

ROMAN BURIAL CAVES AT I'BILLIN

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I'billin is located in the lower Galilee, near Shefar'am, on the Roman road that linked 'Akko in the west to the Bet Neṭofa Valley in the east. In 1984, during construction work in the yard of a private house in the village of I'billin, a bulldozer exposed a complex of three burial caves (map ref. 2185/7478), necessitating a salvage excavation.¹ The caves (A–C) yielded a number of coffins and ossuaries, and hundreds of artifacts, among them 300 lamps and many glass vessels, including a kohl bottle still containing the original material. These finds date most of the burials to the first–mid-third centuries CE, and a few to the mid-third–fourth centuries CE. Although two of the caves (A and C) had been looted, whole vessels remained.

HISTORY OF RESEARCH

Surveys and excavations have been conducted in the vicinity of I'billin over the last 40 years. The village was first surveyed in the late 1950s when it began to extend down into the valley, and excavations were conducted at that time in the yards of some of the houses (Fig. 1).

Previous excavations yielded burial caves dated to the Roman and Byzantine periods, all of which had been robbed in antiquity. One such cave was excavated by Ze'ev Yeivin in 1960, dated to the mid-first–mid-second centuries CE (Feig 1999). Another burial cave was discovered on the western slope of the village and excavated by Fakhri Hasson and Yehuda Ben-Yosef in 1967.² This cave consisted of a standing pit with three arcosolia, each containing six burial troughs. It was entered from the north via three steps; a round sealing stone was found near the entrance,

although not *in situ*. An additional cave was excavated in 1994 by Danny Syon (1997). A hiding complex, also dated to the Roman and Byzantine periods, was excavated by Abdullah Muqari in 1992.³ In 1996, the area at the foot of the hill was excavated by Edna J. Stern, yielding Hellenistic and Roman remains, as well as an unfinished Crusader public building.⁴

On top of the hill, a Crusader church was found within the village, under the current church. Traces of the city walls and part of a tower of a Crusader castle, erected here to protect the area between 'Akko and the lower Galilee, are visible. These remains, however, are very fragmentary.

In 2001, a salvage excavation by R. Abu Raya, 50 m south of the Greek Orthodox church, unearthed the remains of a Byzantine structure,

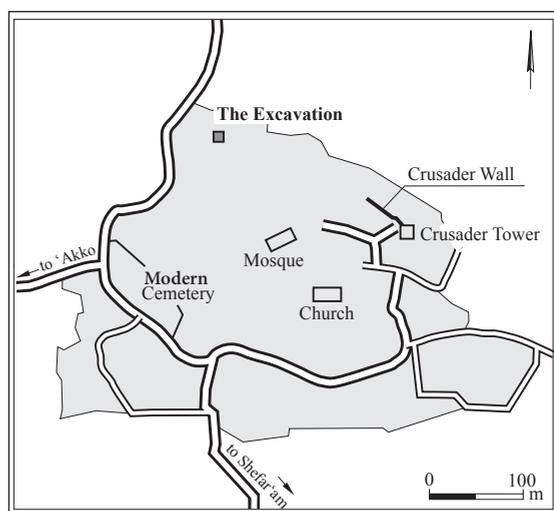


Fig. 1. Various excavations at I'billin.

above which is an Ottoman agricultural terrace (Abu-Raya 2008a).

At the top of the hill, c. 15 m south of the Greek Orthodox church, is a sacred compound dedicated to a revered local nineteenth-century figure, Mariam Baouardy. Around it, in a trial excavation in 2003, Abu-Raya discovered remains of structures and finds from the Roman to the Ottoman periods (Abu-Raya 2008b).

The name I'billin may derive from the name of a Frankish family, given to the castle at that time, or may be a corruption of the name of the Talmudic Jewish village of Evlayim (Benvenisti 1970:310).

THE CAVES (Plans 1, 2)

The three burial caves (A–C) share a common courtyard. Caves A and C contained *kokhim*, while Cave B, consisting of a small burial chamber, is located between them.

Cave A

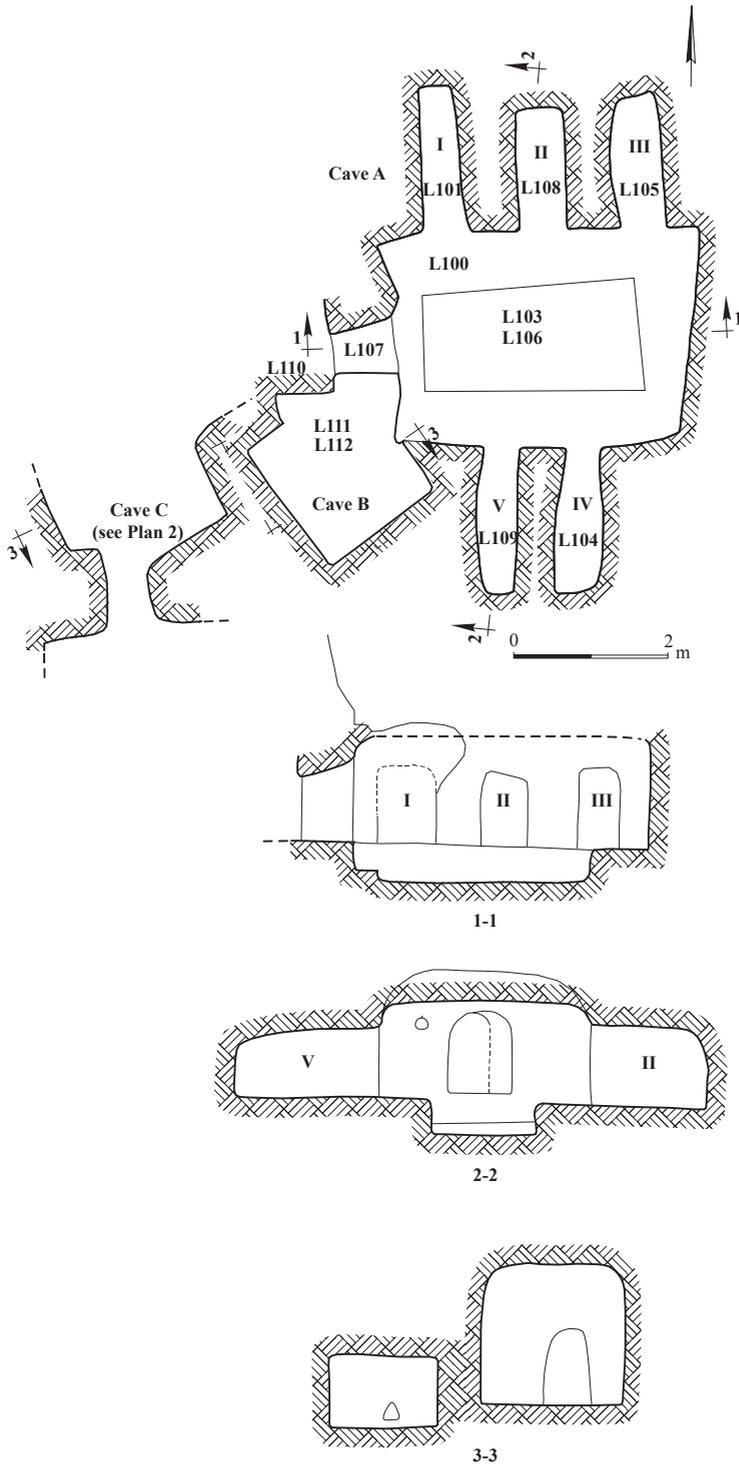
This easternmost of the three caves (Plan 1; Fig. 2) is entered from the west (L107) via

one step (0.35 m high) that leads down into its single, rectangular chamber (2.08 × 4.10 m), with a standing pit in the center (L103, L106; 1.30 × 2.75 m; 0.5 m deep). Three *kokhim* were located in the northern wall (I–III) and two in the southern wall (IV, V). Each of the five *kokhim* contained the skeletal remains of one individual, lying supine, with the head facing away from the center of the cave, toward the back wall of the *kokh*, accompanied by pottery and glass vessels.

Four clay coffins—two of which are complete—along with eleven coffin lid slabs, were discovered in the standing pit. Twelve clay ossuaries, all complete, were also found in the standing pit. Six of these (including three with lids), were found *in situ* on the standing pit floor. The six others had been scattered in the standing pit by looters. Skeletons were found in three of the coffins and five of the ossuaries; in each case the deceased was buried with pottery and glass vessels. Nine very poorly preserved articulated skeletons were also found on the standing pit floor. A large quantity of lamps and a few glass and pottery vessels, mainly cooking



Fig. 2. Cave A, general view to the east.



Plan 1. Caves A and B, plan and sections.



Fig. 3. Cave B, two coffins *in situ*, looking southeast.

pots, were also retrieved from the standing pit. In addition, near the entrance to Cave A (L100), was a jug (Fig. 8:9); perhaps as a sealing-stone offering. Of the twenty-two burials found in the cave, eight were identified: five males, one female and two children.

Cave B

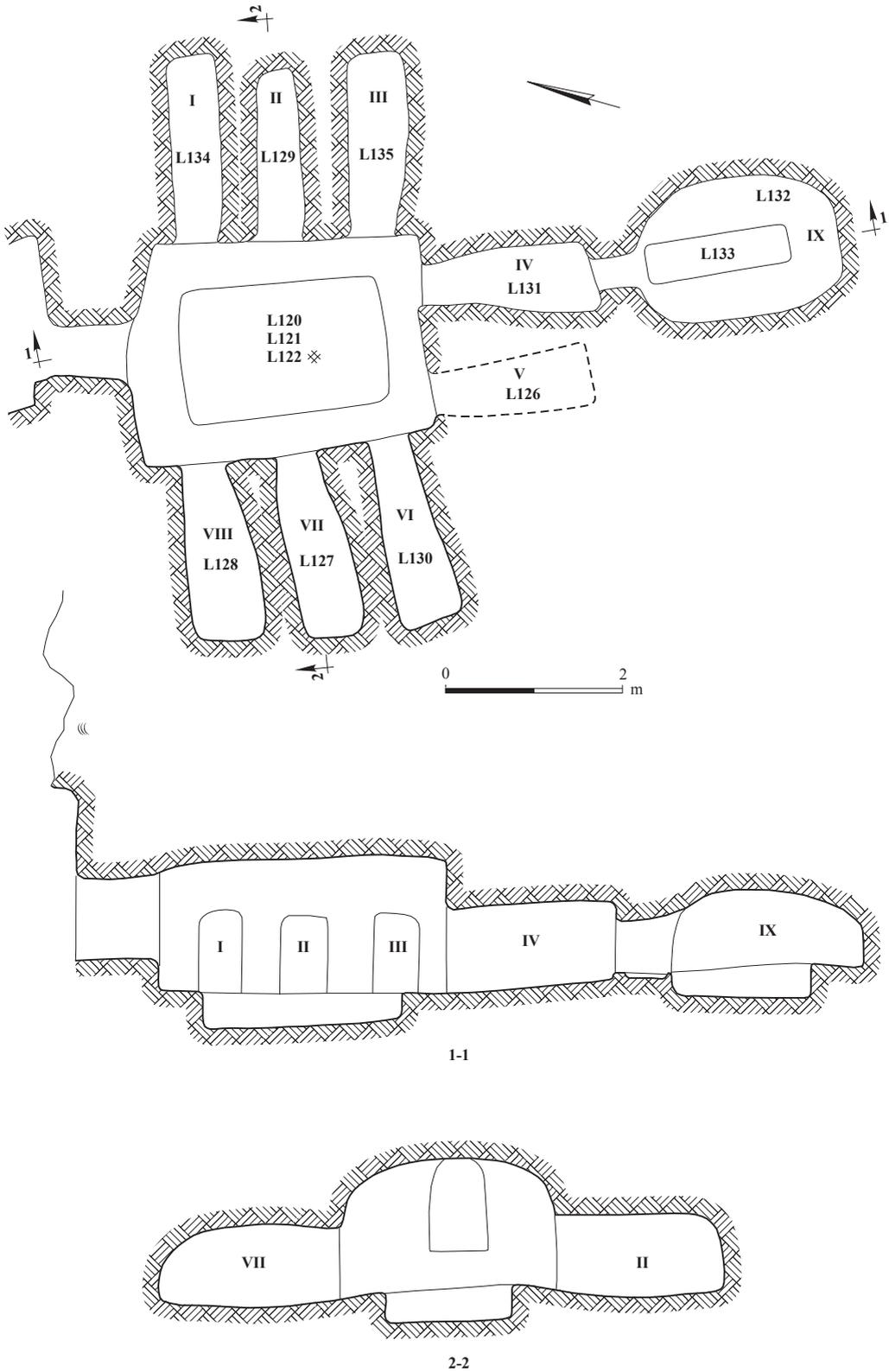
A small hewn channel in the southwestern corner of Cave A, 0.1 m above the floor level, connected Cave A to Cave B (L111, L112; Plan 1), which was a small, square burial chamber (1.7 × 1.9 m) without *kokhim*. Two empty clay coffins were found on its floor (Fig. 3): one, adjacent to the western wall, was found open, while the second, near the eastern wall, was closed with a lid. Between them, on the floor, lay an intact, glass candlestick bottle containing kohl (Fig. 20:11), with a copper-alloy spatula near it (Fig. 21; see below). It seems that this chamber had been prepared for a burial, perhaps of a female, but was never used.

Cave C

Cave C, the roof of which was destroyed by a bulldozer, was located southwest of Caves A

and B (Plans 1, 2). Its entrance, from the north (Figs. 4, 5), led directly into a standing pit. The standing pit was surrounded by eight *kokhim* (I–VIII) and a collecting pit (IX, L133), which extended from *Kokh* IV in the southern wall. The standing pit (L120, L121, L122; 1.5 × 2.3 m, 0.3 m deep) was filled with soil. In its center were dozens of pottery vessels, predominantly lamps (see Fig. 24), and a few glass vessels and beads, along with two clay coffins and two stone ossuaries (Fig. 6), one of which is unique in having four legs. A skeleton was found in each of the coffins and the ossuaries; however, the latter were devoid of offering vessels.

The *kokhim* were sealed with stones, some of which were found on the floor near their entrance. In the three *kokhim* in the eastern wall, burial goods lay alongside the skeletons. The skeletons found in *Kokh* II faced west, toward the standing pit. The southern wall contained two *kokhim*, one damaged, quite likely by robbers. Each contained four skeletons, all found with burial goods. Three skeletons were discovered on the shelf of the standing pit. A passage in the far wall of the southeastern *kokh* led to a collecting pit carved



Plan 2. Cave C, plan and sections.

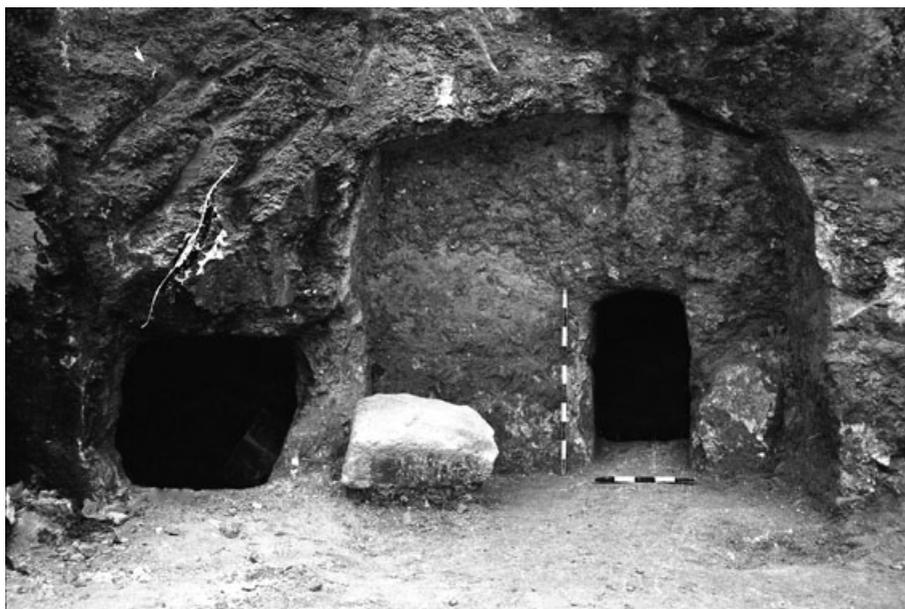


Fig. 4. Caves B and C, the entrances of both caves, looking south.

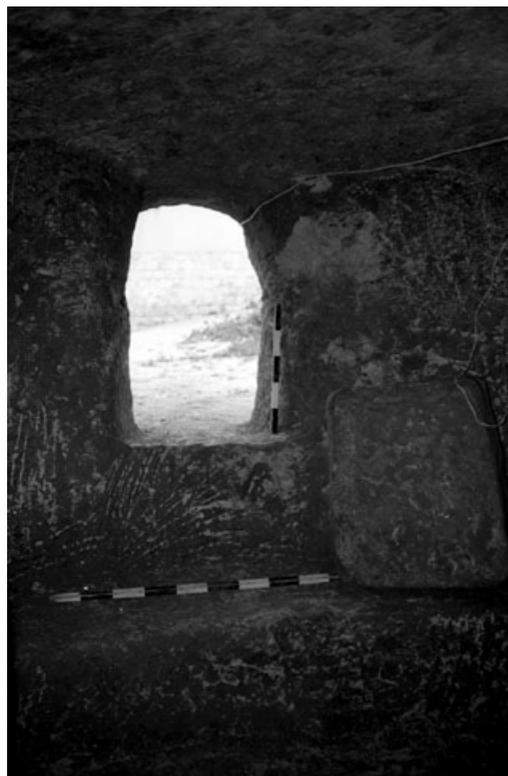


Fig. 5. Cave C, the entrance, view from the standing pit to the north.



Fig. 6. Cave C, coffins and ossuaries in the standing pit, looking east.

into the ground (L133; Fig. 7). It contained one skeleton and a few finds. Although the three *kokhim* in the western wall were found with their sealing stones almost blocking the entrance, they, too, had been robbed. Four skeletons, along with burial goods, were discovered in these *kokhim*.

Of the 46 individuals found in this cave, seven were identifiable: five males, a female



Fig. 7. Cave C, the repository, looking north toward *Kokh* 4.

and a child. The deceased were laid with their heads toward the standing pit, as opposed to Cave A. The burials were found, like those in Cave A, throughout the cave: in the *kokhim* (17), in coffins and ossuaries (9), on the floor of the standing pit (17) and on the bench (3).

THE FINDS

As mentioned above, the finds discovered in the three burial caves included pottery vessels and lamps, glass vessels and beads, and a copper-alloy spatula; they will be discussed below in that order. The chaos left behind in the two caves by robbers made it impossible to date individual burials. Therefore, all the vessels from all the caves are presented together in a typological-chronological order.

Pottery Vessels (Fig. 8)

The pottery assemblage found in Caves A and C includes typical vessels of the first–third centuries CE, of which a bowl, cooking pots, jugs and a votive amphoriskos are presented here. For descriptions and parallels, see the table accompanying Fig. 8.

Pottery Lamps (Fig. 9)

Of the almost 300 oil lamps uncovered in Caves A and C, one-third were complete (see Fig. 24); all show signs of use. Many of the lamps found in the *kokhim* were placed near the head, waist or legs of the deceased. More lamps were found in Cave A than in Cave C.

All the lamps except one were locally made; the one exception was imported from Cnidos, in Asia Minor. The 41 examples described below represent all the types found in the cave. Of the nine local types found, the dominant types are 1, 3 and 5. All the lamps are mold-made, except for Type 1, those of which are wheel-made. The lamps are dated from the end of the first century BCE (or the very beginning of the first century CE) through the fourth century CE.

Local Lamps

Type 1 (Fig. 9:1–8).— This type is the ‘knife-paring lamp,’ characterized by the treatment of its nozzle. Only one nozzle is adorned with stamped circles and a horizontal line (Fig. 9:8).

Lamps of this type, discovered at Masada and Jerusalem, were dated to the end of the first century BCE (late in Herod’s reign or very soon thereafter) or very early in the first century CE, and continued in use until the mid-second century CE (Barag and Hershkovitz 1994:24–58, Class C [Masada]; Geva 2010:128–129 [Jerusalem]). For an extensive discussion on the distribution of this lamp type in exclusively Jewish sites or in sites inhabited by both Jews and gentiles, and the users of these lamps, see Adan-Bayewitz et al. 2008, especially pp. 69–77.

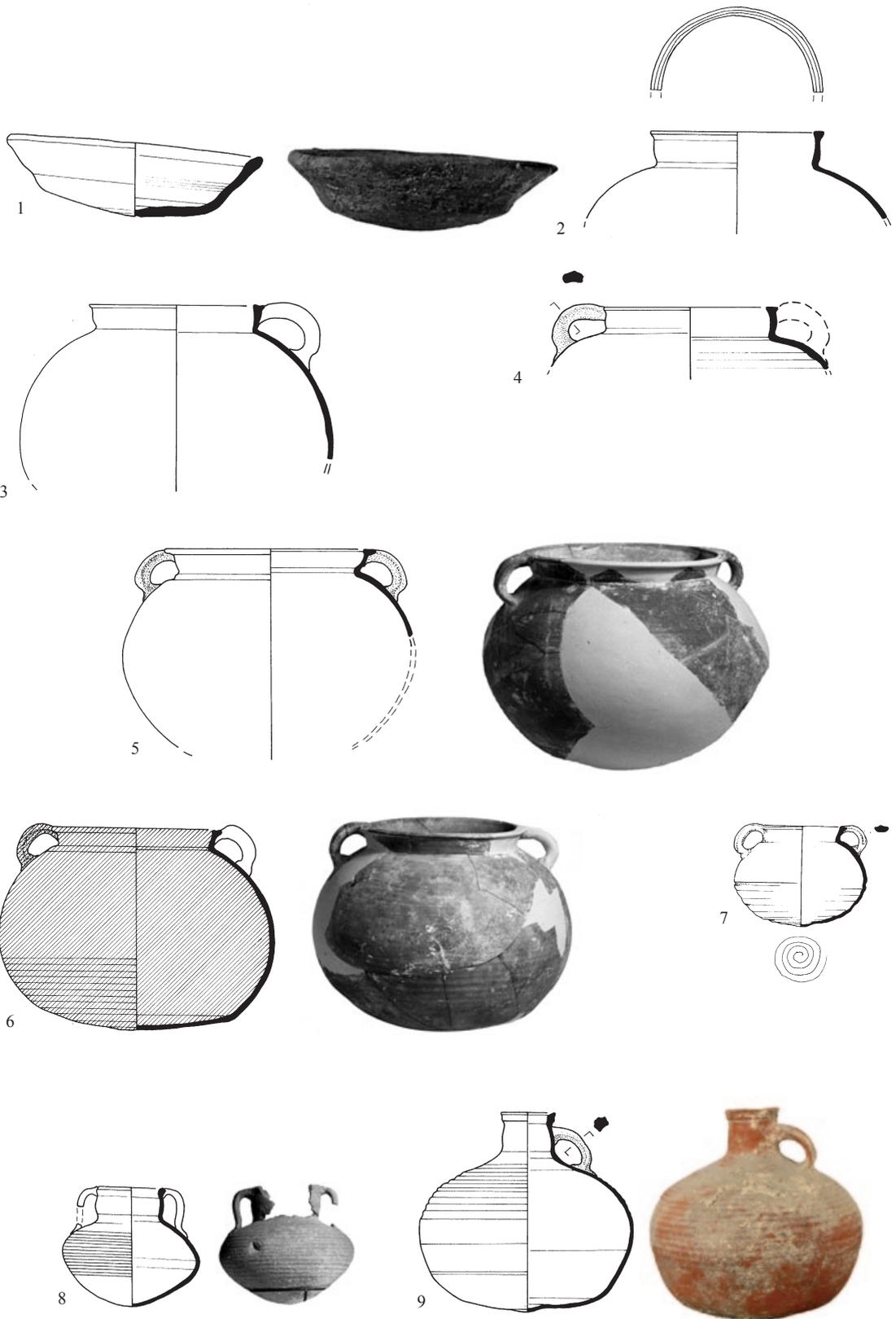




Fig. 8. The pottery vessels.

No.	Vessel	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description	Parallels
1	Bowl	A	101; floor level of <i>Kokh I</i>	6	96-1289	7.5R 5/4 reddish	Meyers, Kraabel and Strange 1976:175, Pl. 7.6:3, 28 Diez Fernández 1983:128, 172, 217, Type T15.4
2	Cooking pot	A	106; floor level of standing pit	78-5		2.5YR 5/4 red; few grits	Loffreda 1976: Fig. 6:15-20
3	Cooking pot	A	106; floor level of standing pit	40-16		Thin cooking-pot ware, 2.5 YR 5/6 red; small white grits	As No. 2
4	Cooking pot	A	106; floor level of standing pit	40-9		2.5YR 5/4 red; grits	As No. 2
5	Cooking pot	A	106; floor level of standing pit	78-2	96-1288	Thin cooking-pot ware, low ribbing, 5YR 5/8 red	As No. 2
6	Cooking pot	A	106; floor level of standing pit	78-40	96-1291	Thin cooking-pot ware, 2.5YR 5/6 red; red slip	As No. 2
7	Cooking pot	C	121; few cm above floor of standing pit	21		Thin cooking-pot ware, 10R 5/4 light red; few grits	Loffreda 1974:29-30, Fig. 2, Photo 2
8	Amphoriskos	A	103; inside Coffin IX	8	96-1292	Thin ware, high ribbing on body, 10R 6/3	Bagatti 1968: Fig. 192:26
9	Jug	A	100; the sealing-stone offering	88	96-1290	High ribbing, 10R 6/6 reddish; few white grits	Loffreda 1976: Fig. 3:1-3
10	Jug	C	121; floor level at entrance of <i>Kokh II</i>	17	96-1307	High ribbing, 10R 6/4	Bagatti 1968: Fig. 192:22 Aviam 1997: Fig. 2:1
11	Jug	C	126; floor level of <i>Kokh V</i>	40-1	96-1308	High ribbing, 2.5YR 6/6 light red; many small grits	Bagatti 1968: Fig. 192:20
12	Jug	A	106; floor level of standing pit	78-1	96-1290	High ribbing, 2.5YR 5/6 red; few white grits	



Fig. 9. Local lamps, Type 1.

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
1	A	105	29	97-4392	Light reddish brown clay
2	A	106	68	97-4393	Reddish clay
3	C	121	37-1	97-4395	Light pink clay
4	C	127	42-1	97-4396	Pinkish clay
5	C	121	16	97-4390	Pale greenish clay
6	C	122	30	97-4388	Dark reddish brown clay
7	C	121	36-1	97-4389	Pink-red clay, traces of reddish brown slip
8	C	121	35	97-4391	Light pink clay

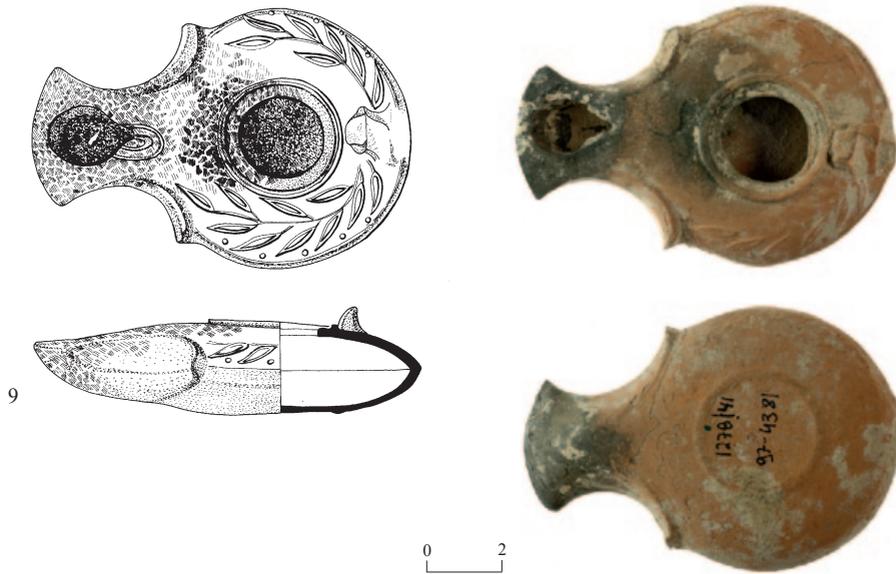


Fig. 10. Local lamp, Type 2.

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
9	A	106	41	97-4381	Orange-brown clay

Type 2 (Fig. 10:9).— One example of this quite rare type of lamp was found; the rim is decorated with a branch of olive leaves and fruits (see n. 5), and the nozzle, with two concentric ellipses. The loop handle is broken and the lamp features a low ring base. Lamps of this type were discovered in Jerusalem, in both the citadel (Amiran and Eitan 1970:13–14) and the Burnt House (Geva 2010:129, Pl. 4.7:7; see further references therein), within the destruction layer of 70 CE. At Masada, they were dated to the last decade or two before its siege and fall (Barag and Hershkovitz 1994:59–71, Class D). One lamp of this type was found at Bet She’an (Hadad 2002:16, Type 5).

I’billin and Bet She’an are the northernmost sites known where such lamps have been found (a sole example at each site). Since they feature the same decoration as most of the lamps of this type, and since they are such a rarity, it is likely that they were produced in Jerusalem and

brought to I’billin and Bet She’an from there. Based on the distribution of this lamp type, it may be defined as a ‘Jerusalem lamp.’

Type 3 (Figs. 11, 12).— These lamps, either plain or decorated, can be defined as the northern variant of the ‘Southern’ (*Darom*) lamp (Sussman 1982; Israeli and Avida 1988:48–81), also known as the ‘molded Judean lamp’ (Barag and Hershkovitz 1994:72–78, Class F). Lamps of this type either lack a handle or have a solid or pierced handle.

The lamps without a handle are plain, except for two circles around the rim (Fig. 11:10–13); most have two horizontal lines on the nozzle (Fig. 11:10–12). A few of the lamps that have a handle, either pierced or solid, are completely plain or decorated with only a string of dots (Fig. 12:14, 15)—the former has quite prominent wings—while most of the others are decorated with geometric (Fig. 12:16–19) or vegetal (Fig. 12:20–21) designs.⁵ This type

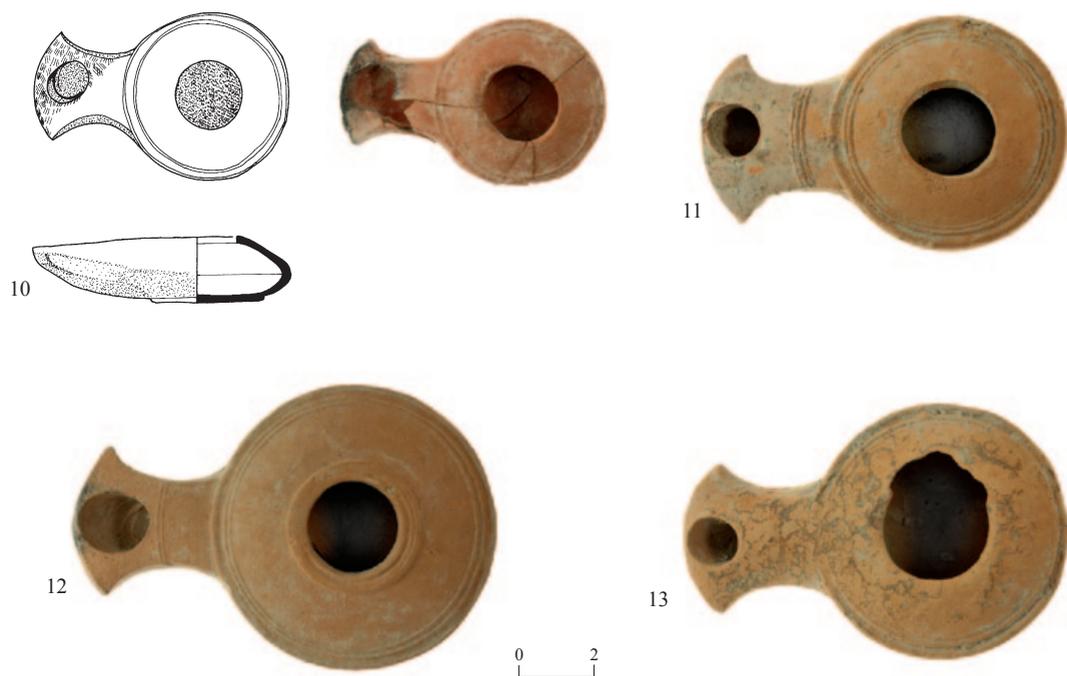


Fig. 11. Local lamps, Type 3.

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
10	C	122	26-3	97-4397	Reddish brown clay
11	A	100	85	97-4400	Buff orange clay
12	A	103	34	97-4401	Light brown-pink clay
13	A	103	12	97-4399	Buff pink clay

Fig. 12 ▶

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
14	C	135	50	97-4393	Light brown clay
15	A	106	63	348651	Light red clay
16	A	106	60	348605	Pink clay
17	A	107	66	97-4403	Light pink-buff clay
18	A	103	16	97-4379	Reddish brown clay
19	C	122	29-3		Pink clay
20	A	107	65	97-4377	Pink clay
21	C	127	42-2	97-4376	Brown clay

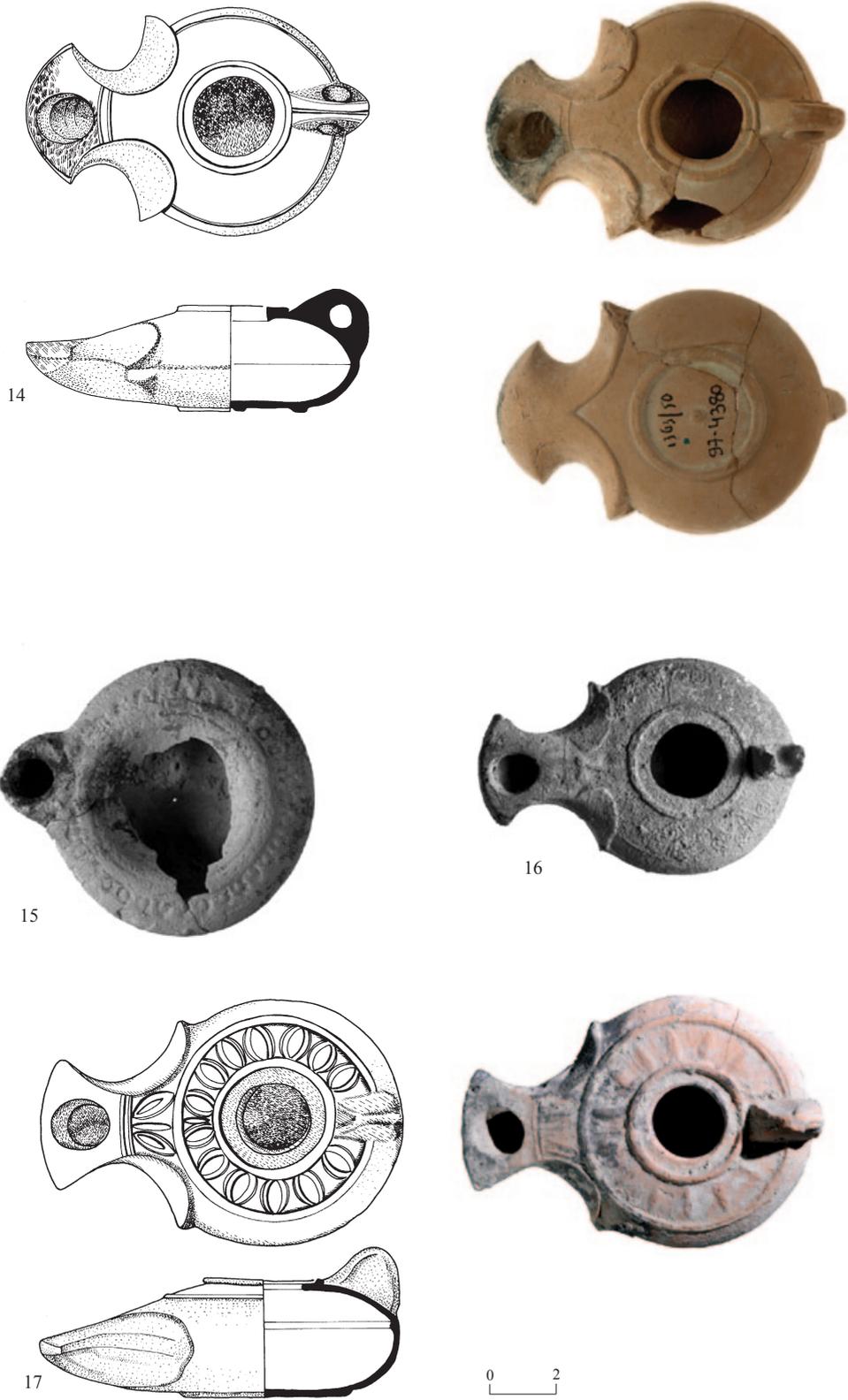


Fig. 12. Local lamps, Type 3.

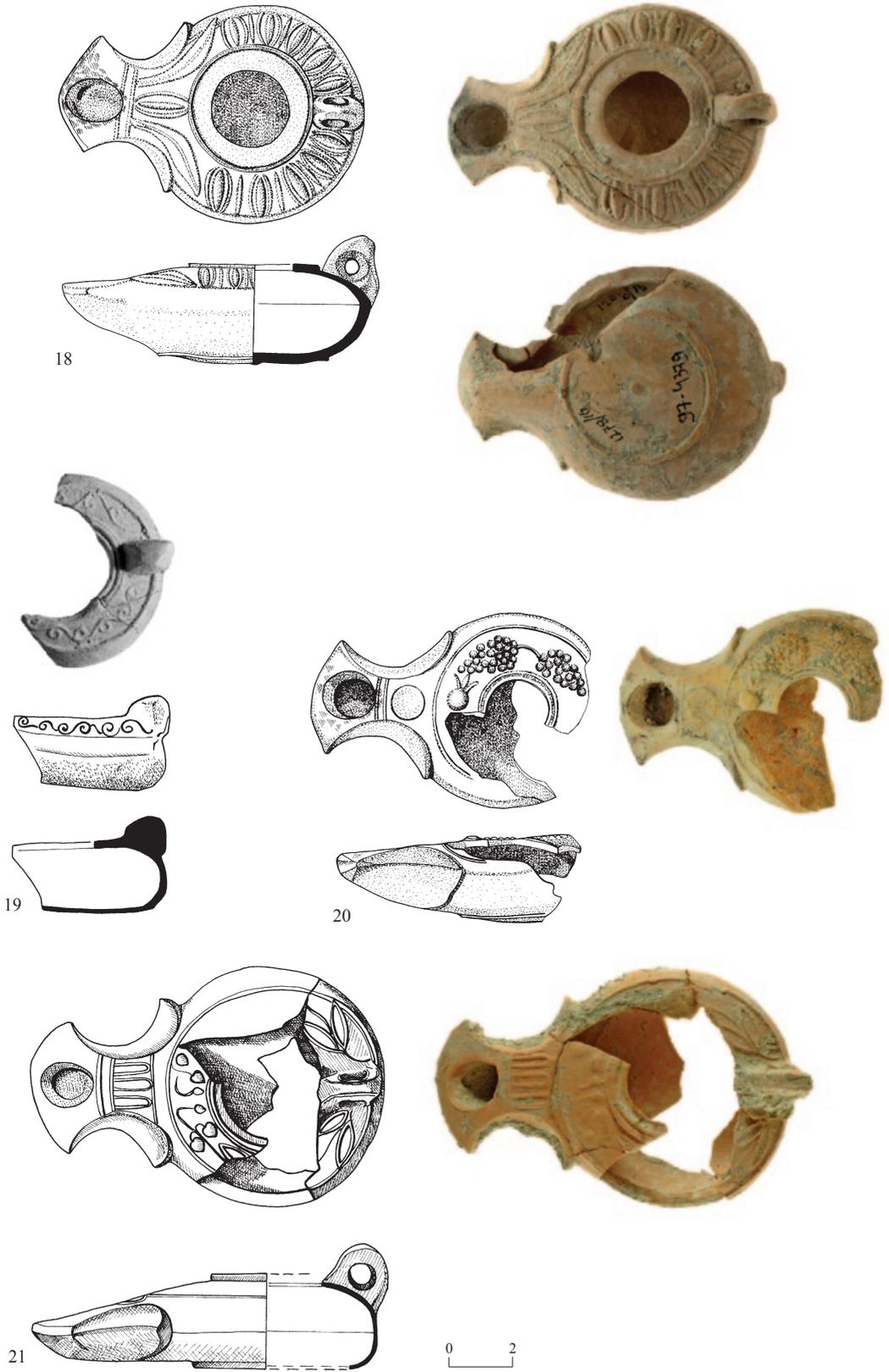


Fig. 12. (cont.)

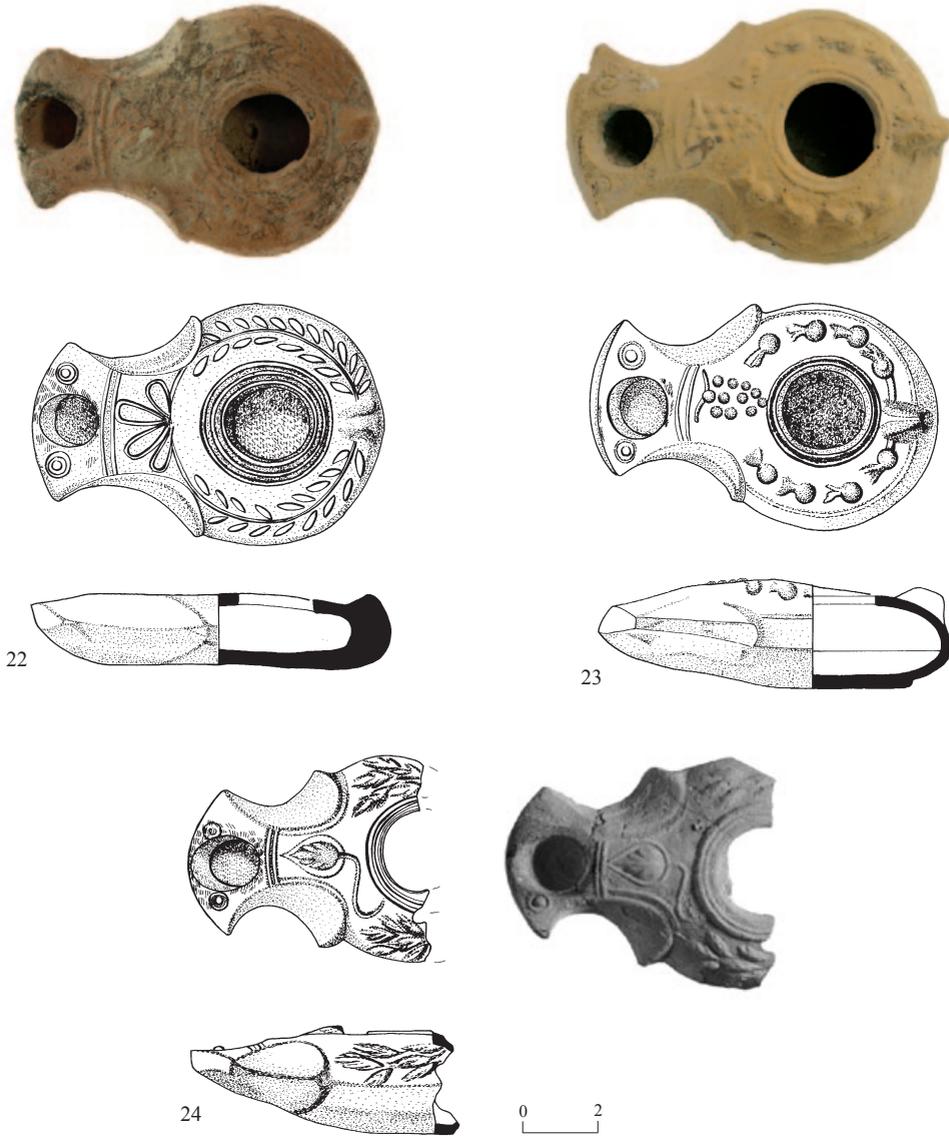


Fig. 13. Local lamps, Type 4.

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
22	A	106	179	97-4382	Orange-pink clay
23	A	106	56	97-4383	Orange clay
24	C	122	29-1		Pink clay

parallels Hadad’s Type 6, dated to c. 70–135 CE (Hadad 2002:16).

Type 4 (Fig. 13:22–24).— The lamps of this type, similar in shape and decoration to those of Type 3, were apparently produced in the

‘potter’s store’ at Jerash (Iliffe 1945:24, Nos. 155, 156; Rosenthal and Sivan 1978:96–97, Nos. 391–393; Israeli and Avida 1988:84–93, 95–97; Kehrberg 1989:86–87). They are adorned with vegetal designs and have a solid handle.



Fig. 14. Local lamps, Type 5.

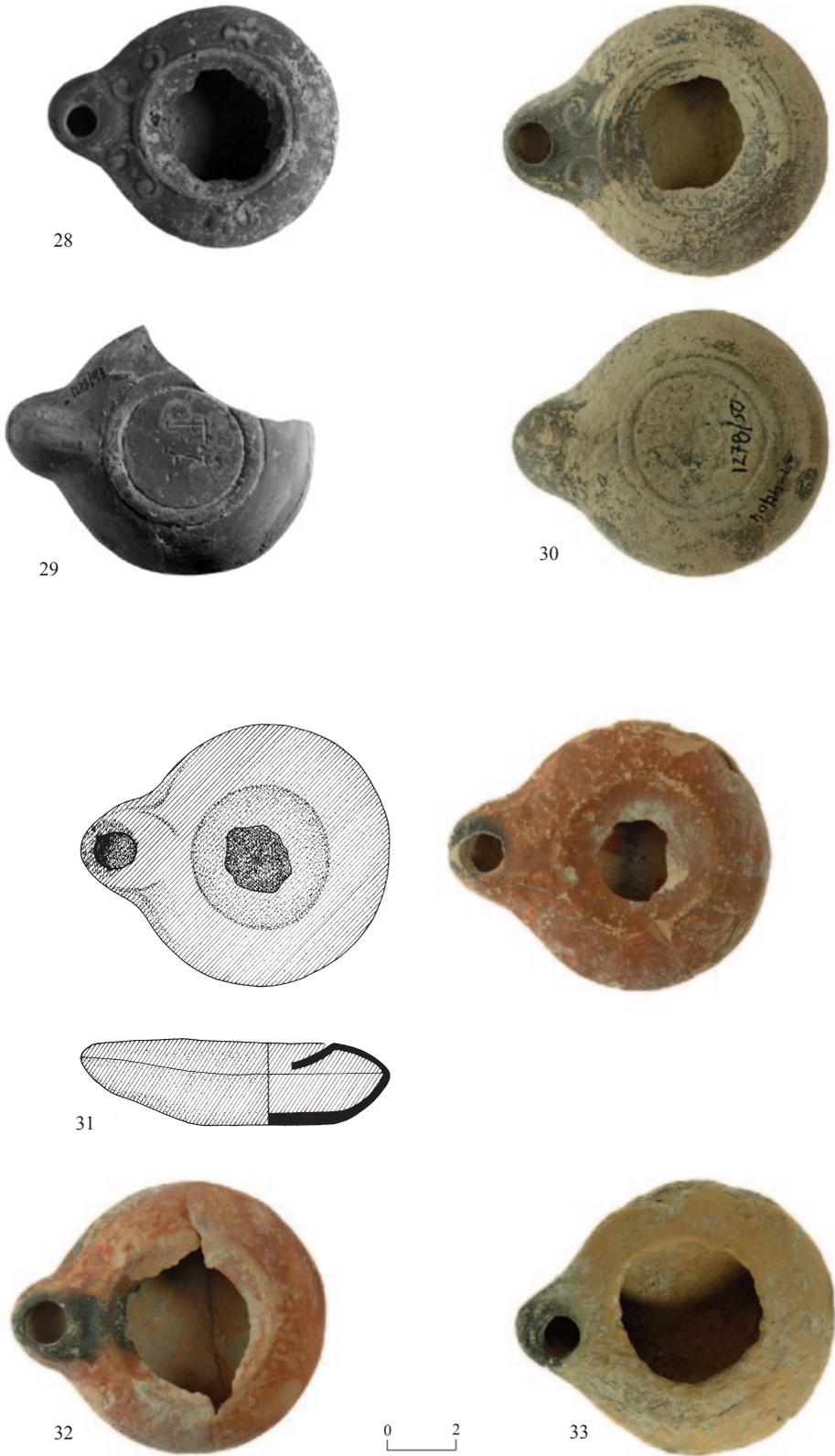


Fig. 14. (cont.)

◀ Fig. 14

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
25	A	111	92	97-4387	Light brown clay
26	A	103	32	97-4405	Light pink clay, reddish brown slip
27	C	122	28	97-4386	Pink-orange clay, light brown slip
28	A	103	15	348634	Reddish brown clay
29	A	111	93	348659	Light brown clay, reddish brown slip
30	A	108	50	97-4404	Light brown-greenish clay, dark brown slip
31	A	103	254	97-4409	Pink clay, reddish brown slip
32	A	103	31	97-4408	Pink clay, light reddish brown slip
33	A	106	82	97-4410	Brown-pink clay

Type 5 (Fig. 14:25–33).— These lamps have a round body, a discus, a small, round nozzle decorated with volutes, and a low disc or a ring base. All the lamps have a large filling hole formed by breaking the discus. The most common rim decoration is ovolo; triangles and leaves also appear on occasion. In some cases, the rim is decorated only with double axes. Two lamps (Fig. 14:31, 33) are completely plain. In a few cases, a small part of the discus decoration survived—a *symplegma* or a rosette. The bases are decorated with circles or a stylized flower, a *planta pedis* and the Greek letters Γ Α.

The lamps either have a very thin wall and are well-fired (Fig. 14:25–29), or have a somewhat thicker wall and are quite coarse (Fig. 14:30–33); the former, which are of good quality, first appeared in the late first century CE (after 70) and continued in use in the second century CE. The latter, which are poorly made, appeared later, perhaps in the late second or more probably in the third century CE (Hadad 2002:16–20, Type 7).

More than 30 lamps were found in a burial cave at Qiryat Tiv'on, and at least 26 of them are of the type under discussion; in all of them the discus is broken (Vitto 2011b:45*–48*, Type D; see there her extensive discussion on these lamps and their decoration). Some of the Qiryat Tiv'on lamps have the same base ornamentation as the lamps from I'billin—

perhaps made in the same workshop. The few other lamps found there parallel Types 1, 3 and 6 of I'billin.

As noted above, all the lamps were found with their discus broken. The intentional breaking of the discus, particularly the adorned ones, is believed to have been done by Jewish customers in order not to contravene the ban on images or to maintain the purity of the lamp, which was subject to the laws of ritual purity and impurity only after opening it (e.g., forming or enlarging the filling hole by breaking the discus; for an extensive discussion on this custom, see Hadad 1992:124–128; Vitto 2011b:48*–52*⁶).

Type 6 (Fig. 15:34).— This lamp belongs to the type known as the 'Jebel Jofeh lamp.' It has a large filling hole, a small, round nozzle and a solid, vertical handle. This type parallels Hadad's Type 13, dated to mid-third–mid-fourth centuries CE (Hadad 2002:22–24).

Type 7 (Fig. 16:35).— This pear-shaped lamp has a rim decorated with impressed ovolo and the discus is broken to enlarge the filling hole. It has a solid handle and a ring base. Barag (1970:78) dated this lamp type, known as a 'Deba'al lamp,' to the end of the third or early fourth century CE.

Type 8 (Fig. 17:36–39).— The lamps are pear-shaped and have a plain discus, a very small

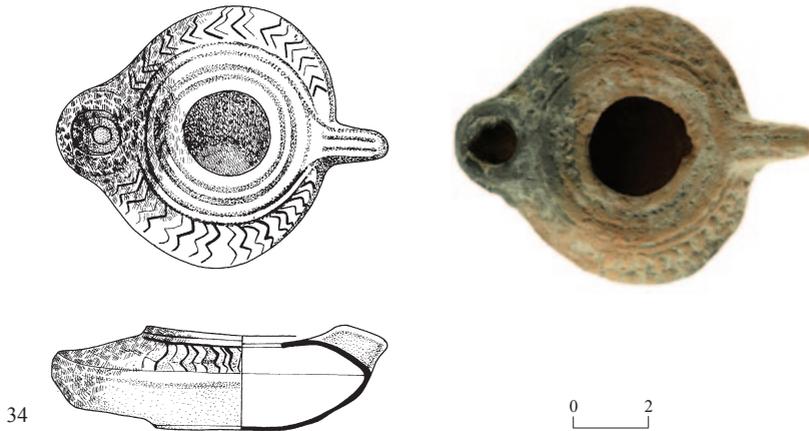


Fig. 15. Local lamps, Type 6.

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
34	A	103	17	97-4424	Reddish brown clay



Fig. 16. Local lamps, Type 7.

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
35	A	106	83	348676	Pink clay

filing hole, which in some cases was enlarged by breaking the discus, a small grooved handle and a flat base. The rim and nozzle bear different decorations—impressed or incised geometric or vegetal patterns. These lamps, dubbed ‘Bet She‘arim lamps’ (Avigad 1976:187–189), are widespread in northern Palestine only, with a few examples occurring in southern Phoenicia. This type parallels Hadad’s Type 14, dated to

the first half of the fourth century CE (Hadad 2002:24).

Type 9 (Fig. 18:40).— This lamp is ovoid, with a nozzle and a handle that are not separated from the body. The filling hole is relatively large and is surrounded by a pronounced ridge. This type parallels Hadad’s Type 16, dated to the fourth–fifth centuries CE (Hadad 2002:26).

Imported Lamp

The lamp (Fig. 19:41) is similar in shape to the local discus lamps presented above (Type 5), except that in this lamp, the nozzle is slightly larger and protrudes; it is separated from the body by a horizontal line. The rim is plain and separated from the discus by two closed circles. The discus, which was partially broken to enlarge the filling hole, is decorated with a rosette and the flat disc base bears an unclear signature. The lamp, imported from Cnidos, is dated to the second century CE (Bailey 1988:325–365, Nos. Q2782, Q2792, Q2798).

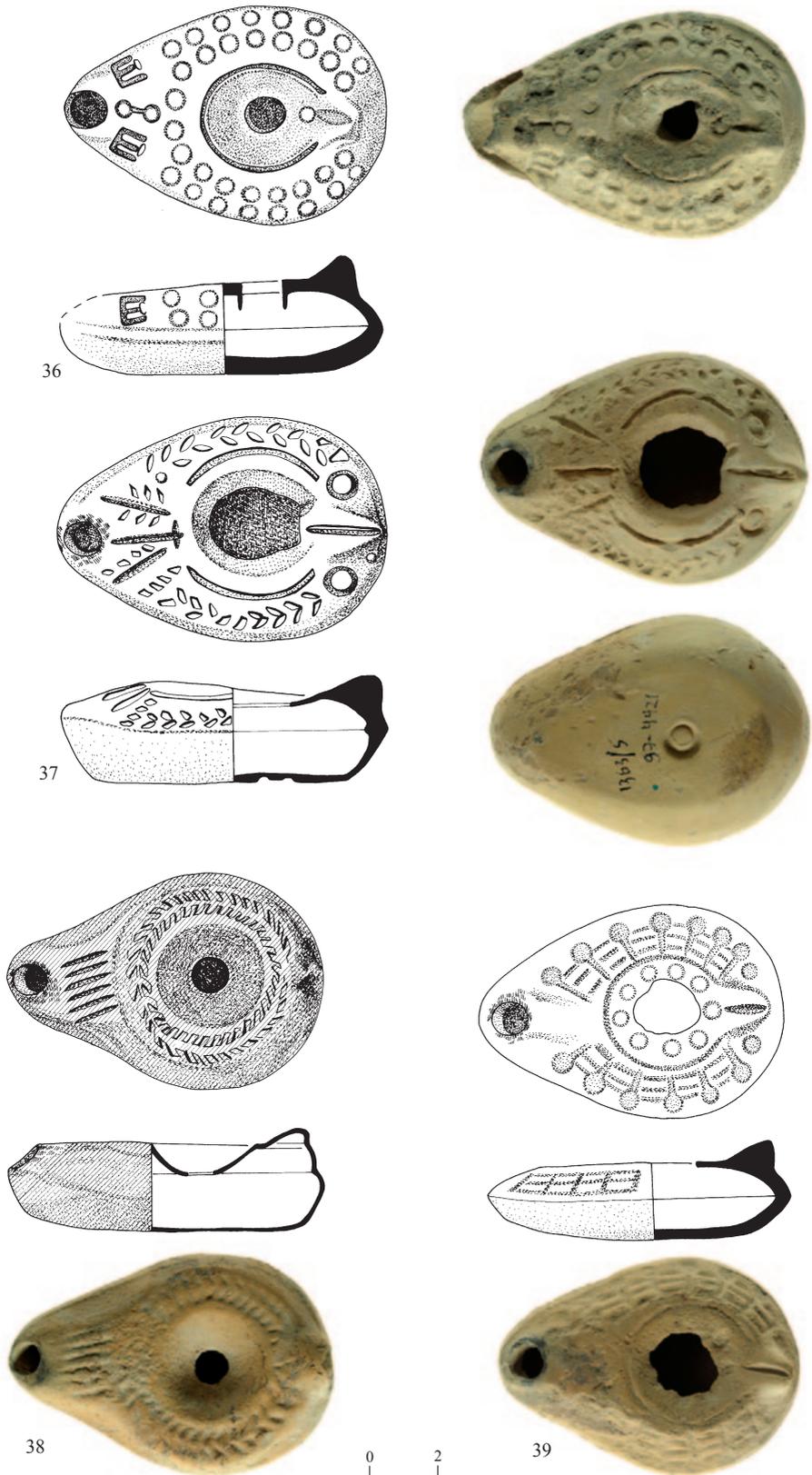


Fig. 17. Local lamps, Type 8.

◀ Fig. 17

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	Description
36	C	122	4	Light pink clay
37	C	120	5	Light brown clay
38	A	103	10	Light brown clay
39	C	120	3	Light brown clay



Fig. 18. Local lamps, Type 9.

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	Description
40	A	103	27	Light brown clay

Glass Vessels

The glass vessels, dated to first–mid-third centuries CE, were found in Caves A and C, except for Bottle No. 11, which, as noted above, was found in unused Cave B. Some of the vessels found in Caves A and C were placed beside the body in the *kokhim* or inside the coffins. Others were found on the standing-pit floor, which is usually devoid of finds, indicating that they had been placed there as burial offerings. Presumably, most had been removed by the robbers.

All, save one, are closed vessels, which are typical of Early Roman-period burials. It should be noted that although a few lamps dated to the mid-third–fourth centuries CE were found in the caves (Types 6–9), no glass vessels that could be ascribed to this timespan were found. Rather, the glass vessels are contemporaneous with the pottery vessels, almost all the local lamps (Types 1–5) and the single imported lamp.

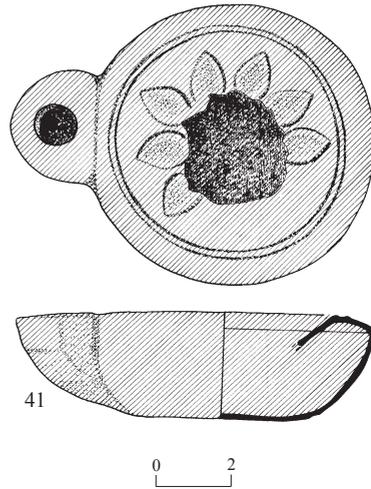


Fig. 19. Imported lamp.

No.	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
41	A	106	81	97-4384	Reddish clay, traces of reddish brown slip

Two small beads, made of bluish green glass, were also retrieved from Cave C; they were found near the head of the deceased in *Kokh* 5 (Reg. Nos. 40, 42-4; not illustrated).

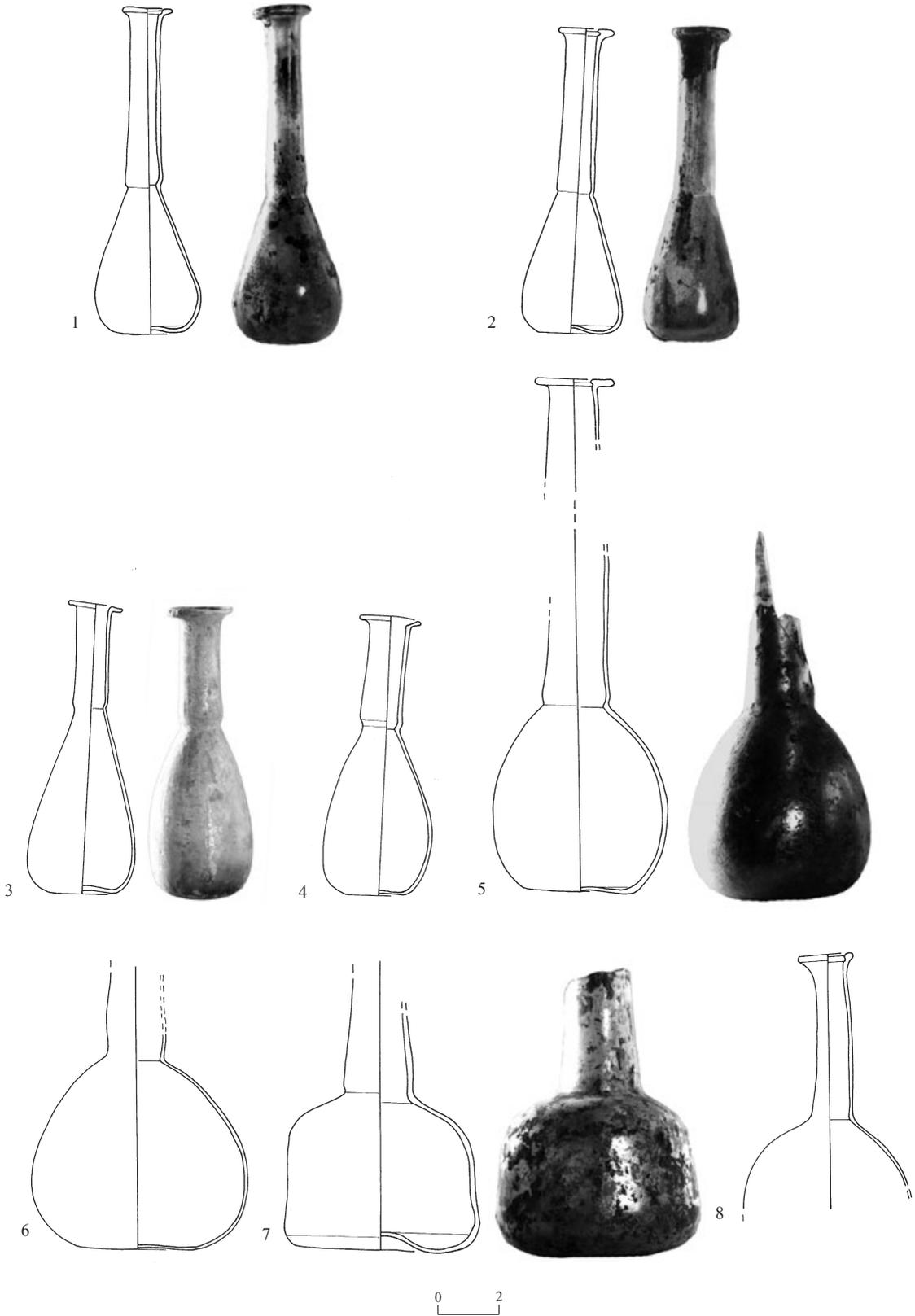
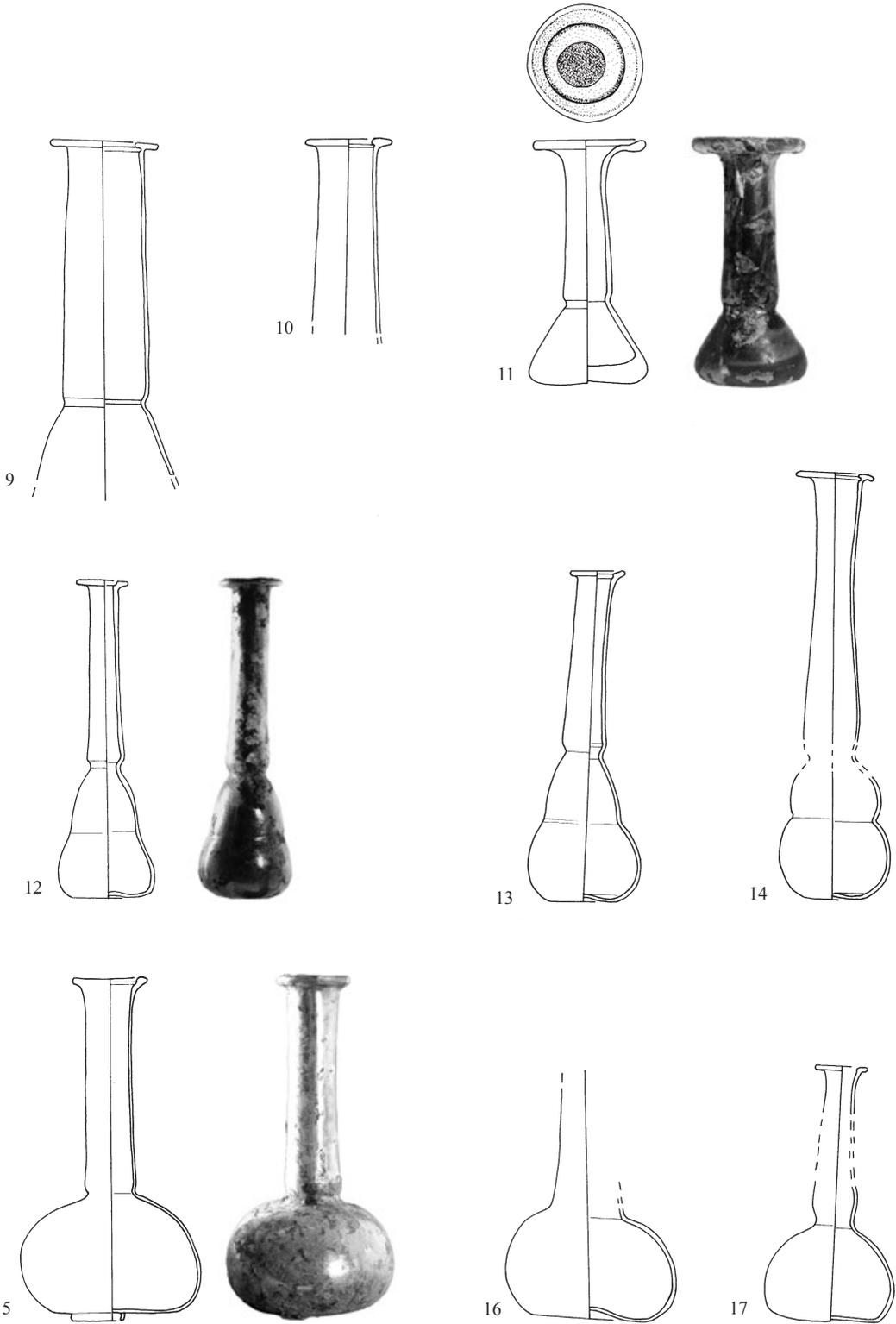


Fig. 20. The glass vessels: bottles (1–20) and a beaker (21).



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Fig. 20. (cont.).

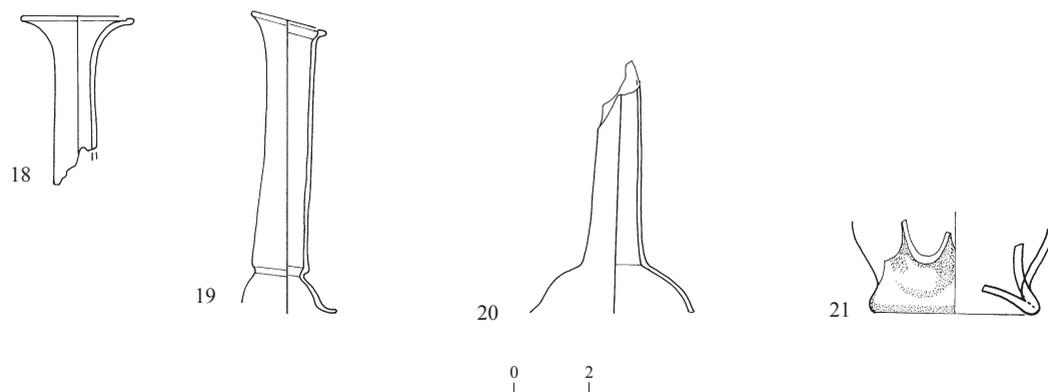


Fig. 20. (cont.).

No.	Vessel	Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	IAA No.	Description
1	Bottle	A	108	54	96-1298	Light bluish green
2	Bottle	A	107	43	96-1296	Light bluish green
3	Bottle	A	107	53-2	96-1306	Light bluish green
4	Bottle	A	108	51	96-1305	Light bluish green
5	Bottle	A	105	67	96-1293 96-1294	Yellowish green
6	Bottle	C	129	56	96-1301	Colorless
7	Bottle	A	103	33		Light bluish green
8	Bottle	C	128	53-1	96-1300	Light green
9	Bottle	A	103	18		Light bluish green
10	Bottle	A	111	94		Light green
11	Bottle	B	112	97	92-1114	Green
12	Bottle	A	108	55	96-1299	Light bluish green
13	Bottle	A	106	78	96-1295	Light bluish green
14	Bottle	A	109	72		Light bluish green
15	Bottle	C	128	54	96-1303	Light green
16	Bottle	C	121	15	96-1302	Light bluish green
17	Bottle	C	127	42	96-1304	Light bluish green
18	Bottle	C	126	41		Light green
19	Bottle	C	128	53		Light green
20	Bottle	A	107	44		Light green
21	Beaker	A	103	14		Light green

Bottles (Fig. 20:1–20)

The bottles are of two types: pear-shaped (Fig. 20:1–10) and candlestick (Fig. 20:11–20). According to Barag (1970:197–198, Type XVI-1, 4), the production of pear-shaped bottles ended toward the end of the first century CE. Pear-shaped bottles are common; they

were found, for example, in the Burnt House in Jerusalem, in the destruction level of 70 CE (Israeli 2010:225–226, G28–G38; see there discussion and parallels, especially from tombs).

The candlestick bottles are of both the short (Fig. 20:11) and long (Fig. 20:12–20) type.

Of the long type, the bodies of those that were completely preserved feature either a constriction that divided it into two parts (Fig. 20:12–14), which is quite rare, or a globular shape (Fig. 20:15–17). Candlestick bottles developed from the pear-shaped bottles. They parallel Barag's Type XXI-15, 13, 6, dated from the end of the first through the mid-third centuries CE (Barag 1970:209–218). According to Barag, despite their differing shapes, all such bottles should be dated to the same period. The fact that both shapes were found together in these burial caves strengthens his theory.

Candlestick bottles were usually retrieved from tombs rather than from occupation levels. Tall candlestick bottles were uncovered, for example, in a burial cave and in a grave in the Neshet-Ramla Quarry (Hadad 2010:192, 194, Pls. 14.4:6; 14.6:7; see there parallels). Short and tall candlestick bottles were found in the above-mentioned burial cave at Qiryat Tiv'on, dated no later than the mid-second century CE (Vitto 2011b:52*–54*; see there discussion and parallels).

The finding of large quantities of candlestick bottles in burial caves, but very rarely in occupational layers, may indicate that they were produced specifically for use as burial offerings. Their unique shape, the very long thin neck and the very small body, probably had special meaning to those who used them.

Bottle No. 11, found *in situ* on the floor of Cave B, is of special interest due to its contents. It was filled with a black material that upon analysis (see below) was determined to be kohl. The finding of the bottle containing kohl and a spatula beside it may attest to the use of such bottles as kohl vessels, as has been suggested by Barag, and recalling the Talmudic description (BT *Brachot* 18b) of a woman's request to be buried with her comb and eye paint. This is apparently the only bottle containing kohl ever unearthed in an excavation. Two candlestick bottles—with liquid and traces of oil, probably olive oil used to prepare perfume—are in the Israel Museum (Israeli 2003:213, Nos. 255, 256).

Beaker (Fig. 20:21)

The only open vessel found in the I'billin caves was a beaker, of which part of the indented wall and the concave base are preserved. This type of beaker parallels Isings' Form 35, dated to the first century CE (Isings 1957:49–50).

Copper Spatula (Fig. 21)

The copper-alloy spatula, found in Cave B, near the above-described kohl bottle, ended with a little spoon, which was used to extract the paint. Most published spatulae were found in tombs. For example, Tomb E220 at Samaria, dated to the second–third centuries CE (Crowfoot 1957:428–430, Fig. 100:24, 25); the cemetery at Berit Aḥim (Edelstein 2002:77*–78*, Fig. 31); the Second Temple-period Jewish cemetery at Jericho (Hachlili 1999:139, Fig. III.82); the burial cave at Ha-Gosherim (Ovadia 1999:43*–44*, Fig. 10:2); and in the tomb near Tell Abu-Shusha (Siegelmann 1988:35, Fig. 52).



Fig. 21. The spatula from Cave B.

Cave	Locus	Reg. No.	Description
B	112	96	Copper alloy

Kohl Analysis

Irina Segal

The kohl analysis was conducted in 1992 in the laboratory of the Geological Survey of Israel. An Inductively Coupled Plasma Optical Emission Spectrometer (ICP-OES) and Scanning Electron Microscope equipped with an Energy Dispersive Spectrometer (SEM-EDS) were used. The SEM-EDS analysis of the material revealed 98% lead sulphide (PbS) and 1.0–1.2% silicon oxide (SiO₂) (Table 1). The lead sulphide was identified as mineral galena, the dye known as kohl. Galena often contains silver, and occasionally zinc, cadmium and copper. These elements, indeed, were defined in our sample. In addition, manganese, chromium and nickel were detected. The elements such as titanium and strontium, as well as silica, probably derived from the soil during the passage of time.

Only one source of galena was known in Palestine in antiquity—a vein in the ridge of Mount Hermon, near the peak of Mount Kaḥal (1141 m asl; Peri 1969). However, although that source contains galena and smithsonite, its associated metal is iron (Fe; Lang and Bogoch

1979:9) and not silver (Ag) as in our sample. The sources of galena from Egypt—south of the Red Sea, in Sinai and in the Western Desert—are also not associated with silver (Petrie 1892:42–43). Therefore, our sample may have originated overseas, possibly in Europe, Anatolia or Asia Minor, and arrived in Palestine via trade between the provinces in the Roman Empire.

COFFINS AND OSSUARIES

A total of 8 clay coffins and 14 ossuaries—12 clay and 2 stone—were found in the three caves, most on the floors of the standing pits (Fig. 22). Caves A and C contained both, while Cave B held only two empty coffins (probably awaiting future burials). A group of three intact clay ossuaries was found *in situ* in the standing pit of Cave A. The lids, which were found complete and in place on two of the three ossuaries, slide on runners in the form of

Table 1. Analysis of the Kohl

Element	Concentration (ppm, except for %)
Lead sulphide (PbS)	98.0 %
Silicon oxide (SiO ₂)	1.2 %
Titanium oxide (TiO ₂)	453
Manganese (Mn)	102
Cerium (Ce)	30
Cobalt (Co)	2
Chromium (Cr)	300
Copper (Cu)	190
Strontium (Sr)	65
Zinc (Zn)	280
Nickel (Ni)	120
Silver (Ag)	150
Cadmium (Cd)	3
Molybdenum (Mo)	35



Fig. 22. Stone ossuaries.

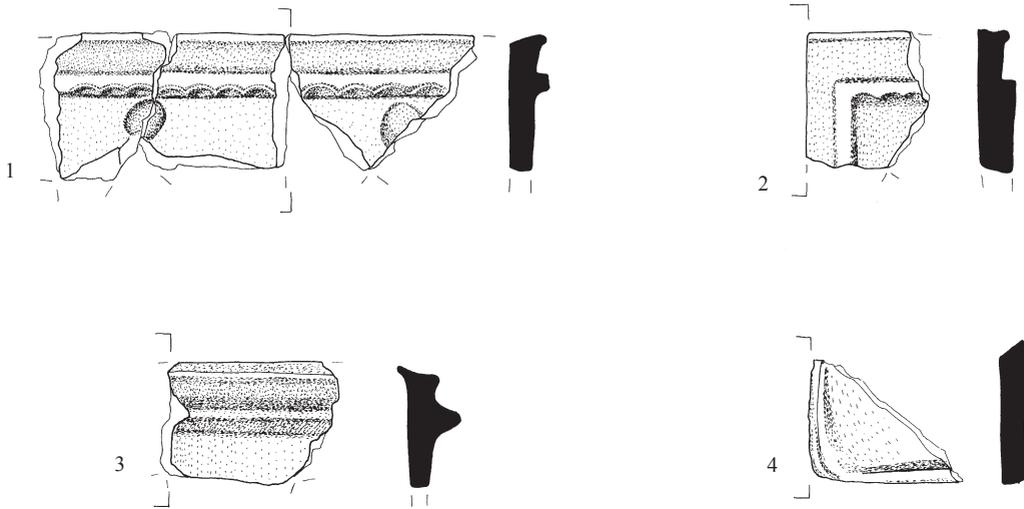


Fig. 23. Fragments of decorated ossuary lids.

recessed grooves. Figure 23 shows decorated portions of the lids. Clay ossuaries are fairly uncommon in general; it is quite rare to find a group of intact ossuaries with their lids *in situ*. In Cave A four coffins and eleven coffin lid-slabs were found. Normally coffin lids consists of three such slabs each.

Rahmani (1994:21–24) believed that clay and limestone ossuaries were found together because Jews who had fled from Jerusalem to the Galilee at the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt had brought with them the custom of using clay ossuaries. The quality of the stone ossuaries is lower than that known from the Jerusalem area.

Clay ossuaries with their lids were found at Ya'ad (Feig 1990:52) and Kabul (Aviam 2002:141–142). Seven limestone ossuaries and one made from clay, as well as three clay coffins, were uncovered *in situ* in the burial cave at Qiryat Tiv'on. According to Vitto (2011a:131–132; 2011b:27*–41*, 56*–57*; see there her extensive discussion), the clay ossuaries were made in one workshop, perhaps in the area of Qiryat Tiv'on, and should be dated to the first–mid-second centuries CE. However, she dated the coffins, imported from Cyprus or Turkey, later, to the second half of the third and especially the fourth century

CE—like the latest lamp found there (similar to I'billin Type 6). Since no glass vessels dated later than the mid-third century CE were found in the coffins uncovered in the burial caves at I'billin, they can perhaps be dated slightly earlier than suggested by Vitto, to the entire third century CE.

CONCLUSIONS

Most of the assemblage—which was left intact despite the robbery of the caves—was found in the *kokhim* or on the floor of the standing pits (Fig. 24). The reason so many items were found in the standing pits is that the pits became burial places in their own right after the *kokhim* filled with burial containers. The large number of lamps shows the high frequency of visits to Caves A and C.

All the burial caves hitherto discovered at I'billin fall within a radius of 500 m; their assemblages are typical of Roman and Byzantine grave goods from northern Palestine. Based on the finds, the three burial caves discussed here should be dated to the first–fourth centuries CE. Most of the burials took place during the first–mid-third centuries CE—the date of all the ossuaries, some of the coffins

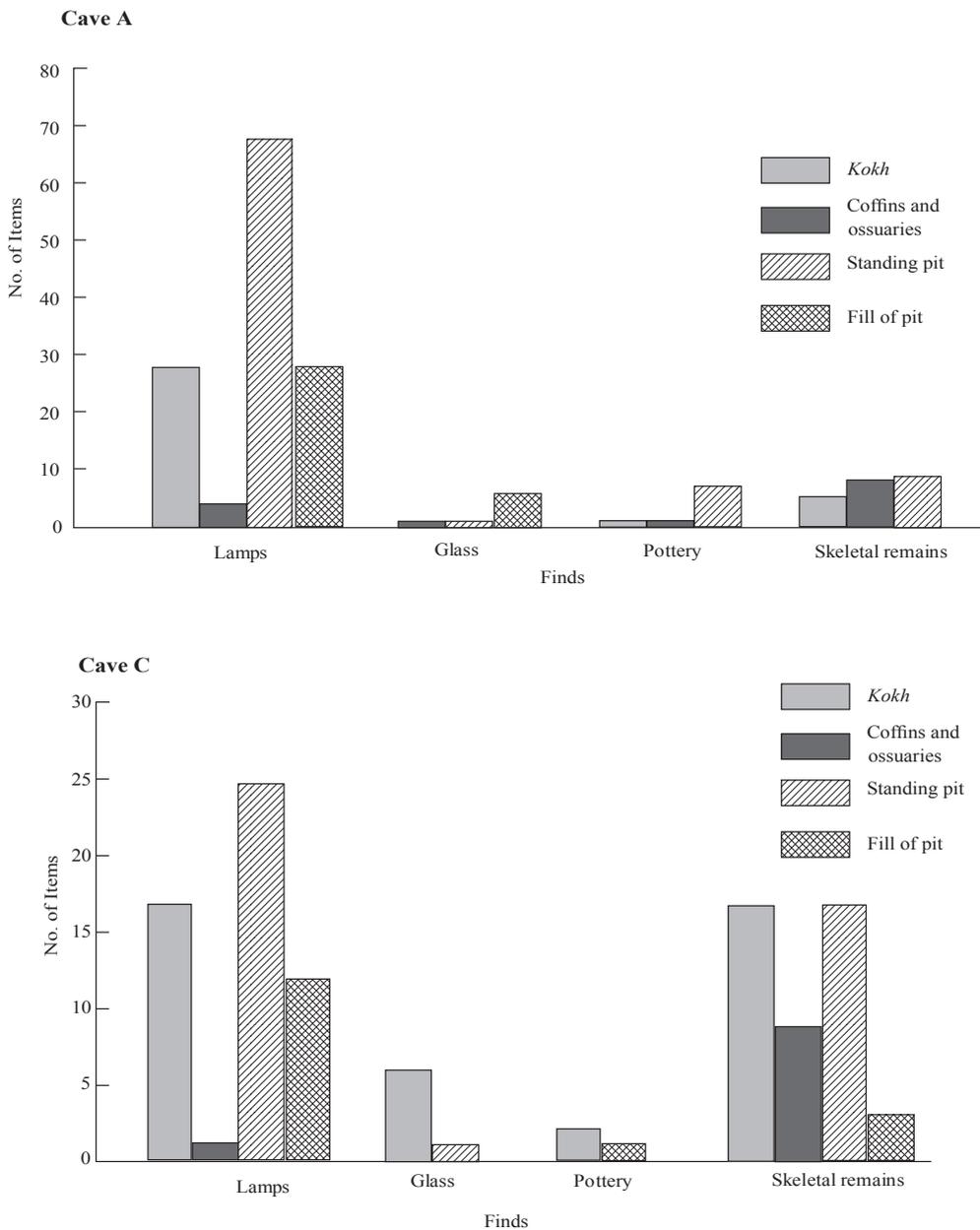


Fig. 24. The distribution of finds within Caves A and C.

and almost all the burial offerings: the pottery and the glass vessels, almost all the local lamps (Types 1–5) and the single imported lamp. The few other lamps (Types 6–9) are dated to the mid-third–fourth centuries CE—the date of the other coffins.

There are a number of indications that the deceased were Jews: the large quantity of

lamps of Types 1 and 3 and the single lamp of Type 2 (all used particularly by Jews); the Type 5 lamps that were all found with their discus broken in keeping with the Jewish custom; and the custom of secondary burial in ossuaries. It is not clear why the burial gifts during the mid-third–fourth centuries CE are so meager relative to those of the earlier

burials. Perhaps it indicates a change in Jewish law (*Halakha*) at that time, prohibiting the offering of an inordinate number of burial gifts at graves. Later, this custom of offering burial gifts ceased and was never renewed.⁷

The caves were probably part of the cemetery of Evlayim, where Rabbi El'azar Ben Yehuda lived (Tosefta, *'Eruvin*, Chap. 1; Zuckerman 1881:138:30), and to which Rabbi Shim'on Bar Yochai, who lived in the second half of the second century CE, referred (Tosefta, *Zevahim*,

Chaps. 2, 3; Zuckerman 1881:481:28). A stone lintel with a relief of a menorah and a synagogue dedication inscription in Aramaic, found on the surface, also indicate the existence of a Jewish settlement here.

The caves discovered at I'billin are an additional link in the chain of Jewish burials in the lower Galilee, from Qiryat Tiv'on (Vitto 2011b) to Sajur (Braun, Dauphin and Hadas 1994), Bet She'arim (Mazar 1973; Avigad 1976) and Kabul (Vitto 2011a).

NOTES

¹ The excavations (Permit Nos. A-1278, A-1363) were conducted in March 1984 and March 1985 by Nurit Feig, on behalf of the Department of Antiquities and Museums (now the IAA) with the assistance of Fakhri Hasson, Israel Vatkin and Avraham Hajian (surveyors); Tedi Mazola (drawings); Michael Miles (glass beaker drawing); Ella Altmark (chemistry); Irina Segal (kohl analysis); Tsila Sagiv and Clara Amit (photography); and Joe Zias (anthropology). Field photography was done by the excavator. We are grateful to Varda Sussman, who conducted the initial classification and research of the lamps.

² Permit No. A-130; we wish to thank them for allowing us to mention it.

³ Thanks to Abdullah Muqari for the information regarding his excavation (Permit No. A-1840).

⁴ We wish to thank Edna J. Stern for additional information about I'billin from her excavation (Permit No. A-2518).

⁵ It is noteworthy that in the Type 3 lamps, six of the 'seven species' appear, with only the olive absent.

In Type 2, on the other hand, the olive is the most common decoration.

⁶ A similar phenomenon, of a later date, is a casserole and its lid that were sold as one piece, to be separated and opened by the customer. Such a vessel from Nizzana, dated to the Byzantine period, was published by Wolff (1997), who states: "there is no reason to consider a closed casserole a particularly or exclusively 'Jewish' vessel." Four such vessels were found *in situ* in a shop at Jerash, dated to the first half of the eighth century CE; according to Walmsley et al. (2008:133, Fig. 26), this was made "in accordance with religious ritual."

⁷ It should be noted that the lamps of the late third-fourth centuries CE were found near the cave's entrance. Therefore, they might have been deposited there by family members revisiting the cave. Alternitavely, the lamps may have been left behind during plundering activities.

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