

GLASS VESSELS FROM JERUSALEM STREET, SAFED (ZEFAT)

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The salvage excavation conducted on Jerusalem Street, Safed (see Barbé, this volume) yielded several glass fragments.¹ The importance of this group lies in its well-dated context, in a Crusader–Ayyubid building, since so far most of the glass finds retrieved from excavations at Safed date to the later Mamluk period.²

Nine diagnostic pieces were chosen for this report. Six came from two superimposed loci in the southern room of Building 1 (see Barbé, this volume: Plan 1; Appendix 1): L37, a fill in Phase 4 (Nos. 2, 3, and 9), and L46, one of the destruction layers that constitute Phase 3 (Nos. 1, 4 and 6). The finds from L46 (B143) were part of a group that included also a body fragment of a mold-blown, twisted ribbed beaker (as No. 3), a few more beaker rims and the base of a bottle. One fragment came from Phase 3 (L51; No. 5) and two others, from Phase 2 (L44; No. 7) and from a modern fill (L31; No. 8).

Locus 37 was dated by coins to the late twelfth–fourteenth centuries. The earliest datable coin in this locus is a *denier* from 1178–1189, and the latest is a *fals* from 1354–1360 (another fourteenth century coin was found in this locus, but could not be more precisely dated; see Kool, this volume). Radiocarbon analysis dated L46 to 1150–1280 with a probability of 95.4%, and within a narrower range of 1180–1255 with a 68.2% probability (see Barbé, this volume).

The similarities between the glass finds and the homogeneity of the two loci point to a similar date, and they can therefore be attributed to the second half of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries.

THE FINDS

The assemblage includes three rims (Nos. 1–3) and three bases (Nos. 4–6) of beakers, and two body fragments of a well-known type called “prunted beakers” (Nos. 7, 8). Number 9 is a base of a bowl or a jug.

Beakers

The beakers belong to well-known medieval types. Their common characteristics are thin walls, flared rims, high pushed-in ring bases and colorless fabrics variously tinged. The types are distinguished by their decoration, which consists either of mold-blown—elongated or twisted—ribs (Nos. 2 and 3), or of applied prunts on the body (Nos. 7 and 8).

This group of beakers is very similar to a large group unearthed in excavations at ‘Akko in contexts that are securely dated to the thirteenth century.³ A complete plain beaker of this type, made of colorless glass, was found at Beirut where it was attributed to the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries (Jennings 1998–1999:87, 91, Fig. 1:17).

Beaker with Flared Rounded Rim.— Beaker No. 1 is a characteristic plain beaker. Similar beakers were found in Crusader assemblages dated to the twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE, e.g., Emmaus (al-Qubeibeh; Bagatti 1947: Fig. 35:1–3).

1. Two joining fragments of rim and wall (L46, B143/1). Colorless dull glass with light purple tinge, covered with black and silver weathering, iridescence and pitting. Low quality glass, very

bubbly, with small black impurities and blowing spirals. The thin, flared, rounded rim is uneven. Thin, uneven wall, slightly bulging.

Beakers with Flared Rounded Rim Decorated with Mold-Blown Ribbing on the Body (Fig. 1:2, 3).— Four diagnostic fragments of this type were found in one basket. Two are rims of very similar vessels that differ only slightly in fabric and color. The third (not illustrated) is a beaker with a flared rim and a funnel-shaped mouth, made of colorless glass, and the last one is a small body fragment with a prunt.

Two similar rims were found in a Crusader context in the excavation of the Educational Campus at 'Akko (Gorin-Rosen 2010: Fig. 12:1, 2). A similar rim was also found at

Emmaus (al-Qubeibeh), in a context dated to the twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE (Bagatti 1947: Fig. 35:5).

2. Two joining fragments of rim and wall (L37, B120/1). Colorless glass with light greenish tinge, covered with black and brown weathering, iridescence and pitting. Low quality glass, very bubbly, with large, oval, horizontal bubbles and black impurities. The flared, rounded rim is uneven, as is the thin wall. Slight remains of mold-blowing on the body.

3. Rim and wall fragment (L37, B120/2). Colorless glass covered with black, silver and brown weathering, iridescence and pitting. Narrow, oval,

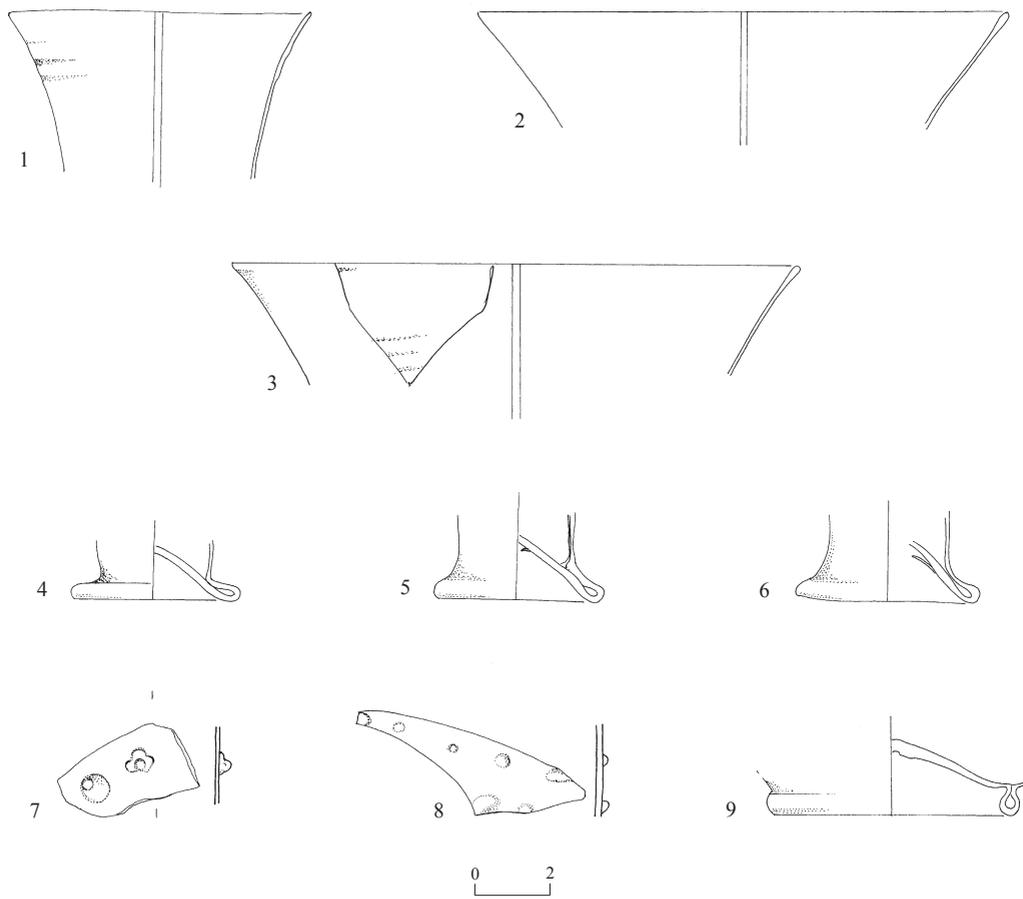


Fig. 1.

horizontal bubbles. Flared rounded rim. Thin, uneven wall. Remains of mold-blowing on the body.

Beakers with Pushed-In High Kick Ring Base.— Beakers, bowls and jugs with pushed-in tubular bases are distinguished from one another mainly on the basis of their size, proportions and the angle of the wall. Base Nos. 4–6 were identified as beakers according to their size and the high kick in their center.

Bases of this type were found in the Crusader tower at 'Akko, where they were dated to the thirteenth century (Gorin-Rosen 1997:81–82, Fig. 2:16), and at Somelaria, where remains of a Crusader glass furnace were uncovered (Weinberg 1987: Fig. 15). They were also found in the stables of the Pilgrims' Castle at 'Atlit, in contexts that were dated to the thirteenth century (Johns 1936: Fig. 18), and at Emmaus (al-Qubeibeh), in twelfth–thirteenth-century contexts (Bagatti 1947: Fig. 35:1, 2, 7).

4. Almost complete base and part of wall (L46, B143/2). Light bluish green glass covered with black and silver weathering, iridescence and pitting. Pushed-in ring base, with a high kick off-center, and a large pontil scar (diam. 1.2 cm). Upright thin wall.

5. Complete base and part of wall (L5, B201). Colorless glass, with light green tinge, covered with black and silver weathering, iridescence and pitting. Pushed-in ring base, with high kick off-center, and a large pontil scar preserving traces of the pontil (diam. 1.2 cm). Upright thin wall.

6. Two joining fragments of base and wall (L4, B143/3). Colorless dull glass with light grayish tinge, covered with black weathering, iridescence and pitting. Bubbly glass, with small and medium bubbles. Pushed-in ring base with high kick, broken at the center. Remains of scar preserving traces of the pontil. Upright thin wall.

Prunted Beakers.— Beakers with applied-prunt decoration are the most characteristic glass vessels of the Crusader period in Israel. Usually, they have a flared rounded rim, and a

wide, open mouth with an applied horizontal trail at the transition from the mouth to the body. The cylindrical body, which may be short and squat or tall and narrow, is decorated with rows of prunts, usually uneven. Most of the bases were formed by an applied trail wound around a pushed-in bottom.

Fragments of prunted beakers were found in the Courthouse Site at 'Akko (Gorin-Rosen 1997:82–84, Fig. 2:20–26; and see there for reconstruction of the type and parallels to Somelaria, Monfort, Bet She'an and Jaffa) and in the bathhouse site there (Gorin-Rosen 2013:109–110, Fig. 1:3). Fragments of such beakers were found in the Crusader castle of Monfort (Whitehouse 2005:191, Color Plate 42), where most of the finds date to the period between 1226 and 1271, and were probably used by the Teutonic Knights. A single beaker was found in the Crusader tower at Tel Yoqne'am (Gorin-Rosen 2005: Fig. 7.2:14).

Two very small body fragments of prunted beakers were found at Safed. Fragment No. 7, with small pointed prunts is similar to the main group discussed above. In contrast, fragment No. 8 has uneven, small, rounded prunts, and is similar to beakers with a horizontal band of prunts around the middle of the body that were found at Ḥama, where they were dated, after Lamm, to the twelfth–thirteenth centuries, or at the latest, to around 1300 CE (Riis 1957:57–58, Fig. 157–160).

7. Small body fragment, with two prunts (L44, B141). Colorless glass covered with black and silver weathering, iridescence and pitting. Good quality fabric with small bubbles. One of the prunts is unusual, being shaped as a flower at its base.

8. Small body fragment with prunts (L31, B117). Colorless glass with black weathering (removed), iridescence and pitting. Bubbly glass. Thick wall with uneven small prunts.

Bowl or Jug with Pushed-In Base.— This type of base may belong to a bowl, a bottle or a jug. A similar base, made of clear glass, was found

in Phase C of the Red Tower, which dates from the late twelfth century up to the destruction in about 1265 (Pringle 1986:160–162, Fig. 53:21; see there for references to a bottle from Montfort and a bowl from Ḥama).

9. Half a base (L37, B120/3). Colorless glass, with black and rust-color weathering, iridescence and pitting. Low quality glass, with small and medium bubbles. Pushed-in ring base with a crude scar retaining remains of the pontil (diam. 1.4 cm).

SUMMARY

The glass assemblage from Jerusalem Street, Safed, reflects a tradition common in medieval Europe of using glass vessels predominantly for drinking. Beakers dominate the assemblages, accompanied by bottles and flasks. A similar composition was found in the Crusader-period glass assemblage from Area A of the Courthouse Site at ‘Akko, which consists mainly of beakers, bottles and jugs

(Gorin-Rosen 1997:75). This phenomenon has also been discussed in relation to various Italian medieval glass assemblages, e.g., the study of Poggio Imperiale in Tuscany (modern day Poggibonsi; Mendera 1996), where beakers are the predominant type in assemblages of the twelfth–thirteenth centuries (57.47%), with sporadic finds of cups (2.29%) and goblets (1.14%). Similarly, in the fourteenth-century assemblages at Poggio, beakers account for 47.72% of the glass fragments (Mendera 1996:311). In both periods, the main types of beakers are—as in Safed—plain, ribbed and pruned, a composition that reflects the local production of Tuscany in the medieval period.

This small group of glass vessels from Jerusalem Street is the first to be published from Crusader-period Safed. In spite of its small size, it can be said to have the same composition as large assemblages of the period—published and unpublished—from sites such as ‘Akko, Montfort and Jaffa.⁴

NOTES

¹ I wish to thank the excavator, Hervé Barbé, for inviting me to publish these fragments. Thanks are also due to Olga Shorr, who restored the fragments, and to Carmen Hersh who drew them.

² Mamluk-period glass was found in two salvage excavations of the Mamluk settlement at al-Waṭa (Katsnelson 2014; and an unpublished excavation by Amos and Getzov—the glass was studied by the author) and in the excavations of Safed Castle (excavated by Barbé—the glass was studied by Natalya Katsnelson).

³ The excavation of the Hospitaller compound at ‘Akko was conducted by Eliezer Stern (Gorin-Rosen, in prep.) and that of the Knights’ Hotel, by Danny Syon and Ayelet Tatcher (Syon and Tatcher

2000). I wish to thank them for asking me to publish the glass finds and for the permission to mention the data prior to the publication of the final report.

⁴ Since this article was submitted, a crusader assemblage, dating to the destruction of Arsur Castle (Apollonia-Arsuf) in April 1265 and including plain beakers similar to those from Safed, was published (Jackson-Tal and Tal 2013: Fig. 9:5–7). The excavators note that “about 50 percent of the assemblage is devoted to pouring and drinking vessels, of which the bottles, jugs and beakers are predominant” (Jackson-Tal and Tal 2013:89, Fig. 4a). This assemblage supports our finds, and sheds light on the use of these glass vessels by the Crusader knights until their last days in the country.

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