

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# ARTIFACTS FROM TELL AL-JADUR AT THE AS-SALT ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM IN JORDAN AS A MATERIAL CULTURAL EVIDENCE

*Raed Alghazawi,<sup>1</sup> Nada Al-Rawabdeh,<sup>2</sup> Ali Al-Manaser<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Department of Cultural Resources Management and Museology, Queen Rania Faculty of Tourism and Heritage, The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan; <sup>2</sup> Tourism Management Department, Faculty of Tourism and Archaeology, Jordan University, Amman, Jordan  
(✉ [aliy@hu.edu.jo](mailto:aliy@hu.edu.jo))



Figure 1. Satellite image of Tell Al-Jadur (Google Earth).

**ABSTRACT.** *This study aims to shed light on a group of archaeological artifacts in the As-Salt Archaeological Museum found during an archaeological excavation in Tell Al-Jadur. The most important result of this study is that the pottery found in Tell Al-Jadur belongs to the EBIV, specifically to the Amman-Zarqa family. As a result, a new site can be added to the sites of the Amman-Zarqa pottery family.*

**KEYWORDS.** *Jordan, As-Salt, archaeological museum, Tell Al-Jadur, archaeology, artifacts.*

## INTRODUCTION

As-Salt is one of twelve major cities in Jordan and was the first capital of the modern state of Jordan before

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the capital was moved to Amman. Today, it is the current capital of the governorate of Al-Balqā'. Most of the local government's buildings are located within the city itself, which is less than thirty kilometers west of Amman and is between 800–1100 meters above sea level. Similar to much of Jordan, As-Salt's climate is characterized by long, dry, hot summers and short, cool winters.

The city is buffeted by westerly to southwesterly winds, though there are also periods of hot, dry, dusty winds from the southeast, known as *Khamsin*, occurring in the early summer. There is often little rain between June and August, with approximately 70% of the average annual rainfall occurring between November and March. The area in the northwest of the region (closest to the Jordan River), receives approximately 40 cm of rain per annum, while the eastern region collects only 35 cm. The city itself records even less, with an average of only 20 cm, while the desert regions in the south of the country have an average annual rainfall of just 5 cm (Al-Matarneh 2013: 23–24).

Topographically, As-Salt is built and continues to develop across three steep hills, with the Wadi al-Akrād and ad-Deir corridors cutting through the city along a north-south axis.

The Old City (al-Madīnah al-Qadīmah)—which contains two mosques, residential housing and small-scale amenities—is located across three hills on the slopes to two local wadis (Al-Zoabi 2004: 550–551).

## INVESTIGATING THE TOPONYMY OF AS-SALT

In terms of its nomenclature, it is likely that As-Salt was located in a oak-covered area and was potentially known by the name of Gadora in the Greco-Roman era. The city derived its current name from the Roman designation *regis saltus*, from the Latin *saltus*, “forest” or “woodland.”

Another name for the city was *Snt*. We find this appellation in dictionaries of the Arabic language, but not in the historical accounts. The dictionaries simply say that As-Salt was in *bilad al-sham*, so we cannot be sure whether the modern-day city is in the same location as the original.

The name *Sl* is also extant; it is found in the 640 AH/1243 CE.<sup>1</sup> Many of the historical Arabic accounts of the city, of which a few have been covered above, relate the same information regarding the castle at As-

Salt, sometimes referred to as particularly large, and as having springs and plantations. None of the books specify the measurements of the castle or precisely what it contained.

Modern dictionaries describing historical places consider that As-Salt could have also been referred to by the historical city (*as-Sant*). Its location is only described insofar as saying it was in the Levant (see Knauf & Lenzen 1987; Mittmann 1973; Saggs 1955).

## INVESTIGATING THE LOCATION OF AS-SALT

As much as the origin of the name of As-Salt is a topic of debate, so is the attempt to locate historical As-Salt and correlate the findings with other named sites of this area known from historical sources. What is clear is that endeavours to reconstruct the history of As-Salt must move beyond searching for ancient cities whose names are similar to As-Salt without bringing forth any historical evidence.

There is limited historical evidence for the early history of As-Salt. It is very difficult to ascertain specifically when As-Salt was first inhabited. There is some limited archaeological evidence suggesting that it was inhabited from as early as the Middle Bronze Age. One problem with addressing this question is that most of the researchers who have studied the city's history are its residents, and their pride at having been born and raised in the city can have a tendency to prevail over historical evidence.

This phenomenon prevents the identification of this city with those of other ages and bestows an illusion of historical depth onto the city's cultural heritage without physical or scientific evidence.

Since the city first came to the attention of western travellers in the nineteenth century, As-Salt was associated with some cities mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, such as Khirbet As-Souq, which is located within the city of As-Salt about four km from the city center. Differing views arose between supporters of and objectors to the link of the city of As-Salt to biblical cities.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribī, 1970. *Kitāb al-Jughrāfiyā, ḥaqqaqah wa-waḍa'ah muqaddamatahu wa-'allaqah alayhi Ismā'il al-'Arabī*. Bayrūt: Manshūrāt al-Maktab al-Tijārī lil-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī'.

<sup>2</sup> An As-Salt Antiquities Office report from 1986 describes ruins from a Roman bath complex in the city center dating to the late Roman period.

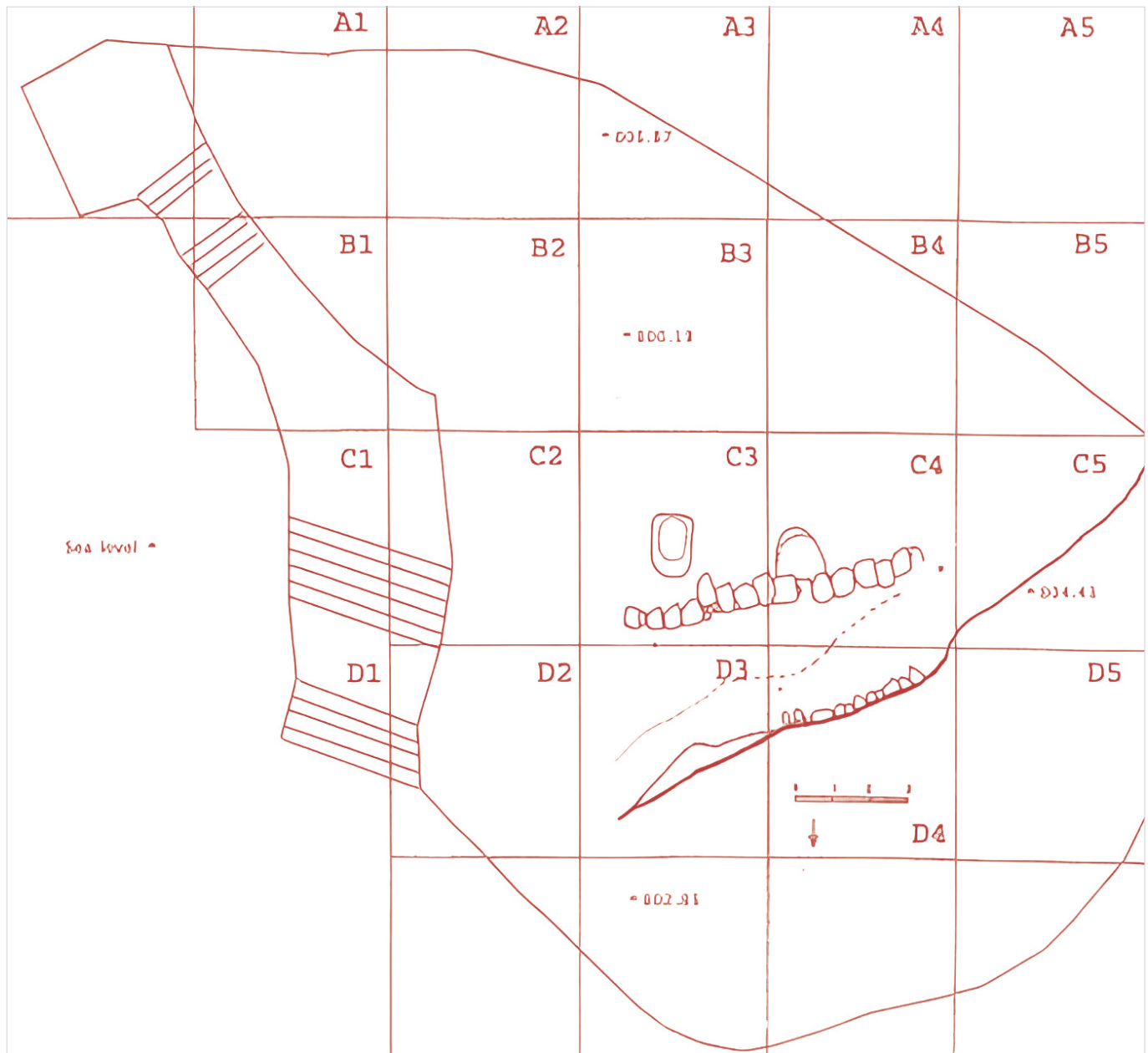


Figure 2. Plan of the excavation area in Tell Al-Jādūr (© As-Salt Archaeological Museum).

Specifically, as Khirbet As-Souq has not been extensively excavated, the question remains: Is there any connection between Khirbet As-Souq and the areas mentioned in the mosaic at Dhībān? What has been discovered until now in Khirbet As-Souq would constitute but a small part of a possibly complete Byzantine city, but this has yet to be confirmed.

The Department of Antiquities (DoA) and other excavation works in As-Salt city have uncovered what is believed to have been a Roman bath (*thermae*) under the current cultural center (As-Salt Cultural Center); this was unfortunately destroyed during the work that took place in the reconstruction of the city center. There

is likewise no evidence to support the local stories of a Latin Church in As-Salt built over top of the ruins of a Roman temple.

Since the publication of an inscription that was found in the north of Iraq in Nimrud (Täfel, ND 2773) dated to the 8th century BC, which mentions Al-Gadur, many researchers have argued that the area mentioned in the inscription is Tell Al-Jādūr, near As-Salt. Moreover, there will be further description of a number of archaeological sites located in As-Salt and dated various periods.

Some researchers, on the other hand, pointed out that the word mentioned in the text—a single cuneiform letter—refers to a particular nation who attacked

Moab or the Moabites; still others assert that it refers to al-Qadariyyah referring to a “nation” and not a piece of “land,” which in itself is emphasized by the fact that this “nation” is not thought to have had the capability to attack an area such as Moab. It seems therefore inaccurate to state that the people of As-Salt or Tell Al-Jādūr are the people referred to in the Nimrud inscription (see Mittmann 1973; Saggs 1955). What remains important is to investigate the areas between the springs and Khirbet As-Souq for evidence of a church.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS IN TELL AL-JĀDŪR

Tell Al-Jādūr is nearby in the south of As-Salt, about 750 m above sea level (Figure 1). The eastern slope of this site is very gentle, with its western slope being contrastingly very steep. An Islamic cemetery was found just at the top of the steeper eastern side, and at the bottom of this same slope are two springs called ‘Ain al-Jādūr at-Tahtā and ‘Ain al-Jādūr al-Fōqā. The As-Salt Secondary School for boys is located at the top of Tell Al-Jādūr, where, looking west, Wadi Shu‘eib is visible. The As-Salt Secondary School was built on Tell Al-Jādūr in 1921; at the time, it was the largest building in the area on a site of considerable archaeological importance.

Discoveries in the area include a Roman bath and, under the school itself, the stone pieces of an olive press. Both of these have since been destroyed due to modern construction and the mismanagement of various projects. Additionally, Saad al-Hadidi, chief of the As-Salt archaeology office, found many mosaic fragments in the area now covered by the school’s football field. This further proves that when sites are not proficiently managed, the archaeological integrity and authenticity of sites can be disrupted.

The large number of pottery sherds and the tombs in the western part of the hill confirm that Tell Al-Jādūr was settled in the Middle Bronze Age. In the new graveyard on the other side of Tell Al-Jādūr, the eastern side is a site used by inhabitants of As-Salt from the beginning of the 20th century. Pieces of mosaic and pottery sherds can still be found in the soil here. In 1998, after two years already on the site, Saad al-Hadidi found two pipes—one made of stone and the other of pottery—on the eastern part of the tell. These pipes are the only surviving part of a water system that extended from the southwest to the top of Tell Al-Jādūr and behind the



Figure 3. Pottery and human bones in Tomb 1 at Tell Al-Jādūr (© As-Salt Archaeological Museum).

As-Salt Secondary School, and they would eventually have reached nearby water tanks. Unfortunately, this system was too destroyed throughout the heavy and environmentally insensitive construction projects in these areas in the 20th century.

The next excavations at Tell Al-Jādūr in 2004 and 2005 were financed by JICA as part of the developments in As-Salt. The archaeological dig covered an area of around 150 m<sup>2</sup> and was about nine meters deep in some places. This surface was divided into squares C3, D3, E5, and E6 (Figure 2). The excavation area is within the grounds of the aforementioned As-Salt Secondary School for Boys. The campus itself was landscaped with cypress terraces, and olive trees bordered the paved road that led to the school’s front entrance and an upper tiled yard. The soil layers in square E6 that were excavated initially created a large amount of rubble and debris that has since been piled up on the hill, around the school and the rest of the site. The soil contains a large number of pottery sherds dating back to the Roman and Byzantine periods, along with a few sherds from the Early Bronze IV and Iron Ages.

At a depth of 150 cm, excavations revealed tombs with human remains surrounded by irregular stones, their orientation indicating that they were most likely Islamic graves. The latest pottery sherds found beneath these graves are dateable to Roman times, with evidence of earlier Bronze Age sherds in lower layers. Excavations reached bedrock at a depth of about four meters in the southwestern corner of the excavated zone. Squares C3, D3, and E3 are located in the northern half of the area. These squares were excavated and contained pottery mostly dated to the Middle Bronze Age. There were two tombs discovered in squares C3 and C4.

The first of these tombs, “Tomb 1” (Figure 4), found in square C3, is carved into the bedrock and consists of an entrance shaft and a circular burial chamber. The entrance shaft is ovoid in shape, oriented from north to south, and is 1.4 m long, 1.1 m wide at the south-



Figure 4. Wall and excavated tombs at Tell Al-Jādūr (© As-Salt Archaeological Museum).

ern edge, 2.15 m wide in the center, and 1.05 m at the northern edge. The burial chamber is almost circular in shape and has a diameter of about 2.5 m. The convex ceiling is 1.1 m high, with some parts visible above ground. Located to the northern side of the room, the tomb entrance is semi-circular with an average diameter of about 0.55 m.

The second tomb, “Tomb 2,” is located in square C4 and is notably smaller than the first. It is a single shaft tomb and is “L” shaped. The entrance well is—like Tomb 1—ovoid and oriented north to south, but it is only 1.20 m in depth and 1.45 m in width. It is on the northern side of the tomb. The entrance has a circumference of 0.45 m and was found sealed with limestone rocks. The room is circular in shape with a radius of 1 m, even floor, and 1 m high ceiling. This tomb did contain human remains facing south, possibly of a young person, but unfortunately the As-Salt Antiquities Office site report does not give a clear account of how these bones were dated.

Finally, there were two jars found on the east side of the room, as well as two small oil lamps, one of them

broken. A wall made of dressed limestone was also excavated during this project (Figure 4). Constructed of small to medium-sized rocks, which were then set with a limestone and soil mortar, the wall has not been fully uncovered. It is 16.2 m long and runs through squares D3, D4, C4 and C5 on a northeast to southwest axis. The height varies around an average of 3.3 m. The width is unclear, but is 95 cm in the excavated area. Pottery sherds from the same stratum, as well as the nearby tombs, date it to the Early Bronze IV (2350/2300 to 2000 BC) period.

A smaller, parallel inner wall was found two meters away from the first wall. Built from large, coarse limestone blocks, this wall is only one stone in width, unlike the larger defensive wall, which has several layers. The inner wall is 80 cm high and 0.45 m wide. Significantly, this wall runs over the tombs, which makes it possible to date it to a later era. Any evidence from this area that pointed to the Early Bronze IV would also provide support for the conclusion that these walls were constructed in order to create a division between settlements.

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS



Figure 5 (© Ali Al-Manaser &amp; Munjed Qasem).

**Description (Figure 5)**

Jug with a globular body, flat base, cylindrical neck, flaring plain rim, flat strap handle from below the rim to the shoulder with straight vertical incisions, “coin roll” thumb impressed bands and wavy incisions on the shoulder, reddish yellow 5 YR 6/6 ware with highly fired, limestone and small grits. Parallels: Helms & McCreery 1988: figs. 8–12; Ibrahim & Qadi 1995: fig. 7: 4–5; Waheeb & Palumbo 1993: fig. 5: 7–8; 1994: fig. 2: 1, 8–10; Younker *et al.* 1993: pl. 5a. Manufacturing technique: hand and wheel made. Dating: EBIV. Dimensions: H: 22.8 cm, Ø: 0.9 cm, T: 0.8 cm.

**Description (Figure 6)**

*Amphoriskoi*. Globular body, flat base, two lug handles, recessed hole-mouth jar rim, highly fired, reddish yellow 5YR 6/6 ware, and small limestone grits inclusions, decorated with “coin roll” thumb impressed bands and wavy incisions on the shoulder. Parallels: Palumbo & Peterman 1993: fig. 6: 10, 13; Ibrahim & Qadi 1995: fig. 7: 2; Prag 1995: fig. 3: 4. Manufacturing technique: hand and wheel made. Dating: EBIV. Dimensions: H: 17.3 cm, Ø: 8.5 cm, T: 1cm.

**Description (Figure 7)**

Jug. Globular body, flat base, cylindrical neck, flaring plain rim, flat strap handle from below the rim to the shoulder, “coin roll” thumb impressed bands incisions on the shoulder, brown 5 YR 5/4 ware with medium

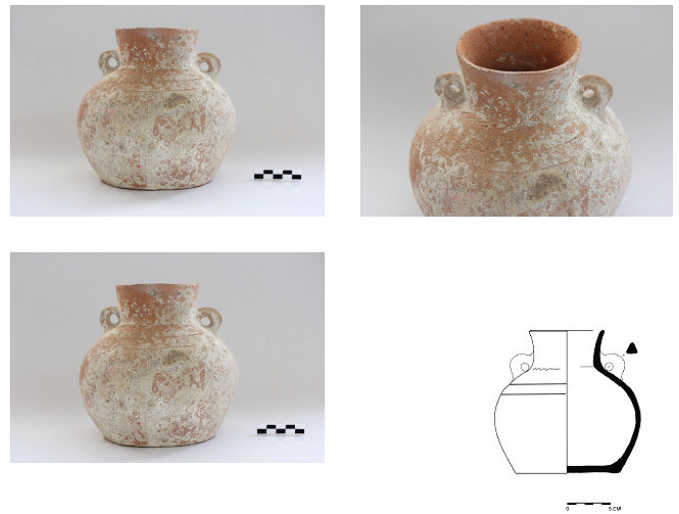


Figure 6 (© Ali Al-Manaser &amp; Munjed Qasem).

fired, limestone and small grits. Parallels: Helms & McCreery 1988: figs. 8–12; Ibrahim & Qadi 1995: fig. 7: 4–5; Waheeb & Palumbo 1993: fig. 5: 7–8; 1994: fig. 2: 1, 8–10; Younker *et al.* 1993: pl. 5a. Manufacturing technique: hand and wheel made. Dating: EBIV. Dimensions: H: 17.5 cm, Ø: 8.5 cm, T: 1 cm.

**Description (Figure 8)**

Storage jar. Globular body, flat base, cylindrical with flaring neck, two “envelope” ledge handles, brown 5 YR 5/4 ware with medium fired, limestone and small



Figure 7 (© Ali Al-Manaser &amp; Munjed Qasem).

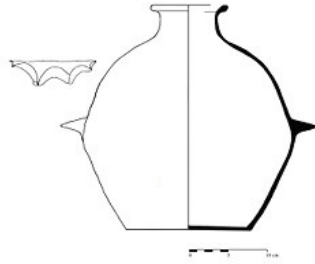


Figure 8 (© As-Salt Archaeological Museum & Munjed Qasem).

grits, cracked and some parts missing. The jar has several significant cracks and breaks to the body. Some pieces missing. Parallels: Helms & McCreery 1988: figs. 17–20; Ibrahim & Qadi 1995: figs. 6: 3, 7: 1, 3; Waheeb & Palumbo 1993: fig. 4: 6; Prag 1995: fig. 3: 1. Manufacturing technique: hand and wheel made. Dating: EBIV. Dimensions: H: 29 cm, Ø: 14 cm, T: 0.7–0.9 cm.

### Description (Figure 9)

*Amphoriskoi*. Globular body, flat base, two lug handles, short flaring rim, highly fired, reddish yellow 5YR 6/6 ware, and small limestone grits inclusions, cracked and some parts missing. Parallels: Palumbo & Peterman 1993: fig. 6: 10, 13; Ibrahim & Qadi 1995: fig. 7: 2; Prag 1995: fig. 3: 4. Manufacturing technique: hand and wheel made. Dating: EBIV. Dimensions: H: 31.5 cm, Ø: 12.5 cm, T: 1 cm.

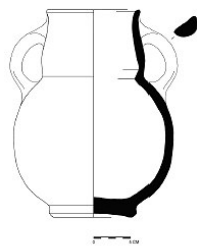


Figure 9 (© Ali Al-Manaser & Munjed Qasem).

### Description (Figure 10)

Jug with significant pieces missing, globular, flat base, narrow neck, flaring rim, flat strap handle from below the rim to the shoulder, there are some straight horizontal incisions on the handle, light brown 10 YR 7/4 with medium fired, limestone and small grits, smoothing in the exterior, there are horizontal single straight incisions at the neck/shoulder junction. Parallels: Helms & McCreery 1988: figs. 8–12; Ibrahim & Qadi 1995: fig. 7: 4–5; Waheeb & Palumbo 1993: fig. 5: 7–8; 1994: fig. 2: 1, 8–10; Younker *et al.* 1993: pl. 5a. Manufacturing technique: hand and wheel made. Dating: EBIV. Dimensions: H: 30 cm, Ø: 14 cm, T: 0.7 cm.

### CONCLUSION

The Archaeological excavations in Tell Al-Jādūr support the suggestion that the nature of pottery production and distribution in the region during the EBIV is not well understood.

Most pottery has been found by chance in cemeteries and isolated tombs, as opposed to being found during the course of excavating settlements. This suggests a limited production scale in the Amman-Zarqa region, probably involving kinship-based, independent production units which were organized in an informal way for small-scale local, and occasionally non-local, consumption. Production was standardized only to a very limited extent, with a lack of systematic vessel features by



Figure 10 (© Ali Al-Manaser & Munjed Qasem).

different potters. As such, the number of groups active in pottery making within the majority of communities did not amount to more than two at the same time (Krabbenhöft 2010: 84–85). This ultimately resulted

in a fairly modest ceramic output. In summary, this article has addressed a number of matters, including the significance of archaeological sites in As-Salt city and the manufacturing of pottery in As-Salt.

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