

The Fourth Excavation Season at Jabal Juhayra, Aug/Sep 2015

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1. Introduction

Our long-term research project, the Jafr Basin Prehistoric Project (JBPP), started in 1997 with a view to tracing the process of pastoral nomadization in southern Jordan. For this objective, we have investigated a few dozen archaeological sites varying in both date and character. The series of research outcome was recently synthesized in the form of *the Jafr chronology*, which has enabled us to roughly sketch the process of pastoral nomadization in the region (Fujii 2013). The current phase of the project aims to develop the details of the Jafr chronology and, by so doing, provide further insights into the formation process of the Badia society in southern Jordan. Jabal Juhayra is among several sites that were selected to approach the issue.

2. The Site

Jabal Juhayra is located at the forefront of the hilly terrain that fringes the northwestern edge of the al-Jafr Basin (Fig. 1). The site occupies the southeastern flank of an isolated volcanic hill of the same name, commanding a small gully that flows down eastward from the hillside (Figs. 2, 3). It was found for the first time during our general season survey in 2002 and tentatively registered as JF-0116 (Fujii 2002; Fujii and Abe 2008). A test-sounding, taken place in August 2014, suggested that the site contains two distinct cultural layers: Layer 2 dated to the LN/early Chalcolithic transitional phase and Layer 3 dated to the Late PPNB (Fujii 2014). The second season was devoted to the excavation of the Layer 2 (LN/Chalcolithic) settlement (Fujii 2015; Fujii, Adachi et al. n.d.), and the third season dealt with a barrage-like masonry wall belonging to the Layer 3 settlement. The fourth season, our main concern, addressed a comprehensive excavation of the Layer 3 (LPPNB) settlement that extends along the scoria terrace above the gully.

4. Excavation results

Structural remains: The excavation showed that the Layer 3 settlement was composed of six rockshelter dwellings, several terrace walls, a dozen open-air features, a few dozen rock-cut cisterns, and a stone-built barrage. They were aligned along the scoria terrace to

form a settlement *c.* 40 m in total length. The highlight of the excavations was Rockshelter 6 at the southwestern edge of the elongated settlement. This unique structure was constructed by means of attaching masonry walls as exterior equipment to the scoria/basalt rockshelter modified in advance into a predetermined form (**Fig. 4**). In terms of typology, it had a tripartite rectangular plan, being equipped with an entrance on the gable side and partitioned by two pairs of buttress-like inner walls. Overall, it has much in common with *pier houses* characteristic of the Beidha layer 2 structural entity, suggesting close relationship with farming communities to the west. The remaining five rockshelters were also partly modified but not associated with such an elaborate finishing process (**Fig. 5**).

The settlement included a stone-built barrage and a few dozens rock-cut cisterns as well, both of which were constructed in Layer 3 and covered with Layer 2 deposits or features (**Figs. 6, 7**). Thus they undoubtedly date back to the Late PPNB period. This finding has corroborated anew our perspective that the Jafr PPNB was sustained by advanced water-use technology ([Fujii 2013](#)).

Small finds: The chipped flint assemblage from the Layer 3 settlement was characterized by the predominance of naviform core-and-blade components and the frequency of projectile points (**Fig. 8**). In addition, grinding implements, stone vessels (**Fig. 9**), animal bone tools, whetstones, shell ornaments, and faunal remains also occurred in a certain number. Among others, the stone vessels were highly developed and represented a remarkable trait of the Layer 3 settlement. For details, refer to the list attached to the end of this report.

5. Discussion

The excavation results have provided valuable insights into the PPNB culture in the al-Jafr Basin. Of special interest is the techno-typological sequence of the six rockshelter dwellings. Evidence suggests that the elongated settlement began with Rockshelter 6 and ended with simple rockshelter dwellings only partly modified and not associated with masonry walls. Given this, it would follow that the tradition of the parent settlement, probably Beidha or a Beidha-type settlement, was gradually replaced by the simple construction-, and probably life-, style in the course of the adaptation to the arid periphery. The existence of the Layer 2 settlement consisting again of simple rockshelter dwellings can also be understood in its extension. It is conceivable that this episode represents the initial process of pastoral nomadization in southern Jordan. We can probably take the remarkable reduction in artifact density and variety during this process to mean both the decrease in group size and the increase in group mobility.

6. Conclusion

Jabal Juhayra is a stratified Neolithic settlement located in an intermediate zone between farming communities to the west and desert outposts to the east. The series of research outcome is all the more important and expected to provide further insights into the formation process of the Badia society in southern Jordan. Nevertheless, our excavations have not yet fully extracted its archaeological implications. We are planning to conduct several weeks of complementary investigation in June the next year.

References

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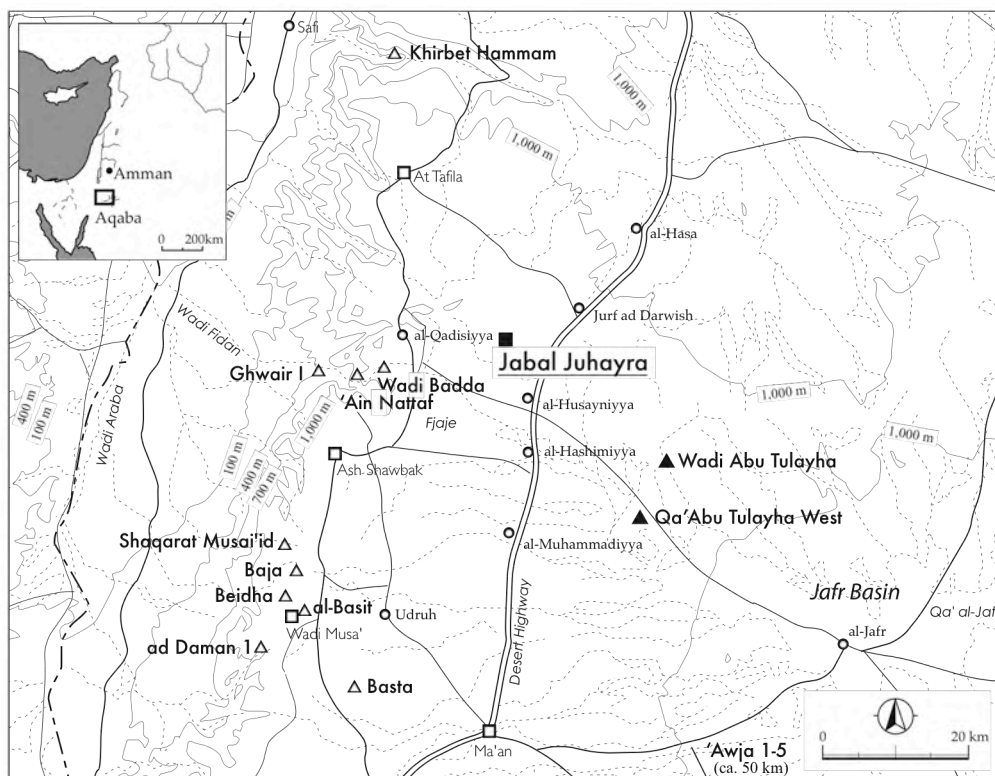


Fig. 1 Jabal Juhayra: site location.



Fig. 2 Jabal Juhayra: general view (looking W).

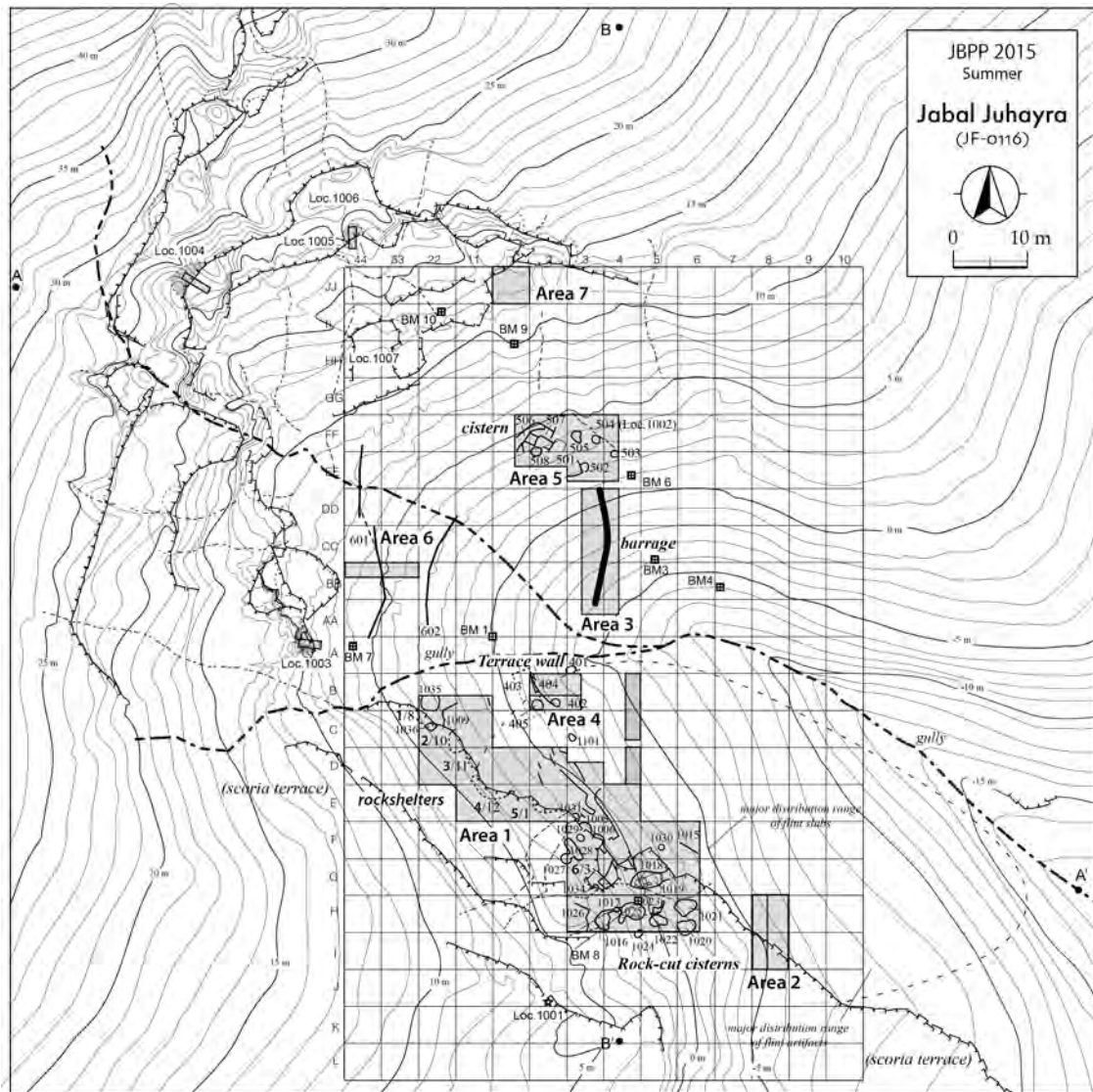


Fig. 3 Jabal Juhayra: site plan (as of October 5, 2015).



Fig. 4 Jabal Juhayra: Rockshelter 6 in Area 1 (looking S).



Fig. 5 Jabal Juhayra: Rockshelters 1-5 and terrace walls in Area 1 (looking W).



Fig. 6 Jabal Juhayra: pit-type rock-cut cisterns in Area 5 (looking N).



Fig. 7 Jabal Juhayra: terrace-type rock-cut cisterns in Area 5 (looking NE).



Fig. 8 Jabal Juhayra: chipped flint artifacts from the Layer 3 (LPPNB) settlement.



Fig. 9 Jabal Juhayra: groundstone artifacts from the Layer 3 (LPPNB) settlement.