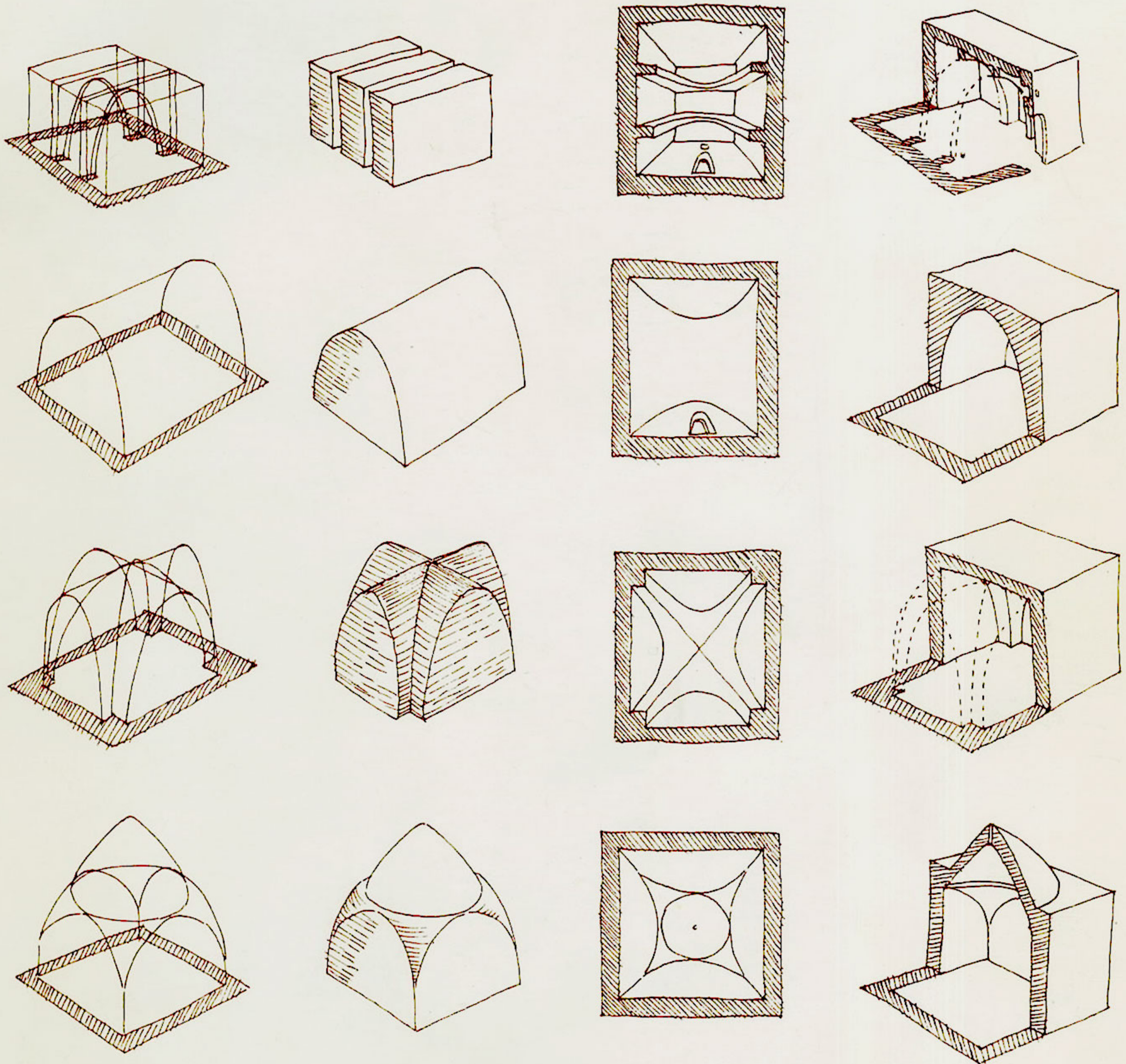


# NOTES ON VILLAGE ARCHITECTURE IN JORDAN



**Ammar Khammash**



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Ammar Khammash

ARABESQUE



Notes On Village Architecture In Jordan  
University Art Museum  
University of Southwestern Louisiana  
Lafayette, Louisiana

This publication accompanied the exhibition Village Architecture in Jordan, organized by the University Art Museum in collaboration with Mr. Ammar Khammash in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of Architecture, Department of Architecture, School of Art and Architecture, University of Southwestern Louisiana.

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For my parents



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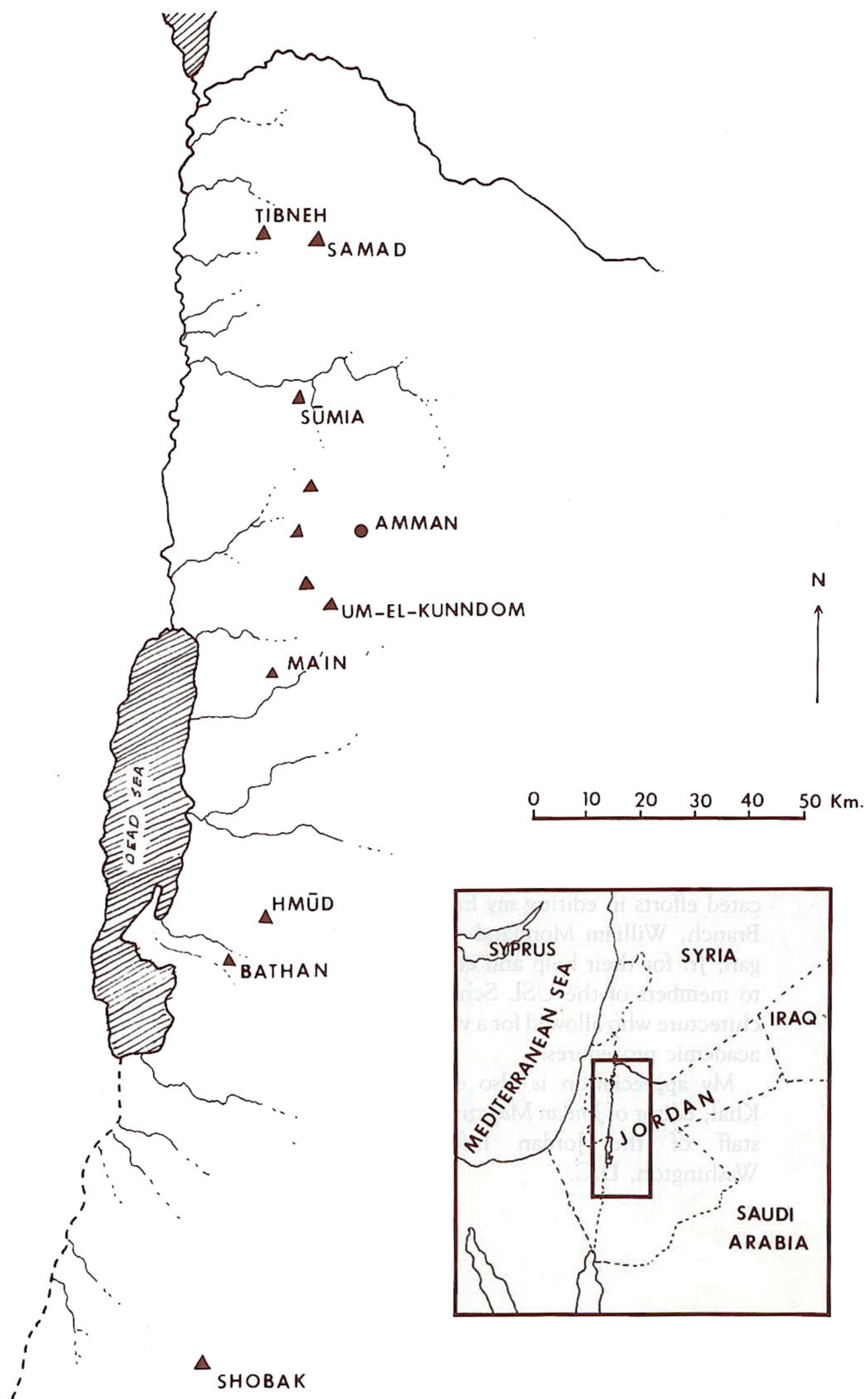
# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To those in Lafayette, especially Herman Mhire for the idea of the exhibition and for organizing its production; to Kay Rees for her dedicated efforts in editing my English text; to Dan Branch, William Moreland, and Elemore Morgan, Jr. for their help and encouragement, and to members of the USL School of Art and Architecture who allowed for a variation of standard academic procedures.

My appreciation is also extended to Helen Khal, editor of *Jordan Magazine*, and the capable staff of the Jordan Information Bureau, Washington, D.C.





Map showing the major sites included in these notes.



# PREFACE

As expressed in the title of this publication, the term "notes" is meant to explain the roughness, freshness and naiveté of the substance of the text. This book, work, publication, journal, or collection of notes first started as a catalog — another possible description — for the exhibition *Village Architecture in Jordan* which opened at the University Art Museum, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana, on March 8, 1986, one month before the text was finally on its way to the printer. Even before I became aware of the lapse which would occur between the opening of the show and the production of *Notes on Village Architecture in Jordan*, I had had the hope that the publication would be able to stand on its own, relatively independent of the exhibition.

The aim of this work is to report a preliminary sketch of Jordan's rural living environments. Included are notes that were taken between January and August, 1985, when I traveled to and lived in the sites presented here, and the impressions that I had been gathering for the preceding ten years. What this work offers is unpolished data, for rapid change is effacing the traditional environment with an alarming swiftness that leaves no time for analogy or for refinement of information. For the time being I feel I am on a rescue mission, at least collecting as many impressions as possible before the real thing disappears.

Besides my early attachment to the Jordanian rural environment in general, having been born and raised in Amman contributed to my desire to explore the countryside. In searching for the Jordan of the last century, I started to see Amman as a collage of playful architecture of eclectic nature. Although it is a pleasant place to live, it does not offer the traditional living environments that once exhibited a more harmonious homogeneity. Viewing the architecture of Amman (as is the case with most modern cities) is like trying to read a paper printed in 20 different

languages; the repeated use of stone, admittedly a unifying element in the city's architecture, is like using one color of ink to print this multi-language paper.

Because I do not believe in isolating architecture as an abstract phenomenon existing for and as a result of itself, I have included in this work as much as I could see as being part of an integration recorded and perceived through architecture. I included notes that seem to be irrelevant to the subject of this work, not for the sake of diversity, but for scrupulosity and thoroughness. Abstraction, although often done for educational purposes and, unfortunately, practiced in today's architecture, tends to deform the complex, natural phylogeny of regional man-made environments. In this work I report an architecture that is the result of the overlapping of geography, history, archaeology, anthropology, physics, etc. — ingredients that are, except for physics, regional in their nature.

This work also contains a few random observations that are not by any means a representation of a typical, historical, or absolute description of the region during the last century. Presenting the contents of my investigations is like returning from a long field trip with hand and pockets filled with shards and exposing these dusty, unwashed, unexamined remnants to the scrutiny of viewers who might interpret them differently.

The work aims to uncover buried fragments of knowledge that, if seen, were often ignored because of their fragmental quality. To uncover knowledge of practical and poetic value and to add to its color and brilliance is like plowing and sowing a gray field which, after the rain and sun have done their job, reveals the brilliant green of early wheat sprouts and glazed shards of Mamlūk ware.



# INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1984 Ammar Khammash shared with me color slides which he had made of traditional village architecture in his native country of Jordan. I was overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of Ammar's images and his concern for the rapidly disappearing indigenous architecture east of the Jordan Valley. The possibility of a major museum exhibition interested me tremendously, since the University Art Museum had previously organized a series of exhibitions examining various world cultures. We conceived and organized this project which was generously funded in its entirety by The Royal Endowment for Culture and Education of Jordan. I subsequently visited Jordan and toured many of the sites explored in this museum exhibition.

A country of great beauty and tradition, Jordan is undergoing rapid and dramatic change. Ways of life centuries old are radically juxtaposed with a restless enthusiasm for the modern. It became clear that our exhibition would document, for the first time, essential aspects of traditional village life which will certainly be altered as twentieth century technologies impact upon the previously isolated rural environments. Indeed, change is so dramatic and rapid in Jordan, that many of the villages examined in this exhibition have already been transformed. The traditionally harmonious integration of stone structures with the dramatic Jordanian landscape is now transfigured by the radical introduction of twentieth century elements.

*Village Architecture In Jordan* serves as a witness to an ancient culture which adapted ingeniously to a harsh arid environment and simultaneously produced an architecture incorporating superb simplicity of form with an inspired dedication to function. The images included in this exhibition were produced during field work conducted between January and August, 1985, and have been selected from a collection of more than 5,000 color slides, drawings and watercolors. Ammar

Khammash traveled to and lived for approximately two weeks in each of the nine village sites, and he conveys to us fresh impressions of a disappearing architectural tradition.

The University Art Museum is honored to have been able to play a major role in the realization of this survey exhibition.

Herman Mhire



## The Site

Located 15 kilometers northeast of Karak and 5.5 kilometers east of the "King's Highway," Hmūd, with the neighboring village of Smakiyeh, السماكية, marks the eastern edge of the fertile land of the Moab Plateau. The land



*Serving tea upon my arrival to the village.*

east of Hmūd is mostly arid with rough topography that contains little of the fertile soil of the plains west of Hmūd. This rough topography is caused by many small valleys that zigzag and deepen as they proceed northeast to meet Wadi El Mūjib. Moving from west to east towards the edge of the plateau, one finds the village of Hmūd on the side of the first relatively deep valley, Wadi Hmūd. The location of Hmūd is significant, for one sees here the last most eastern example of stone architecture of its period before the beginning of the desert. Thus Hmūd marks the end of the semi-nomadic agricultural land and the beginning of the Bedouin land.

The area is rich in basalt stone that appears on the surface of the flat land. Other kinds of limestone and flint are exposed in clearly visible layers at the sides of the eroded valleys. The dry valley east of Hmūd provided a good bit of the stone used to build the village. Not only did both sides of the valley function as a natural quarry, but

also, in many places, a naturally shaped, cantilevered layer of rock provided the ceilings and the back walls of human-size shelters, improved by adding one more man-made wall. These shelters were used by shepherds.

In spring, black irises grow in clusters by the sides of the black asphalt roads leading to Hmūd. Among the wide selection of flowers of that land, the black iris seems the most remarkable, blending perfectly with the asphalt roads and the dark basalt stones.

## The Village

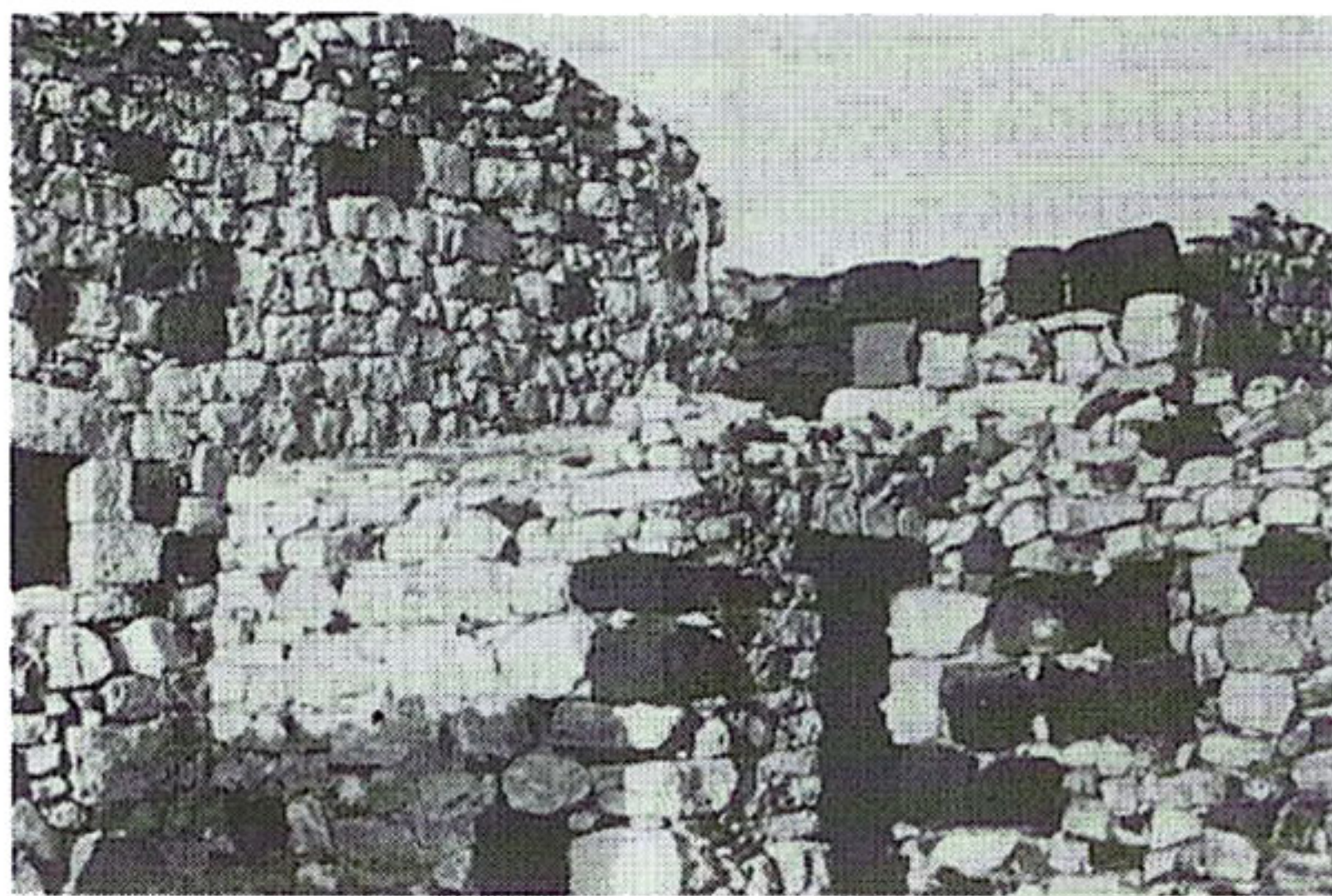
The best view one can have of Hmūd is from the east from which the village appears well displayed on the side of a hill. It reads as a one-piece complex made of cubes that are similar in size and orientation: the roofs of the houses on the highest part of the hill appear of similar height, while the lower edge of the village steps down, following the terrain and ending in a random line. On the lower edge is the only two-story structure built of traditional material. This house, built in 1921, is the last house in southeast Hmūd. The overall appearance of the village is, so far, intact. Concrete is hardly present since all the new concrete houses are placed closer to the road that runs west of Hmūd. Unfortunately, this new development is setting the direction of growth



*Hmūd from the southeast.*



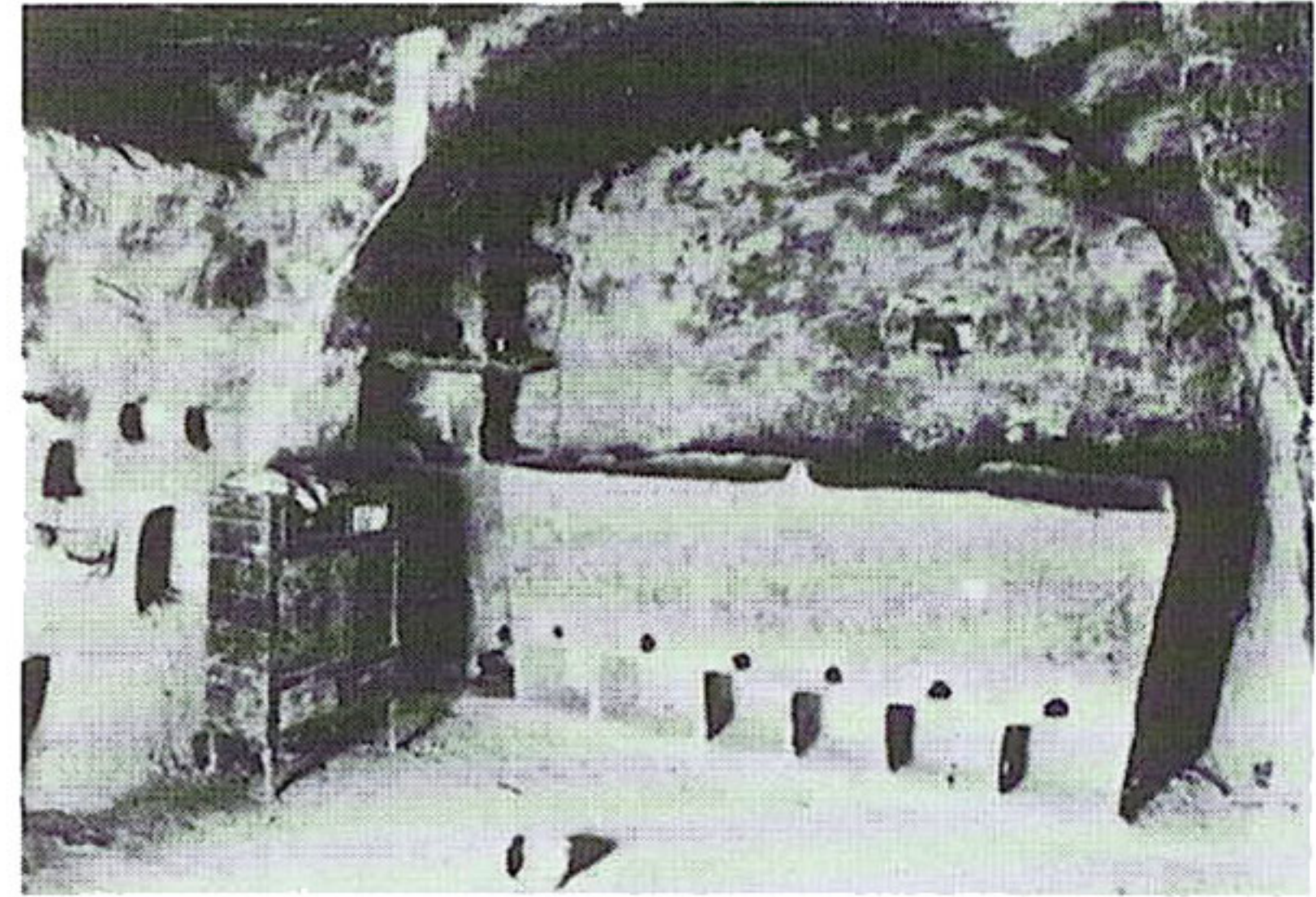
to the west — as usual, on agricultural land. (The same applies in the neighboring village of Smakiyeh.) The exterior appearance of the traditional structures is characterized by the random mixture of white limestone and black basalt stone — a look that not only reflects the availability of both kinds of building stones in the immediate environment, but also helps the houses to be part of the natural landscape rather than foreign objects. As in all Jordanian villages, looking at the stone walls from the west gives a different impression from looking at them from the east. The western view is clearer, and, in the case of Hmūd, a sharp contrast between the black and the white stones gives the west view a poignant vividness. This difference in appearance is caused by the direction of rain that comes every winter to wash the village walls facing west, while the walls facing east have been accumulating dust since the beginning of this century.



*The use of white limestone and black basalt stone gives the village a special character.*

## The House

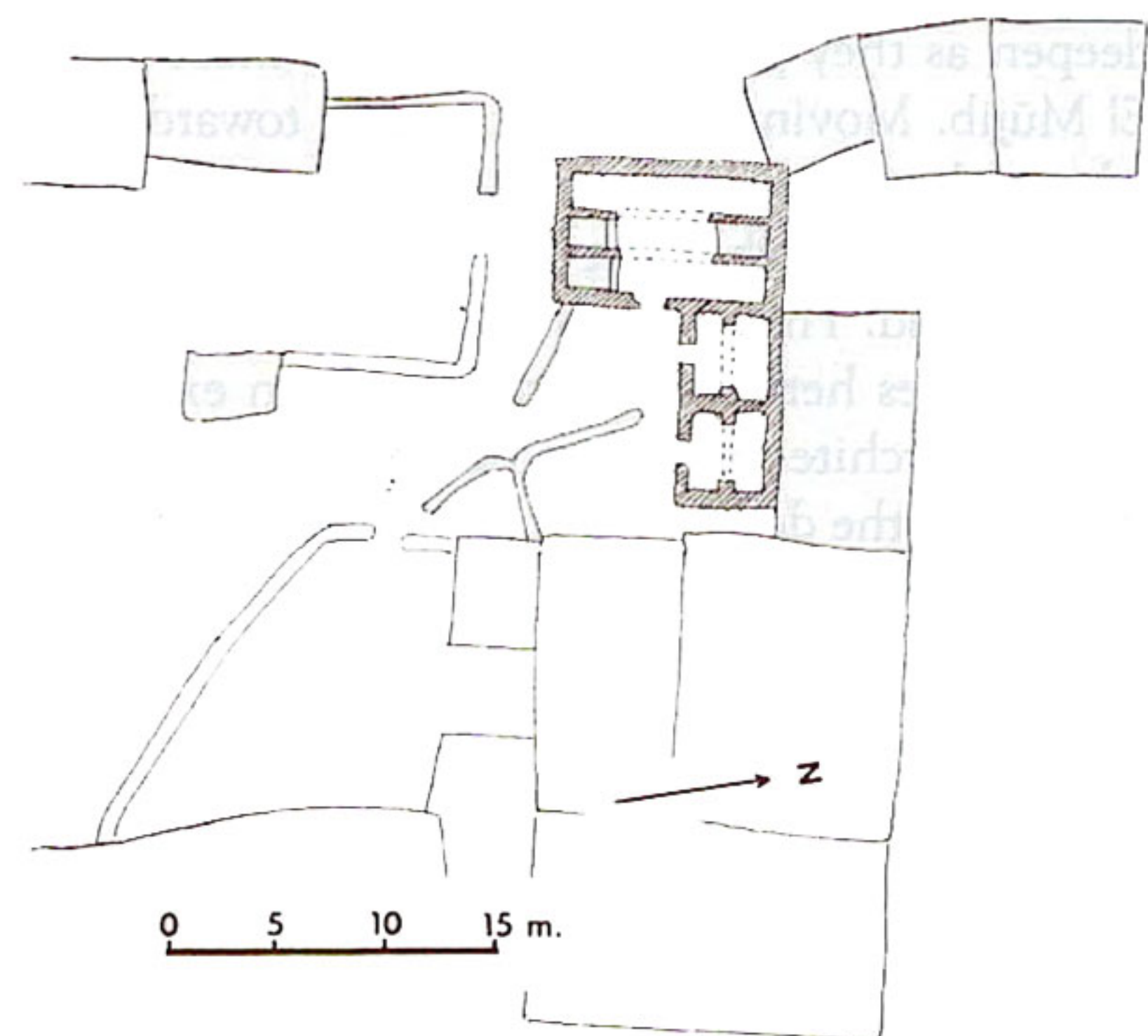
Hmūd offers one of the most impressive examples of the traditional “Jordanian” house. It is a house in excellent condition; its mud “furniture” is intact and complete. Both the portable mud pieces and the built-in shelves and wheat bins are still



*Interior of the house of Khalaf Khalil Al Halaseh.*

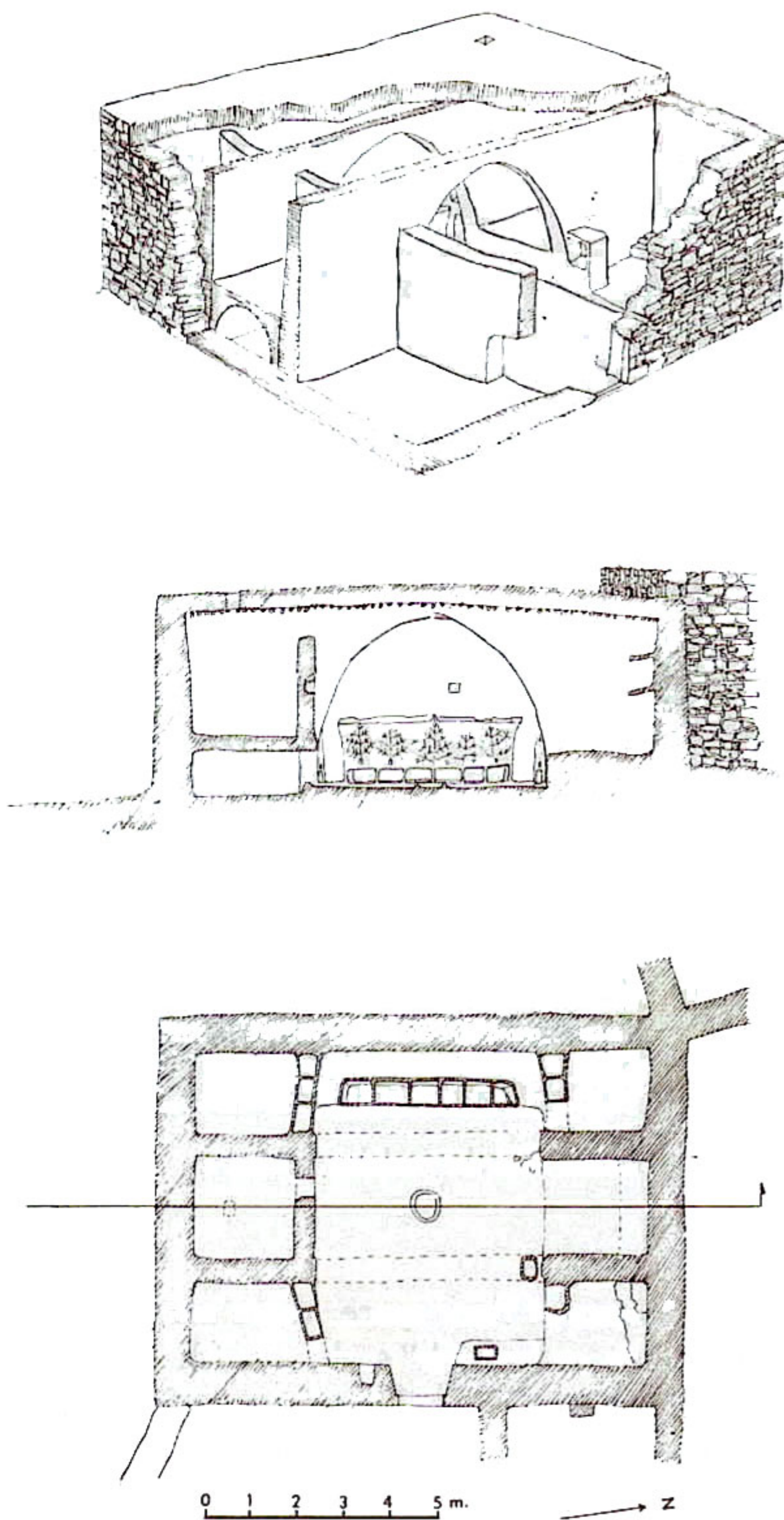
there, richly ornamented with crosses and abstractions of plants. The size of the house is relatively small in comparison to the average size of a typical Hmūd house, nevertheless, it hides within its small rectangular limits a collection that is rarely found under one roof.

The mukhtar of Hmūd lived here in the late '40s and early '50s. Khalaf Khalil Al Halaseh خلف خليل الهلسه was most likely the last mukhtar to oversee a full village, for by 1950,



*The neighborhood with the house of Khalaf.*



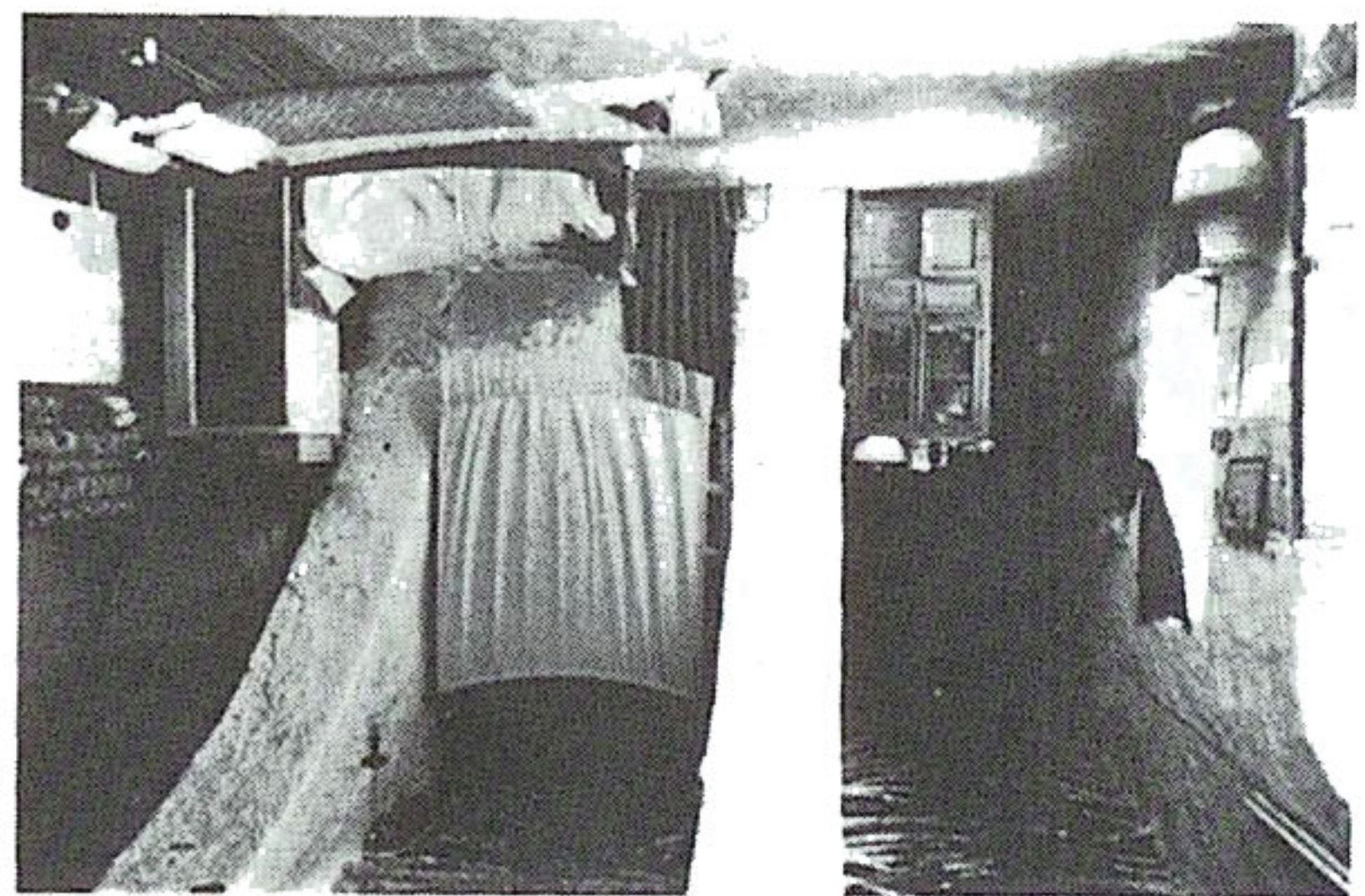


The house of Khalaf Khalil Al Halaseh.  
Plan  
Section  
Perspective

the slow migration away from the villages had started. The house now belongs to the mukhtar's grandson, Haidar, who teaches art at the Hmūd school. Walking in the village one can easily miss this house; nothing from outside hints of the contents. Located somewhere in the middle of a complex layout of houses and courtyards, the site

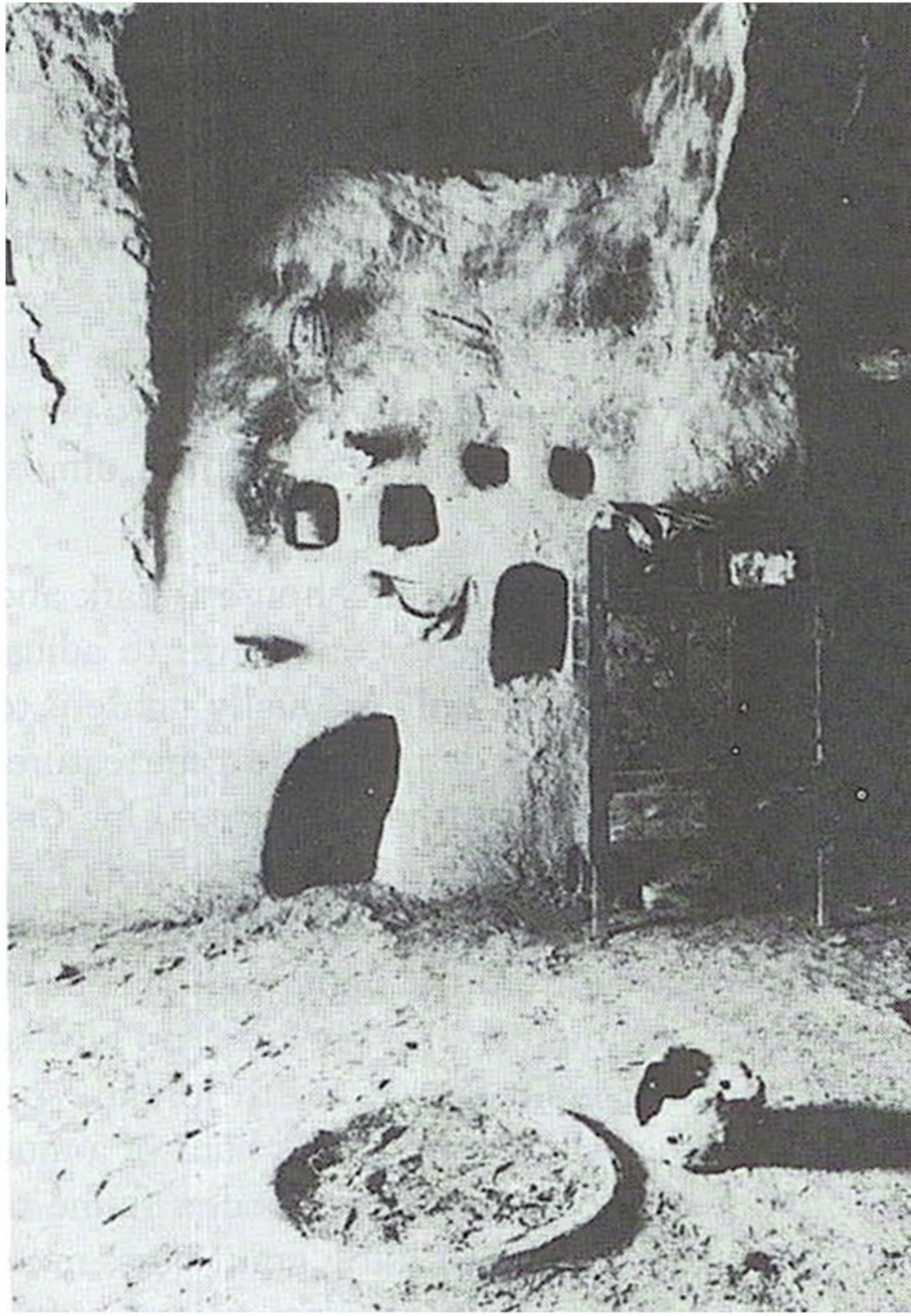
is not at all significant. The neighborhood has four caves, all with their entrances facing south and some with vaulted entrances. The house sits on the western side of a rectangular courtyard that has two small rooms on the northern side, the side of a large house on the east side, and an opening to the walkway on the south. This well defined open space is divided into two parts, allowing one of the rooms to function almost independently.

The interior of the mukhtar's house is dark and mystic. It takes a while for one's eyes to adjust to the darkness which only gradually lightens to reveal the rich interior details while some features of the room remain in total darkness. One first notices a long grain storage unit made of six bins built together. This piece is free-standing, 70 centimeters away from the back wall; it appears as the most dominant part of the interior. Unlike the rectangular grain bins in north Jordan, specifically in the Ajlūn area, this is built of a mud and hay mixture without any wooden frame or skeleton. This way of building grain bins, more used in villages in south Jordan, allows a free expression of organic forms giving the grain bins individual character. In the Hmūd house only the main piece facing the door is an independent object; the rest of the bins are plastered between the arches to separate the hay storage areas from the main living space. This main grain storage unit is called "sandūg" صندوق. It is well ornamented with abstractions of plants and with



The interior of a Hmūd house that is still in use.





*The mogadeh.*

crosses meant to protect the crop. Weavings and daytime bedding are stored on top of the sandūg. Stacked in a neat way, they work as a cover to protect the grain and as a visual composition that enhances the overall esthetics of the house. Other mud containers are portable: the flour “kuara” كواره, the “mehdan” محضن, and the “mogadeh” موقده. The flour kuara in the mukhtar’s house is placed to one side on some stones. It has an ornamented face and a lid also made of mud. The mehdan is a box-like butter container that also sits on stones and has a lid. The mogadeh is a small fire container, 20 to 25 centimeters in diameter, light enough to be carried and placed anywhere in the house and stored when not in use.

Crop storage is a vital issue in Hmūd. In the mukhtar’s house, which has approximately 65



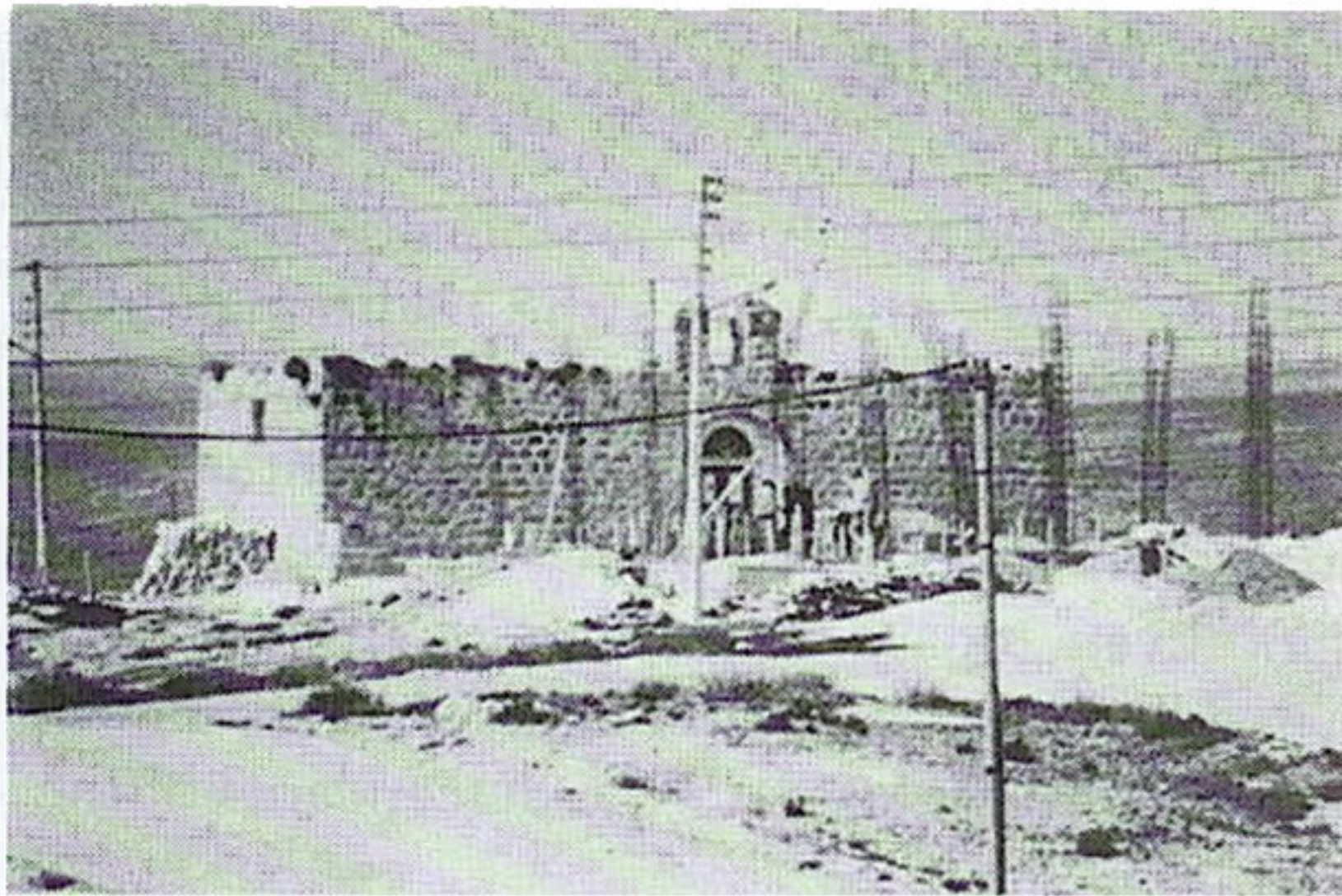
*The flour Kuara and the mahdan behind it.*

square meters of floor space, there are 13 grain-storage bins, or “rawyeh” راويه, with a combined capacity of 8 M<sup>3</sup>. These bins are filled from the outside through an opening in the roof. There are, in addition to the rawyeh, three other hay storage containers, or “gut’a” قطع, which are also filled from the outside and, added together, can hold up to 30 M<sup>3</sup> of hay.

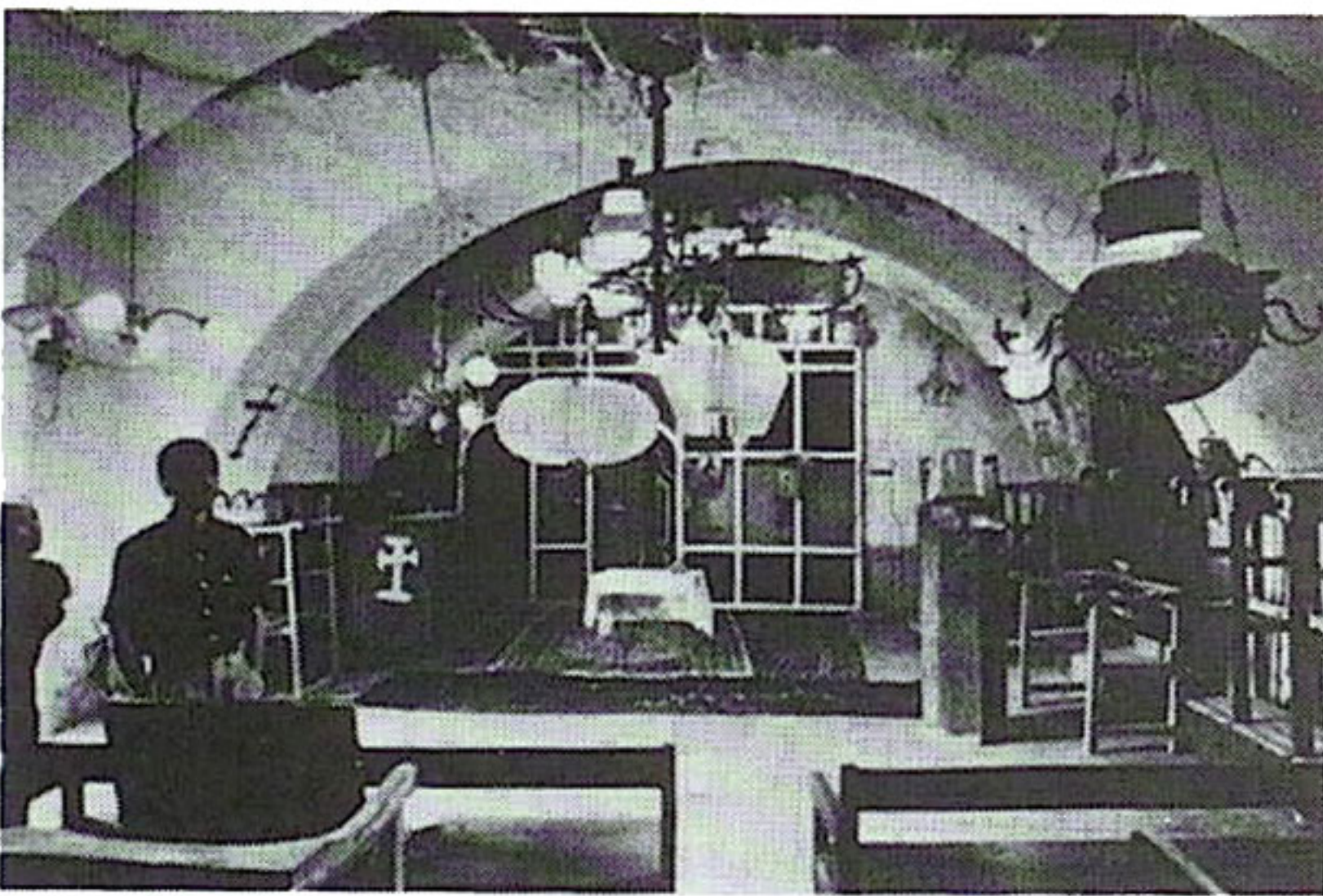
## The Church

Hmūd has a church that is purely “Jordanian.” Its plan does not evidence any Western characteristics; instead, it takes on an individual “style” that is the result of an honest approach to a local solution. This original village-type church might be the only one in Jordan created out of the same





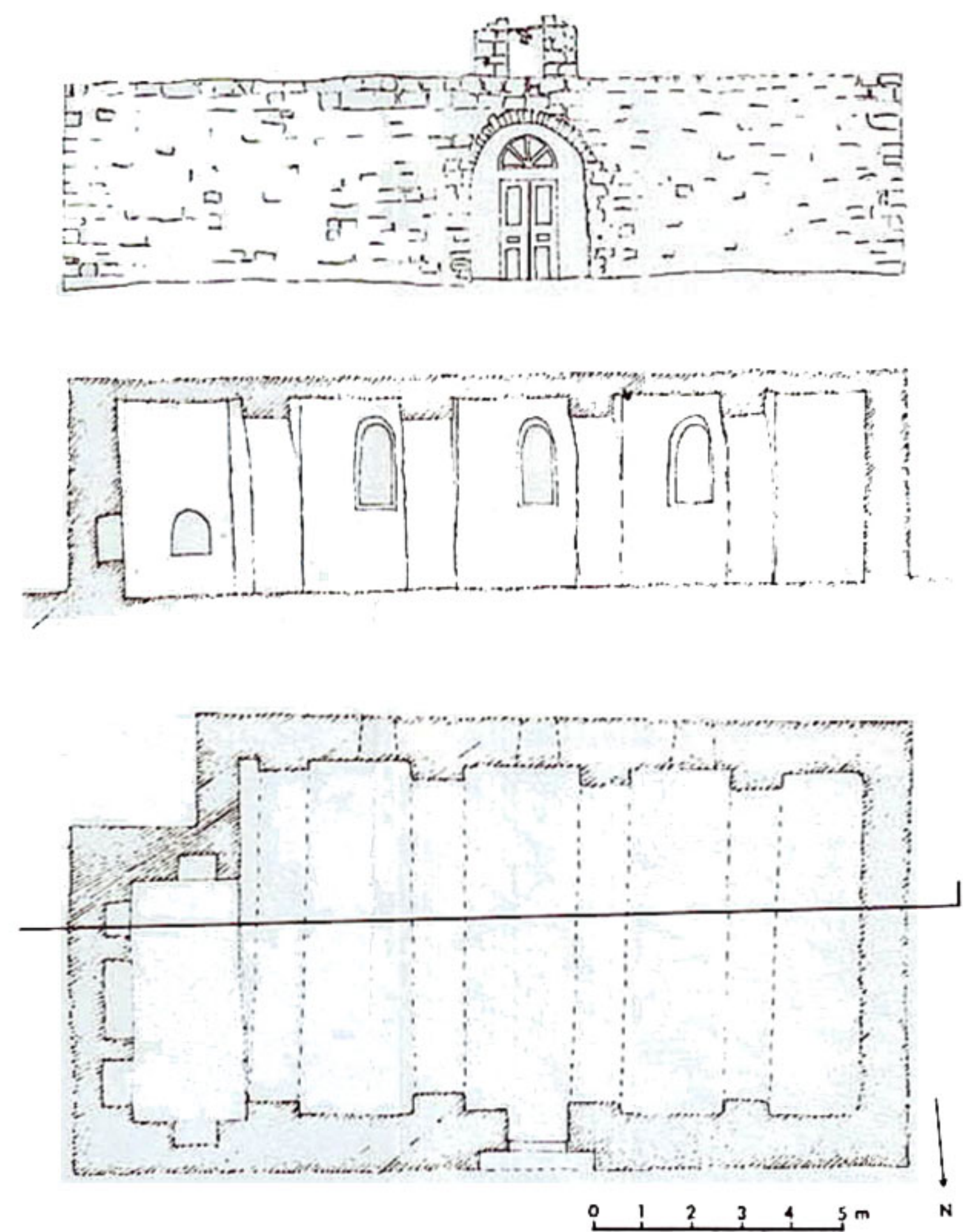
The old church of Hmūd with the foundations of a new one in front of it.



The interior of the old church.

vocabulary as the village house, without imposing foreign forms, ornaments, materials or scale.

Built around 1910, it is as old as Hmūd. (According to the village elders, "The oldest house in Hmūd is the house of Ibrahim Al Thawaher, [who] was the first to build. . . . Before him, everybody lived in hair tents, 1907.") The church used to sit alone on the land south of the village until the new concrete post office and modern houses were added. It must have been standing by itself, outside the village fabric, with its door facing north to the village. A public facility, the church has no courtyard or any defined piece of land around it. It simply sits on the landscape as a powerful volume. The graveyard is approxi-



The old church.  
Plan  
Section  
Elevation

mately 100 meters to the east of the church and is surrounded by a concrete wall and short trees.

The construction of the church is very similar to that of the houses of Hmūd. Its outer walls, built of basalt and limestone like the rest of Hmūd's walls, envelope an almost rectangular space with four thick arches that span the shorter distance to carry the roof. As in the typical Jordanian house, the roof is made of wooden beams spanning the arches, with cane on top of the beams and layers of earth on top of the cane. The northern elevation, which contains the building's only entrance, is the facade. Above the door is the bell carried between two short stone additions that once might have been connected with an arch.



# TIBNEH تبنه

## The Site

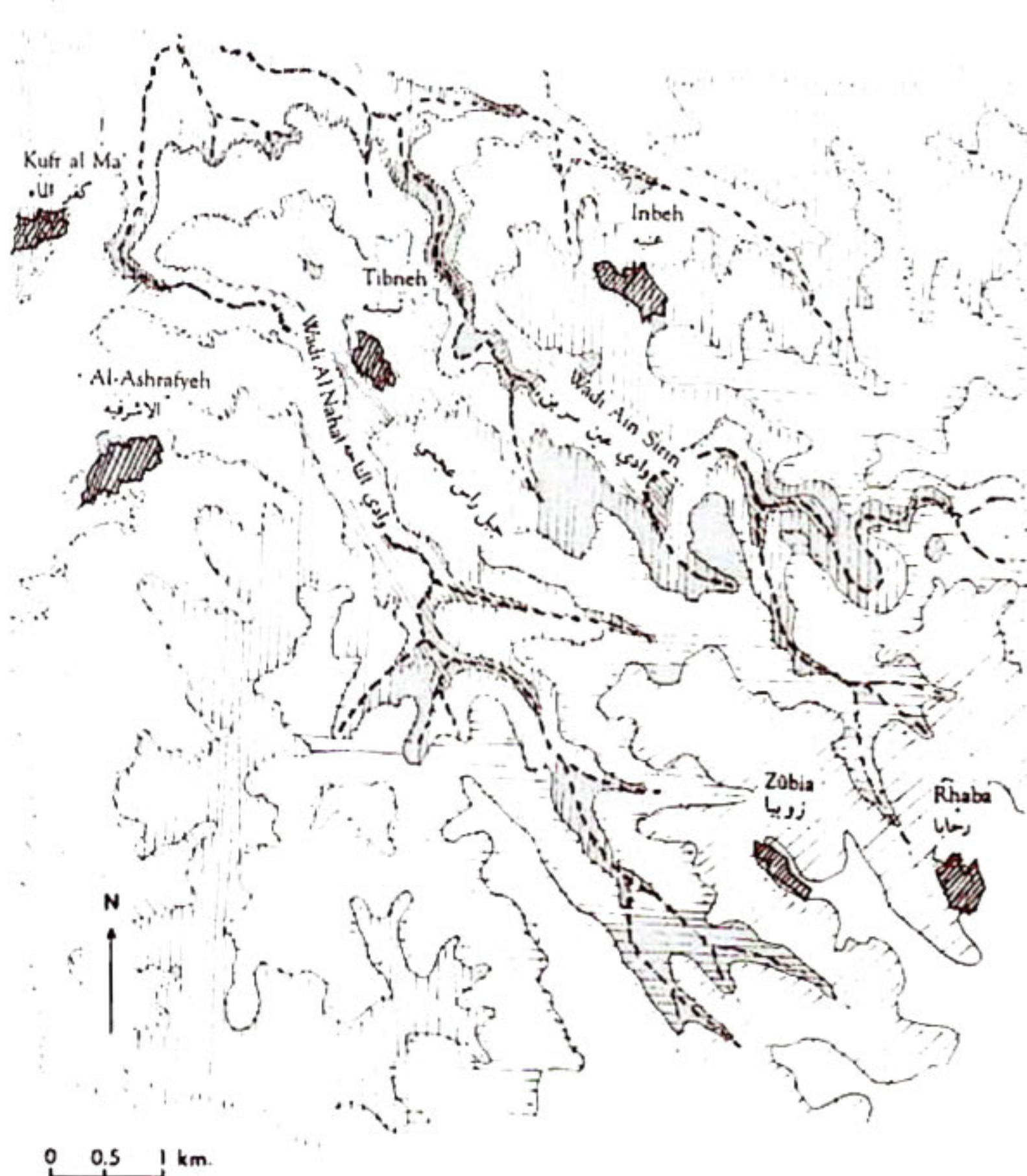
Located 14 kilometers southwest of Irbid and nine kilometers west of Samad, this site is in what has traditionally been the most populated part of Jordan. There exist within a 3-kilometer radius from Tibneh three other villages: Kufr al Ma' <sup>كفر الماء</sup> to the west, Al-Ashrafyeh <sup>الاشرفيه</sup> to the southwest, and Inbeh <sup>عنبيه</sup> to the northeast. This region, called Kura, lies between one of Jordan's greenest forests and the rugged land east of the Jordan Valley.

The forest southeast of Tibneh is probably the best preserved and largest stand of oak in the country. There is relatively little settlement within the confines of the forest although it is surrounded by many villages. Unlike the trees of the forest of Al Alūk <sup>العالوك</sup> south of Seil ez Zarga, the oak here is evergreen. The trees are smaller but denser and of a darker green, and in many spots they cover the mountains completely. The western edge of this forest is a relatively flat plateau that is divided into parts by steep valleys running westward and filled with a strip of villages running north to south. Being an average dis-

tance of two kilometers apart, these villages form the western borderline of the mountain architecture. Beyond them to the west is comparatively empty land composed of hills whose eroded sides expose layers of chalk and limestone inimical to plant growth.



Wadi Ain Sirin between Tibneh and Inbeh.



The first portion of flat land east of the Jordan Valley supports a strip of villages; Tibneh lies between these and other mountain villages scattered to the east. Thus, its site is a link that makes it a stronghold in the area. Tibneh's location is significant because of deep valleys that separate it from the surrounding villages. These



valleys, which run almost parallel from southeast to northwest, constitute the physical borders of the site; Tibneh is located where they come within the shortest distance of one another, 1.5 kilometers, before they diverge again. On both sides of the site, the altitude drops dramatically. The valley to the northeast of Tibneh, Wadi Ain Sirin وادي عين سرين, drops 200 meters below Tibneh's altitude of 600 meters. The valley to the southwest, Wadi Al Naha<sup>2</sup> وادي الناحه, drops 140 meters below Tibneh.

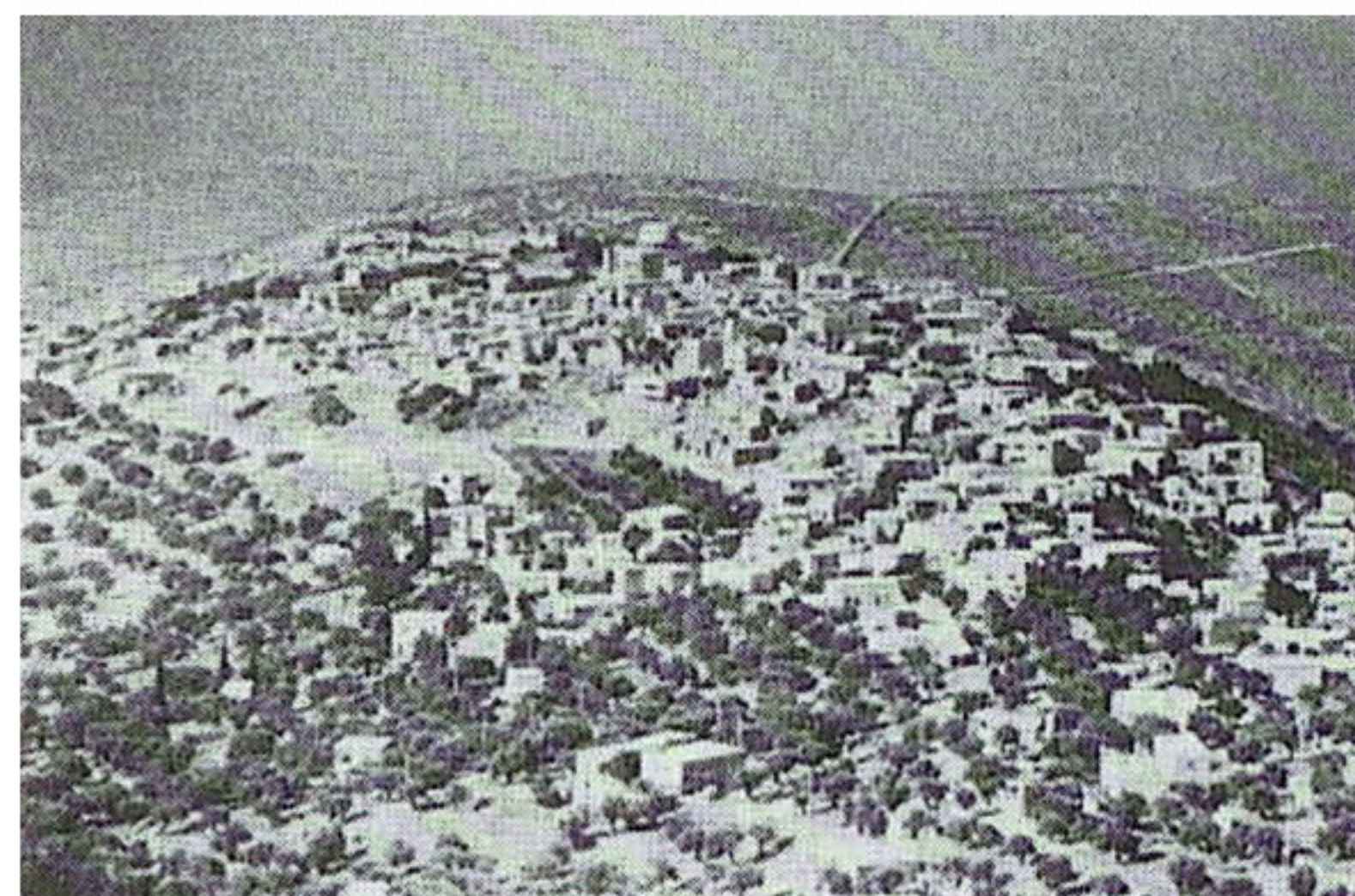
The topography of the land makes this site extremely inaccessible. Even with modern road-building technology available, there is no road between Inbeh and Tibneh, little more than 2 kilometers apart. In traveling from one village to the other, one has to make a detour of 18 to 20 kilometers to avoid the deep Wadi Ain Sirin. Only two other villages are located on the same mountain range, Zūbia زوبيا and Rhaba رحابا, one kilometer apart and seven kilometers southeast of Tibneh.

## The Village

Tibneh is located on the southeast side of a mountain top, and from Jabal Al Ajami جبل راس عجمي it is apparent that this village has lost most of its original fabric. Even though Tibneh does not have a modern internal road system, it is extensively developed and has concrete structures that overwhelm the traditional stone structures in size and number. The village is growing mostly to the southeast where modern houses unfortunately have begun to invade the edge of ancient olive groves.

Approaching Tibneh from the eastern side one can see parts of a wall that seems to be the remnants of a village wall. "Tibneh used to have a wall. It had only two gates — a gate near the castle and a gate to the qibleh قبله."<sup>3</sup> "There used to be around Tibneh a wall, like Akka<sup>4</sup> عكا."<sup>5</sup>

On the northern side of the village, where lie



*Tibneh as it appears from Jabal Al Ajami.*

remains of what is called the "castle," is a large depression which was once an old pool. Approximately 12 × 20 meters and 4 to 5 meters deep, it is now dry. Another pool near the "gate," southeast of the village, became the site for a new mosque.

Towards the north at the highest part of Tibneh a ruin known as the "castle" is now comprised only of two rooms with cross vaults and a staircase built into the wall that leads to the roof. The structure is of the Ottoman period. "This castle is Turkish; it was for the Zayadneh الزيادنه."<sup>6</sup> It was very likely built in the early eighteenth century which seems to be when the wall was also built.

عزك يا صفاً واحداً بتبنة      وبيوت العزبناها بتبنة  
خمنتك ذهب وثره تبنة      خفيفه وطيرها الهوا  
احمد الصندي كان حاكم

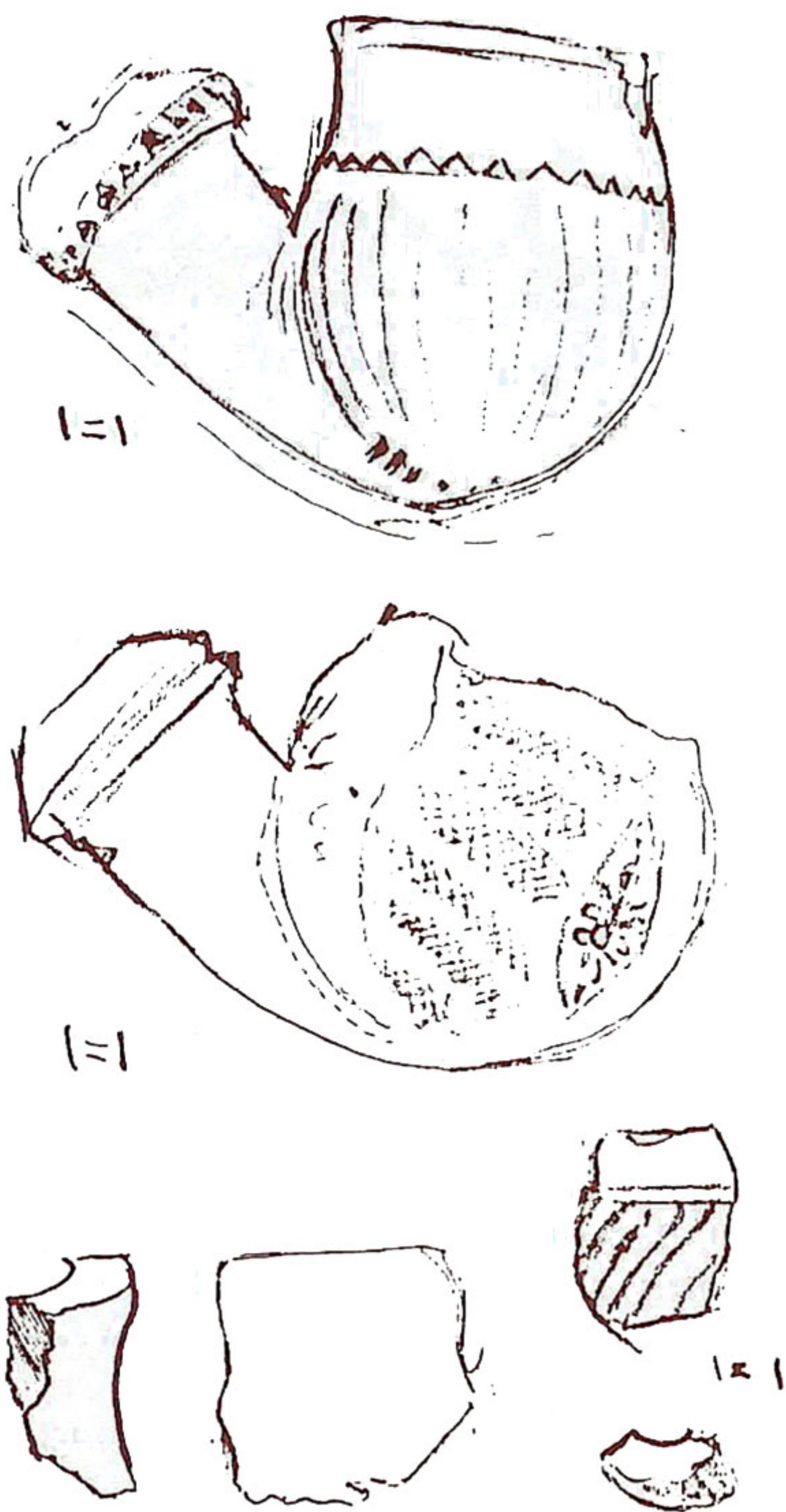


## My First Day in Tibneh

I arrived in Tibneh the afternoon of Thursday, July 2, 1985. When I asked for a place to stay for a week or two, the villagers found an empty shop for me and gave me the key to the lock on its metal rolling shutters. I moved my belongings in, then left to tour the village.

Along a winding pedestrian road that ties the upper parts of Tibneh with what has recently become the center of the village, I made my first

purchase. The large jar was kept on the roof of a small tabūn<sup>7</sup> in the courtyard of a house. When I entered the courtyard and asked if I might buy this jar, I was told by the women that it was not for sale. Then I asked to talk to an old man I could see sitting inside the house by the door. Abu Nhar (I was told later that he was then 103 years old) was well dressed in traditional garb. Feigning ignorance, I asked him about the jar which he asked me to take down from the roof. I climbed up and handed the jar to the young women who started to inspect it and dust it. It was a wheel-thrown olive oil jar with a rounded base and two handles, one of which was broken. Preparing to ask its price, I started pointing out the defects — its broken handle and a crack in its base. At the same time I asked if they had any locally made pottery. The three young women disappeared into the dark interior of the house and came out with two small pots, both containing the remains of antiquated olive oil. One was a pitcher with a long neck and a handle connecting the rim of the pitcher's neck to its shoulder. Capped with a stick in its spout, it was covered with the oil and dust of years. When Abu Nhar started scrubbing the pitcher, its original appearance started peeping through the peeling gray layers. Strips of brownish glaze seemed to be dripping from the top to the bottom of the vessel's surface, and other streaks of dark red dye appeared as though applied with a brush whose bristles had separated. Both the pitcher and the other small jar were wheel-thrown and slightly ribbed. They were not local but brought in from specialized pottery makers in Palestine. I bought the three pieces, the big jar and the two small pots, for five dinars<sup>8</sup> and carried them to the shop where I was staying. When I came back to get the change I found that Abu Nhar had gone looking for change in the village and had not yet returned. I sat waiting on the steps of the courtyard gate, and after a few minutes I saw a fragment of a broken clay smoking pipe on the ground. I picked it up and asked the young women, who were still watching from inside the



Clay pipes from Tibneh.



courtyard, if they had any complete pipes for sale. Laughing, they fetched one pipe which, though slightly chipped on its rim, did not look very old and was of a type I had not seen before. I did not pay for this pipe until I was given another one which was much older and more ornamented than the first.

Abu Nhar returned with the money and asked if I would like to see another big jar filled with olive oil. This jar was huge, perhaps 1.5 meters high, and was placed in a hole inside the house with only its upper half in view.

I spent the rest of the day around the old mosque which, as I learned, has a large cave beneath it. I took some photographs and went back to the shop at the close of daylight. That evening two boys arrived about the same time, bringing me pots of tea along with small, clear glasses. I spent the rest of the evening drinking tea and reviewing events of the past day.

## Olive Trees

The land southeast of Tibneh has one of the best preserved olive groves in Jordan, filled with olive trees that go back to Roman times. The groves still enjoy an environment that is relatively free of roads and development, and on dark red soil the ancient trees grow fruitful and healthy. The density of the olive trees is noticeably high. In the flat parts of the land between Tibneh and Jabal Al Ajami the trees are growing in a rough grid within such a short distance of each other that the tips of their branches often touch. They are of the same size and all have huge trunks which are often hollow. In some cases the core of the trunk has completely decayed, leaving a collection of smaller olive trees growing in a circle on the perimeter of the disintegrated mother tree. They are remains of the living skin of a trunk that dissolved with time. All the trunks have wide bases which terminate in gnarled and twisted roots that look like the toes of a creature 2000 years' old. The soil around these roots seems



*Olive tree from Roman times.*

to have receded over the centuries, leaving the trees on lofty bases. The trunks appear as braided roots, dark gray interweaving strands reaching the top of the trunks and branching out into limbs with silver-green leaves and olives displayed against the still blue sky of Tibneh. These olive trees have interesting proportions; their trunks are far too wide for the amount of foliage they support, which not only gives them a visual disproportion, but also gives them torsos that make them look creature-like. From Jabal Al Ajami olive groves appear as a woven shade of silver-green against the complementary red of the soil — a scene of utter delight.

Even though the inhabitants of Tibneh added very few new olive trees in the last century, the large quantity of old trees is significant, and olive



production in Tibneh has made this village well known for its olive oil. Tibneh's agriculture is for the most part dependent on the ancient olive trees. Other crops include cactus and grapevine. Some of the remains of the traditional olive oil industry are scattered around the village: an almost complete olive press sits by the road near the entrance to Tibneh. The traditional process of extracting oil from the olive is complicated and is different in Tibneh from other villages. Described briefly, "We boil the olive and spread it on the roofs of the houses till it hardens. Then we press it."<sup>9</sup>

## The Mosque

Mosques as traditional structures are hard to find in Jordanian villages. To my knowledge, there are only a few cases in which a village has a mosque that is built in stone and is as old as the traditional village houses. In most cases mosques are concrete structures built within the last 30 years.

Tibneh has three traditional mosques. One is a small building at the northern side of the village; it is a simple rectangle with an exterior staircase leading to part of the roof which was used as a minaret. Another mosque is now part of the first floor of the Shraideh house. The third is the largest and the most representative of a traditional mosque. Called by the people of Tibneh "Ej Jame'a El Qadim الجامع القديم," meaning the 'old mosque,' it is one of Tibneh's landmarks. It is built on a bluff of rock, the southern edge of the tableland that forms the upper part of Tibneh's site. This location makes the old mosque easily seen from a distance, and, because of the different nature of its stone, it is quickly distinguished from the houses of the village. Underneath the rock where this mosque is built lies a cave that is almost as big in plan as the interior of the mosque. This cave is reached from the courtyard of a house northeast of the mosque and was once privately owned by Musa Tojeh موسى

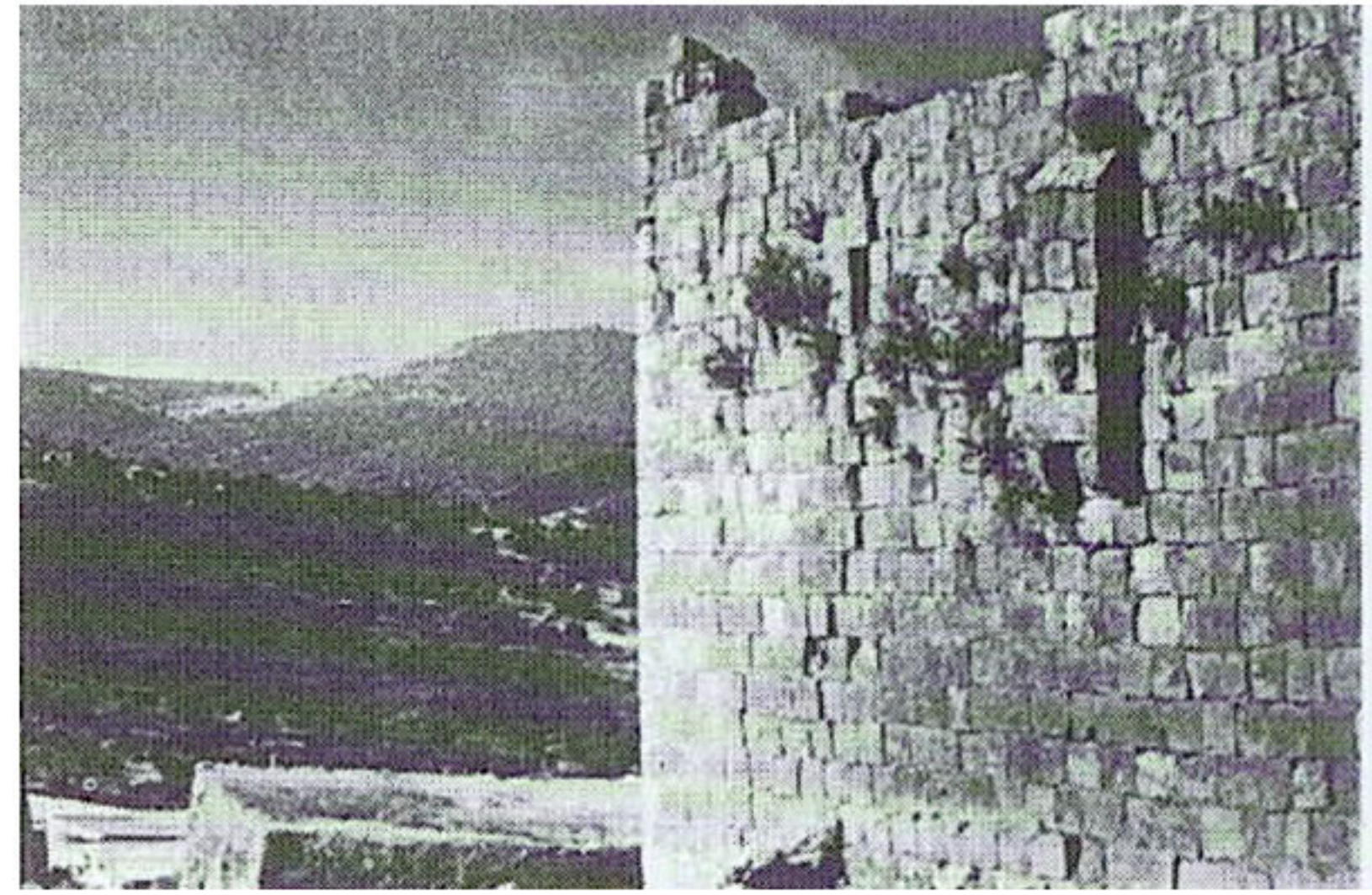




طوجه. Simply and powerfully proportioned, the mosque's plan is a perfect square,  $12.5 \times 12.5$  meters, approximately 5 meters high. The exterior walls are constructed of flat-faced stones of equal size,  $24 \times 34$  centimeters. The elevations are simple: the front elevation faces northwest and contains the main entrance to the building. This entrance is set off-center; to place it symmetrically would have been impossible since supports for the interior cross vaults occur in the middle of each wall. The entrance is not monumental but is small with a segmental arch that once had a stone with an engraved message above it. The



*The only entrance to the mosque.*



*A symbolic mihrab on the exterior wall as seen from the east. The mountain in the background is Jabal Al-Ajami.*

southwestern elevation has an almost square window, and the other two elevations are identical. They each have a protrusion in the center that gives the exterior effect of a mihrab <sup>10</sup> محراب. These protrusions are carried on corbelled stones and are placed on the two elevations that are on the edges of the rock, the two most visible elevations for someone approaching Tibneh from south or east. These two symbolic mihrabs, signs fixed on the exterior walls, served the purpose of identifying the building to a visitor who, if he did not know anyone in the village, would look for the mosque for rest.

Upon entering, one first sees the true mihrab which faces the entrance and, thus, is off-center and does not correspond with the symbolic mihrab on the exterior of the building. From inside, one can see the way in which this mosque is constructed. The interior is divided into four equal squares, three of which exhibit cross-vaulted ceilings that meet in the center of the mosque and rest on a square column. The fourth, where the mihrab is located, is treated differently. Since that part of the mosque is in ruins, it is hard to tell how it used to be, but remains of pendentives<sup>11</sup> suggest that the ceiling of that quarter of the mosque was a dome. This theory makes sense if we keep in mind that this quarter of the building also contains the mihrab which justifies a special treatment of the ceiling. Also,



the fact that this part of the mosque is destroyed supports my assumption, for a thin dome would be the first section to collapse.

The western corner has a staircase leading to the roof where the muezzin used to cry the summons to prayer. This staircase is built into the thickness of the wall and is just wide enough for one person. It begins about 2 meters above floor level, suggesting that the first few steps were in the form of a wooden ladder, now gone.

It is difficult to date this mosque, but, based on the stories of the elders, it would be safe to say it is Ottoman. It is very possible that the mosque was built by the Zayadneh in the eighteenth century when they were ruling in Tibneh. It has lain in partial ruins for at least a century. "It was ruined from its eastern side, and no one could rebuild it. We used to pray in it even though it was ruined."<sup>12</sup>

