

# Khirbat Faris: Rural Settlement, Continuity and Change In Southern Jordan

The Nabatean to Modern Periods  
(1st century BC – 20th century AD)

Alison McQuitty, Holly Parton and Andrew Petersen

with contributions by

Douglas Baird, Dominique Collon,  
Jeremy Johns and Mouna Khoury



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Front cover photo: Faris al-Majali's tomb and the possible shrine



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For Judith





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## Preface and Acknowledgements

The Khirbat Faris Project has been at the forefront of Islamic studies in Jordan in shifting focus away from the concentration on monumental, religious, military and urban architecture towards domestic and rural settlement. Questions of **how** people lived in the countryside rather than just where and when can now be answered. The results have been both spectacular and significant. They have hugely advanced the understanding of rural settlement and the way in which its density has ebbed and flowed over the centuries. Above all it is this which makes the Khirbat Faris Project so pivotal but, in addition,

- a. it is now possible to identify the architectural ‘signatures’ that accompany permanent, seasonal and temporary occupation;
- b. previously unidentified architectural types for domestic buildings – particularly relating to the Islamic periods – have been comprehensively investigated and described;
- c. information about irrigation and the introduction of particular crops, such as cotton and citrus fruits, in the 13th century AD has been charted;
- d. a secure sequence of previously difficult-to-date material has been established.

This volume is the first in a series of three that reports on the archaeological fieldwork carried out at Khirbat Faris from 1988–1994 under the direction of Jeremy Johns and Alison McQuitty. Volume II will include the anthropology and ethnographic report resulting from the survey carried out by William and Fidelity Lancaster as well as the environmental reports of the excavation authored by Mike Charles and Chantelle Hoppé (plants), Kevin Rielly and Lisa Yeomans (animal bones), Wim van de Meer (fish bones) and Hugh Barnes and Alison McQuitty (fields/cisterns). Volume III will cover the ceramic catalogue and analysis and contain the contributions of Robin Falkner, Jeremy Johns and Mads Sarley-Pontin.

It is a matter of very considerable regret to the authors that it has not been possible to publish all of the excavation results simultaneously or sooner. Many of the reasons for this delay have been outside the authors’ control. The bulk of the stratigraphy, architecture and finds analysis was complete by 2004 and the bibliography reflects this. The decision was taken by the authors not to update the analysis (by carrying out new research) and, therefore, the bibliography, lest the

updating process should delay the appearance of this volume even further.

The aim of this volume is to present information in a manner that provides a coherent narrative but also allows the reader to re-interpret the primary excavation material. The Appendices summarise the stratigraphic evidence on which the conclusions of this volume are based. These themes are discussed using the evidence presented in this volume: there will be other narratives that the evidence presented in the subsequent volumes suggests and this is to be welcomed.

Many people have been involved in the Faris Project over the years and gratitude is extended to them all for their dedication, stimulating conversations, laughter, good humour and resilience as well as for their expertise. Their individual roles are detailed below:

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<b>Archaeozoologists:</b>	Kevin Rielly, Lisa Yeomans, Willem van de Meer
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<b>Conservator:</b>	Noel Siver
<b>Cooks:</b>	Fridtjof Eykenduyn, Jad al-Younis
<b>Datebase creation:</b>	Holly Parton
<b>Department of Antiquities Directors:</b>	Dr Adnan Hadidi, Dr Ghazi Bisheh, † Dr Safwan Tell, † Dr Fawwaz al-Khraysheh
<b>Department of Antiquities representatives</b>	†Nabil Beqa’in, Hakim Mahmoud, Khalil Hamdan, Rommel Ghareeb
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<b>Human Bones:</b>	Stephen Bourke
<b>Illustration:</b>	Hugh Barnes, Jane Goddard, Simon Pressey, Isabelle Ruben, Judith Sellars, Samir Shraedeh

<b>Photography:</b>	Ian Edwards, Jennie Lowe, † Bill Lyons, Louise Martin, Isabelle Ruben
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<b>Small Finds:</b>	Catherine McLaughlin, Holly Parton
<b>Soil Scientist:</b>	Ian Baillie
<b>Surveyor:</b>	Hugh Barnes
<b>Vernacular Architecture Survey:</b>	Michele Biewers, Ruba Kana'an, Tamara Meheyar, Alison McQuitty

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# **Part I: Introduction**

Alison McQuitty



# Chapter 1: Introduction

Alison McQuitty

For generations Khirbat Faris has been a dot in the landscape of Southern Jordan but it is also a fragment of the mosaic that addresses a panoply of themes in the history of the Levant spanning the period from the 'Long Classical Millennium' (Kennedy 2007: 15) through the Late Antique World (Brown 1971), the medieval and post-medieval to the modern day. These themes are well identified in the wealth of scholarship surrounding the subject: Braudel's seminal work *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* first published in 1949, was of great influence in the way in which the Faris Project was conceived – particularly the effectiveness of the concept of the *longue durée* when considering rural settlement and land-use (Johns 1994). Since then *The Corrupting Sea* (Horden and Purcell: 2000) – an equally encyclopaedic Mediterranean-wide interpretation of the past – has appeared and provides a framework that allows the articulation of the diversity, both temporal and geographic, that is evident in the region.<sup>1</sup>

So what are the themes and topics that make up the totality of this mosaic – or rather mosaics? Some are period-specific while others are region-specific to the Levant and yet others cover much wider areas. A series of questions sheds light on these subjects: how should the evidence for a 'Byzantine boom' in the countryside be regarded (Johns 1994: 30)? What is the nature and timing of the shift from the world of Late Antiquity to a world that embraced the lands further east? How are the ideas of 'expansion' and 'contraction' in agricultural settlement useful? When was Islam adopted by countryside communities? What did it mean to be part of the Islamic caliphate? How are the presence of systems and networks of communication, trade, defence and transport reflected at Khirbat Faris? How should we interpret cycles of abandonment and occupation at a building level, at a settlement level, at an area level? To what extent was state policy instrumental in causing changes in the type of settlement and land-use? The

<sup>1</sup> It may seem odd to preface this account of the Khirbat Faris excavations with the citing of books about Mediterranean history as the inspiration behind much of the interpretation in this narrative. Khirbat Faris is not that near the Mediterranean and its face will have been turned to the north, south and east as often as to the west. But the concepts, debates and contradictions that *The Corrupting Sea*, in particular, introduces are of extreme relevance as scholars of the Islamic World have recognized e.g. Borrut *et al.* 2011; McPhillips and Wordsworth 2016.

nature of the nineteenth-century buildings at Khirbat Faris gives hints to the latter but the topic will be more fully covered by the ethnographic accounts that are due to appear in Volume 2. Here too will be the primary evidence that contributes to discussions surrounding the 'Islamic green revolution' in the 9th and 10th centuries AD (Watson 1983; Decker 2011 and 2009) – the new crops, new systems of water-management, new types of structures – that this may have heralded. More generally this evidence covers topics such as the identification of shifts from subsistence<sup>2</sup> to surplus production in the rural economy. It is not just the ebb and flow of history of which the Khirbat Faris story is a fragment.....it is part of the archaeological debates concerning the interpretation of survey material, the use of ethnographic and historical data with archaeology (McPhillips and Wordsworth 2016: ix), and the types of excavation and analysis that will best respond to these questions.

## 1.1 Project Aims

At the time when the project was conceived in the late 1980s, there was a stark disconnect between the historical and archaeological picture of settlement on the Kerak Plateau, particularly for the 9th–19th centuries AD. The documentation speaks of a vibrant village economy for much of this period (Johns 1994: 1–31; Walmsley 2008: 503), while surveys of the area suggested periods of complete *hiatus* in human occupation (Miller 1991). This suggestion was linked with preconceptions – markedly Eurocentric – regarding the story of those centuries, (Walmsley 2008: 495–7). This quote from G.L. Harding, 'one of Jordan's pioneer archaeologists' illustrates the point: 'In the ninth

<sup>2</sup> Horden and Purcell point out how it may well be erroneous to think in terms of subsistence economy as a counterweight to an economy that routinely produces a surplus. It is all a lot more complicated and as they remark: 'The interaction of humanity with the Mediterranean environment is so variously productive of the means of existence that a stable state of subsistence agricultural production seems to us unlikely to have formed part of the ebb and flow of strategies of the maintenance of life within the region....' (2000: 272). In this volume subsistence is not taken to mean an economy that is characterized by 'unrelenting toil, homelessness and in extreme cases starvation' but rather output that is targeted to survival and is mostly for local requirements with little or no surplus trade. However, Horden and Purcell's narrative does give pause for reflection since there will always have been trade and barter not to mention an imperative to produce a surplus: this is the only way that communities function and over-production is indeed a true and tested risk-reduction strategy.

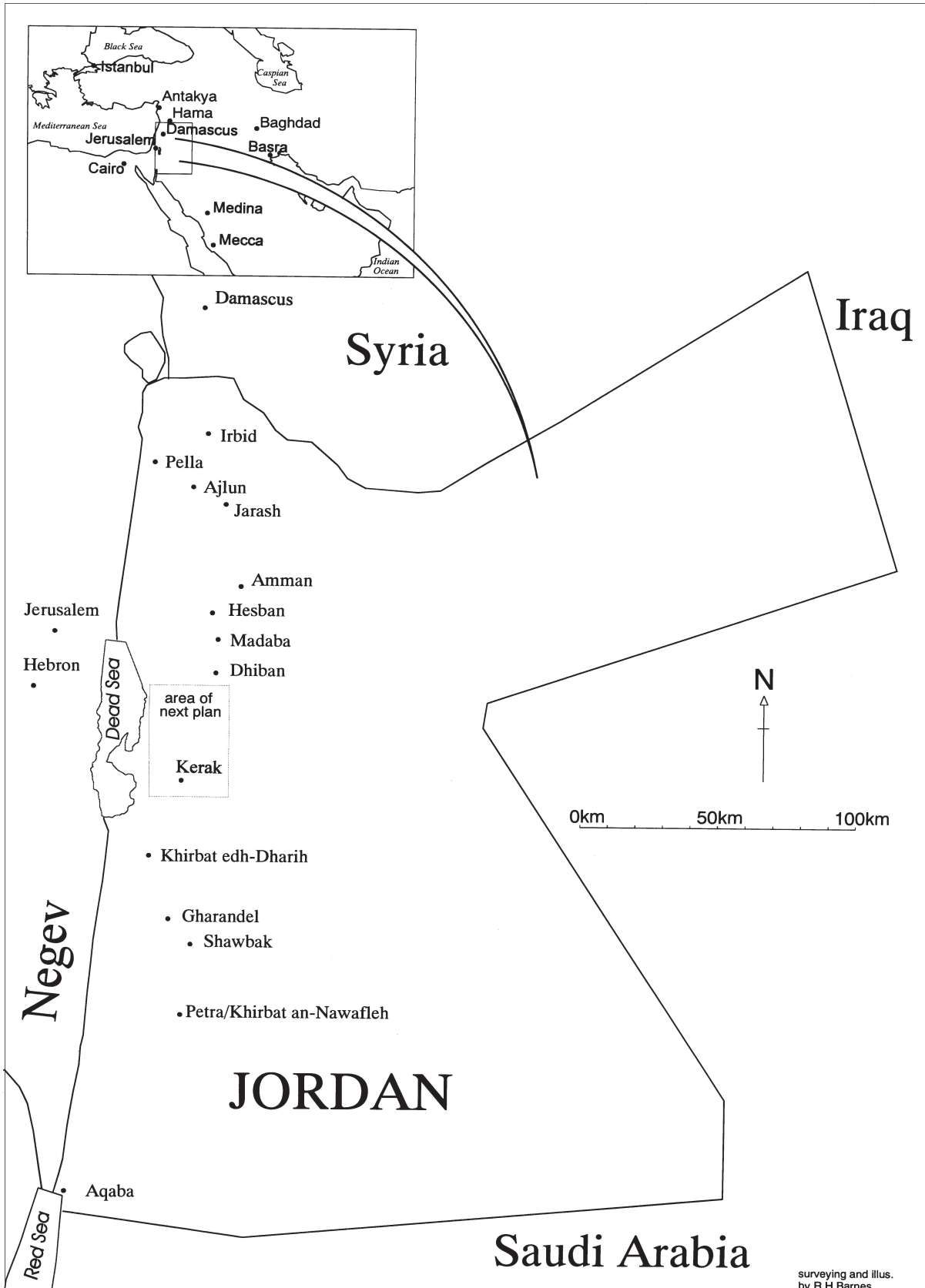


Figure 1.1 Regional plan.



century AD the conquering Abbasids transferred the capital to Baghdad, and Jordan began to be forgotten; not being on any trade route or producing any natural wealth, the country was left to fall into decay. But it was still of sufficient importance for the Crusaders in the twelfth (sic) century to occupy part of it and build castles there, the chief of which were Shobak and Kerak. After that its prosperity declined still further, and it was a country of small, poor villages, scraping a bare existence among the ruins of past splendour' (Harding 1967: 52). It is against this backdrop that the Khirbat Faris Project and other pioneering work in the area was conceived: this research continues to flourish.<sup>3</sup>

There was not a wish to prove or disprove the history but to provide a more nuanced view of the past, to explore some of the reasons for that disconnect and to play to archaeology's strength. Francis Pryor captures the essence of that strength: 'archaeology is about the past as experienced by ordinary people ... the extraordinariness of the ordinary' (2015: xiv–xv). That strength is ultimately what the Khirbat Faris Project is about and informed the identification of its aims.

The original research aims included:-

- a. To elaborate on the type of economy that accompanied occupation of the site;
- b. To investigate the concept of regionalism over time;
- c. To assess the impact of a central place, in this case Crusader and Mamluk Karak on the rural hinterland;
- d. To establish the sequence of Islamic ceramics, particularly those of the 7–10th centuries and of the post-13th century AD.

## 1.2 History of Research<sup>4</sup>

The earliest European traveller to leave a detailed record of his journey through the region was Seetzen (1854–55). In 1806, he took the road from Jabal Shihan to Al Rabba and, although he lists several ruins along the way, including Al Qasr, he makes no mention of Khirbat Tadun. The first detailed description of the site is given in 1851 by de Saulcy (1853). Nearly half a decade later, in 1896, Musil records how he rode from Yarut to Imra' through an 'arable plain' and passed Khirbat Tadun on his left. He describes the site as consisting of 'a fairly well-preserved tower and the ruins of houses' (1907–08 I:87). As part of his pioneering archaeological survey, Glueck (recorded 'two modern abandoned buildings, standing among several ruined buildings' (1934: 62). The associated ceramics were identified as 'Nabatean and

medieval Islamic'. These 'abandoned' buildings were presumably Houses 1 and 2, which had been built after Musil's travel through the area. The area was surveyed as part of the Ard Al Kerak Survey: site 55 (Worschech 1985: 43–45) and then again in Miller's extensive survey of the Kerak Plateau (1991: 49–51. Two ruined buildings plus the traces of a third are again recorded as well as the 'wall lines of numerous structures ... (and) cisterns among the wall remains' and the tomb. The ceramics collected during the survey ranged from Middle Bronze Age I to Late Islamic.

### 1.3 Khirbat Faris: The Name

The name Khirbat Faris is relatively new. The site is named 'Tadun' on the 1: 50,000 map and appears with that name in Worschech (1985: 43–47) and Miller (1991: 49–515). When the co-directors visited the site in 1986, the local Majali landowners distinguished between the western site of Khirbat Faris, which had been recently abandoned by their ancestors, and the adjacent, much older site of Khirbat Tadun. That distinction was followed by the Project and is illustrated in Figure 1.2. However, at least two walls can be traced running from one site to the other and it is highly likely that the two sites, now separated by a track and small fields, once constituted a single complex.

Khirbat Tadun remains unexcavated. De Saulcy visited the site in 1851 and records Tadun as 'a small circular hillock' that he interpreted as the ruin of a Byzantine church (1853: 341). A more recent description is given by Johns, 'Tadun is a large mound, approximately 100 m by 30 m rising to approximately 4–5 m above the immediately surrounding area. The outlines of a substantial rectangular walled structure are visible, enclosing a large central depression and several small mounds. The Roman road identified by Worschech (1985: 131) seems to run north from Al Rabba into the south side of the mound, where there may be a gate. At the top of the mound, near its northwest corner, are exposed what may be the upper courses of a small dome, executed in fine limestone ashlar masonry. In the central depression, recent clandestine excavation has revealed a large Corinthian capital and an architrave block, both in limestone ... .Worschech recovered Late Roman and Byzantine sherds from the site and our own collection added a sherd of Umayyad red-on-grey painted ware to the assemblage: in 1988 further Umayyad pottery was collected from Kh. Tadun' (Johns *et al.* 1989: 64–5; Worschech 1985: 41–4). Further hints as to the nature of this structure are given by the place-name itself. Knauf interprets Tadun as being Greek in origin and deriving from 'St Theodoros' via Tadur and Tadhur (Knauf 1991: 285). In this case Tadun may well be a church of St Theodoros that was used at least until the 7th–8th centuries AD. As is discussed in Chapter 5, the

<sup>3</sup> For an updated bibliography of the various relevant excavations, surveys and historical research in central Jordan, the reader is referred to Linton, G.L. (2003), MacDonald (2015), and Walker (2011).

<sup>4</sup> This section is based on Johns 1989: 67 and Miller 1991: 49–51.

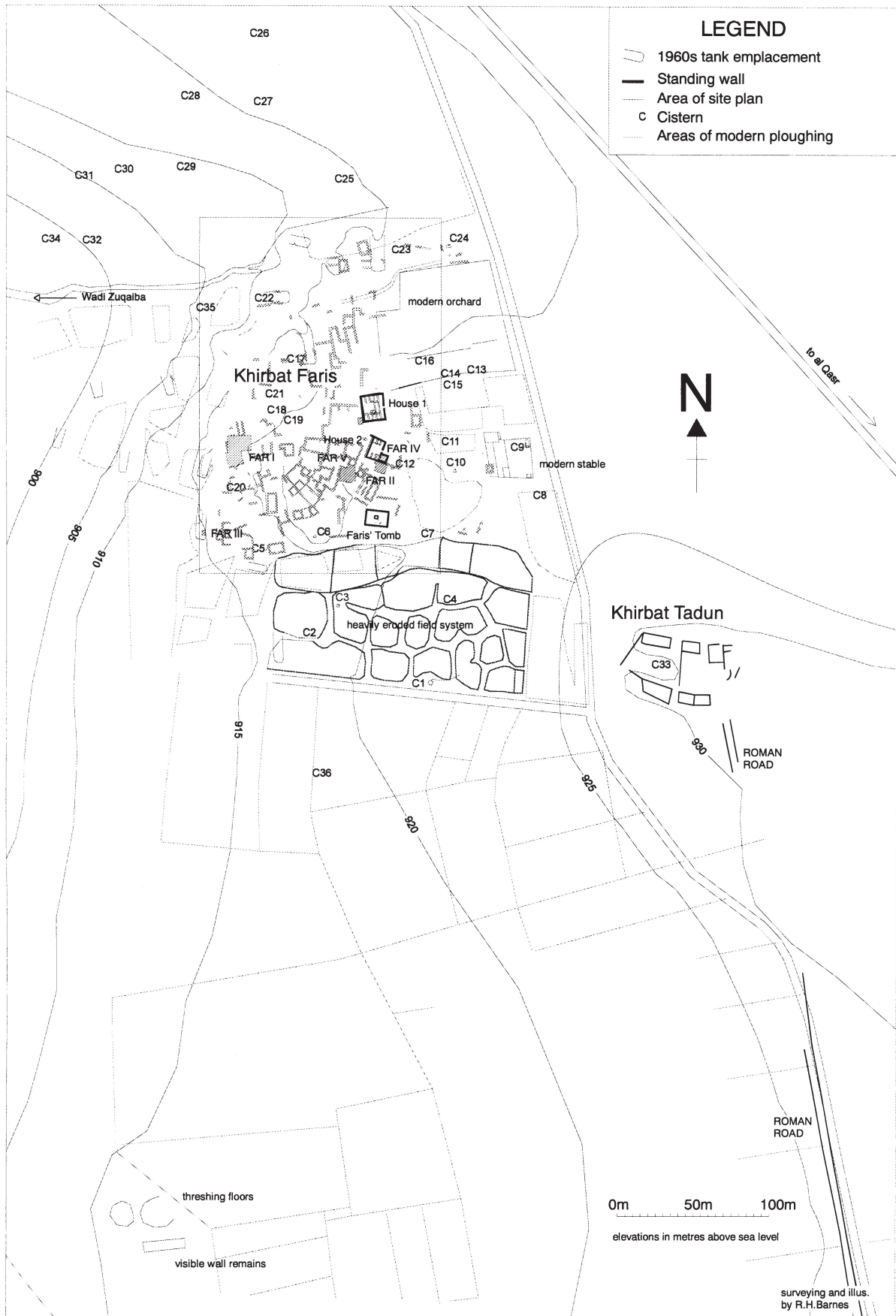


Figure 1.2 Area plan around Khirbat Faris.





Figure 1.3 Aerial view of Khirbat Tadun to left of modern track and Khirbat Faris APAAME\_20070417\_DLK-0051 © David L. Kennedy, Aerial Photographic Archive for Archaeology in the Middle East.

mid-8th century earthquake(s)<sup>5</sup> is likely to have been responsible for considerable destruction at the site and may have marked the end of occupation at Tadun.

#### 1.4 Khirbat Faris: The Geographic and Historical Context

Khirbat Faris is an a-historical site – the geographic and historical context within which it fits are known but the specificities of its own settlement history can only be retrieved from archaeology (Figure 1.3).

The settlement lies in rich wheat and barley growing land (when there is adequate rainfall) and on the edge of a well-watered *wadi* (a valley that is dry except in the rainy season) – Wadi Ibn Hammad – which drains westwards into the Dead Sea. The annual rainfall

currently varies between 100–500 mm (Miller 1991: 3). Analysis of stalagmites in a cave west of Jerusalem, Dead Sea sediments and water levels and tree types in the ramp at Masada, shows that there was also marked climatic variation in the past (Issar and Zohar 2007: 26–37), and it is this feature of variation which is key and will be more fully explored in Volume II. The land-use of the recent past was mixed farming with grain, legumes and summer crops being raised on the plateau while tomatoes, grapes, fruit and grain were both irrigated and cultivated on the *wadi* sides and bottom (Figure 1.4). Raising of sheep, goats and, formerly, cattle complement this agriculture. Environmental data from the excavations suggest that the regime practised has been variations of the above throughout the site's history. Several discreet communities exploit and control various aspects of this pastoral and agricultural regime.

The archaeological story of the rural landscape in Jordan has often been portrayed as opposition between the nomad (*Bedu*) practising pastoralism and the farmer (*fellah*) practising agriculture: between the 'Desert' and the 'Sown' (Lewis 1987). In fact, current historical and anthropological research shows that the relationship between nomad and farmer should more correctly be seen as complementary (Johns 1994;

<sup>5</sup> See Ambraseys 2009: 234–5 for detailed discussion concerning this earthquake. There were at least 3 sizeable earthquakes in the years spanning AD 746–757. It is widely accepted that in Northern Jordan and the Jordan Valley a calamitous earthquake struck in AD 749 and caused widespread destruction. However, Ambraseys, citing the chronicler Theophanes the Confessor (AD 752–818), provides a cogent case for the date of AD 746 being preferred for this area. '... (an) earthquake affected the region to the east of the Jordan Rift more than it did to the west....It seems that much of the damage was done to towns lying east of the river along the trade route that ran from Palmyra via Damascus to Ma'an and Tabuk.'

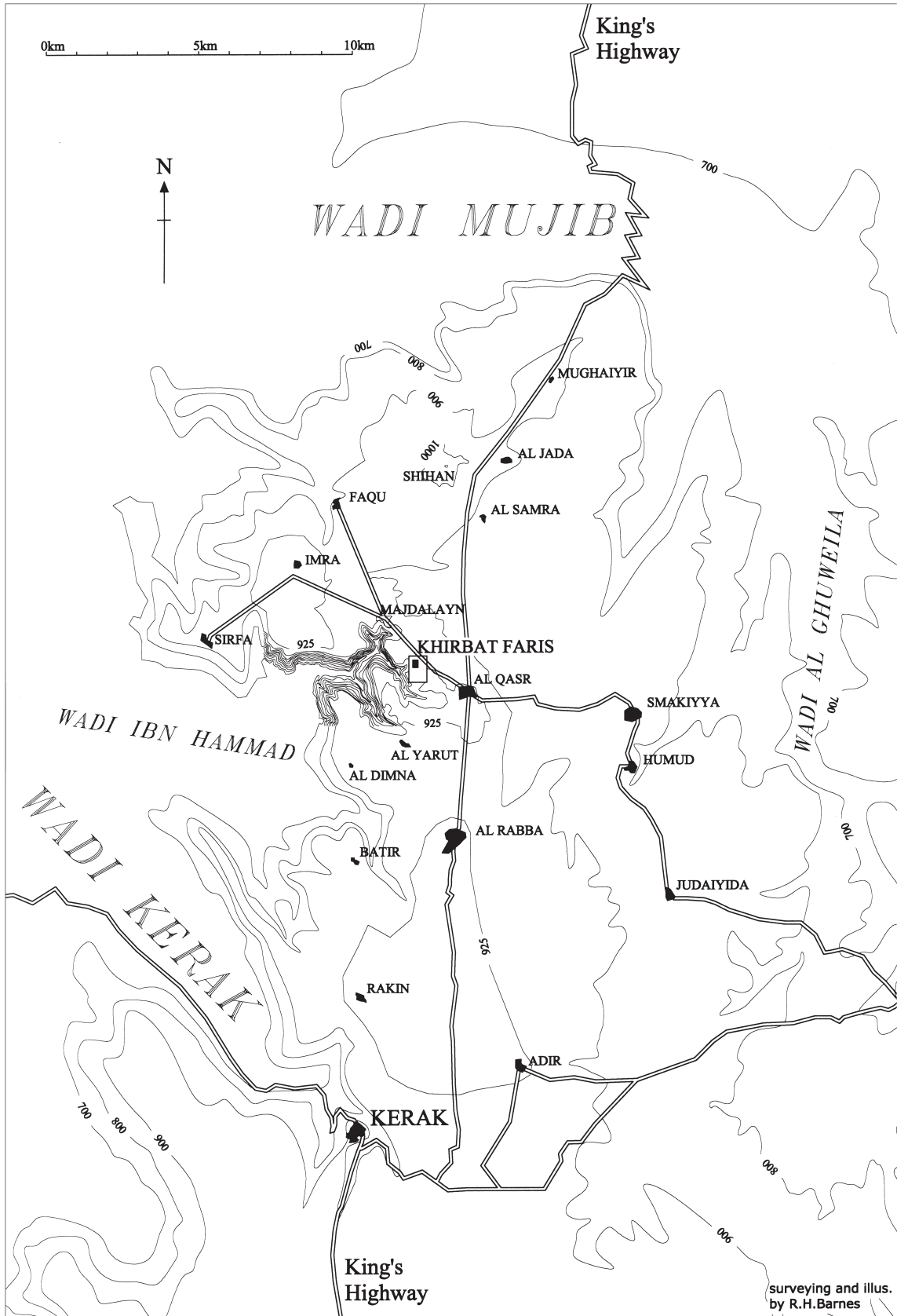


Figure 1.4 Plan of the Kerak Plateau.

# The Complex Continuum between Nomad and Farmer

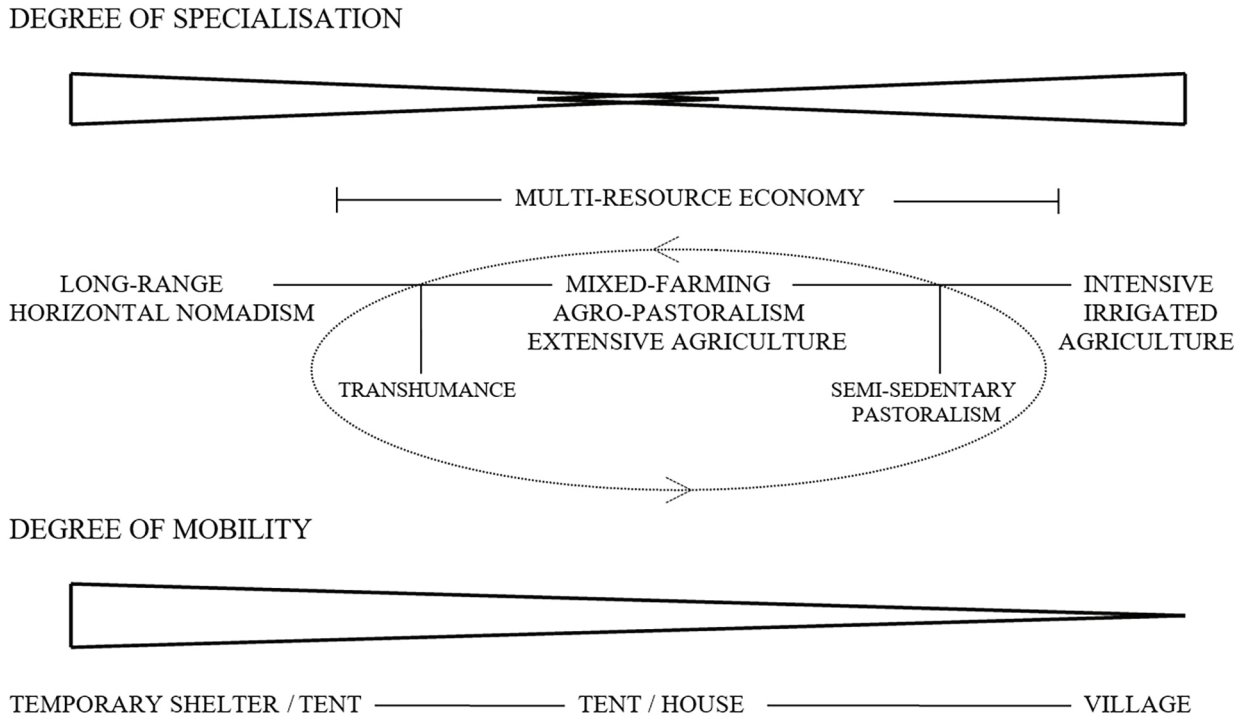


Figure 1.5 The Complex Continuum between Nomad and Farmer.

Lancaster & Lancaster 1995: 106; Palmer 2001: 621–2), as a continuum: a sliding scale from totally nomadic and mobile communities through semi-nomadic communities to sedentary communities. This is a particularly apt framework for considering the rural landscape of the Kerak Plateau and is adopted in this volume (Figure 1.5).

Other factors contributing to that framework are the site's position on the rim of the Wadi Ibn Hammad, neatly located between the grain-growing lands of the plateau to the north and east and the slopes and wadi bottom, with their potential for the cultivation of irrigated crops. A spring, known locally as 'Ain Jubeiba, is only 30 minutes donkey- and person-walking distance from Khirbat Faris along a paved and walled track. This would have augmented the water stored in the many cisterns that provided the only alternative water source. This *wadi* was also a communication route down to the settlements of the *Ghor* (the Rift Valley in Jordan), the harbours of the Dead Sea and ultimately further west to the Mediterranean. The centuries-old route north-south was along what is currently referred to as the King's Highway. Khirbat Faris was indeed 'well connected' and but one of several similar-

looking settlements located along the plateau edge at approximately 5-kilometre intervals.

For a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the historical sources and evidence from archaeological survey as they relate to the Kerak Plateau, the reader is referred to Johns 1994. Recent summary articles addressing the themes of this volume can be found in McQuitty 2005 and 2009.

The story of the settlement at Khirbat Faris starts at least as early as the 13th century BC based on the finding of cylinder seals [SF 1614 and SF 1618], a limestone cosmetic palette [SF 1620], ceramics and massive stone architecture. This is a time when the Kerak Plateau, like the rest of Jordan, was under Egyptian hegemony and governed on a local level by city states, (Strange 2008: 303). Little to nothing can be said about the character of occupation apart from observing that Khirbat Faris was very clearly linked in with international trade networks. The next snapshot of the settlement is offered by the presence of 9th to 8th century BC ceramics on the Western Edge. Khirbat Faris was part of the Kingdom of Moab and neighbouring villages and towns included Dhiban and Balu'a, strongholds of King





Figure 1.6 Aerial view of Al Qasr temple looking northwest. The outline walls of the temple and sanctuary are on the left of the image. The houses in which the carvings illustrated in 1.7 and 1.8 are located are on the right. Compare this image with Figure 4.40. APAAME\_20070417\_FFR-0253 © Francesca Radcliffe, Aerial Photographic Archive for Archaeology in the Middle East.

Mesha (Finkelstein and Lipschits 2011; Routledge 2000; Tushingham 1972; Worschech 1997). It is at Dhiban that the Mesha Stele was found, which chronicles the Moabite rebellion against Israel (Herr and Najjar 2008: 322).

By the 1st century AD the inhabitants of Khirbat Faris were Nabatean subjects using distinctive Nabatean wares and worshipping at the nearby temple of Al Qasr (Figures 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8) (Gysens and Marino 1997: 189–193). There seems to have been a ‘dynamic evolution’ in Nabatean material culture at this time as evidenced by archaeological work in the larger centres of Nabataea e.g. Petra, Huwara (Humayma), Aila (Aqabah) (Schmid 2008: 377–8) as well as smaller yet obviously flourishing villages, e.g. Khirbat edh-Dharih (Villeneuve and al Muheisin 2000: 1515–63). The construction of the Khan at Khirbat Faris may well fit into this resurgence. Communication and trading routes were never far away: the north-south route commonly known as ‘The King’s Highway’ lies but 3 km to the east and this would have given ready access to the centres further south e.g. Rabbath Moab (modern Al Rabba).

The prosperity and stability of this time continued as Nabataea was annexed by the Roman Empire in AD 106. Khirbat Faris now fell within the administrative province of Arabia with its capital at Petra. The administrative change that this brought to a provincial village was probably minimal. As Freeman puts it, ‘communities appear to have retained their pre-Roman administrative frameworks and control of their resources, other than the taxation that they were expected to provide,’ (2008: 423). However, the employment and trading opportunities brought to the population of Khirbat Faris by the upgrading of the King’s Highway to the Via Nova Traiana and the construction of the Limes forts (Kennedy 2000: 134–155) were undoubtedly substantial. The road-stations and garrisons needed not only to be built but also provisioned. As well as the major north-south route running so nearby, Khirbat Faris and Khirbat Tadun themselves lay on a minor Roman road connecting the settlement with a network of villages lying to the northwest (Worschech and Knauf 1985: 131). Al Rabba/Areopolis, with its Roman temple (Zayadine 1971: 71), and Kerak (Charachmoba) continued to be the main commercial centres in the region: both centres were





Figure 1.7 Al Qasr: arch springer reusing a lion carving from a Nabatean temple.



Figure 1.8 Al Qasr: arch springer reusing a Helios carving from a Nabatean temple.

listed in Ptolemy's *Geography* and coins were struck at both cities in the early 3rd century.

It is the 6th–8th centuries AD that allow more extensive characterisation of the occupation at Khirbat Faris. Arguably, at this time, the whole site was known as Khirbat Tadun and was a flourishing village within the Byzantine administrative district, first of Arabia and then Palestine III with its capital at Petra, (Watson 2008: 460). Throughout Jordan the Byzantine period is seen as a peak of agricultural occupation and use of the land. Watson goes on to summarise, (2008: 447), 'Numerous factors contributed to this situation, chief among them being the sense of general security that allowed settlement and food production to exist in safety. Healthy trade and economic networks encouraged an overall prosperity. An expanding religious community enjoyed the highest political support.' On the Kerak Plateau, Christianity and the ecclesiastical framework had grown to have an important role within the countryside, fostering village solidarity, notwithstanding the frequent doctrinal conflicts that coloured the Christian religious life of the 4th–7th

centuries. There was at least one church at Khirbat Faris, and maybe two, judging by the objects found in the trenches at both the Central Area and Highest Point as well as the analysis of the Tadun name. The clergy would have answered to the bishop in nearby Areopolis (Al Rabba), who himself would have answered to the metropolitan bishop of Petra (Watson 2008: 473).

In subsequent centuries, the settlement at Khirbat Faris, administratively, continued to be oriented southwards. In the 10th century Ma'ab (Al Rabba) was the principle town of the region of Al Sharah only to be overtaken by Kerak in the succeeding Crusader, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods (12th–16th centuries). A comprehensive summary of the historical records of these periods is given in Walmsley (2008: 498–503). While a certain amount of this material relates to political and military events, there is also a wealth of information concerning the nature of the rural economy. As the settlement of earlier periods was strongly affected by the presence of, first the King's Highway and then the Via Nova Traiana, so too the imperatives of the Hajj played a significant role in shaping the local rural economy.





Figure 1.9 2016: looking south across Khirbat Faris showing modern buildings and orchards encroaching on the site. House 1 is to the right of the image. Contrast this with Figure 2.2, taken in 1998..

Until the 16th century the Hajj caravans followed the route through Al Qasr and Ma'ab before moving further east (Petersen 1994). Recent analysis of Mamluk *waqfiyat* documents in combination with archaeological fieldwork (Walker 2007) offers detailed information regarding the relationship between the Mamluk state and its peasant subjects as well as information about investment, cropping and revenues. The physical correlates of this information – the construction of road networks, storage facilities, pigeon and fire towers (for communications), caravan and pilgrim stops – are also identified. The grain cultivated on the Kerak Plateau was of paramount importance to the state, as were the swift and strong horses bred on these wide plains for the royal stables, the camels for army transport and the sheep for wool and mutton (Irwin 1986: 115–6). However, as that direct interest waned, according to the history, the 15th century saw a fairly steep reduction in both the size and number of rural settlements.

During the first century of Ottoman hegemony, i.e. the late 16th century, an exhaustive fiscal register assessing the economic potential of the towns and countryside was drawn up by Ottoman officials eager to maximise the contribution of tax revenues to the state. This register has been comprehensively studied and analysed by Hütteroth and Abdulfattah (1977). The picture gleaned of the Kerak Plateau is of a landscape dotted with villages and a handful of larger market towns where the cultivation of grain and legumes held sway with flocks of goats and herds of cattle complementing

the agriculture. This picture probably held true for the preceding and succeeding 50–100 years. However, in subsequent Ottoman centuries tax registers were no longer compiled or updated by central government. The history of government became the history of inter-tribal conflicts and the local *shaykh* (the head of the tribe) was the link between the Ottoman administration and the province (Findley 1986: 4). These are the centuries that coincide with periods that have not been well defined in the archaeological record.

It is not until the mid-19th century that Khirbat Faris and Khirbat Tadun finally enter the written record. De Saulcy visited in 1851 and his observations are recorded in Chapter 10 in this volume. Those accounts and the subsequent visits of early archaeologists give a European view of the settlement at that time but it is the oral accounts and traditions of the people who live in and use the area today which complement that view (Lancaster and Lancaster 1995). The Arch-and-Grain-Bin Houses ceased to be used in the 1940s when a severe drought affected the region following on from the preceding years of Depression. The Hashemite government had provided piped water at the nearby town of Al Qasr and it is here that the Faris Majali consolidated their local power base. Nevertheless, the land around Khirbat Faris continued to be used for the cultivation of grain and legumes and the grazing of sheep and goats. The years since the end of the excavation have seen Khirbat Faris expand once more: orchards and concrete barns ring the archaeological



Table 1.1 Table showing conclusions about rural settlement based on historical documents and survey material and how this compares with the excavated evidence at Khirbat Faris.

Century AD	Survey Evidence	Documentary evidence	Excavation Evidence	Dynastic Period
1st	Dense rural occupation	Dynamic rural economy	De novo constructional occupation of Khan	Nabatean
2nd	Decline in settlement			Roman
3rd			De novo constructional occupation: Late Antique House: Far V	Roman
4th	Progressive rise in settlement density leading to dynamic rural economy in Late Antique period			Roman/Byzantine
5th			Occupation – features and material	Byzantine
6th				Byzantine
7th	Invisibility on survey		De novo constructional occupation: Late Antique House: Far II	Umayyad
8th				Umayyad/Abbasid
9th			Occupation – features and material	Abbasid
10th	Dynamic rural economy			Fatimid
11th			Fatimid/Ikshidid	
12th			Re-modelling constructional occupation: Transverse Arch House: Far II.	Crusader/Ayyubid
13th			De novo constructional occupation: Far I Vault IV; Far V Transverse Arch House	Ayyubid/Mamluk
14th		State investment in agriculture/pastoralism; increase in rural settlement; dynamic rural economy.	De novo constructional occupation: Far I Vaults I, II and V	Mamluk
15th	Shift in rural settlement from arable plains to scarp locations	Site reduction and abandonment	De novo constructional occupation: Far I Vault III	Mamluk
16th	Invisibility on survey	Network of rural sites		Mamluk/Ottoman
17th			Occupation – features and material (oven-houses)	Ottoman
18th				Ottoman
19th	sedenterization		De novo constructional occupation; Arch and Grain-Bin Houses.	Ottoman
20th			Occupation	Ottoman/Hashemite

site (Figure 1.9). The story of the enduring adaptability of the local population in exploiting and curating their rural landscape continues.

Table 1.1 summarizes much of this information. The summary of the survey evidence is based on the reports of Miller (1991) and Parker (2006) while that of the history relies on Freeman (2008), Hütterthoth and Abdulfattah (1977), Johns (1994), Lancaster and Lancaster (1995), McQuitty (2008), Walker (2007) and Walmsley (2008). The table makes use of the terms ‘*de novo* constructional occupation’; ‘re-modelling

constructional occupation’; ‘occupation – features and material’ and ‘occupation’. These terms reflect the different levels of investment, in terms of time, labour and materials, that were spent on the development of the domestic structures of Khirbat Faris. The obvious qualification is that only the portion of the site that was excavated can be assessed – it is by no means certain that this portion reflects the level of investment as a whole. In addition, it cannot be more than suggested that Khirbat Faris is representative of the rural settlement on the northern Kerak Plateau as a whole. However, this table **does** show – albeit in simplified

form – the conclusions about rural settlement based on historical documents and survey material and how this compares with the excavated evidence.

- ‘*De novo* constructional occupation’ refers to buildings constructed from scratch;
- ‘re-modelling constructional occupation’ refers to buildings which are constructed using

earlier elements e.g. walls but are substantially different in form;

- ‘occupation – features and material’ refers to features e.g. pits, oven-houses and *in situ* deposits e.g. courtyard surfaces with their related objects;
- ‘occupation’ refers to out of *situ* material.