

# TALL JUḤFIYYA

## AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN NORTHERN JORDAN: A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2002 FIELD SEASON

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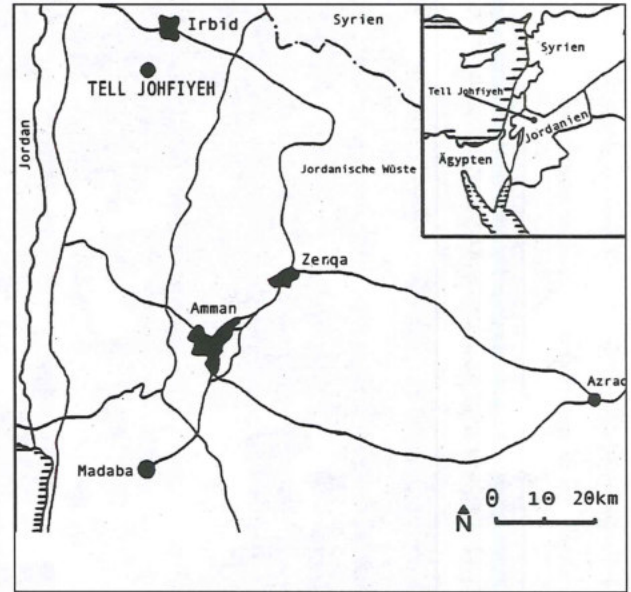
### Introduction

Under the joint directorship of Roland Lamprichs (DEI-Amman) and Ziad al Sa'ad (IAA-Irbid) the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in Amman (DEI) and the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology in Irbid (IAA) conducted a first season of archaeological excavations at Tall Juḥfiyya (تل جحفية) from May fifth to May 26th 2002<sup>1</sup>. The project aimed at studying the archaeology of Tall Juḥfiyya, documenting its remains and increasing our general knowledge and understanding of the Iron Age and its material culture on the northern plateau. In a first step some basic information about the architecture structure, stratigraphy and pottery-sequence of the tall as well as some materials for a reconstruction of a small rural settlement of the Iron Age should be obtained.

The excavation was 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 al-Khraysheh. We are also thankful for help of Mr. Nasser Khassawneh, head of the Department of Antiquities, Irbid-office, and our representative Dia Tawalbeh who did an excellent job in the field. Major logistic support was given to us by Dr. Ziad Talafah (Juḥfiyya), the inhabitants of the modern village of Juḥfiyya and our local workmen. Thank you to all of them.

### Topography and Research History

Tall Juḥfiyya (Figs. 1 and 2) is situated about 7.5km southwest of Irbid at the northern fringe of the modern village of Juḥfiyya (UTM-Zone 36; UTME 7652; UTMN 35986). Its topographical location on a high ground about 793,00m above sea level provides the site with a good view over the hilly surroundings, which are now characterized by



1. Map of Jordan showing Tall Juḥfiyya.

different kinds of agricultural activities. Nowadays, the inhabitants of Juḥfiyya mainly cultivate grains, olive and fruit trees (e.g. figs, apricots).

The archaeological site of Tall Juḥfiyya proper (Fig. 3) covers an area of approximately 4000sqm. The leveled top of the mound, which is almost circular in shape measures about 950sqm. The height of the mound above the surrounding fields is approximately seven meters (Fig. 4). Its orientation at the base is slightly east/west. A steep slope characterizes the upper and medium range of the mound. The bottom range on the other hand partly seems to be leveled by terracing. Traces of ploughing found on the flat surface indicate recent agricultural activities at the top of the site. The slopes and surroundings are covered with a mass of huge

1. We would like to thank all members of staff for contributing to the success of our first season in the field: Nabil Qadi (Irbid); Katrin Bastert, M.A. ('Ammān); Ute Koprivc (Remscheid/Germany); Arnd Kulla ('Ammān); Dr. Lutz Martin (Berlin/Germany); Elke Posselt, M.A. (Berlin/Germany);

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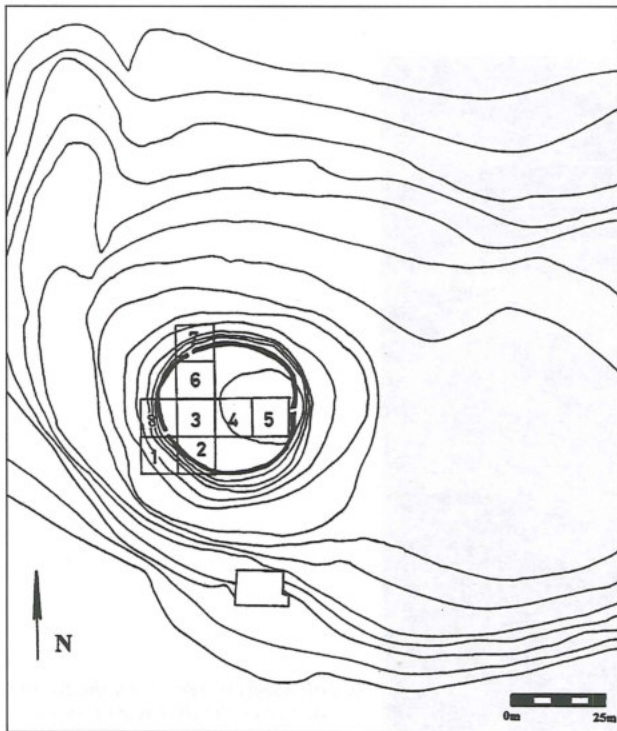
Tell Juhfiyeh



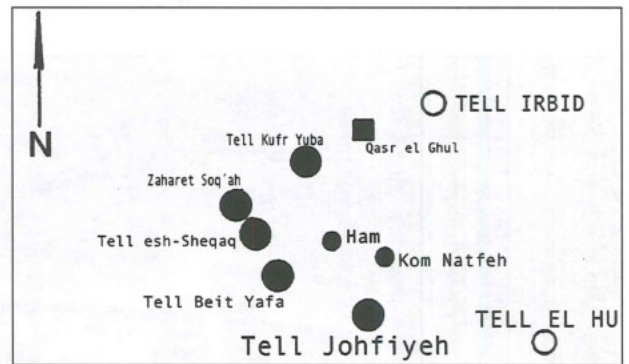
2. Tall Juhfiyya and the modern village of Juhfiyya from the air.



3. Tall Juhfiyya: general view from north-east.



4. Tall Juhfiyya: topographic sketch of the site showing excavation areas.



5. Tall Juhfiyya and its surrounding: a sketch.

to medium/large sized lime and flintstones.

In contrast to similar structures found for example in Tall ash-shiqāq (تل الشقاق) (Fig. 5), a site situated some 3.0km to the northwest, the general state of preservation is good (Lamprichs 1997a, b). Minor destructions and a few robbery pits are found only on the slopes and on top of the mound. Erosion seems to be of almost no consequence.

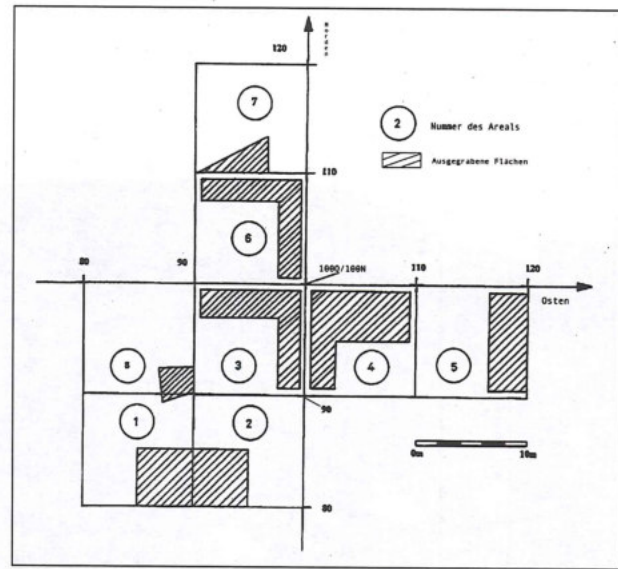
Surface structures mainly consist of a nearly cir-

cular wall (height: up to 1m; width: up to 0.8m) surrounding the plateau of the site. "Openings" within this wall are situated in the eastern, north-and southwestern parts of the tall only. Another wall at the foot of the mound, outlining roughly the limits of the tall, is still extant up to 2.5m in height. Its width is more than 1m. It was found that the villagers of Juhfiyya rebuilt this wall, not long ago, due to recent farming activities.

According to Glueck (1951: 172; 1951a) who visited the site during his extensive "Explorations in Eastern Palestine", Tall Juhfiyya was founded and used mainly during the Iron Age I and II periods (ca. 1200–586BC). Following his analysis of surface finds, only a few potsherds, dating from Roman to Medieval times, indicate a later settlement. Apart from Glueck, only Steuernagel (1926), Zwickel (1990: 309) and Palumbo (1994: 2221.007) have mentioned Tall Juhfiyya in their essays and scientific compilations.

The information given by them coincides in

most parts with Glueck's description and interpretation of the site. Further archaeological investigations did not take place. It was only in 1995 that the hitherto published results were completed. Visits to the site and surveying of its neighbourhood in 1995, 1996, 1998 and 2000 by Dr. Ziad al-Sa'ad (IAA) and Dr. Roland Lamprichs (DEI) (Lamprichs 1996a, b; 1997a, b; 1998; 2002a; Lamprichs and Kafafi 2000) showed that in correspondence with Glueck's statements, most of the pottery collected could be dated to the Iron Age. The remainder of the then identified pottery mainly dates to the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods. The archaeological surveys furthermore showed, that Tall Juhfiyya and several other small Iron Age sites in the vicinity fit within a settlement pattern that is dominated by either Tall al-Ḥuṣn (تل الحصن) or Tall Irbid (تل اربيد). The results of a first season of excavations (Lamprichs 2002b) conducted in 2002 (3 weeks) are summarized below (Fig. 6).



7. Schematic plan showing the excavated squares.



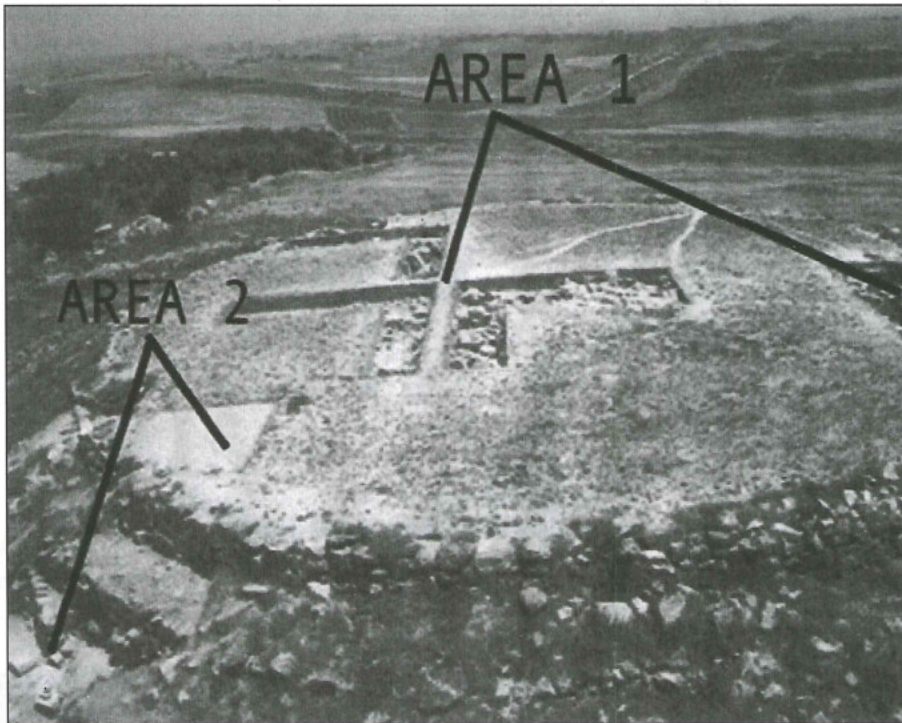
6. Tall Juhfiyya seen from the southwest after the first season of excavations in 2002.

### Results of the First Season

Within an artificial grid (10m x 10m) eight squares (1-8) were defined and partly excavated (Figs. 7, 8). Altogether an area of 210.5sqm, covering the main parts of the mound, was opened during our first campaign in spring 2002. Trenches dug within squares 1 and 2 are situated on the slope of the tall (AREA 2). The other trenches (squares 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) are all located on the leveled, recently ploughed top of the site (AREA 1).

### AREA 1

The remains found within the circular wall surrounding the flattened top of the mound (squares 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) are almost exclusively of an Iron Age date. Only a few remains connected to a water reservoir uncovered in the northeastern part of square 5 (Fig. 9) and some wall fragments found within and just below the topsoil of square 4 belong to the Late Byzantine/Umayyad period. An almost complete jar found on the ground of the medium sized (2.5 x 2.7 x 3.5m) cistern (Fig. 10) and an



8. Excavation AREAS 1 and 2 seen from the south-west.



9. Square 5: Small cistern seen from north-west.

Umayyad bowl (Fig. 11) uncovered not far away in the upper layers of the tall confirm the given date.

Separated by a layer of brown soil from the sparsely documented Late Byzantine/Early Islamic occupation level, a reddish mud floor interspersed with a huge amount of chalky material was un-

earthed. Remains of this floor have been found in almost all excavated areas within the leveled top of the mound (squares 3, 4, 5 and 6). Huge walls founded on an earlier level characterize the architectural remains connected to this floor, to which small, simple walls were added. The small rooms



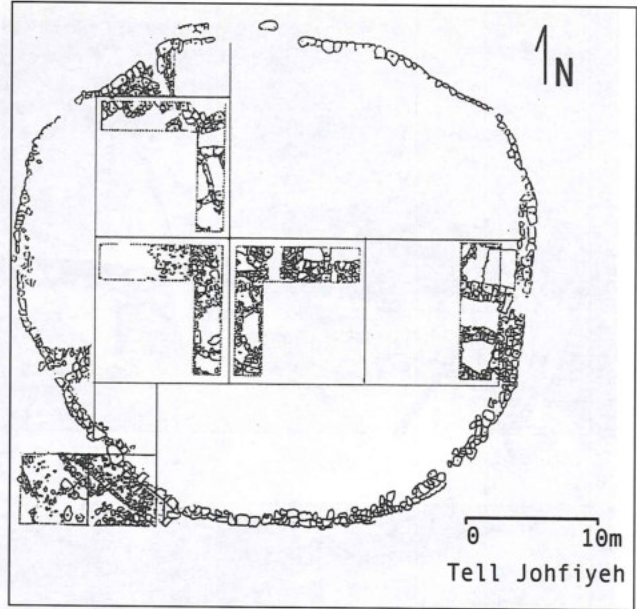
10. Square 5: Almost complete jar found on the bottom of a cistern.



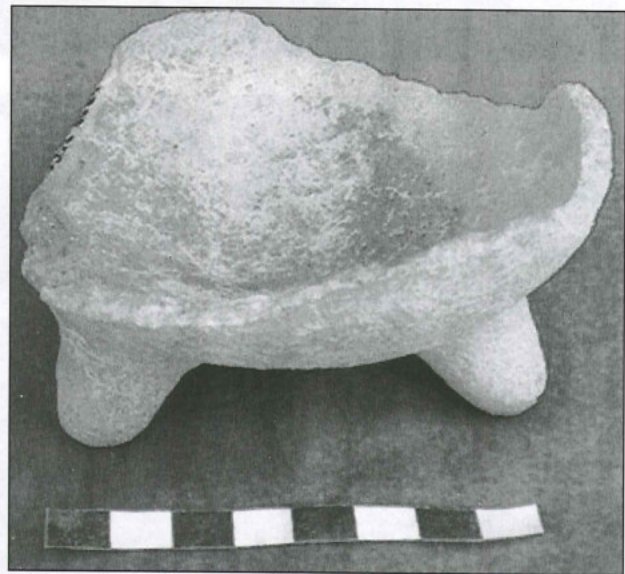
11. Square 5: Umayyad bowl (almost complete).



12. Example of small "rooms".



13. Tall Juhfiyya: architectural remains.

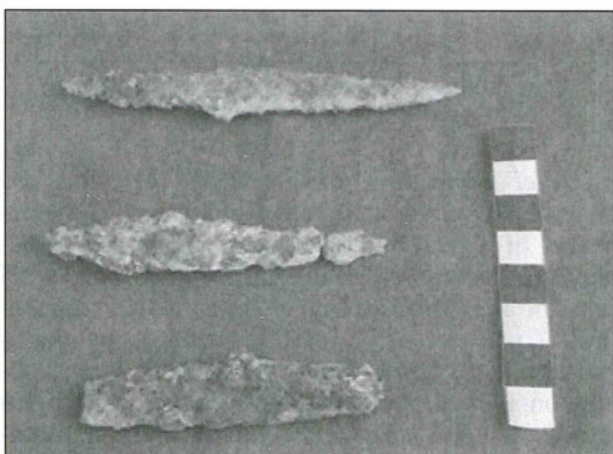


14. Part of an "Iron Age II" incense burner/strainer.

and "courtyards" created by this are very heterogeneous. Their exact structures and relations to each other are not fully understood yet (Figs. 12, 13). The density of installations finds and pottery found within these structures, however, was altogether relatively high. The finds are exclusively of an Iron Age date and could be associated with different activities of a rural/farming community. Among others, we found fire-places, a *ṭābūn*, grinding stones (basalt), different kinds of stones and pestles (basalt), mill-stones, a basalt-vessel (tripod), huge amounts of storage jars (collared rim), cooking pots, jars/jugs, looms, a bead and three arrowheads made of iron (Figs. 14-18).



15. Basalt bowl (tripod) with pestles.



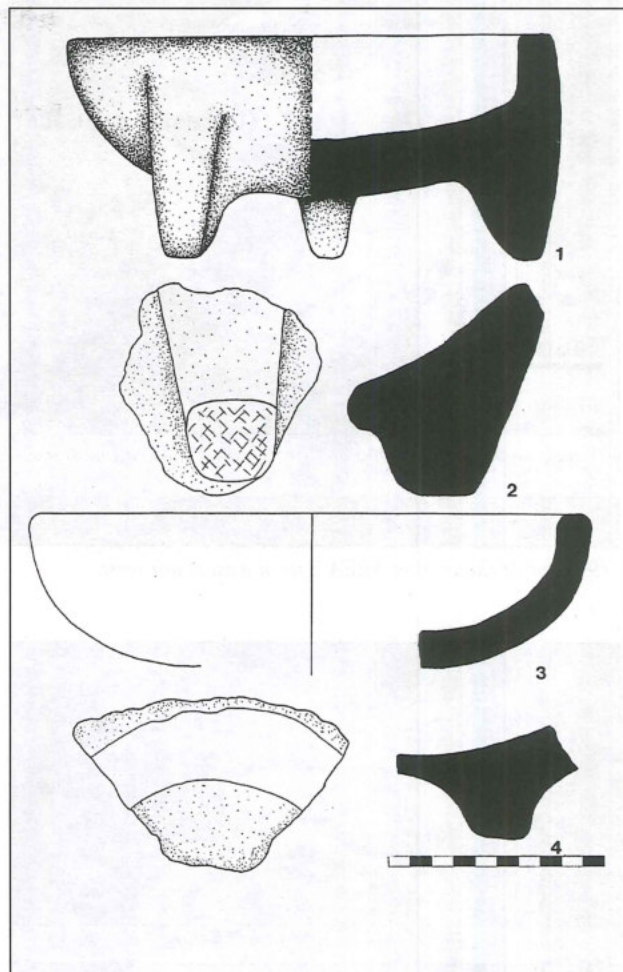
16. Arrowheads made of iron.

Stratigraphically, the mentioned floor was followed by a plaster of unknown function made of stone-slabs (squares 4 and 6). In other parts (squares 3, 4 and 5) it is followed by some kind of hard brownish gravel containing more remains connected to farming activities during the Iron Age.

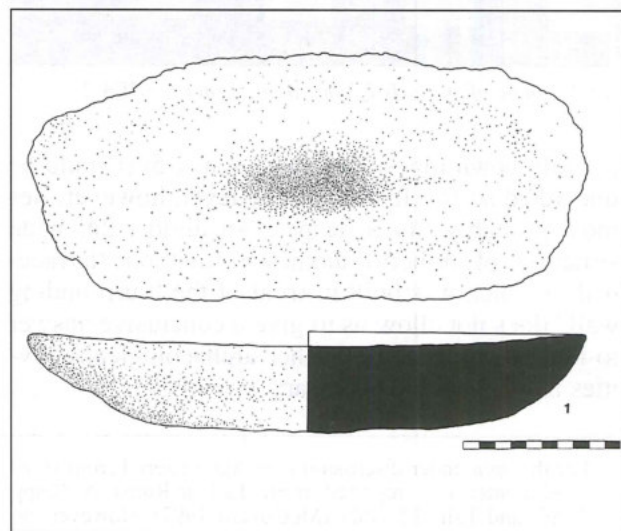
#### AREA 2

In contrast to the situation described so far, the stratigraphy and material remains found on the southeastern slope (squares 1 and 2), named AREA 2, are different (Fig. 19). The material uncovered here dates almost exclusively to the Late Byzantine/Early Islamic era. In addition to that, some Hellenistic and Roman pieces were found. Pottery of the Iron Age is only sparsely represented until now. The same is true for other finds. Non Iron Age pieces like glass dominate the assemblage found so far (Fig. 20).

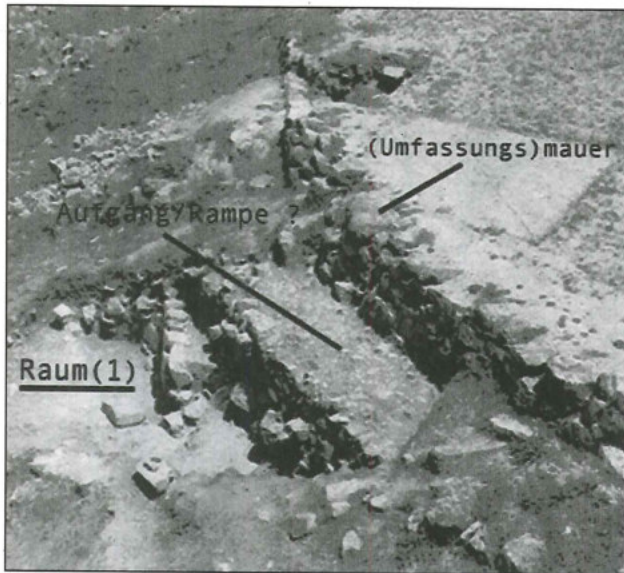
The work conducted here made it obvious that the almost circular wall running around the top of the site is not a recent addition made by the villagers of modern Juhfiyya. Several layers of huge



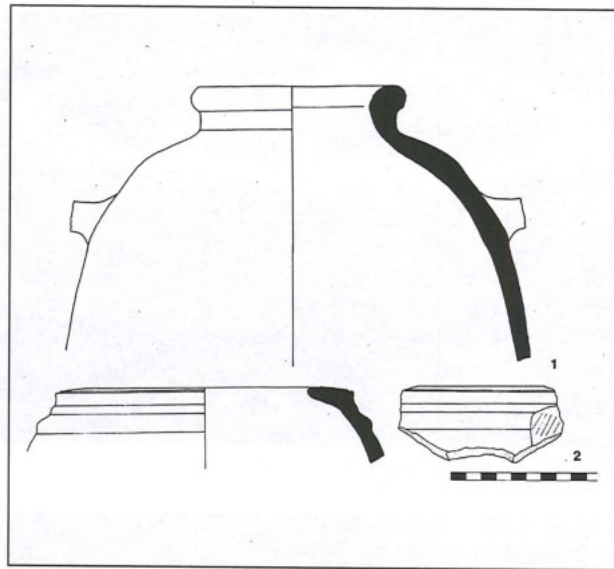
17. 1. Basalt vessel (tripod), square 4 (N 95, 15m, E 101, 72m, Niv 99, 56m), locus 4008, no. 4025; 2. Foot of basalt bowl, square 3, from section, no. 3075; 3. Rim of a basalt bowl, square 4, locus 4018, no. 4077; 4. Fragment of a stone bowl (ring-base), square 4, locus 4006, no. 4016.



18. Grinding stone made of basalt, square 4 (N 98, 94m, E 107, 75m, Niv 99, 73m), locus 4023, no. 4104.



19. View of excavation AREA 2 from west south-west.



22. Storage jars: 1. square 6, ware 2, locus 6016, no. 605201; 2. square 6, ware 2, locus 6041, no. 604109.



20. Example of an Early Islamic pottery sherd, AREA 2.

roughly hewn limestone blocks (ca. 1.5m) could be unearthed so far. Its foundation level, however, lies most probably much deeper. An almost 2m wide structure of hitherto unknown function (terrace-wall?) which was built in front of the “surrounding wall” does not allow us to give a conclusive answer to that question now. Further archaeological activities in this area are necessary.

After excavating another 2.7m following the outer limit of this structure (terrace-wall?) the remains of a plastered floor were uncovered. It belongs to a room/house measuring approximately 2.5 x 4.5m and built in front of the structure (terrace-wall?) using it as a reinforcement of its north-western wall. It was built of well hewn blocks sitting on a foundation of medium sized roughly hewn limestone blocks. The entrance was from the south-east. A worked lintel found not far away, might belong to this entrance. Since the material found on the floor was not yet analyzed in detail, no exact date of the building could be given so far. A first evaluation of the pottery, however, suggests a Late Byzantine/Umayyad date.

#### Pottery

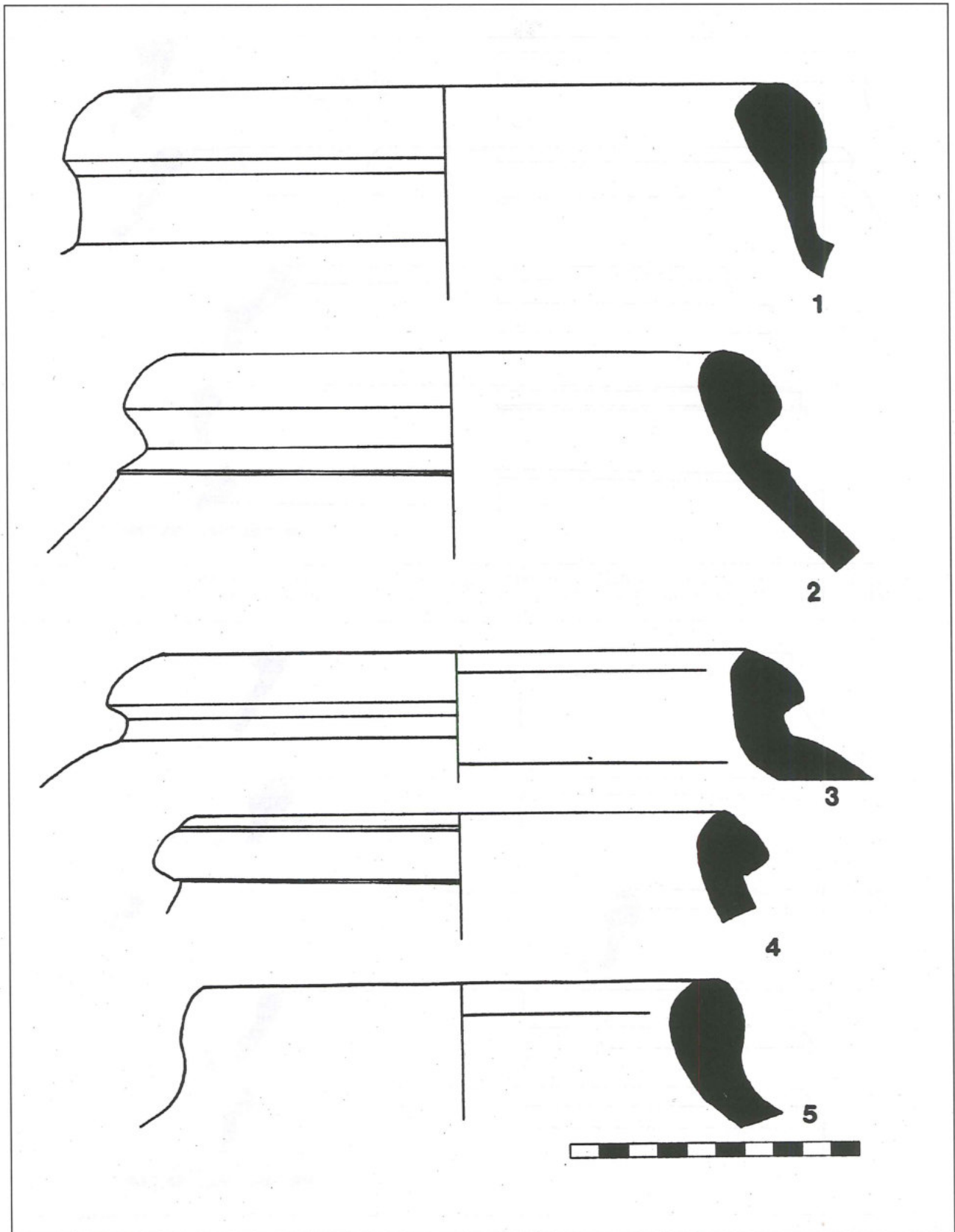
In all, more than 17000 pottery sherds were collected and registered during our three-week season at Tall Juḥfiyya. Almost 1500 pieces were classified as diagnostics (i.e. bases, rims, handles decorated body sherds). Altogether 20 wares could be distinguished belonging to two main groups:

*Group 1* (Figs. 21-27) includes “wares” 1 to 5 which are all wheel-made, of coarse to fine fabric and exclusively of an Iron Age date<sup>2</sup>. Their colour varies from light buff to reddish brown. A gray core is characteristic of some of the larger pots. The tem-

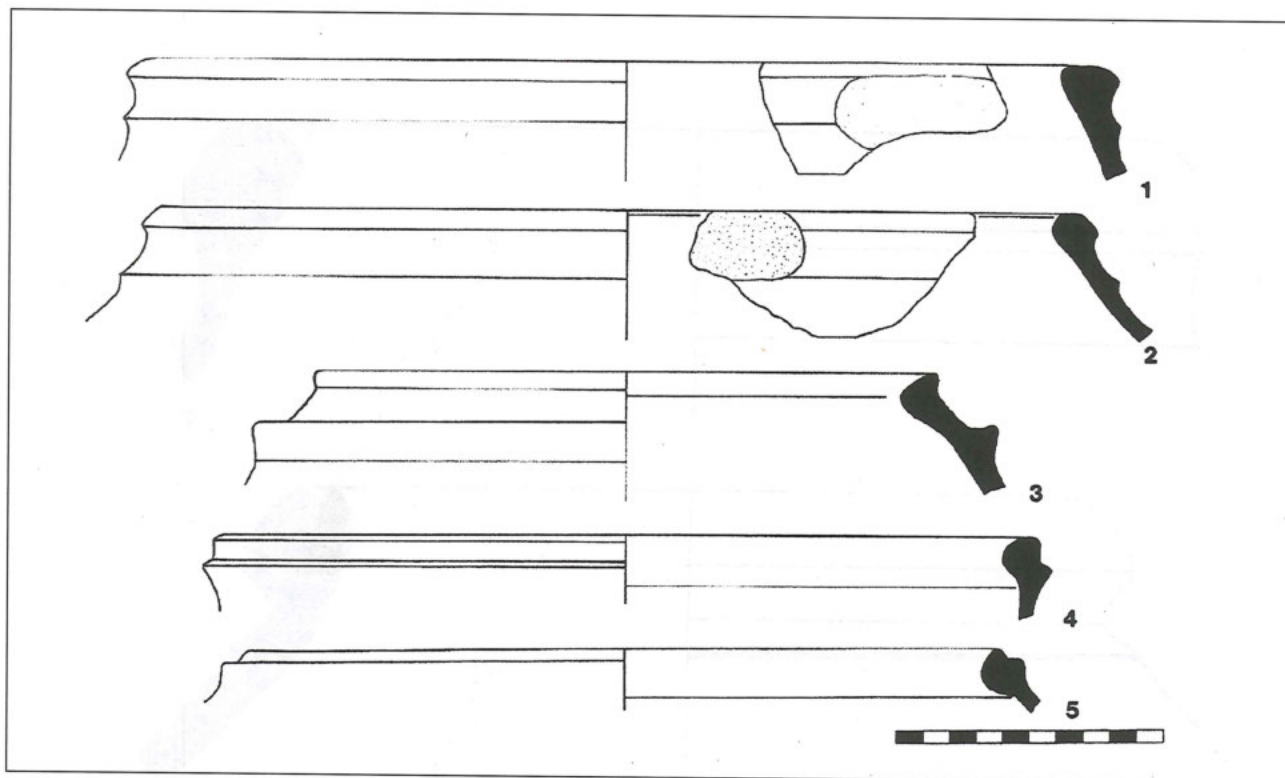
2. For the area under discussion Iron Age material from stratified contexts is reported from Tall ar-Rumayth (Lapp 1989) and Tall al-Fukhār (McGovern 1997). However, no stratified pottery samples are published. Only survey material from the Zeraqon- (Kamlah 2000), Khanāširi- (Bartl *et al.* 2001: 128-129; 2002: 95-96) and Tall Juḥfiyya (Lam-

prichs 1997a) region is available up to now. Due to this, no exact date of our pottery within the Iron Age could be given so far. Comparisons, however, with material found in Palestine and central Jordan point to (late) Iron Age II date for most of the pottery found at Tall Juḥfiyya. Anyhow, further investigation is badly needed.

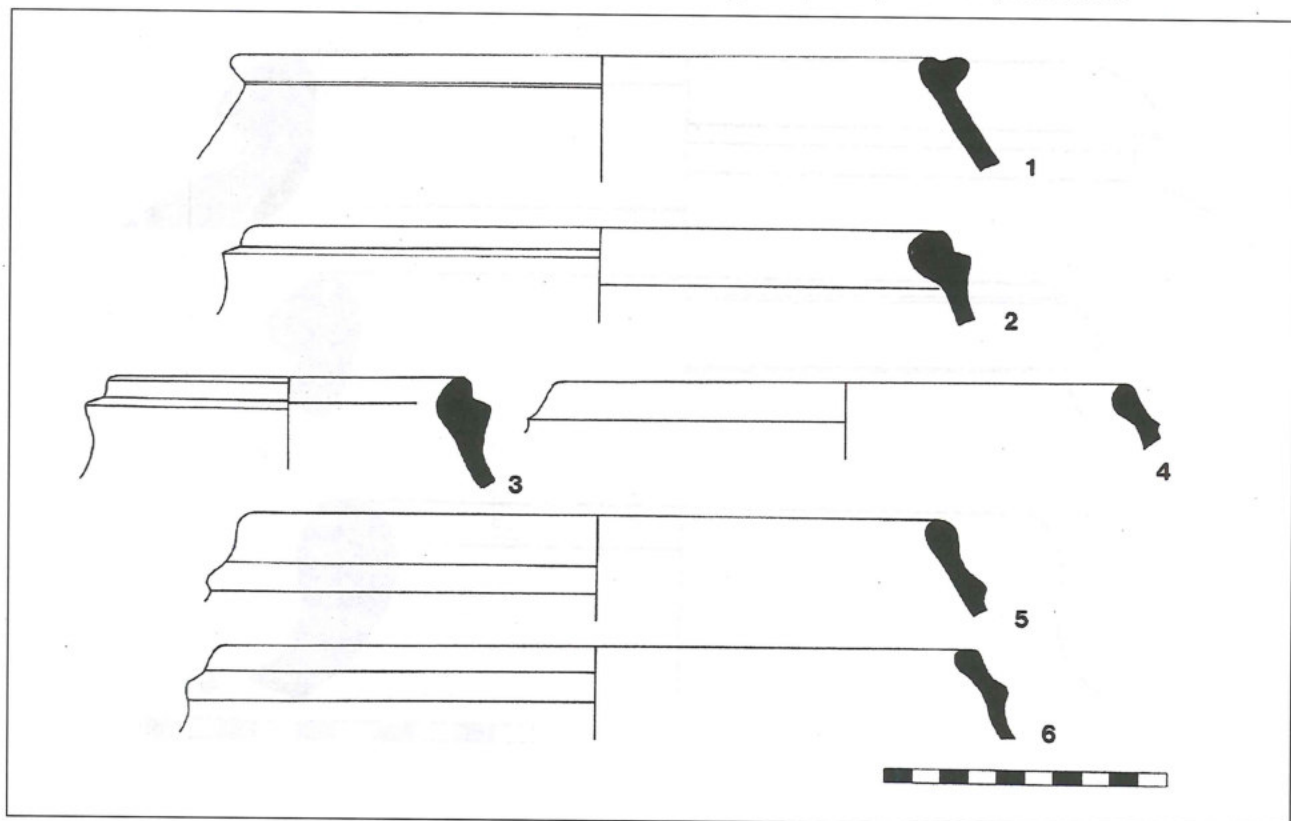




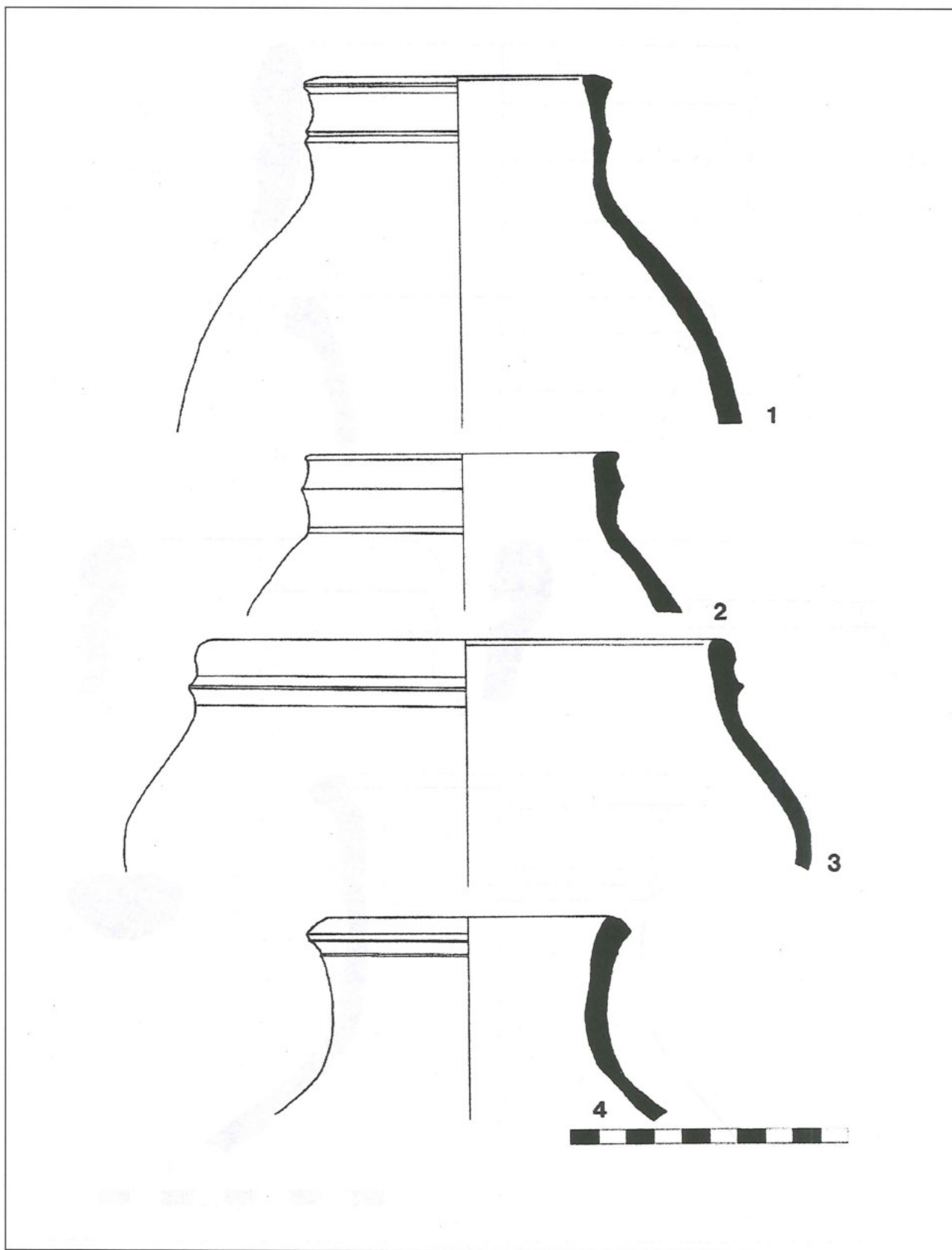
21. Storage jars: 1. square 6, ware 2, locus 6026, no. 608709; 2. square 3, ware 2, locus 3014, no. 305501; 3. square 3, ware 2, locus 3005, no. 302002; 4. square 5, ware 4, locus 5002, no. 500501; 5. square 5, ware 2, locus 5002, no. 500515.



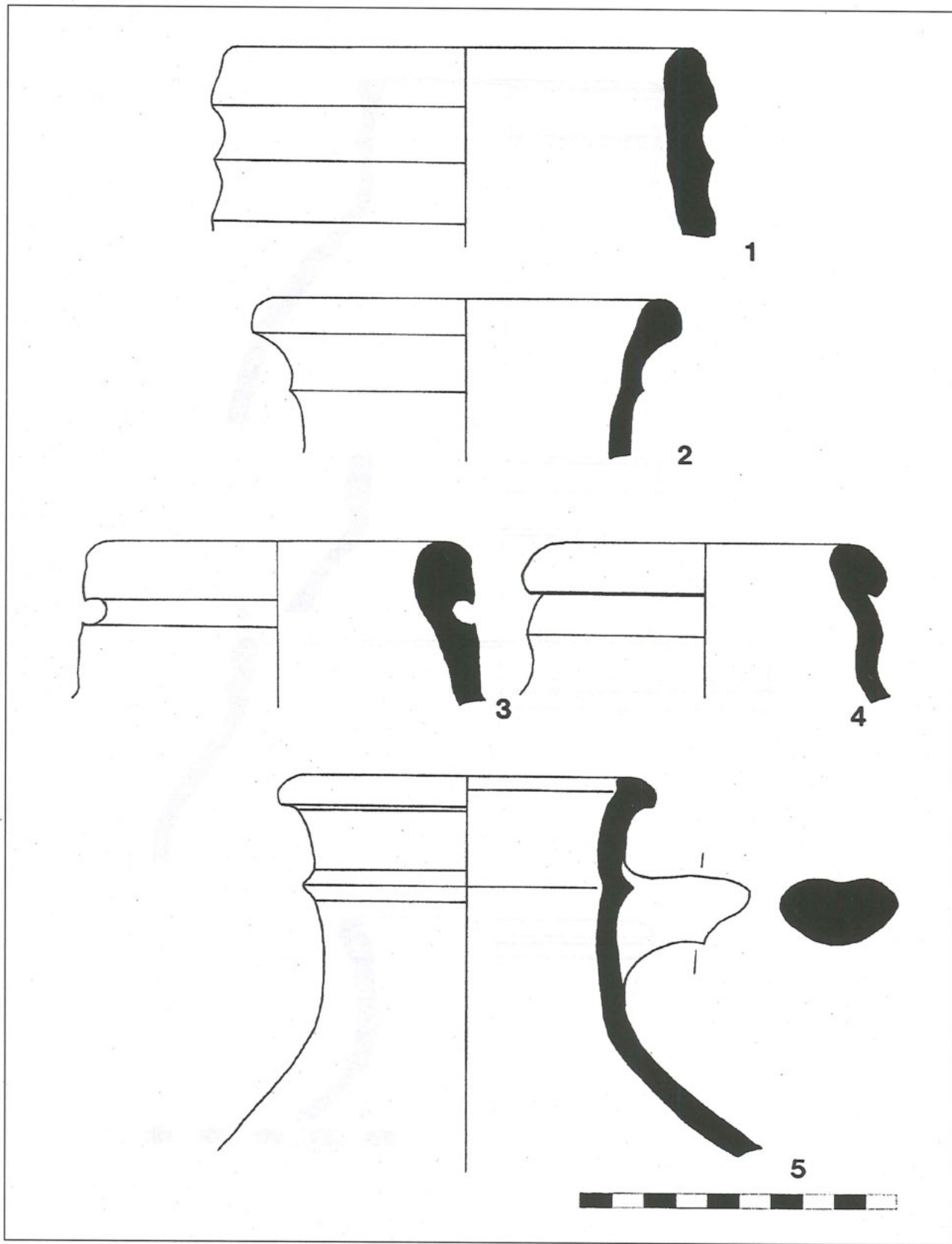
23. Cooking pots: 1. square 4, ware 1, locus 4005, no. 401008; 2. square 6, ware 1, locus 6041, no. 604107; 3. square 6, ware 4, locus 6013, no. 603407; 4. square 5, ware 1, locus 5002, no. 500505; 5. square 4, ware 1, locus 4004, no. 400513.



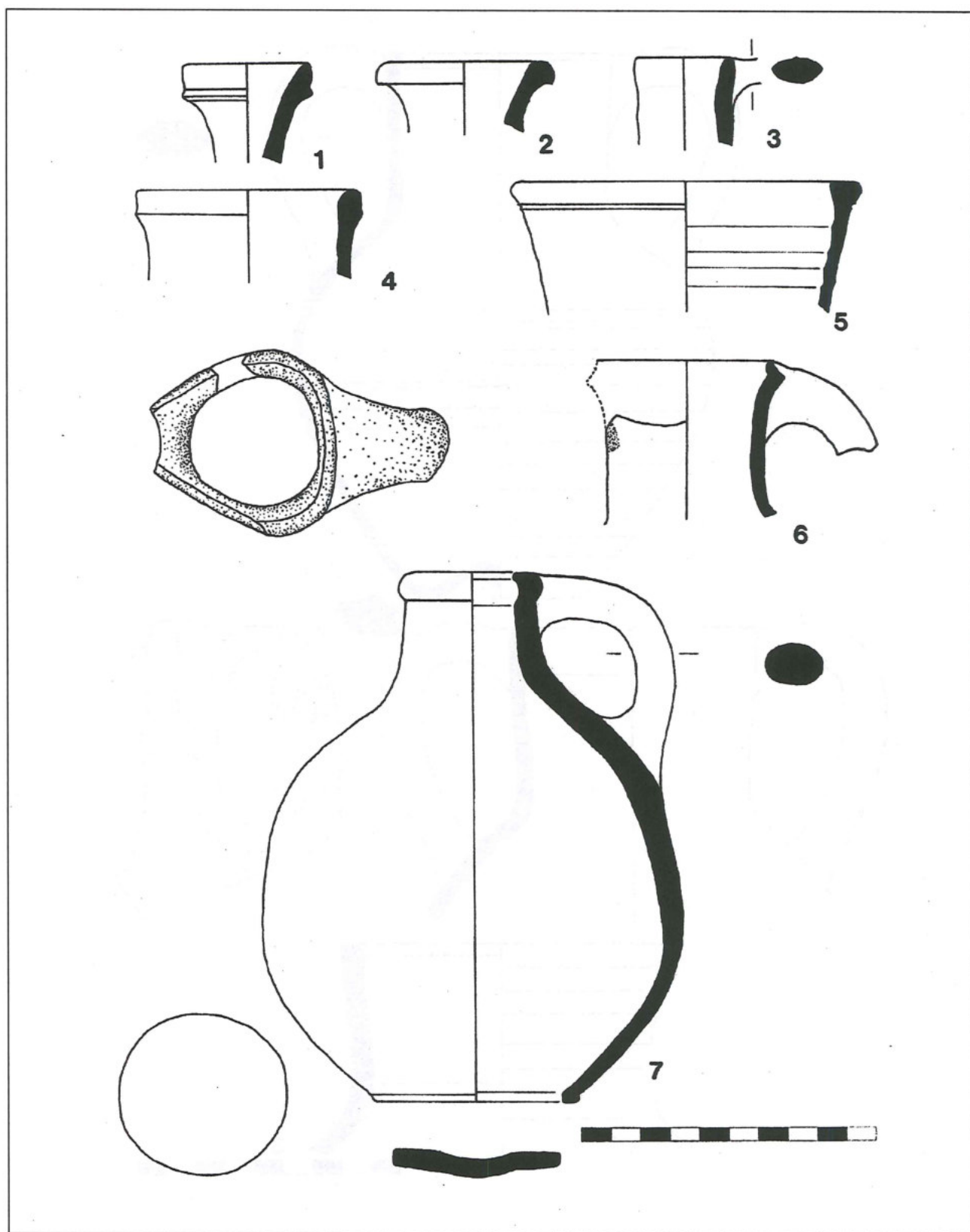
24. Cooking pots: 1. square 4, ware 2, locus 4007, no. 401801; 2. square 5, ware 1, locus 5002, no. 500506; 3. square 3, ware 1, locus 3001, no. 300103; 4. square 6, ware 1, locus 6013, no. 603402; 5. square 4, ware 1, locus 4009, no. 402803; 6. square 4, ware 1, locus 4001, no. 400103.



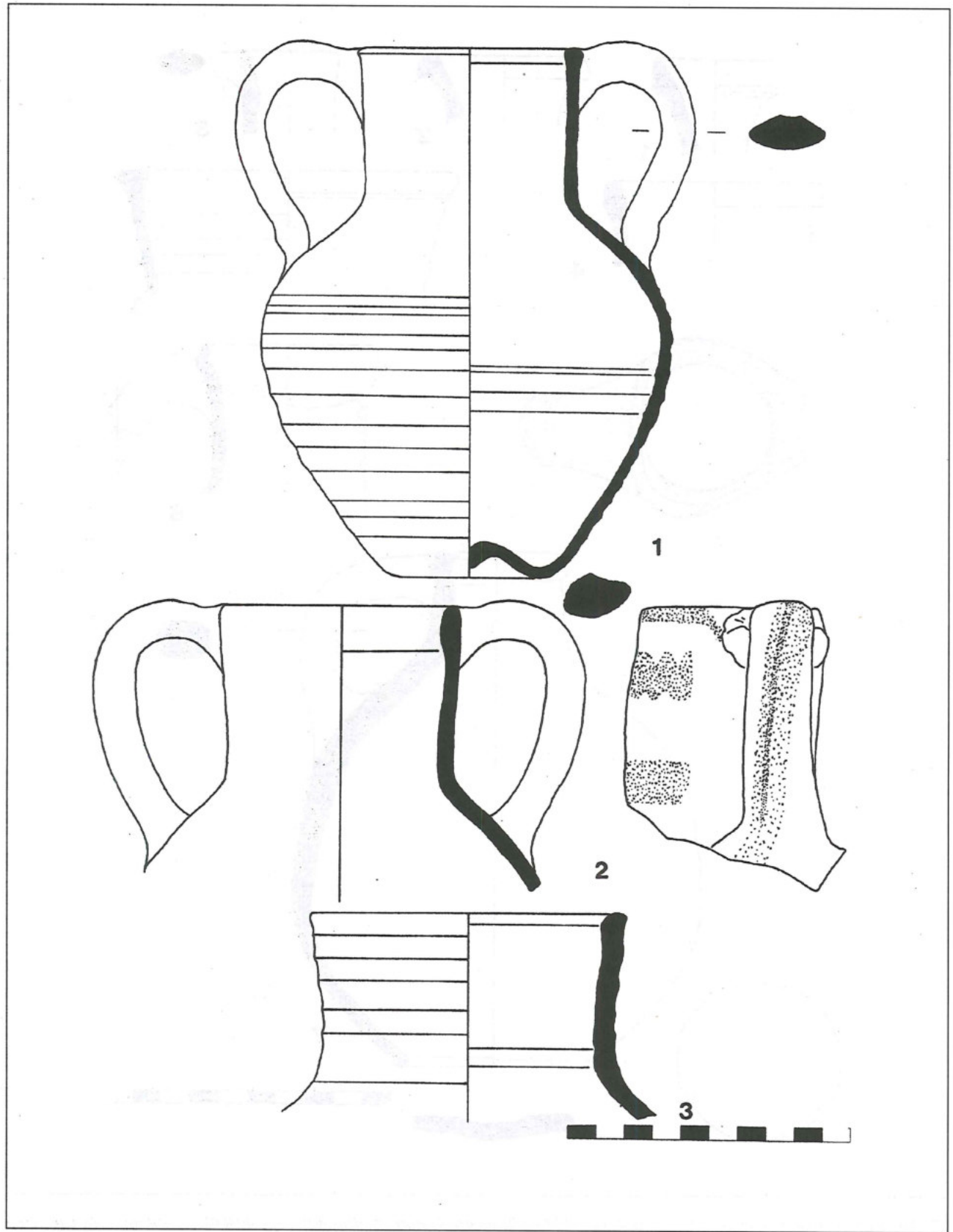
25. Jars/Jugs: 1. square 6, ware 1, locus 6016, no. 605207; 2. square 4, ware 4, locus 4024, no. 411301; 3. square 5, ware 1, locus 5004, no. 501024; 4. square 4, ware 3, locus 4008, no. 402101.



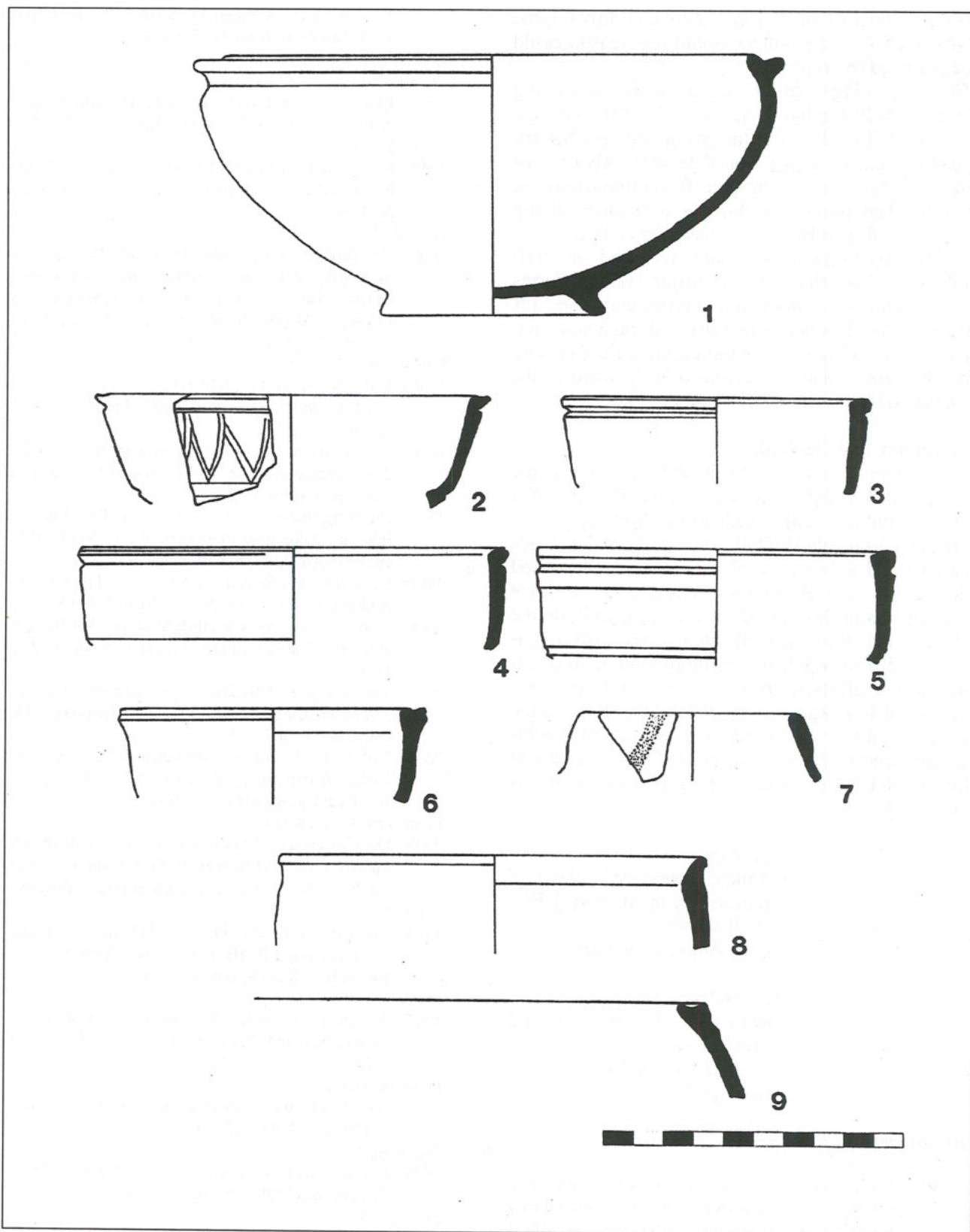
26. Jars/Jugs: 1. square 6, ware 2, locus 6041, no. 604102; 2. square 4, ware 2, locus 4015, no.406103; 3. square 3, ware 2, locus 3008, no. 303901; 4. square 4, ware 2, locus 4014, no. 405102; 5. square 4, ware 4, locus 4011, no. 404001.



27. Jars/Jugs: 1. square 4, ware 4, locus 4024, no. 411309; 2. square 4, ware 2, locus 4011, no. 404002; 3. square 3 (east section), ware 4, locus 3017, no. 306201; 4. square 3, ware 4, locus 3003, no. 300841; 5. square 3, ware 3, locus 3007, no. 302807; 6. square 4, ware 1, locus ?, no. 413701; 7. square 7, ware 4, locus 6025, no. 608101 (almost complete vessel with an opening at the bottom and a "lid").



28. Late Byzantine/Early Islamic pottery: 1. square 5, ware 16, locus 5011, no. 502922 (almost complete vessel); 2. square 5, ware 16, locus 5011, no. 502919; 3. square 5, ware 15, locus 5011, no. 502901.



29. Late Byzantine/Early Islamic pottery: 1. square 5, ware 11, locus 5019, no. 505200 (almost complete vessel); 2. square 1, ware 16, locus 1012, no. 104110 (incisions); 3. square 1, ware 11, locus, 1010, no. 102903; 4. square 1, ware 11, locus 1007, no. 1017155. square 1, ware 11, locus 1010, no. 102929; 6. square 6, ware 14, locus 6002, no. 600212; 7. square 1, ware 16, locus 1010, no. 102935 (painted); 8. square 1, ware 17, locus 1003, no. 101222; 9. square 5, ware 16, locus 5002, no. 500504.

per is usually of small white, gray and brown grits. Nearly 85% of the pottery found this season could be assigned to group 1.

*Group 2:* (Figs. 28-29) includes the remaining "wares" 6-20 and has a share of only 15% in the assemblage. The sherds of this group are very heterogeneous and of a non Iron Age date. About two-third of them date to the Late Byzantine/Umayyad period. The remaining third is a mixture dating most probably to Hellenistic and Roman times.

The typological spectrum recorded in Tall Juhfiyya is restricted to 10 major (vessel) forms with several sub-types and numerous variations: for the Iron Age layers mainly (large) storage jars, jars/jugs and cooking pots are represented. Furthermore bowls, bases, handles, decorated body sherds, lids, spouts and lamps have been found.

### Summary and Outlook

After only three weeks in the field it became clear that Tall Juhfiyya contains the remains of a huge farmstead dating back to the Iron Age, most probably Iron Age II. Only some parts of the slopes and a small area on top of the mound were reused during the Late Byzantine/Umayyad times. Since the remains of this period are located mainly on the slopes and the adjacent areas, we expect undisturbed Iron Age layers of more than 3.5m thickness at the tall itself. In order, however, to get a sequence of Iron Age pottery (for the first time on the plateau) and to get more insights into the architectural and material remains of a rural settlement during that era a closer investigation of the site is necessary.

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