

GLASS FINDS FROM THE AL-WAṬA QUARTER, SAFED (ZEFAT)

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A relatively small amount of glass was found during a trial excavation conducted in the Mamluk and Ottoman residential quarter of Ḥâret al-Waṭa in Safed (modern-day Zefat), adjacent to the ancient fortress (see Cohen, this volume).¹ The corpus comprises several fragments of blown vessels and a few tooled bracelets. Most of the fragments came from debris associated with dwelling activities uncovered in Sqs 1–3.

The limited repertoire is represented by sixteen illustrated fragments: three bowls (Fig. 1:1–3), two jars or bottles (Fig. 1:4, 5), five bottles (Fig. 1:6–10) and five bracelets (Fig. 1:11–15). This corpus is characterized by blown glass of bright colors, such as turquoise, purple and deep blue, alongside glass of natural colors, as well as simple designs of trails (Nos. 2, 3, 7). A small vessel fragment made of opaque red glass was also retrieved at the site (L15, B1031; not illustrated). This assemblage of common household wares can be attributed to the Mamluk period. The bracelets probably also date to the same period, although they may be later, up to modern times.

Recent salvage excavations in the quarter yielded a larger, rich and varied glass repertoire, not yet published. Many similar vessels and bracelets were unearthed in well-dated contexts, attributed by coins to the fourteenth century. These finds suggest that the glass items were produced in a local workshop that functioned in Safed during the Mamluk period (Gorin-Rosen, forthcoming). Other parallels are known from excavations in Jerusalem (Brosh 2005), Bet She'an (Hadad 2005), Ḥama in Syria (Riis 1957) and Quseir al-Qadim in Sinai (Meyer 1992).

Bowls

One bowl is plain (Fig. 1:1) and two bowls are decorated with horizontal trails marvered into the rims (Fig. 1:2, 3). Parallels for No. 1, with a flaring rim folded inward, are uncommon, while Nos. 2, 3 represent common types of decorated bowls. The practice of applying horizontal trails around the bowl rim was very popular in Mamluk-period glass workshops. The globular form of No. 2, with its short, rounded rim, and the combination of the bowl's turquoise color and the white opaque trail on the rim, are typical of this period, e.g., at Hama (Riis 1957:65–66, Fig. 199) and Jerusalem (Brosh 2005:186–187; see there for further references). Fragment No. 3, with its overhanging, colorless rim and the two blue trails marvered into the rim edge and the joint with the body, is quite unusual.

Jars and Bottles

The rims in Fig. 1:4, 5 may be identified as belonging to cylindrical bottles or jars. The greenish fragment, No. 4, has very thick walls, while No. 5 is made of thin-walled purple glass. Such vessels are known from medieval and Late Islamic sites in Israel, e.g., a recently published large jar from Nes Ziyayona, which was probably used in the sugar industry (Gorin-Rosen 2004:62, Fig. 1:10). Other parallels, identified as large bottles rather than jars, come from the Ayyubid–Mamluk layers at Bet She'an (Hadad 2005:61, Nos. 1082, 1083, 1086; see there for references to Quseir al-Qadim and Fustāt).

The wall fragment, No. 6, with a deep, interior, horizontal fold, may belong to a bottle with a broad bulbous body. Examples of such bottles are known from collections and attributed to

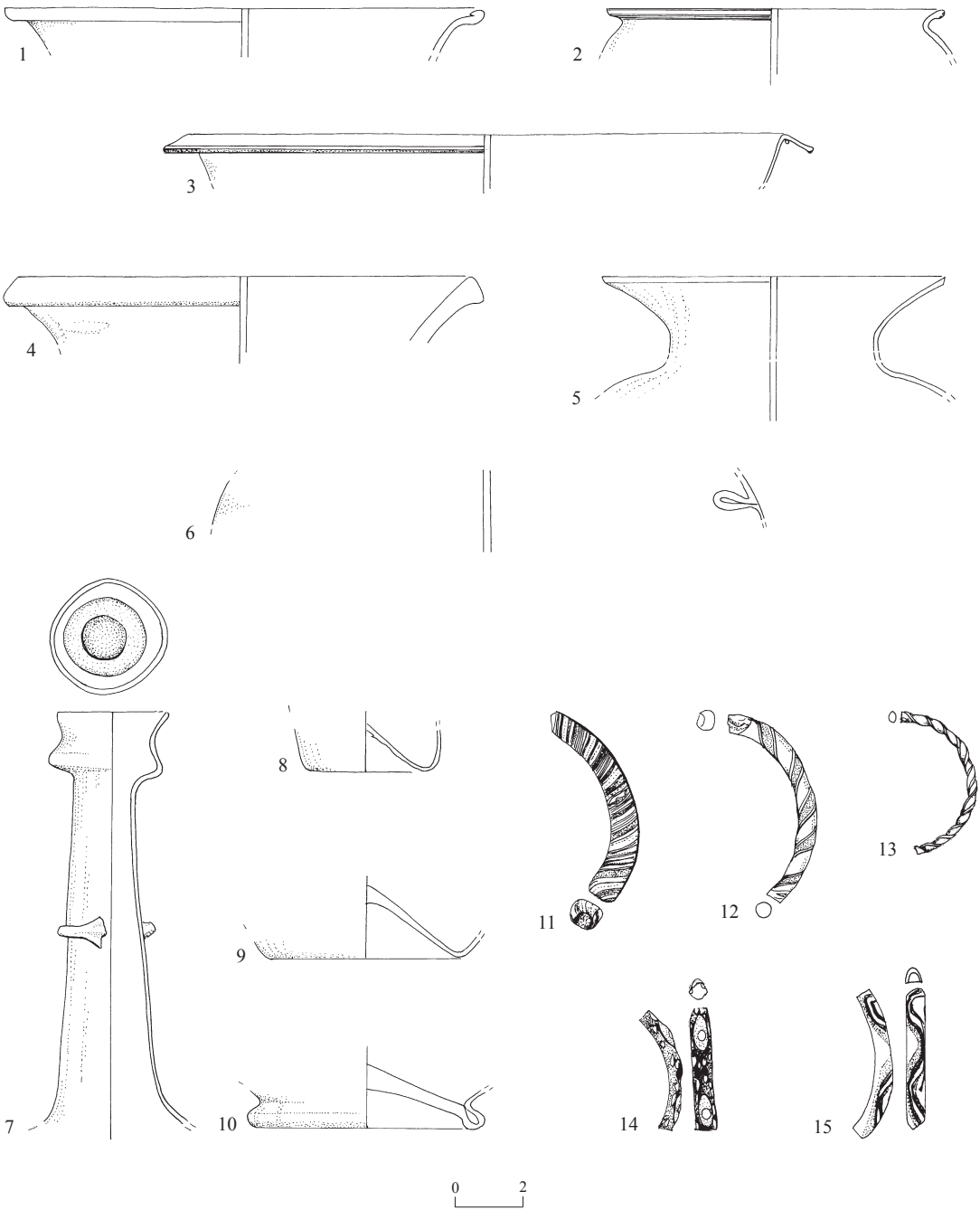


Fig. 1. The Mamluk–Ottoman glass finds.

No.	Vessel	Basket	Locus	Fragment	Color	Weathering	Notes
1	Bowl	1049	28	Small part of rim and body	Pale greenish	Black-silver crust, iridescence	
2	Bowl	1049	28	Small part of rim and body	Turquoise translucent, opaque white trail	Black-white patches, iridescence, pitting	

◀ Fig. 1

No.	Vessel	Basket	Locus	Fragment	Color	Weathering	Notes
3	Bowl	1049	28	2 mended fragments: rim and body	Colorless, 2 blue trails	Silver-black crust, iridescence, pitting	
4	Jar/bottle	1049	28	Small part of rim and mouth	Pale greenish	Black-rusty crust, iridescent film	Thick-walled
5	Bottle/jar	1037	28	2 small fragments: rim, mouth and neck	Purple	Black-silver patches, iridescent film, pitting	
6	Bottle	1056	29	Small remains of body	Colorless, yellowish tinge	Black-rusty crust, iridescent film, pitting	
7	Bottle	1033	25	Mended: rim, neck and beginning of shoulder	Colorless, greenish-blue tinge	Black-rusty crust, iridescent film, pitting	Uneven shape
8	Bottle	1032	21	Small part of body and base	Colorless	Black crust, iridescent film	Circular pontil mark: 1.8 cm
9	Bottle	1049	28	Part of base and body	Purple	Black crust, iridescent film	Circular pontil mark: 1.2 cm
10	Bottle	1048	29	Base and part of body	Deep blue	Iridescent film	Large pontil scar: 2.5 cm
11	Bracelet	1053	32	Small part	Greenish translucent, opaque yellow and white trails	Blackish crust, silver iridescence	Circular cross-section, uneven shape
12	Bracelet	1052	29	Small part, close to seam	Greenish-blue. translucent, opaque band of trails: wide red framed by two white	Silver iridescence	Uneven shape
13	Bracelet	1043	28	Small part	Colorless translucent, yellowish tinge	Silver iridescence	Circular cross-section, uneven shape
14	Bracelet	1053	32	Small part	Olive-green translucent, interior opaque white trail, opaque white, orange and green crumbs	Iridescence	Semicircular cross-section
15	Bracelet	1033	25	Small part	Deep greenish-blue translucent, opaque blue coat, band of 3 yellow, white and black trails	Silver iridescence	Triangular cross-section

twelfth-century Iran (Carboni 2001:182–183, Nos. 46a–c). Similar fragments were found at Corinth, as well as in Europe, where they were common in contexts of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries. However, in Israel they appear mostly in Crusader sites (Gorin-Rosen 1997:80–81, Fig. 2:9). Brosh suggests that the interior fold on these bottles may have served as a mark for mixing liquids, besides its decorative purpose (Brosh 2012:402, G27).

The upper part of a bottle, No. 7, and the two plain, concave bottle bases, Nos. 8 and 9, represent common Mamluk vessels. The tall-necked bottle, No. 7, is trailed and has a pronounced bulge at the mouth. Fragments of similar Late Islamic bottles, although mostly with plain necks, were found at Nes Ziyayona (Gorin-Rosen 2004:62, Fig. 1:8, see there for further references to Bet She'an and Hama, dating to the twelfth–fourteenth centuries CE). The deep blue base fragment, No. 10, with its pushed-in, hollow ring base, could also belong to a bowl or a lamp.

Bracelets

The bracelets (Fig. 1:11–15) are of common local Islamic types. Such bracelets were usually made of translucent glass canes, plain (No.

13), or more often adorned by trails, patches or prunts in bright, opaque colors. Numbers 11–13 represent twisted versions with a circular cross-section. Many similar bracelets, both plain and trailed, were found at Bet She'an, in layers dated from the Abbasid to the Mamluk periods (Hadad 2005:48, 62, Nos. 988–991, 1106, 1107, 1115, 1116). The twisted fragments may be products of the Late Hebron tradition, similar to a bracelet from Nes Ziyayona (Gorin-Rosen 2004:62–63, Fig. 1:11). Bracelet Nos. 14 and 15 belong to another type of bracelet, with an oblique, pointed cross-section, flattened on the interior. Number 14 bears a polychrome design of crumbs and prunts, while No. 15 is decorated by patches and trails marvered into its surface. Both decorations are common on pre-Ottoman bracelets (Spaer 2001: Nos. 469–473), although Nos. 14 and 15 could have been produced in the Ottoman period or in modern times.

Conclusions

This small assemblage from the Mamluk–Ottoman residential quarter contributes to our knowledge of the glassware repertoire that was in use in Islamic Safed. The glassware was probably also produced there.

NOTE

¹ I wish to thank the excavator, Michael Cohen, who suggested that I study the glass finds. Restoration

was carried out by Olga Shorr, and the drawings, by Carmen Hersch.

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