

SECOND SEASON OF EXCAVATIONS AT JEBEL ABU THAWWAB (ER-RUMMAN), 1985
PRELIMINARY REPORT

by
Zeidan Kafafi

Introduction

The Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology of Yarmouk University conducted a second season of rescue excavations at Jebel Abu Thawwab (er-Rumman), located fourteen kilometres north of Şuweileh and twenty kilometres south of Jerash (Fig. 1). The work started on June 1st, 1985, and lasted six weeks until July 15th, under the direction of the author. In addition to the excavation operations, a survey of the area, headed by Dr. Axel Knauf and Dr. Robert Gordon of the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, Yarmouk University, was undertaken. A separate preliminary report is being prepared on this survey.

Work was conducted in three major areas of the site (Fig. 2), designated: A, C, and D. The areas were chosen because of the occupational evidence exposed during the first season of excavations in 1984; and, the widening of the main road between Amman and Jerash. Excavations were concentrated on both sides of the Amman-Jerash road in order to obtain more information about the site before it could be further removed by the road work. Two areas (A and D) were opened during 1984; work in Area C started this season.

The Excavation

A. Area A

Most of our work was concentrated in this area since, in 1984, a fifteen metre wall had been found and was associated with evidence of the "Yarmoukian Culture". A total of seven squares: A II 6, A II 7, A III 6, A III 7, A IV 3, A IV 4, and A IV 5 were excavated totalling 100 m². We finished the work started last season in square A III 6. Excavation of A II 6 was necessitated to uncover the rest of the cir-

cular structure formed in A III 7. But this square was again limited due to the roadcut and subsequent erosion which had occurred. It measured 2.20 m. from north-west to north-east, and 2.25 m. from north-east to south-east. Virgin soil was reached throughout the square without finding structures such as a wall or a floor. While other squares nearby had such features, none appear to have been present in A II 6. After trimming the western baulk cut by the bulldozer, square A II 7, measuring ca. 4.0 m. east-west by 5.0 m. north-south, was excavated. Excavation in this square was limited; however, more data concerning the Early Bronze occupation was retrieved. The south half of square A III 7 was partially excavated. A half of a circular building was found and extended to both the south-east and south-west. More excavation will be done in the coming seasons in this square (Pl. III, 1).

Squares A IV 3, A IV 4, and A IV 5 were placed to the east of the long wall found in 1984 to see if there were buildings in conjunction with this wall. Square A IV 3 was opened with the knowledge that the above mentioned wall would be found. This was already known from the bulldozing operations created by the road cut, and by our work in 1984.

Work continued from the 1984 season in square A IV 4. The major find was a large north-south wall in the western section of the square, measuring fifteen metres. It dated to the Late Neolithic I, and was re-used in the Early Bronze I period.

Because of the nature of the Late Neolithic (Yarmoukian) occupation at Jebel Abu Thawwab, and the density of the material culture remains of this period, squares A IV 4, A III 5 and A III 6 were opened. In square A III 5, an extension of the Early Bronze I east-west wall from square A IV 4

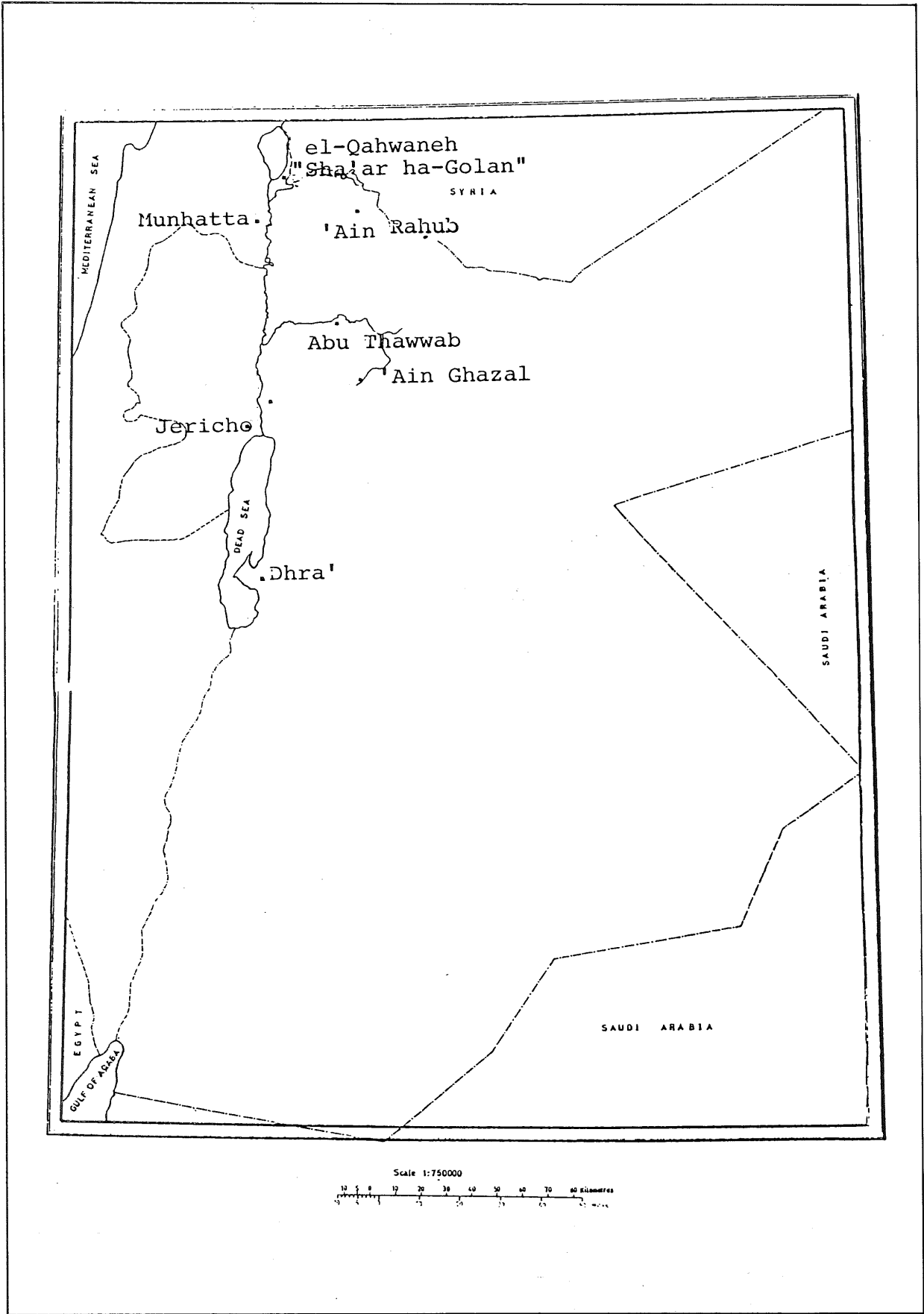


Fig. 1. Map showing Jebel Abu Thawwab location.

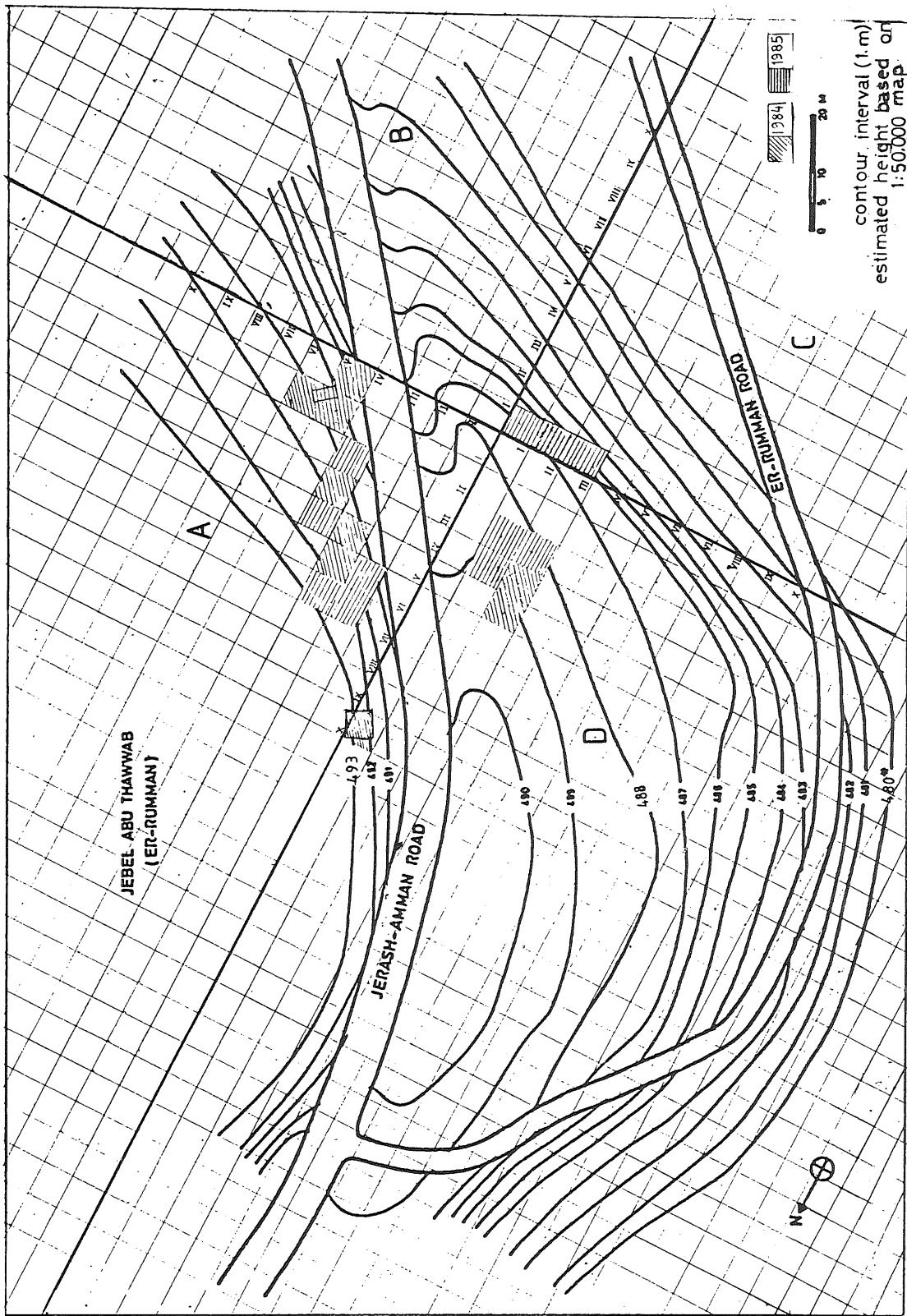


Fig. 2. Contour map with Areas A, B, C, and D.

was found, and Late Neolithic 1 (Yarmoukian) floors, hearths, and pits. Here, four hard-packed earth floors from the Late Neolithic 1 were found, and the earliest was located directly over virgin soil.

B. Area C

Excavations were started in Area C during this season; squares C I 1, C II 1, and C III 1 were opened. The reasons for excavating in Area C were the following:

1. to obtain more information about the Early Bronze occupation of this area; and,
2. to investigate whether or not this higher section of the site consisted of fortifications for the early settlement.

After the removal of the topsoil from these squares, a (D) shaped fill of small and medium sized stones was uncovered. This layer was located to the north of the above mentioned wall (P1. III, 2).

In square C I 1, as in all the area, a cobblestone layer sloped from the north to the south. Most of the southern section was covered with these stones. In order to clarify the function and the date of this layer, a probe trench was excavated in the northern part of the square. The excavated pottery sherds were field identified as a mixture of sherds from the Late Neolithic 1, Early Bronze I, Roman, and Byzantine periods. It is probable that the Roman and Byzantine sherds were washed from the top of the mountain down to this site. The probe trench was excavated down to a depth of 1.30 m., where bedrock was reached.

Square C II 1 did not add more data than that from square C I 1. A continuation of the cobblestone layer found in square C I 1 was recognized. Also, a mixture of Late Neolithic 1, Early Bronze I, Roman, and Byzantine pottery sherds was found, and again, was a result of wash.

Although the upper levels of square C III 1 showed the same results as squares C

I 1, and C II 1, a pure Late Neolithic 1 occupation level was uncovered on the western side. Two circular structures were excavated, in addition to a dark grey layer. In this layer flint tools and pottery objects pointed to the Yarmoukian Period.

C. Area D

Area D consisted of five squares; D II 3, D II 4, D III 3, D III 4, and D III 5. In the first season of excavation, squares D III 4 and D III 5 produced Early Bronze I architectural remains. These consisted of a rectangular room with a benched courtyard.¹ Thus, to uncover the rest of the building and to understand it better, squares D II 3, and D II 4 were opened.

In square D II 3, bedrock was reached at the depth of about 1.50 m. under a red soil layer which was virgin soil. The uppermost layer showed Early Bronze I architecture and artefacts. Just above the bedrock, Late Neolithic 1 (Yarmoukian) artefacts and architectural remains were excavated.²

It seems clear that, in many cases, the Early Bronze I period people destroyed, but in some cases, reused the Yarmoukian buildings. In square D III 3, the stratigraphic profile points to the fact that the Early Bronze I settlers of Jebel Abu Thawwab removed the Yarmoukian remains from the north-east corner of the square and deposited them in the southern half. After that, they built their own structures above this levelling layer. Bedrock was reached at the depth of about three metres at the south-west corner of the square, and at less than one metre in other parts of it (Fig. 3). Even though a few Byzantine sherds were found here, no evidence of settlement from this period was recognized.

After uncovering a portion of a round building in square D II 3, part of which extended into D II 4 (since most of it had been missed by the road cut between Şweileh and Jerash, and instead of eliminating more archaeological evidence from this part of the site), square D II 4 was opened. Evidence of Early Bronze I and Late Neoli-

¹ Z. Kafafi, *Jebel Abu Thawwab (er-Rumman)*, a preliminary report of the first season of ex-

cavation. *ADAJ* XXIX, (1985), p. 31-41.

² *Ibid*

- 1) surface
- 2) locus 1 very small stones
dark brown soil 10 YR $\frac{4}{3}$
- 3) locus 17 soft soil without stone
10 YR $\frac{5}{4}$
- 4) locus 21 its soil 2.5 Y $\frac{6}{2}$
few small stones in the layer
- 5) locus 22 many medium
stones 2.5 Y $\frac{5}{2}$
- 6) locus 27 many medium stones
10 YR $\frac{4}{4}$ very soft soil
- 7) locus 28 its soil 7.5 YR $\frac{4}{4}$
- 8) locus 13 between the wall
its similar to locus 1
- 9) locus 18 its soil 10 YR $\frac{5}{3}$
soft in digging
- 10) locus 29 its soil 2.5 Y $\frac{7}{4}$
some medium stones
and big stone
- 11) locus 30 7.5 YR $\frac{4}{4}$ no stones
hard in digging

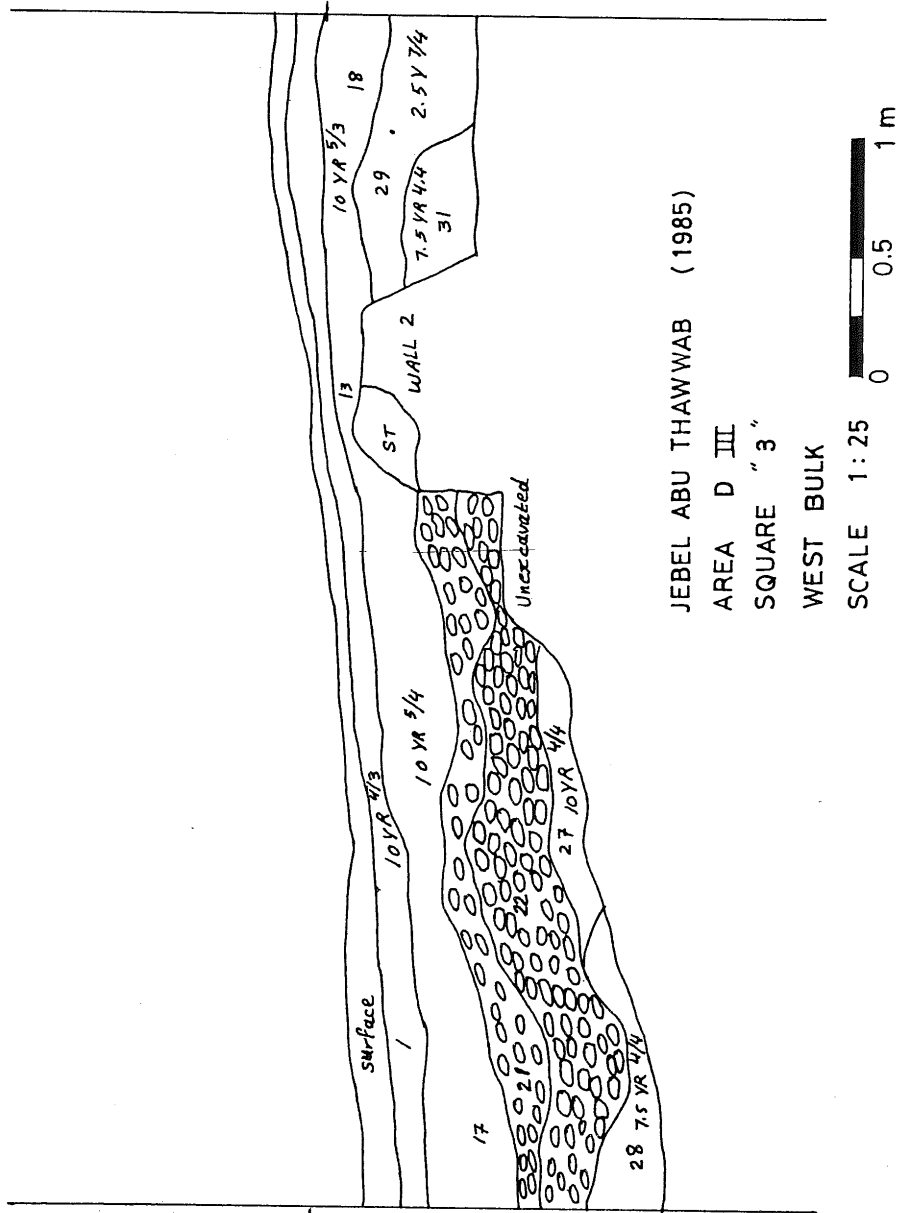


Fig. 3. D III 3 baulk drawing.

thic 1 was found, and the bedrock was reached, as in other squares. The aims for excavating D II 4 were achieved after the rest of the circular building, part of which was in D II 3, was uncovered, and the extension of the Early Bronze I structure in square D II 4 was found.

Conclusions

As was reported in the first season,³ Late Neolithic 1 (Yarmoukian) and Early Bronze I were the major occupations represented at Jebel Abu Thawwab. The excavations continued to show that no occupation of the Chalcolithic Period existed. In addition to this, a few Roman and Byzantine pottery sherds were excavated at several places on the site. A mixed fill of small-sized stones was found all over the area and was considered to represent an unoccupied deposit which separated the two occupational levels.

A. Phase II (Late Neolithic 1)

All excavated areas produced pure occupational remains of the Late Neolithic 1 (Yarmoukian) period. The uncovered architectural buildings associated with this phase were rooms built of stone.⁴ These are either rounded or rectangular in shape, though the rounded ones are the dominant type (Pl. III, 1). Hard-packed earth floors are associated with these buildings, and in some cases cobblestone floors are represented, such as in square D II 3. Hearths were also found, as in square A IV 5. In addition to the above mentioned architectural remains, storage pits were found. These were circular and dug into the virgin soil and measure up to about one metre in diameter and range between 0.50 m. and 1.50 m. in depth.⁵

In terms of its repertoire of artefacts, the Jebel Abu Thawwab Neolithic pottery assemblage is characterized by the following types of ware: 1. coarse tempered plain ware, 2. fine ware (very few were found),

3. red painted slipped ware, 4. incised with herring-bone incisions, 5. red painted with parallel incisions. Though the pottery vessels were apparently relatively low-fired, a good oxidation atmosphere was maintained. This was shown by the rarity of the grey cored vessels. The inclusions showed a wide variation in both grit type and size; however, straw and limestone grits were used as temper. It appeared that the red-painted slip for decorating was popular during the Late Neolithic 1 period. In very few cases, the vessels were burnished by hand. In general, the slip is relatively thin and ranges in color from red, light red, to dusky red.

The decorative motifs include horizontal incised lines, with incised herring-bone patterns in between (Pl. IV, 1). On the other hand, red painted decoration with irregular lines is recognizable on some of the vessels, especially the small ones. Notched decorations are very rare. Discussion of the form repertoire must be withheld until further analysis is completed. The recognizable pottery forms are the simple bowls, cups, hole-mouth and globular jars (Figs. 4-5). Those have ledge, knob, and loop handles, and flat, rounded, and flat-ring bases.

The technology and typology of the chipped stone industry from Abu Thawwab resembles that of assemblages of Late Neolithic 1 sites in Palestine (Giv'at Haparsa) and Lebanon (Byblos). Arrowheads and sickle blades were plentiful; the arrowheads were tanged and had shoulders or wings and a thin point (Pl. IV, 2). The sickle blades were deeply denticulated and had gloss. The absence of axes and chisels is noteworthy in the Abu Thawwab flint tool assemblage; scrapers and pointed tools were well represented, indicating the community was an agriculturally based one.

Small Late Neolithic 1 finds consisted of bone awls and shells of Mediterranean origin. Human, animal and symbolic figurines were found. A great number of

³ *Ibid*

⁴ Z. Kafafi, Late Neolithic architecture from Jebel Abu Thawwab, Jordan, *Paléorient*,

11/1 (1985), p. 125-127.

⁵ *Ibid*.

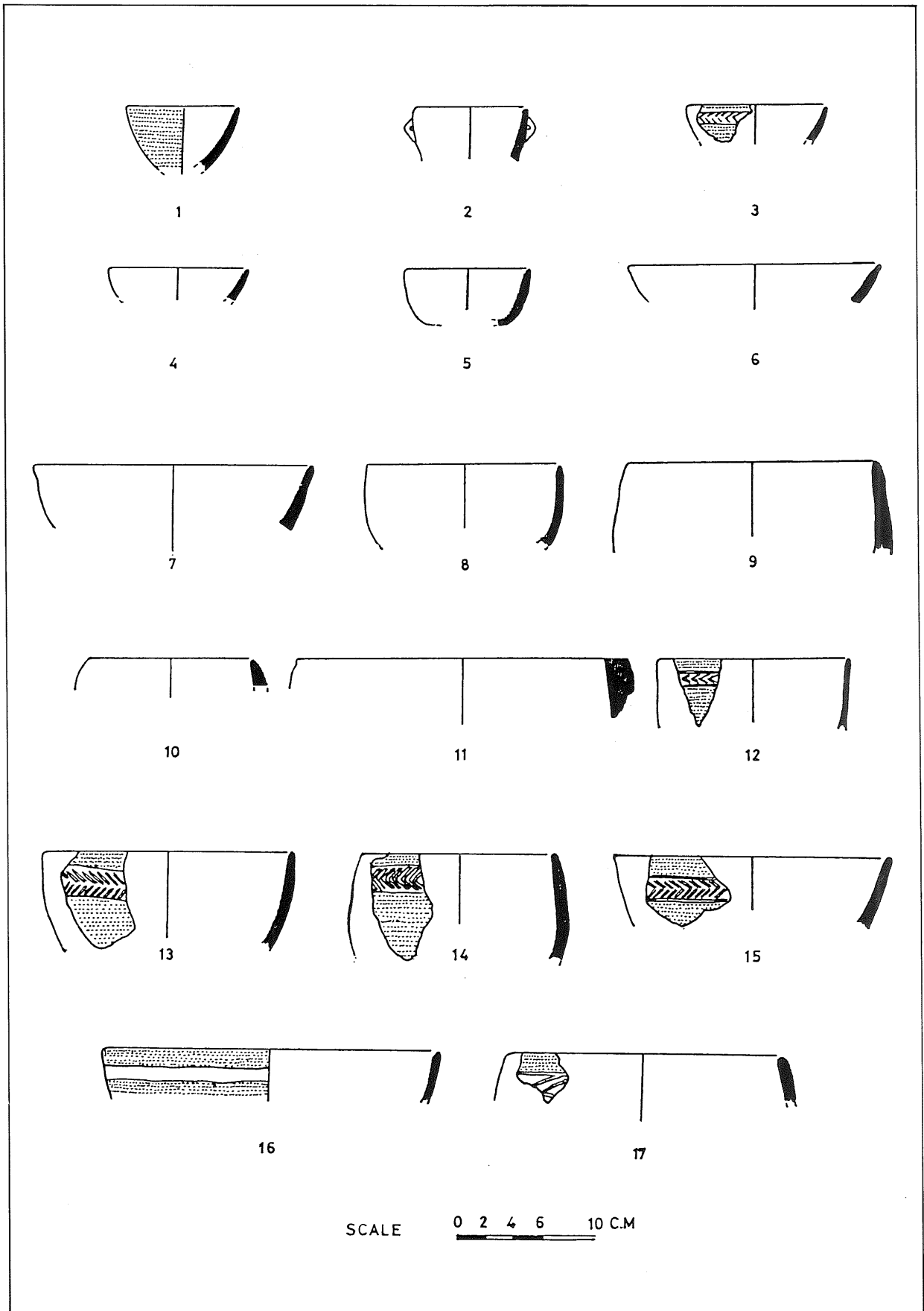


Fig. 4. Pottery cups and bowls.

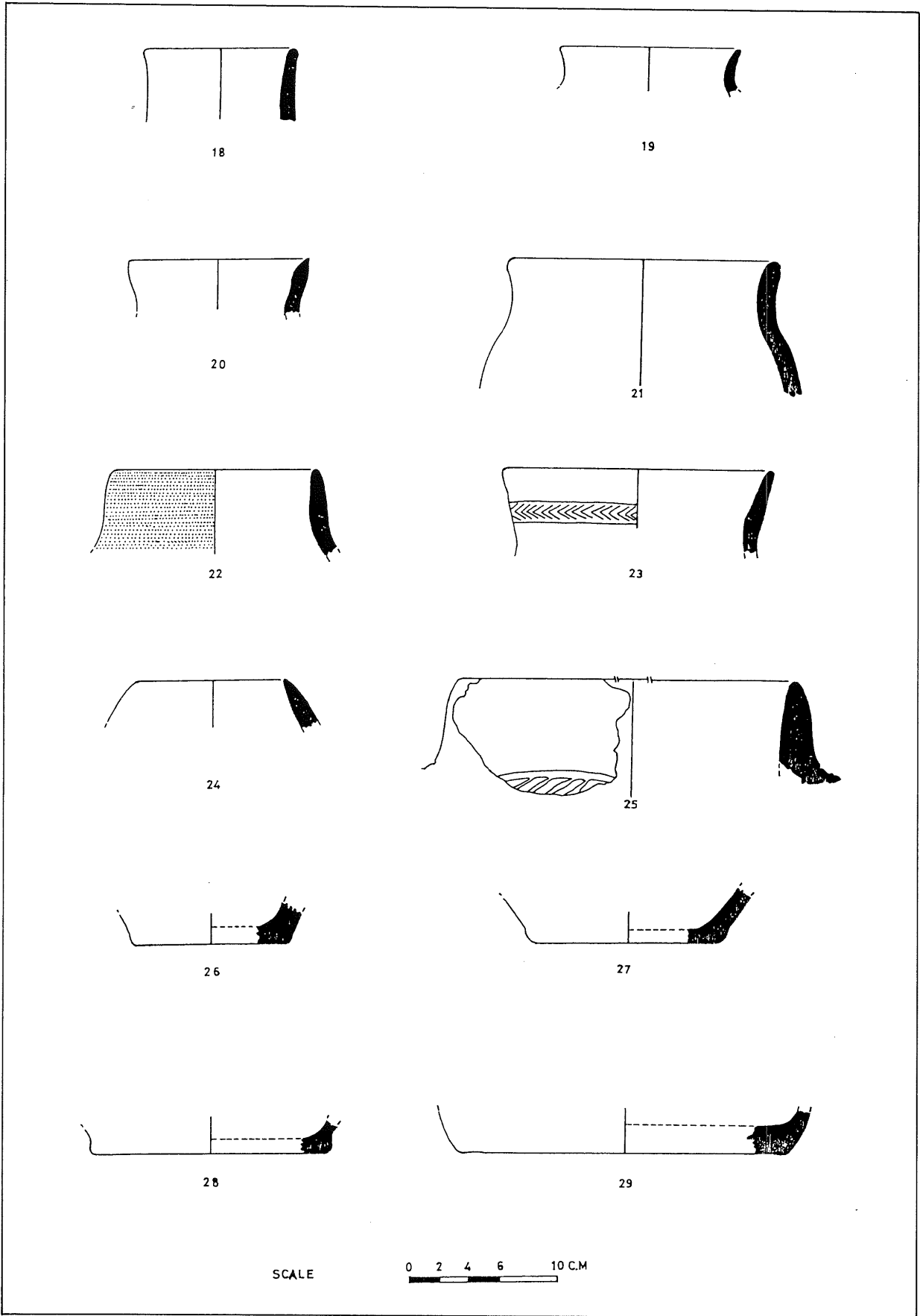


Fig. 5. Jars.

ground stone utensils and vessels were found, most of which were in a fragmentary state of preservation.

Botanical⁶ and faunal⁷ samples were collected at the site. The results of the preliminary analysis of the botanical samples show that the predominant crop plant was *Lens culinaris*, commonly known as lentil. *Pisum sativum* (field pea), *Hordeum distichum* (two row barley), and *Triticum sp.* (wheat) were also cultivated. *Pistacia sp.* (pistachio) and *Amygdalus sp.* (almond) could have been gathered on purpose in the surrounding forests. Further investigations may give us more information about the botanical and faunal aspects of life.

B. Phase I (Early Bronze Age I)

Archaeological remains of Phase I, which is identified with Early Bronze I (ca. 3200-3000 BC), were found in the top strata all over the excavated areas at Jebel Abu Thawwab. Structures related to this period were encountered in Areas A and D. In Area A, Squares A IV 4, and A IV 5, a wall built of two rows of unhewn stones was found directly over a Late Neolithic 1 wall. This wall forms a right angle with another to the east, thus it may be that these walls formed part of a large room.

The most significant building of the Early Bronze I period excavated at Jebel Abu Thawwab, was a rectangular building with benches uncovered in Area D during the first season. This season the rest of the courtyard walls were uncovered. In addition to these, in Square D II 3, more walls were found, but since they are directed to the unexcavated areas, we can not give a clear picture of them. Plastered floors connected with those walls were found.

The pottery vessels and sherds found in the 1985 season are of the same types as those found in 1984. The forms recognized within the assemblage consist mostly of hole-mouth jars and bowls. These were painted with criss-cross lines and parallel

bands. Also, plain, grey burnished and red slipped wares were excavated. Further study of the Early Bronze I pottery repertoire of Abu Thawwab is presently being done. In the 1985 season C14 samples were collected and sent to Holland, the results of which should be available soon.

Jebel Abu Thawwab is one of the few Yarmoukian sites discovered in Jordan during the last few years. 'Ain Ghazal and 'Ain Rahub being the others. What distinguishes Abu Thawwab is its size and the quantity of material culture remains recovered from the excavations. Abu Thawwab was a large farming village of the period and was surrounded, as shown by a recent survey, by contemporary farming villages. Further excavation and survey in the Jebel Abu Thawwab region should help to clarify the nature of Late Neolithic 1 occupation in this part of Jordan.

Acknowledgements

The team members of the excavation (Fig. 6) were: Mr. Nabil el-Qadi, Research Assistant at the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, who served as chief archaeologist; Mr. Reinder Neef of Groningen Rijkuniversiteit Biologisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, as paleobotanist; Mrs. Ciony C. Metz, camp director; students in the M.A. program of the Institute: Deif-Allah 'Oeidat, Mohammad 'Essam- 'El-ai, Wajih Karasneh, Jum'a Kreyem, Mohammad Rousan, Ibrahim Zo'bi, and Ms. Hanna Mismar; and, a group of sixteen American exchange students: Karen Arnold, Michael Cooperson, Daniel J. Holub, Jerry D. Lyon, Christine Sieben, Robin Surratt, Jeffrey S. Sutton, Lori Billings, Timothy Harrison, Leesteffy Jenkins, Nickolas Morris, Andrea Olsen, Stephen Perkins, Gerard Rimel, Julie Taylor and Craig Wanink. Other members of the team were Abu Ramadan, cook; Abu Othman and Abu 'Emad, Yarmouk University drivers.

The members of the team are very

⁶ Mr. Reinder Neef has undertaken the analysis of the botanical remains from Abu Thawwab, and has provided us with the information

given above.

⁷ Dr. Ilse Kohler is now studying the bone remains.



Fig. 6. Jebel Abu Thawwab 1985 season team.

thankful for the interest shown by the public of Jordan and abroad. Special thanks are due to Prof. Dr. Adnan Badran (former President, Yarmouk University), Prof. Dr. Moawiyah Ibrahim (Director, Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology), and Prof. Dr. Adnan Hadidi, (Director-General of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan) for their continuous support of this project. The staff is also grateful to Dr. James A. Sauer (President), American Schools for Oriental Research, Dr. David McCreery (Director, ACOR) and Mr. D.

Jacobsen (Administrator, ACOR) for making the American Youth Exchange Program possible. Acknowledgement is also given to Mr. David L. Metz who restored some pottery objects retrieved during the season.

Members of the survey team were 'Esam-'El-ai and Daniel Holub, Gerard Reimel and Craig Wansink.

Zeidan Kafafi
Institute of Archaeology
and Anthropology
Yarmouk University
Irbid, JORDAN

Bibliography

- Z. Kafafi, Jebel Abu Thawwab (er-Rumman), a preliminary report of the first season of excavation. *ADAJ* XXIX, (1985), p. 31-41.
- Z. Kafafi, Late Neolithic architecture from Jebel Abu Thawwab, Jordan. *Paléorient*, 11/1 (1985), p. 125-127.