

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

BY

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[AR]

الطريق إلى المدينة المقدسة ... الجحفة أنموذجاً

كانت قرية الجحفة ولا تزال مركز حضارى عبر تاريخ البشرية. ولأنها مناسبة للحياة فقد أقامت فيها كثير من الدول عبر تاريخها الطويل والقديم. ومع ظهور الإسلام أصبحت الجحفة أكثر أهمية حيث كانت بمثابة محطة رئيسية للحجاج وكان الحجاج المسلمون يمررون بها في طريقهم إلى الأراضى والمشاعر المقدسة، حاملين معهم الطعام والماء وغير ذلك من الإحتياجات، وتشتهر الجحفة أيضاً بآثارها التاريخية مثل قصر عالية 19- يعرب الباحثون عن امتنانهم لعمادة البحث العلمى بجامعة أم القرى لدعمها وتمويل هذه الدراسة بمنحة رقم ( .ومسجد الزور وغير ذلك HUM-4- 9-0001جرانها). والتي ساهمت بشكل فعال فى إجرائها

[EN] 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 *Mīqāt* for *Hajj*, and that is why Muslim pilgrims were obliged to pass by it, carrying with them food, water and other items. *al-Juhfa* is further known for its historical remains like the Alia Palace and *Masjid* of ʿAzzūr. The researchers express their gratitude to the Deanship of Scientific Research, Umm al-Qura University for supporting and funding this paper under scholarship N<sup>o</sup>. (19-HUM-4- 9-0001), which effectively contributed to conducting it.

**KEYWORDS:** *Al-Juhfah*, Alia Palace, wells, springs, coins, monumental, *Mīqāt*, Holy Mecca, Medina of the Prophet.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The village of *al-Juhfah* 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 *Hijāz*'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-Juhfah*, it becomes clear that it belongs to *Tihamah* of *Hijāz*, since it is only 13.08 km above sea level. Besides, it is geographically represented the western border of the *Hijāz* region that separates it (*al-Juhfah*) from mount *Tayy*<sup>1</sup>.

Today, *al-Juhfah* 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 *Mīqāt al-Juhfah* (the place at which pilgrims shall make *Ihrām* to *Hajj*), *Alia Palace*, *Ghadīr Khumm* (the brooklet of *Khumm*), *Wādī al-Kharār* (the Valley of *al-Kharār*) and the *Harrah* of 'Azzūr.

With most of its land a plain area, *al-Juhfah* 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 *Ghadīr Khumm* is known as *al-Halaq*. As for its area extending along *al-Juhfah*, it is known as *Wādī al-Ghāiḍah*<sup>2</sup>. 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-Juhfah* to lose many of its water resources including its very wells, springs and brooklets (with *Ghadīr 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-Juhfah* and the Valley of *Harshā*<sup>3</sup>, as follows: *Wādī Ghazāl*, *Wādī Dū Dūrān* and *Wādī Kulaiyah*. In truth, *al-Juhfah* enjoys this very distinctive geographical feature, since it formulates the western border of *Tihamah* of *al-Hijāz*<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> ABŪ AL-FIDĀ 1850: 24; AL-BASSĀM 1998: vol.9: 141; AL-NAWAWI 2017: vol.8, 227; AL-ALŪSĪ 2009: vol.1, 187, 199; AL-BAKRĪ 1983: vol.1, 9– 11; JUNAYDEL n.d: 139; IBN ḤAWQAL 1992: 40.

<sup>2</sup> AL-BALĀDĪ 1973.

<sup>3</sup> The Arabic word *Harshā* is a valley lying in the route to Mecca in the proximity of *al-Juhfah*. 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-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.5, 397; SHARRĀB n.d: 294.

<sup>4</sup> AL-SULAMI 1999: 23; IBN BAṬṬŪṬA 1987: vol.1, 142- 143; AL-SAMHŪDĪ 1998: vol.2, 754.

Even though *al-Juhfah* today experiences scarcity of plants, it was, still has, various kinds of desert plants including *al-Markh*<sup>5</sup>, *al-Arāk*<sup>6</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, whereas Islamic historical reports reveal the fact that horses were also found therein a long time ago<sup>7</sup>.

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*<sup>8</sup>. 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*»<sup>9</sup>. 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<sup>10</sup>, 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*<sup>11</sup> 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 *Qadīd*<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> *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-ʿArab* IBN MANZŪR says: «With no leaves and thorns, *al-Markh* has thin stems that grow within groups». IBN MANZŪR 1993: vol.9, 163; *AL-MUʿĀM AL-WAṢĪT* 2004: 861.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Arāk* 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. *MUʿJAMUʿ AL-SHĀB* 2008: 26–30; *AL-MUʿĀM AL-WAṢĪT* 2004: 14.

<sup>7</sup> IBN HAWQAL 1992: 40; AL-SULAMI 1999: 23; AL-BAKRI 1983: vol.2, 368.

<sup>8</sup> *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-Suqyā*, and may be also written as *Luhya Jamal*. AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.5, 15; AL-BALĀDI 2010: 1467–1468; SHARRĀB 1991: 92, 171, 235.

<sup>9</sup> IBN BAṬṬŪTAH 1987: vol.1, 142 – 143; YĀQŪT AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.2, 111; AL-ALBĀNI 2000: vol.2, 58; ABŪ AL-FIDĀ' 1850: 80; AL-BAKRI 1983: vol.2, 561; 625 & vol.3, 955, 1006 & vol.4, 1350.

<sup>10</sup> IBN HAWQAL 1992: 46.

<sup>11</sup> *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-BALĀDI 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<sup>13</sup> in the direction of Holy Mecca.
4. A route connecting *Badr*<sup>14</sup> 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'*<sup>15</sup> 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-Ṣafrā'*<sup>16</sup> 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*<sup>17</sup> leading directly to *al-Juhfah* at which people would directly head to Holy Mecca<sup>18</sup>.

Today, *al-Juhfah* is linked with other cities through some main and secondary modern roads built in the desert. For example, *Mīqātu 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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<sup>12</sup> *Qadīd* is a valley of *Tihamah of Hijāz*. It has many springs and farms. It intersects with the Mecca-Medina route along 120 km. AL-BALĀDI 2010: 1356, 1357; SHARRĀB 1991: 222.

<sup>13</sup> '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-BALĀDI 1982: 208; SHARRĀB 1991: 174, 191- 192; AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.4, 121-122.

<sup>14</sup> *Badr* is a village lying downwards in *Wādī al-Ṣafrā'* (Valley of *al-Ṣafrā'*). It is 155 km away from Medina, 310 km away from Mecca and 45 km away from *Sayfu al-Baḥr* (lit. the Sword of the Sea). AL-BALĀDI 1982: 41- 42; SHARRĀB 1991: 44; JUNAYDEL n.d.: 64-68.

<sup>15</sup> 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 *Rabīgh* is estimated by 43 km. JUNAYDIL n.d.: 17; SHARRĀB 1991: 17.

<sup>16</sup> *Wādīm al-Ṣafrā'* 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-Musayjid*, *al-Khīf* and *al-Wāsītah* (previously known as *al-Ṣafrā'*) until you leave *Badr*. AL-BALĀDI 1982: 177; SHARRĀB 1991: 159.

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

<sup>18</sup> IBN ḤAWQAL 1992: 46; AL-JUZAYRI 2002: vol.2: 56, 183; ĀL BASSĀM, *Khazānat* 1998: vol.9, 141; AL-<sup>c</sup>ABDARI 2005: 349-351; AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.2, 111; AL-MAQDISI n.d.: 103; AL-YA<sup>c</sup>QŪBI 2001.: 150, 179; IBN RUSTAH 1891: vol.7, 178.

Examining 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 Rabīgh, Yanbū<sup>c</sup> <sup>19</sup> and King <sup>c</sup>Abdullah Economic City<sup>20</sup>.

## II. ORIGIN OF AL-JUHFAH

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 <sup>c</sup>Ubail to the region and the construction works made by Yatrib Ibn Qā'inah Ibn Mahlābīl Ibn Ārim Ibn <sup>c</sup>Ubail<sup>21</sup> in *Yatrib*. Though *Mahyā'ah* – later known as *al-Juhfah* was not mentioned in these reports, Banū <sup>c</sup>Ubail's residence in the place, eventhough the *Amaliks*<sup>22</sup> 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<sup>23</sup>.

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, <sup>c</sup>Amr Ibn <sup>c</sup>Āmir Ibn Hārītah, a Yemeni King, left his home in the

<sup>19</sup> *Yanbu'* is one of the cities of *Hijāz*. It is divided into two parts, namely: *Yanbu' al-Nakhl* (*Yanbu'* of the Palm Trees) and *Yanbu' al-Bahr* (*Yanbu'* 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-JĀSIR 2006: 10–12; AL-BALĀDI 2010: vol.10, 39–40.

<sup>20</sup> King <sup>c</sup>Abdullah Economic City is a modern economic city built in during King <sup>c</sup>ABDULLAH BIN <sup>c</sup>ABD AL-<sup>c</sup>AZĪZ AL-SU<sup>c</sup>ŪD – may Allah have mercy upon him – reign. It lies in the west of KSA between the two cities of Jeddah and *Yanbu'*. <https://www.kaec.net/about-ar/?lang=ar> 5/8/2020.

<sup>21</sup> *Banū <sup>c</sup>Ubail*: Historians believe that <sup>c</sup>Ubail is from the offspring of «*Awṣ*», brother of <sup>c</sup>Ād. 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 <sup>c</sup>Ubail*) resided in a place between Mecca and Medina. AL-BALĀDHIRI 1996: vol.1, 6; MAHRĀN 2010: vol.1, 154; KAḤĀLAH 1994: vol.2, 784; <sup>c</sup>ALI 2001: vol.1, 343-344.

<sup>22</sup> *Amaliks* is a Semitic people whose lineage goes back to <sup>c</sup>Amlīq Ibn Lāwidh Ibn Iram Ibn Sām Ibn Nūḥ. Some of them dwelled in Mecca while the rest resided in *al-Šām*. The list of the *Amaliks* includes the Pharaohs, the mighty people who dwelled *al-Šām* 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.

<sup>23</sup> AL-ṬABARI 2012: vol.1, 128; AL-BAKRI 1983: vol.2, 368; AL-<sup>c</sup>ABDARI 2005: 350; AL-SAFĀRĪNI 2009: vol.1, 76; AL-NAWAWI 2017: vol.8, 227, 228; AL-JUZAYRI 2002: vol.2, 184.

land of *Kahlān*<sup>24</sup> to it after he felt that the Dam of *Marib* became fragile. A soothsayer, ʿAmr 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 *Jurhum* drove him out, and thus he moved to *al-Juhfah* and then to *Yatrib*. Besides, the tribes of *Zabīd*, known as *Zabīdu al-Ḥijāz*<sup>25</sup>, dwelled therein.

This historical significance of *al-Juhfah* 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 *tamūdī* 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 Ibn Mattā has passed by the valley of *Haršā*, which reads, «Ibn ʿAbbās 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*»<sup>26</sup>. It is known that Prophet Yūnus Ibn Mattā lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>27</sup>.

## 1- Monuments and Construction of *al-Juhfah* throughout History

Construction started in *al-Juhfah* 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<sup>28</sup>.

Besides, *al-Juhfah* is considered one of the largest *Marwāqīt* of Hajj (places at which pilgrims are obliged to make *Ihrām* for Hajj)<sup>29</sup>. *Al-Juhfah*, furthermore, continued for

<sup>24</sup> *Kahlān* is a mountain in *al-Ghail* region in *Saʿdah*. *Kahlān* are *Qaḥṭānī* tribes that dwelled Yemen. AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.4, 496; SHARRĀB 1991: 28.

<sup>25</sup> AL-BASSĀM 1999: vol.1, 36; JUNAĪDIL n.d.: 140.

<sup>26</sup> AL-BAIHAQI 1991: Nr<sup>o</sup>. 9014, vol.5: 66.

<sup>27</sup> IBN ʿARABI 1906 :vol.1, board 93.

<sup>28</sup> AL-MURJĀNI 2002: vol.1, 614.

<sup>29</sup> ALSUBAIE 2018: 57.

long an important station (on the road between Mecca and Medina). It was so organized and wide<sup>30</sup> that its monuments were found in the west of *al-Juhfah* fortress as well as the areas in its northwest and southwest.

Being a *Mīqāt* for pilgrims is one of the reasons that led to the flourish of *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 *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, *al-Šām*, Egypt and North Africa<sup>31</sup>.

*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<sup>32</sup>.

The Umayyad Dynasty witnessed the main stage of building the major cities of *al-Juhfah*, which is why historians, like Šākīr al-Kutabī, state that ʿUmar Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz was the one who built the city<sup>33</sup>.

During the ʿAbbasid Dynasty, *al-Juhfah's* flourishing was so prominent that historical resources for the 3<sup>rd</sup> AH/9<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>34</sup>.

This very point on the advancement of *al-Juhfah* during the 4<sup>th</sup> AH/10<sup>th</sup> century AD may be espoused by the description of al-Iṣṭakhri 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<sup>35</sup>.

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

<sup>30</sup> BAKR 1981: 24.

<sup>31</sup> BĪLSŪD 2009: 145.

<sup>32</sup> AL-ṬABARĪ 2012: vol.4, 69.

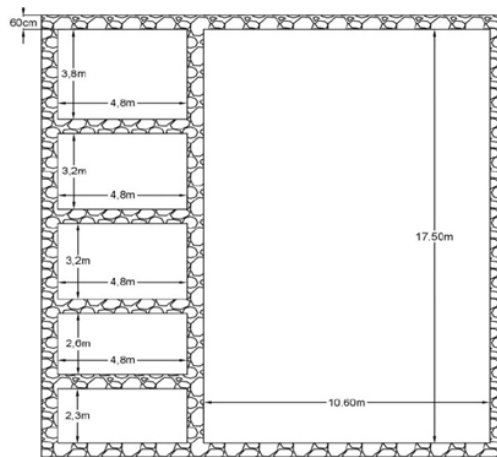
<sup>33</sup> AL-QAZWĪNĪ 2015: 564; AL-BILĀDHĀRĪ n.d.: 261–262; IBN SHĀKĪR 1973: vol.3, 134.

<sup>34</sup> IBN KHIRDĀDHĀBAH 1889: 187; AL-HAMADĀNĪ 1977: 335–339; AL-IṢṬAKHRI 1961: 21; IBN HAWQAL 1992: 33; AL-MUQQADĪSĪ 1906: 77–78.

<sup>35</sup> AL-IṢṬAKHRI 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<sup>36</sup>.

The research team, who managed to unearth the remains of the old city of *al-Juhfah*<sup>37</sup>, 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<sup>38</sup>.



[FIGURE 1]. A model of the foundations of a residential building in *Juhfa* © done by authors

## Decline Phase

Despite historical records unveiling the fact that *al-Juhfah* was an advanced village under the Umayyad Dynasty, they also record that it was ruined and spoiled in the late 11<sup>th</sup> AH/11 century AD and the early 6<sup>th</sup> AH /12 century AD<sup>39</sup>.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> AH/15<sup>th</sup> AD, *al-Juhfah* attracted the attention of voyagers that Ibn Ṭulūn<sup>40</sup> and *al-Humairī*<sup>41</sup> visited it; these two voyagers recorded that *al-Juhfah* 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

<sup>36</sup> ALSUBAIE 2018: 137.

<sup>37</sup> The research team made a number of the field visits to the site of *al-Juhfah*.

<sup>38</sup> ALSUBAIE 2018: 138-141.

<sup>39</sup> AL-BAKRI 1983: vol.1, 367; YĀQŪT AL-ḤAMAWĪ 1995: vol.2, 129; AL-<sup>c</sup>ABDARI 2005: 349.

<sup>40</sup> AL-JĀSIR 1396: vol.1, 1–12, 887.

<sup>41</sup> AL-ḤUMAYRI 1975: 156.



is that it became away from the Hajj route<sup>42</sup>, which indicates that some caravans of pilgrims permanently viewed *al-Juhfah* as the *Mīqāt of Hajj* although it no longer included any feature of civilization during the 12<sup>th</sup> AH/18<sup>th</sup> century AD.

*Al-Suwaidī* stressed the authenticity of this narration, stating that *al-Juhfah* became ruined and void of any feature of life when people took *Rabīgh* as the *Mīqāt of Hajj* since it is paralleling to it<sup>43</sup>. However, this very testimony of *al-Suwaidi* was rejected by *al-Wurthīlānī* who stressed that he witnessed the buildings of *al-Juhfah* when he visited it in the 12<sup>th</sup> AH/18<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>44</sup>.

Based on the testimonies given by the voyagers, the fact that *al-Juhfah* 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 *Rabīgh*<sup>45</sup> as their *Mīqāt* instead of it, which led to the disappearance of the village features, with nothing left from it but ruins<sup>46</sup>. 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 *al-Juhfah*<sup>47</sup>, as follows:

**First**, what is covered by dust or, in other words, what is buried under the ground?

**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.

Examination of the location of the historical *al-Juhfah* village stressed these two points, since the region is permanently exposed to wind and floods are known to usually run therein<sup>48</sup>. 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.

### Masjid *al-Juhfah*

Masjid *al-Juhfah* is the main Masjid in the village. People of Egypt and *al-Šām* used to consider it as their *Mīqāt*<sup>49</sup>. The significance of this *Mīqāt* stems from the fact that it includes three Masjids<sup>50</sup>. Historical records unveiled the fact that there was a Masjid at the very beginning of *al-Juhfah*, which is known as *Masjid the Prophet*, the *Masjid*

<sup>42</sup> AL-YŪSĪ 2018: 132.

<sup>43</sup> AL-SUWAIDI 2008: 318.

<sup>44</sup> AL-WURTHĪLĀNĪ 2008: 1, 422.

<sup>45</sup> AL-MURĀD ABĀDĪ 2004: 101.

<sup>46</sup> AL-RRSSEENI 1992: 228; AL-HINDĀWĪ 2004: 43; AL-BALĀDĪ 1973: 174.

<sup>47</sup> *AL-MUĠĠĀM AL-WAŠĪT* 2004: 344.

<sup>48</sup> ISSAM 2019.

<sup>49</sup> AL-ĤĀRITHYY 2003: 142.

<sup>50</sup> ŠABRĪ 2004: vol.4, 817.

‘Azzūr<sup>51</sup>, *Masjid Ghawrat*<sup>52</sup> or *Masjid Ghawrat*<sup>53</sup>. As for the other two mosques, one of them is known as the *Masjid al-A’imma* (*Masjid of Imāms*)<sup>54</sup> and the other is known as *Masjid Ghadīr Khumm*; it is three or four miles away from *al-Juhfah* and lies on the left of the route, and particularly on the edge of *al-Masīl* region. Qādī ‘*Iyād*, on his part, opines that *Ghadīr Khumm* is a name for a big tomb beside which there is a small river flowing into a pond. The *Masjid Ghadīr Khumm*, it is in the middle of this small river<sup>55</sup>. 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 *al-Juhfah*, al-Faḍlī highlighted the existence of a small, unroofed Masjid that was recently established beside Alia Palace<sup>56</sup>. 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.

### Alia Palace

It overlooks *Wādī al-Ghāyḍah* [Valley of al-Ghāyḍah], or the *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-Balādī stresses that the old *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 *Masjid al-Juhfah*)<sup>57</sup>.

### Palace Architecture

Built from black basalt<sup>58</sup> in the form of courses connected with gypsum, the Palace covers a total area of 841 ms<sup>2</sup>. 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

<sup>51</sup> ‘Azzūr is valley meeting with *al-Juhfah* in the north on the then route known as *al-Ṣultān*. It is today known as *al-‘Azzūrīya*. AL-BALĀDĪ 2010: 1149; ḤASAN 1991: 191; AL-ḤARBI 1969: 457–458; AL-BAKRI 1983: vol.1, 367 – 368.

<sup>52</sup> AL-SAMHŪDĪ 2001: vol. 3,170.

<sup>53</sup> ṢABRĪ 2004: vol.4, 817.

<sup>54</sup> AL-ḤARBI 1969: 457–458; AL-SAMHŪDĪ 2001: vol.1, 483– 484; AL-BAKRI 1983: vol.1, 367–368; AL-BALĀDĪ 1973: 171.

<sup>55</sup> AL-SAMHŪDĪ 2001: vol.2 , 484; ṢABRĪ 2004: vol.4, 817.

<sup>56</sup> AL-FAḌL 1993: 133.

<sup>57</sup> AL-BALĀDĪ 1973: 174–175; AL-FAḌL 1993: 133; AL-ḤARITHĪ 2003: 142.

<sup>58</sup> AL-BALĀDĪ 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<sup>59</sup> 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 m.



[FIGURE 2]. Southern and eastern façades of Alia Palace © Taken by authors

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<sup>59</sup> ALSUBAIE 2018: 102–107.



[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.



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

**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 7]. Supporters of the interior walls of the Palace © Taken by authors



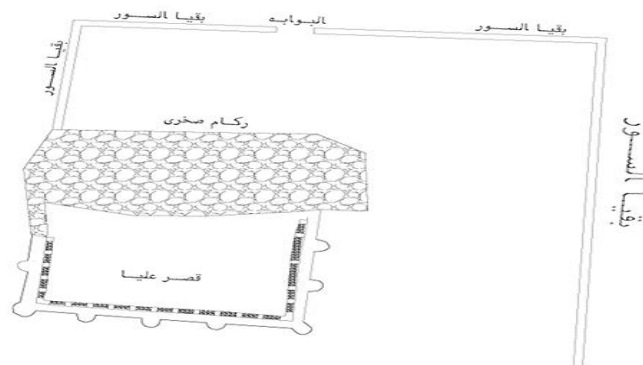
[FIGURE 8]. Openings of the wooden strings in the internal walls of the Palace © Taken by authors

### 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<sup>60</sup>.



[FIGURE 9]. A plan for the Alia Palace © Taken by authors



[FIGURE 10]. The interior yard of the Palace © Taken by authors

<sup>60</sup>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<sup>61</sup>.

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 2<sup>nd</sup> AH/8<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>62</sup>.

Drawing a comparison between the Alia Palace and those built in the Umayyad Dynasty including the Palace of *Ḥirrāna*<sup>63</sup> and the Palace of *al-Ḥīr al-Šarqī*<sup>64</sup> 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 m<sup>65</sup>.

Based also on comparison, AlSubaie opines that the Palace was often built during the Caliphate of Mu'āwīya Ibn Abī Sufyān, a point stressed by poet 'Amr Ibn Abī Rabī'ca al-Makhzūmī (23-93 AH/644–711 AD) in his poem on the Fortress of *al-Juhfah*<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> 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<sup>68</sup>.

<sup>61</sup> ALSUBAIE 2018: 102–107.

<sup>62</sup> ALSUBAIE 2018: 103.

<sup>63</sup> *Qaṣr Ḥirrāna* (Palace of *Ḥirrāna*) was established by the Umayyad Caliphate al-Walīd Ibn 'Abd al-Malik in 92 AH/710 AD, ŠĀFI'Ī 2002: 187.

<sup>64</sup> *Qaṣr al-Ḥīr al-Šarqī* (*al-Ḥīr al-Šarqī* Palace) was built in Umayyad dynasty in 110 AH/728 AD. KIRIZWİL 1984: 155, 163.

<sup>65</sup> KERIZWİL 1984: 157; GHĀLĪB 1982: 315.

<sup>66</sup> ALSUBAIE 2018: 143.

<sup>67</sup> AL-FADL 1993: 133; AL-ḤĀRĪTHI 2003: 142.

<sup>68</sup> AL-PĀSHA 1999: vol.1, 244; ŠĀFI'Ī 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 *Mīqāt of al-Juhfah*. In this regard, Caliph Mu'āwīya Ibn Abī Sufyān ordered several wells in *al-Juhfah*<sup>69</sup> to be dug in 44 AH / 644 AD. In the same vein, Caliph al-Walīd Ibn 'Abd al-Malik ordered his governor over the Medina of the Prophet (PBUH), 'Umr Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, to fix all the routes of Hajj and to dig new wells in 88 AH / 707 AD<sup>70</sup>. The location of *al-Juhfah* 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<sup>71</sup>.

The research team, through field visits to the site of *al-Juhfah*, 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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<sup>69</sup>AL-JUZAIRI 2002: vol.2, 194.

<sup>70</sup> AL-ṬABARI 2012: vol.3, 677; IBN AL-ATHĪR 2006: vol.4, 247.

<sup>71</sup> AL-ḤARBI 1969: 457–458; AL-BALĀDI 1973: 171.





[FIGURE 11]. A picture showing the width of the exterior edges of one of the wells in *al-Juhfah*.  
© Taken by authors



[FIGURE 12]. A well in the region of *al-Juhfah* © Taken by authors

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

1. An old well lying in the northeast side of the *Masjid al-Mīqāt* (about 600 m away from the *Masjid*). Al-Faḍlī states that he witnessed shepherds and the Arabs of the region drinking from it<sup>72</sup>, 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:



[FIGURE 13]. Remains of the old well © Taken by authors

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<sup>72</sup> AL-FADL 1993: 133.

2. 1.5 km away from the north of the Masjid al- Mīqāt, 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]. 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 *Mīqāt* 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 *Mīqāt* 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<sup>73</sup>.

Field visits to the site of *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 *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<sup>74</sup>.

The pottery-made items found in *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.

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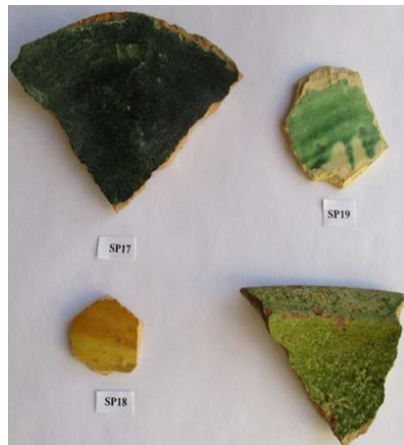
<sup>73</sup> MARZŪQ 1965: 126.

<sup>74</sup> MARZŪQ 1965: 127.



[FIGURE 15]. A collection of pottery-made and ceramics-made pieces found in the site of *al-Juhfah* © Taken by authors

Many fragments of ceramics were found in *al-Juhfah*<sup>75</sup>, since Islamic-fashioned ceramics were the most advanced products of the Islamic civilization<sup>76</sup>. 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 ʿAbbasid Dynasty was known. They included a few decorations and were mostly painted with one color<sup>77</sup>. This collection of early ceramics dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup>– 5<sup>th</sup> century AH/9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>78</sup>.



[FIGURE 16]. A collection of the early ceramics dated back to the 3<sup>rd</sup>– 5<sup>th</sup> century AH/9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century AD © taken by authors

<sup>75</sup> AL-ĤĀRITHI 2003: 142.

<sup>76</sup> MĀHIR 2005: 35.

<sup>77</sup> ḤASAN 1948: 266.

<sup>78</sup> ALSUBAIE 2018: 316.

Excavations in *al-Juhfah* unearthed the existence of a golden dinar dated back to the Aghlabīds<sup>79</sup> 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-Juhfah* 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<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup>.

At this point, we reach a very important conclusion that the site of *al-Juhfah* 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.



[FIGURE 17]. A golden dinar dated back to the Dynasty of the Aghlabīds in 206 AH. Found in *al-Juhfah*

© Taken by authors

### 3- Monumental Inscriptions

*Al-Juhfah* contains several monumental inscriptions and writings. The inscription of the tombstone published by Aḥmad al-Zailaī 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-Juhfah* and found 4 km away from it. These two inscriptions were

<sup>79</sup> 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. ZĀMABĀWR 1980: 106; ĪBN QURBAH 1993: 120.

<sup>80</sup> YŪSUF 2015: 23.

<sup>81</sup> RAMDĀN 2004: vol.1, 17–19.



written on black basalt. As for the first inscription, it is dated back to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> AH/9<sup>th</sup> century AD, particularly 280 AH/890 AD<sup>82</sup>.

Careful examination and review of these two *kufi* inscriptions indicate the following: -

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



[FIGURE 18]. Two *kufi* inscriptions from *al-Juhfah*. ĀL 'AQĪL 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 *kufi-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,

*Lā Ilāha Illā Allah* (there is no god but Allah)  
*Al-Haqqu al-Mubīn* (all-Truth)  
*Allahu Ṣalla* (Allah has sent His Peace ...)  
 'Alā Ṭab ...

<sup>82</sup> AL-ZAILA'Ī 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.



[FIGURE 19]. Old writings and symbols in *al-Juhfah* © Taken by authors

### 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 *Mīqāt* 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 *Mīqāt* 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 *Rabīgh*. 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 *Mīqāt* of *al-Juhfah* in a manner that many views as a revival of the *Mīqāt*, a matter seen clearly in the architecture, facilities and services provided in the *Mīqāt*. *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*, *Mīqāt* as well as the other spatial *Mīqāts* 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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