THE ROUTE TO THE HOLY CITY.
[AL-JUHF AH AS AN EXAMPLE]

BY

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The village of Al-Juhfah was, still is, a center of civilization throughout human history. Since it is suitable for life, many nations resided in it. With the advent of Islam, Al-Juhfah became of more importance, since it served as a Miqāṭ for Hajj, and that is why Muslim pilgrims were obliged to pass by it, carrying with them food, water and other items. Al-Juhfah is further known for its historical remains like the Alia Palace and Masjid of Azzūr. The researchers express their gratitude to the Deanship of Scientific Research, Umm al-Qura University for supporting and funding this paper under scholarship No. (19-HUM-4- 9-0001), which effectively contributed to conducting it.

KEYWORDS: Al-Juhfah, Alia Palace, wells, springs, coins, monumental, Miqāṭ, Holy Mecca, Medina of the Prophet.
The village of *al-Juḥfah* lies in the west of the Arabian Peninsula between Holy Mecca and the Medina of the Prophet, particularly to the north of Mecca and the Southwest of Medina. Other geographers yet believe that it lies on the Ḥijāz’s northern coast route. Previously, scholars opined that the village lies between longitude «65» and latitude «22», whereas it is believed today to be lying between latitude (22.42.45) and longitude (39.09.00), with a total area measuring around 4 square km. Based on this very last opinion on the location of *al-Juḥfah*, it becomes clear that it belongs to Tihamah of Ḥijāz, since it is only 13.08 km above sea level. Besides, it is geographically represented the western border of the Ḥijāz region that separates it (*al-Juḥfah*) from Mount Tayy. Today, *al-Juḥfah* lies in the west of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in the governorate of Rabīgh. It is 16 km away from its very center. For those heading to Holy Mecca, it is on their left. It has some landmarks, such as Miqāt *al-Juḥfah* (the place at which pilgrims shall make *Iḥrām* to Hajj), Alia Palace, Ghadir Khumm (the brooklet of Khumm), Wādī al-Kharār (the Valley of *al-Kharār*) and the Ḥarrah of ‘Azzūr.

With most of its land a plain area, *al-Juḥfah* includes several hills and volcanic places. It has a wide valley known as *al-Kharār* into which the sea water flows. Today, the upper part of this valley is known as *al-Khāneq* while its very area overlooking the Ghadir Khumm is known as *al-Ḥalaq*. As for its area extending along *al-Juḥfah*, it is known as Wādī al-Ghaṭādah. As for the soil of the valley, it belongs to the sedimentary, flood layers. It seems that the valley route has diverted in recent Islamic times, which is now known as Inkisār al-Wādī (Diversion of the Valley), a matter that caused *al-Juḥfah* to lose many of its water resources including its very wells, springs and brooklets (with Ghadir Khumm the most famous of them all) for which it was usually known. This valley used to be fed by a number of neighboring valleys. For example, it is reported that there were three valleys between *al-Juḥfah* and the Valley of Harshā, as follows: Wādī Ghazāl, Wādī Ḫūl Dūrān and Wādī Kulaiyah. In truth, *al-Juḥfah* enjoys this very distinctive geographical feature, since it formulates the western border of Tihamah of *Ḥijāz*.

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3 The Arabic word Harshā is a valley lying in the route to Mecca in the proximity of *al-Juḥfah*. It overlooks the sea. There are two routes leading to this very valley of Harshā, with each of them leading to the same position. Al-Hamawī 1995: vol.5, 397; Sharrāb n.d: 294.
Even though al-Juhfah today experiences scarcity of plants, it was, still has, various kinds of desert plants including al-Markh, al-Arāık, and palm trees that used to be found in large numbers near Ghadīr Khumm. For this, camels used to represent the most prominent figure of livestock in al-Juhfah. Monumental discoveries unearthed the fact that the existence of camels in al-Juhfah dated back to the 1st century BC, whereas Islamic historical reports reveal the fact that horses were also found therein a long time ago.

The significance of the geographical location of al-Juhfah stems from the fact that it served as a geographical mark to define locations of places throughout past times, such as Rabigh, Harshā and Lahyu Jamal. In other words, places used to be defined in light of the very location of al-Juhfah. For example, when describing a particular place, they used to say: «It lies between al-Juhfah and another place, or near al-Juhfah, or on the way to al-Juhfah». Noticeably, the fame of al-Juhfah is not restricted to neighboring cities, but is also connected with large cities like Aden, to the extent that the distance between both of them has been defined through five stations, a matter that may be interpreted in light of the geographical and historical significance of al-Juhfah, since it represented a main land station on the route connecting Mecca to Medina in particular, and the old routes of Tihamah al-Hijāz in general. The list of these routes includes the following:

1. The coast route: it is a three-day long journey from al-Jār to the coast of al-Juhfah, and another three-day long journey from the coast of al-Juhfah to Jeddah.
2. The second coast route: it starts from al-Jār towards al-Juhfah at which it moves towards Qadid.

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5 Al-Markh is a kind of tree with no leaves or thorns. Of the Asclepiadoidecae family, this plant climbs the air towards the sky. In his Lisān al-‘Arāb IBN MANZŪR says: «With no leaves and thorns, al-Markh has thin stems that grow within groups». IBN MANZŪR 1993: vol.9, 163; AL-MU’CÂM AL-WÂSĪT 2004: 861.
6 Al-Arāık is a kind of plants belonging to the Salvadoraceae family. With its height not exceeding four meters, this always-green tree lives for long times and has soft branches usually looking downwards or crawling on the surface of the earth at other times. MU’JAM AL-SHÂB 2008: 26-30; AL-MU’CÂM AL-WÂSĪT 2004: 14.
8 Lahyu Jamal is a place between Holy Mecca and the Medina of the Prophet. It is ‘Aqabatu al-Juhfah. It is seven miles away from al-Suqā, and may be also written as Luḥyā Jamal. AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.5, 15; AL-BALĀDĪ 2010: 1467–1468; SHARRĀB 1991: 92, 171, 235.
11 Al-Jār is a city lying on the coast of the Red Sea. It is a one-day journey from the Medina of the Prophet. The way separating it from Aylah (i.e. Aqaba) passes through ten stations, whereas there are three stations in the way connecting it the coast of al-Juhfah. Now lying in the place known as «al-Rāyis» in the west of the village of Badr with a gentle slope towards the north, it was used as a harbor in the past. AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.2, 92-93; AL-BALĀDĪ 2010: 326 – 329; SHARRĀB 1991: 85.
3. The third coast route: it starts from the north of the Medina of the Prophet but did not penetrate into it; it moves towards al-Juhfah and 'Usfān\textsuperscript{13} in the direction of Holy Mecca.

4. A route connecting Badr\textsuperscript{14} to al-Juhfah: it is a straightforward route that is a two-day long journey. It has many wells of sweat water.

5. A route connecting al-Abwā'\textsuperscript{15} to al-Juhfah at which it moves towards Qadīd. The distance between al-Abwā' and al-Juhfah is estimated by 23 miles.

6. The route connecting the Valley of al-Šafrā'\textsuperscript{16} to al-Juhfah. Egyptian pilgrims used to go through this very route.

A historic narration once highlights the importance of al-Juhfah as a route for pilgrims, maintaining that had it not been for the pilgrims to visit the Medina, they would have taken the road of Tayma\textsuperscript{17} leading directly to al-Juhfah at which people would directly head to Holy Mecca\textsuperscript{18}.

Today, al-Juhfah is linked with other cities through some main and secondary modern roads built in the desert. For example, Miqātu al-Juhfah is linked with the main highway connecting the city of Yanbū to Jeddah through a 4 km secondary road, which is actually the same road with which Alia Palace is linked through a desert road that is fewer than 2 km long. As for the historic village of al-Juhfah, its corners are connected to each other through well-known desert roads.

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\textsuperscript{12} Qadīd is a valley of Tihama of Hijāz. It has many springs and farms. It intersects with the Mecca-Medina route along 120 km. AL-BALĀD 2010: 1356, 1357; SHARRĀB 1991: 222.

\textsuperscript{13} 'Usfān is a village lying 80 km away from the north of Holy Mecca in the route to Medina. Three roads meet at this very village, namely: one is leading to Medina, another leading to Mecca and a third leading to Jeddah. AL-BALĀD 1982: 208; SHARRĀB 1991: 174, 191-192; AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.4, 121-122.

\textsuperscript{14} Badr is a village lying downwards in Wādī al-Šafrā' (Valley of al-Šafrā'). It is 155 km away from Medina, 310 km away from Mecca and 45 km away from Sayfu al-Bahr (lit. the Sword of the Sea). AL-BALĀD 1982: 41-42; SHARRĀB 1991: 44; JUNAYDEL n.d.: 64-68.

\textsuperscript{15} Al-Abwā' is a valley in Hijāz. It has many wells and fruitful farms. The very particular area that is now covered with plants is known as al-Khuraybah. This place (al-Khuraybah) is 28 km eastward the village of Mastūrah. The distance between al-Abwā' and Rabigh is estimated by 43 km. JUNAYDIL n.d.: 17; SHARRĀB 1991: 17.

\textsuperscript{16} Wādīm al-Šafrā' is one of the big valleys in Hijāz. When one leaves Medina to Badr, you will be at the very beginning of this very valley once you pass by al-Furaish. Within this valley, you would pass by al-Musayjūd, al-Khīf and al-Wāṣīfah (previously known as al-Šafrā') until you leave Badr. AL-BALĀD 1982: 177; SHARRĀB 1991: 159.

\textsuperscript{17} Tayma is a village lying on the borders of al-Šām, and particularly on the route between al-Šām and Wādī al-Qurā (Valley of al-Qurā). It is the routes usually taken by the pilgrims of al-Šām and Damascus. It is 420 km northward the Medina of the Prophet. AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.2, 67; SHARRĀB 1991: 74.

Examing the geographical location of the village of al-Juhfah clearly tells that communication between her and the other major cities like the Medina, Holy Mecca and Jeddah became an easy matter, and so is the communication process between her and the economic cities like Rabigh, Yanbūʿ and King ʿAbdullah Economic City.

II. ORIGIN OF AL-JUHFATH

Of long, fascinating history, scholars attempt to carefully examine al-Juhfah to arrive at impressive conclusions. That is because this very village enjoys two characteristics, as follows: first, it is an important station separating two great civilizations of ancient times, that is, the civilizations of the two cities of Holy Mecca and Yatrib (the previous name of Medina of the Prophet); and second, it is an important station for pilgrims heading to the Ka`ba by land from the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula.

Records of ancient history tell us that al-Juhfah was of cardinal importance among other villages and cities. Al-Juhfah’s importance has started with the arrival of Banū ʿUbayl to the region and the construction works made by Yatrib Ibn Qāsimah Ibn Mahlābil Ibn Ārim Ibn ʿUbayl in Yatrib. Though Mahyāʿah – later known as al-Juhfah was not mentioned in these reports, Banū ʿUbayl’s residence in the place, eventhough the Amaliks had expelled them from Yatrib, is conclusive evidence that those people fully realized that this place is more suitable for residence than any other one.

The point that al-Juhfah was qualified for human existence may be espoused by the fact that it served as a station for those who travel from Mecca to Medina and vice versa. For example, ʿAmr Ibn ʿĀmir Ibn Ḥārītah, a Yemeni King, left his home in the

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19 Yanbūʿ is one of the cities of Hijāz. It is divided into two parts, namely: Yanbūʿ al-Nakhl (Yanbūʿ of the Palm Trees) and Yanbūʿ al-Bahr (Yanbūʿ of the Sea), with the second part lying on the eastern coast of the Red Sea, which is why it serves as the harbor of the Medina of the Prophet. It is 354 km northward Jeddah and 250 km west of Medina. AL-JĀSIM 2006: 10–12; AL-BALĀDI 2010: vol.10, 39–40.

20 King ʿAbdullah Economic City is a modern economic city built in during King ʿabdullah bin ʿabd al-ʿazīz al-suʿūd — may Allah have mercy upon him — reign. It lies in the west of KSA between the two cities of Jeddah and Yanbūʿ. https://www.kaec.net/about-ar/?lang=en 5/8/2020.

21 Banū ʿUbayl: Historians believe that ʿUbayl is from the offspring of ʿAwwa, brother of ʿĀd. Besides, they were the first people to build the city of Yatrib, yet the Amaliks drove them out of it. As a result, they (Banū ʿUbayl) resided in a place between Mecca and Medina. AL-BALĀDHIRI 1996: vol.1, 6; MAHRĀN 2010: vol.1, 154; KAḪĀLAH 1994: vol.2, 784; ʿALI 2001: vol.1, 343-344.

22 Amaliks is a Semitic people whose lineage goes back to ʿAmliq Ibn Lāwidh Ibn Iram Ibn Sām Ibn Nūḥ. Some of them dwelled in Mecca while the rest resided in al-Ṣām. The list of the Amaliks includes the Pharaohs, the mighty people who dwelled al-Ṣām during the era of Prophet Moses, the Kings of Persia and the people of Khorasan. IBN QUTAIBAH 1992: vol.1, 27; IBN MANZŪR 1994: vol.10, 271; AL-SUHAILI 2000: vol.4, 171-172.

land of Kahlān\(^{24}\) to it after he felt that the Dam of Marīb became fragile. A soothsayer, ‘Amr once saw a dream that Yemen would be covered with water, which is why he took his family, after he bought all his property, and moved northward. Once he arrived at Mecca, the tribe of Jūrhm drove him out, and thus he moved to al-Juḥfah and then to Yatrib. Besides, the tribes of Zabīd, known as Zabīdu al-Ḥijāz\(^{25}\), dwelled therein.

This historical significance of al-Juḥfah is reinforced by the discoveries unearthed by discoverers in Ğumāda II 1441 AH/27 January 2020 AD, including inscriptions, drawings and symbols on the rocks of a small mountain on the road of Moghiniyah opposite the western side of the valley where Ghadīr Khumm lies, with all the inscriptions similar to the jamūdi letters. As for the drawings, they are abstract; one of them is a drawing of a camel while the other is a knight riding a horse. It is believed that these inscriptions were referring to the kingship of someone, defining the borders of a tribe or even highlighting the description of cattle. Researchers believe that they (i.e. the inscriptions) dated back to the period between the first century BC and the first century AD.

In truth, these inscriptions and drawings may also be documented by the Prophetic Hadith in which the Prophets tell that Prophet Yūnus Ibīn Mattā has passed by the valley of Haršā, which reads, «Ibīn ‘Abbās was with the Prophet when they passed by the valley of Haršā at which he asked, What valley is this?» They said, «Haršā» whereupon he replied: «It is as if I can see Yūnus, on a red she-camel, wearing a woolen cloak and holding the reins of his she-camel, woven from palm fibers, passing through this valley, reciting the Talbiyah»\(^{26}\). It is known that Prophet Yūnus Ibīn Mattā ived in the 8\(^{th}\) century BC\(^{27}\).

1- Monuments and Construction of al-Juḥfah throughout History

Construction started in al-Juḥfah at a very early age, particularly in the year 2500 BC when the Amaliks dwelled in it, or when the Jews resided therein after the Amaliks, according to some reports\(^{28}\).

Besides, al-Juḥfah is considered one of the largest Mawāqīt of Hajj (places at which pilgrims are obliged to make Ḯṛām for Hajj)\(^{29}\). Al-Juḥfah, furthermore, continued for

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\(^{24}\) Kahlān is a mountain in al-Gha’il region in Sāḍah. Kahlān are Ḥaqīṭānī tribes that dwelled Yemen. Al-Ḥamāwī 1995: vol.4, 496; Sharrāb 1991: 28.


\(^{27}\) Ibn ‘Arabi 1906 :vol.1, board 93.

\(^{28}\) Al-Murjānī 2002: vol.1, 614.

\(^{29}\) Alsubaie 2018: 57.
long an important station (on the road between Mecca and Medina). It was so organized and wide\textsuperscript{30} that its monuments were found in the west of \textit{al-Juhfah} fortress as well as the areas in its northwest and southwest.

Being a \textit{Miqāt} for pilgrims is one of the reasons that led to the flourish of \textit{al-Juhfah}. Besides, it has a large number of valleys from which water flows into it, a matter that makes water available in it in large quantities, which contributed to the spread of agriculture on a large scale as well as the availability of sweat water in large quantities. This is one of the main reasons that attracted people to it, to the extent that people who traveled for a long distance would head to it. As for the economic status of \textit{al-Juhfah}, it is of cardinal importance since it serves as a meeting point where the tribes traveling from Mecca and Medina meet. Besides, it is a harbor that used to receive ships heading to the two holy cities, \textit{al-Šām}, Egypt and North Africa\textsuperscript{31}.

\textit{Al-Juhfah} kept on its very advancement during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance and the early Islamic era. It is reported that Caliph ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb cared about the route of pilgrims and commanded that sweat water should be provided for those passing by it\textsuperscript{32}.

The Umayyad Dynasty witnessed the main stage of building the major cities of \textit{al-Juhfah}, which is why historians, like Šākir al-Kutabī, state that ʿUmar Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz was the one who built the city\textsuperscript{33}.

During the ʿAbbasid Dynasty, \textit{al-Juhfah}’s flourishing was so prominent that historical resources for the 3\textsuperscript{rd} AH/9\textsuperscript{th} century AD believe that the city was highly advanced and that neither Medina nor Holy Mecca was of the same advancement. It was inhabited throughout the year since it included various architectural buildings, including a block of homes, a large pond, a water pool, some wells, a well-built castle, two gates and a market\textsuperscript{34}.

This very point on the advancement of \textit{al-Juhfah} during the 4\textsuperscript{th} AH/10\textsuperscript{th} century AD may be espoused by the description of al-Iṣṭakhrī for it as an inhabited house that is big and always replete with construction works. Besides, it is the only station between Mecca and Medina that is inhabited by people throughout the year\textsuperscript{35}.

Careful examination of the site of \textit{al-Juhfah} unveils that the city has the characteristics of the early Islamic cities, since \textit{al-Juhfah} covered a large area of land and

\textsuperscript{31} Bilsūd 2009: 145.
\textsuperscript{32} Al-Ṭabarī 2012: vol.4, 69.
\textsuperscript{35} Al-Iṣṭakhrī 1961: 25.
included a number of monumental buildings buried underneath the earth. The list of the most important monuments includes the fence surrounding the housing area, the fortress lying in the southeast corner of the city, some bases buried underneath the sand, some architectural units, and a network of narrow streets

The research team, who managed to unearth the remains of the old city of al-Juḥfah, unveiled that all the remaining buildings are characterized with the use of the black basalt stones in the construction works. Members of the team also stated that (the residential) units are not of the same size and that homes are very close to each other, which is why the streets were narrow and curved. The team furthermore stated that they had found foundations for five connected rooms overlooking a rectangular yard.

(Figure 1). A model of the foundations of a residential building in Juḥfa © done by authors

Decline Phase

Despite historical records unveiling the fact that al-Juḥfah was an advanced village under the Umayyad Dynasty, they also record that it was ruined and spoiled in the late 11th AH/11 century AD and the early 6th AH/12 century AD.

In the 10th AH/15th AD, al-Juḥfah attracted the attention of voyagers that Ibn Ṭulūn and al-Ḥumairi visited it; these two voyagers recorded that al-Juḥfah was a very flourishing village that included everything in the past but it was ruined the time they passed by it, to the extent that few pilgrims used to ask about it, with some people did not know anything about it at all. They believed that the reason behind this negligence

36 ALSUBAIE 2018: 137.
37 The research team made a number of the field visits to the site of al-Juḥfah.
38 ALSUBAIE 2018: 138-141.
40 AL-JĀSIR 1396: vol.1, 1–12, 887.
41 AL-ḤUMAYRI 1975: 156.
is that it became away from the Hajj route\textsuperscript{42}, which indicates that some caravans of pilgrims permanently viewed \textit{al-Juḥfah} as the \textit{Miqāt} of Hajj although it no longer included any feature of civilization during the 12\textsuperscript{th} AH/18\textsuperscript{th} century AD.

\textit{Al-Suwaidī} stressed the authenticity of this narration, stating that \textit{al-Juḥfah} became ruined and void of any feature of life when people took \textit{Rabīgh} as the \textit{Miqāt} of Hajj since it is paralleling to it\textsuperscript{43}. However, this very testimony of \textit{al-Suwaidī} was rejected by \textit{al-Wurthilānī} who stressed that he witnessed the buildings of \textit{al-Juḥfah} when he visited it in the 12\textsuperscript{th} AH/18\textsuperscript{th} century AD\textsuperscript{44}.

Based on the testimonies given by the voyagers, the fact that \textit{al-Juḥfah} turned into a ruined village that included no homes or buildings became undeniable. This may be the result of the fact that the Egyptians took \textit{Rabīgh} as their \textit{Miqāt} instead of it, which led to the disappearance of the village features, with nothing left from it but ruins\textsuperscript{46}. Careful examination of historical records stressed the abovementioned fact that nothing remained from the village but ruins. Reliance on lexicons and architectural dictionaries, it became crystal clear that there were different kinds of ruins in \textit{al-Juḥfah}\textsuperscript{47}, as follows:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{First}, what is covered by dust or, in other words, what is buried under the ground?
  \item \textbf{Second}, what is covered by floods after the inhabitants of the city left it, especially after the route of the valley is diverted in another direction.
\end{itemize}

Examination of the location of the historical \textit{al-Juḥfah} village stressed these two points, since the region is permanently exposed to wind and floods are known to usually run therein\textsuperscript{48}. This description is even stressed by the buildings neighboring the Alia Palace, since their features and locations indicate that they were covered by dust and buried beneath the ground.

\textbf{Masjid \textit{al-Juḥfah}}

\textit{Masjid \textit{al-Juḥfah}} is the main Masjid in the village. People of Egypt and \textit{al-Šām} used to consider it as their \textit{Miqāt}\textsuperscript{49}. The significance of this \textit{Miqāt} stems from the fact that it includes three Masjids\textsuperscript{50}. Historical records unveiled the fact that there was a Masjid at the very beginning of \textit{al-Juḥfah}, which is known as \textit{Masjid the Prophet}, the \textit{Masjid

\textsuperscript{42} Al-Yūsī 2018: 132.
\textsuperscript{43} Al-Suwaidī 2008: 318.
\textsuperscript{44} Al-Wurthilānī 2008: 1, 422.
\textsuperscript{45} Al-Murād Abādī 2004: 101.
\textsuperscript{47} Al-Mufgām Al-Wasīṭ 2004: 344.
\textsuperscript{48} Issam 2019.
\textsuperscript{49} Al-Hārithyy 2003: 142.
\textsuperscript{50} Şabrī 2004: vol.4, 817.
`Azzūr\textsuperscript{51}, \textit{Masjid Ghawraf}\textsuperscript{52} or \textit{Masjid Ghawrat}\textsuperscript{53}. As for the other two mosques, one of them is known as the \textit{Masjid al-A’imma (Masjid of Imāms)}\textsuperscript{54} and the other is known as \textit{Masjid Ghadīr Khumm}; it is three or four miles away from \textit{al-Juhfah} and lies on the left of the route, and particularly on the edge of \textit{al-Masīl} region. Qāḍī ‘Iyād, on his part, opines that \textit{Ghadīr Khumm} is a name for a big tomb beside which there is a small river flowing into a pond. The \textit{Masjid Ghadīr Khumm}, it is in the middle of this small river\textsuperscript{55}. The research team has already observed the existence of locations defined with stones and spread with soft soil in the very old places of these Masjids.

During his journey to \textit{al-Juhfah}, al-Faḍlī highlighted the existence of a small, unroofed Masjid that was recently established beside Alia Palace\textsuperscript{56}. It is believed that this Masjid might be built to revive the region where Alia Palace stands; however, this Masjid is not discovered by the research team.

\textbf{Alia Palace}

It overlooks \textit{Wādī al-Ghāyda} [Valley of al-Ghāiḍah], or the \textit{Wādī al-Juhfah} (Valley of al-Juhfah) as indicated in the official correspondence, under the valley of ‘Azzūr in the south, a point at which the valley turns southward. Al-Balāḍī stresses that the old \textit{Juhfah} is the very location of the Palace, maintaining that it lies on a hill on the edge of the valley, and particularly in the southeast of Rabīgh (4 km away from the north of the \textit{Masjid al-Juhfah})\textsuperscript{57}.

\textbf{Palace Architecture}

Built from black basalt\textsuperscript{58} in the form of courses connected with gypsum, the Palace covers a total area of 841 ms\textsuperscript{2}. With big and solid walls, the Palace is a strong, well-designed building. The reason why the black rocks were used in the construction is that they were found in abundance in the rocky areas surrounding the Palace, which means that architects had already made use of the local environment and the volcanic rocks.

Field visits to the site of the Palace indicate that it was established on a high hill, which is why architects took into account that the walls and the foundations of the

\textsuperscript{51} `Azzūr is valley meeting with \textit{al-Juhfah} in the north on the then route known as \textit{al-Sulān}. It is today known as \textit{al-Azzūriya}. \textsc{Al-Balāḍī} 2010: 1149; \textsc{Hasan} 1991: 191; \textsc{Al-Ḥarbi} 1969: 457–458; \textsc{Al-Bakri} 1983: vol.1, 367 – 368.

\textsuperscript{52} \textsc{Al-Samhūdi} 2001: vol. 3,170.

\textsuperscript{53} \textsc{Ṣābri} 2004: vol.4, 817.

\textsuperscript{54} \textsc{Al-Ḥarbi} 1969: 457–458; \textsc{Al-Samhūdi} 2001: vol.1, 483– 484; \textsc{Al-Bakri} 1983: vol.1, 367–368; \textsc{Al-Balāḍī} 1973: 171.

\textsuperscript{55} \textsc{Al-Samhūdi} 2001: vol.2, 484; \textsc{Ṣābri} 2004: vol.4, 817.

\textsuperscript{56} \textsc{Al-Fadl} 1993: 133.

\textsuperscript{57} \textsc{Al-Balāḍī} 1973: 174–175; \textsc{Al-Fadl} 1993: 133; \textsc{Al-Ḥarīthi} 2003: 142.

\textsuperscript{58} \textsc{Al-Balāḍī} 1973: 173–174.
Palace should be sloping. In doing so, they were keen that courses should be coherently arranged with each other. In truth, this architectural style was so advanced that it was never seen before in the early Islamic period.

**The Palace’s Exterior Fence**

The remains of the Palace indicate that it had a fence surrounding it from three sides: north, west and south. As for the eastern side, it is the exterior façade of the Palace that overlooks the valley. As for the main door of the Palace, it is found in the middle of the western fence due to the existence of stairs at the very beginning of the entrance leading to the inside of the yard.

**Building of the Palace**

The current architectural description of the Palace unveils that it is a square building, with an open, interior yard surrounded by four walls. As for the Palace’s eastern fence, it was not affected by the time conditions and thus remained intact. On the other hand, parts of the southern and northern fences, particularly from the western side, were destroyed. As for the western fence, nothing was found of it but the debris of the stones from which it was made.

**The Palace’s Exterior Façades**

Alia Palace is characterized by the existence of three exterior façades, with each of them measuring 29 m. As for the Palace walls, they measure 8 m high and 2 m wide. The four exterior corners of the Palace are supported by four cylindrical towers: one in each corner. These towers serve as a strong hinge that connects the exterior walls of the Palace. Six semi-circular towers are found in the exterior walls, with two towers on each wall. As for the distance between these towers, they range between 4, 5, and 7 m, while the width of each of them is 2.44 cm.

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THE ROUTE TO THE HOLY CITY AL-JUHFAH AS AN EXAMPLE

[FIGURE 3]. The remains of the western façade of the Palace © Taken by authors

[FIGURE 4]. The southern façade of the Palace © Taken by authors

[FIGURE 5]. Fence of the southern façade of the Palace © Taken by authors
The Palace’s Interior Walls

The architecture of the Palace’s interior walls is different from that of the exterior ones. They are of two parts:

A. The Lower Part: It is 3 m high and 2 m wide. It is made up of strong foundations upon which the rest of the Palace’s walls are established. This part is built from big, basalt courses.

B. The Upper Part: It starts from the very top of the lower part to the end of the fence. The walls are 90 cm back from the exact position of the fence, which formed rectangular shapes. With each of these shapes (shoulders) measuring 90 cm wide, they served as internal supporters of the fence. Besides, they gave a beautiful, architectural scene. These shoulders are topped with arches, with the two legs of each of which (i.e. the arches) come out upward forming thereby a coherent unit of arches to carry the roof of the Palace. In each of the arches’ two legs, there are two square holes wherein wooden strings were placed, to reinforce the cohesion and strength of the arches.

[FIGURE 6]. The interior, lower fence of the Palace © Taken by authors

[FIGURE 7]. Supporters of the interior walls of the Palace © Taken by authors
Design of the Palace’s Inside Area

The description of the interior part of the Palace along with the plan tells that it did not include any interior walls indicating the existence of rooms. However, it might be that the interior part of the Palace would have several rooms and due to the fact that the Palace was left and the region was destroyed, the interior walls along with the ceiling were destroyed. Architectural studies stress that no buildings had even been found inside the Palace, which requires more study and investigation.\(^{60}\)

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\(^{60}\) ALSUBAIE 2018: 119-121.
The walls heights along with the end of arches indicate that the Palace of al-Juhfah was a one-floor building; an opinion that goes against the common opinion that it was a multi-floor palace, an opinion espoused by the fact that the Palace contained stairs for ascending and descending.\(^{61}\)

Scholars’ difference on the architectural origins of the Alia Palace may be crystal clear in the fact that there was controversy among them on what to call it, with some of them believing that it should be called «Palace» and others calling it «fortress». AlSubaie, on his part, pointed out that the original naming is «palace» – a naming frequently used to refer to the fortresses built during the Umayyad Dynasty, and particularly in the 2nd AH/8th century AD.\(^{62}\)

Drawing a comparison between the Alia Palace and those built in the Umayyad Dynasty including the Palace of Ḥirrāna\(^{63}\) and the Palace of al-Ḥir al-Šarqi\(^{64}\) indicates the architectural planning of the aforementioned two palaces are similar to that of al-Juhfah.

Besides, they all were built from the very rocks found in the local environment. The width of the walls of the Palace of al-Juhfah is somewhat similar to that of the two palaces in question, with the walls of the first measuring 2 m wide while the others measuring 2.30 cm.\(^{65}\)

Based also on comparison, AlSubaie opines that the Palace was often built during the Caliphate of Mu‘awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyān, a point stressed by poet ʿAmr Ibn Abi Rabīʿa al-Makhzūmī (23–93 AH/644–711 AD) in his poem on the Fortress of al-Juhfah.\(^{66}\)

Nāṣir al-Ḥārithī, on his part, believes that the Alia Palace is dated back to the Abbasid Dynasty, since the cities adopted the early Abbasid style\(^{67}\) characterized with the new architectural planning, especially the careful selection of sites and the equipment with protection styles that were not known in the Umayyad Dynasty including providing cities with two fences separated with a narrow ditch and establishment of towers – all of which are features found in the al-Ukhaidir Fortress dated back to the Abbasid Dynasty.\(^{68}\)

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\(^{62}\) ALSUBAIE 2018: 103.

\(^{63}\) Qaṣr Ḥirrāna (Palace of Ḥirrāna) was established by the Umayyad Caliphate al-Walīd Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik in 92 AH/710 AD, SĀFFĪ 2002: 187.

\(^{64}\) Qaṣr al-Ḥir al-Šarqi (al-Ḥir al-Šarqi Palace) was built in Umayyad dynasty in 110 AH/728 AD. KIRIZWĪL 1984: 155, 163.


\(^{66}\) ALSUBAIE 2018: 143.

\(^{67}\) AL-FADL 1993: 133; AL-ḤĀRĪTHĪ 2003: 142.

\(^{68}\) AL-PĀSHA 1999: vol.1, 244; SĀFFĪ 2002: 26.
Excavations in the northern side neighboring the exterior fence of the Palace unveil the existence of the building remains of a room that is more likely to be of the Palace’s oven, a viewpoint stressed by two matters: first, the existence of large quantities of big, red bricks whose width measures 8 cm; it seems that these bricks constituted the floor of the oven fixed in the oven walls where cooking pots were put and bread were cooked; the second, the existence of an oven in the northern line outside the fence, which is the suitable line for the existence of the oven as it is away from the direction of wind; that is, it is against the southern and northern currents of air.

**Ponds and Wells**

Caring about the route of Hajj led rulers to give due care to the Miqāt of al-Juḥfah. In this regard, Caliph Muʿāwiyah Ibn Abī Sufyān ordered several wells in al-Juḥfah\(^69\) to be dug in 44 AH / 644 AD. In the same vein, Caliph al-Walīd Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ordered his governor over the Medina of the Prophet (PBUH), ʿUmr Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, to fix all the routes of Hajj and to dig new wells in 88 AH / 707 AD\(^70\). The location of al-Juḥfah is characterized with the fact that water easily gathers in it, which is why a pond along with many wells of different sizes was found therein\(^71\).

The research team, through field visits to the site of al-Juḥfah, unearthed a group of wells scattered inside the place, with some of them covered under the sand and dust and the some other still containing the remains of old water. Besides, there are some wells whose water is still potable and that are still working up till now. Discovered wells were of different levels above the surface of the earth, with the height of their fences ranging from 70 cm to 1.5 m.

As far as the architectural description of these wells is concerned, some of them were built from the basalt and limestone covered with a layer of mortar – rocks found in the surrounding area. With all of them are of a cylindrical shape, the width of the fences of these wells ranged from 40 to 50 cm, maintaining that such a width might have allowed people to stand on the wall when taking water, so that none would fall into it.

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The old wells and springs whose remains are still found up till now, along with some new springs in the region of al-Juḥfah might be described as follows:

1. An old well lying in the northeast side of the Masjid al-Miqāṭ (about 600 m away from the Masjid). Al-Fadlī states that he witnessed shepherds and the Arabs of the region drinking from it\(^{72}\), whereas our guide, who is from the region inhabitants, told us that the well was covered many years ago, an opinion viewed to be the most authentic as seen from the following picture:

\(^{72}\) AL-FADL 1993: 133.
2. 1.5 km away from the north of the Masjid al-Miqāt, we have the following:
- Remains of an old spring buried underneath the ground, with its diameter measuring 3.5 meters. As for the mouth of spring, its width measures about 80 cm. Eyewitnesses from the region inhabitants say that it (i.e. the spring) was found until recently and that they witnessed water gushing forth from it. As for the date of digging of this spring, it is not exactly known. The following is a picture for a broken part of its mouth:

![Figure 14](image)

[FIGURE 14]. A new well dug 15 years ago © Taken by authors

- A new well dug 15 years ago, with water-raising equipment fixed on it. As for the water taken out from the well, they are stored in four pools:
  * Two pools raising about 90 cm from the surface of the earth.
  * Two pools fixed on 130-cm pillars and topped with a 1.5-m pool as shown from the following picture: -

3. In the north of the abovementioned wells, and particularly inside the valley of al-Juhfah, there are remains of water channels (al-Kharaz) buried underneath the ground and sloping from nearby mountains towards the previous wells as well as a third one found in the same site. We did not find any beads therein since the soil has been frequently degraded along with the existence of many car routes; however, some of their remains remained intact.

2- Monumental Remains found in the Region

During the field visits paid to the site of al-Juhfah, many remains including pottery, ceramics and glass were found therein. This is the nature of the historical sites in the Islamic era, let alone the fact that al-Juhfah was the Miqāt of the people of Egypt and al-Šām as well as he who passed by it from the pilgrims of other countries. It is natural that many items would unintentionally be lost from these caravans or that their
members themselves would leave something behind in the Miqāt and the region surrounding it. The pottery-made remains indicate that they were specialized for containing water for washing and other purposes. This is espoused by the fact that the fragmented pieces of these pots, when collected together, would form pots with wide bases and mouths. One piece of ceramics tells that the mouth of a (particular) pot was an external one to hold the pot from it when full of water. Most of the discovered remains are simple and free from any inscriptions (in case they were not affected by climatic conditions). The width of the pottery-made remains, it ranges from 2 to 3 cm. Besides, there are pottery-made fragments whose width is not more than 1 cm. These many pieces of imperfect shapes might be broken from their pots because of the thinness of these pots, which is why it is difficult to re-shape the fragments scattered from them.

Islamic-style Pottery and Ceramics

Many pottery-made and ceramics-based items fashioned as per the Islamic style were manufactured. Making pottery is actually of the ancient industries man learned about since his very emergence on the surface of the earth.\textsuperscript{73}

Field visits to the site of \textit{al-Juhfah} enable researchers to unearth a lot of pottery-made pieces of various sizes, shapes and colors scattered here and there, which may be the result of the big diversity \textit{al-Juhfah} experienced throughout its long history. Pilgrims carried with them hundreds of thousands of pottery-made pots to use during their journey to Mecca. The list of these items includes pots and glasses maintaining that these items were used for serving food and water.

Pottery-made water bottles or what is known as the pots of pilgrims manufactured by the pottery factories in the Islamic era might be the most famous of these pottery-made items. They were known for their small size, so people could carry them and move with them from one place to another.\textsuperscript{74}

The pottery-made items found in \textit{al-Juhfah} are of various sizes and colors, stressing that the natural color of pottery was the most prominent one. As for the inscriptions engraved on them, they were either geometric decorations consisting of vertical, horizontal and curved lines or simple floral decorations taken from nature, particularly the different leaves of plants.

\textsuperscript{73} MARZŪQ 1965: 126.
\textsuperscript{74} MARZŪQ 1965: 127.
Many fragments of ceramics were found in *al-Juhfah*\(^75\), since Islamic-fashioned ceramics were the most advanced products of the Islamic civilization\(^76\). The unearthed discoveries show that the fragments of ceramics found in the very location of *al-Juhfah* are known for their delicacy, since they show that these were pieces of ceramics-made dishes. Besides, they show the white, off-white and light green were the most used colors in these dishes. Discoveries furthermore tell that these pieces are dated back to the early ceramics for which the ‘Abbasid Dynasty was known. They included a few decorations and were mostly painted with one color\(^77\). This collection of early ceramics dates back to the 3\(^{rd}\)–5\(^{th}\) century AH/9\(^{th}\)-11\(^{th}\) century AD\(^78\).

\(^{75}\) *Al-Ḥārithi* 2003: 142.
\(^{76}\) Māhir 2005: 35.
\(^{77}\) Hasan 1948: 266.
\(^{78}\) Alsubaie 2018: 316.
Excavations in *al-Juḥfah* unearthed the existence of a golden dinar dated back to the Aghlabīds and particularly the time of Abū Muḥammad Zyādah al-Aghlab (201 – 223 AH/817-838 AD), with the year 206 AH/821 AD inscribed on it. It is normal to find such coins in the *al-Juḥfah* region, since many pilgrims, who used to carry money with them to spend on their affairs, passed by it while on their way to Holy Mecca that served as a flourishing commercial center that it was the most important center for trade in the Arabian Peninsula. Besides, it was an active market that used to receive all the commodities coming from India through the harbors of Yemen. Not only that, but Mecca was also of cardinal importance for the trade of al-Šām as manifested in the two journeys of winter and summer.

If we truly apply the theory that Islamic coins are considered an important source of Islamic history, relying meanwhile on authentic, valuable documents as well as considering coins as a mirror truly reflecting the conditions of the era when they were minted, we would identify all the conditions of the then state, be they political, religious, doctrinal, economic, social.

At this point, we reach a very important conclusion that the site of *al-Juḥfah* is considered safe for many coins dating back to different Islamic dynasties. It is believed that more excavations would unearth many coins in the imminent offing.

**3- Monumental Inscriptions**

*Al-Juḥfah* contains several monumental inscriptions and writings. The inscription of the tombstone published by Aḥmad al-Zailaṭi may be the most important on both the artistic and historical sides. In one of his studies, he examined two *kufi* inscriptions from the region of *al-Juḥfah* and found 4 km away from it. These two inscriptions were

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79 The coins of the *Aghlabīds* were minted during the *Aghlabīds* dynasty. As for the published piece, it is dated back to the second phase of minting during this very era. ZĀMĀBĀWR 1980: 106; IBN QURBAH 1993: 120.
80 YŪSUF 2015: 23.
written on black basalt. As for the first inscription, it is dated back to the late 3rd AH/9th century AD, particularly 280 AH/890 AD\textsuperscript{82}.

Careful examination and review of these two \textit{kufi} inscriptions indicate the following:

1. They belong to two people who died in the late 3rd AH/9th century AD, a point stressing the fact that life continued in \textit{al-Juḥfah} during that very period.
2. The black basalt used in the two inscriptions is likely to be cut off from the region of \textit{al-Juḥfah} where mountains containing this kind of rock are common there.
3. The use of \textit{kufi} inscriptions was very advanced and accurate, which stresses the fact that there was a school for the calligraphers who lived in this region.

\textbf{[Figure 18]. Two \textit{kufi} inscriptions from \textit{al-Juḥfah}. ÁL ‘AQIL AL-ZAYLA’ 2018: 315 – 317}

As for the technical description of these two inscriptions, it includes several elements:

1. The outside shape: The two tombs are of vertical and rectangular shape.
2. The inscription: These inscriptions, which are but invocations engraved on the tomb, are an extension to the \textit{kufi}-\textit{Hijāzi} ones.
3. Decorations: Floral decorations represented the perfect picture on the two tombs; they took several forms: a three-leaf decoration, semi-fan palms, a four-leaf small flower and plant branches – all of which took several positions inside the two tombs.

On Thursday 3 Rabī‘ I 1442 AH/22 October 2020 AD, the research team managed also to unearth other inscriptions in the village covered underneath the earth opposite the Alia Palace. The team furthermore discovered an inscription on basalt upon which the following four-line text was written,

\begin{quote}
\textit{Lā Ilāha Illā Allah} (there is no god but Allah) \\
\textit{Al-Haqqu al-Mubīn} (all-Truth) \\
\textit{Allahu Śalla} (Allah has sent His Peace ...) \\
\textit{‘Alā Tāb} ...
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{82} ÁL-ZAILA’I 2018: 315 – 317.
This inscription is not far away from another one reading: «Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd Allah» which is engraved on a basalt rock on a rocky hill. Besides, the covered village contains several unreadable writings, symbols and inscriptions. In truth, the diversity of inscriptions, writings and symbols found in al-Juhfah from the ancient times to the Islamic era tell that the village was a beacon for human civilization.

III. CONCLUSION

Al-Juhfah’s status is deeply rooted in history. Prophets passed by it and it has inscriptions dated back to prehistoric times. Under Islam, the role of al-Juhfah was not restricted to the fact that it is the Miqāt for Hajj only; rather it exceeded it to play significant political and military roles. The history of al-Juhfah shows that it was a flourishing village with tall, beautiful buildings under Islam. However, it was buried due to environmental factors including floods and dunes.

Out of the fact that it is the Miqāt defined by Sharia, pilgrims, particularly scholars and those from Morocco, who used to pass by al-Juhfah during the Ottoman Dynasty. They did not suffice with passing by Rabigh. Several features of social life were once found in al-Juhfah during the Ottoman Dynasty, especially during the Hajj season. The Saudi government cares about the Miqāt of al-Juhfah in a manner that many views as a revival of the Miqāt, a matter seen clearly in the architecture, facilities and services provided in the Miqāt. Al-Juhfah is of cardinal importance on the archeological level, since it contains monumental, historic buildings. There are monumental remains of the city under the sand. Many monumental inscriptions were found in al-Juhfah including al-Musnad and kufi calligraphies.

The research recommends Approving the site of al-Juhfah, Miqāt as well as the other spatial Miqāts of Hajj on the KSA’s official maps in addition to carrying out excavation works all over al-Juhfah to unveil its remains and to resist any excavations not organized by law.
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DOI: 10.21608/jguaa2.2021.84661.1070. 166 JGUA2 vol.7/1, 2022: 142-168
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