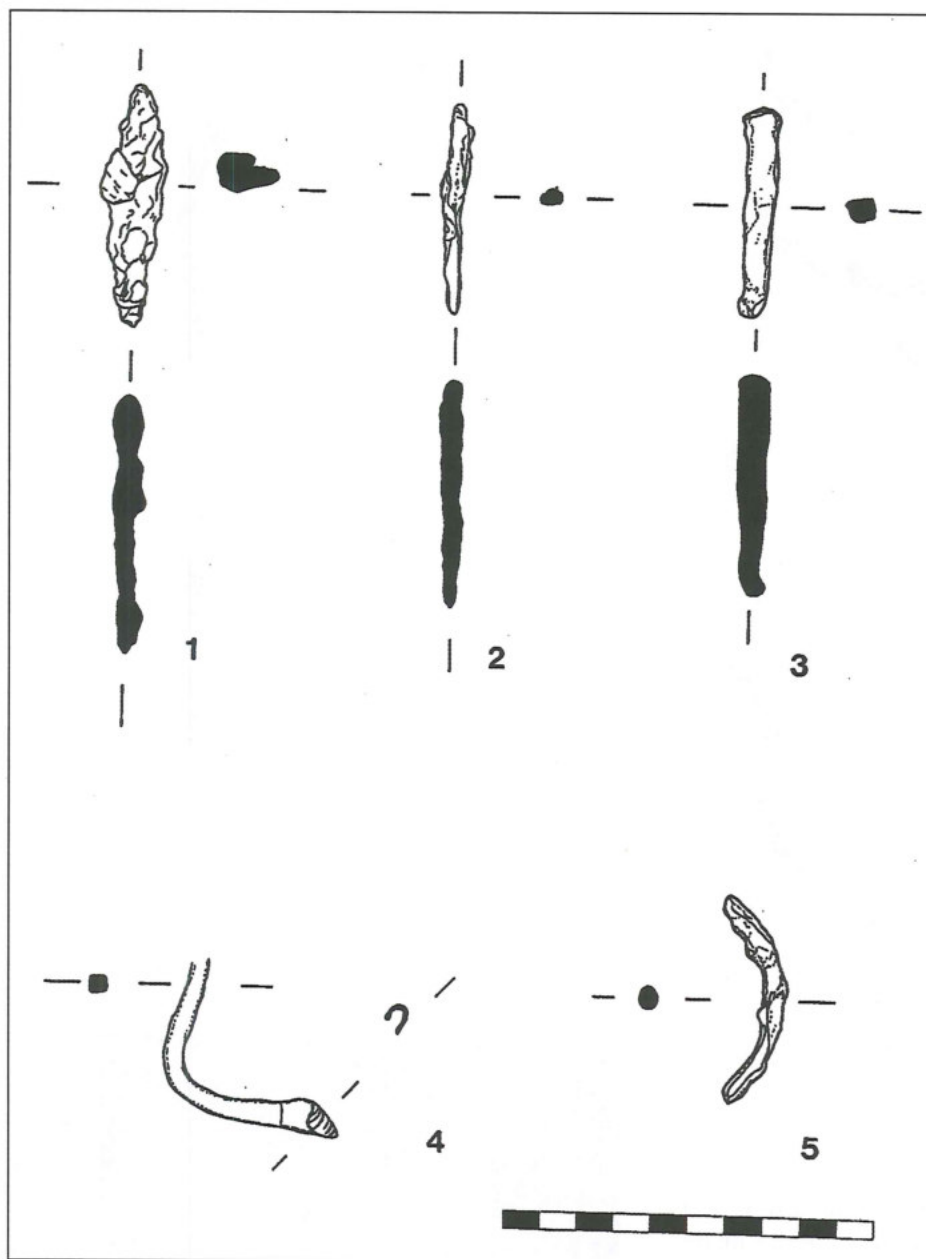
Summary and Outlook

Summarizing our results, we may say that Tall



13. Complete basalt bowl (tripod).

Juhfiyya, Tall Bayt Yāfā, Tall ash-Shiqāq, Dhahrat as-Sūq and Tall Kufr Yūbā are quite homogenous sites, which were mainly founded and inhabited during the Iron Age. The function of the sites dur-



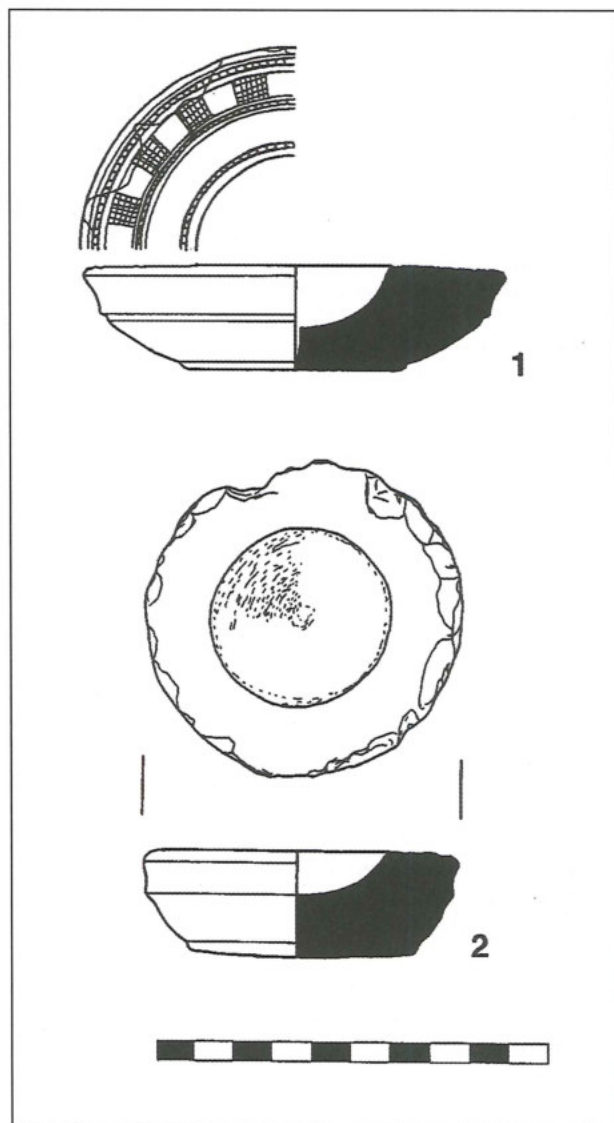
14. A selection of metal objects: 1. arrowhead/iron 15g, square 2, locus 2014, no. 2084; 2. metal-tool 10g, square 3, locus 3026, no. 3117; 3. metal-tool 10g, square 9, locus 9002, no. 9025; 4. fibula/bronze 20g, square 3, locus 3018, no. 3093; 5. bracelet/bronze 20g (fragment), square 5, locus 5035, no. 5125.

ing late Iron Age II times is best described as “farmstead”. The finds made within the main or farmstead building at Tall Juḥfiyya suggest that its inhabitants were related socially and politically to some kind of elite leadership. A close link of the “farmstead” to one of the regional centers, most probably Tall Ḥuṣn, is very likely and the excavated remains may well represent the penetration of Tall Juḥfiyya and its surroundings by an arm of a centre-based administration. The huge amount of pottery sherds and grinding tools found within the “storage and processing unit” fits well in some way with the general association of farmsteads with periods of high intensity land use, demand for specialized economic goods and heightened security

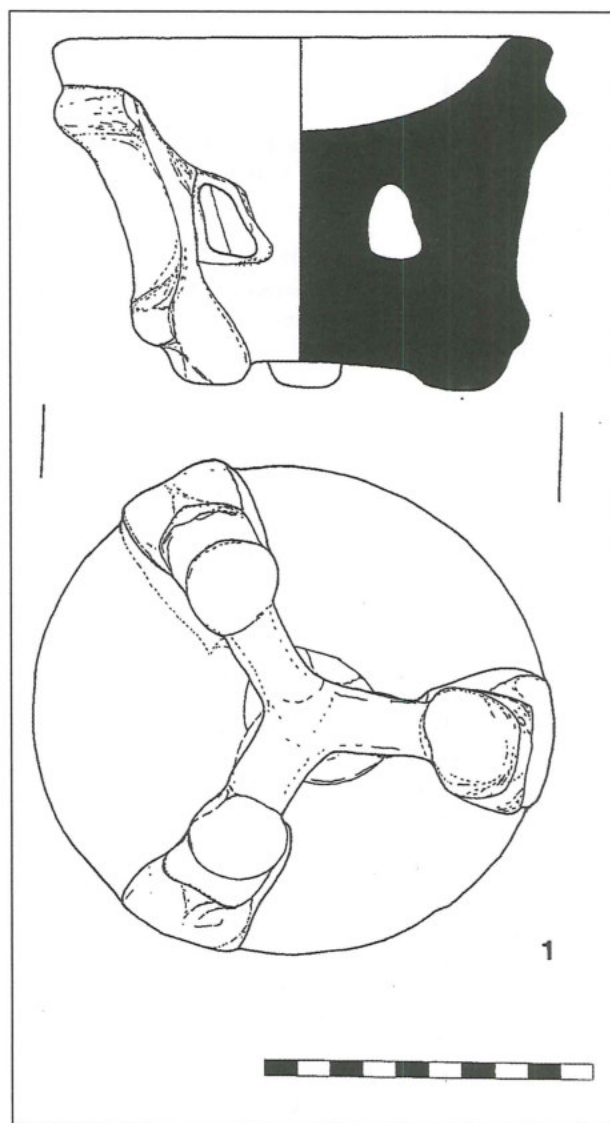
conditions (Hopkins 1997: 306). In how far the latter, however, were guaranteed by the main (regional) power of the period has to be found out in the future.

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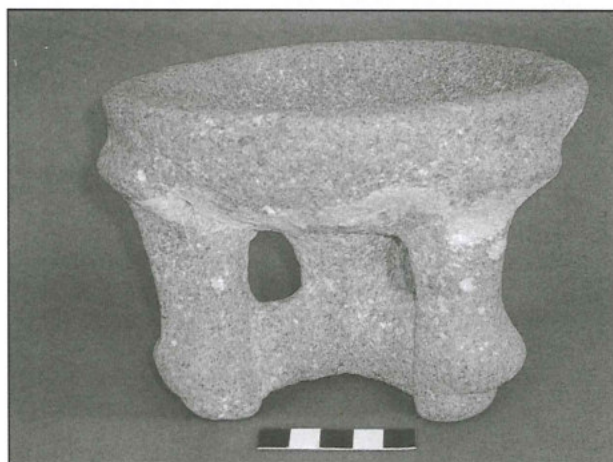
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15. Tall Juhfiyya: (decorated) cosmetic-bowls: 1. polished limestone 150g (fragment), square 3, locus 3018, no. 3085; 2. polished limestone 280g (almost complete), square 9, locus 9010, no. 9058.



16. Small mortar on three legs: basalt 1630g (complete), square 10, locus 10004, no. 10027.



17. Small basalt mortar (tripod).

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