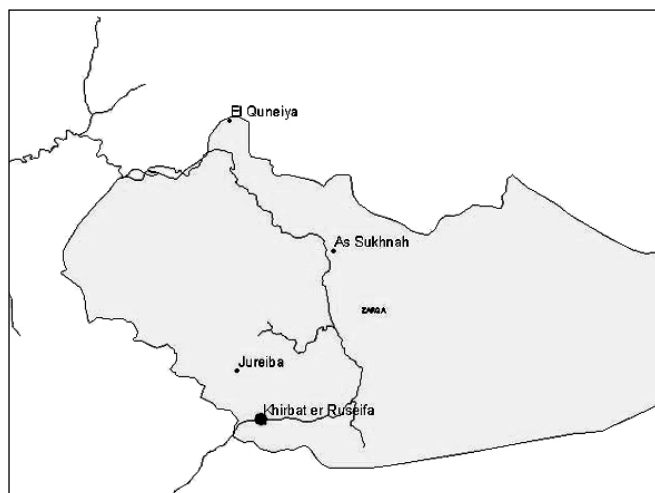


Results of Recent Excavations at Khirbat ar-Ruṣayfah

1. Introduction

Because of its location in the centre of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and because of its vast extent, az-Zarqā' province contains several important archeological sites. Khirbat ar-Ruṣayfah is one of the most important of these sites, which date from the Chalcolithic to the Islamic periods. Ar-Ruṣayfah is located north of Wādī az-Zarqā', 12km south-west of the city of az-Zarqā' (Zalloom 1993: 176) and 15km north-east of 'Ammān (FIG. 1a, b). The hills on which ar-Ruṣayfah is located have an altitude of around 675m above sea level. The site is an artificial mound covering nearly 20 acres, but urbanisation (FIG. 2), road construction and drainage works have affected 95% of it, with only one acre remaining untouched on the top of the artificial mound (FIG. 3). There are two huge sections on the south-west and on north-east sides (FIG. 4), but the other two sides have been removed.



1a. Site location.

Because of its location on the upper reaches of the Wādī az-Zarqā', its strategic importance was such that the site played a principal defining role in the area. The immediate vicinity is characterised by open terrain, enabling easy contact with the surrounding region (al-Mugheer 1999: 75). The river stream that passes through ar-Ruṣayfah¹ called Sayl az-Zarqā'. On either side of the site are tributary valleys that feed into the main course of the Wādī az-Zarqā' (FIG. 5). The Wādī az-Zarqā' was previously known as the Yabooq and is a major tributary of the Jordan river. It separates the 'Ajlūn mountains from al-Balqā' (Abu Nawwas 1995: 49; ad-Dabagh 2003: 81).

2. The Early History of Exploration ar-Ruṣayfah

A number of archaeologists have either visited or worked at ar-Ruṣayfah, including Glueck (1939), Condor (1889) and Burckhardt (1812). Glueck's journey along the Wādī az-Zarqā' and Sayl az-Zarqā' took him past ar-Ruṣayfah to az-Zarqā' castle (Qaṣr Shabīb). His principal focus on the journey was a site some 3km south-west of ar-Ruṣayfah. The modern name of the site was not mentioned in Glueck's notes but he comments on the considerable quantity of pottery, which resembled that found at Tall Bayt Marsīm and included folded wavy ledge handled jars dated to the end of the third millennium BC (Glueck 1939).

The site of ar-Ruṣayfah was extensively occupied in the Roman period, during which a road was constructed (Zalloom 1993: 176). This road, known as the Yājūz road, now connects many cities in Jordan, e.g. az-Zarqā' with 'Ammān through ar-Ruṣayfah, and az-Zarqā' with Ṣuwayliḥ and as-Salt

1. The word 'Ayn / "spring"; the name *ar-Ruṣayfah* is derived from the root *raṣaf* "alignment", i.e. the arrangement of stones in straight or parallel lines in order to collect rainwater; "collec-

tion", i.e. the dam / cistern constructed for collection of runoff water.



1b. Site location on Wādī az-Zarqā’.



2. Urbanization extended.



3. Artificial mound.



4. East section.



5. Landscape of Khirbat ar-Ruṣayfah area.

RESULTS OF RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT KHIRBAT AR-RUṢAYFAH

(al-Mugheer 1999: 75-76). One should not forget its role as a commercial artery, as it was one of the most important trade routes during the Decapolis period (Sulaiman 1998: 32) (FIG. 6). Today the Yājūz also connects Jordan with neighbouring countries.

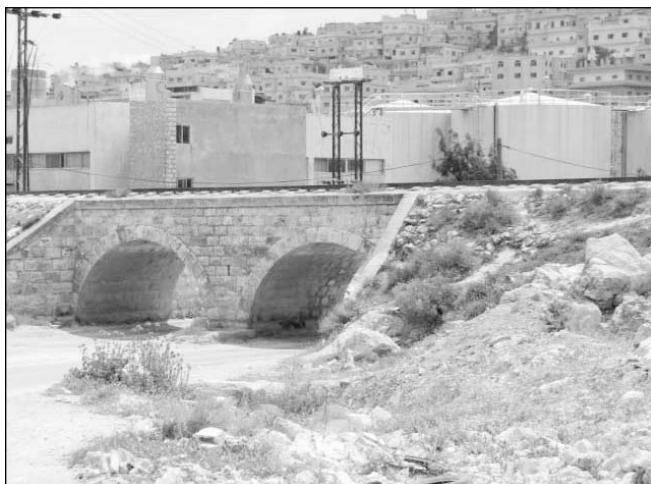
Ar-Ruṣayfah, located on this ancient but important communication route, became strategic as a resting place for travellers and traders, which ensured the town's continued existence and improvement. The construction of the al-Ḥijaz railway line (FIG. 7) in 1902 enhanced ar-Ruṣayfah's connections by giving it direct access to Damascus and Istanbul (al-Mugheer 1999: 75-76).

3. Archaeological Excavations

Over the past fifteen years, the site of ar-Ruṣayfah has suffered from the twin threats of development



6. Ancient and modern road.



7. Ottoman bridge.

and looting. Urban sprawl and road construction has destroyed much of the tell, so it was deemed vital that archaeological work be undertaken before the site was completely destroyed. The Department of Antiquities designated the site an ancient monument in 1999 and began excavations there in the same year (FIG. 8). Six seasons of fieldwork were undertaken between 1999 and 2004².

The top of the artificial mound was divided into four areas (A, B, C and D), which were in turn sub-divided into 5 x 5m squares for excavation. 21 squares, or 15 % of the site, were excavated (FIG. 9). These were:

Area A: No squares were dug.

Area B: Squares A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, D1, D2, E1, E2, F1, F2.

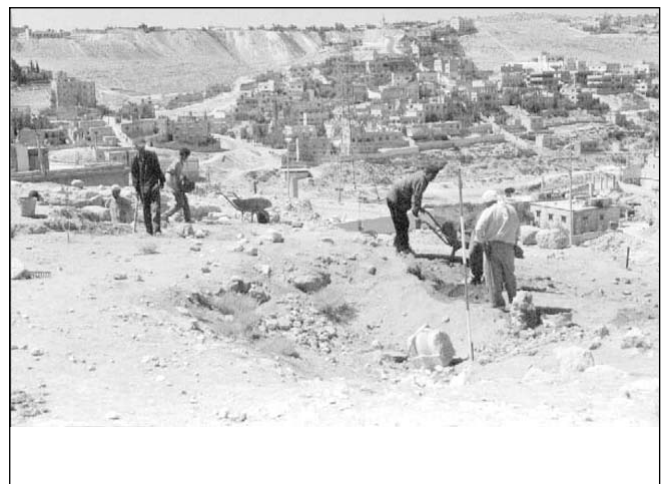
Area C: Squares A1, A2, B1, B2, B3, C1, C2, C4, C5, C6.

Area D: Square B1.

Preliminary work defined the extent of looting and other damage to the site, while later seasons demonstrated that ar-Ruṣayfah had been occupied from the Early Bronze Age to the Umayyad period

The Bronze Age

Two squares excavated in the west section of the mound exposed Early Bronze Age stone and mud-built walls and compacted mud floors (FIG. 10). These were associated with a destruction layer that contained quantities of sherds and other material characteristic of the beginning of the Bronze Age. Analysis of the pottery showed that it belonged to Bronze Age deposits (FIG. 36:1-3, 5 and 8).



8. Site before excavation.

2. The excavations were directed by R. Ghrayib, with the participation of A. Sharma, A. al-Dihythem, A. al-Hunaty, I. al-Faiomy

(archaeologist), S. al-Abadi, T. al-Hnaity, K. al-Dusuky and A. Obaied (draftsman).



9. Site through excavation.



10. Mud Brick wall.

Quantities of fallen brick (FIG. 11) were also recovered, including a whole brick measuring (52 x 22 x 10cm). It was later discovered that this is a standard brick size at ar-Ruṣayfah.

The City Wall: The Early Bronze Age in Area B was dominated by a city wall (FIG. 12) standing 1.6 to 1.8m high, approx. 9m long and 7m thick. The wall itself was interesting in that it was not of solid stone construction, but instead had a rubble core with an interior and exterior stone facing of good quality. A similar but later wall can be observed at Bāb adh-Dhrā', dated to the MB IIC period. The pottery excavated from the foundation trench of this wall, however, is Early Bronze Age in type.

Architectural features: The Brick Wall: When starting to remove the layer of broken bricks in Square B1 Locus 12, quantities of mud brick were found,

which were later shown to form part of a well-preserved wall (FIG. 13) extending from north-east to south-west. It is built of mud bricks that contain some gravel and straw within the matrix. Each brick is approximately the same size (14 x 40 x 60cm) (FIG. 14). The wall is 4.10m long and 0.62m wide, with a slope height of 2.2m; it consists of 15 courses of brickwork, one brick wide. The wall was covered with a layer of plaster up to 1cm thick (FIG. 15).

Wall 1: is located in the middle of Square B1 and extended for one metre, from the north-east corner of the square towards its south-west corner. This wall was built of medium-sized undressed limestone blocks and flint nodules, with mud mortar (FIG. 16). In the eastern part of the square and on the eastern façade of the wall, there were traces of plaster (FIG. 17). The wall intersects with another wall that begins in Square B1. The stratigraphic position of the wall and associated finds place its construction in the MB II period, but its current condition is so poor that it is hard to be definitive.

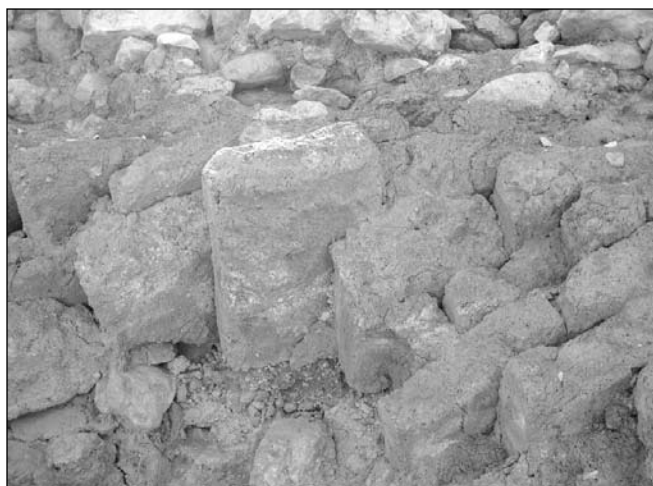
Wall 5: extends from the western part of the square. It is 3.25m long, 0.75-0.9m wide and consists of two rows of medium-sized undressed stones with a maximum extant height of 2.20m (FIG. 18). Although its northern end intersects with Wall 1, its southern end was not discovered until recently, but was found to have been built in the same style as Wall 1 (FIG. 16). This wall, according to the stratigraphic sequence of the associated floors, indicates an MB II date.



12. City wall.



13. The Brick wall.



14. Brick.

and quantity of material recovered. On its east side were two walls belonging to the same period. The floor associated with these walls had many in situ potsherds; a considerable amount of charcoal was also found. In the north-west corner of the room there was a small hearth, entrance and what appears to be a stairway (FIG. 22).



15. Bronze Age wall.



16. Wall 1.



17. plaster on wall.

Fallen bricks were found in the south part of Square A1 below Walls 1 and 6. The layer which contained the bricks was damaged, but what remained extended from west to east over an area measuring 3 x 1.2m and in excess of 0.8m thick. It forms an extension of Layers 9 and 10 in the same square. This layer was considered to be a part of Layer 13 and contained the following:

Jar 1: was placed upside down and was broken. It was made of dark red clay, with many grits in the fabric. Some white powdery soil was found inside

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18. wall 1 and wall 5.



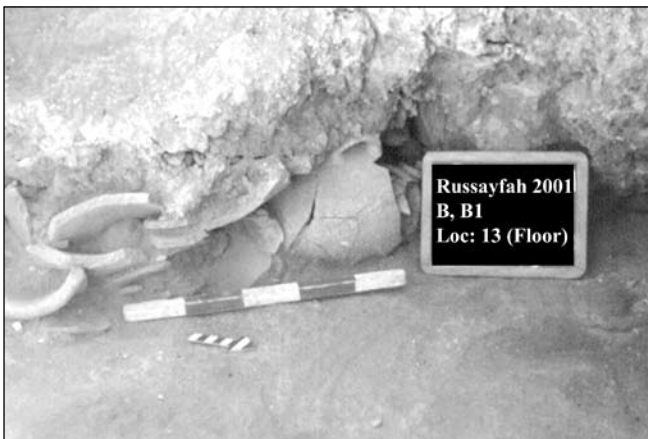
21. Jar.



19. Jar.



22. Stairway.



20. Jar.

it, some of which appeared to have been affected by water. The floor on which the jar was found consisted of a hard, white material and reddish brown soil. A group of burned medium-sized limestone fragments surrounded the jar. The soil around the jar was a mixture of creamy white, yellow white and very light red soil. Broken pieces of flint and fractured bricks were found beneath the jar, which may have been because of exposure to very high

heat.

Jar 2: was also broken, and was bigger and thicker than Jar 1. The jar is poorly made, incompletely fired and tempered with straw and flint. The fabric is light red with a light grey core.

The Iron Age

The Iron Age is poorly represented at ar-Ruṣayfah. Archaeological features are few and ill-defined, but two walls were discovered in Square A1 which we have dated to the Iron Age on the basis of associated pottery and the presence of twelve loom weights (FIGS. 23 and 37).

Hellenistic and Roman Periods

Like the Iron Age, the Hellenistic and Roman periods were poorly represented and have been damaged by recent urban development, with the result that some sherds (FIGS. 36:7,10 and 37) and coins were re-deposited. If much in situ material of these periods ever existed, it is now buried under new buildings, but traces may still be recoverable in another area of the tell. While working on floors as-



23. Loom weights.

sociated with these periods, it appeared that there were walls beneath the floors, especially in the middle hall. We excavated beneath the hall floor and located foundation trenches for robbed-out walls pre-dating the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In the process, half the hall floor was removed and two extant walls (Walls 27 and 28) discovered. Wall 27 extends parallel to the walls of the middle hall for a distance of 10.8m; it was 1.36m wide, 0.5m high and constructed of undressed stone. Walls 27 and 28 are distinguished from other walls at the site because of their greater width.

Byzantine Period

Excavations were most extensive in Area C, where nine squares were opened. The first task, before any archaeological features could be exposed, was to remove the modern rubble (FIG. 24) that covered the top of the mound. One of the most important discoveries was that of dozens of walls built of eroded limestone blocks, which appear to have been damaged by ancient or modern construction work.



24. Modern rubble in the site.

A. The 'Big Building'

Excavations in Area C also uncovered a group of walls, which together formed four roughly rectangular 'halls' approx. 15.2m long and 11.5m wide. Together, these 'halls' comprise a huge rectangular structure that we have designated the 'Big Building' (FIG. 25), owing to the fact that its footprint covers almost the entire summit of the tall. At the eastern end of the building was a small rectangular room, aligned north — south and separated from the three rectangular 'halls'. The building has been identified as Byzantine on the strength of the archaeological material found within it (FIG. 26).

The construction of the building (e.g. type of blocks used, the way they have been cut, the presence of column drums (FIG. 27) and church stones, e.g. the "chancel stone" (FIG. 28) suggests that it may represent the remains of a church, constructed during a single phase. The pottery (FIGS. 36: 4, 9 and 37) and coins found in the 'halls' typically date to the Byzantine period. In addition, some re-deposited Roman coins and pottery were found in the uppermost fills. The floors of the 'halls' were of compact soil or, in some cases, paved with limestone blocks. We also found five copper coins that date to end of Roman



25. The Big Building.

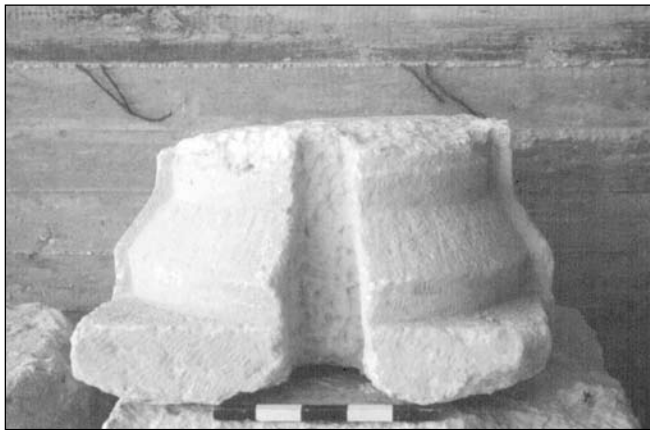


26. Byzantine wall.

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27. Column drums.



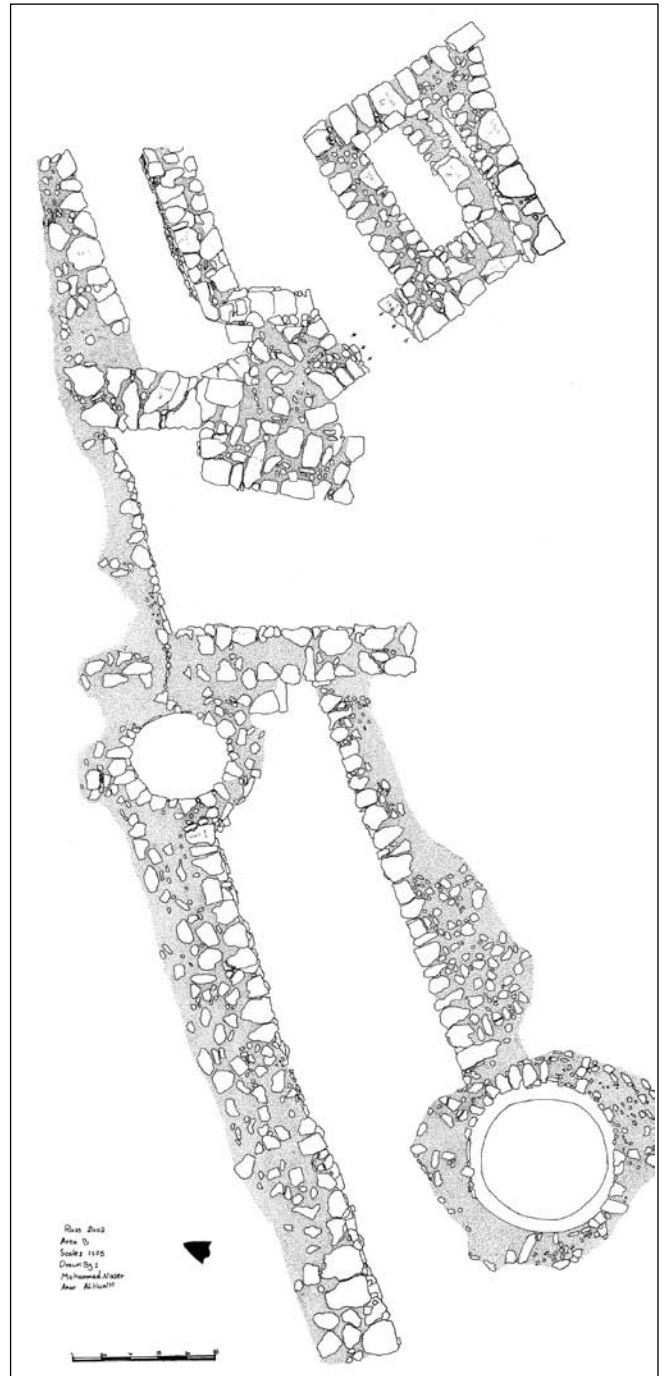
28. Chancel stone.

period and beginning of Byzantine period; some of the Roman coins can be attributed to the reign of Orlianus (272-275 AD) (FIG. 29a).

The Byzantine period is represented by many copper coins, including one attributed to the reign of Constantine I (315-320 AD) (FIG. 29b). Other objects include a group of loom weights, an ivory spindle whorl decorated with circles, lamps and a small jug.

B. Well and Water Cistern

On the north-west side of the mound, a well and water cistern were discovered (FIG. 30). The well

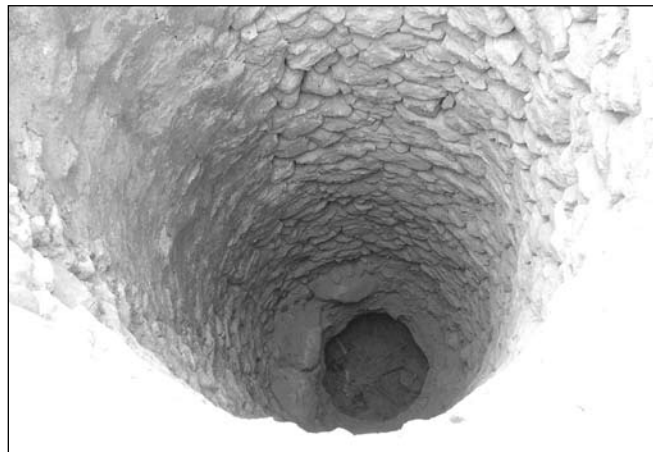


30. Water units in the site.



29. Coins

was built of uncut, medium-sized limestone blocks and was 10m deep (FIG. 31a, b); its lower part was plastered. Near the well was a 3m deep cistern (FIG. 32); its inner face had been plastered with



31a. Well.



31b. Well.



32. Cistern.

three separate layers. The cistern and well can be dated historically and archaeologically to the Byzantine period.

4. Conservation and Restoration of the Site

Much of the wall has been damaged by urban development. During the course of the excavations it became clear that conservation and restoration of many of the architectural features was required. Conservation work in Area B included the well and cistern (FIG. 33), which were fenced and consolidated. The stairway found in Square A1 was also consolidated, as was the Byzantine wall adjoining to the well and some of the less substantial Bronze Age walls (FIG. 34). Conservation work is still underway at the site, in order to ensure that most of the Byzantine walls and the "Big Building" are protected.

5. Conclusion

Detailed analysis of the pottery³, coins and archi-



33. Restoration works in the site.



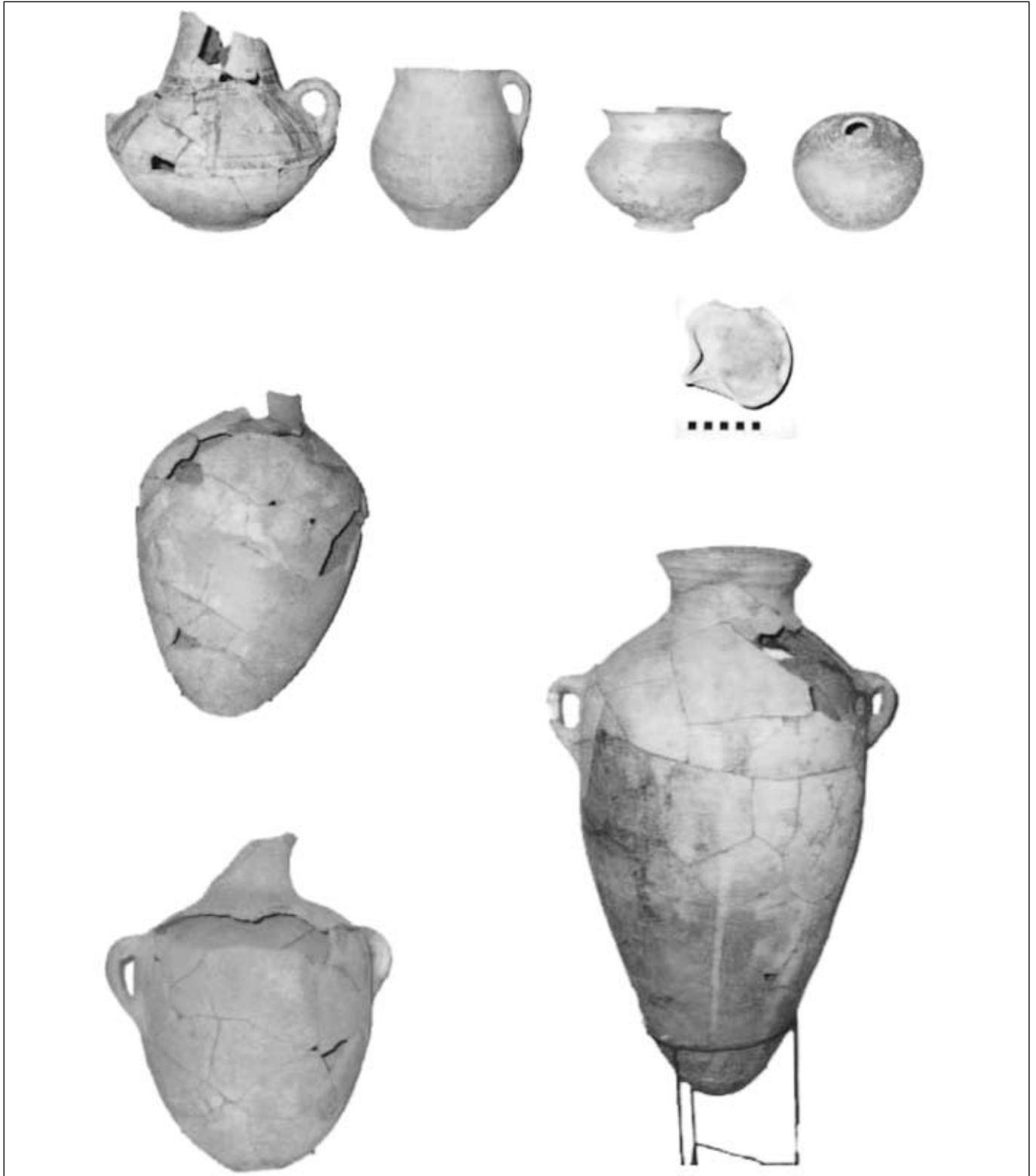
34. Bronze age wall after consolidation.

3. Collected by Mr Adeeb Abu Shmais.

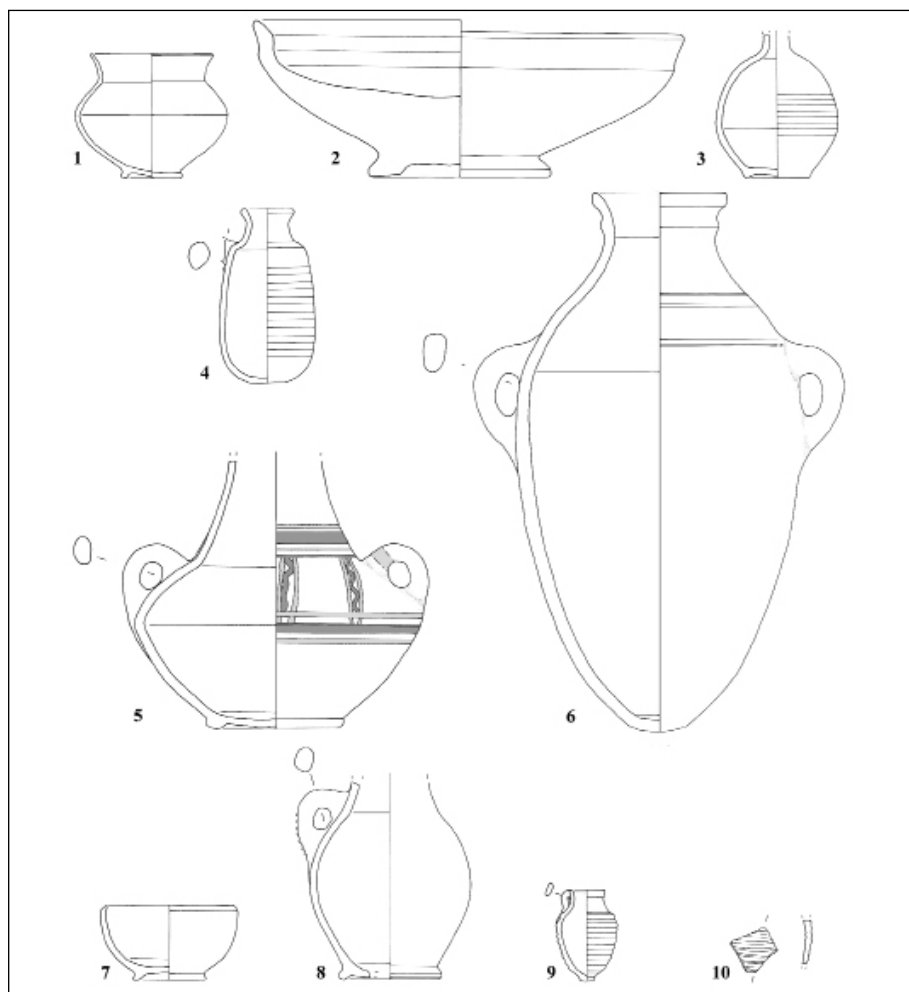
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ture show that Khirbat ar-Ruşayfah was occupied for a long period of time, from the Bronze Age to the Byzantine period. The Roman and Byzantine remains dominate the site and suggest that the site

attained its peak during this time. Less is known of the Iron Age, Hellenistic and Classical periods. Many walls and floors, and a range of material culture belonging to Iron Age II have been found,



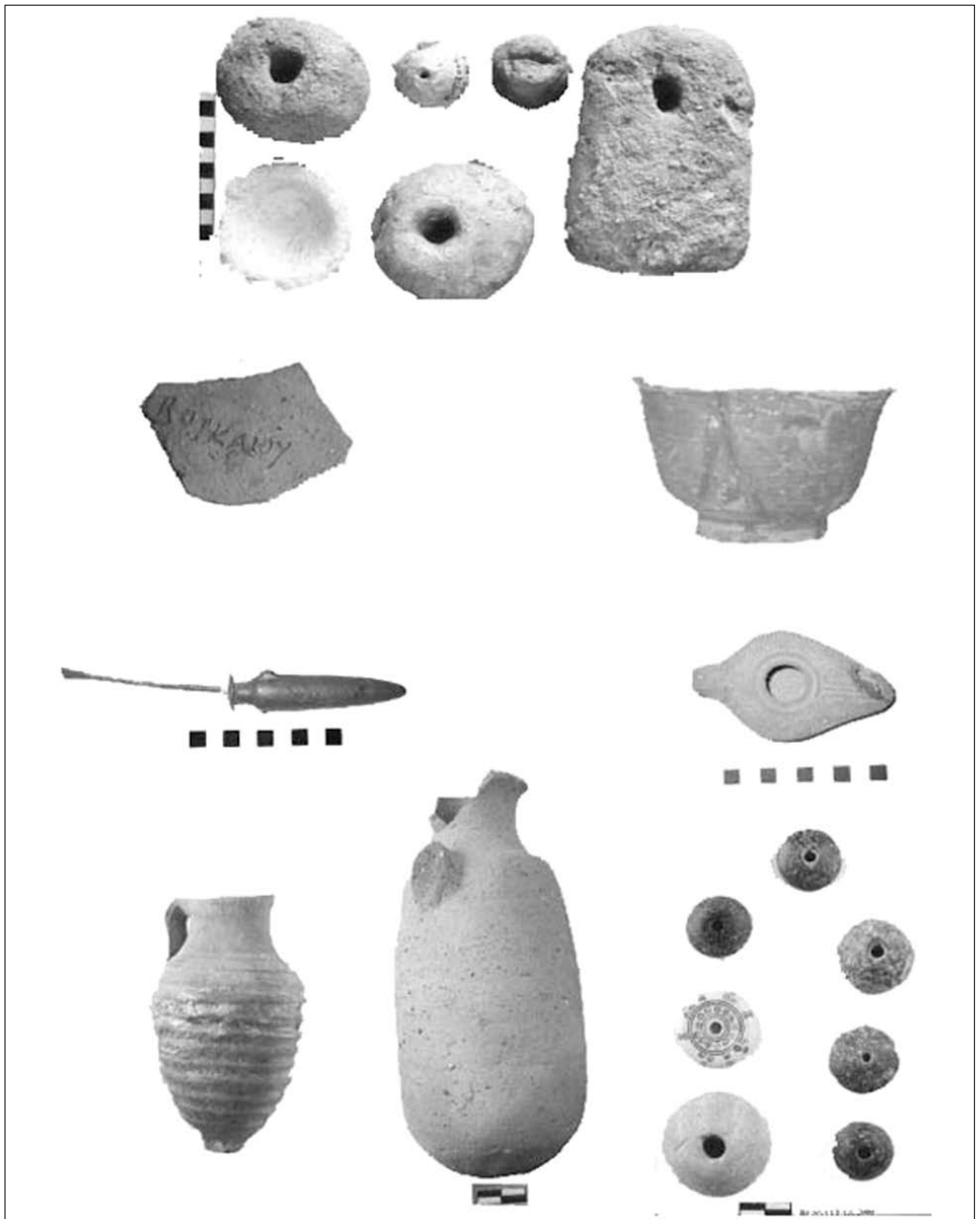
35. Bronze age artifacts.



36. Pottery drawing.

No	Type	Form	Diameter	Depth/Height	Description	Date
1	Bowl	Open	Medium	Intermediate	Buff; cream burnished slip outside.	MB II C
2	Bowl (platter)	Open	Large	Shallow	-	MB II C
3	Jug (juglet)	Closed	-	Short	-	MB II C
4	Jug (juglet)	Closed	-	Very Short	Pink buff; hand burnished; horizontal ribbing; cylindrical; body; ridged rim.	Byzantine
5	Amphora	Closed	Medium	Intermediate	Pink, white, red decoration	MB II C
6	Jar	Closed	-	Tall	Broken edge and tall neck; narrow top; compact body with two handles extending from middle of body to bottom of neck.	
7	Bowl	Open	-	-	-	Hellenistic
8	Jug	Closed	-	Short	-	MB II C
9	Jug (juglet)	Closed	-	Very Short	-	Byzantine
10	Sherd	-	-	-	-	Hellenistic

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37. Artifacts from ar-Ruşayfah.

including the very important loom weights. Even though the Hellenistic period is not as well represented in architectural terms as the subsequent Roman period, a considerable quantity of Hellenistic pottery has been recovered. The 30 copper coins have been studied and conserved with the help of Dr Fawzi Zayadine and Mrs Ayda Naghawwy. We managed to read some of them, which were inscribed with the following names: Hulianus, Gurdianus, Thiodosius and Valerian; two coins from the reign of Constantius II (361-337 AD) were found. In sum, the size of the architecture and the richness of finds show that ar-Ruḥayfah was an important site in the region.

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