

THE CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROJECT IN JORDAN  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESCUE SURVEY OF THE ṬAFILEH-GHOR FEIFEH  
ROAD ALIGNMENT, SECTIONS I-II

by  
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### Introduction

The Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MPWH) is conducting the construction of a new road between Ṭafileh and Ghor Feifeh in Wadi 'Arabah, along the steep Wadi 'Umruq. The length of the projected road is 24 kilometers, from the village of Şinfaha, near Ṭafileh, to Feifeh.

The road alignment crosses a plateau area west of Şinfaha, reaching the edge of the plateau approximately 4 km west of the village, from there starts a precipitous descent into Wadi 'Umruq in an extremely rough and steep landscape of sandstone mountains sharply cut by wadis and erosional gullies. Only 6 km (as the crow flies) separate this plateau, at an elevation of 700 m above sea level, from the Ghor, at an elevation of 300 m below sea level.

The aims of the survey were to locate archaeological sites within the limits of the construction project's right of way (ROW), to evaluate their importance, and to coordinate with the MPWH different solutions for their protection. A parallel research question was to find evidence of the human exploitation of Wadi 'Umruq through time and to check the reported "gap" of the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze Age occupations, as stressed by previous research in the area (MacDonald 1992). The survey was financed by the MPWH with a provisional sum as provided in the construction budget.

This procedure is becoming a standard for all major construction projects financed directly by or through the MPWH, and allows the Department of Antiquities to conduct archaeological investigations and to protect important cultural heritage sites from destruction. This procedure is part of a more complex cooperation agreement which has been recently reached between the MPWH and the Department of Antiquities through the mediation of the Cultural Resources Management Project.<sup>1</sup>

### Methodology

A team composed of eight Department of Antiquities staff and University of Jordan students surveyed the road alignment from August 30 to September 30, 1992.<sup>2</sup> The team surveyed, registered, and mapped all the sites located within 500 meters to the right and left of the road alignment. Available maps were the 1:50,000 scale series K737, sheet 3051.I and 3151.IV.

The survey was conducted on foot, with survey members walking at distances between 20 and 50 meters from each other. Sample collections were taken at all sites, and site features were recorded.

### Survey Results

The survey located 38 sites, 28 of which were identified for the first time (Fig. 1). The periods best represented are the Chal-

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1. The Cultural Resources Management Project is a joint Department of Antiquities-American Center of Oriental Research project financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Aims of the project are to create mechanisms of cooperation between development agencies and the Department of Antiquities, to anticipate the need for emergency excavations, and to organize the existing infor-

mation about all the archaeological sites of Jordan into a computerized inventory (the JADIS project). See Palumbo *et al.*, this volume.

2. They were Jihad Darwish, Hakim Mahamid, Yazid Elayan, Jihad Harun, Ahmed Momani and Lo'ay Mrafi. Mohammed Waheeb directed the fieldwork. Gaetano Palumbo was project consultant and liaison with the MPWH and the Department of Antiquities.

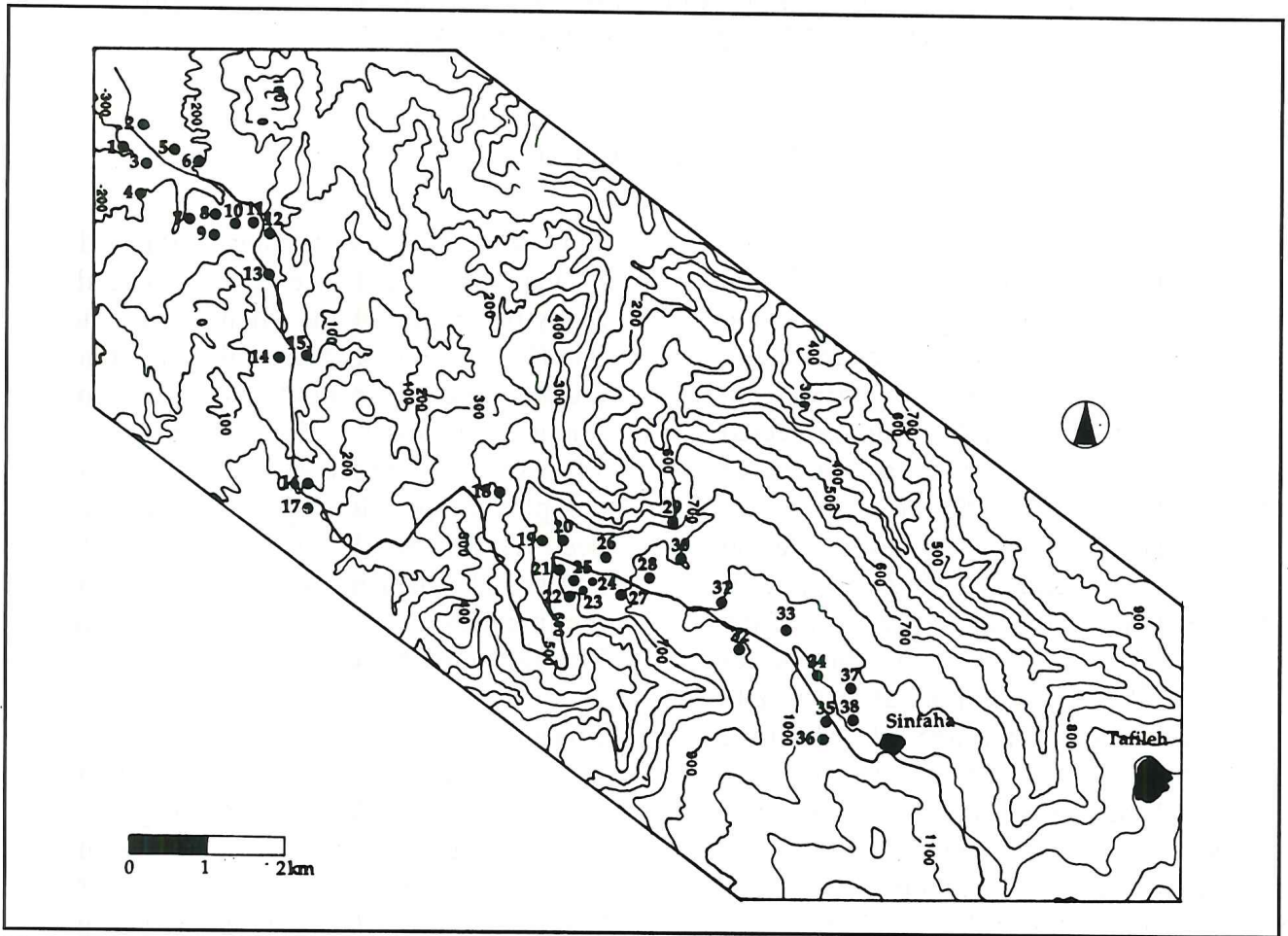


Fig. 1. Map of road alignment with sites 1-38.

colithic (4 sites), the Iron Age (7 sites), the Nabataean (10 sites), the Roman (21 sites), the Byzantine (14 sites), and the Mamluk/Ottoman (10 sites). The Roman and Byzantine periods, combined, are represented at 24 sites, i.e. over 60% of the sites located during the survey. Nabataean and Mamluk/Ottoman periods are present at 25% of the sites. On the basis of this survey alone, it is not possible to speak about “gaps” in the record of human occupation in Wadi 'Umruq, because of the limited area surveyed. It is, however, important to stress an almost total absence of Bronze Age and Early Islamic materials, while the centuries between the first B.C. and the seventh A.D. mark the “high peak” of human occupation and exploitation of the limited resources of this area. A renewed occupation seems to occur between the 14th and the 18/19th centuries, under Mamluk and Ottoman rule.

Sites fall under five main categories: habitation (sites 15, 25, 29), agricultural (sites 12, 21-24, 30, 31, 34, 35), watchtowers (sites 1, 5, 13, 14, 19, 32, 36), sherd scatters (sites 3/4, 6, 7, 11, 18, 26, 27, 33, 37, 38), and other or unspecified (sites 8/9, 10, 16/17, 20, 28). Site 2 is a grave site.

The primary aim of the survey was to identify archaeological sites still unknown in an area where major construction work is going to heavily disturb the present landscape. The parallel “research questions” mentioned above, e.g. to check the reported gap of Middle and Late Bronze Ages occupation, and to find evidence of human exploitation of the area, were only partly answered, because of the “emergency” and restricted nature of the survey. An important result, however, is the discovery of a very large number of archaeological sites in an area which today looks totally unhospit-

able. As the evidence has shown, man was able to adapt even to harsh environmental conditions. Adaptation probably came from a number of factors, including the need to control and exploit a communication link between the plateau in the Tafilih area and the Ghor. It seems that this link was mainly exploited during the Roman-Byzantine period, but substantial traces of the Nabataean and the Iron Age periods date the active use of Wadi 'Umruq back several centuries. Newly discovered site 15, a largely undisturbed Iron Age II site with

substantial structural remains, could yield information on the Edomite village settlement, structure and control of peripheral and inaccessible areas.

The construction work will be closely monitored, in order to avoid unnecessary damage to archaeological sites. It is hoped that this rescue project could be followed by more scientifically-oriented field projects that will clarify the phases and intensity of use of this and other major wadis flowing from the high plateau to the southern Ghor.

## Catalogue of Sites

### 1. Sites Directly Threatened by Construction

#### Site 11 (SGNAS site 138)<sup>3</sup>

Name: No name  
 UTM: 7374E-34219N  
 Palestine grid: 196.1 034.9  
 Periods: EChal, EB? (SGNAS: LPNeo, EChal, EB)  
 Description: Located west of site 12 (SGNAS 137), on the north bank of Wadi 'Umruq. Flint tools and pottery sherds scattered over an area with no traces of architectural remains.

#### Site 12 (SGNAS site 137)

Name: No name  
 UTM: 7376E-34217N  
 Palestine grid: 196.3 034.7  
 Periods: Maml, UD flints (SGNAS: Chal, EB)  
 Description: North bank of Wadi 'Umruq, on an alluvial fan. Pottery sherd scatter and traces of circular structures.

#### Site 13

Name: No name  
 UTM: 7376E-34212N  
 Palestine grid: 196.3 034.2  
 Periods: Rom?, UD pottery  
 Description: Sandy hill located in the Right of Way of the new road. Pottery sherds and traces of a foundation wall, possibly a watchtower.

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3. SGNAS= MacDonald 1992. Sites 1-17 are found within the limits of map 3051.I; sites 18-30 within the limits of map 3151.IV.

Site 16/17

Name: No name  
UTM: 7381E-34185N  
Palestine grid: 196.8 031.5  
Periods: Ir, Rom, Byz?  
Description: Middle slope of a high hill. Sherd scatter with some traces of wall foundations.

Site 22

Name: No name  
UTM: 7416E-34170N  
Palestine grid: 200.2 030.0  
Periods: Rom, Byz, UD flints  
Description: On a slope, pottery sherds scattered around some cairns, possibly the result of field clearing.

Site 23

Name: No name  
UTM: 7418E-34170N  
Palestine grid: 200.4 030.0  
Periods: Nab, Rom, Byz, UD flints.  
Description: Pottery sherds scattered over an area with cairns, possibly the result of field clearing.

Site 24

Name: No name  
UTM: 7418E-34172N  
Palestine grid: 200.4 030.2  
Periods: Rom, UD flints  
Description: Pottery sherds scattered around some cairns, possibly the result of field clearing.

Site 25

Name: No name  
UTM: 7415E-34172N  
Palestine grid: 200.1 030.2  
Periods: Ir?, Nab, Rom, Byz, Ay/Maml, UD flints  
Description: Traces of wall foundations on the lower slopes of a hill, with some caves on the west sector of the site.

*2. Sites Not Directly Threatened by Construction*

Site 1 (SGNAS site 94):

Name: Rujm 'Umruq  
UTM: 7358E-34228N  
Palestine grid: 194.6 035.9  
Periods: Hell, Nab, Rom, Byz  
Description: Located on a small hill on the north bank of Wadi 'Umruq. Traces of structures,

possibly a watchtower.

Site 2

Name: No name  
UTM: 7361E-34230N  
Palestine grid: 194.9 036.1  
Periods: UD pottery  
Description: Small round cairns, possibly tombs, located south of road alignment.

Site 3/4 (SGNAS site 132)

Name: No name  
UTM: 7360E-34222N  
Palestine grid: 194.7 035.3  
Periods: Rom  
Description: On a small hill on the south banks of Wadi 'Umruq. Sherd scatter. No associated structures.

Site 5 (SGNAS site 145)

Name: No name  
UTM: 7365E-34227N  
Palestine grid: 195.2 035.8  
Periods: Rom (?)  
Description: On a hill on the north bank of Wadi 'Umruq. Destroyed tower. No pottery, no flints.

Site 6 (SGNAS site 146)

Name: No name  
UTM: 7368E-34226N  
Palestine grid: 195.5 035.7  
Periods: UD (SGNAS: EB, Rom, Byz)  
Description: On the north bank of Wadi 'Umruq. Sherd scatter. Site affected by erosion. The few diagnostic pottery sherds may have all been collected by MacDonald during his survey.

Site 7 (SGNAS site 139)

Name: No name  
UTM: 7366E-34219N  
Palestine grid: 195.3 035.0  
Periods: UD (SGNAS: EB, Ir I, Ir II)  
Description: On the south bank of Wadi 'Umruq. Sherd scatter. No architectural features. The diagnostic pottery material may have all been collected by MacDonald during his survey.

Site 8 (SGNAS site 133)

Name: No name  
UTM: 7369E-34220N  
Palestine grid: 195.6 035.1

Periods: Chal  
Description: On a rocky hill on the south bank of Wadi 'Umruq. Circular structure foundation, built with a double row of stones filled with stone chunks.

Site 9 (SGNAS site 133)

Name: No name  
UTM: 7369E-34219N  
Palestine grid: 195.6 035.0  
Periods: Chal  
Description: Rectangular structure built with two rows of stone. Entrance from the north, on the structure's long side.

Site 10 (SGNAS site 134)

Name: No name  
UTM: 7371E-34218N  
Palestine grid: 195.8 034.9  
Periods: Chal (SGNAS: LPN, Chal, Ir I)  
Description: On the south bank of Wadi 'Umruq and to the east of site 8, traces of square structures built of two rows of stones.

Site 14

Name: No name  
UTM: 7377E-34202N  
Palestine grid: 196.4 033.2  
Periods: UD pottery  
Description: South of the road alignment, on a hilltop, traces of destroyed building, possibly a watchtower. Recent bedouin graves.

Site 15

Name: No name  
UTM: 7381E-34202N  
Palestine grid: 196.8 033.2  
Periods: Ir II  
Description: On the north bank of Wadi 'Umruq, on a small hill. Wall foundations of undressed stones, surrounded by high hills to the north. Fallen stone blocks probably obscure part of the site. High density sherd scatter. An habitation site.

Site 18

Name: No name  
UTM: 7406E-34184N  
Palestine grid: 199.3 031.4  
Periods: Rom, Byz  
Description: Sherd scatter.

Site 19

Name: No name  
UTM: 7411E-34178N

Palestine grid: 199.7 030.8  
Periods: Rom, UD  
Description: On a hill near km 15 of road alignment. One structure, possibly a watchtower.

Site 20

Name: No name  
UTM: 7412E-34178N  
Palestine grid: 199.8 030.8  
Periods: Ir?, Nab, Rom?  
Description: 100 m east of site 19, traces of wall foundations. High density sherd scatter.

Site 21

Name: No name  
UTM: 7413E-34176N  
Palestine grid: 199.9 030.6  
Periods: Ir II, Rom, Byz, Isl (Maml?), UD flints  
Description: On upper slopes of hill, pottery sherds found besides a rujm/cairn. Possibly an ancient agricultural field.

Site 26

Name: No name  
UTM: 7420E-34176N  
Palestine grid: 200.6 030.6  
Periods: Ir, Rom  
Description: North of road alignment, on a hill. Structures built with limestone blocks. Some pottery sherds found in the area.

Site 27

Name: No name  
UTM: 7422E-34170N  
Palestine grid: 200.8 030.0  
Periods: Nab, Rom, UD flints  
Description: Opposite to site 26 on a high hill. Sherd scatter. No visible structures.

Site 28

Name: No name  
UTM: 7425E-34173N  
Palestine grid: 201.1 030.2  
Periods: Chal/EB?  
Description: North of road alignment, traces of destroyed buildings. East section of site is eroded away.

Site 29

Name: Ghalyun Ersheid / Kharabet ar-Romani  
UTM: 7428E-34180N (approximate)  
Palestine grid: 201.5 030.9  
Periods: UD

Description: Site not visited. Structures visible from a distance.

Site 30

Name: No name

UTM: 7429E-34175N

Palestine grid: 201.5 030.4

Periods: Nab, Rom, Maml, UD flints

Description: North of road alignment, on a small hill, an oval building or structure, built of one row of stones only.

Site 31

Name: No name

UTM: 7435E-34170N

Palestine grid: 202.1 029.9

Periods: Rom, Byz

Description: North of road alignment, on a low area, a circular structure built over bedrock. The site is surrounded by agricultural terraces.

Site 32

Name: No name

UTM: 7437E-34163N

Palestine grid: 202.3 029.2

Periods: Nab, Byz, Maml, Unsp. Isl.

Description: South of road alignment, on a hill, traces of one circular structure, possibly a watchtower.

Site 33

Name: No name

UTM: 7444E-34166N

Palestine grid: 203.0 029.5

Periods: Nab, Rom, Byz, Maml, Unsp. Isl.

Description: Some pottery scattered over a small hill north of road alignment.

Site 34

Name: No name

UTM: 7448E-34160N

Palestine grid: 203.4 028.9

Periods: Rom, Byz, Maml, Unsp. Isl.

Description: North of road alignment, traces of foundation walls belonging to a single structure.

Site 35

Name: No name

UTM: 7448E-34154N

Palestine grid: 203.4 028.3

Periods: Nab, Byz?, Maml, Unsp. Isl.

Description: South of road alignment, in an agricultural area, traces of a destroyed building



with pottery.

Site 36

Name: No name  
UTM: 7448E-34152N  
Palestine grid: 203.4 028.1  
Periods: Nab, Rom, Unsp. Isl., UD flints  
Description: South of road alignment, on a high hill, traces of a destroyed building, possibly a watchtower.

Site 37

Name: No name  
UTM: 7452E-34159N  
Palestine grid: 203.8 028.8  
Periods: Ir?, Rom, Byz  
Description: Sherd scatter in an agricultural area.

Site 38

Name: No name  
UTM: 7452E-34155N  
Palestine grid: 203.8 028.4  
Periods: Rom, Byz, Maml, Unsp. Isl.  
Description: North of road alignment, on a low hill, pottery sherds without visible architectural features.

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## References

- MacDonald, B.  
1992 *The Southern Ghors and Northeast 'Arabah Archaeological Survey*. Sheffield.
- Palumbo, G. *et al.*  
1993 Cultural Resources Management in Jordan, 1987-1992. *ADAJ* 37.

## Appendix - Catalogue of Pottery

### *Fig. 2:*

1. Site 15: bowl. Flared rounded rim. Small grit temper, high fired. Red slip exterior and interior. 2.5YR 5/6 slip, 5YR 7/6 ware. Iron II.
2. Site 15: basin rim. Inverted flattened rim. Small grit temper, high fired. Brown slip exterior. 5YR 5/2 slip, 5YR 6/3 interior, 2.5YR 6/6 ware. Iron II.
3. Site 15: bowl rim. Inverted rim with shallow carination below it. Small to medium grit temper, high fired. 5YR 7/6 exterior, 2.5YR 6/6 interior and ware. Iron II.
4. Site 15: cup rim. Vertical rounded rim. Small grit temper, high fired. Red paint exterior and rim interior. 2.5YR 4/6 paint, 5YR 6/4 ware. Iron II.
5. Site 15: jar rim and handle. Handle from vertical rounded rim to shoulder. Small to medium grit temper, high fired. 2.5YR 5/6 ware. Iron II.

### *Fig. 3:*

6. Site 20: jar rim. Very coarse ware with medium/large quartzite grits, low fired. 5YR 6/4 exterior, 5YR 6/6 interior, 5YR 5/1 core. Chalcolithic.
7. Site 28: basin rim. Coarse grit temper, low fired. 5YR 6/6 exterior, 5YR 6/4 interior, 5YR 4/1 core. EB?
8. Site 20: jar rim. Very coarse ware with medium/ large quartzite grits, medium fired. 5YR 6/4 exterior and interior, 2.5 YR 6/8 ware. Chalcolithic.
9. Site 31: basin rim, applied impressed decoration. Medium grit temper, low fired. 2.5YR 5/2 interior, 2.5YR 6/6 exterior, 2.5YR 4/0 core. EB?
10. Site 27: cup rim. Fine grit temper, high fired. 2.5YR 6/4 exterior, 2.5YR 6/6 interior and ware. Roman/Byzantine.
11. Site 28: basin rim, applied impressed decoration. Coarse grit temper, low fired. 5YR 7/4 exterior, 5YR 6/6 interior, 5YR 4/1 core. EB?
12. Site 1 (Rujm 'Umruq): jar handle. Medium grit temper, medium fired. 5YR 6/4 exterior, 5YR 6/2 interior, 5YR 5/1 core.

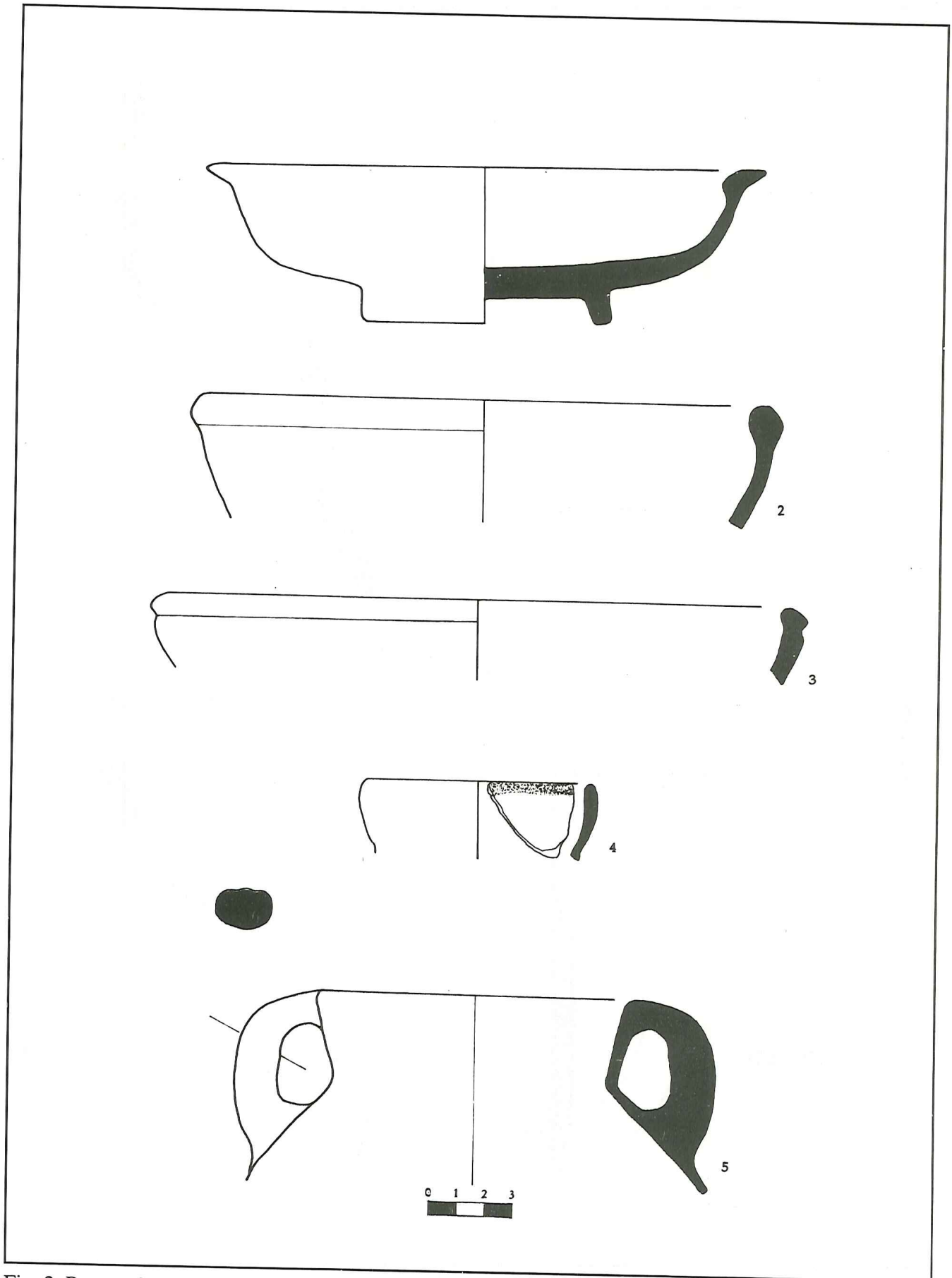


Fig. 2. Pottery from site 15. Drawings by Yazid Elayan.

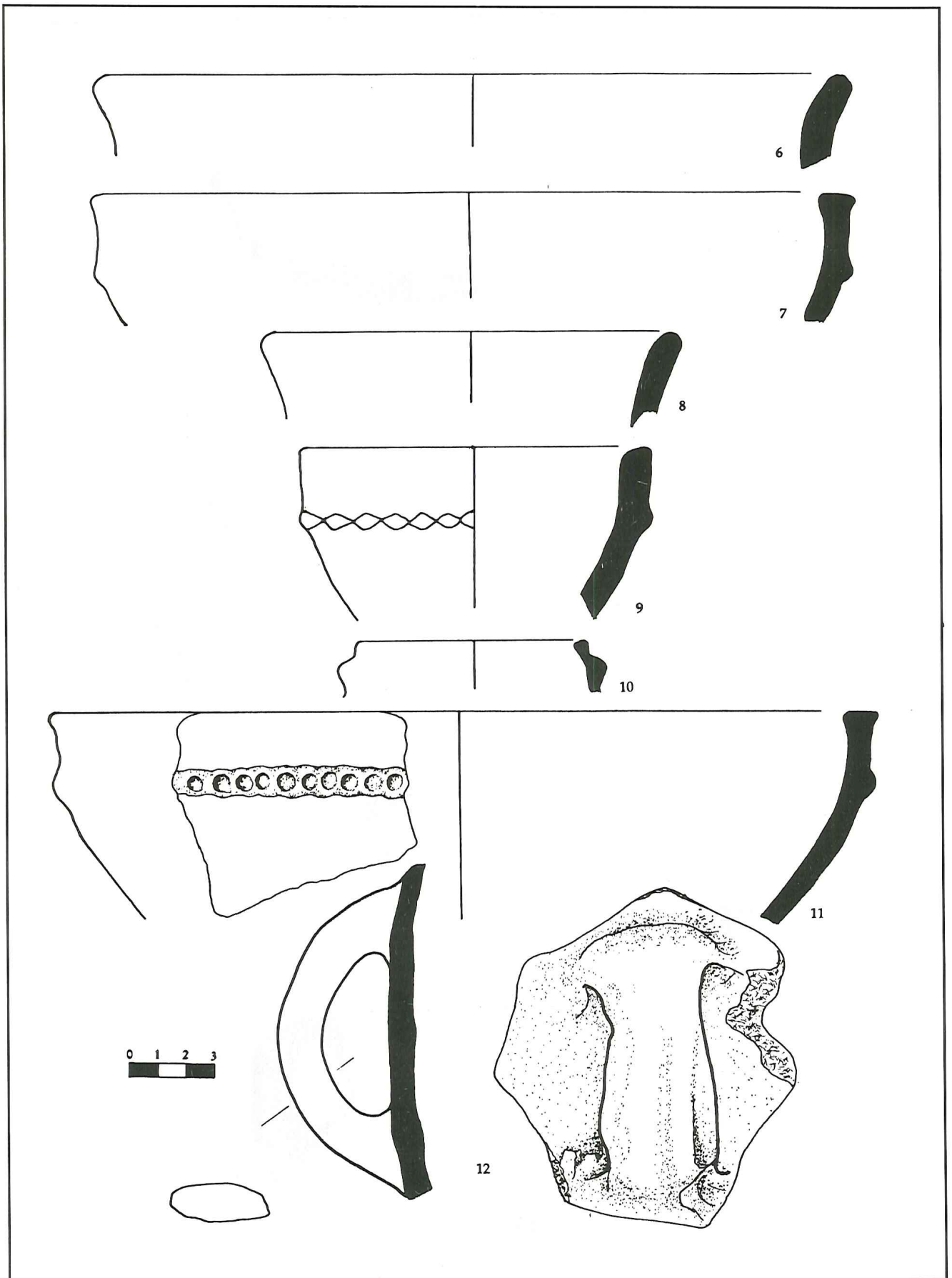


Fig. 3. Pottery from sites 1, 20, 27, 28 and 31. Drawings by Yazid Elayan.