

THE CLAY OIL LAMPS FROM KHIRBAT EL-NI'ANA

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The excavations at Kh. el-Ni'ana¹ yielded about 110 mold-made clay oil lamps, some of them fragments. They were discovered mostly in and around Tomb I. These finds provide us with a better acquaintance of the lamps used in the Judean Shephelah over a long time span, covering the Late Roman and Byzantine periods and part of the Islamic period. The Kh. el-Ni'ana lamps preceding the Islamic period seem to be products of regional industries that are typologically related to one another, such as the workshops at Gezer, Bet Naṭṭif and Yavne. The Candlestick-type lamps and the Islamic lamps, however, are common almost all over the country.

Sixty-two specimens are presented below. They are discussed by their types, which are arranged in chronological order.

Bet Naṭṭif Type 3 Lamps (Fig. 1:1, 2)

Eight examples, four of them complete, of the classical Bet Naṭṭif-type oil lamps were among the finds, all found in Tomb I. They belong to Type 3 (Sussman 1985–6: Figs. 2, 3) with a voluted arched nozzle, a wide filling hole and a pyramid-shaped handle (Baramki 1936: Pls. X:1–3; XI:3–11, 16; Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:12–15). The lamps found at Kh. el-Ni'ana are decorated with a string of globules (No. 1) and a herringbone pattern (No. 2).

Oil lamps of this type, unlike other types made in the Bet Naṭṭif workshop, were widely distributed and were also manufactured in other, less skilled workshops in the region. They are dated to the early fourth–fifth centuries CE.

1. Fragment. Dotted circle close to the nozzle. A string of delicate globules frames the

circumference. Light pink ware, traces of red-brown slip. Tomb I, L44, B247/C.

Comparisons: Baramki 1936: Pl. X:1.

2. Two fragments of the same lamp. Shoulders decorated with herringbone pattern. Pyramid-shaped handle. Very light pink ware, traces of red-brown slip. Tomb I, L44, B247/D.

Comparisons: Baramki 1936: Pl. X:2.

Variants on Bet Naṭṭif Type 3 Lamps (Fig. 1:3–8)

This group includes eight lamps and fragments, all but one (No. 5, found in Tomb III) unearthed in Tomb I. These lamps resemble the Bet Naṭṭif Type 3 lamps (Sussman 1985–6), with their almost pear-shaped body and winged arched nozzle, but are somewhat degenerated. They are dated to the fourth–fifth centuries CE.

The lamps stand on a ring base; the filling hole is surrounded by a single or double ring rim. The fingernails and herringbone patterns on the shoulders of the lamps follow the Bet Naṭṭif-type lamps (Sussman 1985–6). Lamp 5 is a variant of Bet Naṭṭif Type 3a, with a flattened depression around the filling hole. The handles vary: pyramid-shaped (Nos. 4, 5), a bar handle (No. 7), and knob (No. 8) or wart-shaped (No. 6) handles. These may be influenced by Yavne (Yabneh)-type oil lamps, with their characteristic knob or wart-shaped handles (Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:9, 10).

The lamps in this group follow the Bet Naṭṭif-type lamps, depicting the main motif on the nozzle. Lamps 3–5 (the nozzles of Nos. 6–8 are broken or missing) bear a vessel on a base, very different from the only type of vessel found on

lamps from the Bet Nat̄tif workshop (Sussman 1985–6: Figs. 20, 21, 29). The angular vessels depicted on Lamps 3 and 4 are reminiscent of barrels or stone vessels, while the one on Lamp 5 has a spherical body. A similar schematic amphora was carved on the walls of a burial cave at Ḥorbat Tannim in the Judean Shephelah (Zissu 1999: Fig. 135:3). The space within or around the vessels is adorned with globules, probably representing bunches of grapes.

3. Fragment. On the nozzle, in high relief, an angular vessel with a short neck and a wide flaring rim, standing on a high, bulging triangular base. The vessel is decorated in two zones: the upper ridged and the lower filled with two strings of globules. The space around

the vessel is filled with globules, some intended to represent bunches of grapes. Pink ware, red-brown slip. Traces of soot. Width 4+ cm, length 5.3+ cm. Tomb I, L44, B247/b.

4. Incomplete. On the nozzle, a depiction of a vessel similar to the one on No. 3. The vessel's base resembles the ridged narrow rectangular neck, from which hangs a cluster of grapes. On the shoulder, a band of fingernail pattern. Orange ware, red-brown slip. Height 2.8 cm, width 6 cm, length 8.7 cm. Tomb I, L56, B278.

5. The shoulders and a shallow depression surrounding the filling hole are adorned with strings of globules. On the nozzle, a depiction of a vessel with a spherical, vertically ridged

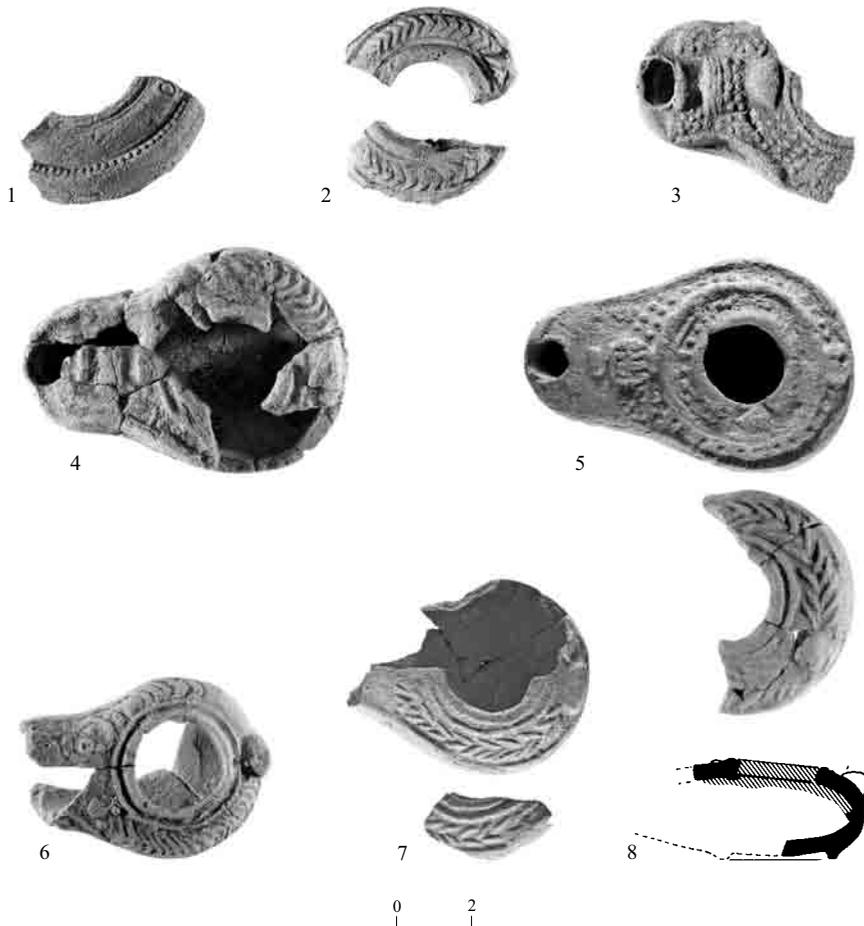


Fig. 1. Bet Nat̄tif lamps (1, 2) and variants on Bet Nat̄tif Type 3 lamps (3–8).

body, atop a stand. This vessel resembles the one on Lamp 25 and another from a workshop near Bet Naṭṭif (PAM 43.82). Two rows of small globules, possibly representing bunches of grapes, flank the vessel. Pink ware, second-hand mold. Traces of soot. Height 3 cm, width 5.8 cm, length 8.7 cm. Tomb III, B1251.

Comparisons: Baramki 1936: Pl. XI:12; Sussman 1985–6:45, Type 3a; Handle similar to one in Yavne (Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:4, 9, 10).

6. Incomplete. On the nozzle are circles and dots, on the shoulders—fingernail pattern. Light brown ware, red-brown slip. Height 2.5 cm, width 4.6 cm, length 6.3+ cm. Tomb I, L44, B247/K.

7. Two fragments of the same lamp. Herringbone pattern on shoulder, stemming from bar handle. Orange ware. Height 2.7 cm, width 5.5 cm, length 6.7+ cm. Tomb I, L44, B247/g.

8. Fragment. Herringbone pattern stemming from wart-shaped handle. Light pink ware, traces of red-brown slip. Height 3.1 cm, width 5.6 cm, length 6.6+ cm. Tomb I, L44, B247/d.
Comparisons: Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:10; Macalister 1912: Pl. XCIII:5.

Khirbat el-Ni'ana-Type Lamps (Fig. 2)

This group includes twenty lamps and fragments, most of them discovered in Tomb I and near its facade. To the best of my knowledge, these lamps have not yet been found outside of Kh. el-Ni'ana, and have therefore been named after the site. They resemble the Bet Naṭṭif and Yavne types in shape and probably date to the early fourth and fifth centuries CE, but differ mainly in the choice of decorations (see below).

Most of the Kh. el-Ni'ana lamps are pear-shaped, except for No. 15, which is almond-shaped and No. 17, a multi-spouted lamp. They stand on a ring base and have a wide filling hole, with a thick ring-rim surrounded by an additional thin ring. The lamps have a

wide, arched nozzle, with rudimentary 'wings' stretching along the edges, forming a nearly continuous line with the circumference of the body. There is a single (Nos. 9, 10, 13, 15, 16) or double (Nos. 12, 14) ridge across the nozzle. This is also a common feature on other contemporary lamps, such as the Yavne 1 type (see below, Fig. 3:18, 19) and the Yavne 2 type (Fig. 3:20–23) oil lamps. This type of ridge had already been introduced onto oil lamps in the late Hellenistic period and gathered momentum on local types of the Roman period, such as the 'Herodian' and 'Darom' oil lamps.

Most Kh. el-Ni'ana lamps have a bar-shaped handle, also common on the Gezer-type lamps (see below) and on Bet Naṭṭif variants (see Fig. 1:7, above). One lamp (No. 16) was fashioned with a wart-shaped handle, similar to the ones on the Yavne-type lamps and the later Byzantine Candlestick-type lamps discussed below. The loop handle on No. 17 is reminiscent of handles on Bet Naṭṭif-type lamps (Sussman 1985–6: Fig. 22).

The decoration on the Kh. el-Ni'ana lamps makes use of two basic elements, segmented circles and globules, which are already known on other lamps (Sussman 1969: Pl. XIV:6, 7), but to a different effect. At Kh. el-Ni'ana the segmented circles and the globules fill the entire surface of the body, including the space between the filling hole and the handle with two (Nos. 15, 16) or three (Nos. 12–14) globules.

The lamps (bar the multi-nozzled Lamp 17) were divided into two groups based on their decoration: Kh. el-Ni'ana 1 (Nos. 9–12) decorated with double-line segmented circles, and Kh. el-Ni'ana 2 (Nos. 13–16) with single-line segmented circles. The segmented circles on both groups are filled with globules. The multi-spouted lamp (No. 17) was classified as a third group—Kh. el-Ni'ana 3.

The Kh. el-Ni'ana lamps seem to have been manufactured locally using a limited range of decorations, as did other mediocre workshops, the products of which were found in the Bet Naṭṭif area (confiscated lamps at the IAA: PAM 43.71–43.74), at Bet Guvrin (Kloner and Frumkin

1989: Fig. 27), and at Yavne-Yam (Sadeh 1991: Fig. 6; Fisher 1991: Fig. 5). A similar lamp, but decorated with a wavy line, was discovered in Tomb 3010 at Ashdod together with Bet Nat̄if-type lamps (Fortuna 1971: Pl. XCIV:1). The motif of strokes across a perpendicular line on Lamp 17 was used to depict branches and fruit on Bet Nat̄if- and Gezer-type lamps. It is also found on a Yavne-type lamp from Rehovot (Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:11).

Khirbat el-Ni'ana 1 (Fig. 2:9–12)

9. Six double-line segmented circles filled with globules, five globules on the nozzle and a single one between the segmented circles. Light pink ware, dark red-brown slip. Height 2.5 cm, width 5.8 cm, length 8.3 cm. Tomb I, L44, B247/f.

Comparisons: Sussman 1969: Pl. XIV:7.

10. Fractured. Similar to No. 9. Light buff ware, brown slip. Height 3 cm, width 5.5 cm, length 8 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B233/a.

11. Incomplete. Similar to No. 9. Light brown ware, traces of brown slip. Worn mold. Height 2.7 cm, width 6+ cm, length 7.8 cm. Tomb I, L57, B296/8.

12. Similar to No. 9. Gray ware. Height 3 cm, width 6 cm, length 9.2 cm. Facade of Tomb I, B1358.

Khirbat el-Ni'ana 2 (Fig. 2:13–16)

13. Fractured. On the shoulders are four single-line segmented circles with globules filling the space within and around them. Two double-line segmented circles occupy the area between the filling hole and the bar across the nozzle. Light gray ware, light brown slip, heavy soot. Height 2.6 cm, width 5.5 cm, length 8 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L19, B191.

14. Fractured. Six single-line segmented circles with globules filling the space within and around them. Brown-gray ware. Width 5.6 cm, length 8.5 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B236.

15. Fractured. Almond-shaped. Irregular, thick ring base. Decoration similar to No. 14. Light pink ware, very little soot. Height 2.2 cm, width 5.5 cm, length 7.2 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B229.

16. Incomplete. Similar to No. 15, but with only five segmented circles, arranged differently around the filling hole. Brown-pink ware. Traces of soot. Height 2.7 cm, width 3.5+ cm, length 7.5 cm. Tomb IV (not excavated), B2003.

Khirbat el-Ni'ana 3 (Fig. 2:17)

17. Multi-spouted oil lamp with a wide slanting nozzle perforated with six wick holes. A wide irregular ring base is shifted toward the left and rear of the lamp. The body is framed by a single line, enclosing scattered globules. Two rings surround the filling hole. The outer ring and an inner bar across the nozzle are both crossed by short strokes. On the nozzle are two nearly complete circles, each filled with five globules, flanking two rows of three globules each. A loop handle rests upon the shoulder. Buff-gray ware, heavy soot. Height 3 cm, width 7 cm, length 10.2 cm. Structure 3, B2000/3.

Yavne (Yabneh)-Type Lamps (Fig. 3)

This group includes ten lamps and fragments, all found in and around Tomb I. The Yavne-type lamps, dated to the fourth–fifth centuries CE, are familiar from the Yavne region, e.g. Rehovot, Qatra, Rosh Ha-'Ayin and Tel Barukh (Sussman 1969: Pls. XIV:8–10, XV:11–13). They are absent from the lamp assemblages in the tombs at Gezer.

These lamps have a squat, drum-shaped body and horizontal shoulders. This shape is characteristic of earlier local 'Herodian' and 'Darom' lamps. The Yavne-type lamps stand on a single or double ring base of varying widths, drawn by compass. (At Rehovot the center of the ring base is sometimes decorated, Sussman 1969:71, Pls. XIV:10; XV:12, 13.) The filling hole is encircled by a single or double ring rim. The short rounded nozzle creates a marked

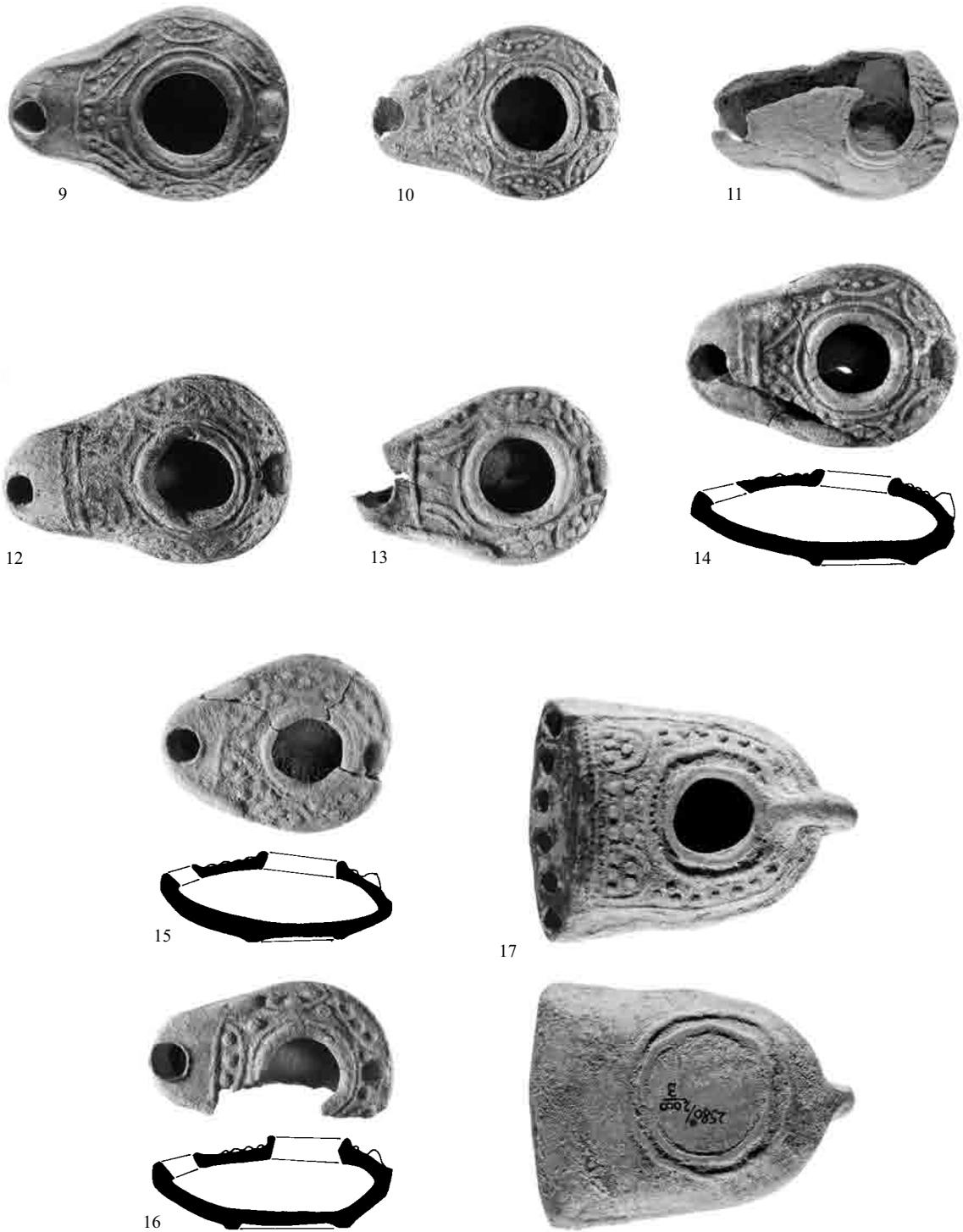


Fig. 2. Kh. el-Ni'ana-type lamps.

waist, and is separated from the body by one (e.g., No. 19) or two (e.g., No. 18) ridges. One of the identification marks of the Yavne-type lamps is the wart-shaped handle at the very rear of the body. (At Rehovot these lamps are covered with a slip or wash.)

As the nozzle of the Yavne-type lamps has little or no space, the decoration is concentrated on the shoulders. There are two groups of decoration: Yavne 1 (Nos. 18–20) has wavy lines (Nos. 18, 19) or dense radial strokes (No. 20), whereas Yavne 2 (Nos. 21–23) is decorated with interlacing bands with dotted circles, some drawn by compass (No. 23).

The Yavne-type lamps at Kh. el-Ni'ana were found together with Bet Nat̄if-type lamps. As is the case at other sites in the Yavne region (see above), these too were discovered out of stratigraphic context, and were dated by their typology to the fourth–fifth centuries CE. They are typologically connected to lamps made in the Samaria region, called 'Yavne North' (Sussman 2002: Fig. 1:8). They may also be compared to local lamps from Bet She'an dated to the fifth century CE (Hadad 2002:51–52, Type 20, Lamps 229, 239–241).

Yavne 1 (Fig. 3:18–20).

18. Wide, arched winged nozzle similar to the Bet Nat̄if type, crossed by a double line. A delicate wavy line surrounds the filling hole, with dotted circles in the curves. Light gray ware, light brown slip. Height 2.5 cm, width 5.3 cm, length 7.6 cm. Tomb I, L44, B247/b.

Comparisons: Sussman 1969: Pl. XIV:7.

19. Incomplete. Resembles Lamp 18, with only a single line across the nozzle; triangular handle. A double wavy line surrounds the filling hole, a dot within each curve. Orange-light pink ware. Height 2.8 cm, width 6 cm, length 8+ cm. Tomb I, L44, B247/a.

20. Fractured. Dense radial strokes on shoulders. Reddish ware. Height 2.8 cm, width 6.7 cm, length 8.2 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B229/1.

Yavne 2 (Fig. 3:21–23)

21. Thick wall. Two ridges across the nozzle, on both the upper and bottom parts of the lamp. The shoulder is decorated with an entwined band of scrolls with a dot at center. Light orange-buff ware, little soot. Height 3.2 cm, width 5.4 cm, length 7.8 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B146.

Comparisons: Eitan 1969: Fig. 14:1; Sussman 1969: Pl. XIV:4, Type A.

22. Resembles No. 21, only with three ridges on the bottom of the lamp. Interlaced dotted band of sperm-like pattern on the shoulders. Three small dots between the handle and the filling hole, as on Kh. el-Ni'ana lamps (Fig. 2:12–14). Light pink ware. Traces of soot. Height 2.7 cm, width 5.7 cm, length 8.2 cm. Debris east of Tomb I, L11, B141.

Comparisons: Sussman 1969: Pl. XV:112, 14.

23. Incomplete. A single ridge across the nozzle. 'Nailhead' pattern of dotted circles on the shoulders. Tomb I, L56, B278/1.

Gezer-Type Lamps (Figs. 4, 5).

This group includes some twenty lamps and fragments, all found next to the facade of Tomb I and south of it. It is the first assemblage of Gezer-type lamps to have been unearthed in an excavation since Macalister's digs at Gezer in the early twentieth century. The Gezer-type lamps merge perfectly into the 'Southern Shephelah' corpus of oil lamps, sharing common typological elements, and are dated from the late fourth to the sixth centuries CE (see discussion below).

The lamps are wide and relatively elongated with no waist. Most of them stand on a ring base. The nozzles vary (see below) and the wick hole is small. The filling hole is surrounded by either a single ring (Nos. 29, 30, 34) or a double ring, with the inner ring generally thicker than the outer one (Nos. 24–28, 32, 33, 37, 38); No. 36 has two thin rings. In some lamps (Nos. 29, 37) the ring is somewhat distant from the filling

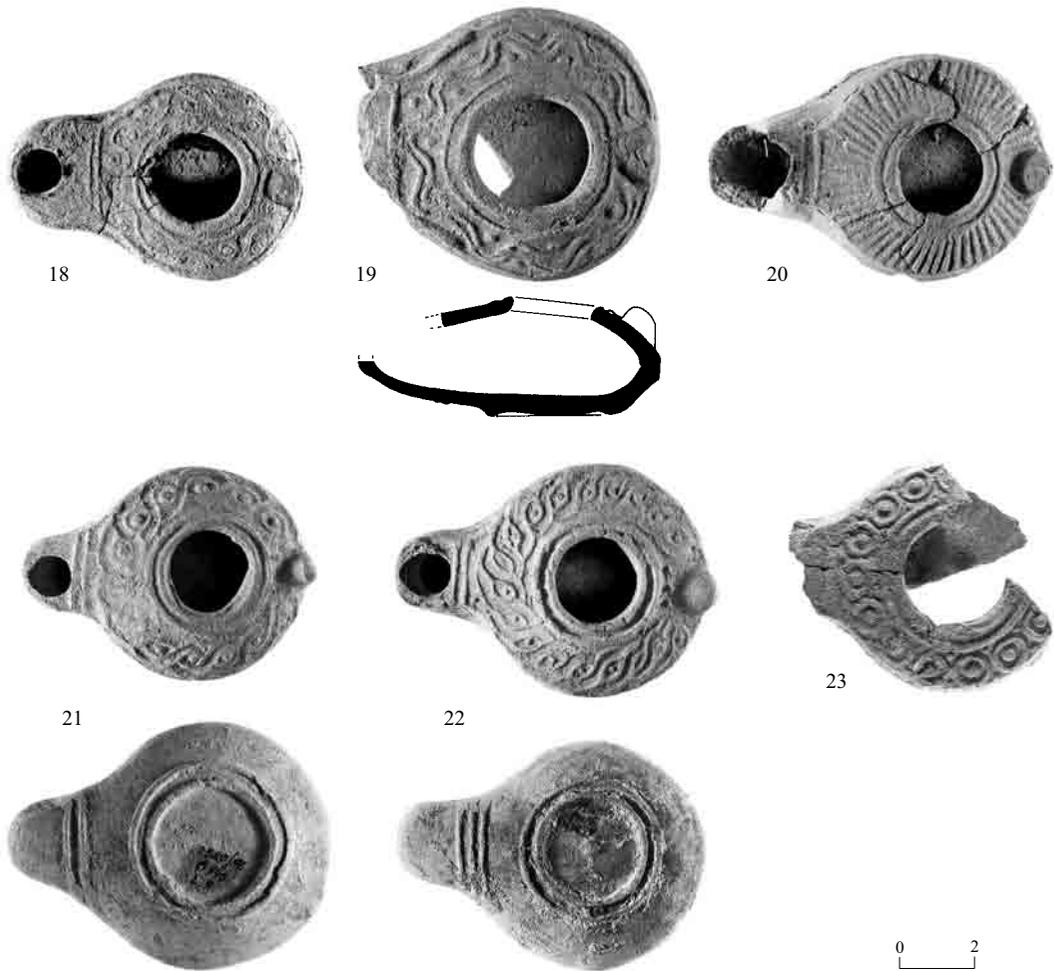


Fig. 3. Yavne-type lamps.

hole. The handles are variations on the bar-shaped handle, except for No. 34 which has a V-shaped handle. The decorations occupying the nozzle and the shoulders are mostly geometric (except Nos. 24–26, see below). The Gezer-type lamps at Kh. el-Ni'ana are very crude. Their hue varies and may be gray, reddish, pink, buff or orange.

The Gezer-type lamps have been sorted here by their shape and composition of decoration into three groups:² Gezer 1 lamps (Nos. 24–28) have a curved 'winged' nozzle; Gezer 2 lamps (Nos. 29–35) have a straight-cut 'winged' nozzle; Gezer 3 lamps have a pointed almond-

shaped body (No. 38). Lamps 36, 37 are broken, missing their nozzles and therefore may be classified as either Gezer 2 or Gezer 3 (see below).

The Gezer-type oil lamps found at Kh. el-Ni'ana were discovered around Tomb I, together with Candlestick-type oil lamps (Nos. 41–50). At Gezer these lamps were recorded from within tombs only (Macalister 1912: Tombs 8, 18, 99, 124, 134, 196, Pl. LXIX:3, 6; Tomb 99, Pls. XCII, XCIII, XCIV) and were accompanied by other types of oil lamps, such as the Bet Natiff and Candlestick lamps and later Islamic lamps, none of which have absolute dating. Therefore,

placing the Gezer-type lamps typologically among these other types of lamps does not assist with their dating.

Gezer-type lamps were also found in sixth-century CE contexts at Ashdod (Fortuna 1971: Pl. XCIV:2–4; Fortuna, Wallace and Yeivin 1971:146, Fig. 79:22; Pl. LXXII:2); and at Tell Qasile (IDAM 64–96) and Rehovot (Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:4).

The body shape, the nozzle and the handle of the Gezer-type lamps at Kh. el-Ni'ana are common elements shared by the Kh. el-Ni'ana-type group of the fourth–fifth centuries CE, and by other types of lamps of the fifth–sixth centuries CE from various sites, e.g., Caesarea (Sussman 1980: Pl. XV:110) and Bet She'an (Hadad 2002: Nos. 217, 339–345).

Most of the patterns on the nozzles of the Gezer-type lamps are entirely different from other known types of lamps, and seem to be antecedents of the later, Early Islamic oil lamps, as demonstrated at Gezer (Macalister 1912: Pl. CXVIII:17, 22). The depictions on the nozzle generally consist of geometric combinations, some of them common on the Bet Naṭṭif-type lamps (Macalister 1912: Tomb 18, Pl. CXVII). An oil lamp from Gezer

displays a Bet Naṭṭif pattern on its nozzle, while the shoulders are decorated with strokes in the Gezer fashion (Macalister 1912: Pl. LXXII:1). The coarse globules and strokes also appear on a Christian ampulla found in Jerusalem (Ben-Dov 1982:108). The decoration of strokes on the shoulders became common among the Caesarea and the Candlestick-type lamps. It seems that the Gezer-type oil lamps, like the Caesarea, Yavne and Samaritan lamps, were another group produced under the influence of the Bet Naṭṭif tradition.

All these considerations lead me to date the Gezer-type lamps roughly to the fifth and sixth centuries CE.

Gezer 1 (Fig. 4)

This group is characterized by a curved nozzle. It is flanked by a thick ridge, a reminder of the 'wings' common on Bet Naṭṭif lamps, creating a curved wing-like impression. As on the Bet Naṭṭif lamps and their variants, the central space bears the main motif: a menorah (No. 24), an amphora (No. 25), or a palm branch (No. 26). Lamps 27 and 28 are cruder and their nozzles are somewhat shorter, bearing geometric elements. The shoulders are decorated with

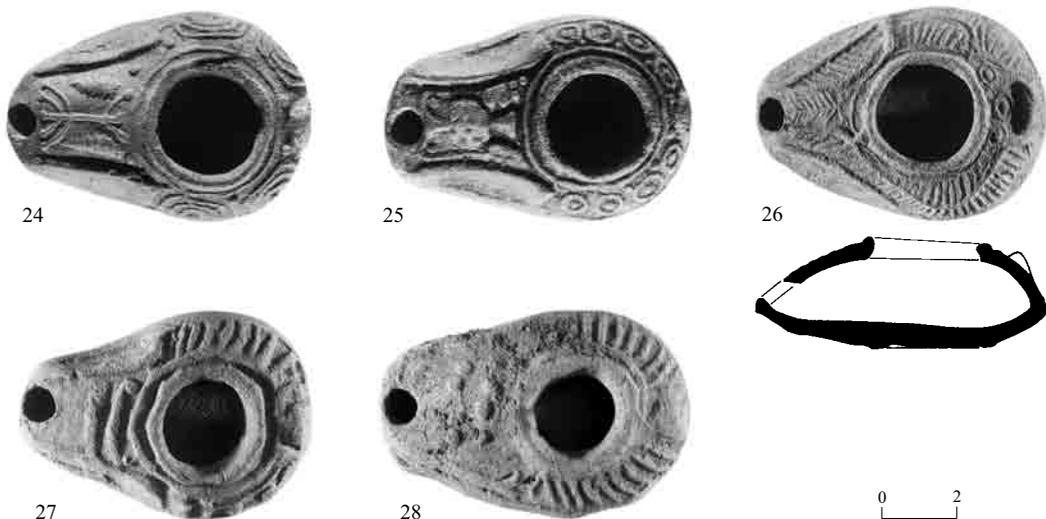


Fig. 4. Gezer-type lamps.

variations on patterns which also appear on the Kh. el-Ni'ana- and Yavne-type oil lamps from the site and on Bet Nat̄tif lamps. These include segmented circles (No. 24), 'nailhead' (No. 25) and herringbone (26) patterns, and strokes (Nos. 27, 28).

24. On the nozzle is a depiction of a five-branched menorah, standing on an arched tripod base, with globules adorning the tips of the branches and the feet of the tripod. The menorah is flanked by globules and elongated pointed plants, with a central branch crossed by perpendicular lines. These may represent either a *lulav* (palm frond) and *etrog* (citrus) or a pair of *lulavim*. On the shoulders are four hand-drawn concentric segmented circles with globules between them. Orange ware. Traces of soot. Height 3.3 cm, width 5.5 cm, length 8.5 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B145.

Comparisons: The five-branched menorah is known mainly from the second part of the Early Islamic period, e.g., on the base of lamps from Bet She'arim and Tiberias (Avigad 1976:193, No. 52, Fig. 93; IDAM 65-1374). The tripod base is identical to a Bet Nat̄tif lamp discovered in Jerusalem (Ben-Dov 1982:109) and similar to those on Candlestick-type oil lamps (Macalister 1912: Pl. CLXXXVIII:5). On Bet Nat̄tif lamps the motifs flanking the menorah resemble three fruits on a plate (Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:12; PAM 43.77; Hadad 2002: Lamps 82, 95, 109, 111). The segmented circles resemble those on Kh. el-Ni'ana-type lamps (Nos. 9–16) and on Yavne-type lamps (Sussman 1969: Pl. XIV:7).

25. On the nozzle is a depiction of an amphora with a spherical, dotted body, resembling a strawberry, similar to Lamp 5. The amphora stands on a trumpet-shaped base identical to the voluted neck. From the amphora's neck, elongated angular handles are drawn toward the body, ending in stylized bunches of grapes flanking the base. A globule adorns the 'knee' of the handle. The shoulders bear a wide 'nailhead' pattern (resembling Lamp 23), with intermittent globules. Light brown ware. Traces

of soot(?). Height 3 cm, width 5.6 cm, length 8 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B152.

26. Very shallow lower part, high and concave upper part; irregular, wide ring base. On the nozzle is a depiction of a palm frond supported by two small circles. The shoulders are assymmetrically decorated: a thin wavy line and short dense parallel strokes in different directions along one side; a thin branch or a herringbone pattern on the other. Three dotted circles fill the space between the handle and the filling hole. Light buff ware. Traces of soot. Height 2.7 cm, width 5.6 cm, length 8.1 cm. Tomb IV (not excavated), B2001.

Comparisons: Macalister 1912: Pls. XCIII:2; CLXXXVIII:1 on a Candlestick-type lamp; Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:3.

27. Thick 'wings' create a stepped nozzle. The second ring rim is unfinished. Across the nozzle are two thick ridges supported by two globules. The shoulders are assymmetrically decorated: thick irregular strokes on one side; two short lines and two globules on the other side near the handle. Light pink-brown ware. Traces of soot. Height 2.3 cm, width 5.5 cm, length 8.1 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L15, B158.

Comparisons: Macalister 1912: Pl. XCII:4; Fortuna 1971: Pl. XCIV:4, Tomb 3010.

28. Resembles Lamp 27. Irregular, very narrow ring base, shifted to the left. On the nozzle two rows of worn globules, slightly curved strokes along the shoulders. Light cream ware. Height 2.5 cm, width 6 cm, length 8.6 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B233/b.

Gezer 2 (Fig. 5:29–35).

The main characteristics of this group are a straight-cut nozzle and shoulders decorated with strokes. This kind of nozzle is common on both the southern and northern versions of Caesarea-type oil lamps (Sussman 1980:1a, 13) and Caesarea North-type lamps (Hadad 2002: Type 22, dated to the fifth–early sixth centuries CE), as well as on the Bet Nat̄tif-

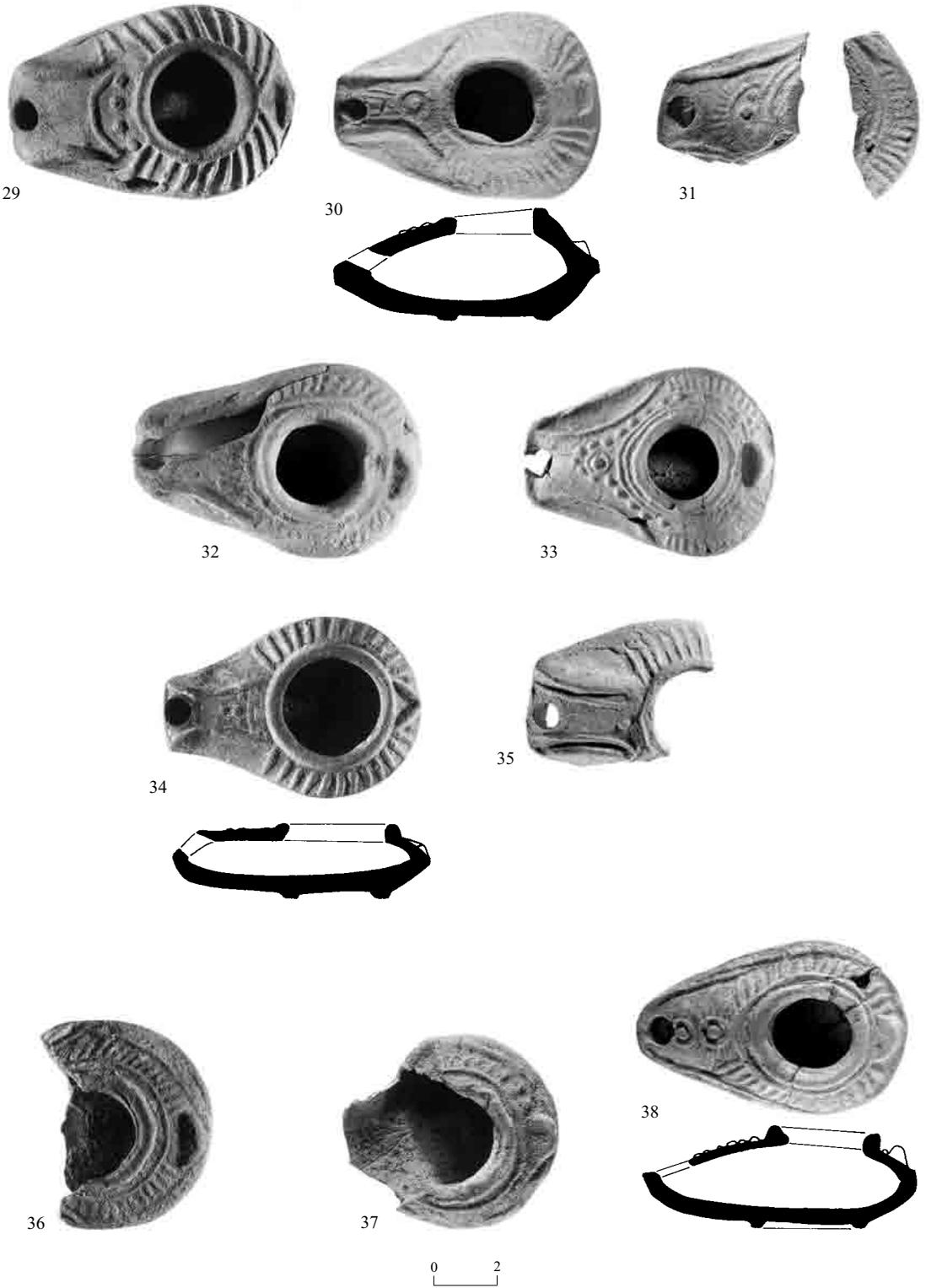


Fig. 5. Gezer-type lamps.

type lamps from the Bet She'an region (Sussman 1986–7: Type 5, Figs. 15, 27). The inner 'wings' differ from lamp to lamp: thick short (No. 29), thick bent (Nos. 30, 32), thin elongated (Nos. 31, 33), relatively straight (No. 34). The various geometric patterns depicted on the nozzles are known from the lamps found at Gezer. However, the variety of patterns found at Kh. el-Ni'ana is limited in comparison to Gezer, in keeping with their smaller number. One of the common patterns consists of rays stemming either from a circle (No. 30) or an arch (No. 31), reminiscent of a sun motif. Other motifs include globules, a chain of beads and dotted circles. The shoulders are decorated with strokes that end at the feet of the 'wings' and vary on each lamp. The strokes were incised into the molds by hand and are irregular.

29. Sunken ring base; thick short inner 'wings'. On the nozzle a hand-drawn arch over four globules, on the shoulders oblique strokes. Red-orange ware. Very little soot. Height 3.2 cm, width 4.7 cm, length 8.6 cm. South of Tomb I, L43, B299.

Comparisons: Macalister 1912: Pls. CIII:14; XCIV:1; Goodenough 1953: No. 304.

30. Thick irregular ring base, trapezoidal section, thick bent inner 'wings', irregularly cut, raised filling hole. Large dotted circle (sun?) from which rise five elongated rays. Brown-red ware. Traces of soot. Height 3.1 cm, width 5.8 cm, length 8.4 cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B255.

Comparisons: Macalister 1912: Pl. XCII:5.

31. Two fragments of the same lamp. Elongated 'wings'. Double-line segmented circle on the nozzle, topped by an arch over three globules from which stem short rays, perhaps a sun motif, as in Lamp 30. Buff ware. Traces of soot. Facade of Tomb I, L5, B118.

Comparisons: Macalister 1912: Pl. XCII.

32. Fractured. Very shallow bottom, rounded joint, thick irregular ring base. Nozzle adorned

with thick bent 'wings' and globules. Pink ware. Heavy soot. Height 3.2 cm, width 6.1 cm, length 9.2 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L5, B136.

33. Fractured. Thin elongated 'wings' create a stepped nozzle, the filling hole is encircled by two additional thin rings. A string of dots adorns the filling hole and nozzle, enclosing a dotted circle. Orange-buff ware. Height 2.6 cm, width 6 cm, length 8.1 cm. East of Tomb I, B1209.

Comparisons: Macalister 1912: Pls. XCII:6; CI(a):3.

34. Shallow body, sharp biconical section; thick wide ring base. On the nozzle are relatively straight 'wings' flanking a ridge and four globules in triangular formation, V-shaped handle. Reddish ware. Heavy soot. Good quality. Height 2.1 cm, width 5.7 cm, length 8.1 cm.

Comparisons: Macalister 1912: Pl. CII:9, 14. South of Tomb I, L43, B292.

35. Fragment. On the nozzle double 'wings' create a channel, with a globule at the end, close to the filling hole. Red-brown ware. Traces of soot. Width 5.7+ cm, length 6+ cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B245/a.

Gezer 3 (Fig. 5:36–38)

This group has an almond-shaped body, resembling lamps of the late Byzantine and Early Islamic periods from Gezer (Macalister 1912: Pl. CX:5, 8). The strokes cover only part of the shoulders. The decoration on the nozzle of Lamp 38 is similar to that of the Gezer 2 group. Lamps 36, 37 are broken, missing their nozzles; therefore they may be classified either as Gezer 2 (as they resemble No. 33), or as Gezer 3 (when compared with No. 38).

36. Fragment. Irregularly cut. Two registers of strokes decorate the shoulders. Reddish ware. South of Tomb I, L35, B245/c.

37. Fragment. Irregularly cut. A band of strokes decorates the shoulders. Reddish ware. South of Tomb I, L35, B245.

38. Almond-shaped body. Thick, oval irregular ring base. Rounded nozzle, frame running along the body; knob handle. Along the nozzle two rayed dotted circles (sun motif, similar to Lamp 30) one above the other; short strokes on the shoulders. Light buff-gray ware. Heavy soot. Height 2.6 cm, width 5.2 cm, length 8.5 cm. South of Tomb I, L43, B256.

Samaritan Lamp (Fig. 6:39)

A single example of the Samaritan Type C oil lamps was found at Kh. el-Ni'ana. The Samaritan lamps, dated to the fifth–sixth centuries CE, are the latest lamps which may have had roots in the Late Roman–Byzantine tradition of oil lamps (Sussman 1983: Pl. 12:86).

Evidence of Samaritan oil lamps, or contacts with Samaritan workshops, is found among the Shephelah oil lamps, e.g., in Rehovot (Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:1, 11). Samaritan lamps were also found at Gezer (Macalister 1912: Pl. XCI(a):6, together with a Gezer-type handle), and Kefar Sava (Ayalon 1998: Fig. 11:1, dated to the fifth–sixth centuries CE). Samaritan elements appear in the fashioning and decoration of Gezer-type lamps (Macalister 1912: Pls. CXVII:5, CI(a):3).

39. Almond-shaped body, sunken double ring base. Large disc, broken after being fired, shallow channel along the nozzle and around the rimless filling hole. Small wick hole. Strokes on the shoulders and along the nozzle.

Horizontal wing-shaped handle. Brown-pink ware. Heavy soot. Height 4.6 cm, width 8 cm, length 10.9 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B136.

Comparisons: Goodenough 1953: No. 268:8; Ayalon 1998: Fig. 11:1.

Unclassified Lamp (Fig. 6:40)

This fragment is rooted in the Late Roman–Byzantine tradition of oil lamps. It may belong to the Gezer or Samaritan lamps, but as it is very fragmentary it cannot be confidently classified.

40. Fragment. On the nozzle a deep straight-sided channel and oblique lines forming an upside down V. Brown-red ware. Length 5+ cm. Tomb I, L49, B263.

Candlestick-Type Lamps and Molds (Figs. 7, 8)

The lamps and molds of the Candlestick-type form the largest group of oil lamps from Kh. el-Ni'ana. Interestingly, none of the lamps match the molds from the site.

Sixteen lamps and fragments of the Candlestick-type oil lamps were found at Kh. el-Ni'ana, most of them in Tomb II and outside of Tomb I.

The Candlestick-type lamps (Fig. 7) have an almond-shaped body, a single-ring base, a single (Nos. 41, 42, 47–49) or double (Nos. 43–46, 50) ring rim, and a ring around the wick hole. Most examples are decorated with



Fig. 6. Samaritan lamp (39) and an unclassified lamp (40).

a stylized six- or eight-leaf branch along the nozzle, reaching from the wick-hole ring to the rims encircling the filling hole. Oblique strokes decorate the shoulders. The handle varies: a short vertical stroke (No. 42), a wart-shaped handle (Nos. 41, 45), or a circle (No. 46).

Lamps 47–50 are crude, degenerated specimens, with an irregularly shaped body, a curved nozzle and a thick ring rim. The small wick hole is not encircled and the handle is hardly noticeable. The decoration, consisting mainly of strokes and globules, is sloppy and coarse. It is dense and covers the entire surface of the lamp.

The lamps from Kh. el-Ni'ana have been divided into two groups by their size: Candlestick 1 is smaller, around 7 cm long (No. 41); Candlestick 2 is the larger version, approx. 8.5–11.0 cm long (Nos. 42–50).

Most of the tomb groups excavated in the Shephelah region include, among others, Candlestick-type oil lamps (e.g. Sussman 1969: Pl. XIII:1, 2). These very popular lamps were in use throughout the country, and were occasionally discovered in stratigraphic contexts. The classical Candlestick-type oil lamps are dated to the Byzantine period, mainly the fifth–seventh centuries CE. The smaller version, Candlestick 1 (No. 41), is considered somewhat earlier, mid-fifth to sixth centuries CE.

The accepted date for their appearance is the later part of the fourth century CE, when Christianity gained official recognition. But recent studies of finds from excavations in Jerusalem date the Candlestick-type lamps from the mid-sixth to the late seventh centuries CE (Magness 1993:251–255, Form 3). At Bet She'an these lamps were assigned a date from the fifth century to the end of the Umayyad period (Hadad 2002:67–68, Type 28).

Candlestick-type oil lamps bearing Greek or Arabic inscriptions on the shoulders are considered later than the ones with no inscriptions. Thus the lack of inscriptions on the lamps from Kh. el-Ni'ana may point to an earlier date within the type's chronological range.

The crude lamps (Nos. 47–50) seem to be regional products, appearing no earlier than the seventh century CE. Their shape resembles late Byzantine and Early Islamic lamps (Macalister 1912: Tomb 8, Pls. LXIX:1; CXIX:15–17; Barag 1974: Fig. 3:2, Pl. XXVII:7).

Candlestick 1 (Fig. 7:41)

41. Almond-shaped body, large ring base, single thick ring rim, wide ring around the wick hole, wart-shaped handle. On the nozzle a stylized branch: a line reaching from the wick hole to the filling hole, crossed by four short parallel lines. Oblique strokes on the shoulders. Orange-red ware. Height 3.2 cm, width 5 cm, length 7.1 cm. Sq G2, near Tomb I, L19, B171/1.

Candlestick 2 (Fig. 7:42–50)

42. Compass drawn, thick ring base with a bulge in its center. The motif on the nozzle resembles a seven-branched menorah on an arched tripod base, similar to the tripod on Lamp 24. Thick red-brown ware. Height 3.4 cm, width 7.4 cm, length 11 cm. Tomb II, L61, B305/18.

43. Incomplete, upper part. Red-brown ware. Soot, white wash. Width 7 cm, length 9+ cm. Near Tomb I, L19, B165/3.

44. Incomplete. Pink-brown ware. Width 7.3 cm, length 10.5 cm. Tomb II B305/20.

45. Incomplete. Orange-brown ware. Traces of soot. Height 3.2 cm, width 6.2 cm, length 8.5+ cm. South of Tomb I, L43(?), B252.

46. Thick shallow ring base. The eight-leaf branch on the nozzle is irregular: the two lower pairs are horizontal, the two top pairs slanted. Light orange-pink ware. Traces of soot. Height 3.3 cm, width 7.2 cm, length 11.2 cm. Tomb II, L61, B305.

47. Narrow oval ring base, a stepped joint on left wall. On the nozzle a crude twelve-leaf stylized branch. Two pairs of strokes parallel to the shoulders flank a vertical stroke at the place

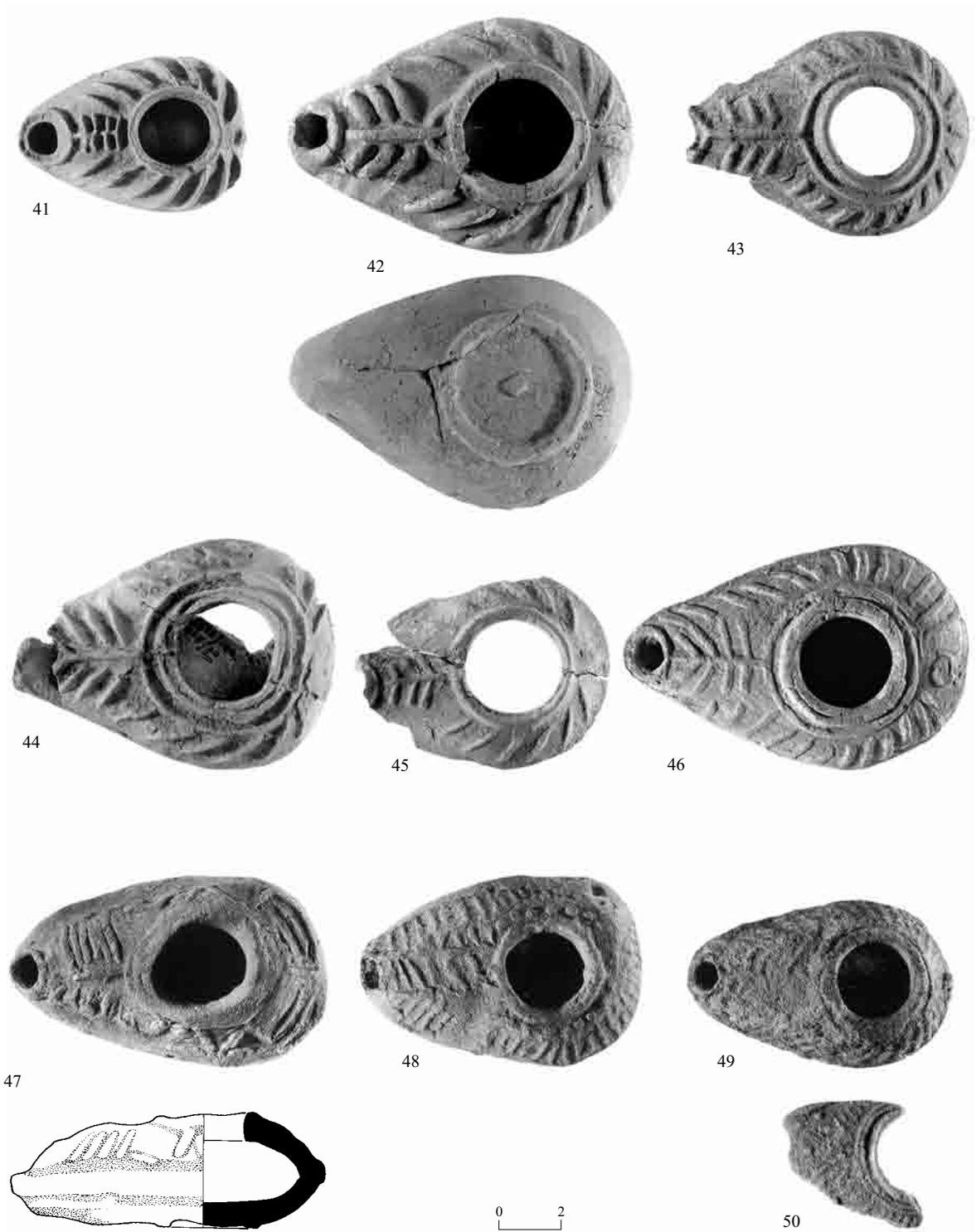


Fig. 7. Candlestick-type lamps.

of the handle. On the shoulders is a zigzag pattern in a bold line, perhaps imitating Greek letters, common on large, late Candlestick lamps. Light buff ware, bad mold. Traces of soot. Height 3.4 cm, width 6 cm, length 9.7 cm. Debris, L35, B199/c.

48. Thick joint biconical section, worn ring base. A double line along the nozzle forms a channel adorned with oblique strokes. Horizontally pierced very narrow wick hole. Crude irregular globules encircle the filling hole ring rim, while strokes decorate the shoulders. Orange-reddish ware. Traces of soot. Height 3.3 cm, width 6.2 cm, length 9.1 cm. Facade of Tomb I, L9, B146.

49. Irregular wide ring base, high slanting shoulders, wart-shaped handle. Light brown ware. Traces of soot. Height 3.2 cm, width 5.5 cm, length 8.5 cm. Tomb II, L63, B306.

50. Fragment. Globules on the nozzle, dense oblique strokes in two directions on the shoulders. Light pink ware. Length 4.2+ cm. Facade of Tomb I, L15, B155/1.

Seventeen mold fragments were discovered south of Tomb I (Fig. 8); six upper molds, the rest lower molds. Clay molds such as these are durable and could produce several lamps before wearing out. However, all the molds from Kh. el-Ni'ana but one (No. 51) are incomplete, either broken during production or discarded after use. The complete, well-preserved molds were probably used in a workshop that has not yet been discovered. No wasters of oil lamps were found. It is noteworthy that although the molds were made to fashion the classical almond-shaped Candlestick-type lamp, none of them match the lamps of this type discovered at the site.

The molds were made of well-fired clay in various hues of pink. Among the finds are both the lower and upper parts of the mold, which were fashioned by hand and are identical in size. Clay molds were fashioned with a lamp serving as an archetype. The mold is always somewhat

larger than the finished product, i.e., the lamp. The lump of clay was fastened to the lamp and smoothed by hand on the exterior. The two ends, the nozzle and the rear, were marked by a vertical incision before being separated from the archetype by a knife into two halves. The marks were incised in order to make sure to use the proper halves when fashioning the lamps, and they vary from lamp to lamp. These marks are evident on most of the mold fragments from Kh. el-Ni'ana.

51. Upper mold. Single ring rim around the filling hole, encircled wick. The incised decoration includes on the nozzle a stylized branch, reaching both the wick hole and the filling hole, and on the shoulders radial strokes. The location of the handle is not marked. Flat joint. Incised fitting marks on both ends of the mold. Light brown-cream clay. Well-fired, good quality. Height 2.5 cm, width 7.2 cm, length 11 cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B199.

52. Incomplete upper mold. Double ring rim. Decoration similar to No. 51. Fitting line evident. Light brown-red clay. Height 2.6 cm, width 7+ cm, length 8.8+ cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B237.

53. Fragment of upper mold. Similar to Nos. 51, 52. Orange clay. Length 5+ cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B 237.

54. Fragment of upper mold. Decoration similar to Nos. 51, 52. Light brown-gray clay. Length 5.7+ cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B 237.

55. Incomplete lower mold. Irregular hand-drawn single-ring base. Short wide depression as fitting mark. Light brown-gray clay. Height 2 cm, width 7.2 cm, length 11+ cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B245.

56. Fragment of lower mold. Deep vertical fitting mark evident on front end. Height 2 cm, width 4.7+ cm, length 9.3 cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B230/2.

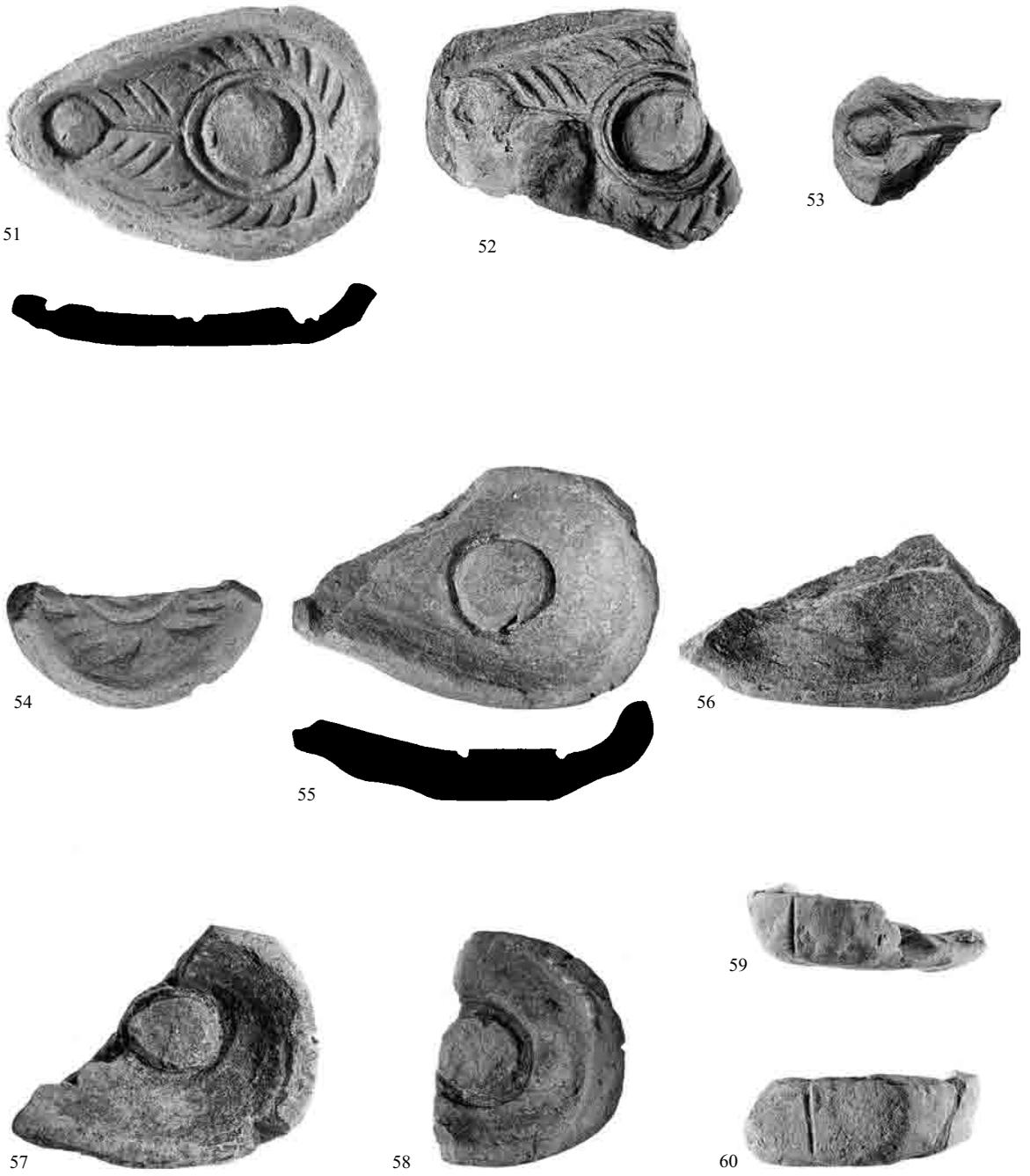


Fig. 8. Candlestick-type molds.

57. Incomplete lower mold. Deep vertical fitting mark evident on the rear end of the mold. Light orange-cream clay. Height 2 cm, width 7 cm, length 8.5+ cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B230/3.

58. Incomplete lower mold. Fitting mark evident on the rear end. Light brown-cream clay. Height 2.5 cm, width 7.5 cm, length 6+ cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B230/1.

59. Fragment of lower mold. Fitting mark evident on the rear end. Light brown-gray clay. Height 2 cm, width 7.2 cm, length 6+ cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B237.

60. Fragment of lower mold. Fitting mark evident on the rear end and nozzle. Orange clay. Height 2.3 cm, width 7 cm. South of Tomb I, L35, B245.

Islamic Duck-Shaped Lamps (Fig. 9)

The Duck-shaped lamps, also named Slipper lamps, were the last type of oil lamps to be used

at the site. Nine lamps, two of them complete (Nos. 61, 62), were found in Area 101.

These lamps, like the Candlestick-type lamps, are not considered a regional product, but seem to be more popular in the southern part of the country. They were also found in the Gezer tombs (Macalister 1912: Tomb 213, Pl. XCIX:13; Tomb 206, Pl. CIa:14; Tomb 176, Pls. CXIV:2, CLXXXIX:2).

The shape of the lamps resembles a pointed petal or almond, with the upper and lower parts very similar in profile. The section is bilanceolate. On the upper part a small rimless filling hole was cut and a small wick hole pierced at the tip. The handle was made of a strip of clay added to the body before firing, stretching from the rear of the lamp and bending forward to reach the body. This handle, together with the shape of the body, gives the lamp the form of a nestling duckling with its head and beak bent backward over the body, hence the name of this type.

A very delicate linear relief covers the entire surface of the lamp. It either runs along the shoulders, or divides the area widthwise into

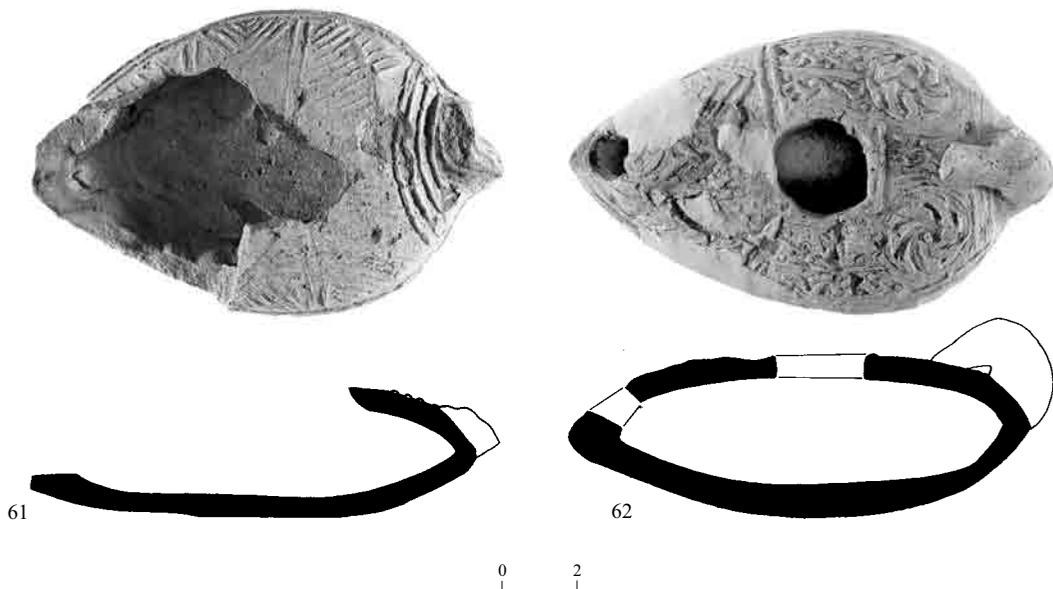


Fig. 9. Islamic Duck-shaped lamps.

three sections, with the central zone running the width of the filling hole. Such divisions are common on other Islamic oil lamps (Sussman 1986: Pl. 81:47–51), and appear as early as the late Byzantine period, e.g., on lamps found in Samaria and in the Bet She'an region (Sussman 1983: Pl. 12:90–93). The nozzle is divided lengthwise by a flat decorated strip, either straight-sided or forming a triangle, typical of Islamic oil lamps. Multiple straight or arched lines at the rear of the lamp mark the location of the handle and define it from the rest of the body.

The patterns depicted at Kh. el-Ni'ana are of a geometrical nature: herringbone (No. 61) and whorls (No. 62). The interlacing calligraphic Kufic letters characteristic of the Duck-shaped lamps are absent from the Kh. el-Ni'ana corpus.

The fabric of these lamps differs from the rest of the lamps at the site, with a tendency toward reddish or light whitish, well-fired clay.

Duck-shaped lamps have been found in stratigraphic contexts dated to the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries CE (Monastery of St. Mary of Carmel—Pringle 1984: Fig. 5:9; al-Burj al-Ahmar—Pringle 1986:145, Fig. 47, Phase D; Jerusalem—Tushingham 1985:147, 151, Figs. 34:41; 37:6, 13; 38:14, 17; 43:17; 45:1, 3).

61. Incomplete. The upper part is divided widthwise into three zones by a double line. The rear and front zones are decorated with oblique lines, and the central zone—with a herringbone pattern. Four arched lines frame the handle. Reddish clay, greenish wash. Traces of soot, also on the fracture near the filling hole. Finger marks left when smoothing the clay into the mold. Height 3 cm, width 8 cm, length 12 cm. Area 101, B1204.

62. Fractured and mended. Concave base. A superficial channel crosses the center length of the lamp, bordered by two curved lines. Another channel divides the lamp's width at the center. Laced decoration: rosette whorls flank the handle, herringbone pattern on the nozzle.

Dark brown-red ware, yellowish wash. Height 3.2 cm, width 8 cm, length 13 cm. Area 101, B1209/1.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The various types of oil lamps discovered at Kh. el-Ni'ana form an assemblage typical among burials in the Shephelah region, e.g., at Gezer, Rehovot/Yavne, Palmahim, Qatra, Bet Gamli'el, Tel Barukh and Rosh Ha-'Ayin. Most of these sites are within the boundaries of the Yavne district during the Late Roman and Byzantine periods (Antipatris to the north, Lyda to the east, Ashdod to the south; Avi-Yonah 1962:109).

All but the Candlestick-type lamps and the Duck-shaped lamps are regional products and are typologically related, sharing elements such as the bar, knob and wart-shaped handles and patterns such as the segmented circles and the globules. The lamps were decorated with motifs of vessels and a menorah and geometric patterns only. The Candlestick-type lamps and the Duck-shaped lamps, however, were much more widespread throughout the country. Most of the lamps found at Kh. el-Ni'ana do not seem to have been produced in first-class workshops, but rather by less-skilled craftsmen in a school of imitation and improvisation.

This corpus is also noteworthy due to the first presence of the local Kh. el-Ni'ana-type lamps, which have yet to be found outside this site. This group suggests that Kh. el-Ni'ana was a junction for influences from Yavne in the west, Gezer in the east and Bet Naṭṭif in Judea. It certainly offered its customers a large variety of local lamps and may have been an industrial center.

The central hall of Tomb I yielded some thirty lamps of the Bet Naṭṭif, Bet Naṭṭif variants, Kh. el-Ni'ana and Yavne types, all dated to the fourth–fifth centuries CE. Eight more lamps of the same types were found at the facade of Tomb I, and were probably left there at the time of the burial. A few Gezer-type lamps and one Samaritan lamp, both of the fifth–sixth centuries CE, as well as several Candlestick-type lamps

of the fifth–seventh centuries CE, were also discovered at the facade of Tomb I and to the south of it, attesting to some later activity. The Candlestick-type molds were found south of Tomb I.

Tomb II yielded only Candlestick-type lamps, and as all tombs at the site display the same architectural type and the same burial practices, it is suggested that the tomb was either reused after clearing earlier remains, or was used only in the fifth–seventh centuries CE.

The oil lamps may provide a clue as to the identity of the people who buried their dead in the cemetery of Kh. el-Ni'ana, which is situated halfway between Gezer and Yavne: the absence

of Gezer-type lamps from inside the tombs may indicate that the population of Kh. el-Ni'ana was connected to Yavne, whereas the presence of the Gezer-type lamps outside the tombs suggests that residents of Gezer visited the site at a later date.

The production of the Candlestick-type lamps at the site, as attested by the molds, indicates a change in the population and perhaps a change of faith to Christianity.

The Duck-shaped lamps of the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries CE were discovered only in Area 101, suggesting, as do the pottery, glass and coins, that this part of the site was active in medieval times.

NOTES

¹ The lamps were drawn by Alina Pikovsky and photographed by Clara Amit and Tsila Sagiv.

² The lamps from Gezer were divided by the author into three groups: lamps with truncated nozzle (here

Gezer 2); lamps with elongated slanting nozzle (missing from the Kh. el-Ni'ana corpus), and lamps with arched nozzle (here Gezer 1).

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