

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL CHECK-UP ON JABAL ASH-SHARĀH: EDOMITE KHIRBAT AL-KÜR

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## Introduction

The Petra region in southern Jordan, Edom in antiquity, has already revealed a fair amount of Late Iron (IA/IIC) settlement. Except for Umm al-Biyara (أم البيارة) and Ṭawilān (طويلان), the following Edomite sites were discovered and identified by Naturhistorische Gesellschaft Nürnberg (NHG) (Germany) during the last 20 years (Lindner and Zangenberg 1999: 281-316): Ba'ja III (بعجة), Umm al-'Ala (as-Sādah) (السادة), Jabal al-QBayr (جبل القصير), Khirbat al-Mu'allaq (خربة المعلق), Jabal al-Khubtha (الخبثة), Kutl II (كتل) and Drāj III (دراج), the latter two situated on Jabal aṣ-Ṣuffaḥa, were surveyed in cooperation with U. Hübner, University of Kiel (Germany) (Lindner *et al.* 1998: 225-240). Moreover, Khirbat al-'Arja (العرجا) and Khirbat al-Minya (المنيا), identified previously by N. Glueck as Edomite sites, were visited and sherded. Lately, U. Hübner reported on the newly examined Edomite stronghold of Qurayyāt al-Manṣūr (قريات المنصور) (2002: 263-276).

## Examination of 1999

Turning from the Ḥuwālah crossing on Wādī Mūsā ash-Shūbak road toward west, a hitherto seemingly unknown khirba to the north of an impressive shaykh's tomb was reached in 1999 (Figs. 1, 2). The khirbah is located on a mound above and to the west of a narrow road which is mostly used for fieldwork and for the removal, legal or not, of stone material (Fig. 3). A second dirt road runs to the east, with both roads converging to the main road north of a spring. On first sight, no terraces or foundations were discerned in a tumbled mass of coarsely hewn limestone ashlar. The khirbah ascends in a northerly direction to an elevation of 1300m asl, a spot where most of the stones have apparently been taken away, and ends toward the west at the rim of a steep slope. Well-hewn ashlar seem to belong to a rampart in the east, where it was and is easiest to approach. Rainwater could be stored in cisterns *intra muros*, one of them def-

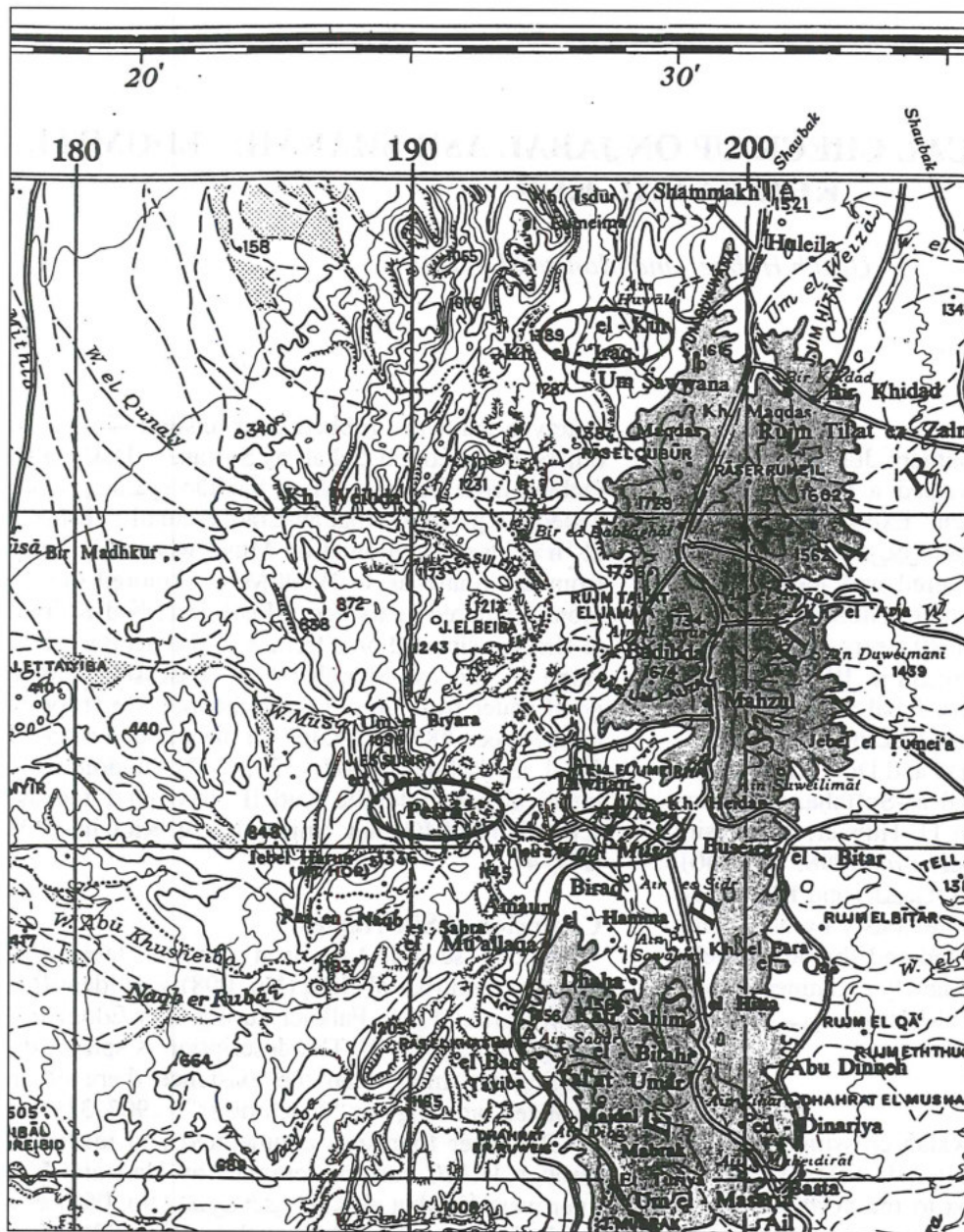
initely a built-up, robbed cave cistern similar to others detected on Jabal aṣ-Ṣuffaḥa. Dakhllallah Qublan from Petra — Umm Ṣayḥūn (أم صيحون) called the place Khirbat an-Eraq. Actually "Khirbat al-'Irāq" was mentioned by Musil who on his way from ash-Shawbak to Wādī Mūsā explored the region a hundred years ago. Musil described Khirbat al-'Irāq as situated on a terrace of the steep western slope of the ash-Sharāh ridge possessing ample good water from an old built channel. He reported to have seen "Khirbat Kutl" on the wooded ridge of Jabal aṣ-Ṣaffaḥa (1907: 329, 343), undoubtedly identical with Edomite Kutl II discovered and described by NHG and University of Kiel in 1998 (Fig. 4).

## Confusion of Site Names?

Among several Late Iron sites on Jabal ash-Sharā, a "Khirbat al-'Irāq (No. 008) was identified by S. Hart and R.F. Falkner during their Edom survey (1985: 255-277). The description is sparse, divulging not more than the existence there of an "isolated building" or "watchtower". (1907: 329)

The other four sites enumerated and identified through IA/IIC surface ceramics by Hart and Falkner were Khirbat al-Kūr (خربة الكور) (No. 068) as a "walled settlement", 'Ayn al-'Irāq (Nr. 087), Khirbat al-'Irāq (No. 088) and Khirbat al-Waybida (No. 089). As the description "walled settlement" fits rather "our" site, names and/or numbers may have been confused. According to information received from local people, "our" site is called al-Kūr (or "el-Kor" as Musil wrote in 1907), whereas the names 'Ayn al-'Irāq and Khirbat al-'Irāq belong to the area ca. 800m to the north, now comprising the spring, a shaykh's tomb and a cemetery. To the north and right by the shaykh's tomb there are the remnants of a presumed watch tower. It may have controlled a road and the spring 'Ayn al-'Irāq. Seen from there, Khirbat al-Kūr unmistakably crowns the hill to the south. Situated farther north, Khirbat (al-Gnéne) Genīna, too, beside some bedouin stone





1. The road to Khirbat al-Kūr the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Archaeological Map 1: 250 000

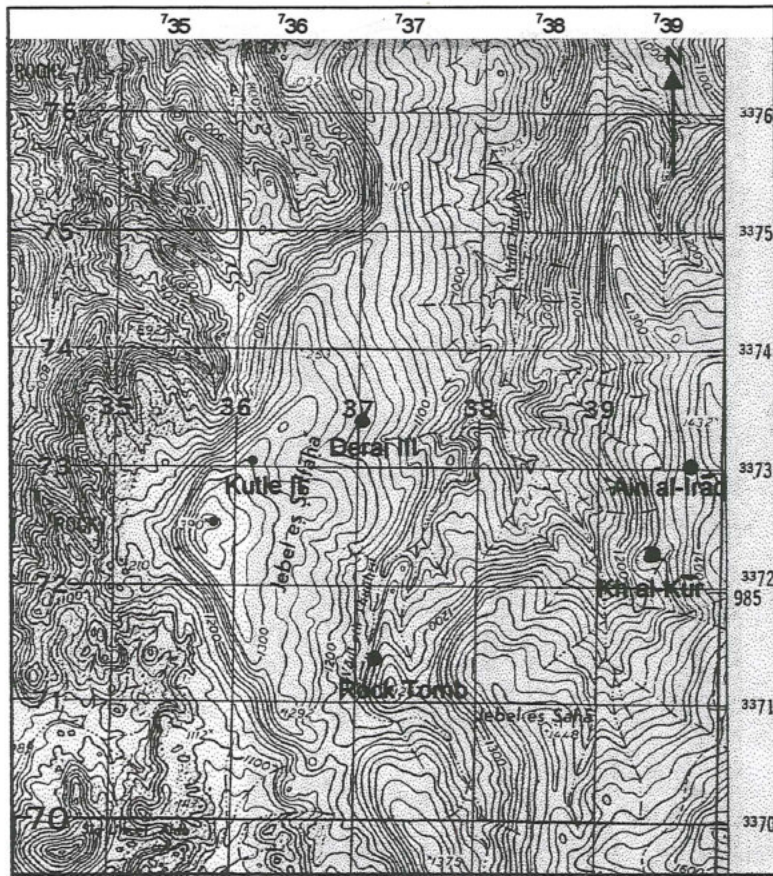
houses sports a probably ancient watchtower. Musil reported the village had been inhabited by the “Mallāhīn” of ash-Shawbak 60-80 years ago, i.e. around 1830 (1907: 328).

**Examination of 2000**

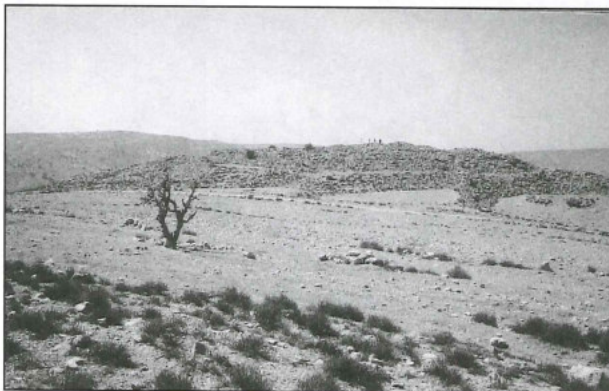
Khirbat al-Kūr was more precisely examined, plotted, mapped and sherded in September 2000 as part of an archaeological expedition to southern Jordan by a group of the Naturhistorische Gesellschaft (NHG) Nürnberg directed by M. Lindner and U. Hübner (University of Kiel). The place is highly disturbed by taking away ashlar for houses on the plateau (Figs. 5, 6). Earthquakes may have done some damage, and Khirbat al-Kūr was inhabited

and thereby remodeled intermittently by an Arabic half-nomadic populace since the Ayyubid-Mamluk period. The mapping was done by U. Hübner with the help of a surveyor who used a computerized theodolite (Fig. 7). The low mound extends to ca. 135m (N - S) and ca. 65m (E - W) at ca. 1300m asl. The location of the walls is very precise but except for the casemate town wall, none of them can be reliably dated to the Iron II period (Figs. 8, 9). Although there is no proof in the architecture, an Iron II gate in the middle of the eastern wall can be safely assumed. There were two different quarters, the elevated, more thickly built-on “acropolis”, and to the south a “subquarter”. Details of wall sections were photographed. The highest point of Jabal aş-

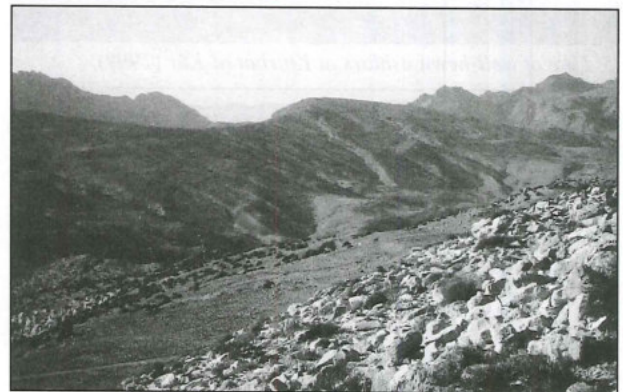




2. Map of Jordan, 1:50 000 with locations of Khirbat al-Kūr, 'Ayn al-'Irāq, Kutl II and Drāj III.



3. Khirbat al-Kūr from east (U. Hübner 2000).



4. Sloping surface of Khirbat al-Kūr with Jabal aş-Şuffaḥa, Jabal Ma'mūd and Jabal al-Fāid in background (1999).

Şuffaḥa was seen due west from Khirbat al-Kūr. The spring of 'Ayn al-'Irāq at ca. 1375m asl may well have served the necessities of Khirbat al-'Irāq, now a cemetery, and Khirbat al-Kūr (Figs. 10, 11, 12). U. Hübner supposes that Edomite Khirbat al-'Irāq was considerably larger than Khirbat al-Kūr with a double-porched gate and 'Ayn al-'Irāq possibly directly extra muros of Khirbat al-'Irāq.

In order to assess a possible contemporaneity, Khirbat al-Genina to the north was located, sherded and dated as precisely as possible (Fig. 13). Its

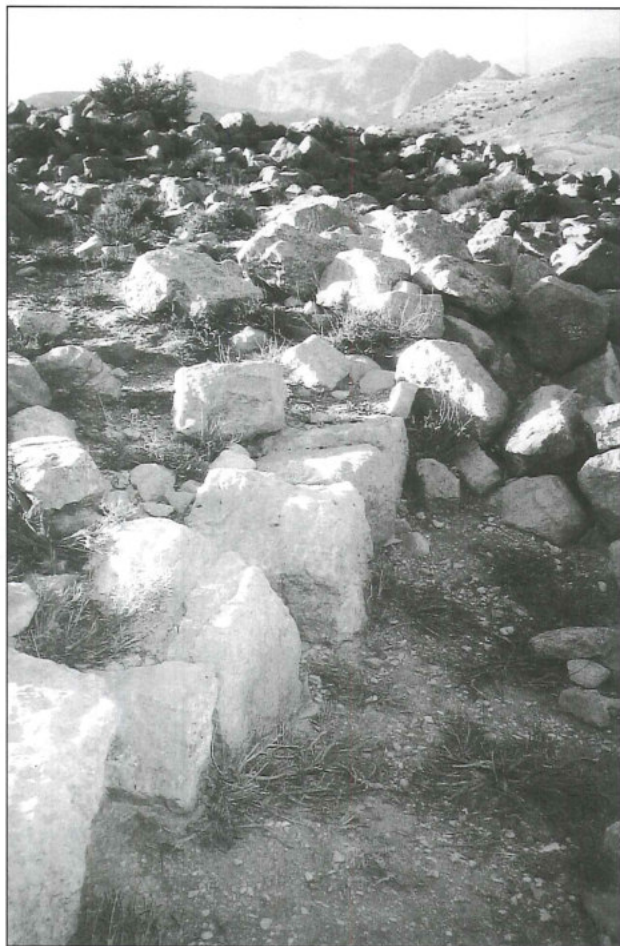
name was not mentioned by Hart and Falkner, but possibly the site was falsely called or confused with Khirbat al-Waybida where only Edomite pottery is mentioned by Hart and Falkner as the characteristic of the place.

#### Results of the Check-Up 2000

##### Surface Pottery from Khirbat al-Kūr (Fig. 14 - 17)

65 ceramic fragments, 59 rims, 4 body sherds, 2 bases and one fragment of a clay figurine were taken from the surface in 1999 and 2000. Of 45 diagnostics there are 40 Iron II, 1 Nabataean-Roman,



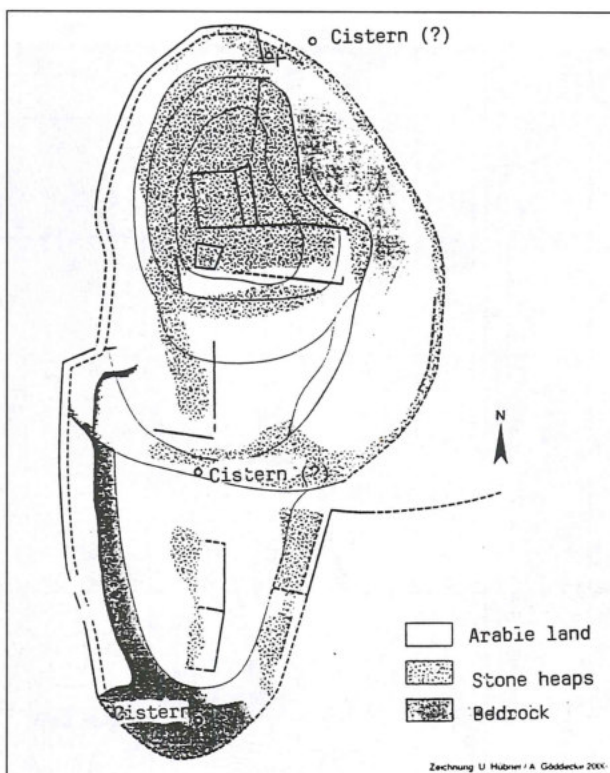


5. Line of well-hewn ashlar at Khirbat al-Kūr (1999).



6. Robbed cave-cistern of Khirbat al-Kūr (1999).

1 Late Islamic and 3 possibly Late Iron, but outside the generally accepted types of Edomite pottery. 11 fragments are painted in one way or other, from simple exterior black bands to a bowl, which was decorated with white and black bands on the rim and with red, white and black bands in the interior<sup>1</sup>. NHG teams previously found pottery decorated with black bands at as-Sādah, (Umm al-‘Ala) an Edomite site far to the south (Lindner *et al.* 1990)



7. Sketch map of Khirbat al-Kūr (U. Hübner and A. Göddecke 2000).

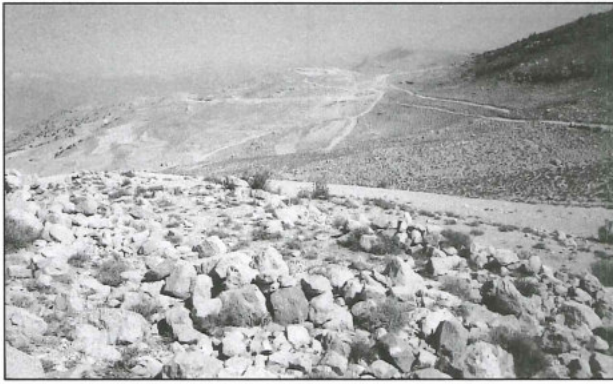


8. Stuccoed corner of well-hewn ashlar (cistern?) (2000).



9. Double row of well-hewn ashlar at Khirbat al-Kūr (2000).





10. 'Ayn al-'Irāq (upper centre) from Khirbat al-Kūr (U. Hübner).



11. Presumed Khirbat al-'Irāq, now a cemetery (2000).



12. Presumed watch-tower at Khirbat al-'Irāq Shaykh's tomb, left centre (2000).

and painted pottery with dark brown parallel bands or an angular band with in two lines at Khirbat al-Mu'allaq (Lindner *et al.* 1996).

Other typical Iron II finds were double grooves at a body shoulder and fragments of lamps. The clay is mostly grayish-brown; red and black are exceptions to be found on painted ceramics. There was a variety of undetermined broken handmills,



13. Khirbat al-Genina with the ruin of a watch tower and the heights of Jabal ash-Sharā in the background (2000).

round and oval, beside one saddle quern. A significant find was a clay figurine, male, hand-made, 4cm high, 2.6cm wide, originally reddish-brown painted with rests of the paint still visible. Only the separately made head with a conical helmet is preserved. Its long neck was to be fitted between the shoulders of the (lost) body. There are certain parallels with the horse rider figurines from Muqabalayn ('Amr 1980: 138).

#### Surface Pottery from Khirbat al-Genina (Fig. 18)

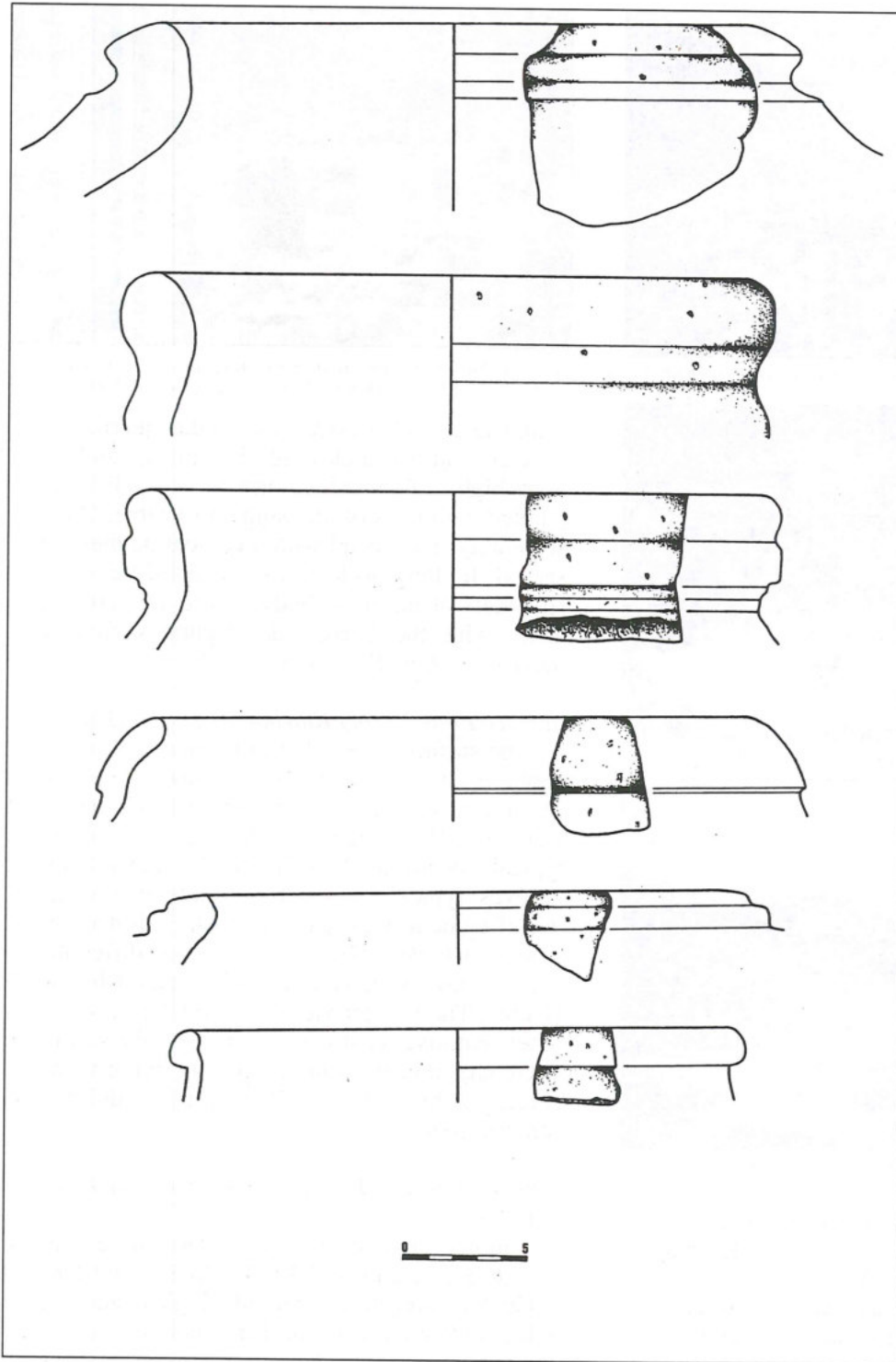
The surface of Khirbat al-Genina with the remnants of an old (ancient?) watchtower revealed 14 ceramic fragments, 11 rims, and 3 body sherds; 11 were Iron II, 3 might be Edomite, but outside the typical spectrum. 2 body sherds showed double grooves, typical for Iron II in southern Jordan, one thin fragment was painted with red-black-white stripes or bands. There is no marked difference in the inventories of Khirbat al-Kūr and Khirbat al-Genina. The meager yield of Late Islamic sherds or other primitive hand-made pottery on the surface of al-Genina indicates that the people living there according to Musil around 1830 and later did not use ceramic pots.

#### Comparison with Edomite Settlements on Jabal aş-Şuffaḥa

Variety, amount of painted ware and quality of the surface ceramics of Khirbat al-Kūr and Khirbat al-Genina indicate a generally higher standard of living and/or more social differentiation in the settlements on the ash-Sharā proper than on Jabal aş-Şuffaḥa. Of advantage on ash-Sharā were the numerous springs in addition to its location close to

<sup>1</sup> At this point one may refer to pottery finds of Mattingly, G.L. *et al.* "al-Karak Resources Project 1997: Excavations at Khirbat al-Mudaybi" ADAJ 43: 127-144". J.A. Pace, one of the authors describes Iron II painted body sherds from the site decorated with horizontal bands of red, white and black, found within an Iron II entrance way. Commend-

ably, he offers a bibliography of previous finds and their descriptions from sites to the north and to the south of al-Karak. He concludes that therefore this decorative style should not be linked to a particular ethnic group such as Ammonites, Moabites or Edomites (Pace 1999: 140)



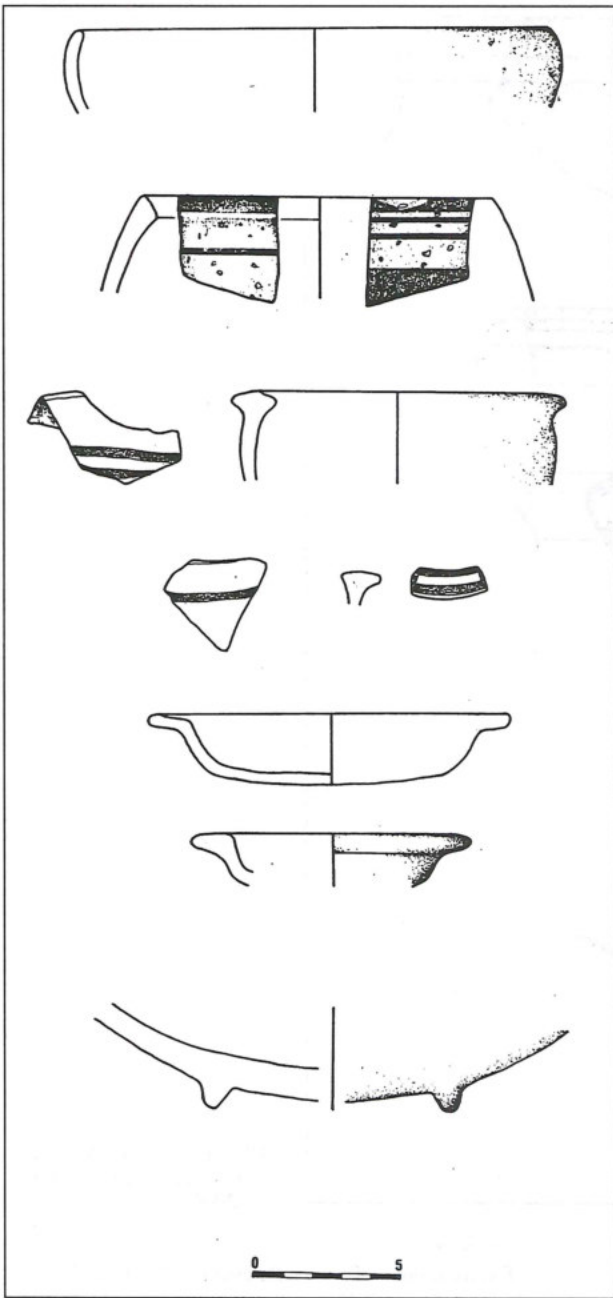
14. Selected pottery from Khirbat al-Kūr (2000).

an old route from Syria to South Arabia, which was always but especially in the Late Iron period important for copper trade and military activities (Knauf 1994: 142/3). The lack of Nabataean-Roman-Byzantine ceramics indicates that Khirbat al-Kūr and Khirbat al-Genina were neither fortified nor massively resettled in antiquity after they had been left by the Edomite populace.

**Summary**

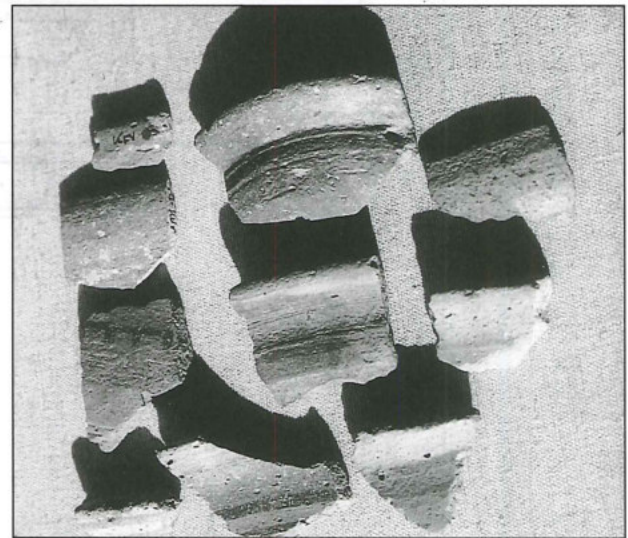
In the course of archaeological surveys in southern Jordan by groups of Naturhistorische Gesellschaft (NHG) Nürnberg directed by Manfred Lindner (NHG) and Ulrich Hübner (University of Kiel), two settlements below the rim of the Jabal ash-Sharā massif, previously mentioned by S. Hart and R.F. Falkner were examined and sherded. Their





15. Selected pottery from Khirbat al-Kūr (2000).

Edomite (Iron II/C) origin was verified by surface pottery. Their exact names, however, had to be corrected. A comparison with surface finds on Jabal aš-Šuffaḥa shows that settlements on the slopes of Jabal ash-Sharā, contrary to Jabal aš-Šuffaḥa, profited from their location at an old road and from possibly perennial springs. Still at Khirbat al-Kūr and Khirbat al-Genīna there was no clear evidence of later settling or fortifying. The results of the ex-



16A, B. Painted pottery from Khirbat al-Kūr (2000).

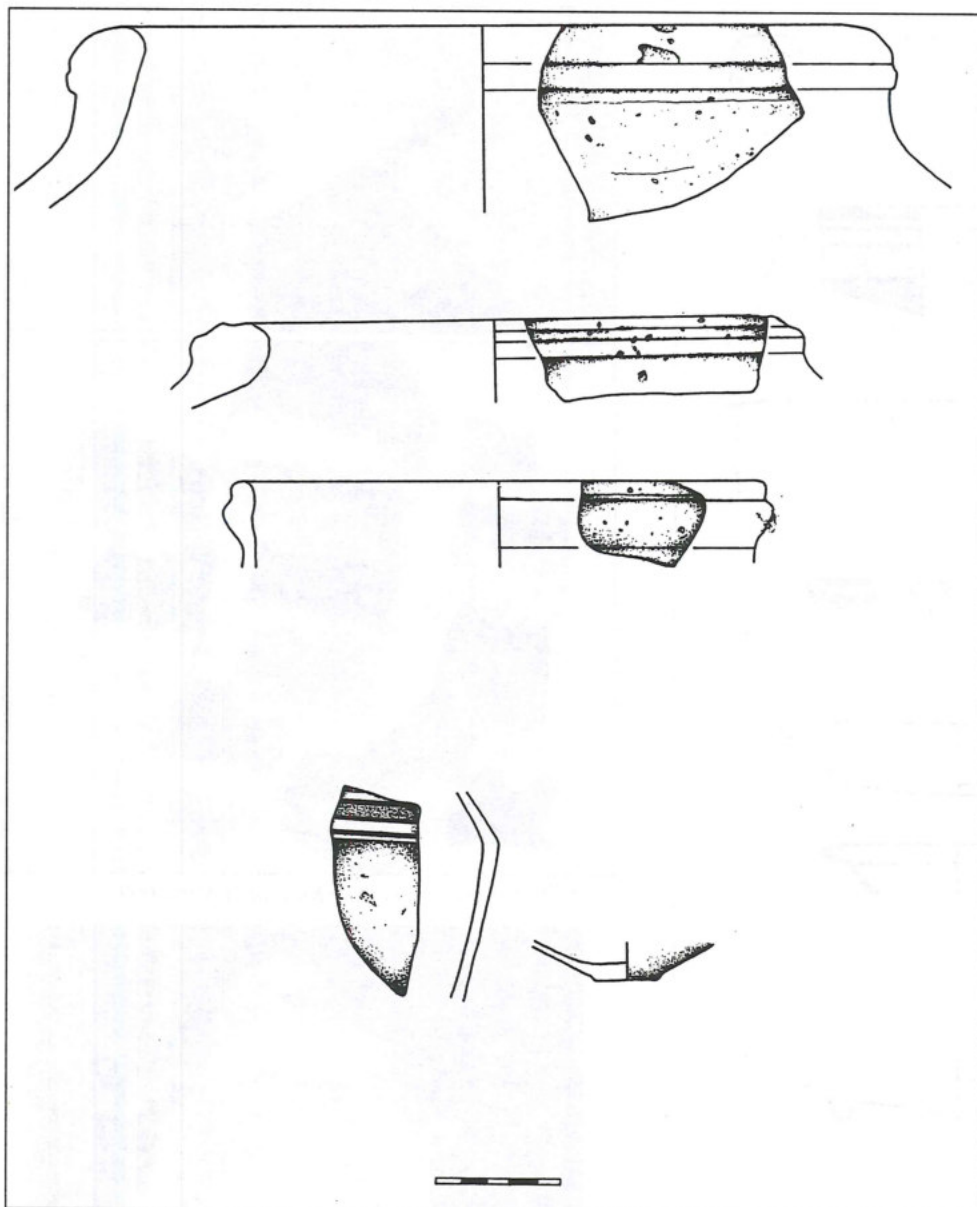


17. Fragment of a clay figurine from Khirbat al-Kūr (2000).

amination on Jabal ash-Sharā demonstrates that check-ups of previously mentioned sites can be worthwhile in every respect<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>Thanks are due to the Director-General and his local representative. Mrs. E. Schreyer and Dakhlallah Qublan from Wādi Mūsā/Umm Šayhūn helped the authors considerably.

The photos are by M. Lindner and U. Hübner. The pottery was drawn by M. Lindner, E. Schreyer and Gisela Vorn-dran.



18. Selected pottery from Khirbat al-Genina (2000).

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