

## THE POTTERY AND STONE OBJECTS FROM A ROMAN-PERIOD FARMSTEAD AT EL-QABU, SOUTH OF ASHQELON

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### INTRODUCTION

The ceramic finds from the site at El-Qabu (see Sion, this volume) comprise for the most part locally manufactured vessels, along with a few imported wares. The repertoire includes plain-ware utilitarian vessels produced on the southern coastal plain along with imported examples of Eastern Terra Sigillata Ware (ESA) and two foreign amphorae. The pottery is exceptionally homogeneous with regard to its dating.

A representative corpus of pottery was chosen by the excavator from a number of loci on the Northern Hill and the Southern Hill, from deposits above and below the estimated level of the floors and foundation trenches of walls. In addition, a few complete, nearly complete and special examples are included.

The text offers a general picture of the pottery, paste and stone objects in their context in order to explain their significance. The pottery examples presented are grouped within the respective areas from which they were recovered.

### NORTHERN HILL (Fig. 1)

#### *Building 1* (Fig. 1:1–11)

Room 4 (L146) yielded a bowl, three cooking pots and four Gaza jars.

*Bowl*.— Bowl No. 1 is a deep, hemispherical ESA bowl with an everted rim decorated with two registers of rouletting on its external wall. It may be Hayes' (1985) Form Late d, dated to the late second century CE.

*Cooking Pots*.— Cooking Pot No. 2 is squat, with a narrow triangular rim and a relatively low cylindrical neck. The prototype of this vessel appeared as early as the Late Hellenistic period (Bar-Nathan 2002:72). The triangular-rim cooking pot continued in use through the early and middle Roman periods (Loffreda 1996:74, Fig. 28). The earliest form was globular, with a thick triangular rim and a tall neck. Over time, the form became more squat, the rim narrower and the neck lower. Number 3 is a squat cooking pot that has an arched rim with a very deep groove on top of it, and a medium-high conical neck separated from its shoulder by a sharp carination. Number 4 is a globular cooking pot with a slightly thickened, incurving rim; a tall neck; and two long, strap handles springing from below the rim to the shoulder. In the north, this form of cooking pot is dated from the early fourth to early fifth centuries CE. Its presence may indicate that our site continued in use into the early fourth century.

*Gaza Jars*.— Each of the four Gaza jars (Nos. 5–8) recovered from L146 exhibits a combination of features similar to Majcherek's (1995) Form 1 (first to third centuries CE) and Form 2 (fourth to the mid-fifth centuries CE). The height of the rim and the obtuse curve and the ribbing of the shoulder of vessel No. 5 are closest to Form 1. The height of the rim of No. 6 more closely resembles Majcherek's (1995) Form 2; however, the breadth of the shoulders is more similar to Form 1. The height of the cupped rim of No. 7 is more similar to Majcherek's (1995) Form 2; however, the

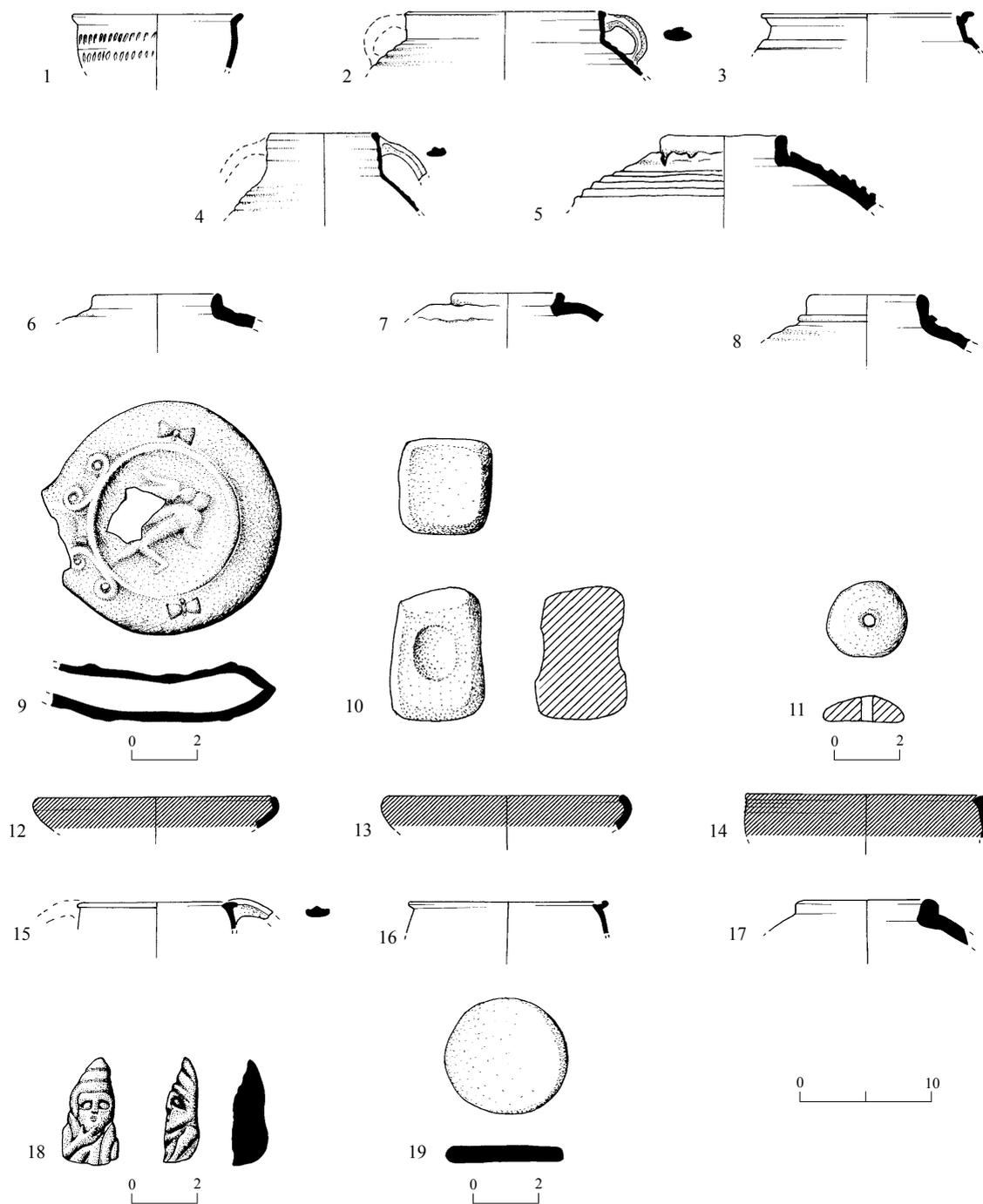


Fig. 1. Finds from the Northern Hill, Buildings 1 (Nos. 1–11), 3 (Nos. 12–18) and 4 (No. 19).

angle of the shoulders closely resembles that of Form 1. On example No. 8, the height of the rim and the ribbing on the shoulders are more similar to Majcherek's (1995) Form 1, although the acute

curvature of the shoulders is more similar to Form 2. The collar ridge at the base of the rim is similar to collar ridges on two examples of Majcherek's Form 1 (Majcherek 1995: Pl. 4:4, 5).

◀ Fig. 1

No.	Form	Locus	Basket	Description	Parallels
1	Bowl	146	286	Pink 7.5YR 8/4 ware; no core; no visible inclusions; red 10R 4/8 int. and ext. gloss	Possibly Hayes 1985:42, Pl. 8:8, ETS Form Late d (late 2nd c. CE)
2	Cooking pot	146	286	Yellowish red 5YR 5/8; no core; some medium to tiny sand inclusions	Loffreda 1996: Fig. 28
3	Cooking pot	146	286	Red 10R 4/8 ware; very dark gray 5YR 3/1 patchy core; many small to tiny sand inclusions	
4	Cooking pot	146	286	Yellowish red 5YR 5/8 ware; no core; few small to tiny white and sand inclusions	Adan-Bayewitz 1993: Pl. 4E:4 (early 4th–early 5th c. CE)
5	Storage jar	146	286	Reddish brown 5YR 4/4 ware; very dark gray 5YR 3/1 core toward the int. surface; few large sand and white inclusions	Majcherek 1995: Pl. 4:2, Form 1
6	Storage jar	146	286	Yellowish red 5YR 4/6 ware; no core; some medium to tiny sand inclusions	As No. 5
7	Storage jar	146	286	Yellowish red 5YR 4/6 ware; no core; some medium to tiny sand inclusions	Majcherek 1995: Pl. 5:5, Form 2
8	Storage jar	146	286	Yellowish red 5YR 5/6 ware; few large to tiny white and sand inclusions	Majcherek 1995: Pl. 4:5, Form 1
9	Lamp	138	267	Very pale brown 10YR 8/4 ware; no core; red 2.5YR 4/8 ext. gloss	Rosenthal-Heginbottom and Sivan 1978:88, No. 360 (second half of 1st–3rd c. CE)
10	Stone grinder (?)	137	278		
11	Spindle whorl	136	323		
12	Bowl	104	204/2	Pink 7.5YR 7/4 ware; no core; few small to tiny sand red and white inclusions; yellowish red 5YR 5/8 int. and ext. gloss	Possibly Hayes 1985:32, Pl. 5:15, Form 39 (60–80/100(?) CE)
13	Bowl	128	132(?) -13	Very pale brown 10YR 8/3 ware; no core; no visible inclusions; red 2.5YR 4/6 int. and ext. gloss	As No. 12
14	Bowl	128	132/15	Very pale brown 10YR 8/4 ware; no core; no visible inclusions; red 2.5YR 4/6 int. and ext. gloss	Possibly Hayes 1985:42, Pl. 8:5, Form Late b (2nd c. CE)
15	Cooking pot	123	132/1	Red 2.5YR 4/8 ware; no core; some medium to tiny white and sand inclusions	
16	Casserole	129	133/1	Reddish brown 2.5YR 4/4 ware; dark gray 5YR 4/1 core; many medium to tiny sand inclusions; very dark gray 10YR 3/1 int. and ext. surfaces	Machaerus: Loffreda 1996:81–83, Fig. 34:3, Group 46, (mid-1st c. BCE–2nd c. CE)
17	Storage jar	116	220	Yellowish red 5YR 4/6 ware; no core; some medium to tiny sand inclusions	Majcherek 1995: Pl. 5:5, Form 2
18	Figurine	123	229	Pale yellow 2.5Y 8/4 paste; few tiny sand inclusions	El-Khoury 2002: Pls. 33–35, esp. Pl. 34
19	Pottery disc (stopper?)	147	318	Reddish yellow 5YR 6/8 ware; no core; few tiny white and sand inclusions	

*Lamp.*— A molded Roman disc-lamp (No. 9), complete except for the spout, was retrieved from L138. Its rim is decorated on either side with a double axe and with double scrolls flanking the spout. The discus is decorated with a much worn erotic scene or *symplegma*. The filling hole within the discus was broken, possibly enlarged (as it often was) by the owner of the lamp. Interestingly, a considerable number of erotic lamps were found in a villa excavated by Stager in Grid 38 in Ashqelon (Stager 1991:45). This type of lamp first appeared in the mid-first century CE and was common through the third century CE.

*Stone Objects.*— Recovered from L137, No. 10 is a granite block (9.0 × 6.1 × 6.0 cm), with depressions carved and rubbed into each of its four sides, the better to grasp it. It was probably used as a grinding stone. A steatite spindle whorl (No. 11; diam. 2.45 cm) was retrieved from L136 in Room 3.

#### *Building 3* (Fig. 1:12–18)

*Bowls.*— Only one example is presented from L104 (No. 12). It is a small carinated Eastern Terra Sigillata A (ESA) bowl, possibly Hayes' (1985) Form 39, dated 60 to 80/100(?) CE. Two ESA bowls are presented from L128: Nos. 13 and 14. Number 13 is a small, shallow incurving bowl, resembling No. 12. It may also be an example of Hayes' (1985) Form 39. Number 14 is a deep hemispherical bowl, with a thickened incurved rim, below which it is decorated with three grooves. It may be Hayes' (1985) Form Late b, dated to the second century CE.

*Cooking Vessels.*— A cooking pot (No. 15) was retrieved from L123. It has a thick, convex shelf rim and a tall, wide and more-or-less cylindrical neck. A broad-rimmed casserole (No. 16), found in L129, is somewhat similar to No. 22 in L102 (see below), with a concave rim with an infolded edge.

*Storage Jar.*— The upper part of a Gaza jar (No. 17) is one of two jars found sunken below the floor level in L116. The height of the rim and the rather acute curvature of the shoulders are typical of Majcherek's (1995) Form 2, dated to the fourth to mid-fifth century.

*Paste Figurine.*— A tiny, mold-made, paste figurine (No. 18) was found in L123. It has large, wide eyes and its right hand is raised to its chin. The figure is wearing a *chiton* and what appears to be a Phrygian cap. It apparently depicts 'mourning Isis', a common motif among Roman figurines (El-Khoury 2002:11). The very schematic crown worn by the Nabatean terracotta Isis depicted in El-Khoury 2002: Pl. 45 somewhat resembles the cap of our figurine. The depression below her neck may be where her *chiton* is tied over her breast in the so-called 'Isis knot'. The yellowish paste from which our figurine is made is apparently the same material as that of the bead (No. 20, see below).

#### *Building 4*

*Sherd.*— The edges of this potsherd (No. 19; diam. 3.8 cm), discovered in L147, were refashioned by chipping as a stopper suitable for sealing the mouth of a jug. The object is quite worn, probably after considerable time submerged in seawater.

#### SOUTHERN HILL (Fig. 2)

##### *Southern Hill Building*

*Bead.*— A small, globular bead (No. 20; diam. c. 1 cm) was retrieved from L151. It is made of light yellow paste, apparently the same material as that of Figurine No. 18 (see above).

*Strap Handle of an Amphora.*— Locus 153 revealed the strap handle of an amphora (No. 21), which had become worn through contact with water or by sand abrasion. It may have been employed in secondary use as a tool, possibly a spatula, a pestle or some sort of applicator.

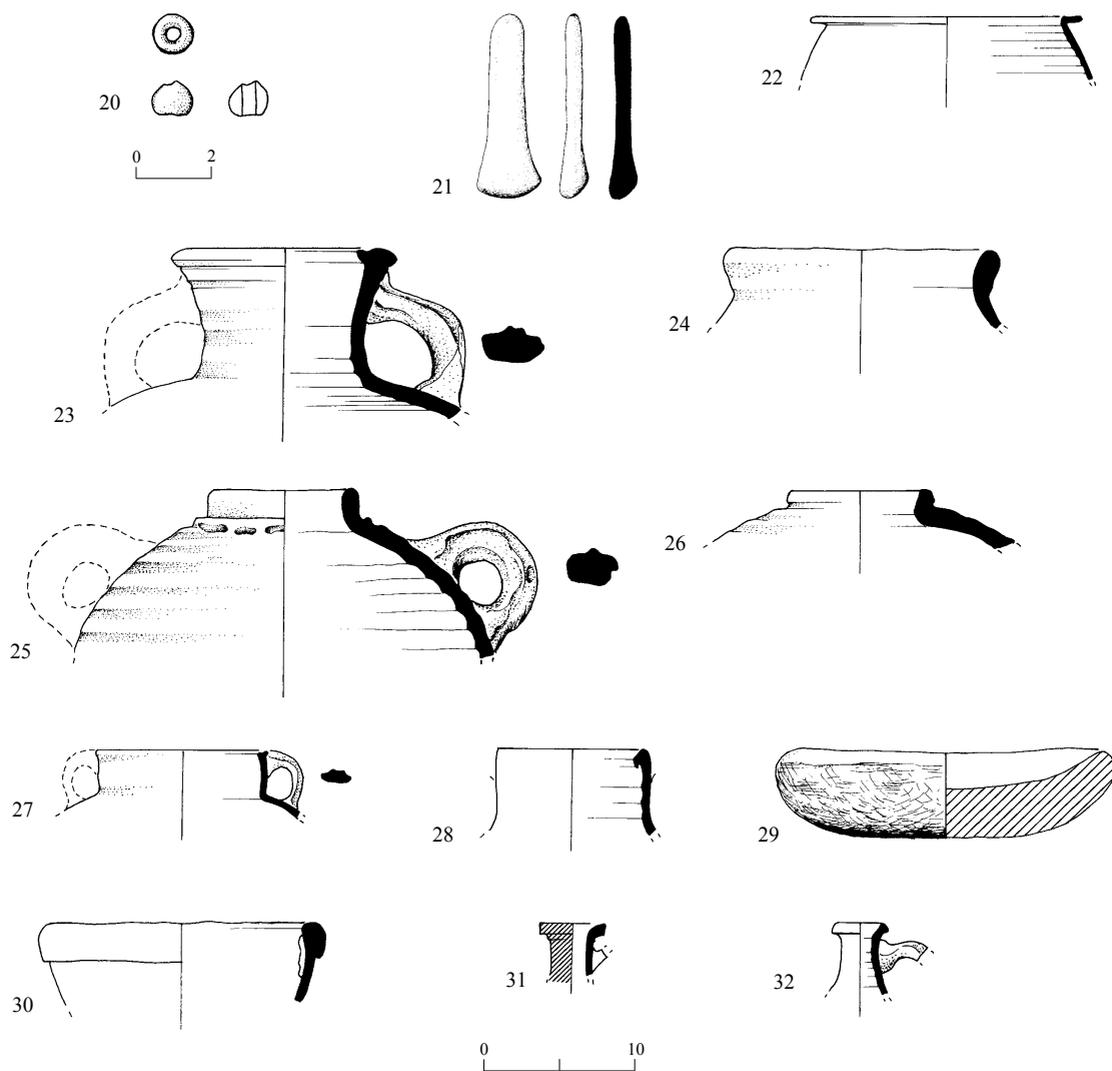


Fig. 2. Finds from the Southern Hill Building (Nos. 20, 21); Winepress 1 (Nos. 22–25); Winepress 2 (No. 27); Tomb (No. 28); and unstratified (Nos. 29–31).

*Winepress 1*

*Casserole.*— From L102, this casserole (No. 22) has a broad, concave shelf rim. It is fairly common at other sites in the country within levels dating to the end of the first and the beginning of the second centuries. It apparently developed out of a wide-mouth, carinated Late Hellenistic to Early Roman form (Adan-Bayewitz 1993:112, Plate 3A; Loffreda 1996:83).

*Jars.*— An amphora, a jar or krater, and an example of a Gaza jar were retrieved from L102. The upper portion of an amphora with a rounded, out-turned grooved rim and a funnel-shaped neck (No. 23) has a parallel from Paphos, which is noted by Hayes as being similar to his Eastern Type IV, presumably imported from Western Asia Minor (Hayes 1991:205). While the form of the Caesarea

◀ Fig. 2

No.	Form	Locus	Basket	Description	Parallels
20	Bead	151	299	Light yellow paste	
21	Amphora handle (secondary use)	153	306	Yellowish red 5YR 5/6 ware; apparently few sand and white inclusions	
22	Casserole	102	202	Red 2.5YR 4/8; no core; some tiny sand inclusions; very dark gray 2.5YR N3 ext. surface	Machaerus: Loffreda 1996:81–83, Fig. 4:4, Group 46 (mid-1st c. BCE–2nd c. CE)
23	Amphora	102	202	Yellowish red 5YR 5/8 ware; no core; few, large to tiny white and sand inclusions	Paphos: Hayes 1991: Fig. 70:7 (late 2nd c. CE) Caesarea: Oleson et al. 1994:23, Fig. 6:A39 (1st–2nd c. CE) Quseir Al-Qadim (Egypt): Whitcomb and Johnson 1982:57, 86–87, Pl. 16:a (early 1st–early 3rd c. CE)
24	Storage jar?	102	202	Brown 7.5YR 5/4 ware; no core; few medium to tiny pink and white inclusions	Possibly Machaerus: Loffreda 1996:36, Fig. 9:6, amphora Group 6 (1st–2nd c. CE)
25	Storage jar	102	202	Yellowish red 5YR 5/8 ware; dark gray 5YR 4/1 core; few white and sand inclusions	Majcherek 1995: Pl. 4:7, Form 1
26	Storage jar	132	246	Red 2.5YR 4/6 ware; no core; some large to tiny gray sand and white inclusions	Majcherek 1995: Pl. 5:5, Form 2
27	Cooking pot	150	298	Red 2.5YR 5/8 ware; no core; some large to tiny sand and white inclusions	Similar to Yadin 1963: Fig. 41:7.47
28	Cooking pot	150	298	Yellowish red 5YR 5/6 ware; no core; medium to tiny sand, white and red inclusions; yellowish brown 10YR 5/4 ext. surface	Adan-Bayewitz 1993: Pl. 4E:4 (early 4th–early 5th c. CE)
29	Stone platter or mortar	169	4?		
30	Amphora	“B” on sherd	“B” on sherd	Pink 7.5YR 7/4 ware; no core; many large to tiny sand and red inclusions; plaster coating on int.	Possibly Peacock and Williams 1986:105–106, Class 10 (late 1st c. BCE–mid-2nd c. CE)
31	Lagynos	“C” on sherd	“C” on sherd	Very pale brown 10YR 8/4 ware; no core; few small red inclusions; red 2.5YR 4/6 gloss over rim and on ext.	Hayes 1985:44, Pl. 9:5, Form 104 (second half of 1st c. BCE–early 1st c. CE)
32	Jug	10H7?	B?	Not available	Kh. Ibreyktas: Kletter and Rapuano 1998:51, Fig. 4:8 Jalame: Johnson 1988: Fig. 7-45:687 (before 351 CE) Lejjun fortress: Parker 1987: Fig. 103:109 (284–363 CE)

parallel is similar to our example, the fabric is different. All the parallels cited for this form (see Fig. 2) can be dated within the second century CE. The thickened, slightly out-turned

rim of a wide-mouth jar or krater (No. 24) may in fact be a variant of a local amphora (Loffreda 1996: Group 6), dated to the first and second centuries CE. Number 25 is an early

example of a Gaza jar, whose general form and rim height are typical of Majcherek's (1995) Form 1, dated from the first to the third centuries CE. However, the body already tends toward a longer, trimmer profile and handles are placed somewhat lower on the shoulders in a manner closer to Majcherek's (1995) Form 2, dated from the fourth to the mid-fifth centuries CE.

Another example of a Gaza jar from L132 (No. 26) shows the same ambiguity. The height of its rim is closer to Majcherek's (1995) Form 2, dated from the fourth to the mid-fifth centuries CE; however, the obtuse curve of the shoulder and the shallow ribbing just below the rim is more similar to Form 1, dated from the first to the third centuries CE.

#### *Winepress 2*

The finds presented from Winepress 2 include a squat cooking pot (No. 27) with a narrow grooved rim and a tall cylindrical neck. It is one of the most typical forms unearthed at second-century CE Judean sites. Number 28 is a cooking pot similar to No. 4 (see above).

#### *Cist Tomb*

Recovered from within the tomb (L169) is a rather coarsely hewn granite platter or mortar (No. 29).

#### *Unstratified Finds*

Within the representative corpus were a few finds whose provenience was unclear. Amphora No. 30 features a heavy, rounded, folded rim, possibly belonging to Peacock and Williams' (1986) Class 10, dated from the late first century BCE to the mid-second century CE. A lagynos (No. 31) is ESA Form 104. This vessel form has a long tradition, dating from the end of the Hellenistic to the beginning of the Roman periods. A small, coarse jug (No. 32) has an everted rim and a strap handle springing from its cone-shaped neck to its shoulder. It is apparently of a type found at a number of sites dated to the third and fourth centuries CE.

## DISCUSSION

The pottery from El-Qabu was recovered from loci disturbed by earth-moving equipment that removed the floors of the structures, evidently mixing the material from above and below the floor level. Thus, the pottery generally represents both the establishment and duration of occupation at the site.

The ESA bowls (Nos. 12 and 13) and the lagynos (No. 31) are of standard forms that seem to have enjoyed a long life dating back as far as the Late Hellenistic period. Other ESA bowl forms (Nos. 1 and 14) belong to the late second and possibly third centuries CE. The imported amphorae also may be dated to the second and third centuries. The parallels of the small jug (No. 32) date to around the mid-third to fourth centuries. The broad-rimmed casseroles (Nos. 22 and 16) are of a type common at the end of the first to the second centuries, which likely continued in use into the third century as well. The most common vessel presented is the Gaza jar. These jars exhibit a combination of features, some of which are similar to Majcherek's (1995) Form 1, dating from the first to third centuries, while others more closely resemble his Form 2, dating to the fourth and early fifth centuries. Northern examples of the cooking pot presented in No. 4 are dated to no earlier than the beginning of the fourth century. This survey of our corpus of pottery suggests that the finds range in date from the second century to the late third and possibly the very beginning of the fourth century.

The figurine (No. 18) of mourning Isis(?) and the disc-lamp (No. 9), decorated with what was probably an erotic scene, are themes clearly more pagan than Jewish or Christian, giving some indication that the inhabitants of our site may have been pagan.

The pottery and small finds from El-Qabu present a small but interesting corpus dating from the second to probably the very beginning of the fourth century CE.

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